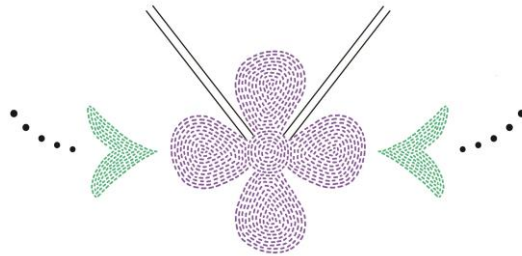


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale
sur les femmes et les filles
autochtones disparues et assassinées

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Membertou First Nation
Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island), Nova Scotia**



PUBLIC

Monday October 30, 2017

Statement - Volume 62

**Shirley Christmas,
In relation to Emma Ann Paul**

Statement gathered by Debbie Bodkin

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NOTE

The use of square brackets [] in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. Amendments were completed by listening to the source audio recording of the proceeding and were made by Bryana Bouchir, Public Inquiry Clerk with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ, July 13th 2018 at Vancouver, BC.

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

1

Membertou, Nova Scotia

2 --- Upon commencing on Monday, October 30, 2017 at 12:45
3 p.m.

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** So I will have the video
5 recorder and the audio recorder on. So again I'll repeat
6 that my name is Debbie Bodkin, and I'm a statement taker
7 with the Commission. And my job here today is to help you
8 bring forward whatever your truth is, whatever your story
9 is, in whatever manner's comfortable for you.

10 The date is Monday, October 30, and I have
11 it's 12:45. And we're in Membertou, Nova Scotia. And, are
12 you comfortable introducing yourself? (~~indiscernible~~)
13 [Giving] your full name?

14 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** My name is Shirley
15 Christmas. My maiden name is Paul.

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay. And where are you
17 from, Shirley?

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Membertou.

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Membertou. Okay. And
20 we also have present -- sorry, Jackie, if you'd give your
21 full name?

22 **MS. JACKLYN PAUL:** My name is Jacklyn Paul
23 (ph) and I'm from Sipekne'katik First Nation here ~~and help~~
24 [as a health] support.

25 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Wonderful. Wonderful.

Statement - Public
Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

2

1 So our cell phones are off. We got the recording's on. If
2 you see me take any notes, it's only to remind myself of
3 questions that we might go through. And I'm not taking
4 notes of your interview, it's just to keep myself on track.

5 So again, I'll repeat that everything that's
6 recorded, and audio taped goes to the Commission, it stays
7 with them there. So this -- consider -- please consider
8 this a safe place, a comfortable place. If you need a
9 break, you know, if we go on for quite a time and you need
10 a break, just let me know. There's no problem with that.
11 So basically, you're in charge here. And I'll just help
12 you out as best I can as we ~~grow~~[go] through.

13 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I remember hearing
14 those words before.

15 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Oh, okay. Well
16 hopefully I'm saying them and there will be a good outcome
17 in the end with your statement.

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Well, the other one
19 was a good outcome.

20 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Oh, okay.

21 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** It's just --

22 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Good to know.

23 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah.

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** So any other questions
25 before you kind of launch in? So wherever you want to

Statement - Public
Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

3

1 begin -- you've got your coffee. If you need water, let me
2 know. We have --

3 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yes.

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** -- Kleenex here. We
5 also have a bag here for Kleenex if --

6 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** No. I guess I want
7 to start with my younger sister.

8 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

9 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Her name was Emma.
10 Emma Ann Paul. And that day -- and she was just 24. She
11 was a mother of three, and she lived across from me.
12 Well, she did for a while.

13 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Here in Membertou, you
14 said?

15 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah. And we got
16 along very well. And you know, we -- we like sort of
17 supported each other of whatever dreams or goals we had.
18 And she always called me Sho-Sho (ph). I don't know where
19 she got that name from, but that's what she called me, Sho-
20 Sho. Anyway, she -- I don't know, I can't remember exactly
21 days or months or things like that, but she no longer lived
22 across the street from me anymore. She -- she gave her
23 children to her -- to the children's father. She met this
24 other dude. And I guess she didn't want children or
25 things, I don't know what it was, but anyway, she -- the

Statement - Public
Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

4

1 father took the children.

2 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And how many children?

3 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Huh?

4 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: How many children?

5 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Three.

6 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Three?

7 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Yeah. And she moved
8 in with this guy, [Boyfriend]. It's okay to say the name
9 is it?

10 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Absolutely, yeah.

11 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: [Boyfriend] -- I
12 guess they were together for a while. I don't really know
13 because I lost touch with her. I only see her every now
14 and then. And a couple days before -- before...

15 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You have all the time
16 you want so don't rush yourself.

17 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Couple of days
18 before they found her body, she came to ~~this~~
19 ~~(indiscernible)~~ [visit me]. Just to (indiscernible) I
20 guess. And she had a scarf on her neck. And this was in
21 the summer, quite warm. And I -- I'm not one for asking
22 questions, you know? But I'm one for observing and I
23 noticed that on her neck -- well, at first, I thought they
24 were hickies, but they weren't. They were marks like,
25 bruises. I didn't question her and -- and we talked for a

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

5

1 while and -- and I asked her, I said, "Are you okay?" She
2 says, "Yeah." I said, "You guys get along all right?" She
3 was quiet for a minute, and then she said, "Yeah." I said,
4 "Are you sure?" Says, "Yeah." She said, "Don't worry."
5 Says that she was planning to leave him, you know? And
6 that she found someone else who really care -- cared for
7 her. And I said, "All right." And that was the last time
8 I saw my sister alive when she left home. When she left my
9 place.

10 It wasn't until a couple of days later when
11 they found ~~that~~ [her and] she was murdered and left in the
12 back out -- she was strangled. And -- and the guy, he was
13 no where's to be seen or you know, couldn't find him. And
14 he -- I was angry with myself. I felt guilt for a really
15 long time. Because I should have said something. I don't
16 know ~~what we~~ [if it] would have done anyway, you know? But
17 maybe if I had said something, maybe she'd be still with
18 us. I don't know.

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

20 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I feel like I failed
21 her as a big sister. And I don't think I ever forgave
22 myself that. I still think about it. Especially when I
23 see her. ~~She looked~~ (indiscernible) [children]. I don't
24 know why I can't forgive myself. I don't talk to anyone.
25 I don't even talk to my mom about it. I don't talk to any

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

6

1 of my sisters. I don't talk to my kids. I don't talk to
2 anyone. I just keep it in. Maybe 'cause I'm afraid that
3 you know, they'll say, "Well, you should have said
4 something," sort of thing. You know, you're -- you're the
5 older sister, you're supposed to do this. Supposed to
6 doing that.

7 But the thing is, I don't usually -- how do
8 you put it? Interfere with other people's relationships.
9 And even with my own trauma back then, I didn't discuss it
10 with anyone either, you know? Because I always believed in
11 privacy, you know? What goes on in your own home goes on
12 in your home. Nobody else should know about -- sort of
13 thing. And -- but I still kicked myself in the ass for
14 that, because I didn't say anything, and I should have.

15 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** It'd be difficult
16 carrying all that guilt.

17 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Now, with my
18 granddaughters who are grown, and so far, two of them are
19 with abusive partners. Well, one left hers, but the other
20 one, she keeps going back. And it's hard for a grandmother
21 to see.

22 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

23 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And you could talk
24 to them, you know? Because I didn't want to make the same
25 mistake I did with my sister. So I talked to them. One

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

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1 finally caught on so she's out of the relationship. Her
2 and her daughter are -- well, she's now into another
3 relationship. But the [other] one, she keeps going back.
4 You know, and I keep telling her, "He's not going to get
5 any better." I said, "Each time it happens it's going to
6 get worse." "No, no granny. He'll be -- he's just tired.
7 He was working." And I said, "There's no excuse. If a man
8 truly loved his girlfriend or wife or whatever, he would
9 not raise a hand on her."

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, let alone
12 his own voice, you know? So I -- I told her about her
13 grandfather and the life I had with him. I told her a few
14 things, I wouldn't tell her everything, just a few things.
15 And I told her that it took me years, but I finally -- I
16 said, "After one certain incident," I said, "I had enough.
17 When he started attacking my children," I said, "your
18 father and your uncles," I said, "that was it." So I
19 couldn't -- I would stay and take the abuse. But when it
20 came to my children, I said, "No. That was enough."

21 And that was only just a minor one, you
22 know? When I think about it, if I had've (sic) stayed I
23 think I would have been with my sister.

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

25 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I would have been

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(Emma Ann Paul)

8

1 killed. You know, I think about that a lot. And I feel
2 grateful that I had enough courage to walk out. Although,
3 I could still hear my mom in the background that you're
4 married for life and you should stick it out and all this,
5 you know? But I didn't care anymore. I just didn't.

6 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

7 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** When it came to the
8 safety of my children, I had to do something. Yeah. It's
9 hard to talk to my mom about things, 'cause my mom is very
10 old-fashioned. And it took her a while to speak to me
11 after I filed for a divorce. You know, it took couple of
12 years, but now we're close.

13 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's good.

14 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, took --
15 well, we didn't get close right away. It's just the past,
16 I don't know, past six, seven years I guess, my mother and
17 I are close.

18 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's good.

19 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I spent a lot of
20 time with her. You know, and she's always talking about
21 her childhood and you know, she had such a different
22 childhood than I did.

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And tell me about that.
24 What was hers like?

25 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Her childhood was

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9

1 more -- childhood more happier and more like a child should
2 be.

3 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

4 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I didn't have that.
5 There's so much in my life that went on, there's so much
6 pain in my life. I don't remember my childhood because of
7 most of my childhood I was in residential school. That's
8 why I always say I don't have a childhood.

9 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

10 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I -- and I -- and
11 when I hear my mom's I always feel it's me. It's my
12 childhood, you know? I -- and I love listening to her
13 stories. And I know I'll never get that.

14 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

15 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I know I'll never
16 get that back. Maybe that's why today I -- I'm a child at
17 heart. I love Halloween. I never had Halloween. The first
18 Halloween in my memory was when I was 12, 11 or 12, and I
19 was no longer in the residential school. But that was my
20 first Halloween in Membertou.

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Can you tell me a little
22 bit as our time frame when you were in the residential
23 school and when you weren't?

24 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Huh?

25 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** The -- the years, can

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

10

1 you tell me a little bit of a timeline like, when were you
2 taken into residential school?

3 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** When I was five.

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Five? And whereabouts
5 was it? Which school? Which school? Whereabouts was it?

6 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** In Shubenacadie.

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay. And then when you
8 were 12 you were allowed to go back home?

9 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Well, when I was 11,
10 I -- I guess they closed the school down and I was home.
11 And that was my first Halloween. And that's why I love
12 Halloween.

13 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

14 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I decorate my house
15 to the fullest.

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I love Halloween too.

17 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And when my children
18 were growing up, I always made sure that they had
19 Halloween, they had -- that they were happy. That they had
20 a childhood.

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Even though my ex-
23 husband now was an abusive person, but I had my children.
24 And I think that's what kept me going.

25 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah. Providing them a

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

11

1 childhood you missed out on.

2 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: I wanted them to
3 have a childhood.

4 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

5 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know? Including
6 Christmas. Christmas --

7 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

8 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- is another time
9 when I become another child.

10 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm. That's wonderful.

11 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know, you just
12 feel so --

13 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Feel the love and --

14 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Yeah. The Christmas
15 part I got from my mom, because my mom was the same way
16 with us. She always wanted to make sure that we had a good
17 Christmas.

18 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

19 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Like, joy, you know?

20 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

21 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: And so I just passed
22 that on to my kids. My kids are the same way with their
23 own.

24 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Wonderful.

25 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know? And I

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1 still celebrate Halloween, I still celebrate Christmas.

2 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

3 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know? With a
4 difference nowadays --

5 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

6 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- this would be --
7 I think this Christmas is the fifth -- it will be -- I have
8 a -- an annual dinner for -- for the regional police in in
9 Membertou.

10 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Oh really?

11 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: And this would be my
12 fifth year.

13 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Of hosting this dinner?

14 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: And I have a
15 Christmas dinner for them. They come over you know, and
16 it's -- I call it appreciation dinner.

17 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: That's wonderful.

18 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know, that's me.
19 I -- I like to -- I'm a giver, and I like to see people
20 happy. Maybe because, I don't know, I, I always say I was
21 never a happy person when I was growing up. It was always
22 something that always took me down and -- and -- but as --
23 but as I got older I just realized that you know, I had to
24 think about me.

25 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

1 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I always wondered
2 why people say, "You got to think about yourself." And I
3 felt so selfish --

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

5 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- when somebody
6 used to tell me that. You know, "Think about yourself."

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

8 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And you're saying
9 here, "Why in the name of God would you want to think about
10 yourself?" You know, and I see -- and -- but today, I
11 understand what they mean.

12 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And what's that ~~hounding~~
13 [how do] you?

14 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I guess that's the
15 real me, you know? When you're -- well, I always felt that
16 I had something to give to others. But I could never show
17 it. I had a difficult time showing you know, I was just
18 since I started talking about my childhood, the residential
19 school that I started realizing who I am, you know? What
20 makes me tick.

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** It's just too bad
23 the rest of ~~them~~ [the world] can't see it.

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah. And did you -- do
25 you have siblings that also went to residential school as

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

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1 well?

2 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah. I protected
3 them as much as I could. The girls anyway, because my
4 brother was on the other side, and I hadn't seen him.
5 You're not allowed. And he was -- we are very close today,
6 my brother and I.

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm. And your sisters
8 as well, are you very close with them too?

9 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Not really.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** You're not as close?

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** No.

12 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And how many sisters?

13 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** There were 11
14 sisters.

15 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** 11.

16 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Five passed away.
17 They were all younger than me. And I still have two
18 brothers, so I've got, I think, five sisters left. Or four
19 sisters. You know, four sisters. I have four sisters
20 left. I got married when I was 23. Yeah. (~~Indiscernible~~)
21 to [Ex-Husband]. And we had three sons. I had two
22 children before [I met him] and -- before (~~indiscernible~~).

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

24 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Of course, ~~most~~
25 [those] relationships are like one-night stand [things]

1 (~~indiscernible~~). That was -- that was my life. Like I
2 said, I -- my whole life I think was not good.

3 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** So you had five -- five
4 children of your own, right? Is that what you said?

5 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Well, I adopted my
6 youngest daughter.

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Oh, okay.

8 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah. She was my
9 sister's daughter.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** But my sister asked
12 if I could take her because she was an alcoholic. And she
13 said, she can't. And she didn't want Children Service to
14 take her. [Back then it was] ~~That maybe wasn't sitting~~
15 ~~well for the~~ (indiscernible) Children Service in Sydney,
16 you know?

17 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** The ruthless ones
19 you know? And so I agreed to take her (indiscernible)
20 and that was, I was still married to --

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- to [Ex-Husband],
23 you know?

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

25 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And we owned the

1 store and things like that. We were (~~indiscernible~~) [but
2 he was still an abusive man] was drinking.

3 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And do you know where
4 that came from? This -- was his childhood [and so on]
5 (~~indiscernible~~) where that abusiveness came from in him as
6 -- as his childhood or anything or?

7 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** No. His parents got
8 along very well. You know, I don't know where he got it
9 from.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Was he in residential
11 school do you think, himself?

12 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I don't know.

13 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Oh, no? Okay.

14 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** He wasn't abusive
15 when we first started dating. It wasn't until after we got
16 married. And I already had one son from him. And when we
17 got married and my other two were born after, I remember
18 when my youngest son, [Son 1] was just let's see. He was
19 born in January. January, February, he was just three
20 months old. And we were living at my -- my great-uncle's
21 place. We didn't have a house. He was building the house.
22 It took him three years. He still never finished it.

23 But anyway, I was living with my uncle, my
24 great-uncle and one night he -- my mother-in-law called me
25 and she says, "Get out of the house." She said, "[Ex-

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

17

1 Husband] is coming over and he's got a lightbulb." And I
2 did not have time to dress my children or dress myself.
3 And it was a winter storm.

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

5 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I went out in the
6 back door, took my babies with me. None of us had shoes
7 on.

8 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

9 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** None of us had coats
10 on. And I went behind in the woods. I had nowhere to go.
11 And he was there hollering, and you know, you could hear
12 him. So I went around the back of the woods, all the way
13 to my in-law's and I got there, and then we tried to call
14 the police and -- and the police wouldn't come up because
15 it was a Mountie jurisdiction or something. And then I
16 called the Mounties. They said they can't come up because
17 it was city. So I called back the city and -- and they --
18 I don't know what they said.

19 Anyway, I -- I was at my mothers-in-law's
20 and we were talking. And then my ex-husband came over to
21 the house and my father-in-law told him, you know, got mad
22 at him and started hollering at him in Mi'kmaq. Telling
23 him to settle down and all that stuff. And -- and so my
24 father-in-law told me -- and told me to go home, back home
25 to the house. So I did.

1 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Do you remember what
2 year this was around about? Just in --

3 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** huh?

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Do you remember what
5 year this was around about? Like, how old your little ones
6 were and --

7 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Let's see. [Son 1]
8 was born in '77. January.

9 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And it was that year
10 just you said he was just little?

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah.

12 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

13 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah. And so I did,
14 I went back to the house. And I figured he -- they -- they
15 keep him over at his place, but he came back to the house.
16 And -- and then the cops came in. And they were friendly
17 with my ex. They knew him like a book, and they knew him
18 better than I did, I guess.

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

20 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I don't know. But
21 they told him to settle down, and they took the rifle.
22 And --

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And was this the city
24 cops or the RCMP?

25 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** The city. So he

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

19

1 settled down. And he was quiet for a couple months. And
2 then we moved into the house on Maillard Street. And
3 that's where he started a business, having a store.
4 And -- and it was then that we -- well, I don't know how to
5 put this. We were married. But I never seen him. He
6 would come home after we're all in bed. The kids were ~~good~~
7 ~~night, when~~ [were in bed and] I go to bed. And the only
8 time we see him is in the morning. Well, the kids. Well,
9 I -- the kids don't see him. I see him.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** 'Cause he's asleep.
12 And then I get up with the kids, get them ready and send
13 them off to school and stuff like that. And when they get
14 home at dinner time, he's not around, you know? This went
15 on for years. And every time he got drunk and if somebody
16 got mad at him in town, he comes home and well, I'm the
17 punching bag.

18 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

19 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know? Like I
20 said, we had a store. And I had to look after the store
21 'cause it was open -- he would have that store open at 8 in
22 the morning. And I had to get my kids ready for school and
23 things like that. So that was fine. He had an obsession
24 with money. There was a certain way the money had to be
25 when you put it away at nights. You had to have all the

1 money accounted for. The bills had to be like brand new.
2 No wrinkles. The corners -- there were not supposed to be
3 corners. You had to, you know, make sure there were no
4 corners.

5 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

6 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** So I did all that.
7 Then I started getting tired because I, you know, my days
8 are long. And with four kids it was not easy. And I had
9 no one to, you know, to go to. I didn't have friends. You
10 know, no special friends. No --

11 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** You didn't have time.
12 You were so busy.

13 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** No. So there was
14 one night I -- I just said, "No." I said, "I had -- I
15 can't do anymore," you know? So I didn't count the money.
16 I didn't do anything. I just left it there. Went to bed.
17 He comes home, and he wakes me up. And he tells me to --
18 he says, "Where's the money at?" I said, "I left it," I
19 said. He says, "You're supposed to put that money away."
20 So he drags me out of bed and down to the store. And I had
21 to go and get the cash and do what I'm supposed to do, have
22 done with it. And then he says, "Well, where's my supper?"
23 I said, "It's in the oven," you know? Well, he says, "Warm
24 up my supper." There was no microwaves then.

25 So this went on. And then one night I heard

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(Emma Ann Paul)

21

1 something, and I felt something on my head here. And then
2 he -- he was there hollering at me to wake up. So I woke
3 up. It was a rifle. ~~Where did that~~ (indiscernible)
4 [pointed at my head] He wanted me to get up and do the
5 cash and things like that. He did that for about two
6 years. Every night. Same thing. I was beginning to hate
7 that man.

8 Anyway, one day I got up. Then I went down
9 in the basement. And I found the rifle. And I made sure
10 that it ~~wasn't~~ (indiscernible) [was emptied]. And I went
11 upstairs with the rifle. He was sitting on the couch. And
12 I pointed the rifle and -- then he looks at me and says,
13 "What the?" You know, I don't like to swear.

14 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I ~~think that's~~ [can
15 guess] what he said.

16 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And he says, "What
17 are you doing?" And I told, I said, "Do you know now what
18 it feels like to be woken up with that pointed at you?"
19 "Put that damn thing away." "Don't be so foolish." I
20 said, "The next time you do that make sure that there's a
21 bullet in there and make sure you pull the trigger." My
22 kids were still in there.

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

24 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I don't know what
25 they thought of their mother. So he jumped up and he

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Shirley Christmas
(Emma Ann Paul)

22

1 grabbed the rifle and he started pushing me around. But
2 that was just another (~~indiscernible~~) [day]. You know?

3 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And what year did you
4 finally tell him to get out and you leave him?

5 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: What?

6 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: What year did you
7 finally go though? You did, did you? Didn't you say you
8 left and you finally told him you've had enough?

9 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: No. I just stayed,
10 and then one -- he -- he was home for a change. First time
11 ever home early.

12 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

13 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: The kids were
14 watching TV and I guess they had a little argument, the
15 kids. You know how boys are.

16 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

17 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: And he was in the
18 room I guess trying to sleep or something. I don't know
19 what he was trying to do. And then he comes out. He was
20 ripping mad. And he was telling the kids to keep quiet
21 'cause he's trying to sleep. And he grabbed the oldest
22 one, [Son 2] and he started beating him up. And that's
23 when I broke. I got -- I couldn't do it anymore. Those
24 were my babies.

25 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

1 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** [Son 2] was 14, but
2 it's still my baby. I was so furious with him. I took him
3 to my floor and I started fighting with him and I told him,
4 "No more. I can't do this." But he started fighting back
5 at me. He started kicking me and he left. Walked out and
6 he says, "I'll be back." So I -- that night, I said to ~~my~~
7 ~~son, my~~ [myself, I] -- "No. Can't do no more."

8 So I called [R. C.]. She was
9 (indiscernible) [working with] alcohol and drugs.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I think. I told her
12 I didn't know what I -- what to do no more. And then she
13 said something about this place, transmission. Well,
14 transition, but we call it transmission.

15 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

16 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And that's the first
17 I ever heard it. And she said, "I'll put you there." So
18 that night I packed the kid's clothes, and I put them in
19 the car. I had my own car. ~~And yeah, I just~~ [and he had
20 his]-- and I was going to school. I went back to school.
21 So I told my children, I said, "You guys go to school. And
22 I'll pick you guys up." I didn't tell them we were -- that
23 I was taking them.

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Right.

25 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I just told them to

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(Emma Ann Paul)

24

1 go to school. I'll just go pick them up at dinner time,
2 'cause they usually come home dinner time. So the youngest
3 one, she was in daycare. And [Ex-Husband] wasn't even
4 home. God only knows where ~~(indiscernible) believe me I~~
5 [but anyway] -- I wasn't going to back down anymore. So I
6 -- I went to school like, you know, like nobody's business.
7 I went to school. Then [R.C.] called me and she -- she
8 said, "I can't get you in a transition house like that."
9 She said, "But if you know how to get to [New] Glasgow," I
10 didn't even know where the hell [New] Glasgow was. She
11 said, "They have a place there like transition house." And
12 it was called (indiscernible) house. So I said -- I said,
13 "Okay." She said, "Get on the highway. Just stay on the
14 highway until you see the sign Glasgow." She said,
15 "They'll meet you at the gas station at the red barn." I
16 said, "Okay."

17 So I went there, at the gas station red
18 barn. And they took us to transition, the (indiscernible)
19 house. And that was a Native woman there, working there,
20 [C.N.] --

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

22 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- [C.N]. And she
23 knew [Ex-Husband], and I was so scared.

24 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

25 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: But she said, "Not

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25

1 to worry," she said. "I have a job. And my job is to
2 protect the kids and..."

3 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

4 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know? She said,
5 "I would never, ever do that." So we stayed there -- we
6 were there like, three months. And then finally, they got
7 room at transition, so we came back. And for some I don't
8 know how he did -- no. We -- he won -- he won the request
9 to see the kids. So we agreed to go to the -- in the
10 public place. I think --

11 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

12 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- the park. And I
13 had somebody with me and -- and he had the kids. And --
14 and then they were -- he was with the kids for a while, and
15 then we went back. And then the kids said, "We want to
16 move home with dad," 'cause I just started getting tired of
17 being in --

18 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

19 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- you know? So I
20 went home with him. And that. He said and that everything
21 is going to be okay. Didn't last.

22 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

23 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know? So this
24 time I said, "Well, I'm not going to run away to the
25 Glasgow," but I did. Because he didn't know anything about

1 -- but he knew where the transition house was.

2 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right.

3 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: So I got my kids and
4 my -- at the time, my youngest daughter, she was visiting
5 her uncle and her aunt in the campground. So you know, I
6 had to leave without her. So we only stayed in there like,
7 for that weekend, and then we came back to Sydney, to here.
8 And my brother, my sons were -- they wanted their sister,
9 you know? They wanted her with us. So I said, "I don't
10 know how we're going to do this," he says. "Well, here --
11 here's like this, mom. We'll go and keep me and [Son 3]
12 we'll go and keep auntie busy and uncle; go talk to them.
13 And then [Son 1] is with [Daughter] he'll take [Daughter]
14 to the -- bring [Daughter] to the car." He says, "You
15 don't go in the campground, mom. You just sit right
16 there."

17 So that's what we did. They went in to
18 visit their aunt and their uncle, and just before they left
19 they told [Son 1], "Start walking with [Daughter] to the
20 car," 'cause she wanted to see mom too.

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

22 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: So they did. They
23 got her -- they got her, and they left. They got in the
24 car and we left, you know? And then [Ex-Husband] was
25 having a fit because I got my daughter back. And

1 another -- another three months in transmission house.
2 Then we had a court hearing. I was there, and we waited,
3 and we waited, and no [Ex-Husband]. His lawyer was there,
4 and he was flipping because [Ex-Husband] wasn't there. So
5 the judge reviewed my -- my files and he says, "Mrs.
6 Christmas," he says, "you've been in the (indiscernible)
7 house for three months." I said, "Yeah." He says, "Well,
8 I'm granting you the divorce." He says, "You have
9 children. It's no place for children. You need a home.
10 I'm also going to tell [Ex-Husband] that he has to move out
11 of that house. I'll give him 24 hours. And he is not to
12 come to that house while you're there. He has to ask for
13 visitation rights."

14 And so that was fine. The police issued him
15 a warrant, you know, telling him and he said, "Fine. Let
16 her have the damn house." So he left. And then a couple
17 weeks later he came to the house. So I called my brother
18 'cause he always said, "If he comes to the house, I want
19 you to let me know."

20 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

21 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** So I called him.
22 And he came over. He pinned my husband up to the wall and
23 he told him, "You were ordered never to enter this house.
24 You lay one hand on my sister, there won't be anything left
25 of you." So he left, and he never came back. I guess he

1 also included no child support either. But I never went
2 back after that. That was -- that was that.

3 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And what year was that?
4 How long ago was that?

5 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** That was -- in 1986
6 I got my divorce. I was legally divorced. It was 1985.

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

8 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And in 1986 he came
9 to the house with the divorce papers. Because I guess they
10 must have mailed them to him.

11 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Right.

12 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And he says, "Oh,"
13 he says, "I'm going to take you out to dinner. We're going
14 celebrating," I said. Celebrate? What the hell are we
15 going to celebrate? Oh, you got your divorce. Here, I'll
16 say, "Thank you and go to hell."

17 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Good for you.

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Oh, boy.

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** You are one strong lady.

20 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, I haven't
21 been with anyone after that for I don't know, ten years. I
22 started going out [with another fella] ~~when~~
23 (indiscernible). Five. [Finally] And we were together for
24 four years. And then we argued about something. I don't
25 know what it was. Something stupid. But everything sort

1 of came like a wave crashing. Wave. And everything in my
2 head went to my ex-husband reactions. Once his voice
3 raised, I got so scared, you know? And I told him that --
4 to leave 'cause I couldn't.

5 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Hard to trust.

6 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** No. So it took four
7 years, another four years, and then he came back into my
8 life. You know, well, he said he was sorry and all that
9 stuff. And we got along, and we got married August 15th,
10 2004. And we used to go out to [K.]'s mom. We used to
11 camp there.

12 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

13 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** All the time. So
14 that's where we got married. So, on our first anniversary,
15 we went to Lunenburg 'cause he was one of those with the --
16 that did that program they have on now about the pirate's
17 stash. God, (~~indiscernible~~) [what was the name of that
18 thing]? It's a weekly show they have on.

19 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Oak Island?

20 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Oak Island.

21 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** M'hm.

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Oh, he -- he was --

23 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Treasure hunt.

24 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- obsessed with Oak
25 Island. You know and oh, he was non-Native by the way.

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(Emma Ann Paul)

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1 He's Irish from Banakade (ph). And so we went there, and
2 we spent a weekend up there. And then he says, "You know,"
3 he says, "when we go back we have to stop at Moose Cabin."
4 He says, "It's going to be our first anniversary." I said,
5 "Yeah. I know." So we went and came back. We went to the
6 Moose Cabin and that day, and that day he says, "I'm going
7 to the cave." I said, "All right." So we start up walking
8 together. And I know that that happened 'cause I had -- my
9 legs were bad then. So he says, "You know, you sit here
10 and rest," he says. "I'm going to go the rest of the way."
11 I said, "Fine." So he went.

12 When he came back, it was hard to explain
13 what he looked like. I don't know what it was, but there
14 was something very strange about -- and it just didn't
15 click in my head until later. About two -- two weeks
16 later. We were supposed to return to the mountain. Then
17 one day he says, "I'm going over to my mom's." I said,
18 "Yeah." He said, "I might," he said, "I have somewhere to
19 go." I said, "Okay." So that was fine.

20 So the next day was Sunday. And I tried
21 calling there, and I know Sunday his mother goes to church,
22 you know? So I figured well, he must have took her to
23 church or something. So I tried to call. Still couldn't
24 get a hold -- nobody wouldn't answer the phone. So I
25 called his sister, [Husband's Sister] and I said -- I said,

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(Emma Ann Paul)

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1 "Tried -- I tried calling your mom's place." I said, "I
2 can't get no answer over there and John's over there." So
3 she called, she got a hold of her mother. And her mother
4 says, "John is upstairs sleeping." And [Husband's Sister]
5 told me, "Yeah, you should go wake him up. 'Cause
6 Shirley's trying to get a hold of him," he says. Oh and
7 she's one of those old-fashioned. She will not enter a
8 man's room. Not even her own son's. So she went to her
9 neighbour's and asked if they were there to go to John's
10 room to get him up. He was dead.

11 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Oh.

12 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** He had a heart
13 attack. I missed him. He was the only one that I guess
14 knew me. Understood me, you know? He never raised a hand.
15 Maybe his voice at that --

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Right.

17 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- (indiscernible),
18 but, he --

19 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Who knows?

20 (Indiscernible).

21 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- treated me like a
22 person. I don't think I'll ever find one like that again.

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

24 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** That was 2005, he
25 passed away.

1 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I'm so sorry.

2 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know? When I
3 keep going now, I am too scared to look around or be with
4 anyone. 'Cause I don't know what -- what to expect from
5 people.

6 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah. Understandable.

7 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Huh?

8 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Understandable.

9 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah. You've had a lot
11 of (indiscernible).

12 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I, sure I want
13 somebody to -- to call me companion, but when it comes to
14 actually someone talking to me I get sort of, you know? I
15 get scared.

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah. And that's likely
17 normal when you've suffered losses like that.

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Well, my son says,
19 "Mom, the right one will come along eventually, and you
20 wouldn't even notice."

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I -- I totally agree
22 with him. That's usually how it happens.

23 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know? So, but
24 right now my sons are my protectors.

25 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's wonderful.

1 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** It wouldn't work
2 anyway. Every time I even talk to a man my sons would
3 (indiscernible).

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** They'll be interviewing
5 you first.

6 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** All three of them.
7 They know. It's a wonder I can't find nobody? Oh, but I
8 think my abusive days are over.

9 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's good.

10 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, I won't
11 tolerate anymore.

12 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's right. You
13 shouldn't. Do you mind if I bring you back to tell me a
14 little more about your sister?

15 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Emma?

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yes. Yeah? Okay. So
17 let's just go right back to -- what year was it when she
18 was living with the man, and who he was and?

19 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Huh?

20 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** What year was it when
21 she was living with, I don't think you said it was her
22 husband. It was an abusive relationship with who?

23 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Boyfriend.

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Boyfriend. And what was
25 his name?

1 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: [Boyfriend].

2 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: [Boyfriend]?

3 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: [Boyfriend]...

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Boyfriend].

5 [Boyfriend].

6 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: He's still in
7 prison.

8 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah? Okay. That's
9 what I wanted to find out. What happened with him.

10 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Well, they found him
11 in -- in Florida. That's where he --

12 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And what -- like, what
13 police department investigated her?

14 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Sydney.

15 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

16 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Yeah. And we
17 wouldn't give up, we kept asking you know, to keep, we just
18 didn't let go. We just called until they found him. And
19 when they did he was in Florida. He moved his sister up
20 there.

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

22 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: So they had him
23 transported down here. Then they had to call the thing,
24 thingy. It was a rough time then. Oh my God. No wonder
25 his sisters wanted to get the hell out of that house, but

1 they kept us -- you know how police are they keep us
2 (indiscernible).

3 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** There's just some
4 (indiscernible).

5 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Then --

6 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Yeah.

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

8 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- ~~guaranteed it~~
9 [barricaded] or something.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Oh my God.

12 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And what year was that
13 that he was taken to court? Do you remember?

14 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** I think his sister
15 was -- was taken in 1992. Was that?

16 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah, she -- it was
17 either '92 or '93. I can't remember.

18 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

19 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** '93 I was in my new
20 house in October. So I think it was '92. 'Cause I was
21 still in the old house.

22 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** So things turned out
23 well? Like, her murder was handled properly? And the
24 investigation, that he was found guilty of it obviously if
25 he's still in jail?

1 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah. M'hm. But
2 the main reason for me to be here I guess is my concern for
3 my grandchildren. My granddaughters, you know?

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** How so? Can you explain
5 that?

6 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Well, I don't want
7 to fail them as I did with my sister.

8 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I don't think you failed
9 your sister, but I understand how you're carrying ~~that~~
10 [guilt].

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Do you? I'm -- I
12 was hoping that they would come here. But one is back in
13 school, and the other one, well, she's with that
14 (indiscernible). Her boyfriend, you know? That's the
15 strange thing too about like, about -- is that when you're
16 a in a relationship, but you don't go anywhere's (ph).

17 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** They don't go to
19 movies. They don't go --

20 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** They don't go out like,
21 at all.

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** No.

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

24 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know?

25 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I think that might be a

1 common thing in domestically violent relationships.

2 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah. Like, he -- I
3 don't know if it's a trust issue or what, you know? And if
4 she wants to go north [anywhere], then he'd get so teed off
5 about it. You know, he doesn't want to ~~to~~ (indiscernible)
6 ~~take and~~ [her, and yet he can] go to work and he can go out
7 and --

8 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** M'hm.

9 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

10 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- do whatever.

11 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** That's not a life.

12 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah.

13 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

14 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know? And I
15 want her to see -- to see that.

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And have police been
17 involved in any of her situations? No?

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** No. She won't call.

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** She won't call?

20 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** She goes to her
21 mama.

22 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

23 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Then her mama tells
24 me. I said, "I would have loved to see that young fellow
25 myself."

1 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

2 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know? I won't
3 get -- I won't get violent, but I would talk to him.

4 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm. Say your piece.

5 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Yeah. As I did that
6 with -- with my oldest with her sister.

7 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

8 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: When she was in a
9 nasty relationship with her boyfriend, and then I told --
10 when I spoke to her.

11 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Do you see any - if you
12 have an opinion as to why the -- the -- the domestic
13 violent relationships, like, why they're ending up in them?
14 Or why there is so much domestic violence obviously?

15 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: I don't know. I
16 don't believe in drugs and alcohol.

17 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

18 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: As my husband and my
19 ex-husband was a druggie and he was an alcoholic, but he
20 won't see that.

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: M'hm.

23 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know? And
24 her -- my granddaughter, you know, she's an alcoholic. And
25 so was her boyfriend, he was an alcoholic.

1 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Are these Emma Ann's?

2 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Emma -- Emma, I
3 don't know if she was an alcoholic.

4 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: But these are her
5 children that you're talking about who have --

6 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: No.

7 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Oh, okay.

8 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: No. [One line
9 redacted - personal information].

10 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

11 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: [One line redacted -
12 personal information].

13 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

14 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- but to not --
15 like you would see most alcoholics and drugs. No, they're
16 sort of -- I guess there's limited. They don't know, but
17 it's not an every day thing.

18 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right. Right. Yeah.

19 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Yeah. I believe
20 alcohol and drugs have (indiscernible) major factor.

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

22 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Even with all
23 this -- because when people get drunk, they get crazy.

24 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: M'hm.

1 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Those aren't usually
2 very good things.

3 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** They do. They're
4 totally different people, you know? In my family, it's a
5 long line of alcoholics. I'm an alcoholic myself. But I
6 haven't drank any (indiscernible) ~~over three~~ [in forty-
7 three] years.

8 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Congratulations. That's
9 a win.

10 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah. I just
11 happened to see myself one day. I woke up, my son was --
12 the oldest one, he was -- he was just two. Was he two? He
13 wasn't quite -- yeah, he was two. And I was living with my
14 -- living at my uncle's house, [Uncle]'s place. And I
15 know, ~~me and Ron were~~ [we were on a] drunk that weekend.
16 And I'm one of those mean drunks, you know? I always say I
17 ~~wasn't really~~ [was a mean] drunk. I don't know, can't
18 remember what I all said. And so that morning,
19 (indiscernible) the weekend, so come Monday morning I woke
20 up, and I was on the couch. And then I woke up, I was
21 sitting on the couch. And my two-year old comes out of the
22 room. ~~He places (indiscernible)~~ [The place is beer bottles
23 everywhere, broken glass everywhere. Place stunk like
24 hell. (Indiscernible) [And he comes out of the room and I
25 look at him]. I don't know how old that diaper was on him.

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1 Could have been all weekend, I don't know.

2 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

3 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** He had a bottle of
4 milk, sour as can be. ~~You~~ (indiscernible) [He was standing
5 there and he was looking at me and I was looking at him and
6 I said]. "Oh my God, what the hell is wrong with me? You
7 know, ~~you just think.~~ [It just hit me] And I felt so bad.

8 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

9 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** 'Cause I was looking
10 at my son [standing there], and you know, [and there was no
11 need for it] ~~he knows~~ (indiscernible). And here was, ~~here~~
12 (~~indiscernible~~) [beer bottles everywhere] the house was a
13 mess. And I said, "That's it." I said, "I'm never going
14 to touch another ~~rum~~ [bottle] again." And that was it.

15 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's amazing.

16 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I still have that
17 imagination. I still have that --

18 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Picture of him?

19 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- picture of him
20 standing there at the door. Holding his bottle.

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And that was that.
23 And my second youngest mind you, ~~he asked him,~~ [Son 3] he
24 says, he -- he did a paper in school on -- on ~~rum~~ [me] and
25 on there he says, "My mom gave up drinking because of me."

1 And he wasn't even born. But that's what he believed.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

3 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right. Yeah.

4 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He was just out of
6 baby diapers.

7 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: I still have that --
8 I still have that paper in my -- in my -- the letter that
9 he wrote. Oh my God. Yeah. So now, today my boys are
10 very protective of me.

11 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

12 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Very protective.

13 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: That's based on what
14 they see happen and so --

15 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Well, there was a
16 time a few years back, before -- before John and I got back
17 together again; there was a time that ~~we are~~ [year] 2000,
18 early 2004. And [Ex-Husband] came over and we were
19 talking. And we are civil to each other, you know? I -- I
20 don't -- I don't --

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Oh, good for you.

22 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- I don't have no
23 hate for the man, you know? And we do talk to each other,
24 but --

25 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

1 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- just as ordinary
2 people.

3 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

4 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Anyway, that day, he
5 decide he wants to move back, he wants to come back into my
6 life. Well, I said, "Well, I better think about this."
7 "Oh, take all the time you want, dear." (~~indiscernible~~)
8 ~~all day,~~ [I said alright] so I talked to (~~indiscernible~~)
9 [the boys]. And (~~indiscernible~~) ~~said,~~ "Hang on." [the boys
10 said, "no mom"] He says, "And if you do, ~~(indiscernible).~~"
11 "~~Your mind,~~" he says, "~~so why,~~" [well never mind] he says,
12 "call dad, tell him to come over." So I did. Told him to
13 come over, and the boys were sitting in there. And
14 (~~indiscernible~~) [they told him, they] says, "Dad, I'm not
15 young anymore. We're all adults, and if you lay a hand on
16 mom, I'm going to get you this time." So he
17 (~~indiscernible~~) [walked out the door]. That was that.
18 Yeah. Because the boy said it's not going to
19 (~~indiscernible~~) [happen]. And they said, "We're only doing
20 this to protect you." And they met John. Poor John.

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: He had to be interviewed
22 by them, I presume?

23 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: But they did like
24 him, you know? They got to know him, and they did like
25 him.

1 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Well, you are one strong
2 lady. I have to say.

3 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Well, that's what
4 people keep telling me.

5 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Well, it's --

6 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** M'hm.

7 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** But sometimes I
8 don't feel strong. But lately now like a lot of my bad
9 days, I call them my bad years are out in the open, and
10 then I find that I'm a total different person.

11 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I think it's a
12 (~~indiscernible~~) [weight off you].

13 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Because I've learned
14 how to let go of the negativity in my life. Let go of my
15 past. I've learned to -- to accept it and it does not run
16 my life anymore.

17 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Good for you.

18 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, I have a
19 responsibility to myself. So I have to do things for me
20 and not everybody else, including my children.

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, I -- I
23 love my children dearly, but I do have ~~allowing~~ [a line]
24 that where my life is just as important as anybody else's.
25 You know, so now I'm -- I do a lot of things for myself. I

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1 do (~~indiscernible~~) art [I write]. I -- I'm -- I have -- I'm
2 reviewing three of my books. I have four books, but I'm
3 ~~only doing~~ [reviewing] three. I -- John had a -- a
4 company, a publishing company which is called
5 (~~indiscernible~~) Books. And when he passed away, before he
6 passed away, he gave me the rights to (~~indiscernible~~)
7 Books. The first 11 years of (~~indiscernible~~) I couldn't do
8 nothing. I -- I just couldn't.

9 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

10 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: It was an emotional
11 thing.

12 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

13 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: I found it very
14 hard, and I couldn't do it because every time I tried, I
15 think of John, you know? So there was the day I said to
16 myself -- this was about -- this was about a year ago. I
17 decided if I want to do my own thing, I'm going to have to
18 change the name of -- instead of (~~indiscernible~~). So I did
19 my spiritual -- I smudged, I prayed. I talked to John, you
20 know? I went up to the mountain where I let his ashes go.

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

22 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: And I went up there
23 and I talked, I told him that I wanted (~~indiscernible~~) [to
24 revise] books. I also wanted to start writing again. I
25 said, "But," I said, "each time I do so under

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1 (indiscernible) name I feel it's not mine. I think it's
2 yours." I said, "I want to change ~~owner with~~ [I want to
3 put] a name Sweetgrass and Sage." I said, "I know you're
4 not going to answer me." So a couple weeks after that I
5 got my answer in a dream. And -- and he, he was quite
6 happy.

7 So I tried. I tried to do it on my own.
8 Then I got this overwhelming feeling that it's not the
9 same. It's not going to turn out, it's not going to be
10 like John's, you know?

11 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

12 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And so I -- I -- I
13 stopped. I only did one book. (~~Indiscernible~~). [My new
14 one] Yesterday, what was that? The Me of Yesterday and
15 the Me of Today, that's my fourth book. So I did that.
16 And but I still -- I don't know what it was. It was just
17 something that wasn't -- and then a few weeks ago I was
18 saying, I said, "Shirley Christmas, get off your ass and do
19 something." I says, "You can't keep being negative about
20 that." I says, "You have to start. If you want something,
21 get it done."

22 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah. [Make it happen]

23 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** So I started. And
24 you've got to hear this. Last week I was looking through
25 books. I have boxes of stuff way back before John passed

1 away. This was way back in the 90's.

2 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

3 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: This was '93, '94.
4 '94, '93. No, '93. And there were boxes there. So I was
5 looking through the boxes. There was -- I see this title.
6 I was looking, you know that. So I kept looking at it, and
7 then it dawned on me. That title was supposed to be the
8 first book that I published; Sons of Membertou. Sons of
9 Membertou was not the original ~~there~~ [name], but I forgot
10 about that. I couldn't find it, you know? If I don't see
11 something I don't remember.

12 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

13 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: And John wanted the
14 name for the book to get done (~~indiscernible~~) ~~write it~~
15 [because he wanted them printed]. So he says, "Well, how
16 about we go with Sons of Membertou?" I said, "Yeah. Okay.
17 Fine." You know? And I did not find that paper until
18 October 16th, 24 years after the day the book was put out.

19 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Wow.

20 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: And I found that
21 title. So I was sitting there. And I said, "When I revise
22 Sons of Membertou, it's going to be called, The Dawn of My
23 Beginning," because that's what that's poetry is all about.

24 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

25 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: It's all about me

1 learning about my Mi'kmaq roots. All the (~~indiscernible~~)
2 [torments] and all the -- the heartbreaks and stuff. That
3 was the original. So I talked to the (~~indiscernible~~) [Sons
4 of Membertou, I told them and they agreed].

5 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Good for you. ~~That's~~
6 (~~indiscernible~~) [Congratulations].

7 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** So that's my --
8 that's what I'm doing nowadays.

9 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Good for you.

10 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, I'm a
11 writer. I know I'm a writer, and I write stories. I do
12 poetry, you know? I'm not famous, but I'm doing what I
13 like to do.

14 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And that's important.

15 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** So --

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Really important.

17 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** But when it comes to
18 sales stuff, I'm lousy.

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's hard work.
20 Before we just chat any further, is there anything else you
21 want to say on the record that you want the commissioners
22 to know about this Inquiry? You know, what changes you
23 hope come from it, you know?

24 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Well, I know I have
25 a friend, a close friend. She lost her sister ~~in~~

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1 ~~(indiscernible)~~ five [about twenty-five] years, and they
2 still haven't found her. And I think about her a lot. And
3 I know she's not ~~getting~~ [giving up] -- and I wish, I
4 really do wish with all my heart that this -- whoever these
5 people are --

6 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** The commissioners?

7 Like...

8 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah -- would help
9 her.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Would you want -- what's
11 her name and we'll put it on the record?

12 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Agnes Gould.

13 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Gould?

14 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yeah.

15 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Just, how do you spell
16 her last name?

17 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** G-O-U-L-D. Her --
18 her sister, Virginia.

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Gould as well?

20 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Yes.

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Same -- same name?

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I don't know what
23 her last name is. But she disappeared. She was in a bad
24 relationship.

25 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm.

1 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** And to this day,
2 they haven't found her.

3 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And do you know, does,
4 is Agnes, does she know about the Commission and?

5 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** Agnes? No.
6 She's -- she's downstairs.

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay. Good.

8 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** She -- she -- she's
9 -- I guess in a way --

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** (Indiscernible)

11 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- she had helped me
12 to speak out about my own traumas, you know? Because like
13 I said before, I would never spoke to anyone about my
14 ordeals and my --

15 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm. Well, I really
16 appreciate you taking the time to tell me today.

17 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** You know, and with
18 my younger sister, I just kept that to myself because I
19 felt guilty about it and about letting her down.

20 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Well, you're a strong
21 woman. And (indiscernible).

22 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** I try -- I try to
23 convince myself. Eventually I will. Except that I --

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** It wasn't your fault.

25 **MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS:** -- and that I wasn't

1 in --

2 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Not at all.

3 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- you know? But
4 right now I still feel bad.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: M'hm.

6 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: It takes time.

7 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: But with this
8 Inquiry, I hope that it would give answers to a lot of
9 questions that people are looking for --

10 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm. Yeah.

11 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: -- to find their
12 loved ones.

13 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: I wish the same.

14 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: I know it's not
15 easy. I know it's a rough road for a lot of them.

16 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hm.

17 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: You know?

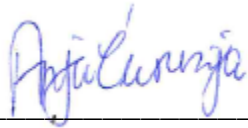
18 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. I'm going to shut
19 the camera off now. It is five after 3, and I'm going to
20 shut the cameras off and we'll --

21 MS. SHIRLEY CHRISTMAS: Holy crap, I got a
22 big mouth.

23 --- Upon adjourning at 3:05 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Anja Curuvija, 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.



Anja Curuvija

February 28, 2018