National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
York Boat Inn & Suites
Norway House, Manitoba

Wednesday November 8, 2017

Statement - Volume 186
Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay,
In relation to Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe

Statement gathered by Francine Merasty,
Commission Counsel

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II

NOTE

Francine Merasty, Commission Counsel, listened back to the original source recording of this testimony and amended the official transcript by adding in passages spoken by the witnesses in Cree. All amendments are set off with square brackets [ ]. Ms. Merasty made these amendments on November 1, 2018 in Toronto, Ontario.
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**Statement Gatherer:** Francine Merasty

Documents provided with oral testimony: none.
Statement - Public

Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 14:45

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: This is Francine Merasty with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, speaking on the record with ---

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Cecilia Blacksmith, Cross Lake, Manitoba.

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Therese McKay (phon), Cross Lake.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And, we’re in Norway House, and the date is November 8, 2017. And, it’s 2:45 p.m. Cecilia Blacksmith, Therese McKay, you are here to voluntarily give your statement in the matter of Marcus Blacksmith, and Glenn Colombe. Your statement will be audio recorded today. And, you’ve also allowed us to videotape your statement. Can you please confirm that you agree with this?

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Yes.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. So, what do you want to share with the Commissioners today? So, you can just start wherever you want to start.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Okay. I want to share my experience in the murder of my son, Marcus Neil Blacksmith. I lost my son to homicide on February 11,
2014. He is the youngest of my children. He was the baby of the family. And, he was only 19 years old.

I’m going to go a little bit on the background on Marcus. When he was 16 years old, he became a Cross Lake firefighter when he was 16 years old, up to where he got murdered. And, Marcus came from a good home. His dad worked for [Company] for almost 40 years. And me, I’m a teacher for 20 years now. And, Marcus was a well, well behaved boy.

He was a well-known boy in our community because of his firefighting. And, he had lots of good friends. And, he was very, very active in the community, and around his friends. And, he loved firefighting, through his dad. My husband is also a firefighter. And, my other son is also a firefighter.

And, my husband and my other son, they always compete on firefighting competitions. And, that’s the reason my late son liked firefighting. He liked to watch his dad compete, his brother compete, and he wanted to be like them. And then in 2013 the Cross Lake Firefighters ask every year, they always go and compete in Winnipeg for firefighting competition. And, in July 2013, they asked Marcus if he wants to join them in this competition. And, he agreed right away.

So, they went to Winnipeg, 800 kilometres
away from my home. So, they went to Winnipeg to compete. And, apparently they won, of all the Manitoba. And, it’s called the Regional Firefighters Competition. And, the Cross Lake team won. My husband was there, and my two sons. So, they won the firefighting competition.

And then that night, I guess, they went to go celebrate. And then my late son, Marcus, met a girl. That’s July 2013. He met a girl in Winnipeg that time. And, I guess he fell in love. Love at first sight, I would say. And, he was only 19 years old that time. He didn’t even have a girlfriend yet, when he went to Winnipeg that time for that competition.

And so, he met this girl. And then throughout the year it became serious. He fell in love with her right away. And then he started visiting her in Winnipeg. And then, in January, end of January, me and my husband dropped Marcus off. January of 2013, in Winnipeg. We were on our way to Brandon to go visit our daughter. So, we dropped him off in Winnipeg to go visit his girlfriend. And then we told him that we will pick him up on our way back.

And then on our way back we texted him that we are on our way to pick him up. And then he texted back and he said he decided to stay with his girlfriend. And then we thought it was okay, so we let him. And so, that’s
the last time we saw him alive, that time we dropped him
off end of January.

And then he stayed. He stayed and then he
called February 4 he called. He said, “I’m going to stay.”
He’s supposed to come home that time, and he called again
at home and he said, “I’m going to stay, but I’ll be home
on the 20th, February 20th.” We didn’t -- you know, we
accepted it. We didn’t think of anything.

And then Sunday morning, February 9th,

exactly at 8:45 a.m. I got a phone call. My phone rang,
and I was home alone. And then I got a phone call that my
son was stabbed, and he’s in Health Science Centre ICU.
And then I almost went and see, you know? I didn’t know
what was his condition, and if it’s serious, or -- I know
it was serious. They said he was in ICU. And then I
called my husband right away to come home. And then I just
packed and packed right away.

By 11:00 a.m. we were on the road, 800
kilometres away. We were on the road to Winnipeg. My mom
was with me, and my other sister. And, by Ashern we had
another call. They were, you know, preparing us what to
expect when we get there.

So, we got to Winnipeg. We went straight to
the hospital. We went straight to the ICU. We didn’t
expect what -- you know, to see him like that, in life
support, fighting for his life. And, not once did he knew that we were there with him. He was unconscious. He was on life support.

He fought for his life for two days. He died February 11, 2014. And, I am trying to remember but, it’s only a little bit of vivid memories that I have during that time, when I lost him. And, the only vivid memory that I have is during the time of court. That’s the only vivid memory that I have.

So, I guess that’s the only thing I can talk about, is how my son’s case was handled. The accused was caught right away that night, when he stabbed my son. He was caught right away. And, he’s been in jail since then.

So, we started our court in 2015. In April 2015 the court started. And, it ended in November 2016. Sporadic dates, we would go to Winnipeg for the court. And, in November 4, to be exact, of 2016, that’s where they sentence my son’s killer. And, you know, we just met that guy that night, so -- I don't know.

So, it’s been three years, and I’ve been, you know, reading news, watching news, about these missing and murdered Indigenous people, men and women. And, I’m, you know, interested in helping out, you know, giving comfort. You know, my fellow grieving mothers the comfort that they need, the support that they need.
But, one thing, it’s hard to see that missing and murdered men are -- you know, they don’t have any solid support. And, that’s one thing I want to, you know, recommend for missing and murdered women and men to be together, to combine, because I know lots of missing and murdered men are out in northern Manitoba. And, I wish and hope some day that they will get justice, you know, and find their missing loved ones.

And, I’m -- you know, at the present time I’m trying to help my community find their missing men. We have two missing men for over 25 years already. And, I am trying to, you know, get that support for these missing men in our community.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: I want to ask a question. So, how did you, I guess, receive, or what kind of help did you access?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: To be honest with you, the most help that I got was from my husband. He gave me, you know, this total support, you know, to comfort me. And, he is still. And, also the God. I don’t know, he gave me this, you know, these visions, these scriptures to read. And, from these scriptures I understand it from what I went through. And, my husband is my strong supporter.

We never had counselling. There’s nothing in my community like that. We never had counselling.
MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you think that’s something that would be beneficial for you?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Oh yes, oh yes. I would like to see mental health counselling, you know, in my community. So, my children, my grandchildren, they kept me going.

And, we also put recognition on Mark, on behalf of Marcus. Like, we have floor hockey. He loved floor hockey. So, we named a floor hockey tournament after him. And, this year we’re going to devote a scholarship for a (indiscernible) graduate. So, we’re going to give out a scholarship on behalf of Marcus. And, what else did we do?

Because, you know, when you do stuff in memory of your loved one, it helps you. It heals you. You feel good; you know? And, even his grave, you know, you go there, and if you sit, it’s just that I don’t want to -- and then I feel for the missing that are not found. That must be hard, eh?

So, when you do this stuff, when you help people? Because I help a lot of people in Cross Lake. And, when you do stuff in memory of your loved one, you feel good. I feel good.

So, hopefully -- we are trying to start another search or this missing person for over 25 years.
So, we’re trying to start another search this coming summer. And, what else did I want to say? You can’t give up. You can’t. Hope; you know? That’s what keeps you going, hope.

So, that’s my experience, it’s my Marcus.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Would you like to make any recommendations to the National Inquiry?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: When I see on Facebook, I’m on Facebook, and I’m a Facebook friend to Bernice Catcheway (phon), Lydia, all these women that are searching for their daughters. I always, you know, mention can we get our own investigators? We need our own investigators. Somebody that we can trust. That’s what kept coming on my mind. And, now, when I read about these missing and murdered, it’s hire, hire investigators. And, don’t give up searching. Keep voicing, keep that voice coming, you know, the strong voice.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Do you feel that you’ve been heard?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: I did. I did. But, in my third year I’m at peace after the sentencing. I’m at peace. Not totally healed, but my heart is ---

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So, how much time did the -- what was the sentence?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Ten years.
MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Do you want to take a break, or do you want to start speaking? (Speaking in Indigenous language). (IN CREE: are you going to speak?)

MS. THERESE MCKAY: (Speaking in Indigenous language). [IN CREE: for a short time, yes.]

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Can you hold this for me, because I have one at home?

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: I’ll just put it here for you.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Can I go now? Can I go take a break?

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: But, you can talk to her.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Because I need to ask her questions. Are you going to come back?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Mm-hmm.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Take a break then, and she can just (indiscernible) [IN CREE: and she can talk.]

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Okay.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: All right. (Speaking in Indigenous language). [IN CREE: What would you like to speak about?]

MS. THERESE MCKAY: (Speaking in Indigenous

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language) -- 25 years. [IN CREE: This young man my nephew has been lost for over 25 years.]

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Your nephew went missing 25 years?

**MS. THERESE MCKAY:** Yes, my nephew, he went missing for 25 years. (Speaking in Indigenous language).

[IN CREE: When he went missing they searched for him and they could not find him.]

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So, they went looking for him, and they never find him?

**MS. THERESE MCKAY:** He went in the bush. They didn’t find him. They went looking in places away from Cross Lake. The road, you know, the highway. They couldn’t find him. Even now, where is he, what happened to him? It’s so hard. And, my brother, and his wife, it was their son, they are already gone. They died. They were very, very -- they lost their son. And, my other -- my grandson, her son, he was a very good boy. Very good boy. And then ---

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** What was his name?

**MS. THERESE MCKAY:** You mean, Marcus? The other one?

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Yes.

**MS. THERESE MCKAY:** The other one, that was -- Glenn Colombe, that’s my brother’s son. I was
mentioning Marcus, my daughter’s boy. He was a very good boy. And then when he got in Winnipeg, what he got into, that’s what got him, you know, killed. It didn’t take long. So, we’ve been through this for so long. You know, Glenn went missing -- we don’t know what happened to him. Nothing. Nothing to, you know -- we tried and find him, but we couldn’t. I think of my brother and his wife, I tell them to call, and I tell them to call -- I guess they were very -- because he was missing, they didn’t know what happened to him.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: [IN CREE: Is that all?]

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you want to make recommendations?

[IN CREE:]

MS. THERESE MCKAY: What do you recommend?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: What do you mean?

MS. THERESE MCKAY: What do you think should happen?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: In finding him?

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes.]

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Well, try to, you know, find ---

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: More investigation.
MS. THERESE MCKAY: More investigation.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: More ongoing.

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes. I would love to know what happened, what happened to him. He’s just gone, and no one knows what was -- it was so many years, 25, 28.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: It’s going to be 28 years. It’s going to be 28 years.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Is that was your brother?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: My cousin.

MS. THERESE MCKAY: I don’t know.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Do you want to ask her what would make things better for future generations?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: You know, this, generation, the world is so hard for them. And, I think the two factors that are -- it’s alcohol and drugs. I guess, be more strict on the alcohol and drugs. That’s the biggest factor of our missing and murdered.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Who are you recommending to be more strict with, the parents or the community?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Justice. The system. I know the fact they’re trying really hard, but -- I don’t know.
MS. THERESE MCKAY: There is lots of drinking and lots of drugs; eh?

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Yes.

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Lots, every day.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: And, I know that’s -- I’m assuming that’s one of the factors on the missing and murdered. And, mental health, I want to see mental health workers in communities. Because, you know, what I experienced is after my experience I needed help, and I didn’t have anybody to turn to, like a mental health counsellor. We need those kind of stuff in our communities.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: [IN CREE: is that all?]

MS. THERESE MCKAY: [IN CREE: yes that is all.]

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: All right. Well, it’s 3:20 p.m.

MS. THERESE MCKAY: It’s very good that you, you know, let us talk about this.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Don’t stop. Don’t stop what you guys are doing, fighting the system. We need the system to, you know, stand by us. And -- yeah. Thank you.
MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So, it’s 3:20 p.m. November 18 in Norway House. And, we’re done.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: November 8.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: November 8; sorry.

--- Upon adjourning
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Shirley Chang, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.

Shirley Chang
March 27, 2018