National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
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Statement - Volume 115
Debbie Ironbow

Statement gathered by Debbie Bodkin

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Pursuant to Rule 7 of *Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice*, Chief Commissioner Marion Buller ordered that all names aside from that of the witness be made anonymous in this transcript and any related documents. The order for anonymity was made April 30, 2019.
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NOTE

The use of round 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. Bryana Bouchir, Public Inquiry Clerk with the National Inquiry, made all amendments on April 26th, 2018 at Vancouver, British Columbia. Ms. Bouchir listened back to the source audio recording to make the amendments.
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Documents submitted with testimony: none.
--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, November 22, 2017 at 10:00

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** So, today is Wednesday, November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, and it is 10:00 a.m. We are at the Sheraton Hotel in Saskatchewan. Again, my name is Debbie Bodkin, and I am a statement gatherer with the Inquiry. So, I'll -- yes. I'll let you introduce yourself, if you wouldn't mind?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yes.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Just your name, where you're from, your cultural background. And then we'll get Cora Lynn (sic) to do the same. And then we'll launch into the story, okay?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** All right. I was born in Marsden, in Saskatchewan, in a small rural community. My mother had been through residential school.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Sorry, can I ---

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yes.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Sorry to interrupt you there. Just your name first?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yes.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Just so we have that.

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** For sure. Debbie.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Sorry?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Debbie Ironbow.
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Ironbow?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Ironbow. I-R-O-N-B-O-

W.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Perfect. Thank you.

And, you live in Saskatchewan?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I live here in

Saskatoon.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: In Saskatoon. And, your
cultural background?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: My cultural background,

that’s sort of why I was getting into it.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Sorry.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: My father was Russian.

My mother is Cree and Lakota.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. Wonderful. Thank
you. And, Cora Lynn, would you like to introduce yourself
to this Inquiry?

MS. CORALEE: I'm Coralee.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Coralee.

MS. CORALEE: I'm with the health support
team.


Couple more things I have to say to Debbie, and then you
can take over. You had -- you're here voluntarily ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- to share your truths.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, you've given me permission to video and audio record the discussion. So, now I will stop talking and let you take over. Again, when you need a break, please do. Keep this space as feeling safe, and you're in control, and I think you were headed in that direction anyway.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Usually giving your background is starting as chronologically as you're comfortable.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Start from there. You have mentioned that there's one -- there's a lot of things you want to talk about. But, one person you have named is [Person X]?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Who you're going to speak about?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, I will let you take over from here. And, just kindly give us your background, and go wherever you feel comfortable.
MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Okay. I was born in Saskatchewan, in Neilburg, Saskatchewan. I lived in Marsden most of my youth. My father passed away when I was seven. He worked for CP Rail, which is the reason we weren't taken into care. So, my mother had already lost six children to the Sixties Scoop. And, when she met my dad, he basically kind of intervened with Social Services when they were trying to take us.

So, he stood up. We were able to stay with our mother. And, it wasn't that it was the best thing that happened to us either. My mother had been through residential school. There was a lot of alcohol, a lot of drinking. Her family, we were -- we endured a lot of abuse in the home. My dad passed away when we were quite young, so after that, there was no safe place left.

So, I guess going back to that, I mean, you know, we -- I remember contact with police through my mother, right? And so, there's some history there. Some good, some not so good. She never really -- I guess she never really felt that she belonged in that rural town. We were the only Indigenous family there. And, I mean, she hid everything; sweet grass, things that were cultural to her was hidden, you know.

She was very scared of anything happening when we were growing up. It was like you were trained to
be silent, because if you didn't, it rocked the boat. And, she was terrified of losing us to Child and Family. She said, you know, “Don't say anything. Don't say anything.”

Well, somebody molested you? I watched my 11-year-old sister being raped by the store manager; blood running down her legs. “Don't say anything.” So, we were trained early to be silent, and it affected a lot going forward for me.

Sorry.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: No. You don't have to apologize. Take your time. Take a break. It takes a lot of strength to be here, so use it as you need.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Anyway, as young as, you know, pre-kindergarten, I remember having a tiny little metal wagon that I'd pull around. I had my cat in there, and I had my few little things, you know. And, I was always pulling this little wagon around. And, kids in the town would, you know, they'd be calling me a wagon burner. And, I'm like, you know, thinking how can you burn it, it's metal, you know? I mean, it was the way we were treated growing up. So, there was like this root always there. It didn't matter; we were never going to be like them.

And so, that sort of was my first experience growing up here, right? And, I don't really see a whole lot of change now, and this is how many decades later, you know? I still see the same things coming out in systems,
the same attitude. And so, anyways, that childhood is filled with trauma, filled with experiences.

Moving forward, my first experience away from home -- I ran away at 11. I was young, very young. I was a child. And, I did run away because there was just -- it was just too much. I couldn't take the abuse anymore. And, even though I loved my mother, I understand where she was coming from now, I didn't then. I just wanted to be away from it. And, I went from the frying pan into the fire. My very first experience here in Saskatoon was a gang rape. And, it was violent, brutally violent. I was 13. It sort of set the -- I guess how I would perceive being treated by men. And, there was no police involvement, there was no -- you know. I mean, I grew up being afraid to make that call. Afraid to, you know. And, as I got older, I sort of pushed that aside, left it there. I began working here in Saskatoon. I started as a waitress. And, you know a few years went by. I was older. I had my first three children here in Saskatoon. And, I was working here at the Métis Nation. I spent a number of years there. But, I ended up at a conference, and this is where this person, this [Person X] comes into play.

It was at a conference, and we were out after, you know, working all day. There was -- you know,
we were supposed to basically ensure that all of the people
who travelled in, the area directors, were taken care of.
And, somehow, I don't know, at some point whether he
drugged my drink. And, the next morning, I remember being
raped by him. And, I remember the next morning one of my
coworkers coming into my home, just coming in to try and
wake me up to come to work, and he was in my bed.

And so, the embarrassment, you know what I
mean? Like, you're -- you try to make it seem like it's
normal, you know what I mean? Like, okay, this happened.
I must have let it happen, you know? And so, there
proceeded to be, you know, some type of relationship. I
never felt like there was a love there. It was like I felt
obligated, so that it would save face, so I can keep my
job.

And, anyways, further down the road, he was
very violent. He ended up kicking in my door one night.
And, this is after I gave birth to my last child, his
child. And, he broke all my fingers. I broke -- like just
bent them down. And, those incidents, like the one I want
to talk about where the police actually got involved, was
just prior to that.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Before you go there, can
we just put a date on when ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- this original incident would have happened?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: It would be in '95, yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. Thank you.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. '94, '95, there was a lot of violence there. He shared something with me that sort of kept me from, you know, looking for help. It kept me from -- like, there was so much fear around what he had said to me. He comes from a northern area, northwest Saskatchewan. And, he told me -- and his story to me when we were first seeing each other in this sickness, right.

He told me that him and several of his co-workers and relatives, cousins, were in the lodge for a meeting. And, he's old. Like, this would have been like the seventies when this happened, when he was young. And, he said that they had come across -- they were partying, come across a young girl. She was a teenager. And, he laughed about this when he was telling me. He said that they gang raped her and they murdered her. They beat her to death. Each of them gang raped her. And, he said that they took her body across the lake by boat and buried her. He said no one would ever find her.

And, to this day, like, that bothered me so much all through the years. Like, I was terrified to speak
about it. And then after I lost my own child, you know, it really hit me how this mother may never know what happened to their daughter. And, he did name some of the people that were with him when that happened, and it was a meeting that happened in the lodge.

So, I'm sure that the meeting aligns with a missing person there, do you know what I mean? And, something -- I don't know, you know, what they were doing when they came across her, but she had been drinking. She was out, and she was just a young girl. And, he -- the way he explained it to me was to instill the fear. Like anything, if you say anything, the same thing is going to happen to you, you know? My family can do this, you know? My -- you know, it was asserting that power.

And, when I finally picked up the phone and called Crimes Stoppers -- I did. And, this was after my daughter died, because I couldn't get that out -- I couldn't shake that, you know -- a mother. Like, I had my child's ashes, you know? I knew she was with me. But, this mother may never know. And so, it just ate at me. And, I was, like, I got to call. And, when I did, they took the story. They didn't even give me a file number, nothing, you know. It was like they just took the story and left it. And, to this day -- and this is already years, right, 2014.
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: That's when you made the call?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: When I made the call.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: He's running around. He's doing whatever, you know I mean? Like, nothing was ever done. And, it -- to me, it's just like everything else, right? Like, I mean, he -- I can't explain this situation fully, I guess. It's so extensive around this person, you know, and the violence. This is the beginning of most of the fear that I've had, and the beginning of a lot of trauma.

He found me downtown. And, I was with my friends, and my friends are all, you know, like, you know, try to keep me safe from him, you know. Take me -- one of my girlfriends took me -- we went to a little Asian place, and we were having, you know, soup and tea. And, as she was talking to me, I get home, he was in my apartment, hiding. He had thrown all my garbage, and spread it all across the floor, and rubbed it in. He had urinated inside my shampoo bottles. He did these kinds of things. And, he was hiding in my walk-in closet.

When I went into my room, I was just looking around in shock. He came out and punched me in the side of the head. And, I dropped, and he just dragged me. I was
brutally raped that night. He slept behind me with a
knife. And, my face dried to the pillow with blood. He
finally passed out and it was daylight. I crawled out my
window. I got away. Crawled out my window. I went to the
payphone and called the police.

There's no feeling like basically just being
told that they can't help you, you know? I told them to
get him out of my house. And, they were just trying to not
to get involved, you know what I mean? Like, I was
standing there with no -- I didn't even have pants on. I
had to, you know, just throw whatever I could grab to throw
over, and run out of there. And, I'm standing there in the
middle of the street. And, they just kept talking to me,
and embarrassing me, and making me feel like I was just
nothing to them. I was bleeding. My mouth was bleeding.
My face, my hair was just dried with blood. They didn't
take me to the hospital. They didn't -- they charged him
with common assault. He got a $125 fine for doing that.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: When was this, Debbie, the date for that?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: That would have been
probably 1994 -- '93, '94. It's like, you know what I
mean? It's 20 -- over 20 years ago. But, it's things that
are just so brutal, you know? And, the minimization from
the police like it was -- it was as if they were laughing
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at me. They were -- wouldn't take me to the hospital. They didn't even offer that, you know? This is a rape like.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** What police are we talking about?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Saskatoon City Police. And, they -- where I lived was Avenue Y, and there's a little Petro Can. Now, it's Cree Way there. But, it was that street. I ran from Y down the alley, down to the payphone there. And then they just let me stand there on the street. They didn't even help me, like. I walked back to my place.

The way the police treated me at that point, the one time I reached out, always one of the biggest reasons I didn't tell them about the girl. And, I'm sure there's other people that he's brutalized, you know? But, they won't step forward. Or maybe if they did, you know, the time's gone past. Nobody would ever care.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Take your time.

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** I just have pushed so much down, because there's nowhere to go with it, you know? And, from that, it's just this internalization of all this pain and suffering. I'm just hurt and broken, and there was never any help. It was always -- I remember him. I was pregnant with my daughter. And, he threw a rotten deer
carcass down my stairs, and he said that would feed me.

It was the degradation and the way that things happened that the police didn't care, you know what I mean? They didn't care. It was like, well, you deserved that, you know? The treatment was very much like that. "We can't help you. I don't know what you're expecting from us." And, that was told to me so many times. "I don't know what you expect from us." To do your job, to help me, you know? And, none of it ever happened.

And, there's just so many things. And, it's, you know, it's over the years. And, it's happened, you know, where I had somebody stalking me years after this. I had somebody stalking me. I think it was about six years later in another relationship. This person basically just, you know, I knew that he was going to begin to be abusive, and he did. And, I had a judge put an interim order in place. And, at that point, it was the judge; it wasn't the police. I phoned at night, and I got a hold of a justice place instead of the police, because they wouldn't listen. They didn't care. And so, the judge gave me the order.

But, this guy stalked me. He stalked me. He was following busses here. He was doing everything for about a year. And, he finally pulled up by my sister's townhouse where I was. And, I went outside, and I was
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like, "What are you doing here?" And, he said, "Well, I just want to talk for a moment, hey." And, I thought, you know what? I need to deal with this. I need to tell this guy to stop following me, you know?

And, of course, I'm not thinking that he's going to do anything, but he did, and he drove me out of town. He had me down on the floor by my hair, and he told me that I would never see the lights of the city again. And, I really believed I was going to die, you know, being punched in the head, pulled down, and pushed down. Again, nothing from the police. I'm sitting there, and nothing. No charges. Nothing.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Tell me what -- how that came about. Like, when did you call the police and what's this person's name?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: His name is [Person Y]. I'm sure he's working somewhere with some [Employment].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Was he First Nations himself?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes. Yes. Very disturbed person. And, it's all of this abuse, you know, through most of my life. And, I tried so hard, so hard to overcome that, you know? But, I just broke. I just broke. And, I ended up becoming somebody I am not, you know? And so, I went through the prison system. I -- you know. And,
it helped me. It literally saved my life, you know?

But, to go through all of your life never really knowing that there's something better, it feels like such wasted life. I feel like I didn't have -- I didn't have what other people had, you know, ever. And, but I -- things are different now for me. Like, I love my grandkids so much. After my daughter, my last child, like, that fear of systems comes into play. Fear of everything. I was taught to fear the Child and Family Services. I was taught to fear the police. I was taught none of this was ever going to help me. And then, you know, my children, even having my children, it was violated there too, you know.

I had C-sections at [Hospital 1]. And, my doctor at the last C-section, he told me about a week -- this was planned. He planned it and made the appointment for when I would go into the hospital. And, he said -- he said if you have another C-section, you're going to die. Like just literally just like that. And, was like -- I felt very afraid of the fact that, you know, who would be there. Who would be there for my kids if something happened to me, you know? Going through all this with a partner; going through the things that I was going through. I was like oh my God.

So, when I went in, I didn't do anything. It was just that, you know, that he said that. And, of
course, you know, I'm in fear thinking about it. Going to the hospital to have my daughter, and at that time it's just, you know, I didn't know, you know, it was going to be a girl or anything. I just went it for the C-section, and I'm strapped down on that table, and they had already done the epidural. I was already there. The curtain was already up, because they put a curtain there we're you're going to have your child. And, I was awake for the surgery.

And, he leaned over and asked me if I wanted the cut or tied. And, all I could think of was, oh my God, you know? What do you mean, you know? Yeah, cut, you know? And, I'm not even thinking of what he's actually saying to me. There were -- it just happened just like that. So, you know, I didn't even really think about it. I thought it was normal. And, you know, okay, I'm going to die if I have another C-section. Find out later on that that's not the case, you know? I was young, I was healthy.

I felt like -- like it took away something that if I ever got married, I couldn't have a child with a husband, you know? I couldn't do that, you know? So, every partnership I had, every relationship after was always -- always tainted by that, you know? It was like I was not a woman. I was not woman enough to -- to be important for that person, or to be important any more.
And so, I didn't even find out until years later. And then it’s just recently that other women experienced the same thing here, and it just like literally was like getting punched in the stomach. It was like this didn't have to happen that way. It didn't. I feel like I've never been able to be who I should be, ever, not ever in this province.

My daughter, my oldest child had passed away. She had a similar experience in Battleford. And, at that time, her last baby, they used also a mesh inside, a wire mesh. And, she suffered so much. Like, she was always feeling -- like, she just felt like she was always needing to go to the bathroom, you know? Like, she said there's so much pain. Every time she had her period, she would just suffer. She'd be laying there crying. And, it happened to her, too. And, I couldn't say anything because I didn't know at that time, you know, that they shouldn't have done those things, you know? So, you trust these systems. You believe that something isn't going to hurt you like that, you know?

And, she passed away in a house fire in 2014. She didn't know, you know, that this was going to come out. But, I'm sure she would have been like me, you know? She would have been hurt.

Like, there's so much around the
mistreatment that the police have done, so much around just the way that you are viewed, you know? And, there's a perception there that you're not equal; you will never be equal. I can tell you, honestly, the times that I've had experiences with the police in that capacity. Asking them for help, I felt like an animal. I'm standing there with nothing, you know, just my underwear; the blood and everything, and just standing there. My teeth, he had hit me in the mouth. I had scars inside my mouth. I'm standing there, and I felt like I was nothing. I felt like I was -- I was dirty to them.

And, I missed one incident that just is really difficult to talk about to you. This is -- I'm trying to remember exactly what year it was. I was out at my mother's, and she lived in Marsden. She stayed there like most of her life. She ended up moving to Neilburg, a little town about eight miles from there to be closer to the hospital before she passed away.

But, when she lived in Marsden, I used to go and just try and spend time and stay with her. Like, she helped me raise my older children and, you know, we were very close, you know, when I got older. I was out there, and my brother -- I don't have contact today with my family, my siblings, no one. I just absolutely refuse to endure anymore, because it's like they're not moving

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forward, you know? They're not trying to heal. And, I feel like every time I step in, they're going back into that chaos, back into that abuse.

So, years ago -- my son must have been a few years old. So, it's like 26 or 25 years ago, maybe. My brother came by. We were at my mom's for Christmas. And, of course, my mom's having a few drinks. She's sitting down. We're all -- yes, everybody was happy. We're at the table, we're talking about Christmas Eve, and mom was making -- cutting up meat and cutting up cheese. We were trying to make cheese trays.

My brother happened to be drinking in Lloydminster, and then somehow managed to drive down from Lloyd to Marsden. My brother is six foot three. He came in the house and just started, you know, kind of attacking my mom, you know, verbally. And, I said something to him. I said, you know, I said you don't have to be here. Like everybody's happy. This is a good, you know, good thing. Everybody's happy. Please don't do this. And, he was in some kind of rage.

And, my brother, he's always been this way. Like, he used to shoot at us when we were kids, with a pellet gun. Like, shoot at -- sit at the window and shoot at us. Like, he was very aggressive, and he just attacked me. Like he attacked me. This is a six foot three guy.
And, dragged me into the living room. And, I was trying to defend myself. He picked me up, and he did these like wrestling things, and you know. And, literally, I've gotten injuries to my back, and injuries all over. And, he -- my mom didn't have a telephone at home, so we couldn't call the police. He ran to the pay phone and called the RCMP, Cut Knife RCMP.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Your brother ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- who did this?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: He did this. He made it sound like he was attacked. And, my mom was trying to tell them, you know, like, that's not what happened, you know? But, they were just disregarding -- they took me by ambulance first, because I said, you know, I can't even move, you know? You need to -- I need to get to a hospital.

I go by ambulance to Neilburg. The doctors are telling the police you can't take her like this. You can't. They took me from there to Cut Knife and put me in the cells there overnight with, you know? There was a tiny little woolen blanket in the wintertime. This is Christmas. It was minus 36, and I stayed overnight in there, sitting there trying to keep warm.

In the morning, the officer arrested me for
assault, right? Assault. I got arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, right, because my brother had this big story about what happened. And, I spent the night there, and then the officer came in the morning. And, he fingerprinted me, and all this stuff, formally charging me. He didn't charge me the night before. And, here, I was just injured, you know? And, I had on a thin jacket and not even socks in my boots. And, this is -- and I'm going to say it, you know. Like, I mean, this is an Indigenous RCMP officer.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Sorry, it was or was not?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes. It was.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: It was.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: And, I was 42 miles away from my mom's home on Christmas Day, on a route, like, highway from Cut Knife to Marsden. Not one car in seven hours. I asked him after all of this, you know, like, how do I get home? He wouldn't even let me use the phone there. My mom didn't have the phone at home. I had nobody. And, he left me on the corner right by the Crossroads Hotel. He left me on the highway there in the winter.

I stayed out there for seven hours. I walked across. There was no traffic, and it was getting
close to evening. I was so cold. I went across in a little entrance way in the hotel there. It was open, but the lobby was closed, so there was no heat in there. But, there was a phone. And, I didn't know who to call.

And, I thought, you know, there's got to be somebody. And, I was so afraid of dying out there. Like, there was nobody coming. I thought about my mom's neighbours, you know? I phoned one of them. They weren't -- there was no answer, like calling collect. I called the neighbour across my mom, and that was the pastor for the United Church, and he answered the phone. And, he drove there to get me.

When I got home, I had blisters for -- my entire bottom of my feet peeled off from the cold, and I spent a year checking in every Friday with those same police, every Friday, because that was the ---

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Part of your release?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I had to stay in that area, even though my brother was around there, until that trial came up. And, the first day of the trial, the judge knew he was lying. He actually wrote it out. He admitted to it. And, all that year, I suffered so much. It’s just how little they have belief in us. We're nothing to them.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: So, you were not charged with the offence, I presume?
MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I was charged. I was charged. I spent a year of that recognisance. And then it was an absolute discharge because he admitted he lied.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Oh.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: But, the suffering, you know? And, if I had actually not been able to find someone that night to come and get me, I would not be sitting here.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: And, no one would know that story. Everyone would have believed what he had said.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, you said when the police came to your mom's home, and your brother told the story, they did take you to a doctor but then they took you to the police station afterwards, even though the doctor had said not to?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes. Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, where did they take you?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: To Cut Knife, to their holding cells.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, sorry ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: And, it was a Doctor [H.] in Neilburg that said to them you can't take her. She's been injured, you can't take her. Like this is -- she's got injuries here. They didn't care. They just took
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, sorry, what year was it?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: It was 25 years ago for sure, yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. Take your time, Debbie. You are incredibly strong to be repeating all this. Your emotions are likely overwhelming, so just take your time. Look after (you) (indiscernible).

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I just don’t want to see my kids and my grandkids go through so much, you know, because it's still happening. My daughter was beaten up in Calgary by the police not very long ago. I'm sorry. I just haven't talked about a lot of this to anyone.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You don't need to apologize. Just take your time. Do you want an actual break? Do you want me to cut the recording off?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: No, it's okay.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: (You’re good? Just take a minute) (Indiscernible).

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I feel like everything that's supposed to be there to help us has failed. I felt so isolated most of my life from ever being able to have any support. I felt diminished all of my life. And, I never knew how much until recently, you know? I just kept
going, kept going, and focusing on other things, helping other people, and not looking to see how little I had actually experienced that was good. You try to pull happiness out of trauma, you know? And, it's just we're fine to think of everything, all those events that -- my mind can cope with individual things, you know? But, when it came to that whole life story, it was like oh, my God. I feel like -- like there's so much, you know, that needs to be let go; that needs to be out there. Like, this doesn't have to happen. It doesn't. I'm terrified for my family too, you know? I lived with that all of my life.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Terrified like in general because the system isn't working, or from specific people?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** No, terrified because if they reach out -- if my daughter experiences domestic violence, she's been treated similarly, you know.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Is this the daughter in Calgary?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yes. Yes. She -- and this is quite recent too that she was pulled out of a business. And, the officer said they were charging her. And, they didn't. They didn't charge her. He drove her to a female office where the female officer began to beat her
up. And, she suffered broken ribs, a dislocated jaw.
Like, there was never any formal charges. But, her health
records have been sealed. Like, she's trying very hard to
have some accountability, you know, from them.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, is this [Police
Service 1]?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yes.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, how you say
recently -- this year or...?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Last year. Yes.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, what's your
daughter's name?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Her name is [Daughter
1]. It changed her. Like, it really did. Like, it's like
I see these events happening with her. She explains
things, but you can see the rage behind it, you know? And,
I can see it. It seems like I'm always, always on alert
for that.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Mm-hmm.

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Everything that has
happened, I always felt like I had no meaning to anything.
And, when this came up, this opportunity to speak, I wanted
to feel like my life had some meaning. And, lots of the
women who experience these things, a lot of them will never
talk about it.
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You're showing incredible strength to be able to do so.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: It's not strength; it's fear, you know. Fear for the future. What happens when I'm gone, you know? Will my kids be able to endure? I feel like this systemic racism is (the) root. This ugly that's underneath has just hurt so much. Like, the potential in people, you know? And, that's so heartbreaking to me. It is. We shouldn't have to fight so hard. I knew it was going to be very hard for me to do this.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: (Absolutely) (Indiscernible). Let's just talk about something else for a minute.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: How do you look after yourself now? How did -- like are you taking care of yourself? Do you see someone to help you ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: No. I tend to isolate a lot, because I have difficulty with being around people, being in crowds. I had PTSD diagnosed years ago. I remember when like even to, you know. I mean, there's failures in all of it, you know? I mean, even to myself, you know, for not speaking up sooner. I feel like if I had, would my children have had more, you know? Would...
things have been better?

I don't know. It's so hard. It is hard. It is. I do try to spend as much time with my grandkids, you know, trying to help them understand that life is not like what I have known. It's better. It could be better, you know? They're a great source of strength for me, you know? They're my deceased daughter’s, you know. I see her in each of those kids, you know? I still have a lot I fight for, and that's why, you know, I'm here.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: You know? They're the reason I am here.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, how many grandkids are there?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I have six grandkids -- seven grandkids, actually, in total. I have five with me, and two that don't live with me. My youngest had a baby a 14, and I kept that one since she was born, so. Then, when my deceased daughter passed away, I had her kids. And them too, you know, like Child and Family Services placed them with known drug users.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: When your daughter first passed away?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah, because the dad said that was fine. He just basically signed them over as
the surviving parent. And, my grandkids, two of my
grandkids suffered through sexual abuse in that home. I
fought to get them back, you know, get them safe. I knew
it was going to happen the moment I knew where they were.
And, it was like, I mean, the girl -- these are a strange
family that my grandkids were placed with. The girl -- my
sister's daughter, came out of the house with -- when we
had the court order to get the kids for custody, she came
out. She had bruising all up and down her arms, carrying
her baby. The police saw it all, but we didn't have it on
the order that the police could take the kids out of there.

So, we had to drive all the way back from
Regina. The lawyer went to court the next morning and got
that order. So, we got the kids safe, you know? It was
horrifying to see my grandkids looking out the window, you
know? "Why isn't Grandma coming to get us?" you know?
And, the guy, like that guy, stranger to my grandkids,
stranger to me, was crawling into bed with my eight-year-
old granddaughter. But, Child and Family Services
determined it was safe to leave them there.

So, these are the failures, you know? These
are the things that need to change. They do. Like, that
generation was already harmed at that moment because of
that decision. My daughter wasn't allowed -- my deceased
daughter wasn't allowed by the worker to take -- to take a
job in Oxville. And then she ended up in Esther (ph), and
that's where she died.

So, you know, I mean, this decision making
doesn't make sense to me.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: They wouldn't listen to
anything I said. They allowed her -- my daughter, at that
time, she left the father of her kids. He was really
abusive to her. He drank every day. He was a heavy
alcoholic. She came to me for help, and I kept the kids.
And, they were just sick and, you know, like they were
malnourished. They were just -- it was horrifying to see
the conditions of the kids.

I kept them, and I tried my best to tell
her, you know, get a place. I'll help you, I'll support
you. Please, let's work together, you know? She met some
guy. She was going online on these things and met some
guy. The workers here let her move the kids in there after
she'd known this guy online for a week. I don't even know
if that's justifiable, you know? And, after she got her
child tax with him, she paid all of his bills -- his rent,
all the bills he had built up, and he kicked them out, and
they spent Christmas in a shelter. And, that's how she
ended up out of Saskatoon, because of the poor decision
making of these workers. They didn't understand the
history. They used my criminal past against me.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, that's why you couldn't ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: They didn't place them.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Oh, they didn't place them with me, you know? But, that, you know, I mean, they were safe with me. And, if a judge can see that, but Child and Family Services can't, you know, where's the ---

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: --- actual, you know? I guess to me it would be like the law could see that, you know what? If someone has done something, it doesn't mean that they're still that same person, you know? They look at everything from that point. What is this person; who are they today, you know? They go and put them with this guy. And, he throws them out after his bills are paid.

My grandkids suffered a lot too, you know. And, that's why I just, you know. This is important. There's a lot of anger I have towards these systems, these workers. They apologized after the fact when she was dead. "Oh, we're so sorry. You know, we should have, you know, we should have done things differently." You think?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, how long have you had your grandkids?
MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I've had them since 2014. I got them the end of May. And -- but they were, you know, for three or four months with this family, long enough to cause harm, long enough to give them memories that they'll never, ever forget. And then, too, you know, we took them -- when my grandkids disclosed this, they didn't disclose right away. I didn't know that that happened right away.

Again, their contact with the police; the police didn't believe them. That officer terrified them. I wasn't allowed to see that video tape. They took them into the room on their own, little kids with an officer who already decided that I was having them to this to get custody, even though I already had custody. She had determined that. She didn't believe them. And, that guy's walking around free, you know? So, it's okay to molest those kids, crawl into bed with them. We don't even know, you know, what really all was done to the little ones, eh?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: What year was that, that you -- you took the kids, obviously, to the police?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes. Yes. It was same year. Like, I mean, after they disclosed it. It was probably a month after they came home when my granddaughter told me that she remembered laying in bed. Like, they -- that girl had all the kids kind of in different like
crowded little rooms. And, he crawled into bed with my [Granddaughter]. And, he crawled in behind her. She said she could feel this guy, you know, the weight of him. And, when she told me that, like the way her face changed, eh?
"I felt his weight behind me, Grandma. And then, he did things, you know?" So, when she disclosed, you know, it took everything to take my heart, you know, from just ---

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Be strong for her.

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** And, I was listening, and I let them speak, you know? And then, once I knew that that had happened for sure, I knew, you know, get them down there, you know? To me, it was like okay, you know, this isn't 1995. This is not, you know? There should be something there for these kids. Maybe the police would treat them differently, and they didn't.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, what police are we talking about?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** It was whatever their ---

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** RCMP?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** No, city police here.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Here?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yeah. They have some special unit that they have here.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** For sexual assaults?
MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. And, she had already determined that it was related to custody, and it wasn't. I already had custody, you know? It was her ---

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: ( -- mindset already)

(Indiscernible).

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: When she took them in there, the kids all told me that she intimidated them. They all said that they were scared to talk.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, what year is this?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: That was in 2014. I have never been allowed to see those videos, even as their legal guardian -- their legal, you know? I'd love to see them, to see how they were talked to.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, what happened from that?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Nothing.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: It was ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. She said that there was no ---

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: What was the man's name?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: No. It was a female officer.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: No, sorry, but the man's name.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Oh, the guy. I don't
know his name.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Oh.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. That's why I said, you know, a stranger to us.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: And, the girl, my niece, my sister's daughter. I can't even call her a niece. She's not really -- I don't know them that well. She kept telling the worker that guy wasn't living there. And, she'd say, when the workers would come through her place, she'd say that the men's clothes were my grandson's, you know? So, she'd try and lie, and say the guy wasn't there. So, none of the workers knew that -- well, I mean, they probably knew he was there. They just ignored it, you know?

All of that lack of caring, the lack of -- that lack of equality, you know? It comes down to that. That we our, you know, we're just disregarded in so many ways. And, I think that that's why this is so important. This inquiry has to be done. People need to see, you know? Like, our experiences have to be able to change something. Like I said, my daughter, you know, has definitely changed, you know, as a result of her experiences.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You want to talk about
it?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. She's not the same. She's hard. She's changed. And, that -- you can just see it. My son, [one line redacted – personal information]. My family's broken. We've been broken since I don't know when.

I'm doing my best to keep the kids in a safe place. But, in my heart, every time I see my own kids, because I can't save them. I couldn't save me. We're surviving. That's all we're doing.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Well, again, you're certainly showing an incredible strength to do this for them, which I understand you're doing it for them, for their future. And, hopefully, it will change things.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I hope. That's my hope. I'm sorry. I'm kind of jumping around with all of it. It just seems like so much.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: It is so much. So, do not apologize. Just take a minute. I do have a few questions just to clarify a few things, but when you're ready. Just take your time.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: It's so tiring.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: (Indiscernible).

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Absolutely. Please.

(MS. CORALEE GAUDRY) DEBBIE–BODKIN: You
know what? This is (has been a) (indiscernible) process for you going through (and like you said you haven’t) (indiscernible) brought it altogether at once, right?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yeah.

**(MS. CORALEE GAUDRY) DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, you know, (it’s just that overwhelmingness) it’s overwhelming us right now. So, I was just thinking if we could just take a moment (even just to ground yourself in where we are right now) (indiscernible).

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** So, we'll shut the recordings off, and just take five minutes just to breathe and relax. Let's do that, okay?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yeah.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** It’s 10:54. I'm going to shut off and take a break here.

--- Upon recessing at 10:54
--- Upon resuming at 11:14

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, it's 11:14, and we've resumed the audio tape. So, Debbie, we took a break there ---

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yeah.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** --- just so you could, you know, gather yourself, and put yourself in a more grounded and a better place, which is good. I do have a
few questions. Just to go back to a few of the incidents ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- if you're okay with that?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. I'm fine.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Not in great detail. Just a few. One of the first things I wanted to ask is, where is [Person X] now?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I believe he's still in Northern Saskatchewan, [Community 1].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, do you have a fear, concern, ongoing still in regards to him? Like when is the last time ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: No.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- you've had contact or...?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I, you know, I don't have contact with him. I have seen him around. Like, he's -- him and his wife play in the casinos. And, they're occasionally -- once in Battleford, I went there with my sister who lives in Battleford, and he was there with his wife. But, it's not a fear of him. Like, there were other
people involved in that.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: He wasn't the only one.

There was a [Person Z] involved, and his cousin, [Person A]. There was, I believe, five of them. I don't remember the other two. I know those three.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, you're talking about involved in the ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: In that.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- murder of this girl?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: This girl, yeah. She's a teenager.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. He is -- oh, how old is he now? He must be close to 70.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: [Person X] is?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. So, when he was [Employment information], there had to have been a meeting in that area, in La Loche, because it happened in the bush. That's what he told me. It was a bush party.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: They were drinking. They came across this young girl. Like, it was some time in the early morning or, you know, through their partying. But, all I know is what he said. He said they gang raped
her, each of them, beat her. He said it felt good to beat her. And, they drove -- or they took her body by boat across a lake.

So, I don't even know how La Loche is, like, as far as their lakes and things like that, where they were, actually, because physically I've never -- I've been to La Loche, but not, you know, not seen the -- how it's, you know, the bush is, where people live, or anything like that. Just in one particular place I've been, and that was just for a meeting. So, I've never been outside of that. But, he said they took her body across the lake and buried her. So, there's a body, you know. There -- she's out there.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, was she Métis herself, too, or no?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** She was Indigenous for sure. Yes. Yes. She was just a young girl. They said teenage girl, so. And, they knew her. So, you know, there is contact there at some point.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, you said in 2014 you called Crime Stoppers about that?

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** Yeah.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And, did you also go into the police station or anything ---

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** No.
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- or just Crime Stoppers?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Just Crime Stoppers.

At that point, it was like, you know, Crime Stoppers, usually they take these things seriously, you would think, you know?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: And, to me, it was anonymous way of doing this, and I didn't have to worry, you know, that he was going to send family after me, or whatever, you know? Because that was the threat behind it. It was his cousin that was with him when it happened. There's a lot of people that are related to these people.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: And, that area, if he wanted to, he could definitely do some harm, you know? And, that -- that is a concern. But, at the same time, you know, when I think about it, standing up and saying, you know what? I know this story, and you need to open this up. You need to admit what you've done. And, to me, he said it to me, but he used it as a tool to keep me in line, you know, to keep me afraid of him.

But, that body has to be there. And, that little girl, her family doesn't even know, you know? He's never been accountable for it, and he laughs about that.
That's the other thing, is that how many of these guys have gotten away with these kinds of things? And, some of them are Indigenous, some of them are -- you know what I mean? They've gotten away with it, you know? I know the community likes to point fingers, and say oh, it's not the Indigenous men. But, you know, I mean, the most violent, most abusive things that happened to me were -- they were both Indigenous. And, it's not that I'm painting them all with the same brush. I know a lot of people are very good people, good traditional people. But, these people are, you know, they've gotten away with a lot.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. And, that's, to me, somebody who is capable of murder has been running around all this time. What else has he done, you know, if he got away with it once? Those other guys know about it, and they've kept it silent, you know? That's their big secret. And, maybe I'm the only one that's been told. I hope not. I hope not. I hope that they can rattle it enough to find out where she is, you know?

And, it was me having my daughter's urn, burying my child, you know what I mean? Like, not burying her, but having her funeral, having that loss, that deep sense of loss, you know? When I thought of that story, and it came. It was like it was part of that, you know? It
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was a loss. It was a mother's loss. And, it was then that
I fully connected to what I needed to do for her, you know?
And, that's when I picked up the phone.

And, it was like -- and they didn't even
give you a file number or anything. Nothing. Like I said,
2014, and he's still running around happily, you know?
And, she, where is she? Which lake did they take her body,
you know? Where is it buried? Somebody needs to bring her
home, you know? Maybe her mother has passed away if it was
in the seventies. I was thinking about that. My mom's
gone, you know? She would have been older than -- maybe
even older than me.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Perfect. Thank you for
clarifying. You mentioned being stalked by a gentleman,
[Person Y]?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah, [Person Y]

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Oh, [Person Y].

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, you called a JP,
and got an order against him ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- and so on. What
police -- you said police were involved there, too?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: What police service was
that?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: That's Saskatoon City Police.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Saskatoon as well.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, around about was that, date-wise?


MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Thank you.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I was sitting in a police car, and literally had my hands full of my own hair where he had dragged me across the floor, pulling out my hair. He sat on top of me, and he would hit me open hand so that there was no actual, like, you know bruises, and the blackening of my eyes or anything like that. He'd hit me open hand. He sat on top of me, and just back and forth, back and forth.

I could swallow my blood, you know? And, when I was in the police car, they didn't charge him. I had to call my friend, because I had to leave. You know what I mean? Disregard right there again. Like how much -- I don't know. Like, for me, I just feel like, you know, I battle every day to feel like a woman. I battle every day to feel like I'm worth something.
MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, you certainly are.

Are you okay?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. I'm okay.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: When you talked about
the C-sections ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: --- the C-sections that
you had, and the comment that the doctor made after you had
had the epidural.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Can you give a time
frame on all that, and which hospital it was?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: [Hospital 1], yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. And ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I had all my kids at
[Hospital 1].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: In what year?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: That was '95.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. Yeah. October
30th, '95.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And ---

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: But, it was a week
before that, and I don't know which, like, exact day. But,
it would have had to be at least a week when I had that
appointment where he said if you have another child, you're
going to die. I didn't find out until about probably eight
years after that that was a lie, you know? I was strong, I
was healthy, you know? And, my body could have -- you
know? There was no -- there was no real reason to
sterilize, you know?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: You weren't preventing
a death. You were preventing me from having a child, you
know? So, really, that's sort of where it came down to,
is, like, that wasn't even his decision to make. But, it
was the way it was done, you know? It was like put the
fear there. "I'm going to tell her this, and she's going
to agree," you know?

So, I didn't feel like I had control over
that at all. I mean, I was already strapped down. I had
IVs in. They had already done the epidural. I remember --
basically, I don't remember the face even of the
anaesthetics guy, because it's like you're so drugged up to
have that C-section. That's a major surgery. They put --
pump a lot of drugs. Everything seemed cloudy. I just
remember his face coming over and leaning over like that,
you know? He'd already had his surgical stuff on. They
were ready to do the surgery.

So, whether they were already cutting, I
wouldn't have known, do you know what I mean? So, he just
leaned over. So, obviously, the baby was already -- they
had already taken the baby, and then, you know, do you want
cut or tied? So, he had already had me open. Do you know
what I mean? Like every time I think about this, the face
of him, the curtain, me laying there, and the cloudiness of
it, is all I can really remember, you know? And, it's like
-- I feel like it's some kind of dream, you know? Like,
it's not -- it's not part of who I am. Maybe I'm denying,
you know, that I should have -- I should have questioned.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You can't blame
yourself. Do you happen to know the doctor's name?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. Yeah. His name
is [Doctor], believe it or not. Yeah. But, it's just, you
know, I don't even remember signing a document. How could
I sign, you know? My arms are strapped down. I couldn't
have signed, you know? It was just like that drug haze,
you know what I mean? I don't know how to describe it.

Most people are not awake through major
surgery. But, they do with, you know, with C-sections.
They will allow you to be a part of the birth. And, I
wanted to be awake, you know? So, I pushed for that, eh?
And, you know, it was very, very cloudy. But, that --
those certain things, eh?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.
MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: The fear going in there and thinking what's going to happen if anything happens to me. If I die because I have another child, there's no one to care for my kids, you know? A single parent, a single mother. But, they knew that, you know what I mean? The nurses and -- it was -- the first child, great, you know. I could go in. I bought -- you know, got my private room. They didn't question too much because, you know, you're doing things a little differently. There's no Child and Family Services, eh? But, when it came right down to it, you're single, you're Indigenous, and that last surgery was different, you know.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And so, with all three children you had a C-section?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. Do you remember the reasoning why you had a C-section?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. My first one was breech, and her leg was up.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Mm-hmm.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Like, she would have gotten stuck. Like, everything. It would have ----

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: She might have broken her leg, or she would have been -- I wouldn't have been
able to give birth. And, I went into labour with her, right? So, that's my deceased daughter now, yeah.

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

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** But, even with that, there's no medical reason to say that, you know? There's no -- I read that after, right? I was like reading about it. And, it says, you know, clearly, if you're healthy and you're strong, there's no reason why you can't have another one.

Well, why would you say that then? Why would you plant that knowing, you know, that that -- it would be something that I would be thinking about, you know? Like, there's so much that happened around that, you know? It was like every time I had a relationship after that, when someone talked marriage, I pushed it back, you know? I was like no way. No. Because I will never be the woman you need. I would never be able to give you what you need, what you think a family should be. And, there was always something. There was a block, a wall there. I was not a woman anymore; do you know what I mean? Like, I don't know how to describe it.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** No, you're doing just fine. So, just so I'm very clear, though, that when the doctor made that comment, was that your first C-section or that was?
MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: At the last.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Last.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. At the last.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, just -- so the first one, you said, because your daughter was breech. And then?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: The second one was just like I assumed, because I had had a C-section, it just kept -- you know what I mean? Just kept doing it that way.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yes. Okay.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I didn't think that you could have had natural birth after that. They just kept doing the C-section, scheduling me in. And, you know, there was -- like, to this day, I still suffer problems, eh? Like, I mean, there's scar tissue, there's pain, there's more pain than should be. Things are not a normal woman's kind of experience, you know? And, you don't feel the same, you know? Like, you just don't feel the same. There's something different about it, eh? So, that experience is very hard for me. But, I thought it was normal, do you know what I mean?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I went through all those years thinking that that was okay. Okay, it hurt, yes. I can't have this, you know? Because I've had four
C-sections, I cannot do this. I can't be a wife to somebody. I can't give them a family. I kept that and carried it until I heard that first story. And, I -- you know, everyone attacked this woman. The community attacked her, you know? "Well, what are you doing having so many kids?" Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. There were so many comments when that first story came out.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: This is the first story from the Inquiry?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yes, from the -- yeah. And, she talked about a similar thing being told by her child worker not to have any more children, the doctors and the combination there. So, when she was speaking about that, there was too much in common, right? And, I was, like, this isn't happening. This is not real, you know? And then, another woman and a similar story. And, I was like how long have they being doing this? Why -- why us, you know? Everything, everything took something from us, you know? Every system, including the one system I believed was doing the right thing, you know?

So, that is new to me, all that. That experience right now is very new, because now I'm sharing that with other women. There's other women who have had a similar experience and had that taken from that too. And, to me, it's like a rape. It feels like that. It feels
like someone did something that I didn't want, but I had to be quiet. That's what it feels like.

And, I remember all of that around, you know? Like, I'm very sure, you know, as I go through the memories, you know, there'll be a little bit more. But, it was so -- like I was already drugged. They had already done that epidural. My arms were on those -- there's things that they strap you down to. And, I remember laying there. And, I saw the IV and the anesthesiologist. I can't even remember the face, but he said something about how I was feeling, eh? And then he leaned over that curtain, and that was it. And, that was it. And, it was done. And, it was normal. And, it was okay, you know?

I left the hospital thinking that was normal. Finding out that it -- a bunch of us were treated like animals. Like cattle, like some big dogs, you know? And, that's horrifying in itself. I didn't think they could take any more than they already did, you know? And, they managed to do it. And, I think that's why I'm having so much trouble now, you know? It's like the one thing that -- the last invasion.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: I don't have any more questions that I have jotted down about all this, all the things that you've shared with, but I wondered if you would talk a little bit more about an incident that you brought
up when we were off camera there, the being diagnosed with COPD (and the incident that you went through)?

(indiscernible)

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Oh.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And, the treatment that you went through -- your treatment, yes. Where was that, and when was that?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: That was 2014. I had my spinal surgery in May, May 20th. And, it was in the summer that I contracted strep. I thought it was a cold, like a bad flu or cold. And, of course, you know, you're, you know, coughing, and you don't generally feel good. You've got a fever. I go -- I kind of think, you know, it's going to go away on its own.

So, I just kept, you know, taking cough medicine, doing things, you know, trying. And, of course, I'm on, right after spinal surgery, on heavy painkillers. So, I'm not noticing how badly this is changing. And, it was when I was struggling to breathe that I finally -- I go to [Hospital 2]. And, this is like probably August of 2014. I had already lost over 25 pounds in six weeks -- six weeks. I was so sick. And, I go there, and they told me that it was probably just a flu.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Is this in emerg?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: And, there was no need
-- yeah, in emergency -- no need to see a doctor; it's just a flu. Sent me home. I go back again. "Well, you know, there is a flu that's going around, you know?" They send me a way again. This is four months after. Already I've, you know, four plus the six, so almost six months.

I go to [Hospital 2]. I take my grandkids with me. And, we're, you know, I go up there and they put that little thing on to check your blood oxygen. My blood oxygen was like 83. That would probably have people slipping into unconsciousness. They didn't give me oxygen. They didn't help me. They told me to go and wait in the waiting room, so we did. And, I didn't know at that time, you know? Like, I mean, I was struggling, struggling.

I had the kids in the waiting room; we're sitting there and sitting there. Little ones, you know? These are five years old, and four years old -- three of them. And then the older kids are like eight and eleven. It was so hard to just sit for that length of time, you know? Like, I was in a lot of pain too, and that's with the heavy painkillers. I was in so much pain. It hurt to breathe.

They didn't see us after seven hours, and I had to make arrangements for the kids. I thought, you know, I'll take them home, and I'll call Crisis Nursery to see if they can go there. And I can come back and wait,
because I didn't know how long it would take to get in.  
But, I thought, you know, I can't leave, because I can't do  
this anymore, eh?  I just felt so sick.  
And, at that point, I was spitting up like  
really -- like, I mean, stuff that would clog up my throat  
at night.  I couldn't breathe.  It was getting to the point  
where I knew something was so seriously wrong.  Every  
breath I took hurt.  And, we walked there, you know?  My  
oldest grandkids came back with me after Crisis took the  

workers that were there, when I told them how long we had  
been waiting she said, you know what?  She said, "That's  
insanity.  You need to go back there and let them know you  
need to get in right away."

And so, we went back.  And, this older --  
and, I don't know, she was, like, 60 maybe, glasses and  
kind of curly hair.  She leans over in the registration,  
and says to me, "Are you going to stay this time?"  The way  
she treated me right off the hop, after all of that, I  
walked home, got the kids, I walked back, I was just so  

beat at that point.  And, to hear her talk to me like that,  
I was like oh, I just can't do this, you know?  And, it's,  
like, I don't even care, you know, if you guys can't care.  
I'm tired of fighting this, you know?  And, I went home.  
Took the kids and went home.  I was so tired.
And then I just kept -- you know, my days got busier with the kids. And then I went to a little clinic. It can't be that much later after that. But, they still didn't give me antibiotics, because at that point, he didn't know what it was. So, he did the throat swab. And, it was about two weeks after that, that the results came back that it was strep, and I had pneumonia in both lungs. So, I'm living like that. Now, I have COPD because of the scarring. I shouldn't be this unhealthy right now. So, essentially, taking away some of my life, you know?

And, it's that kind of treatment that's so common. Like, when I had spinal surgery, too, if I went in for extreme pain -- it's sometimes, oh my God. I would sit on my couch like just cringing, you know? I couldn't move. I was just in so much pain, the inflammation around my surgery, and things like that. Like, this scar is from that. And, where the surgery is, is so close. Like in -- just sort of at the base of the neck. And, it affects everything in my right side sometimes when there's inflammation around there.

If I go to the Emergency -- and they treat me like a drug seeker, you know? Like, Toradol is an anti-inflammatory, you know? Something like that to bring the inflammation down. Help me, help me here, you know. And, they treat you like you’re a drug addict, right away.
"We're not going to give you opioids." I'm already on them, you know? I don't need that. I need something to bring the inflammation down, you know? And, I knew that there's certain things that work. Toradol works, you know. It actually helps, and then the next I am able to move; things kind of go back.

But, every single time, every single time, treated like a drug addict and a useless Indian. "You are here looking for this." You know what? I have a class 1A licence. I am a welder. I'm a trained counselor. I've also got my business management. I look after my grandkids. I don't always dress nice, because I don't like attention. I don't do things anymore the way normal people do as a result of all that, but it doesn't make me stupid, and it certainly doesn't make me someone who you need to diminish, you know? And, that's why it's important to speak.

So, you know, it's just coming back here -- I worked in B.C. before I came back here. And, I had a car accident in 2010 that caused all of the injuries to my back. So, they weren't just, you know, things that happened over time; they were things that happened. Like we were run off the road, and I was going highway speed. It was either t-bone the guy -- he ran through the stop sign -- or hit the ditch.
So, I suffered injuries, my daughter suffered injury, and this all happened as a result. But, to be treated that way, you know? It's like your life doesn't matter if you are First Nations. The moment they see who you are, they don't look at anything else. Like, they could care less if I walked in there and said, you know what, I have to be at my semi tomorrow. You know, I'm here to get a Toradol shot. I'm here to get something for my inflammation. "Well, we're not giving you opiates," you know. Toradol is not an opiate. Please don't talk to me like that, you know?

But, this is the treatment. And, this is why it has to stop. They need -- and I've said this. I've said this about Saskatoon. They need to have that cultural sensitivity training. They need to understand that there's a history there, and that treatment does harm. It harms families. It harms us in generations. It doesn't just happen at that moment. It culminates. It culminates and destroys. And, that wave, that's affecting so many people out there, you know? And our own -- and I'm going to say, you know, our own leadership has ignored it. It's not just society. It's not just out there in the non-Indigenous. It's in the Indigenous community too.

If we reach out -- I've seen NDP candidates and Sask-Party candidates on my doorstep more often than
I've ever seen a First Nations representative of my own government. So, that tells me that maybe we don't really matter there either, you know? And so, there needs to be some communication happening to us, you know? Like, we have to have some part of that. We have to believe that that covers us, and blankets us, and holds us. And, it doesn't.

So, we're rejected over there; we're rejected over here, too. But, we're not rejected on the street. We're not rejected in a certain category, do you know what I mean? So, that's where we gravitate. That's where we go. And, we feel like we don't belong. Isn't it enough, you know?

So, it has to be accountability at all levels. It can't just be to one thing -- to the police service, yes; to social services, yes. But, how about our own, you know? That stuff isn't always there for us, you know? This is the first time -- and I'm so grateful that you're here from STC. STC has a little board. Like, I believe that those services coming from the tribal councils actually do far more than the political representation that should be advocating for us.

So, the system's got to be reworked. There's got to be something there that I feel I can trust. Because right now, if someone came in, beat me up in my
house, I probably wouldn't call the police, because I'd be the first one they'd blame. I'd be the one that they looked at. And, I'd be the one that probably, you know? My own daughter, you know, she's violent, and she likes to drink a lot, and party a lot. And, she's young. And, of course, with the kids around, you know, I don't want that in the home. She's actually, you know, punched me, broke my nose like literally. I went around the corner, and she hit me; broke my nose, broke my glasses. And, I asked the police, you know, listen, this kid needs to be accountable. She's an adult now, you know? This is not okay. No charges, you know? And, to me, if she had that put on her, she wouldn't have assaulted me again in Calgary. She would not have assaulted me again recently. Do you understand what I'm saying? Like, there's a lack of concern. And so, this is perpetuating. These kinds of things, it's okay. It's okay. The family dynamic is that way, you know?

I am sitting there going oh, my God, you know? If I think about it, as a young adult, had certain things happened where there was a concern from the justice system, concern from certain things, would I have made a different decision? Possibly. She may not be on the path she's on if there was some accountability that she had. She did that in front of the kids. So, my grandkids now
have that memory.

These are the things that are going through our families. And, it's rippling from every -- every part of the system. Every part. It's not just one thing. So, I hope that everything gets looked at. I hope that even, you know, even to -- you know, I sent links to my own band, you know, concerning things, you know? Attention -- let's bring some attention to this. Let's get involved in these things. Total just, "No, can't deal with it. No. We're only for on the reserve."

We need to decolonize, too. And, we need to bring our people tougher, because there are two different communities. There's one that's working and getting paycheques, and as soon as everything's done, their day is done. Our 24/7 is going on over here. We're dealing with other things. We're having this -- this ripple effect in the community, and we can't get healed. We can't fight it.

I'm terrified, you know, that the future's going to be like that. And, that's why I think we have to look at things different, you know? And, that's my opinion. But, you know, I've been persecuted to no end on every angle, you know? It's like I think that reconciliation is about acceptance of responsibility from both parties, because I don't think I've ever had an Indigenous representation when I was in a hospital. I
I don't see things the same way. I don't blame everyone. I see my role; I see their role. I see, you know, what can change. And, I want and hope that that does change, because if I can say something, I'm going to talk about things like that. It's not going to be just about one particular area. You can't just fix one thing. It's like, you know, you fix one wheel on a car, and the other three tires are flat, you're still not going to go anywhere, you know? So, it has to be done properly, you know, where everybody has to mean something.

And that going forward, it can't just be, you know, about money and compensation. It has to be about people understanding that there's a journey here. And, we've come through enough. We've lost enough. So, help us to build again, you know? We don't see things the same way, you know? Like, the ownership, and the money, and all that, Indigenous people have a very hard time understanding that we own something. We're more comfortable not doing that. Some are comfortable, because they've grown up in it, but very few. Most of us will say, you know, that it goes against how we believe that we walk this earth, right?
My tradition is so strong that I actually am poor people who live that way, because I see that as a worship. I see that as a, you know, you're spending more time with that than you do with Creator, than you do with the prayers, than you do with the things that matter -- your children, grandchildren. You're so busy owning and building.

But, we need to build differently. We need to have some healing. We need to do that, put that foundation in place in a good way, because right now, I just feel lost, and I'm not the only one.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Thank you for sharing all that. You were a wonderfully eloquent and powerful speaker, the way you share your feelings and everything you said there.

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** I have to speak, and it's in my heart. I get up every day thinking that there could be change. There could be.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah. And, you're making a huge step towards that.

**MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW:** I get to feel very humbled by all the women who their families and loved ones coming here to tell that story. I was lucky, you know, that I made it through those experiences, you know? And, I'm here to raise my grandkids. I feel very blessed. But,
I feel very honoured, you know, to be part of this process, because I think it's so important. You guys have the job now. We gave you -- we gave you. We're putting our burdens here. And, I appreciate that so much that I don't have to carry this alone, because it's so heavy.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Well, I'm honoured that you were able to share it with us today.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Thank you.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Do you feel that you've been heard and shared what you needed to?

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Yeah. Definitely, you know? Like I said, you know, it's just been a lifetime of this.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Well, again, you're an incredibly strong woman to have lived all you've spoken about, and then have the strength to come here and speak about it in order to help future generations.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: (Indiscernible).

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Thank you.

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: I believe that this is the beginning of something really good. I do. I pray to God it is. I know that it is. And, I -- I know that a lot of forces come against us, you know. But, I know that the way will be clear, because so many of us believe. There are women here; I know they're laying that burden down. I
just want my heart to be free, to be like everyone else.
And, I thank you for giving me this chance to say it, to
let it go.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You're very welcome. We
thank you in return. Well, if there's nothing else, I will
shut the video recorder off, and we'll just have a little
discussion (about after-care for yourself) (indiscernible).

MS. DEBBIE IRONBOW: Okay. For sure.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: So, it's 11:50. And,
the video is off.
--- Upon adjourning at 11:50
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

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

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Shirley Chang

March 13, 2018