National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Chateau Nova Hotel
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

PUBLIC

Tuesday January 23, 2018

Statement - Volume 201

Bertha Lennie, In relation to Mariella Lennie

Statement gathered by Marie-Audrey Girard

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ORDER

Pursuant to Rule 7 of Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice, Chief Commissioner Marion Buller ordered that the name of one person present during this statement be made anonymous in this transcript and any related documents. The order for anonymity was made on June 17, 2019.

NOTE

Where not required by other statute, redactions to this public transcript have been made pursuant to Rule 55 of the Commission’s Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice, which provides for “the discretion to redact private information of a sensitive nature where it is not material to the evidence to be given before distributing the information to the Parties. The National Inquiry will consider the public interest in releasing this type of information against the potential harmful impact on the individual whose personal information is at issue.”
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Documents submitted with testimony: none.
Upon commencing on Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 1:54 p.m.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: So, this is Marie-Audrey Girard with the MMIWG. We are in Yellowknife, and it's 1:54. In the room with me this afternoon are:

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Bertha Lennie, and it's spelt B-E-R-T-H-A, Lennie, L-E-N-N-I-E.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: And your relationship with --

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: And my relationship with Mariella is I'm her auntie, and she was my first niece.

[PERSON 1]: [Three lines redacted - identifying information].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Yes.

MS. AGNES BEYONE: I'm just supporting them.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Give out your name, please.

MS. AGNES BEYONE: Agnes Beyone (ph).

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Thank you.

MS. JEANIE RASMIS: My name is Jeanie Rasmis (ph), and I'm supports for them.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Excellent.
Well, thank you so much for being with us this afternoon. As I said before we started the tape recorder, you are here this afternoon with us voluntarily, and you're agreeing for us to videotape and to audio a tape this session this afternoon, yes?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: We agree.

[PERSON 1]: I agree.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: I agree.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Excellent.

Thank you so much. So, my first question for you this afternoon will be: What would you like to share with us this afternoon? What would you like the commissioners to know about your nieces?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: I will like to share my information on how the process would -- at the very beginning of this investigation, which is still unsolved. When my niece was found after a year -- she came here to go to school, and met up with the wrong group of friends, I'm thinking. So, she started the party scene with her friends and did not attend school after all. And she was staying with me at the time and coming home at all hours of the night living a kind of a risky lifestyle, for me -- for Yellowknife, anyway -- and a girl that hasn't really lived out of Tulita, a community of 500 or less at the time, and then, suddenly to be in the city, for her, I
was scared for her.

She was pretty, outgoing, she could meet anybody she wanted, and she was only 18 at the time. And I did take her aside and talked to her about what happened, why are you not going to school, and you know, the risk out there was taxi drivers and taking rides with different people. Eventually, they may want something for a ride, for the free ride.

So, I talked to her about that. And then at the time, she had a boyfriend here who also was going to school at Kaychewon (ph). This was 1990, and she continued to keep doing what she was doing. I phoned her parents and I said, "You know, she's not going to school. You should see if you can get her back, get her sent back," so they said, "Well, let us talk to her," but she was never around during the day. I couldn't get ahold of her whenever I wanted. There was no cell phones at that time.

Anyways, life went on for a while there and all of a sudden, two days later after she was missing, I found out that they couldn't find Mariella. And she was staying with one of our cousins, and -- I won't name his name -- and, of course, I suspected this person and that person because you're hearing rumours about her being -- later on after they found her, that's when I started thinking, "Well, this person might be the suspect."
But the RCMP, to me, at that time, didn't do very much. Like, they didn't go searching for her, I don't -- well. And we'd ask them questions and would not tell us anything new. They say the same thing, "There's nothing new. We don't know what happened."

And in May, they found a body in the lake at Great Slave by Con Mine. She was there, I don't know how long, but the person that spotted her, I knew him, and he told me he saw a body out there, but not up close. So, apparently, she was in the water for the whole year there. She floated to the top and [one line redacted pursuant to Rule 55], so there was lots of decomposition. And plus, there had been that [one line redacted pursuant to Rule 55] or she was unrecognizable, I think.

I wasn't in town at the time. I was going to school, and I don't know why they didn't ask me as a family member to identify her. It was hard to believe that at first, it was her. I still didn't believe it was her, and they buried someone. Then they brought her body back to Tulita and then went home for the funeral. It was really, really hard on my dad and my mother because that was their first grandchild.

Of course, they didn't talk too much about it. I don't remember if they did or not, but they didn't say very much. They all kept everything inside. So did my
sister and my brother. It was like they just buried her
and -- well, we're not a family that talk about things like
this. We just sort of keep it inside. Nobody got together
like now where we're sitting here together. We didn't do
that in those days. So, it was like everybody left with
their feelings.

I left back to Yellowknife because I was
going to school, and my brother had to go back to wherever
he had to go, I think for work. And my sister and my
mother and my father, nothing was said, like, nobody
expressed their feelings although you could tell we're all
feeling the hurt and pain, but no one was saying oh, I feel
this way or I feel that way. That bothered me. I wished I
could have opened up for the family, but I wasn't trained
in that field, so I didn't bother. I just went back to
Yellowknife.

So, the cops had ask me questions and I
told what I knew. And at that time, I had a common-law
husband that was very abusive, and I thought he might be
involved, but I just found lately, when the police came to
see me, that he did take a lie detector test and he passed
it apparently. So, that kind of laid my mind to rest
because I have felt guilty about that. I felt the guilt
because I thought, Well, he was supposed to be my boyfriend
and my ex-common-law husband, and they were going out to
party together. So, of course I was suspensive, and then I figured, Well, going out to Con Mine, you're going to have to need a vehicle unless you're in the Con Mine area. But I got --

So I had lots of ideas; they suspected her boyfriend, and they suspected my cousin, where she stayed, and they suspected [Person 2] at first, but they ruled out [Person 2], and I think they might have ruled out [Person 3]. But the one that's still not ruled out, he's still a suspect. But anyhow, we'd asked the cops, "Well, how did she die? What did she have on? How did she look when she was dead? Was she intact together, like, her body together? How did she die? Did she get shot? Did she get stabbed? Did she get strangled?" We didn't know, and they wouldn't give us any information. Nothing.

And finally, this past year just in December, I got ahold of -- we were speaking about the conference, she said, "Yeah, you could request to talk with a RCMP if you like, on the phone or --" I said, "Well, that's one thing I don't want to do because that's all we've been doing. We've been phoning and no results. They keep on telling us the same thing."

And Marie and Tony Mandeville (ph) told me that if I request, we can get the medical report. So that's what I did, and they came to meet me in my home. I
said I didn't want to go see an environment of the police, cop shops, that sort of thing, so I told them that I would like them to come to my house, then I can ask all the questions, which has kind of put my mind at ease about a lot of things I was suspecting myself. I think it was mostly guilt I felt because I told her to leave, and I shouldn't have did that, but I didn't know what else to do with her.

So, with all this that we finally found out -- or I finally found out, they gave me the medical report, and I read it. A lot of my suspicions were laid to rest at that time. After finding out my common-law was cleared as a suspect and Mariella's body was identified by her teeth, her dentures. And they said she had a pair of jeans on that were open and down to her legs and she didn't have a shirt on. Her face was unrecognizable, but they checked, they couldn't see well, whether she was choked or didn't see any stab wounds or any wounds like that on her body, but they found a mark on the top of that side of her head that was in contact. And one shoe was off, I think they said.

So, like I said, finally, the cops came through, gave me that piece of information, or at least I could say, now I know how she possibly died. She wasn't stabbed; she wasn't shot, but they found out that it might
have been that -- well, they couldn't tell whether she was
drowned. They couldn't tell whether she was alive before
she went in the water, they said, because usually they
would say if she was drowned; there would be water in her
lungs or something. They didn't see that. They didn't
really have too much else to say, just how she might have
died. They don't know exactly how she died.

And before all this, I went to a psychic
and she told me that if I were to brought up a piece of
material or a clothing of hers or something or a picture,
she could tell me a little more about who that person might
be that did this. And I asked them to bring me a photo.
They did bring me that photo or they posted her picture all
over, but I didn't go back to the psychic; I didn't have
that money.

So, I told Wilfred about that, my brother.
I said -- and I also told the police, "If you give this to
my brother and my sister-in-law, I think this would help
them to see that was really her." Because psychic said, "I
don't see her in the ground -- I don't see her in the
water; I see her in the ground when she died." Well, that
again opened up a lot of questions for me. I don't know
whether that body was hers. I really didn't know who was
buried there and that bothered me. That's why I asked for
the autopsy report to see how they identified her.
What we heard was, she was identified by another police officer who was from Deline, who was not a relative or maybe a distant relative, but she was working with RCMP then, and she identified her, but I thought that was not right when I was in town. Maybe I would have had a better idea. It was just really difficult all in all because there's so many questions that were not answered at the beginning for all of us. And my brother even said, "I still don't know how she died." And I told the police, "If you go to see Wilfred, please bring this report to him, and I think that will really be beneficial for him and Sarah."

And you know, that was indeed her that they found. That's basically all I needed to know and just how did she die, and they still didn't have a firm answer. But the whole family suffered about that for a long time. Everything seems to be so hush-hush. We didn't want to talk about it with Wilfred or Sarah. And they didn't -- they never brought it up. It was always kept inside. So, now that I found out, to me, I feel like this has helped me to see that autopsy report, and I know that it is her in the grave. I also know that -- have an idea of what was found was her and how -- they said she didn't hardly have any hair because of the water. It probably all went. She had long curly hair. She was a really beautiful little girl.
MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Can you tell us a little bit more information about what happened when she disappeared, like how long did it take you to realize that she disappeared when you called the cops? What happened? Can you tell us a bit --

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: I didn't call the cops, somebody else did.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Okay.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: They said the last one -- like I said, we were hearing all kinds of rumours, "Oh, she was partying at the Con Mine at those trailers." And then they said, "Oh, she was with other people downtown." But the cops also told me that she was last seen at Discovery Inn. She was leaving around six o'clock. Six around that area. She was last seen then, so, somebody had picked her up, I guess.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Okay. Do you know how long did it take from that time, the last time she was seen at Discovery at 6 p.m., and the time that the cops were called, like how many days in between, do you know?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: I'm really confused in those days because I was -- myself gone through a lot of personal problems with physical/mental abuse, so I wasn't -- I'm still not aware of what time the police called. Were the police called and who called? I don't know that.
MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Okay, that's good. And I know you're here this afternoon to talk about your niece, but you brought the point about yourself and the abusive relationship you were in. Is that something that you would like to share with us today, what happened with your husband in this relationship?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Well, we continued to stay together. I totally stopped drinking at that time. I was no help to my niece at that time. I could have helped her maybe if I stayed sober, like totally sober. I was a binge drinker, and I didn't think properly, you know. My mind wasn't clear, so I don't know -- after she lived with our cousin downtown, I don't know if it was him that reported her missing or maybe the parents. I don't know that part, but when I lived with this man, he was very, very abusive.

It was a point where I finally left him after ten years. It took four years for me to get totally away from him, but he was stalking me and threatening me and I put him in jail because of all of that. So, at that time that Mariella has gone missing, it was like everything was chaotic as I was going through this.

I finally -- when he beat me the last time, he hit me with a guitar and I guess I had got knocked out and he got frightened because there was a whole bunch
of blood on the floor. And I had a nightgown on and he somehow finally woke me up. He says, "Get and up change your clothes, I'm taking you to the hospital." I looked at myself. I had a cut here and a cut in my head, and my face was this big and oh, my God, I looked like a monster. But I don't know what made him wake me up and take me to the hospital.

Then after that, when I decided I have to do something different, I have to stop drinking, get away from him forever. I tried that, and I even went to the social services for the first time to get some kind of help. I told them I want to go back to school, and my father always said, "Never to go to social services, you can do it yourself." And you know, I had to bite my pride and forget about that and just say I need help.

So, I got help from social services and that's how I ended up changing my lifestyle. And when they found Mariella in May, I was sober and I was going to school. And I went back to the crazy man that I was running from to begin with. We spent another ten years together and he didn't hit me ever after that. He stopped abusing me, but verbally still. Jealousy and all that. But he was a very vicious man. That's why I suspected him too. He was jealous. And if he had a young beautiful girl like Mariella, he said he had a young girlfriend that was
18 years old, which happened to be my niece's age, and says, "I don't need you anymore."

So, on that one, Mariella went missing. I thought maybe it was him because we had a van and they used to party together and come home with all hours of night. And I didn't know whether he was -- what they were doing. It was hard for me to put up with that, but when I finally said enough is enough -- and I'm still kind of confused for that first week because I ended up going to the hospital. I had to be there overnight because I might have had a concussion. I just had to keep me awake.

There was so many things he did. He shot a bullet through my hair laughing, thinking that he was a good shot. Meanwhile, I had two kids in the bedroom. All of that, before I finally came to realize I can't live like this anymore, living in fear, never knowing if -- we were both jealous at that time, but after when I decided to stop drinking, he got even worse, and he quit, too. He got even worse thinking that every time I'm out, I'm looking for a man.

The last three years or four years was the hardest where he was stalking me. They kicked him out of my community because he was threatening me there, and he couldn't come to my community anymore, but he lived in the next community. He kept phoning me and threatening that he
was going to burn my house down; shoot my legs off; kill
the closest things that I love; and it was like I was just
living in fear all the time.

So, for most of the ten years after
Mariella, I still phoned cops every now and then just to
find out what they found, anything new. It was always the
same "No, nothing new. We can't tell you anything because
it might jeopardize the investigation." But when I finally
left that evil person, now I'm by myself. I live by myself
and I like it and I don't even want a relationship. I just
want to live happy by myself.

And now, I'm starting to really deal with
my feelings, so I go to a therapist and basically, just to
find out why was I sitting in that mess for so long. And
I'm starting to mention my niece's murder to him, to the
therapist. So, I'm just trying to let everything go from
the past, but I want to settle this thing with Mariella, my
niece, to find out if there's anything new. But for now,
the police said they're still investigating. They'll never
give it up until they finally find the person.

So, for now, I'm just basically trying to
heal myself and try to get on with life. I'm 66 and I want
to live the rest of my life with some peace and happiness
in my life instead of worrying, and I think all of this
worrying is making me ill or has made me ill. I'm now --
I've got diabetes, and then I got arthritis at the same time. It's just like, Now, what do I do. I got to look after my health. There's nothing else I can do.

So, when you go into the counselling, I'm trying to help myself to get better, health-wise as well as mental/emotional. So, from here on, I'm just going to concentrate on me and getting healthier and better. I want to be a better person. I want to be that person I should have been when Mariella was just a young girl. If I had been able to give her a good support, she might have not have gone where she went. But she just left a lifestyle like that at her home. My brother and my sister-in-law had a tumultuous relationship. And then she comes to mine, which is no better.

So, I got to heal from that, too. I feel responsible. I feel guilty because I wasn't there for her. That's basically all I need to say now. Just got to be patient and wait to find out if the murder can be solved.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Do you have, by any chance, a picture of Mariella with you?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Not with me, no. They plastered a bunch of posters when -- at the time she went missing. On media, too. I had that same picture, but I didn't bring it with me.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: No problem.
Statement – Public

Bertha Lennie
(Mariella Lennie)

[Person 1], is there anything you would like to share with us about Mariella this afternoon as well?

[PERSON 1]: Are you done?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Yeah, I'm done. Here, hold my pillow.

[PERSON 1]: [Registrar’s note:

confidential testimony omitted].

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Can I interrupt?

[PERSON 1]: It seems like they're not doing anything.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: When I spoke with Constable Bancroft (ph), he told me the case will never be closed until it's solved. And now, he's head of investigation. He's had -- they follow-up any kind of clue. They said they have one not too long ago that discussed that he had some information. They followed up on that and it was nothing. It didn't really do anything. But what he did say was, it will never be closed until they found her killer. And I forgot to mention that Mariella left behind a boy, her son. Now he's an adult. He's 26, and my brother and Sarah, the grandparents, raised him.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: What's the name of Mariella's son?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Mariella's son's name
is [Mariella’s Son].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: And how old was he when Mariella disappeared?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: He was just a baby.

[PERSON 1]: Four months.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Four months.

Okay. And where is [Mariella’s Son] today? Is he still living here, or?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: [Mariella’s Son]?

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Yeah,

[Mariella’s Son].

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: He lives with his parents -- his grandparents.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: So, the last time that you talked with Constable Bancroft --

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: He's the one that showed me the pictures, and I asked questions, he answered me.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: So, they are still on an active investigation nowadays until today.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Yes.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: [Person 1], you were talking -- I don't know if you would like to add anything else regarding Mariella and Mariella's disappearance and what happened to her. You were still
talking when we then talk about the open investigation, but you were still talking about -- like, the questions that you have and what will happen now. Do you have anything else you would like to add regarding that?

[PERSON 1]: I just have -- what really concerns me is that, like why is it so long for them to solve this? It's just NWT; it's not like New York.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: That's a good one.

[PERSON 1]: It's just a small place.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: You have to take the whole family felt like the police weren't doing enough at the time. And about that time, there was two other Aboriginal girls that were missing. I don't think they were solved either.

[PERSON 1]: [Registrar’s note: confidential testimony omitted].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: So, would that be a recommendation, for instance, have more support for families of murdered or disappeared women and girls. For instance, we were talking about possible recommendations that you could make. Would that be one of them?

[PERSON 1]: [Registrar’s note: confidential testimony omitted].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Is there anything else you would like to add about Mariella's -- not
Bertha Lennie
(Mariella Lennie)

necessarily disappearance or not necessarily about the
murder, but here at the commission, we really want to
honour the victims.

So, if you can tell us a little bit about
her as well because sometimes it will treat people as a
file, but we know Mariella is was a person, a loved one, so
if you want to share good memories about her or a good side
of her, we would like to know as well a little bit about
her, how she was as a person, like good memories that you
can have with her that you would like to share to honour
Mariella.

And we've been talking about her
disappearance, about her murder, but there have been
positive sides of her life. You were saying how she was
beautiful and lovely, so if you want to share something
about her with us as well as something we want to hear to
honour her, the person she was.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: When she was born, she
was so tiny. She was kind of sick that she had stomach
problems, so they would send her always to Inuvik at that
time. And of course, her mom would go with her, but she
was so cute. They would put her in a little jumper. And
she had curly hair too, like half curly and half straight
here and there. I said she sure took on the half-and-half
of mom and dad; dad has curly hair, mom has straight hair -
- and then, she treated there and start bouncing up and
down. Didn't think that she just went through surgery or
whatever they were doing once we were in Inuvik.

But mostly, I was away from my family; got
married, stayed in Inuvik for 10 years. So, I didn't get
to see her very much but whenever we did go, she was always
pleasurable to be around. She was easygoing. She would
have been about the same age as my daughter at the time. I
think she would be a year older maybe.

Once, we went out in the bush and Sarah
and the children were all out there. They got along really
well, Leeane (ph) and her. Well, they were about the same
age, and they each had one -- I think Junior was the
youngest at the time, and my son was about ten months
younger than Junior. So, Mariella would dress up her
little brother and Leeane would dress up my little boy, her
little brother, and they'd put them in swings, like the
whole swings. I have pictures of them. We got sitting
side by side, one little white boy and one little Native
Aboriginal boy just looking at each other, and then they
put them in Jolly Jumpers together. We have pictures of
those.

But those were the good days, and of
course, those little girls were so proud of their little
brothers -- or their little brother, and just be -- they
spend lots of time with them, but you know, that was like
their dolls, their real dolls. Just little things that I
remembered. But as I grew up and older, I just never lived
at home, so [Person 1] would have more idea of what her
life was like when she was growing up.

[PERSON 1]: [Registrar’s note:
confidential testimony omitted].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Thank you for
sharing Mariella's story with us and for coming here today.
At the beginning of this session, you also told me you
would like to talk about [Person 4] [...] [Registrar’s note:
confidential testimony omitted] [...] Is there anything you
would like to add about [Person 4]? I don't know if you
knew her or like --

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Well, I barely knew
her because like I said, I've always been away from my
hometown, so I just heard about this [...] [Registrar’s note:
confidential testimony omitted] [...] That's one of the
reasons I wanted to be here. I wanted to be able to tell
people what is new, what's -- well, you know, it's not my
place to say that because it's really Wilfred and Sarah's -
- if I had your permission to say what I could, I would,
but I can't do that without them saying yes, it's okay. I
could have spoke about -- well, at least if you want to get
with an RCMP, talk to them, they will give you information.
Not like years ago, they wouldn't share anything with us. We wanted to know more about -- well, what was she wearing sort of thing, what wasn't she wearing. They didn't really let us know anything. So, like I said, when Constable Bancroft brought me this information, that was the best piece of information I could have received, and [Person 1] can go there too and ask to see that medical report, and so could Wilfred. And then Constable Bancroft said as he's going, "If Wilfred wants, he can go to Tulita and he can ask questions and show him that report, and I think a lot of questions will be answered for them, too."

Like I said, when they brought her to Tulita, nobody knew who it was because it was a closed casket, because of the damage to her body. They couldn't show her. So, for them, I guess it's like a mystery. Who really is in that box and if they would have told Wilfred and Sarah right away, Oh, this is what we found, you don't have to tell us any more than that. But at the time, they wouldn't give us any information, which is wrong, I think. There's no harm in telling us, "This is how she was found."

That wasn't going to, you know, hurt the investigation in any way, at the time, I think. They always say -- the only person knows it, but that's not always the truth.

And one thing I'd like to add is, it seems
like Aboriginal people; women, children, whatever, who go
missing are not attended to right away or like they would
intensively like they would with a Caucasian person.

So, that's one thing I said before. They
need to communicate with the family members, what they know
was soon as they can. Well, the family members, I don't
think, are going to spread the word that, Oh, this is how
she was found and this is what she was -- not found or
whatever. Release that later, mind to rest soon.

That's really all I have. It's so
important to have people to follow up when they are
healing. If they can have such -- we need some really good
counsellors from here that can help people just in this
field, maybe. Families are really important to get
together, start opening up and talking together not just
waiting. You know, they wait for years before they can
talk about anything. I don't know how else you can open it
up with my family, but I would just be easy to talk about
it like even talk to Wilfred about what I got from
Constable Bancroft.

I said, "If you have a chance --" I did
tell him to -- "Give this to Wilfred," and I said, "I think
it may answer a lot of questions for him." And he said he
would do that. And the nice thing is they came to my
place. I didn't have to go to their office. And I said I
didn't want no phone-to-phone. I want to have a person-to-
person meeting, and in my own environment not their
environment, so that has helped.

[PERSON 1]: [Registrar’s note: confidential testimony omitted].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Is there
anything else you would like to add about Mariella and
[Person 4]? Before I'm asking my last question about
recommendations, is there something else you would like to
share with us today?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: I've said pretty well
everything that I need to say, I think. I can't add
anything.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Okay.

[PERSON 1]: [Registrar’s note: confidential testimony omitted].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: I see. And on a
broader picture, why do you think there's such a high rate
of violence against indigenous women and girls and how this
violence can stop?

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Well, I always think
it starts from the home. You see, Mariella's family, my --
and our family and our parents, they were heavy into
alcoholism. Lots of fighting, lots of violence. So, when
you grow up -- when I grew up I thought, well, it's okay,
my mother got hit, so why should I complain if I get hit or hurt when it's just a slap, you know. So, I got a bruise, big deal.

So, you stay with that stigma from family to family unless one family cleans up their act and stops it. So, with that, violence goes, like, in cycles. So, your family sobers up, now, my brother has sobered up. The younger children are starting to grow up without having that same violence and no alcohol in the home. So that's -- it gives them better life and they know that while if they go out now -- you know, you got to be safe.

But the girls, the younger girls, and Junior, they were grown up and seeing all this violence and chaos at home. So, to them, it was a normal thing, you know, not like when I was talking to Mariella at the time about it. I said, "You know, you can't go out and just take rides," for instance. I said, "You don't know what they could do."

Yellowknife is starting to get violent like down in the South now, like you never know because they had come up here and they're working and they could be cabdrivers and they're very nice to you at first, but in the end, they're going to want something, and if you don't give it to them, maybe they'll, you know, kidnap you, do harm to you, but I guess she didn't believe it. Well, you
know, she can handle it, she probably thought because she lived in it and she knows how to deal with things, but it wasn't so.

And it all starts from the families however you look at it. You can't stop it because it's going to go on. That person probably grew up in a violent home, too. Dysfunctional home. That's how I believe it starts.

[PERSON 1]: [Registrar’s note: confidential testimony omitted].

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Well, that was all my question for this afternoon. Thank you so much for coming here and sharing Mariella and [Person 4]'s story through with us. We really appreciate you coming. We know it's not easy, and for us, it's really important to receive those stories and to know about Mariella and [Person 4]. So, thank you so much for being here this afternoon. So, if you don't have anything to add, I will turn off the video recorder and the audio recorder.

MS. BERTHA LENNIE: Yes. Thank you.

MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: So, it is 3:26 and we are turning off the recorders.

--- Whereupon the statement concluded at 3:26 p.m.
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best of my skill and ability, accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording the foregoing proceeding.

Jovelle Domanais, Court Reporter