National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
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Statement - Volume 226
Karissa Joseph (Carson) & Nina Joseph,
In relation to Bonnie Joseph

Statement gathered by Francine Merasty,
Commission Counsel

Coast Reporting Services Inc.
II

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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Commission Counsel: Francine Merasty

Documents submitted with testimony: none.
FRANCINE MERASTY: All right. We're on the record.

The date is February 6, 2018. It's 9:24, and we're in Prince George. This is Francine Merasty with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls speaking on the record with Karissa Joseph — and her other name is Carson — and Nina Marie Joseph. And they're from the Yekooche First Nation and they've travelled here from ...

Where did you travel here from?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Burns Lake.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Where? Burns Lake? Okay. And you?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I live here.

FRANCINE MERASTY: We're here in Prince George. And I've stated the date already.

Karissa Joseph, also known as Carson, you're here to voluntarily give your statement in the matter of your mother, Bonnie Joseph, who went missing October 2007.

And present with us also in the room are ...?

JONI CONLON: Joni Conlon, guardianship worker with Carrier Sekani Family Services.

DENISE MCKINLEY: Denise McKinley, mental health clinician with Carrier Sekani Family Services.
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Nina Joseph (Bonnie Joseph)

1 FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Your statement will be audio
2 recorded today and you have also allowed us to
3 videotape your statement. Can you please confirm that
4 you agree with this?
5 KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: We agree.
6 FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. And also as the legal guardian,
7 you're ...?
8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm consenting, yeah.
9 FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. And, Nina Marie Joseph, you're
10 present with us in the room. Your statement will be
11 audio recorded today and you've allowed us to
12 videotape your statement. Can you please confirm that
13 you agree with this?
14 NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Yes, I agree.
15 FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. So who wants to make their
16 statement first?
17 NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Not me.
18 FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. You can start talking, Carson.
19 You can begin anywhere.
20 KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I just wish I knew my mom.
21 FRANCINE MERASTY: How old were you when your mother went
22 missing?
23 KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: It was in 2007 and I was seven.
24 FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. And where did she go missing?
25 Like ...
KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: On the Highway of Tears.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I don't know. All I know is that my mom told me that she was trying to get to Burns Lake for [S.]'s birthday and she was hitchhiking and she never showed up. That's what I've been told.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hm. Can you tell us a little bit about what you know about your mother. Like, how she was as a person?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I don't remember much of her.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. So where was she living at the time this happened?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Prince.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Prince George?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: (Moves head up and down).

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: (unintelligible)

FRANCINE MERASTY: And you guys were living all together?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: At the time we were in a different foster home than we -- than the one she's in right now.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Oh, okay.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: We're with the Ministry now. Carrier Sekani at the time.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Well, we can let your sister talk
if you're nervous or shy.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH:  (Moves head up and down)

FRANCINE MERASTY:  So you can begin sharing. Like, we
don't really have a script. It's what the person
wants to share with the Inquiry.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  (unintelligible) I don't remember
anything much about our mom. I don't know what to
say.

I just remember, like, when we were younger,
we -- we all -- we all had to do, like, a whole bunch
of DNA tests and stuff 'cause they found, like, stuff
of our mom and -- yeah. Other than that, I don't
remember much about her.

FRANCINE MERASTY:  How old were you when your mom went
missing?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  Uh ... I think nine. Eight or nine. I
don't know.

I'm two years older than you; right?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH:  (Moves head up and down)

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  Yeah.

FRANCINE MERASTY:  And you said you were in foster care?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  Yes, with Karissa and [V.] before.

Till I was at age 11. And then we moved in -- well,
we switched from the Ministry to Carrier Sekani so
that we could live with our little sister, [S].
FRANCINE MERASTY: How many kids did your mom have?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Five. 'Cause there's [B.], there's me, there's Karissa, and [V.], and [S.].

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: (unintelligible)

FRANCINE MERASTY: And how long were you guys in care before your mom went missing?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: That I couldn't tell you, 'cause I don't know when -- what age we went into care -- or I did.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Were you younger or ...?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I don't -- I remember the first day, like, going to the foster -- or, yeah, the foster home in Prince George when I was younger. But I don't know age. All I remember is I was young.

FRANCINE MERASTY: And who told you about your mother when she went missing?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Hmm ... maybe the Ministry? I don't know. Maybe our worker. I don't know. I don't remember.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you --

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Or I -- or I don't think we got told for a while. Like, we didn't get told, like, right away, like, when she got -- went missing.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hm.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I think it wasn't until, like, we were
FRANCINE MERASTY: And how did you feel about it?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Well, I was young. I didn't really ... I don't want to, like, sound mean or anything, but I didn't have, like, really any feelings, 'cause I didn't really know her. So ... I mean, like, even now -- I mean, I miss her and stuff, but I just didn't know her enough to ... I don't know.

But I'm here for my dad though, because he's still struggling with Mom being missing, you know.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you want to tell us about that?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: My dad?

FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Well ...

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: [One line redacted - personal information].

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: No. [One line redacted - personal information].

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: 'Til he starts drinking again.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: [One line redacted - personal information]. And also he's been drinking still. I'm still mad about that, but ...

Our dad has, like, a drinking problem. Ever -- like, 'cause of being in residential school. And then it got, like, worse when our mom went missing. [Five
Statement – Public
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1 lines redacted – personal information]. He's still in
2 pain though, but he's still drinking.
3 KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: That's his fault.
4 FRANCINE MERASTY: So what residential school did your dad
5 go to? Do you know?
6 NINA MARIE JOSEPH: [Indian Residential School 1].
7 FRANCINE MERASTY: Oh, okay. And how long was he there?
8 NINA MARIE JOSEPH: That I don't know. That's all he told
9 me was that he went to [Indian Residential School 1],
10 him and Mom.
11 FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you know the reason why you guys got
12 put into foster care?
13 NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I sort of have an idea 'cause, like, I
14 got this letter from the government or whatever, like,
15 when I aged out of, like, the many reasons why we were
16 in care -- or got put into care.
17 FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hm. Do you want to talk about that?
18 NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Kind of. But I kind of don't 'cause
19 it's, like, harsh. [One line redacted – confidential
20 information]. Well, I -- I don't know
21 what he did to my -- like, Carson or [V.], [S.] or
22 [B.], but I know what he did to me. And getting
23 that letter was, like, hard.
24 KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Mom told me that when Dad -- when
25 he said that Dad beat her, Mom told me that wasn't
true.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Well, I got a letter from the government.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Mom said it's not true. She said that only [G.] did that.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: She lied. I can give Mom the letter and she can read it herself.

[Nine lines redacted - confidential information].

FRANCINE MERASTY: So during this time, like, she was reported missing, is that still ongoing? Like, it's an open case?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Well, ever since, like, we, like, started doing, like, DNA tests -- like, we had, like, a certain detective and his name was Tom.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hm.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: And when I had a phone, I would get into contact with him every month. But, like, because, like, I don't have a phone, I don't really have any way of contacting him, so I haven't contacted him in about a year now.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I contacted him.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Like, I would always contact him to see -- get any updates or if he found anything. But usually when I'd ask him that, there was, like,
nothing really new.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH:  I still have his number in my phone.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  Hmm?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH:  I never deleted the number.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  It might have changed. I don't know.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH:  Oh.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  Like, his number. I mean, you could try testing it.

FRANCINE MERASTY:  So have you received counselling in regards to your missing mother?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  Yeah, I did. But it didn't, like, really help. So, like ... I don't know. I guess I went down my dad's path and I started drinking. And I was, like, drinking, like, heavily and everybody got worried about me. So I went to treatment last year for four months, and that really helped. I went to (unintelligible) Canyon.

FRANCINE MERASTY:  That's good.

So who's the oldest in your family?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  That would be my older brother, [B.].

FRANCINE MERASTY:  Oh, okay.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH:  He's 22.

FRANCINE MERASTY:  And what is he up to?
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Well, he's in Prince now. We're going
to see him later. We're going to visit him. 'Cause
we -- well, they rarely get to visit him.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: He's always busy.

FRANCINE MERASTY: We'll just take a break. Okay? All
right. So it's 9:39 a.m. and we're going to take a
break.

[PROCEEDINGS ADJOURNED AT 9:39 A.M.]

[PROCEEDINGS RESUMED AT 10:14 A.M.]

FRANCINE MERASTY: All right. We're back on the record
here in Prince George. It's 10:14 a.m., February 6.
And did you want to add something else, Carson,
to what we've been discussing?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I'm pissed off because the
investigators aren't -- I feel like they're not doing
a very good job in looking for her. I feel like they
just stopped because they forgot or something.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hm.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Yeah, I'm just pissed off 'cause
they don't -- they don't keep us in the loop. They
don't really talk to us any more. Well, they never
really talked to us. And I'm just pissed about that.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: But they're, like -- you got to
remember there's, like, missing women. Like, not just
native or First Nations, but everybody. That they're
probably -- they probably have their hands full.
(unintelligible)

FRANCINE MERASTY: And what police department is this?
Like, Prince George or ...?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Well, our, like, detective's from
Prince George. Like, he lives here.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you know his name?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: His name is Tom.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Tom ...?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I don't know his last name.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Oh, okay. And you've been in contact --
like, he's been working on this case for how long?
Like, since it started or ...

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Yeah.

FRANCINE MERASTY: And then he updates you every - every
month, you said? Until about a year ago.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: A year or two ago. I think two years.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Oh, okay. So a -- what's a
recommendation you would make? Like, you said they --
they don't contact you on a -- on a regular basis. So
you're saying that --

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I want more information. Like,
when they get it, they just contact us right away.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah. Well, that's good to know. Thank
you for sharing that. Yeah.
I know on the way here that you talked to your social worker. Like, you were more open with her 'cause you feel more comfortable with her. Do you want to share some of the things that you talked about with her?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I just said that I missed her and I wish that she was there for us when we were kids and that she was still with us.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hm. Yeah. Let's see.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: (unintelligible)

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: (unintelligible) family.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: (unintelligible)

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: She wanted you to say that. That's why she showed you.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I just want to know more of our family too. Like, we don't have that much contact with our family.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Like, your brothers and sisters? Or your extended family, like your aunts and uncles?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Extended.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Extended.

FRANCINE MERASTY: You've never had that or what?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I mean, we go to Yekooche, like, every year for that Christmas in July thing. But --
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Whenever we can.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Yeah, whenever we can.

But sometimes we get there late and then it's over, and then sometimes we're just too busy to go.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Or because of the weather.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Yeah, the weather.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I remember one time we got stuck. Like, that was the day that (unintelligible) throwing-up flu. 'Cause he ate candies for breakfast.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: That was me.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you know any --

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: (unintelligible)

FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you know any of your aunts and uncles? Like, their names?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: No. I don't.

FRANCINE MERASTY: So you don't know your --

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Well, I know --

FRANCINE MERASTY: -- your mother's siblings?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I know Aunty Dora and Aunty Sharon.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Darlene.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Oh, yeah, and Darlene.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Don't we have an uncle in England?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Yeah.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: I don't know his name.
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: His name is Dan.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Yeah. We have one uncle. I used
to talk to him every day, but I got rid of Facebook
and he hasn't talked that much any more. I asked him
if I could visit him. He's just, like, "Sure, if you
get on a plane." I was just like, "Oh, where do you
live?" He's just, like, "England." I was just, like,
"Oh."

FRANCINE MERASTY: So what brought you here today? Why did
you want to come share with the National Inquiry?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: To honour our mom.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I came here to support her.

FRANCINE MERASTY: How would -- how would, like, Canada --
what would you say to Canada or to the government to
make things better for people that have lost loved
ones, like, through them going missing or murdered?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: What was the question?

FRANCINE MERASTY: How do you think things could be better?

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I don't know.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Do you feel that you've been
heard? Like, did you get what you needed to get out
of coming here and sharing?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: (Moves head up and down)

FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah?

You?
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Sort of. I was, like -- I had
different feelings from Karissa and [V.] and all
them.
FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you want to talk about that?
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: Oh, I don't know. Like, my -- like,
all my siblings, like, miss her and stuff. That
they -- I ... I don't know. I don't know how to word
it. It's just, like ... I do miss her. It's just,
like, I just didn't know her well enough to, like,
miss her that much. So I have, like, different
feelings than Karissa and (unintelligible). So ... yeah.
FRANCINE MERASTY: Well, I guess that's -- if you guys
have -- if you don't have anything else to add, we'll
close.
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: (unintelligible) them about the park?
KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Oh, yeah. I only have one
memory, but it's kind of about our dad. But the only
memory I have is me and Nina were at Fort George Park
and --
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: And [V.].
KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Hmm?
NINA MARIE JOSEPH: And [V.]. That was the day that --
you know that picture that we have of, like, the whole
family? It was that day.
KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Oh.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: (unintelligible)

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: We have the picture of our mom and dad and then all of us. And then I remember ... I guess this is why I'm scared of heights, but -- 'cause I got scared. But our dad -- we were on the swings and our dad pushed us and he pushed us so high that our -- the tip of our toes could actually touch one of the trees.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hm.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: And I guess that's why I've been scared of heights. But -- I don't know. We -- that's the only memory I actually have of them.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Wow. How old were you?

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: Young. I don't remember.

FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah.

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: I think that was the last time we saw Mom, too.

FRANCINE MERASTY: All right. Well, we'll close if there's nothing more to say.

KARISSA (CARSON) JOSEPH: (Moves head up and down)

NINA MARIE JOSEPH: (Moves head up and down)

FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah?

All right. The time is 10:23 a.m., February 6 in Prince George, and we're closing.
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Joanna M. Cross, Official Reporter in the Province of British Columbia, Canada, do hereby certify:

That this is a true and accurate transcript of these proceedings recorded on sound-recording apparatus, transcribed to the best of my skill and ability in accordance with applicable standards.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 9th day of March, 2018.