Jerome Gunning & Pamela Gunning,
In relation to Rene Gunning, Krystle Knott,
Pamela Napoleon & Abigail Andrews

Statement gathered by Francine Merasty

International Reporting Inc.
II

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Documents provided by witness: none.
Prince George, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, February 7, 2018.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** This is Francine Merasty with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, speaking on the record with Jerome Gunning of the Carrier Sekani Nation. And he's travelled here from Tumbler Ridge, B.C. We are in Prince George, and the date is February 7th, 2018. Jerome, you're here to voluntarily give your statement in the matter of your daughter Rene Gunning.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** And present with us in the room are?

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** I'm his wife, Pamela Gunning.

**MS. GERTRUDE PIERRE:** I'm Gertrude Pierre, I'm a case support worker.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Your statement will be audio recorded today, and you've also allowed us to videotape your statement. Can you please confirm that you agree with this?

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, I agree.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Okay, so what do you want to share with the Commissioners Jerome?

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Well I'm thankful
there's an inquiry going on, but we all know there are, there are a lot of sick people out there, serial killers. And my case is just one of hundreds out there that are unresolved. What I've gone through with myself and my family, it's happening to hundreds of families out there and it's just not right.

Like I say, I'm thankful there's an inquiry happening, but I'd like to see action happening. There's outfits in the States that have a place and everything else that work on specifically serial killer cases and stuff like this. This has been going on way too long.

The outfit out of Edmonton, Project KARE, they were the ones that contacted me about my daughter being found. And they're short staffed, and underfunded, and there's been many changes in personnel in there and that, that shouldn't be happening. These people care. The ones at Project KARE, they care. Because they came all the way from Edmonton to my workplace in Tumbler Ridge, and took me to the police station where I met them. And they told me in person that my daughter had been found, what was left of her. And I could see it in their faces, they cared.

But those people have moved on because that's the way it is down there. It's ridiculous. And everyone that comes in gives me a phone call saying I'm so
and so, and I've taken over this case. And it's nice to know that they're still on the case, but at the same time I'm wondering well what's happened previously to the previous people that were on it. You know there should be, there should be funds available to have -- I don't know the words.

MS. GERTRUDE PIERRE: A task force.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: A task force, yeah. Set up for this sort of thing. Because we all know there's, there's serial killers running out there, and they're still out there.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Can you tell --

MR. JEROME GUNNING: And --

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Can you tell us a little bit about what happened and -- with your daughter?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: My daughter Rene, was 19 years old. She was trying to leave an abusive relationship just after she miscarried with my second grandchild. She wanted to leave this person, and when he was out of town she took the opportunity to hitchhike to Edmonton --

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: From --

MR. JEROME GUNNING: -- with a friend.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: From what community?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: From Fort St. John.
MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: And they hitchhiked to Edmonton. And on the return trip, they never made it home. She was with another girl, Krystle Knott, and they never made it. They were last seen at the West Edmonton Mall, had just got off the phone with friends of theirs and they told them they were hitchhiking back to Fort St. John.

Krystle lives in Dawson Creek and they never made it. It was five and a half years of keeping my hopes up that she would be found alive. And --

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: What year did she go missing?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: She went missing in 2005 I believe it was.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: I was just thinking that. Today is -- 13 years today she was murdered according to the autopsy. I just realized that.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: They were found 60 kilometres southeast of Grande Prairie, 16 kilometres down the Forcelyn Truck Road. And a gentleman pulled over to the side of the road to relieve himself, and he smelled something rotting. So he finished his business and went looking to see what that smell was.

He walked off the highway and in the bush he found a rotting moose carcass. And when he turned around
to walk away, 20 feet away he spotted two human skulls. So he reported it to the police and the cordoned the area off. They spent I don't know how many days in there combing the bush. And all that was found was a thigh bone and two skulls. Through DNA they were able to conclude that it was Rene and Krystle. So I know --

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And that was me in May 2011.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So they went missing in 2005?

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** February 5th, 2005. The skulls were found May 21st, 2011. And we got the results from the autopsy -- we were notified in June 2011. And they told us that it was -- that she was -- that they were murdered six years ago. Like on their way home, they never -- I can't remember the exact thing they said. It would have been 13 years ago today.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** So they determined that from the skulls they found?

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah. And during that five and a half years she was missing, I personally took four trips to West Edmonton Mall because that was the last place she was seen, and searched for a couple of days each
time. And every time I saw a black head of hair walking
down, down the hall, my heart would rise and I'd walk up,
and walk past her, get upfront and I'd look, and it was
never Rene.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, she --

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And it was devastating.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And she left behind --

when she went missing she left behind a one year old son,
one and a half year old son. His name is [Rene’s Son],
he's 14 now. We're raising him. He's amazing.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And during that five

and a half years as well, there was at least five or six
times when I would get a call from the police and they'd
want me to come to the police station, and they'd ask me
questions about what was Rene wearing and stuff like this.
And they had a case where they had specific things they
wanted me to look at, and they'd show me pictures of her
purses and clothing, and stuff like that, pertaining to a
different case. And there was -- none of the belongings
were ever Rene's. It was pretty gut-wrenching to walk out
of the police station knowing that no progress had been
made and she was still missing. Because I always kept the
hope up that she was alive.

She came to me in a dream twice. The first
time was shortly after she went missing. In this dream I
heard a knock in the door at my apartment. And I was cleaning the apartment, and I stopped what I was doing and I opened up the door and there was Rene standing there. And I said, "Hello stranger, long time no see, come on in". And I turned around to walk away, and she went to step through the threshold, and that was the end of the dream. And I remember I just wanted that to be so real, eh? And I'd wake up and realize it was just a dream. It wasn't a nice feeling.

In the second dream a few years later, she came to me and we were talking. I was -- "Where have you been", I was asking her, "We've been looking everywhere for you, where have you been, why didn't you call"? And then she told me in the dream that, "Dad, where they had us they wouldn't let us go". And I was about to ask her another question and my alarm went off, so I had to go to work. And I remember reaching over and trying to shut the alarm off to still say asleep, because I didn't want that dream to end because I wanted more information. And that never happened. I had to believe it was her trying to give me piece of mind because she was still missing.

I still go down to Flatbed Creek. That's where I spread her ashes, and I go down there when I'm having rough days, and I still talk to her. I feel like she's there because her first five years of her life she
spent in Tumbler Ridge she really lived it there, eh. We spent a lot of time down in that field playing games and stuff. And that's where I spread her ashes, so that's where I go when I'm troubled, or I can't figure things out.

I remember when -- one Remembrance Day I went to watch [Rene’s Son], he was in Rangers. So they were in the parade and everything else, and they went to the school and did the ceremonies, and he was a Rifle Guard and stuff like that. So I watched all this, and when it was over he said he wanted to walk home with his buddies. They were going to help clean up and he was going to walk home with his friends.

So I left and I thought you know, it's Remembrance Day, I'm going to take a trip down to Flatbed. So I went down to Flatbed and I sat there for about an hour, just communicating with Rene, remembering the fun we had in the park that I was looking at.

So friends came driving by the highway and they saw me sitting there, and they came down and asked me what I was doing. I said it's Remembrance Day. They said yeah we know, but why are you here? And I said because I'm talking to my daughter, I put her ashes right here. Oh okay. So we had a cigarette and just talked, passed the time. And they jumped in their vehicle to leave and I jumped in mine.
And this trailer he was pulling down the road, an eagle came flying about 30 feet above, over top of his truck headed straight for me. And I was mesmerized because I love eagles and they're just coming right for me and hung a right. It went -- and there was a second eagle in the tree there, and it landed right beside the other eagle. So there were two eagles.

In Tumbler Ridge you never see two eagles. One -- occasionally you'll see one, but never two. And that was the year that her mother passed away. So I believe that that was Rene passing on the message that she and her mother are together, you know. Because it's -- I don't believe in coincidences like that, eh. They're signs.

And every time go to the Sisters and spirit walk, a vigil, I feel her with me. When I go on these -- you know it was during the time that she was missing that the first one at Peace River, they asked if I would go up there. And I took [Rene’s Son], and I found a part of me that I didn't even know I had pertaining to my ancestral roots. Because being raised in a white family I had lost a lot. But there was something in this ceremony. They opened up their doors for me. There were people that knew how I felt, there was people there that would volunteer to listen to me talk, express my opinion. It opened up doors
where I started to go around to powwows and stuff, because that's what I was missing. And I've met a lot of wonderful people over that stretch of time.

But I'm just one person. There's hundreds of families out there going through the same thing. And it's not right. You know there's, there's injustice everywhere. You know Fort St. John, I don't know how many of them are missing out there, girls, you know? And it's, it's -- for lack of a better word it's a real redneck town, and it seems like the interest isn't there when it involves native people. Yet when the white woman goes missing there's hell to pay, everyone's up in arms, and it's on the news, you know? And everything except an amber alert because it's not to do with a kid, you know? And it's, it's just not right, it's not right.

I'd like to see a task force solely committed to finding these serial killers, because there's more than one out there. Highway of Tears, look at that. That goes right to my hometown.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: It would just be nice if someone made time for it, someone just to make time for us, you know? I've had a lot of friends go missing and get murdered in Fort St. John. They didn't even -- their exact words to me when I went to the police station were, "We don't have time for her right now". It just reminded me of
that when he said that. And it just makes me so angry, and it's not fair, it's not fair. And it shouldn't have taken this long for somebody to care, you know? So I'm trying to be grateful but I'm angry, I just want justice for Rene. I'm just --

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah, I'd like to see it in my lifetime. Because I'm raising [Rene’s Son] right now, and he's, he's got so much of Rene. And it's amazing over the years raising him. He's got the same little crooked smile and the same sense of humour. You know that's, that's my higher power, giving me a gift out of all of this. I get a daily reminder of Rene. But I think about her every day.

I go to work, I'm sitting on my piece of equipment, my dozer, and the mind just goes and I think about Rene, I think about my family. It never leaves you, it's there every day. It sounds cliché but it's not. And I know I'm not the only person in this, in this state. I know other people are dealing with it their way. I'm not saying it's the right way or wrong way, but with the booze and the drugs. I've been clean and sober 27 years now, and I know that's not the way for me to deal with it.

We got -- my understanding is it's given me a new way to live. You know when Rene went missing that was the biggest test of my sobriety. But I knew you were
going to give me more than I could handle. But at times I
tell you, at times it wasn't easy. Then you put people
like Connie Grayeyes in my, in my path. A strong
Indigenous people that have a purpose and they do so much
good, it's amazing.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: She's a walking angle.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: You know, and that's
what -- what a higher power does. It puts the right people
in my path right at the moment I need them. Just like the
day on Remembrance Day when the two eagles, right when I
needed it the most.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Like the gathering.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: You talked about your
daughter going missing February 5th, 2005?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: M'hm.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: How was, how was it
reported to police and what was their response?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: At that time [M.],
Rene's mom and I were still together and she was the one
that reported it. And initially they -- the police looked
at the abusive boyfriend, and questioned me, and then it
went by the wayside. There's nothing every -- other than
getting called to the police station, you know, every so
often to try to identify articles of clothing.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: It was never on the
news.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Was there ever like posters?

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** We made some, but there was nothing when she went missing. There was -- I didn't even know and I knew her, I lived down the street and she spent a lot of time at my house with my step kids at the time.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** It's long before I ever met Pam.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And I didn't even know she went missing until geez, a couple of years later at least because I moved away and came back. But I was -- the whole year that -- like she went missing in February 2005, I didn't leave until November. And I never even knew. Like there's newspaper clippings from Edmonton. She was reported missing in Edmonton a long time after. Those papers were like April, weren't they? I'm pretty sure it was two months before there was a newspaper report, and it was in Edmonton, a missing person report, and I just thought wow. It's the same thing about Abigail Andrews, you know? As soon as they found out she was native they took down billboards and they stopped, like any reports.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, there's a --

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Like anything.
MR. JEROME GUNNING: There was a billboard put up because she didn't look native. So at the time they went all out and put a billboard up, right. And then as soon as it was leaked out that she was, she was native, it came down.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: It was like two days later.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: I mean that's the mentality of Fort St. John.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: It is, and it's still like that. Look at Pamela Napoleon in 2014, you know. They even went to the police where her body was with dogs and never found her.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: The police said they never found anything, yet somebody went back two days later and --

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Yeah, two days later her uncle and her remains, she was -- were in the burnt bed. They burnt down the cabin, the person burnt down the cabin. He just got charged this year, four years later. It's ridiculous. And for Joe, there's no support. He was a single dad like he was saying. There's nothing, like nothing. And there's still nothing for him. Like --

MR. JEROME GUNNING: The people at Project KARE contact me every now and then.
MS. PAMELA GUNNING: I tried to get information, we want to go to the -- where she was found. We want to go there, we want to put a cross and we want to do a little ceremony.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: M'hm.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: And so I contacted -- it ended up being a previous officer on the case, the last info we had. That officer got back to us but we never got -- we were requesting a police report so we know where to go.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: M'hm.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: And we were told that an officer has to escort us because it's an ongoing investigation.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: M'hm.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: But we -- that was the end. And how many months ago was that? Actually it was emails, eh? And we've heard nothing since. We don't even know the exact location to this day, and it's been seven years. It just makes me so angry, I'm just -- that's why you need to do the (inaudible).

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So in regards to support you say there's Project KARE. But what other kind of support are you thinking of, like what could possibly be there for --
Ms. Pamela Gunning: Some sort of grief counselling, you know. I've been trying to find something for him.

Mr. Jerome Gunning: They've got grief counsellors and stuff like that but --

Ms. Pamela Gunning: And not only talking about -- and the travel, maybe travelling we were told -- I was told a couple of weeks ago. I'm waiting -- I left a message, I'm waiting to get a call back.

Ms. Francine Merasty: M'ehmm.

Ms. Pamela Gunning: And didn’t you leave a message with a, with a counsellor there, and never heard back, eh? That -- what's his name, a [J.] or something?

Mr. Jerome Gunning: Whatever.

Ms. Pamela Gunning: Never, ever returned Joe's call.

Mr. Jerome Gunning: And the grief counsellors up in Tumbler Ridge, all they want is your money. And then they give you a sympathetic ear, but they don't know what you're going through, they don't. They give you a poor, "Oh, so sorry for your loss, so sorry". They don't know.

When I go to functions like Sisters and Spirit and stuff, and I'm around those people, they know how I feel because they're going through the same thing,
you know? I've, I've gone to those and stood up in a room full of -- a room full of people to talk because they have one open mike. And I tell Rene's story, and the tears come down my, my face, and these people know that it's okay. I don't have to live up, up to that facade that you have to outside those doors, you know. I'm a human being, I'm entitled to those feelings and damn it, they hurt.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So is that your recommendation that you would offer to the Inquiry, is to have grief counselling?

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Yeah, that would be a really big help I think for more -- for a lot of people. I mean look at how everything has been handled now. Just imagine where -- it's like where, where do you turn, you know? Where do you turn?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Like I don't even know where to go to the police to ask for -- you know updates and stuff.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Yeah.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: But I don't know nothing. I could probably contact Project KARE and make them pull out the file and everything else, but they've already let me know that if there are any new developments in the case they'll notify me, right? Well the last I got notified was -- I don't know, I can't even remember. A
year and a half ago maybe.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Yeah a year and a half, almost two years. And then I contacted them last year for the -- but we've heard nothing since.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: And that's -- ironically enough, Connie Grayeyes asked me to go to Ottawa and I was up in the air about the idea. And I was on my loader in Taylor Pitt because I was working there at the time, and my phone rang and it was an update. Because Connie needed a yes or no by the end of that day, and the day that I was supposed to give it to her I got that phone call out of the blue from Project KARE. And it was a new officer introducing himself and saying well, so and so's moved on, but I'm the new officer and I just want to let you know that the case is still open, and that we'll contact you if there's any new developments.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: And that was four years ago.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: And I took that as a sign that ironically enough, that okay, well it's got to be a sign so I went to Ottawa. I went and protested on Parliament Hill and spoke to the Ministry people there. I keep getting signs this is what has to be done, you have to get the word out there. There's a lot of people that are hurting, going through this stuff, and where do they turn?
MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So you said that you were in foster -- like you were abducted?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: M'hmm.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: When you were how old?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: I was five months old.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Did you ever know your parents?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: My real parents? I met my dad when I was 17 years old and started meeting some of my family. I met an older sister, a brother and my dad. My mom had already passed away. She was -- I don't know if it's true or not, but I heard that she was fished out from -- fished out of the Fraser River or something. And I don't know.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: And what did you meet your sister, when you were 17?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: [M.] yeah, and then [C.].

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Okay.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: And my brother [F.].

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: They were taken to residential schools weren't they, when you were adopted?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah, some were taken to residential schools. Three of us were adopted out into
white families. Myself to the [Family 1]. [C.] was
adopted into a white family in Quesnel, and [E.] was
adopted into a white family down in Nanaimo. The rest were
raised in residential schools and foster homes.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: You were the
youngest?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: No, I'm the middle
brother. There's [F.], [L.], myself and [L].

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: And did one of your
brothers lose both his children in an accident?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah [L.].

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: [L.] right, how sad.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Where were your
parents from, like your biological parents?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: I guess my mom was from
the Fort St. James area. My dad, he's half Irish, or I'm
half Irish, so I guess he was Irish. I'm not really sure.
I met him at 17. I was kind of grateful that I was raised
in the [Family 1]. Yeah, it's given me morals and a work
ethic, just for lack of a better word. Which was very
lacking in what I saw in my dad, he'd sooner drink. I
didn't want that.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Like what were the
circumstances like leading up to the adoption?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: I couldn't tell you, I
was five months old and I was adopted into the [Family 1].  
And they had taken in over the years, I believe it was 39  
foster kids. And my older brother [J.] told me, he says,  
"I don't know what dad saw in you". I remember him telling  
me that one day, "I don't remember what dad saw in you, but  
dad saw something in you, and out of 39 kids you're the  
only one to get adopted in the [Family 1]".  

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Weren't your brothers  
and sisters that went to the schools taken against their  
will?  

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** What?  

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** [M.] told us that, that  
the ones that went -- they were forced into residential  
schools.  

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, they were --  

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, they were taken  
from their parents.  

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** My older sister and my  
youngest brother were in residential schools in Lejac, I  
grew up a mile away from them.  

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah  

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I didn't even know.  

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And it was all against  
their will.  

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** But yeah, I was
grateful for the way I was raised. I grew up with five, five of us foster kids. Basically we grew up as kids all through in the [Family 1]. [D.P.], [R.P.] and [D.P.], brothers and sisters, [S.C.], [C.P.] and myself. And out of all of us, I don't know, I think I'm the only one that's made something of themselves. Choosing to deal with life in a different way, and I don't choose to live that way anymore.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** How is -- so you got married to Rene's mother?

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** We were common law. We had a -- basically a 30 year relationship with a 10 year vacation put in there. She left within a year of Rene being missing, because she couldn't handle running after [Rene’s Son]. She said she couldn't handle it but I think it was other things, and she chose to move back down to Nanaimo. So that's okay.

During that separation I -- I got clean and sober, and I went down to see them -- like I was one of these once or twice a year dads that would show up with a pocketful of money because I was working out the oil patch, spoil the kids for a week and then bugger off.

I went down there and Rene and [C.] were both absent at that time. I found out through [M.] that she had been putting them in foster care and I asked her
why, she said she couldn't handle it. So that didn't go
over well.

Rene had been missing for a couple of days
and the police couldn't start a search for her because
there hadn't been the amount of time. I went out on the
streets, talked to the street people and left my phone
number. I got a call within seven or eight hours that Rene
was at such and such a place.

I went to that place, knocked on the door
and the guy said yeah, she was sleeping on the couch. And
then I shook her by the shoulder, she opened up her eyes, a
big some come onto her face, I goes are you ready to go
home babe, and she goes yeah. So I took her back to
[M.]'s, and I said okay, sit down, family meeting.

So I sat her down, sat [C.] down. She was
12 at that time, [C.] was 10, and Craig their older brother
-- Craig was [M.]'s first son, my stepson and he was 16. I
said family meeting. I said okay -- I looked at the kids
and I says your mom says she can't handle you, that she's
putting you in foster care and stuff like this. So I'll
tell you what, I said I'm getting my act together here, got
off the drugs and booze -- because I was still smoking dope
at the time. Yeah, I was sober but I was still smoking
dope for the seven and a half years.

So I said I've got my act together and I'm
clean. So I said what I'll do is, I'll come and if you
guys want you can come live with me up North, instead of
going into foster care, and [C.] goes, "Yeah, I want to
come with you", he was 10. "I want to come live with you,
Dad". And Rene goes, "Well I want to come live with you
too Dad, but all my friends are down here in Nanaimo and I
want to stay with my friends". I said, "Okay, it's your
choice".

And Craig goes, "Well Dad, you know I'm 16
and I just think I should stay with Mom because she need
help". Okay. So I turned to [C.] and I says, "I'll be
back for you in June when you get out of school". I says,
"Until then I'll go up North and get a place for use and
get ready".

So I went back up North, came back in June.
I walked in and [C.] was there. I had to stop, load up the
car, and we were ready to take off. And then Rene come
running around the corner, "I want to go with you, Dad, I
want to go too". Apparently she just broke up with some
guy. So she was 13. I go, "Okay, grab your stuff". I
threw it in the car and brought them up. And then I was a
single dad for the next six years, raising those two. And
there was a lot of trials and errors I tell you, but we
made it. We have a strong family bond.

And Rene affected a lot of people. Everyone
talks about how she used to help them when they were feeling down, and how she would make them laugh, forget their troubles, yeah. A friend of hers put a Facebook -- or not a Facebook thing. What's that app, Rest in Peace Rene?

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Rest in Peace Rene, it's Facebook.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** The set up one of those for her.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And made a video to warn the dangers of hitchhiking. So he spread that around a lot through social media. And then we made like a -- what looks like a billboard, but it's on social media as well. That's just -- it's pretty much all we can do right now, to get it out there. It's really expensive to rent a billboard. We're saving up to do it, because I -- even if I did it for a month, you know, it's still something. You never know, somebody -- I want to do it outside Edmonton because somebody might recognize her. Somebody out there knows something.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, it looks like it was a truck driver, long haul truck driver.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** I believe that it's -- I believe somewhere deep down that it's one of the Highway of Tears killers because there's -- it's so similar, the
way it's -- the bodies were found on a logging road, logging side road, and just the way everything was, the way they went missing. But then just recently there was a skull found outside of Edmonton too, and that just kind of -- I was like oh, it's so close to home, like so close to our case. And I just thought maybe -- but at least -- but I can't imagine what Joe's going through.

But I know [Rene’s Son]’s 14 now and we don't have any answers for him. [Three lines redacted - personal information]. And I had been trying so hard to find -- I don't even know where to start, I don't even know how to get information, anything. You can't even find any resources like in our area even to go to, you know like Google it. It's just -- it's unreal how little is available like even online.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: It just amazes me.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Are you talking about your grandson's father?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: No.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: No, for Rene.

MR. JEROME: No, he was never --

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: For Rene.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: No.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Like Rene's son's
father. But even for Rene itself, like I've just been
trying to get any kind of -- like even for grief
counselling for him. Like we've been together almost eight
years now.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And I've been searching
and trying and get all -- gathering information since 2010,
myself. And it's, it's -- for lack of a better way to put
it, pathetic how much there only is, even on her case.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** It's unreal.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So how long was Rene
with -- what's the son's name?

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** [Rene’s Son].

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Yeah, [Rene’s Son]'s
father?

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** [Two lines redacted -
personal information]. According to her friends I wouldn't
have approved of him. [Two lines redacted - personal
information]. So they're probably right, you know?

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Like were you --

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** As for the abusive
boyfriend she had --

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Oh yeah.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** -- that she was leaving
when she hitchhiked away, [K.S.], he's -- he's totally different. She got pregnant with -- from [K.S.] and miscarried my second grandchild at -- I think it was five and a half months. But he was a real winner. Oh, I didn't like him. And she --

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So she had a miscarriage, like how long before she went missing?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: A couple of months because it was still winter, snow on the ground.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And she was also in an abusive relationship?

MR. JERONE GUNNING: Yeah.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: How long was she in Edmonton, was she just there for like --

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Just --

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: One night probably even barely. I expect just a few hours and then come back.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah, it was a couple of days that was it, then she was on her way back.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: She was on her way home on the seventh.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So you made some recommendations here for the Inquiry to take into consideration, like a task force for like serial murders, and also to provide grief counselling. Is there anything
else that you could think of that -- like for
recommendations?

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: I don't know, I would
suggest something, and I'm not sure how to say it though.
Like, like those people that we met -- who were those
people we met? That was from Amnesty International, wasn't
it? But something like -- they were talking about having
somebody that could communicate with the authorities.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: M'hm.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Because there's some
information that we can't have access to but they can or
something? So just kind of like a go-between maybe, like
for --

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Like an advocate?

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Yeah, like an advocate,
something like that. Not just for us, but for all these
families. Especially in Fort St. John. I have to strongly
suggest it in that area.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: M'hm.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Because those -- the
police don't even talk to us.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: At all. And there's a
lot of women from Fort St. John missing.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Like not just
Indigenous but --

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: No Indigenous. Even --

how many are we at? Just in the past -- in 2014 I think we

took up 14 posters, and that was only within the past two

years, from 2012 to 2014 or something. It was like -- it

was just crazy how many. That was just from Fort St. John.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: I can't remember.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Like historic cases

or just between 2012 and 2014?

MR. PAMELA GUNNING: I think it was over a

period of -- because there was two posters from -- oh,

there were murdered, those girls were murdered, Connie's

friends. So they knew that those girls had been murdered

but all the rest were missing. Oh, and Pam Napolitan (ph).

We were standing on Parliament Hill pretty much when we

found -- when I found out about her.

And so there was three out of 17 I think,

that -- of pictures we brought that were murdered and the

rest were missing, and it was -- oh my goodness, I can't

think. It was a short amount of years, like it wasn't

since 1970 or anything like that. They were the most

recent cases. And I mean Pam and -- oh, I can't think of

her name, Sandra I think it was, Abigail, they'd all gone

missing like -- there was like four, four or five that were

within the last two years, just two years.
MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And is that still along that Highway of Tears?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: No.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: No, they're from Fort St. John, like missing out of Fort St. John.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Northeastern B.C. Highway of Tears is northwest.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So those are two separate --

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah. There was some in the paper awhile back. They figure they could be linked because they wanted to extend the Highway of Tears to the Alberta border. But look at what happened with that Cody Legebokoff. Like that's a 20 year old kid got nabbed with four murders. I think he was Canada's youngest serial killer. He got nabbed and the last person that he killed, the police just fluked on him coming out of the logging road covered in blood.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: She was a white girl.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: And his story didn't jive, so they put him in the back of the cop car. They got Fish & Wildlife to backtrack his tire tracks in the snow and they went and found [D.L.]'s daughter. I grew up less than a mile away from [D.L.]. We talked earlier about Lejac Indian School? Well I lived on top of the hill,
Lejac Indian School is a mile away, and [D.L.], the [L.] family lived right across from Lejac Indian School. And his daughter was, was the last one that Cody Legebokoff was nabbed with. So it's ironic how that circumstance, they're just outrageous.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Most of them were all out drinking.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah. They met online apparently. But see, he's only one -- he's a kid. Too young to be nabbed with -- or connected with any of the other older cases and that. You know so there's sick people out there that are doing this. Maybe they'll slip up one day just like Cody slipped up. He slipped up and got caught. Labelled Canada's youngest serial killer. How many people are out there doing it still to this day, looking for their next victims? It's going on right now I guarantee you that. And what's being done about it? Maybe I watch too many TV shows or something. These task forces they have down in the states.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Just -- it sure is made for TV, you know, this stuff. But they have to have that, results, and they have to be doing some good, because their focus is nothing but this. They're not just this case here, and this case, shuffle that one underneath there, you
know? That's what we need because these people have to be caught. We have to find justice for the families.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Or something just to tell these people they can't keep doing this. They're -- it keeps happening because they keep getting away with it, because nobody's doing anything. They aren't even looking, you know? Well maybe now, but it was too easy for them to pick everybody off. How many women have to go missing before they even -- look at the Picton farm. How does stuff like that even happen in Canada? But I'm really glad there's people like you guys now. I mean it took a lot of years but at least the ball's rolling now. Very grateful for that.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** [Rene’s Son]'s not going to grow up, hopefully, not going to grow up having to face the same obstacles. So that's something to be grateful for.

**MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Is there anything else you'd like to add before we --

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** No.

**MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Other than thank you.

**MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, I appreciate what you folks are doing. I sure hope something comes out of it.
MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Just to have a voice now.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: M'hum. I don't know if I should ask this, but I will. Do you want to share like a memory about your daughter that you like?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Well I told you I used to go sit down by the Flatbed, and there's a park there, a playground. And there's a grassy area right, like grass and everything else, and that's where we used to play football and stuff. Me and my friends are down there and we're playing football, and we had our kids and everything else. And I remember I threw the football at a friend but I under threw it, and Rene was running between him and I and she got corked right in the head, eh? Knocked her ass over teakettle. She got up and I went running up, "Sorry, sorry". I ran up and she gets up, "That's okay Dad". Something about you better throw it better next time, and off she goes, eh. Didn't really phase her.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: She was definitely Daddy's little girl. We found a picture, she wrote on the back.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: I have it in her recovery book.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Yep, she wrote on the back of it, "To Daddy, love Daddy's little girl".
MR. JEROME GUNNING: Forever.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Yeah, she was smiling.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah, she was always smiling. She affected a lot of people.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: She touched a lot of lives.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Alright, well thank you for sharing your story. It's 5:54 p.m. and we're done.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Alright, well thank you very much.

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: Thank you.

--- Upon adjourning at 5:54 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Sherry Hobe, 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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Sherry Hobe

Sherry Hobe

September 5, 2018