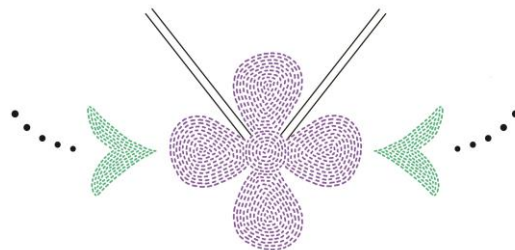


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale
sur les femmes et les filles
autochtones disparues et assassinées

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Siniktarvik Hotel
Rankin Inlet, Nunavut**



PUBLIC

Wednesday February 21, 2018

**Statement - Volume 261
“Niece,” In relation to her Aunt**

**Statement gathered by Francine Merasty,
Commission Counsel**

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II

ORDER

Pursuant to Rule 7 of Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice, Commissioner E. Qajaq Robinson ordered that all names, including community names and the name of the witness, be made anonymous in this transcript and any related documents. The order for anonymity was made May 20th, 2019.

III

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Documents submitted with testimony: none.

Statement - Public
"Niece"
(Aunt)

1

Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

1

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, February 21, 2018.

2

3 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: This is Francine Merasty
4 with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous
5 Women and Girls, speaking on the record with [Niece]. Can you
6 spell your last name?

3

4
5
6

7 NIECE: [*Spells last name*].

7

8 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: She's Inuk, and she
9 lives in [Community 1]. We are in Rankin Inlet, and the date is
10 February 21st, 2018.

8

9
10

11 [Niece], you are here to voluntarily give your
12 statement in the matter of your aunt, [Aunt], and present with
13 us also in the room...

11

12
13

14 LOOEE OKALIK: Looee Okalik, health support for
15 [Niece], with Francine Merasty, statement taker.

14

16 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Your statement will be
17 audio-recorded today, and you have also allowed us to videotape
18 your statement.

15

16
17
18

19 Can you please confirm that you agree with
20 this?

19

20

21 NIECE: Yes, I have. I confirm this.

21

22 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Alright. What do
23 you want to tell the Commissioners, [Niece]?

22

23

24 NIECE: I don't know where to begin. I know
25 for a fact that my late aunt got murdered by my ex. I know the

24

25

Statement - Public
"Niece"
(Aunt)

2

1 reason being is 'cause I played dead three times for my ex, and
2 when he beat me up so bad, I -- first time I played dead he was
3 sober. He was washing my blood off his hands, and I could
4 overhear him say in Inuktitut, 'I'm so happy that his...'
5 Because my brother used to pick me up to come invite us for
6 meals, 'cause we had no phone or a CB at the time. My brother
7 would pick me up daily to come invite us for meals. He was
8 washing my blood off his hands in the washroom. I could hear
9 him say, 'I'm so happy. [Brother] is going to come to a dead
10 sister. He's going to come here to a dead sister,' meaning me.
11 I am laying on the floor. When I heard that I ran out.

12 From there on I played dead three times. Now,
13 this is about my late [Aunt]. We were at her house, her
14 apartment, me, her, and my ex, just the three of us. He used to
15 cheat on me a lot, and if he did I would get the beating. That
16 night they were drinking, they were getting pretty high,
17 intoxicated, and I could feel him -- I was sitting between them.
18 I could feel him trying to fondle, so I got off him, said, 'I
19 can't stay here. I'm going.' My aunt wanted me to stay there,
20 because I know she feared him, but I left anyway, because I know
21 what was ahead of me. (Crying)

22 I went over to his brother's place, knowing
23 he's not going to find me there or going there whatsoever in his
24 condition.

25 The next morning we have not heard from my

Statement - Public
"Niece"
(Aunt)

3

1 aunt. She used to call every day, how many times a day. Not a
2 word, not a call. So my mom got worried, called the place where
3 -- the landlord where she stays, asked if they could open the
4 door, because we have not heard from her, this is not her. So
5 they went, my uncle, and the landlord went to her apartment,
6 only to find her hanging.

7 Now, it's ruled down as a suicide, but I know
8 for a fact that she got murdered. I know -- I knew her inside-
9 out. We were very close. I found her partials under her bed.
10 She never, ever took her partials off, only to brush. She
11 never, ever slept on the bed where there was blood, and there
12 was blood.

13 Now, when I asked to come and see her to
14 confirm that she was gone, I was told it was such a horrible
15 sight that I shouldn't see, and I said, 'I cannot believe you
16 until I see it for my own eyes.' I couldn't see her, because it
17 was so much -- too much, they said, she was so swollen up, it
18 was so bad, that they didn't even want me to see.

19 Now, after that my ex changed a lot. I had to
20 ask him, 'Did you kill my aunt?' He got all, you know,
21 frustrated and mad, and he wasn't himself. I said, 'Look, I
22 just need you to confirm to me, did you kill my aunt?' Deny,
23 deny, deny. He even went to [Community 2] psychiatrist. I
24 guess it was eating him.

25 Now, I know for a fact that he murdered my

Statement - Public
"Niece"
(Aunt)

4

1 aunt, because I know what he was capable of, if he can beat me
2 up, beat me up in front of my mom, kick me head to toe, steel-
3 toed boots, me play dead when he's sober. I know what he was
4 capable of. Especially when he was fondling her, and I know
5 what that meant.

6 He's never confronted, and I know for a fact my
7 aunt would never take her own life, because she has told me
8 numerous of times, like, 'Why do people do that?' You know?

9 I just need peace. I need her to rest in
10 peace. I just need her to be heard. I know for a fact that he
11 murdered my aunt. (Crying) But it was ruled out as a suicide,
12 and I know for a fact she'd never, ever done that, and
13 especially the way I found her things. (Wailing, screaming)

14 (Inaudible) so many (inaudible) but it seems
15 like I can't put her to rest that way, you know. It's just
16 council, what they are going to do? They're just hearing me
17 out.

18 I know talking it out is not going to get her
19 back, but it's going to give me peace. I just need him to
20 confront to me and my family why -- I need to know why he did
21 that. Why? She did nothing to him. He hurt my family so much.
22 That's why we've broken up. I had enough of his abuse. He's
23 done this when he was sober. He's capable of doing stuff, was
24 capable of doing stuff. That's why I left him. He took my aunt
25 away from me. He almost took my life. He laughed about it,

Statement - Public
"Niece"
(Aunt)

5

1 while washing my blood off his hands. My mom's seen more than
2 once him beating me up, steel-toed boots. I know what he was
3 capable of. I guess he got tired of me asking him to confront -
4 - asking -- I wanted him to confess to me, he left -- before he
5 left me, he went [Community 2] (inaudible) to help. That tells
6 me a lot. That tells me a lot. That told me more than enough.
7 He still won't confess, up to today, up to today, not a "sorry",
8 not a "I did it", you know? He was laughing about my death.
9 I'm sure he's laughing at her death for how many years.

10 (Wailing)

11 I just need her to rest in peace. I know it's
12 been over 20 years, but still, I'm tired of holding it in. I
13 just need him to confront and say "sorry" before, you know, I
14 die. At least I'll have that inner peace. I know him saying
15 "sorry" won't ever get her back, but I just need to hear it from
16 him. I know him saying that will never get her back, but it's
17 going to give my family peace. Not him denying it.

18 I'm done. I'm done. (Crying)

19 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Can I ask you some
20 questions? How long ago did this happen? In 2008?

21 NIECE: 1992 or 1990.

22 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. And how old was
23 your aunt?

24 NIECE: She was a few years older than I was,
25 so she must have been 40-something, 44.

Statement - Public
"Niece"
(Aunt)

6

1 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

2 NIECE: 45.

3 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And what kind of person
4 was your aunt?

5 NIECE: She was a very smart person, outgoing,
6 loving, kind, always said hi to everyone. Very kind, very
7 outgoing, friendly. She knew a lot of people everywhere.
8 Everybody knows she would have never done that.

9 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And this is your
10 mother's sister?

11 NIECE: My father's youngest sister.

12 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And did she have
13 children?

14 NIECE: No.

15 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. So was there a
16 police investigation?

17 NIECE: Police were there. They're the ones
18 who told me not to see.

19 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

20 NIECE: They're the ones who opened the door
21 when I tried going in to see.

22 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah.

23 NIECE: I will never forget that police's name.
24 [Officer 1]. She's the one who said that I cannot see, and she
25 lied to me and said that she is okay.

Statement - Public
"Niece"
(Aunt)

7

1 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

2 NIECE: Now, when my uncle opened the door, the
3 minute I saw his face I knew something was wrong. That's when I
4 broke down. But why would a cop lie to me, saying that she is
5 okay when she's dead? (Crying) I wanted to see, just to
6 confirm... Not a pretty sight, I know. 'I need to see. I
7 can't believe you guys.' They would not let me see her.

8 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mmm.

9 NIECE: From what I heard, she was very bruised
10 up. When we cleaned her place of course I believe it. Her
11 partials, which she never took off, were under her bed, panties
12 on the floor. That wasn't her. I know she was fighting for her
13 life. (Wailing, screaming)

14 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: How long did it take the
15 police to say that it was a suicide?

16 NIECE: Right away. It was when they had
17 enough evidence, blood on her bed, teeth under her bed, panties
18 lay on the floor. How is that a suicide? (Crying)

19 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Was your auntie naked?

20 NIECE: Like I said, they wouldn't let me see
21 her.

22 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: That could have been you
23 --

24 NIECE: Three times I played dead.

25 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mmm.

1 NIECE: That's why I believe he did that to
2 her.

3 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm. Do you --

4 NIECE: When he was sober, when he said those
5 things.

6 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

7 NIECE: If he can say those things sober --

8 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

9 NIECE: -- he's more than capable of doing what
10 he did, and I believe he did that.

11 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Have you carried some
12 guilt over all those years?

13 NIECE: I've blamed myself for leaving her that
14 night. (Crying) She'd probably still be here if I just took it
15 -- if I just took his abuse. She'd still be here with us.

16 (Wailing, screaming)

17 The lady who cleaned my aunt, who washed her
18 body, told my (inaudible) wasn't a pretty sight, so I know she
19 got beaten up (inaudible).

20 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So since this time how -
21 - where have you received counselling? [In Community 1], or...

22 NIECE: [Community 1]. I went to [Community 3]
23 once. Psychiatrist come [Community 1].

24 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm. Can you tell me
25 a little bit about yourself?

1 NIECE: What about myself?

2 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you have children?

3 NIECE: I had a son. I found him hanging.

4 It'll be two years in [month]. I have three beautiful grandkids
5 who's keeping me alive, keeping me going.

6 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

7 NIECE: Unemployed right now, not really
8 looking. I just finished a casual work at [Company 1], just a
9 stay-at-home grandma right now.

10 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Yeah. And how was it
11 growing up, like, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

12 NIECE: I raised all my siblings. My parents
13 were drunks. I got raped by my father and four of my uncles.
14 That's why my grandkids keep me going.

15 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mmm.

16 NIECE: Now they're the only reason why I'm
17 sitting here. (Crying)

18 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: How old are your
19 grandkids?

20 NIECE: My baby, the oldest one who I've
21 adopted, he'll be seven in [month]. My little one, the middle
22 one, she'll be five in [month], my son -- I call her my -- we
23 named her after my late son. She'll be two in [month].

24 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

25 NIECE: So I had a rollercoaster life.

1 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mmm.

2 NIECE: Like every people in Nunavut, I guess.
3 Sad to say, but it sounds true. Yeah, I raised my siblings. I
4 quit school. I had to walk around in the blizzard because my
5 dad was beating up my mom so much, and now my family's putting -
6 - my brother, who I love dearly, and his wife are -- I have
7 nothing. I -- I'm just -- I'm just there now, just put it that
8 way. I'm just here. Feels that way.

9 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you know where your
10 parents grew up?

11 NIECE: Yeah. My father in a residential
12 school and my mother [Community 1].

13 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: What residential school
14 did your dad --

15 NIECE: [Residential School 1].

16 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: -- go to? For a long
17 time?

18 NIECE: Not for long. But I know for a fact he
19 got molested. He's never seeked any proper help, and I have
20 made a promise to myself I will not dare put my grandkids or my
21 kids through that, so I try and get help as much as I can get,
22 for the sake of my loved ones who are here right now.

23 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: That's good.

24 Did any of you guys go to residential school?

25 NIECE: My aunt did, who is now deceased.

1 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

2 NIECE: She went to [Residential School 2] in
3 [Community 4].

4 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: How many brothers and
5 sisters do you have?

6 NIECE: I have four brothers and one sister.

7 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And are you the oldest?

8 NIECE: Yes.

9 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. What kind of
10 services do you take in [Community 1], like, for your healing?

11 NIECE: I just go to the mental health when
12 it's overwhelming.

13 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

14 NIECE: And my grandkids are also seeing --
15 'cause there's a brand-new psychiatrist for little kids. They
16 are seeing a psychiatrist.

17 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm. And do you have
18 any recommendations for the National Inquiry, like, to make
19 things better for Inuit women?

20 NIECE: We need more of this kind of service,
21 all over Nunavut. It's a good thing. It's a start. I am sure
22 there is a lot of people that are waiting, or just get to come,
23 and I don't know how they're going to get help, but I'm so happy
24 they'll be getting some help. I don't know what -- I don't
25 know, 'cause anything -- the offer that's given to me, I just

1 say, just hear me out, because if you ask me, you ask for help,
2 it's not going to get my aunt back. We just need to be heard.
3 We need more services like this.

4 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm.

5 NIECE: Of course, all over Nunavut. I guess
6 all over everywhere.

7 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Are you meaning, like,
8 for the Inquiry? Oh, okay. And also mental health?

9 NIECE: There is mental health, I believe, but,
10 yeah, it's very short all over Nunavut, from my understanding,
11 yeah, more mental-health nurses all over.

12 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Mm-hmm. Do you have
13 anything else to add?

14 NIECE: I just want to thank you guys for
15 hearing me out, for believing in me, just hearing me cry.
16 (Crying) I am sure you are helping a lot of people, even though
17 they don't come. Just you being here, helping people, I'm sure
18 is helping a lot of other people out there. That's all I have
19 to say.

20 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Thank you.

21 --- Whereupon the statement concluded.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording
the foregoing proceeding..



Andrea Kovats, Certified Court Reporter