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Statement - Volume 338
Fay Blaney, In relation to Angela Blaney

Statement gathered by Daria Boyarchuk

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NOTE

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(PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED AT 4:30 P.M.)

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Hi, my name is Daria Boyarchuk. It is April 4th, 2018, and it's 4:30 in the afternoon. We're here in the presence of Fay Blaney, who's here to speak about her sister, Angela Blaney.

Fay, I have spoken to you earlier about the consent form --

FAY BLANEY: M'mm-hmm.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- and the consent form that allows you to authorize or not authorize the disclosure of your information -- your image, your story -- to outside of the inquiry. So if you could make -- you make the selection that you think is most appropriate for you, for your story, then -- you can either put your initials next to the -- with the box that you think is most appropriate for you, or you can just do a checkmark, whatever is --

FAY BLANEY: Okay.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- best. Okay?

And would you be able to -- if you want, the next pers -- or ...

ANITA DEGILEY: No, we'll go in a circle, in a circle.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay, we will in a circle this way from me. All right. Thank you.

And then would you be able to sign here as a witness?

DONNA DICKISON: Yes, as a witness.

FAY BLANEY: Okay.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you very much. And before we begin, before Fay begins her testimony, I would like everyone to introduce yourselves and tell us about your relationship to Fay.

DONNA DICKISON: My name is Donna Dickison and I'm a friend of Fay. We have been for 20 years. We belong to the same group, Aboriginal Women's Action Network.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

ROSALYN ING: I'm Rosalyn Ing. I think I met Fay quite a few years back. And I have always admired her, her courage and her activism for
Aboriginal people and women. And I think we share similar backgrounds -- and so I think that, you know, we help each other knowing what we've been through. And we live our lives usefully and -- even though a lot of bad things have happened to us in our lives, but we don't live our lives as victims. We want to make a better Canada for all.

Thank you for having the courage to share your story with us.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you for being here.

HARRIET PRINCE: I'm [speaking in Ojibway] -- from Anishinaabe, and what I just said was -- my name is Kertel (phonetic) in my language and my clan is Cariboo. I'm Anishinaabe from Manitoba, lived in BC for 31 years, and I've known Fay for years through her work. I followed her job and I really appreciate what she's doing for the community, especially for the women in [indiscernible]. [First Nations language spoken], Fay.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you very much.

ANITA DEGILEY: Hi, my traditional name is Sintay Sapitalia [phonetic], my paper name is Anita Degiley, and I've known Fay for -- I don't know even know how long -- like, a number of years, like, through some of the committees, you know, that we sit on and, you know, share a lot of the same, you know, passions and, you know, activism and, you know, our party and indigenous rights, women's rights.

And I just always am very inspired, you know, by your intellect and your passion, everything that, you know, you put into, you know, your path for paving that way, you know, for the younger generations and just, you know, sharing that knowledge, you know, and -- with the people; right? -- and stepping forward, you know, being your own person and that and -- you know, and having the support of, like, many women, like, beside you and behind you, circling you. So thank you for being here. Thank you, you know, for sharing that and inspiring us in a good way.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. Thank you.

FAY BLANEY: And I want to thank you all for coming.
I really appreciate you being here with me when I'm doing this. I feel really strongly about wanting my sister's story out there and I want people to know what happened to her. And so that's why I didn't want this to be private. You know, it's -- like the [redacted] family this morning, you know, they were talking about how their mother died and -- and it was under a dark shadow, and I don't want my sister's name to be like that. So I'm really grateful that you're here to support and to witness what it is that I want to share.

So that -- is it loud enough?

DARIA BOYARCHUK: It's loud enough. If you can speak up a bit so that we do have a better recording of -- that would be great.

FAY BLANEY: Okay.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- that would be great, but --

FAY BLANEY: Okay.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- whichever you're most comfortable with. Okay?

FAY BLANEY: Okay.

So my sister was Angela Joan Blaney and she was the third in our family. I was the oldest and then my brother, [Brother], and then her. And then my baby sister Carina. Angela was born on March the 11th, 1960, and being the oldest, I was born on [birthdate], 1957. And she wasn't even a year old yet and my baby sister was born; 11 months apart, the two.

Just to give you a little background about my community and what she was born into, I had a grand aunt, who was my grandfather's youngest sister. Her name was Veronica and she was raped on the reserve up in Homalco when she was about 12, 13, something like that. And she pressed charges. I don't know how she made it successful, but he was sentenced to five years in Oakalla. And the whole village turned against her. Everybody turned against her. And she couldn't stay at home so she came out here and she lived in the Downtown Eastside. And my Auntie Florence says that she was thrown out of the hotel window of the Broadway Hotel, and she said it was on that block where the Balmoral is. I don't remember a Broadway hotel, but it was at the 50s so I guess it's different. And she died
in 1954. Yeah, she was thrown out the window. And her death was treated the same way that I think all Indigenous women's deaths are treated, where there's no regard, there's no respect, and they just called it a suicide.

And the other two things that I wanted to share historically about my reserve is -- so with my auntie -- my granddad -- Veronica, she died in '54 and I was born in '57, so she was gone by the time I was born. But when -- after I was born, my mother had a really close friend. Her name was Maggie. And when I was about 4 or 5 Maggie was killed by her husband. And in that time, the people -- the men in the community were mostly loggers and so they would go away for a big spell of time -- like, 10 days or two weeks -- go out logging, then they'd come back for a few days off, and then they'd go back. And so the people in the village were saying that she was partying all the time and -- so when her husband got back he was all jealous and he beat her really badly and she had a fractured skull. And she died when I was a little girl. And there was never ever any kind of police investigation into that death. And he murdered her. And so it sent a very loud message, I think, through the community that you could murder somebody and there would be no consequences.

And there was another similar death in our neighbouring community. I won't say too much except that it really set the tone, where this man, he drowned his wife in the bathtub. And it divided the family really badly. They were really fighting, the whole family. Like, there was a son and one of the daughters that defended the father and the rest were, like, very angry that their mother had been killed. So it just split the family.

And the other thing that was going on in my village was we had the Catholic church. They had come in way -- like, the Oblates came in a long time ago. And I often wondered why we had that word, lublet, and recently my uncle told me meant the oblates, the oblate priests of whatever. I don't know whatever that word is. But, anyway, the Catholic church had been in my community since the late 1800s and they had a little house
behind the church where the priest used to come and stay. And there was one priest that abused a lot of girls in residential school, Father [X.]. And he attempted to abuse me, but I never -- I -- I was so offended with the IAP process in the residential school agreement I never went to court for that. But I think that he tried to molest my sister, too, because we were both there at the same time. That priest, Father [X.], he was at the residential school, but he was also the one that they sent to my village and he would come and he'd stay for like a month or two months and he was always so intoxicated and he was always having sexual relations with my young cousins. My one cousin, in particular, I remember her. Yeah. So he'd get really drunk with everybody else on the reserve. He was a horrible man; I didn't like him.

So I really wanted to raise those issues because I wanted to show that in the Indian Act that it really was a patriarchal system. I think one of my big concerns about the National Inquiry is that we're looking so much at colonization, and of course colonization is a very important thing to look at, but we fought hard to make this be only for women and so we should be addressing women's issues and concerns in the process. And I think there's a big difference, a huge difference. In the Indian Act the men got a lot of privileges. They were the ones that could run in band elections, they could vote in band elections, and women were not allowed. And there were a lot of other privileges that they had; like, around the matrilineal property rights issue. The men -- the colonizers turned our world upside down by giving that power to the men when it used to be women that held that power. And my aunties that just passed away in the past five years or so, they told us that the home was where the women were and that the sisters stuck together and the sister's children were brothers and sisters. But your brother, he was -- his children were like cousins. They weren't like brothers and sisters; they were more like cousins. Because they went with the wife. So that's what my aunties were
teaching me. But when the Indian Act came in, women no longer had that right to be the matriarchs in our family, to house our family and our community. It became a men thing, where the men carried the status, the men owned the home. And the kinship systems were through the men, whereas before colonization it was through the women. And with all of the power that the men received through the Indian Act, they abused us. They abused the women. And now we have a really damaged relationship in our communities and ... I just feel really strongly about the importance of -- and that's one of my recommendations that I'm going to make afterwards: that we really need to undo the damage of the colonial symptoms and especially directly deal with the patriarchy that they imposed on us so that we bring back the strength of women and to honour life-givers again. And I think it's a tough sell for the men, but I think that it's something that we really need to work hard at.

So I wanted to tell those three little stories about what my sister and I were born into. We were born into a world where women didn't matter and girls didn't matter. It was the boys, they were the crown prince, but the girls were not allowed to have needs. You know, you weren't allowed to express your needs. The little boys sat at the table and was fed first and, you know, we sat on the floor and were fed last. And very loud messages; that we girls were not -- were insignificant, really. And that message was hammered home throughout our childhood.

So I'll come back now to my sister. My sister was, like I said, born in 1960 and she was about a year and a half. And my dad died in '61. He drowned. And so my mom was left with myself, at 4, my brother, at 3; and my sister was a year and a half; and then the baby was six months old. And she was 23 years old, my mom was, and she had four kids. And she was young, very young. And some of this story is told in the film called Finding Dawn.

I mentioned that to you.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right.

FAY BLANEY: And my mom was being raped all the time
in the village. She had these four little
children and she was being raped all the time.
And the wives were going after my mother and
accusing her of fooling around with their
husbands. So she lasted -- I don't think she
lasted even a year and then she took off down to
the States. And with the 1951 amendment to the
Indian Act, she was supposed to be entitled to
provincial programs and services. She was
supposed to be entitled to support for her
children. And she took two -- the baby and my
brother -- with her and they wouldn't help her.
And this would have been around 1962. And what I
understand happened with the 1951 amendment to
the Indian Act that said provincial services will
be extended to Status Indians, that BC refused
because they said it was too expensive to deliver
services to Status Indians, and they negotiated a
very lucrative agreement, so that's how they got
all of their wealth around the apprehension of
our children and the dummimg down of our kids,
saying that they're all special needs and all the
health issues they put onto us back then where
they were pulling out our teeth and all the
things they did to us. So my mom tried really
hard to take her kids with her but they wouldn't
let her. I mean, the provincial government was
saying, go see your Indian agent -- and this is
the early 60s -- and she should've gotten support
but she didn't. So she went down to Seattle and
then to Los Angeles and left us behind. She had
to bring back the two children that she took with
her because she couldn't care for them. She had
no job, and hadn't been off reserve except for
berry-picking. In the summer, they used to go
across the border to do berry-picking. And less
than a year after my mom left, my baby sister
died in a house fire. My baby sister, Carina.

And we all got separated. I was the oldest
and I never got raised with my brother or my
sister or my baby sister. I was near my baby
sister, but they wouldn't let me talk to her
because I only spoke my language and they didn't
want her learning that. They wanted her to learn
English, so they wouldn't let me near her. So my
brother and my sister were both on the reserve
and -- my sister went through hell. I barely
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ever saw them, but she went through hell. When I -- the odd time I would get to see her, they told me how much sexual violence they were going through, mostly her, not my brother. I thought I was being pretty wise one time when -- I ran away from residential school here in Mission, and shortly after she got kicked out because she was really angry and she was winging chairs through the window and stuff like that, so they kicked her out, and so she came and stayed with me. And she must have been about 13 or something, 14. And I thought I was being wise. I was trying to get her to look at -- I knew she'd been sexually abused like I was and I was trying to get her to look at it and I was trying to show her this film and -- oh, my God, she just came apart; she was crying really loud and -- she was in so many pain; she said, I can't, I can't look at that. And through the years I started to find out what happened to her. She said she was sexually assaulted anally when she was 2 years old. That's a baby. Like that's practically a newborn baby. And that was with my [Family member 1]. And while she was going through her healing she really -- she had so much rage.

And some of you guys knew her from the memorial march and if you see a pictures you will recognize her. She is on some of the pictures. Oh, it's hard to stay focused. There's so much going on inside.

In that time that she was finding sobriety, she wanted to launch a court case. And she went -- she had a cop that she was dealing with and she had 26 offenders. I just can't even fathom that. I had, like, four in my childhood. And I was not on the reserve; I was like off reserve in a remote area, and that was all the men that were there, all four of them were abusing me. But she was on the reserve and there were so many. And so she counted 26. And it didn't go anywhere because they wanted dates and they wanted witnesses and all this stupidity that they wanted. And she was really devastated that it was being re-victimized. It's like she was -- they -- you know, they got away with it the first time and she's trying to bringing it through the courts and they got away with it a second time.
And by this time she would have gotten about
maybe 12 years of sobriety thereabouts, somewhere
in there. And she a really bad car accident with
my cousin and she was in a lot of pain. And she
was already in a lot of pain; she had
fibromyalgia. And I'm pretty sure all the stuff
she went through as a little girl really impacted
her. And so when she had that car accident
she -- she was in so much pain and the doctors
were prescribing her medications and -- they're
just so negligent, I can't believe the things
they do, but -- they were giving her medications
to sleep and medications to kill the pain. And
within that time when all of, you know, in the
six-month period when she's going through all
this pain, she had a relapse, after like about 12
years of sobriety, it might have been more. And
she went back drinking and drugging. And she had
a little girl that was 8 years old and the father
of that little girl was still in her life.
   Oh, I have a hard time talking about that,
that night that she died. It's so difficult.
   So that night that she died ... She'd
already been calling transition houses on him,
his boyfriend or whatever he was, and she'd
called quite a few times, the transition house,
so they were all ready. They had a working
relationship with her. And she had a really good
relationship with the woman upstairs, who was the
landlady too. And she was trying to push that
man out of her life and he kept coming back.
He's still in the Downtown Eastside now. And he
was beating her on that night. And she phoned
the transition house and they were still in the
middle of talking to her and he yanked the phone
out of the wall and that -- that I know,
because the landlady upstairs said that he threw
the phone out the door and it landed out on the
lawn and he could -- she could hear what was
going on down there. She could hear that he was
beating her. So when the phone was gone, like,
she had no connection to the outside world. And
then she died that night and the ... I don't
know, I just don't think that they did a proper
investigation of it. They just said that it was
an accidental death. She took all her pills for
the pain. Like, the sleeping pills and the pain
medications, she took them all. And he wasn't
even investigated or anything, even though the
landlady upstairs said that he was beating on
her.

I really wanted her story out there because
of all that she went through and how she didn't
find the justice that we're still looking for,
for Indigenous women. And I guess to add insult
to injury, the little girl, she was 8 years
old -- she named her [Niece]; she was called
[Niece] -- that the father of [Niece], her boyfriend,
he was raised in foster care with this family --
they were a Christian family -- and that young
man, when he grew up, he ended up out on the
streets. And then, when my sister died, they
took this daughter right away. And I went to the
First Nations Legal Clinic right away and said
that I wanted to have my niece and I wanted to
raise her. And I was talking to the law students
there and they kept -- there was a turnover and
then three months after I went there they told me
that they had a conflict of interest, they said
they couldn't tell me what it was, and they
couldn't work with me anymore. So this is three
months in, they've had my niece for three months,
and -- it just really ... Very upsetting that, I
lost my niece too. And I haven't seen her since
my sister passed.

When my sister passed, we were doing our
ceremonies. In the Coast Salish way, we have
burnings. And we wanted [Niece] there for the
burnings and we asked that family if we could
have [Niece] and they wouldn't -- we asked them to
wait, to respectfully wait -- like, back there --
and they wouldn't listen. They were right in the
middle disrupting our ceremony. And they
wouldn't let her talk. Every time we asked her
something, we asked her -- you know, this is
during the funeral, right, and all that stuff
that was going on -- we were asking her about how
did she like school and how did she like soccer,
and every time we asked the foster mother would
answer. And it's like we couldn't talk to her.
And she just really blocked us and pushed us out.
So [Niece] doesn't have much connection to the
family. And the family are -- they're really
upset; they say that [Niece] is like a White girl.
And it's -- it's just -- that's very upsetting because what do they expect? I mean, [Niece] was raised in a White home; she doesn't know any other way. But she comes into our homes -- like, I've never seen her myself, but just my other niece, her sister, she says that she wipes off the couch and the chair before she'll sit. It's like we're all dirty. You know, everybody is dirty and -- you know, she's got all these mannerisms that are just ... And her children are really struggling. My sister's older children, they're not that old. I mean, they're still in their teens when she passed away. And [Niece 2] --

I don't know if you guys know [Niece 2]. -- she's moved back to the reserve now, but she was at Sheway a lot in the past year. She's got, like, four or five kids. She keeps having kids and kids. And they're all over the place; like, she just ... And now she's gone to the reserve and she doesn't know how to parent the kids and just -- lots of problems. And I don't know what to do. I have a hard time with that.

So that's my sister's story that I wanted to tell and I have a bunch of recommendations.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

FAY BLANEY: But is there anything else? Anybody want to ask anything?

The only thing that I left out was that both my sister and I went to residential school, and my brother too. We all went to Sechelt and to St. Mary's.

HARRIET PRINCE: So how old is [Niece] now?

FAY BLANEY: She's 16 or 17. Yeah.

HARRIET PRINCE: Still with the same foster --

FAY BLANEY: Yeah. And she looks just like mom. I've seen pictures of her.

GROUP RESPONSE: Aw.

FAY BLANEY: She looks so much like my sister. She's really sweet. Yeah. And she's tall like her mom -- or, not -- unlike her mom, unlike us. I don't know, she must have got that from the dad. Because we Coast Salish, we're pretty short.

ROSALYN ING: Maybe that would be [Niece’s father]?

FAY BLANEY: Oh, it might be [Niece’s father].
So one really beautiful memory that I have of my sister is her love of the animals.

That's my son.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So do we want to talk about another member of the family?
FAY BLANEY: Pardon?
DARIA BOYARCHUK: You wanted to talk about --
FAY BLANEY: No, not another member. I just wanted to say one really wonderful memory --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yes, please --
FAY BLANEY: -- I have of --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- do share --
FAY BLANEY: -- my sister.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- yes, of course.
FAY BLANEY: When she was a little girl, she said that -- with all the horror going on in her life -- she said her only solace was the animals. And they used to say that she was like a mother cat. And she was also the mother to all the dogs. It's like -- and we had -- on the reserve we had no running water and no, no indoor toilets, so, you know, we went outside for that stuff. And so in the morning when she got up she would be walking to the outhouse and all the dogs would be jumping around her, and the cats are trailing along behind, all the res dogs. Yeah.

It's really sad the sexual violence that she went through. She says that she often had blood running down her legs and no one cared. No one at all cared. She had -- she was treated so badly. And I didn't get to see them. I hardly got to see them.

So shall I do the recommendations now?
DARIA BOYARCHUK: I have a few questions, actually --
FAY BLANEY: Okay.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- if you don't mind --
FAY BLANEY: Okay.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- and if --
Do you also have any questions to ask Fay?
ROSALYN ING: Well, I just -- you know, it's more like a complaint about this system. Because at one time I worked at the native education centre and
I was teaching counsellors there to work with battered women and there were a lot of issues that they weren't aware of, because a lot of them, you know, had been abused themselves. But one of the things in the 1980s came out was that, you know, it's still a criminal act to beat, you know, another person. It's a criminal assault and -- but the police rarely ever, you know, acted on it, if it was Aboriginal women, that I was told, you know, or somebody else who knew a court worker. And then they -- actually, the government took over and made a policy out of that criminal acts, so that the police departments now had to act on it so that whenever a woman brought up a charge against, you know, anyone that assaulted her, they couldn't just drop the case, even if she came back the next day and said, you know, that she didn't want to press charges, yeah. So I think, you know, in some ways that's been an improvement, but I think it's still not really carried through by a lot of police departments yet. They don't believe or, you know, they -- it's Aboriginal people, that they just don't think, you know, that it's a valid charge.

FAY BLANEY: Women's groups fought really hard for that, the VAWIR policy, the Violence Against Women In Relationships. That was a policy that came in, in the late 90s, that the police were the ones who were to press the charges and not the woman. Yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you.

FAY BLANEY: They -- they were --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- residential school? Where did you end up?
FAY BLANEY: We were remote enough that -- I don't think we involved the Indian agent or anybody. Like, it was -- we were just distributed within our families.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Within your family, okay.
FAY BLANEY: Yeah. I was raised first by my great
grandmother and then she passed away when I was 7 and then I got put with my grand uncle, her youngest son. And, within that, there was a lot of bouncing around, too. Like, we went to residential school. My sister was 6 and 7 and I was like 9 and 10, and the two of us got sent to Sechelt. But I got bounced around a lot within my family growing up. And we were always the orphans, like -- and we were called bastards. That was one of the things; they always called us bastards. And yeah, they -- everybody treated us badly because we didn't have parents.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Is it the same residential school that you went with Rosalyn, or?

DONNA DICKISON: I went to the same school --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Oh, you went school --

DONNA DICKISON: -- yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- yeah, I apologize -- you went to the same --

Donna, you went to the same residential school; right? And was it the Sechelt one?

DONNA DICKISON: No, St. Mary's.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Oh, St. Mary's.

FAY BLANEY: Yeah, we went to St. Mary's later. Yeah.

DONNA DICKISON: But I'm older than her, so it ...

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay. Thank you.

FAY BLANEY: So we got sent to St. Mary's later on, after our mom passed away. We met our mom 10 years later.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Oh, you did?

FAY BLANEY: We met her and by then she already had liver cirrhosis. She drank a lot. And I'm pretty sure I would drink a lot too if I lost four of my kids.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Did she come back into the community or how -- under what circumstances did you have any chance to meet her?

FAY BLANEY: I was the impetus for her coming back. She lived in Seattle. I started running away when I was 13 because of the sexual violence, and that's in the film Finding Dawn where I fled. And it was a really remote location and so I travelled through the wilderness and I swam parts of the way; like, where there's a steep, steep rock face, I swam like a distance to get to the next beach and that sort of thing. I travelled for about six hours or something and I reached
this Christian family and they -- they brought me to the reserve. And, from there, I really got bounced around. And, again, there was so much sexual violence from my uncles. And I was being sent because my uncles were so violent towards me and their wives -- same as what my mother went through -- their wives thought I was trying to fool around with my uncles, and so they wanted to beat me up. And so they were sending me to residential school to get me out of the community. And the flight was scheduled to come in and so I was going around saying good-bye to my family. And my oldest uncle grabbed me and tried to rape me right on the spot -- like, right there -- before I was leaving and --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: How old were you then?
FAY BLANEY: 13.

FAY BLANEY: And so I sent to Sliammon, that's the reserve near ours, and they kept me there overnight and they were sending me to Sechelt. And I never got compensated for a lot this. They ripped me off. I wanted to send the money back to them, the res -- the common experience payment, I didn't get the years that I was there.

So my auntie contacted my mother and said, this is going on with your daughter and you should come see her. And so she came to see me in Sechelt. And, like I said, she was like a full-blown alcoholic. And the first time I met her, she was giving me alcohol. And I got really intoxicated and they kicked me out of the residential school. And I had no place to go. I couldn't go back to the reserve. I had nobody. And so she took me to Seattle with her. And when I got to Seattle, her husband came home and he started beating her up in front of me. And I'm in a strange place, I didn't know what to do. And I'm, like, 13 at the time. I couldn't do much of anything.

And so I met her first. I was really excited to meet her and I wanted my two siblings to meet her, too. And that's how that sort of happened, was me first, and then them. But then she died shortly afterwards and -- yeah -- we were having conflict with her because of her
Public 16
Fay Blaney (Angela Blaney)

1 drinking.
2 DARIA BOYARCHUK: And that's when you ended up coming
3 back here; right, or?
4 FAY BLANEY: I came to Vancouver and by then I was
5 like 14 or 15 and I had no place to go, so they
6 sent me to residential school again, to St.
7 Mary's. So I stayed at St. Mary's for another
8 two years and I ran away. M'mm-hmm. I ran away
9 when I was 16 and I was living in the downtown
10 area; like, on Granville and Robson, back in the
11 day when there was an old, old, old building
12 there. Not modern like today; it was a really
13 old rundown apartment building.
14 ROSALYN ING: Oh, yeah.
15 FAY BLANEY: You remember that place?
16 ROSALYN ING: Yeah. Holy.
17 FAY BLANEY: My boyfriend, Ted, had a brother and they
18 had a twin bed, him and his wife, and me and my
19 boyfriend were on the couch. That's Carina's
20 father. He became my husband later on.
21 DARIA BOYARCHUK: Hmm.
22 FAY BLANEY: So, yeah, that's how we met my mom. And
23 my sister was so excited to meet our mom. And I
24 was going through such anguish. I was so furious
25 with her: How dare you leave us when you knew
26 exactly at what you were leaving us to? So I was
27 going through all that rage, and my sister was,
28 how dare you be so ungrateful; this is our mother
29 you're talking about. You know, and it just ...
30 Like her and I were clashing on that point. So I
31 just really -- my family wouldn't let me have my
32 rage, and I couldn't talk to anybody about my
33 rage, and it was when I was in university that I
34 really processed. One of my women's studies
35 assignments was to interview either an elder or a
36 youth and so I interviewed my auntie. She was --
37 at the time my mom took off, my auntie also took
38 off, and she left four children behind. And, of
39 the four children, her two daughters were
40 sexually exploited and they've both suicided;
41 they are gone now. But I interviewed my auntie
42 and I wanted to know more about my mom. And she
43 was counselling at Hey-way'-noqu' and so she
44 comes home from work and spreads out on my couch
45 and she laid there for four hours -- four
46 hours -- and just talked and talked and talked
47 and told me the whole story of what happened.
And I wrote and wrote and wrote and I got, like, about 84 pages of notes and my hands were cramping. And when I went to make all those notes into a paper, I just never cried so much in all my life. And I came to peace with what happened to my mom. But, my sister and I, we still -- you know, right up until the time she passed away, she hates me saying "my mom." But I still say it. I don't know why. I never say "our mom." I claim her for myself, "my mom." But she was pretty mad about that.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for sharing this.

And you said that you have some recommendations that you would also like to share?

FAY BLANEY: Yeah. I just think the -- these are really, like, right at the top of my list, is the patriarchy within the Indian Act. I think that the damage caused by patriarchy is ripping our communities apart and so I think that there needs to be a huge effort towards decolonization. And that decolonization cannot be a generic general term. It has to be the roles of women and the roles of men in our communities. I think we have really mixed-up ideas of what men's and women's roles are and it's really causing a lot of harm to the women. And far too many women are fleeing from our homelands and our homes and families. And my mom was one, I was one, my sister was one; like, we're all fleeing from our homelands. So there's something terribly wrong in that community that is governed by men around the politics. And one piece that I left out of our history is that the church also did -- had its big role. They appointed watchmen. I think it grew out of the Metlakatla model in -- have you heard of that, in northern BC, where they -- yeah, it was very militaristic style of governing the community. And so on our reserve they appointed a man to be a watchman and that man was raping kids left, right and centre. He was supposedly looking out for our safety, but he raped everybody.

So I think a systemic look at the sexism within the Indian Act, the patriarchy within the Indian Act, and that's what decolonization has to
mean. And I think that we also need autonomous women's groups -- autonomous Indigenous women's groups that does -- here, in Vancouver, we had the traditional mother's dance group. I just thought that was such an excellent model that they had.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Is it something that you think should be adopted throughout the country, like, in every community or some --

FAY BLANEY: Well, I wouldn't want to impose it. I mean if --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right.

FAY BLANEY: -- that's what the community wants, I think it's good. I think it's a really good model to get women thinking about women's roles. You know, they -- in that traditional parenting program, they made their regalia, and they made drums, they told stories, and they sang some songs and they created new songs. And it was -- it was a comfortable women's circle.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So what is it, called traditional --

FAY BLANEY: Traditional parenting skills program. It was my auntie that created that with the Indian Homemakers' Association of BC, my Aunt Florence, Florence Hackett. She was the executive director that really pushed for that.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Florence Hackett?

FAY BLANEY: M'mm-hmm.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Was she real tall?

FAY BLANEY: No, Florence is my height. She's like Don. I really wanted her to come and tell these stories, but she -- she doesn't feel --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So it's still in place; right?

FAY BLANEY: No, the Homemakers' got shut down. I'm really upset about that.

ROSA'LYNN ING: They were awesome.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Oh, yes.

FAY BLANEY: And the founder of the Indian Homemakers' of BC, she just passed away about two weeks ago or a months ago, Rose Charlie. They have such an incredible story of success with Indigenous women's issues. But, yeah, I just think that we really need indigenous women-only spaces where we can have healing groups, talking circles, whatever it is that women want to do. And that's how we started, the one Donna was talking about, the Aboriginal Women's Action Network. We
started by having drop-ins on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and we would sit around and have cookies and tea and we'd just -- sometimes do projects or else we would have a guest speaker or -- just something that brought us together. And eventually we -- we really learned a lot; like, that VAWIR policy that Rosalyn was speaking of. We were really concerned about the issue of violence against women, so in the year 2000 we rafted down the Fraser River on a journey for justice. And before we went we educated ourselves. We had 12 workshops, three or four hours each. And we had a set topic every week. Like, the VAWIR policy, we had a speaker to tell us what it meant and how it worked, and children who witnessed violence policy, and the sexual assault laws. And we just -- 12 weeks solid of learning all about that.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Do you still run -- well, the Aboriginal Women --

FAY BLANEY: Yeah, we have standing.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

FAY BLANEY: Yeah, we have standing in the inquiry.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay. Great.

FAY BLANEY: Yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you.

FAY BLANEY: And I'm still on patriarchal damages in --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yes, of course --

FAY BLANEY: -- the Indian Act.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- of course.

FAY BLANEY: The other thing that they've done is they've de-funded all the women's programs across the country. And it was the women's groups that really helped us get going in the Aboriginal Women's Action Network. We used to work with the Vancouver Status of Women. And, today, mostly we work with Vancouver Rape Relief because they are the ones that are supporting us. And when we heard that the inquiry was starting, we held two national gatherings and brought women from across the country to come and talk about what the inquiry was. And it's very much from a feminist perspective. That's my big thing, is Indigenous feminism.

My second recommendation is -- I'm trying to put them in order of priority.
Fay Blaney
(Angela Blaney)

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.
FAY BLANEY: The second one is time and expertise to complete Phases 2 and 3 of the National Inquiry. I just think that the government has been scheming all along that they haven't wanted to do Phase 2 and 3. When they came here for the pre-inquiry consultation, they wanted to hear the families' stories and they didn't want us from women's groups to come there. And they were saying that the agencies and organizations shouldn't be here. And in BC, like, we're very well organized. We've got the coalition that came out of the Oppal inquiry and we also have the annual Valentine's Day Women's Memorial march. So we are organized and so we all came up -- came out with our different hats on. And yesterday afternoon we heard from someone that was saying that Carolyn Bennett was really unhappy with us here, in the BC, and the amount of space that we took in the pre-inquiry consultation. I think people might not be fully aware of what Phase 2 and 3 are because they're not even telling us what -- you know, no one is telling us what Phase 2 and 3 are and -- I just think they're so critical. You know, we've heard the stories, we've heard the women share their stories, but the next part, the institutional, like, we really have to look at those three areas that you guys are talking about: the victim services, child welfare, and -- I always forget the third one -- health. Health. And then housing is somewhere in there maybe. I mean, it's not for sure that there's a fourth one, but those government institutions need to be interrogated and examined. It's very unfortunate that we're not interrogating the police. That's bad enough, that they're not included in the terms of reference, but what limited power we have, to look at how victim services runs in this country. Like, what kind of support are they offering to Indigenous women in cases of violence. You know, when I was working at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, we had a woman that was almost dead. She was stabbed in front of the First United Church. They took her to the hospital, the hospital -- as soon as she came to -- she was in a semi-comatose stage -- she came to and they
gave her a bunch of gauze and sent her home. Is that proper victim services? We know it's not. You know, they -- that's so inappropriate, to release her and to send her down to her SRO where it's got cockroaches and mice running around all over and she's got gaping wounds. So, you know, that's just a for-example. We need to look at what the victim services looks like in this country. And child welfare, I mean, that's the huge one, child welfare. It needs so much looking at. Because those gals, they age out of the foster care system and they end up working on the streets. You know, my two cousins that I just said my auntie and my mom left together, those two girls were in foster care. One of them was being prostituted for a gallon of wine, the other one was in a foster home up in Prince George, and the sexual violence she endured was so bad that she was prostituting at around 12, 13, just to get away from that foster home. And then she ran down to the States to try and find her mother and her mother was intoxicated and her stepdad was raping her. It's just no end in sight to the sexual violence that we encounter. And somewhere in there the child welfare system has to take responsibility. And the government sure ain't taken responsibility in BC. Before Mary Ellen Lafond was finished as our representative for children and youth, she released a report in 2016 looking at the cases of sexual abuse against foster kids. She looked at a three-year period, from 2011 to 2014. In that -- it's online under their website -- in that period, almost 70 percent -- I think it was like 67 percent -- of the children that were being abused were Aboriginal girls and 50 percent of those were being abused before they were age 12. And when you look at all the children in care, Aboriginal girls comprise 25 percent. Aboriginal girls are one quarter of all foster kids and yet over half of the children being sexually abused are -- they're us. So we're all victims of sexual violence whether we are at home or whether we're in the foster care system. And so that institution of child welfare really needs to be interrogated.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.
FAY BLANEY: And health care is just as bad. Do you know the healthcare system, like, Vancouver Coastal Health, they promptly notify the child welfare authorities when a native mom comes in to give birth. They were trying to take my little cousin away and we fought like crazy to keep that baby. And if she goes to a different health region, they still chase her around. One of the --

Do you remember [Woman 1] on the first poster? Do you remember earlier on when the Pickton stuff started to happen, before the Pickton name was out there, we released that one, the very first poster that said these 60 women are missing?

ROSALYN ING: Oh, yeah.

FAY BLANEY: One of those woman was [Woman 1] on there.

ROSALYN ING: M'mm-hmm. Yeah.

FAY BLANEY: [Woman 1], we protested her case. She was -- and I don't want [Woman 1]'s name on the -- in this -- I don't have the authority to be saying her name -- I shouldn't have said her name -- she had a baby and the hospital social worker criticized and condemned her in writing. The doctor said she was uncoop -- and I'm saying this because she let us read her papers -- the doctor said she was very uncooperative during labour. And we fought and fought for that baby and they still apprehended. And you know what happened, she disappeared. She -- she had two and a half years of sobriety. She was from the north of this province before she had the baby and yet they said she was drug addicted. And after they took her baby away, she relapsed. And not too long after that she disappeared. And she was on that first poster that we had. But on the bright side -- I don't know if it's such a bright side -- but she was alive. She was found in a mental institution in Portland. And Port -- like, there's a sex-trafficking thing going on between here and Portland so ... That's where she was in, in a mental institution.

So my point there is that we really got to get to the institutional part and interrogate those institutions.

And then third part is the expert testimony,
which is what I have standing for in the Aboriginal Women's Action Network. I think those government institutions have their role and they do what they do, but the women's groups and band offices and whoever, we see it differently. We have a perspective that we have to share as well. And it just seems like the government is really anxious to eliminate those two and so it's an insult to all the families that have shared, when you've gathered all this information and then to not take those next two steps to carry those concerns to its logical conclusion: to understanding what happened where things failed. I mean, that really has to be done. So that was my second recommendation.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you.

FAY BLANEY: Sexism in policing, I think the police are horrendous. I've heard it time and time again that there's always sexual violence coming from the police against Indigenous women and girls. In the late 90s I used to work with different native organizations and we got an agreement with the police to have quarterly meetings, very different from SisterWatch because we, the native community, had control over what we did in that. And the cops came and they heard us, not the other way around. Today, SisterWatch, the cops come in and they tell you what, wherefore, and how. It's -- just they run the whole show. It's ridiculous. But back then the organizations would come in. Like, at that time I was working with Hey-way'-noqu', counselling. Some of the women coming to our -- to get counselling, they had been sexually assaulted by the cops. And we brought that to the quarterly meeting and, after complaints from different organizations, they eventually identified those two cops. And right now there's no accountability for that kind of sexual violence coming from the police. And my cousin -- this is -- I know it's anecdotal but I need to say it, anyway -- on my reserve I went home because I'm trying to adopt a little guy from home that's -- they want to adopt him into the non-native world, so I'm trying to adopt him -- and I went home and my cousin was telling me what happened to her. Her husband is actually
my cousin and she -- I guess she's my
cousin-in-law or something, but I'm really close
with her. He was beating on her and she called
the cops and they came -- and she'd been
drinking -- and they said to her, well, if you
give me a blowjob, I will lock him up for the
night, is what they said to my cousin. So in
this day and age it's still going on. And
there's -- there's no system to address that.
And when -- you know, we -- we have no
credibility, no integrity of the eyes of the
cops. We have no voice. And so the sexism with
the police has to be addressed. I understand the
whole issue of racism with the police, but I
think it's just -- I think that's spoken enough
of and what I really want to focus on is male
violence against women; like, the stories I gave
at the very beginning with my mom's friend, who
got killed by her husband. You know, the --
Sharon MacIver often says that the native
patriarchs worked very well with the white
patriarchs; they'd collude to keep native women
down. And it's very true.

This one I think is so important as well --
I should have put is higher maybe -- the
enforcement of the prostitution laws. The
Vancouver Police Department refused to enforce
that law. And the -- I was pretty disappointed
this morning that there was such a pro-sex work
perspective being delivered. And I come at it
from a completely different perspective. I
believe that prostitution should be abolished.
And people say, but it's a choice; we have a
choice to choose prostitution. And the irony
behind it is why is it the women who have zero
choices that are in prostitution? Is it really a
choice then when you have zero choices?

Our reserve came apart in the 1980s. Indian
Affairs implemented an end-isolation policy and
our reserve died, really, in the 80s, and a lot
of our people ended up homeless in
Campbell River. They were with the beach boys,
there was homelessness in Vancouver, and there
was some horrendous couch surfing on another
reserve where we were promised housing and it
never came through. And in that time -- where
was I going with that? -- oh, oh, yeah, okay, I
remember now -- in that time a lot of our people ended up in really dire conditions of homelessness and some of my relatives -- like, close relatives, my first cousins -- are now, as little children, were being prostituted in the Downtown Eastside. And they are still there now. They are still there now in the Downtown Eastside. I don't agree with the organizations being poverty pimps. I don't agree with them using native women to keep saying, look it, we're servicing 5,000 people a year or whatever they're saying, and they get funding to keep, keep these native women in a holding pattern, you know? And native women have a lot of needs because of everything that's been stolen from us and we have a lot of needs that have to be met and we can't feel guilty about saying that our needs have to be met. You know, we have substandard, we've had our children stolen, you know, we struggle with our addictions like my mom did, and -- all those needs have to be addressed. And as long as those needs aren't addressed -- the poverty and the homelessness -- we are forced into that; we are forced into prostitution against our will. Yeah, I can't say enough about that whole issue of the way that they're dealing with the prostitution law. And what I'm really afraid of right now is what this inquiry is going to do about prostitution. What are the recommendations that are going to come at the end? Are you going to agree to keep our sisters in a holding pattern, to be forever sentenced to the streets selling your body? You know, my sister was headed down that path. And she went and tried to -- she told me this herself -- she went and tried to turn a trick and partway through, she just run out of the room and never went back. I don't want that for my sister. I don't want that for my grandchildren, my granddaughters. I want better. I want better for native women. And when I talk like this, people think I hate those women that are doing it now. I don't -- there's no way that I hate those women. I love them. I want better for them. You know? And they are my family and my relations that are there now, and I just ache when I see how they have to live. It's not right
that they have to live like that.

I have three more or four more. One is -- I
better speed up a little -- accountability of the
Crown counsel in the charges that get laid. You
know, we have the police that don't do a proper
investigation, but if they do a proper
investigation and then they deliver that
information to Crown, the decision is up to Crown
about whether they lay charges are not and more
often than not they won't lay charges when it's
Indigenous people involved. And there's no
accountability. You can't appeal. You can't go
back and say you had a lot of -- enough
information to lay a charge, to successfully lay
a charge. But there is no way to appeal to Crown
counsel.

Obviously, the adoption of Indigenous
children into non-Indigenous homes, and I speak
on that one from my little niece -- or my big
niece now, I guess. She's a big girl.

And I won't dwell on this next one either,
the utter failure of the sexual assault laws, you
know, from Jian Ghomeshi, to the taxi driver that
raped that woman in Halifax, to that judge -- and
people don't know, but that judge in Alberta,
he -- that was a native woman he was talking to
when he said, why didn't you just -- what did he
say to her? -- curve your bum down so he wouldn't
penetrate or whatever.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

FAY BLANEY: They didn't really say that was a native
woman, but that was. They kept that message a
secret, I don't know why. But the judiciary are
unteachable. It's horrible that the judges think
they know it all already and they don't want to
listen. So they really have a lot of work cut
out for them around sexual assaults. And the
larger society is addressing that, so I don't
want to talk too much about it. But I hope that
the inquiry will back that up, especially the
campaigns that are going on now that started in
the States and -- their -- the Me Too campaign
and the other one, It's Time or something, that
other one.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

FAY BLANEY: Time's up?

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Time is up, that's it, yeah.
FAY BLANEY: Yeah, yeah.

And the last one -- I'm probably going to speak against everybody else, but anyway, that's me, Ms. Contrary -- I don't really like the idea of a memorial. I know it's in the terms of reference that you're supposed to at the end of this process create a memorial for the murdered and the missing. I really have a hard time with that because it institutionalizes our victimization. Like Rosalyn was saying, yeah, we've been victimized all right, but we're not victims.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.

FAY BLANEY: We're survivors. And the memorial freaks me out because it puts us in eternity into this role of the victim of the murdered and missing, so ... So I'm opposed to the memorial, even though it's right there in the terms of reference.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Because it puts us in this mould or in this -- the memorial itself, can you elaborate a little bit more about it? Because it's --

FAY BLANEY: It will be a lasting legacy that says Indigenous women are victims.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.

FAY BLANEY: I don't want anything that's calling me a victim. Or any --

ROALYN IRING: Or me neither.

FAY BLANEY: Yes. We're not victims, but that will institutionalize it forever.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm. Yeah. Thank you.

FAY BLANEY: And I don't know why they decide that at the front end, anyway. It should be up to us what we want. It was probably Carolyn Bennett's idea.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you very much for sharing here.

And thank you for being here for Fay. I know you have known her throughout the years and, when you have done your introduction, I realized how much Fay has already done. We've not even heard her story. I realized the presence here and the your connection to her has already done so much impact because of her own experiences and that's why I appreciate today you sharing us with everybody else and -- your story, and making it public and agreeing to make it public so all
other people, everyone else who is also
interested, will be able to hear and be part of
that story. So thank you very much.

FAY BLANEY: Thank you.

DONNA DICKISON: And she spoke at a union
function, that's where I first heard her, and
that gave me the power to speak, that she
was so strong, and I never spoke about what went
on for me before that, and then after that I was
able to speak, after I heard her and started
working with her.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

DONNA DICKISON: She gave me the power. Thank you.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: The power, yeah. The inspiration;
right?

DONNA DICKISON: Yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. Thank you.

FAY BLANEY: And Donna does some very powerful things
with cop training now. Not just Donna, but she's
one of them that works with the -- yeah -- the
Justice Institute.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you very much. Thank you. It
is 5:49 p.m. We are going to conclude this
statement. Thank you very much.

Thank you everyone for being here. Thank
you.

(PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED AT 5:49 P.M.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION:

I, Jeffrey Brinkert, Official Reporter in
the Province of British Columbia, Canada, BCSRA
No. 369, do hereby certify:

That the proceedings were taken down by me
in shorthand at the time and place herein set
forth and thereafter transcribed, and the same is
a true and correct and complete transcript of
said proceedings to the best of my skill and
ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
 subscribed my name this 2nd day of May, 2018.

____________________
Jeffrey Brinkert
Official Reporter