National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
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Priscillia Tait,
In relation to Stella Tait,
Patricia Lee Evoy & Susan Tait

Statement gathered by Sheila Mazhari

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## II

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**Statement gatherer: Sheila Mazhari**

**Documents submitted with testimony:** none.
SHEILA MAZHARI: Yes, perfect. Thanks, Priscillia.
So, let's go into your full introduction.
PRISCILLIA TAIT: Okay.
SHEILA MAZHARI: Yeah.
PRISCILLIA TAIT: I'm a devoted Gitxsan Wet'suwet'en mom. I have a son who's 22. I volunteer my time in the Downtown Eastside and I've been volunteering with the Downtown Eastside Missing and Murdered Women's Memorial March. It's been 27 years. And I found out that my two late cousins, Stella and Susan Tait, who were last seen -- who passed on in the Downtown Eastside. Susan, my late cousin, it's her birthday today, April 5th. So, she would have been 59. They were part of the -- and Stella's about, I think two or three years younger. Anyways, five of them were part of the '60s scoop and two who have passed on.
And I'm here in support of my late -- [Cousin's daughter], who is here to testify. And my -- what I know -- what I know about my cousins, I've met them when I was like a little girl, I think 10 or 11 when they were visiting us in Moricetown. And -- yeah, that's -- I think that's the first time and I remember their beautiful smile, their laughter. Especially Stella, she just had this infectious laugh. And I thought it was so cool 'cause she hitchhiked from Vancouver to Moricetown. But now that it's like wow, an 18-year-old hitchhiking? And she was -- after 18 I think the foster parents they have to let them go 'cause of the -- legal age is 18. So, I thought that was pretty young. So, my community, which is Moricetown, they didn't support my cousins at all. So, there was like no support at all, no resources for my two late cousins and they ended up in the Downtown Eastside.
And I guess my compassion is to -- to hopefully have this violence against women to be stopped. And we do need resources, especially for our youngsters 'cause I don't want them in --
ending up, you know, like my late cousins. And what I'm asking is the Province of B.C. needs to raise the age for aging out of foster care to 25 years old. Aboriginal communities need programs to assist youth in continuing with their education or transitioning into satisfying employment. So, that's what the federal government and with the -- with our Aboriginal communities. Third, I would like the cities, for example, Vancouver, it would be nice to see more support for inner city programs oriented toward Aboriginal youth and families 'cause a lot of our Aboriginal kids are in foster care and a lot of them are with non-Aboriginal families. So, definitely we need more resources, so this wouldn't escalate to fostering them out to non-Aboriginal families. So, that's my testimony. Misiyh.

SHEILA MAZHARI: Thank you.

(HEARING ADJOURNED)
(HEARING RECONVENED)

PRISCILLIA TAIT: Okay, I would like -- oh my --
SHEILA MAZHARI: To add Stella into --
PRISCILLIA TAIT: -- oh yeah. I would like to add my late cousin Stella, who's -- I'm not sure her birthdate, but I'm pretty sure she's a few years younger than late Stella -- Susan Tait, whose birthday is today, she would have been 59 years old. And -- and I guess what I wanted to add is that -- I wanted to see if there's more support for our youth because I know from my son is having a hard time looking for work. And, yeah -- it's like he keeps applying and applying and they won't hire him. And it's like what is this? I know -- yeah, that's all I have concern is like 'cause I see so many of our youth -- some of our youth on the streets selling cigarettes in the Downtown Eastside. So, I really hope there's more programs for youth and families, so we can keep them together. Especially with our education so they can strive their goals, their dreams, you know?

SHEILA MAZHARI: And how old is your son?
PRISCILLIA TAIT: Twenty-two. He's part Kwakwaka'wakw and Gitxsan Wet'suwet'en. So, yeah, I'm proud of him 'cause he doesn't drink, smoke or do drugs so he's -- so proud of him.

SHEILA MAZHARI: And did you want to say anything about the other death of a youth that you were...

PRISCILLIA TAIT: Oh yeah. It was outside on Jackson Avenue, not too far from Oppenheimer Park. It was a 19-year-old youth, Aboriginal girl that passed away. And it seemed like there was no support for her at all 'cause she was, I guess, out -- out of -- what is it called? Age...

SHEILA MAZHARI: Aging out.

PRISCILLIA TAIT: Aging out in the foster care. It was pretty sad. And we lost another youth two years ago. So, this is just so many of our youth passing on and I know across Canada too because of the lack of water and housing, health care and education. So, I wouldn't mind seeing the money that's given to the Aboriginal people given to us, rather than the -- I don't know, what are they called? Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, which is the top and then it goes to the managers, supervisors. I wouldn't mind seeing that money from their salaries to -- to us, to our youth. So, that's my pet peeve I guess. So, misiyh.

SHEILA MAZHARI: Thank you. And the name of the youths that passed away, the young girl across Oppenheimer Park --

PRISCILLIA TAIT: I forgot her name.

SHEILA MAZHARI: And this was in -- in what year was that?

PRISCILLIA TAIT: I think it was four or five years ago.

SHEILA MAZHARI: Okay. And the other -- did -- did you remember the other girls name?

PRISCILLIA TAIT: Yeah, what was her name? I know her mom used to work for YWCA Crabtree -- [G.E.].

SHEILA MAZHARI: That's her -- her mom, of the --

PRISCILLIA TAIT: Yeah.

SHEILA MAZHARI: How do you spell --

PRISCILLIA TAIT: [G.E.].

SHEILA MAZHARI: Mm-hm.

PRISCILLIA TAIT: [G.E.].
SHEILA MAZHARI: And that's the mother of -- and how
old was -- was this --
PRISCILLIA TAIT: Nineteen.
SHEILA MAZHARI: -- this is the girl outside
Oppenheimer Park?
PRISCILLIA TAIT: No, this is --
SHEILA MAZHARI: Or this is a different one?
PRISCILLIA TAIT: -- yeah.
SHEILA MAZHARI: They were both 19?
PRISCILLIA TAIT: Yeah.
SHEILA MAZHARI: Okay. And what year was this, the
other one?
PRISCILLIA TAIT: It might've been three years ago.
SHEILA MAZHARI: Okay.

(STATEMENT CONCLUDED)