Archie Pootlass, in relation to Donna Pootlass
Statement gathered by Daria Boyarchuk
II

NOTE 1

Where not required by other statute, redactions to this public transcript have been made pursuant to Rule 55 of the Commission’s Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice, which provides for “the discretion to redact private information of a sensitive nature where it is not material to the evidence to be given before distributing the information to the Parties. The National Inquiry will consider the public interest in releasing this type of information against the potential harmful impact on the individual whose personal information is at issue.”

NOTE 2

The use of square brackets [ ] in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. The use of a strikethrough mark indicates where an error was found in the original transcription. Amendments to this transcript were made by Susan Grant, Legal Assistant with National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SGLTBQ on September 26, 2018 at Vancouver, British Columbia. Ms. Grant listened back to the source audio recording of the proceeding to make the amendments.
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Documents submitted with oral statement: none
--- Upon commencing on Friday, April 6, 2018
at 9:24 a.m.

Ms. Daria Boyarchuk: Hi, my name is Daria Boyarchuk, and we're here, um, on April 6th, 2018. It is 9:24 in the morning, and as a statement gatherer for the National Inquiry for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, I'm very honoured to have you here, Archie, to, um, to be surrounded by you and your family. Because I know, as you told me earlier, you have, you have a lot to share and you have been holding it in your heart for a very long time. And you have also been here to support the statement that your wife has given. And so you've already experienced, you've heard many stories of other people, but you haven't had a chance to release your own emotions and to honour your sister. So right now, this is your moment to, um, to share your story and before we begin, I would like to ask you to sign the consent form.

Mr. Archie Pootlass: Yes, before we begin, could I, could we -- I like to request we open in prayer.

Ms. Daria Boyarchuk: Okay.

Mr. Archie Pootlass: It's in our, our --

Ms. Daria Boyarchuk: Sure.

Mr. Archie Pootlass: -- (inaudible) we --
Statement – Public

Archie Pootlass
(Donna Pootlass)

1 whatever we do in life, we --

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yes.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: -- the first thing

we do is we open in prayer.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yes, let's do that.

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: Creator, thank you

for this beautiful day, and thank you for the people that

are helping us on our journey. I thank you for everything

that's going to happen here today, and I just pray that

you'll give Archie the strength that he needs to do his

statement. Thank you for the elder and the support worker

that's in the room with us, and our daughter Denise, and

the person that's taking the statement. Thank you for

everybody that's here. And we pray that you'll just be

with us and lead us and guide us in everything that we do

from this time on. (Speaking Nuxalk).

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you, very

much. If it, it's okay, I would ask, I would like to ask

everyone to introduce yourself, and, um, would you, would

you like to start?

MS. DENISE POOTLASS: I'm Denise Pootlass

Wilson. I'm, um, the daughter of Archie Pootlass.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you.

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: I'm Dorothy

Pootlass, and I'm the wife of Archie Pootlass.
MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: I'm Archie Pootlass.

My given name, my Nuxalk name is Osencreek (ph). It means, um, power from the sun, from deep within. That's a traditional Chief's name given to me by my, my oldest brother who is the head Chief of our tribe. Um, I come from Bella Coola, predominantly a First Nations community, in the central coast of British Columbia. Um, population is about right now close to 3,000 people, and, um, about 1,800 of those people are Nuxalk people, my family. And I'm, um, myself, personally, I'm retired. Um, I was the, um, the elected Chief. Probably the longest be serving Chief of our, of our tribe. You know, Chief for 20 years. So, and, um, I did a lot of things there to work with our -- to help our people. And an example is I put a healing plan in place for us back in '90 -- '96. And prior to that I, um, built a safe house for women and children. Built a community hall. Sports and recreation activities in our community. And um, I also built a, um, fairly large school, where we offer our language, our culture and our history. And, um, I also, um, added on to the, to the school that, that we built with, um -- I put forward, developed a college where we -- joint venture with other post-secondary institutions like University of B.C. and Simon Fraser and Thompson River University. We've developed a good relationship there, and education is key.
for our healing. So that's just a very quick snapshot of who I am.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. Thank you.

Thank you very much.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Okay.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: And could you please introduce yourself?

MS. VERA JONES: Hi. My name is Vera Jones. I'm a resolution health support worker for the Indian Residential School Survivor Society.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: The Indian residential school?

MS. VERA JONES: Survivor Society.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Survivor Society.

MS. VERA JONES: Thank you.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you. Um, Archie, um, I would like, um, for us to go over the consent form.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Yes.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: And it is a consent form, as I have mentioned earlier.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Um hum.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: That will either authorize the inquiry to disclose your voice, your picture, your image, your story, or it will not -- um, the second
option, for example, you may not -- the inquiry may not
disclosure any information about you or your loved ones.
So, um, if, um, if you're comfortable at this point, if you
could, um, put your initials down here and in the box that
you think is most appropriate for you, and sign the name at
the bottom. Thank you. And Dorothy, if you can, if you
can sign as a witness as well. Thank you. And I can fill
out the rest, address and everything else. Thank you very
much.

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: Okay.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: So, Archie, we're
here, and we're here to hear your story. And, um, we're
here to learn and honour the story of your loved one.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: All right. Okay.
So I'd like to thank you for, for help -- helping us with
this. You know, um, (inaudible) [certainly] we've, um, I
think we've, um -- well my sister Donna Pootlass, we've
been -- she's been missing since 1954, you know, and -- the
summer of 1954. And like it, um, she, um, when she went
missing, we, um -- either, I think I was about seven years
old then. And my dad, he -- we had -- he was married three
times. His first wife died of TB, and he had one child
with his first wife. And then, um, he was, he married
again and with his second wife, he had, um, six children.
You know, so that's where, where Donna was, um, from the
second wife's family. So she was my half-sister.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Um hum.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: But Donna had a, a, um, twin brother --

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Um hum.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: -- and his name was Donald (ph), Don (ph). And he passed away, I think it was about 12 years ago. And um, and his -- my dad's third wife was my mom, and here he had, um -- my mom and dad had ten, ten children together. And when he passed away, my mom re-married and she had four more children. Big family.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. It is a big family.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Huge family. But, um, now I would like to share with my -- back in 1954 I was, in summer, I was seven years old. And Donna, I believe, she would have been, um, 16, 15 -- yeah, 16 years old, I think. And what, what happened here was, um, I could remember, um, when, um, it was determined that she was missing, I think it was after a couple of days from when she went missing. I don't know the exact date, but it was in the summer of '54, and (inaudible) were in the commercial fishing season. There's a huge fleet of, um, gillnetters in Bella Coola at the time. So, um, it was determined that she, that she was missing and probably...
hadn't seen her for, for a few days and, um, my dad — who
was the elected, he was the hereditary Chief, the
traditional Chief, but he was also elected Chief counsel —
and I remember we, um, he had us help him look for her.

Some of us went door-to-door and
throughout the village, and it wasn't very big at that
time. So we couldn't -- nobody found her. It didn't take
us very long to do that, pass to see if anybody's seen her.
No results. So he started looking throughout the mountain
native communities. There's two communities there: Bella
Coola and Hagensborg. So that was about 20 kilometers
away. And (inaudible) from, from Bella Coola. And we --
he looked around there as well. Yeah, he looked there as
well, and, um, we had, um -- he organized a -- the
community started looking, helping us at that point, and I
think he reported to the RCMP, and the RCMP did a little of
a search with us, but...

And then I remember him going to the, the
dock, the government dock, where all the, um, all the
vessels, the commercial vessels were, you know, located
there, eh? So I know he went boat to boat. There where --
I remember being with my dad. I can remember walking along
the, um, the docs there, looking under the, the big, large
dock where we received passenger and freight boats from
Vancouver. We looked -- I looked, I remember, with him. I,

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there was a, a fuel station there, and I remember walking
with him towards the fuel station, and I remember him and I
looking under the dock and under this huge building and my,
all my family was there. I remember my older brother,
Darryl (ph), was there. He's the oldest one of us.

(Inaudible) [There was no luck,] we couldn't find her. We
looked along the docs and we looked everywhere, you know.
And, um, then we went across the inlet --
he went over there, and started looking at the, there's a
fishing company across the bay, called Tallheo Cannery, and
he went there and he, he -- there was a big fishing fleet
there as well at the time. And he -- we had a lot of
family there and he, and he went door-to-door there, again,
asking if they had seen. No, nobody had seen her. So we
went back to the -- probably he was there for a good half
day looking, looking at the grounds all around the area and
that fishing camp. To me, it was a fishing camp. Canadian
Fish Company (ph).

I think, um, after we searched a little,
and I could also remember us going to a freight boat that
brought freight in from Vancouver. Um, so the roads
weren't very good to (inaudible) [out of Bella Coola yet]
and, um, they were just recently being built back in 1954,
so, Bella's not -- we -- the only route out was by, by air
at Bella Coola or, or by boat. And, um, there was a Road
there that within the -- out of Bella Coola Valley, but it wasn't a very good road. But still freight trucks didn't use that, that road, yet. So only, trucks and, and, you know vehicles. But, um, we looked in that -- we made some inquiries at the, with the freight company. I think the name of that that vessel that came into Bella Coola was called the Canadian Prince (ph).

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Canadian what?

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Prince (ph). I think that's what -- I remember that's one the vessels that came in. And probably -- then probably the freight -- had a freight of passengers, primarily freight, but it had a few rooms for passengers leaving Bella Coola -- lower mainland. And that was the, um, the best mode of (inaudible) [transportation] basically at the time in Bella Coola.

And, um, he made some inquiries and he talked to the, to the, um, the staff there, the captain and, um, and they, there was never a passenger named Donna. And they asked if there was a possibility that she could hide in that, that, that -- but, it is. (Inaudible) [It is]. She could have hidden (inaudible) [that boat deck]. He said,

"It's a two-day trip to Vancouver."

I remember, he said,
"No, we -- he doesn't recall."

He would -- they normally would get reports of people, if they had a stowaway, I guess. Nothing happened like that. So... anyway.

Probably a week or so the search was called off. But people still looked for her, thinking that she might -- if she drowned -- that she may come to the surface because you know that's what happens; she would come to the surface, eventually. And there was a large fishing fleet out there at the time, and (inaudible) if she did float to the surface, she drowned, there would have been, um, somebody would have found her. That fleet was huge and the inlet isn't that big. So that -- he, he came to the conclusion that she didn't drown in the inlet.

So, but he was pretty stressed out and that. And he was helping our leader, he liked the leader and he took this pretty hard. He just couldn't find her. And I remember that. And I remember us, um -- as a family -- we came together, and there was a lot of tears that day, especially from my, my older sister, my (inaudible) [lost] older sister. She was the second oldest in our family, my mom's family. She took it really hard because her and Donna were pretty close, and I shared with my family that I was going to make the statement today and she said to me -- which was kind of revealed to us what Donna did. She said --
this is her conversation with, with my sister Lorrain (ph)
- she says,
  "I'm going to leave you. I'm leaving now."
And Lorrain (ph), Lorrain (ph) was 12 years old at the time.
MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: How old? 12?
MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Twelve, thirteen years old. Maybe 13 years old, I think. And she said,
  "I'm leaving. (Inaudible) [I'm going to leave you now]."
But Lorrain didn't understand what that was all about (inaudible) physically leave Bella Coola (inaudible) [but she did]. So when it was determined that she was missing, lost, and (inaudible) [Lorraine] took it really hard, her and my dad. (Inaudible) [Bawled their eyes out]. I, I remember that. And so did my older brother. He was pretty close to her, too. The oldest in our family. And her twin brother, her twin brother, he took it really hard as well. And her biological brothers, the same mother. I, I can remember the pain that was resonating in our family, you know, and, um, but I kept, I kind of still visualize what her twin brother was doing. He just couldn't believe it. She did not share with any of her biological family members what she was doing, only to
my sister, who was her half-sister. [Inaudible] [Told her that she was going to] come back and [inaudible] [that she was going to get her, pick her up and] leave together. So I don't recall -- I was pretty young then, too.

But I don't recall any, too much support from the [inaudible] [, on the] investigation from the RCMP. And I asked my older brother and my sister who, who was really close to Donna. She said, she said, she said, um -- or, um, I asked if the RCMP helped with the search and I remember they did have a few conversations with my dad, like, they did look, but it wasn't a very strong effort, I think - in my opinion. I was pretty young then. And I asked my brother this morning if he remembers, if he recalls the search. He said,

"Only what we did."

And I said,

"What about the RCMP?"

And he said,

"Well, maybe they were there, but maybe."

But he doesn't remember [inaudible] [anything] too [inaudible] was, at the time, in those years there were, relationships were very poor. There was no relationship at all with our community, not like today.

But, um, even today, we really need to work at the
relationships. So, um, we came to the conclusion
(inaudible) [my brother] and I, my sister, the efforts
weren't really that strong from the, um, police services.

But we're asking you to help us with this.

If you, um, look at, research the archives see if you could
find anything about their reports and share that with us.

Because we really need to know. Being a leader and knowing
how governments operate, I do know that, um, RCMP do have
records of deaths and stuff like that. Churches have
records, you know, but our biggest source right now is
Indian and Northern Affairs. So we're asking you to help
us there as well, because any information about Donna - if
there is any information - I, I strongly believe she's
still here. I believe she's alive. I know that she's
here.

So when her brother, two brothers, passed
away, she got word. She was -- our community is pretty
small, and a few people said after -- a couple of days
after our, our brother was buried at our cemetery, there
was a woman standing by his grave. So we feel that may
have been Donna. We didn't get the information right away.

As soon as I got it, I went straight there to see if the
vehicle, the woman was still there, and I immediately went
into the valley to look for that lady, because I heard that
there was a lady standing over his grave, singled out only
his grave. So, you know, I, I feel that the only other person that he would know that come to show respects to him would have been his, his twin sister. We know this, our family (inaudible) [where] this was reported to us.

I called a couple of friends up in a neighbouring village, Algatcha (ph), to see if they know of anybody passing through that looked like my brother, like her twin brother, and no one, no, nobody's seen anything. That's an example that -- but we know that she's still her with us. Yeah.

And when my brother, my brother -- her oldest biological brother now, he was the Chief, head Chief, traditional Chief -- he, when he passed, the same scenario. This time, my wife seen a vehicle in front of our house, our house -- or a truck, a pick-up truck. It went slowly past, stopped, paused in front of our place. So, I mean -- she told me -- she said,

"There's a vehicle, there's a vehicle outside."

I thought maybe a friend from up country. So I immediately went out the door and by the time I got out there, the vehicle was gone, the vehicle had left. I just went to get a jacket and put my shoes on, and (inaudible) [it was leaving]. So I followed it, and I missed it. (Inaudible). That was after my brother -- the
oldest brother, half-brother -- he passed away. That was, that would have been her biological brother. His name is Lawrence (ph). He was our Chief. But we didn't see that vehicle around there long. Knew, knew the valley, knew how to get around. So...

And a relative of mine, he's, um, his wife is from Mount Currie, and she knew, she knows that we are looking for, for our sister. And we thought maybe Mount Currie, and (inaudible) [it's known] to that. Her uncle, his name is [Uncle 1]. He left Bella Coola, I think it was just before Donna. Everybody thought he drowned. (Inaudible) [He drowned.] It was about, um, I think about 20 years ago. He's still inaudible) [He showed up, in] Mount Currie. His, um -- they contacted his daughter. Her name is [Uncle 1’s Daughter]. And some of our (inaudible) [, word] back to ask if that [Uncle 1], if [Uncle 1] is still alive and that he had a relationship -- that was a, his, um, my dad's second wife was [Uncle 1]'s sister. So [Uncle 1] was an uncle to Donna. So they had a good, they had a very good relationship. He went missing shortly after Donna. And it was -- we were told that Donna and [Uncle 1], her uncle [Uncle 1], connected (inaudible) [with each other]. And now his membership, he transferred his membership to Mount Currie. He's now with Mount Currie First Nation. And the, the -- somehow his daughter
connected with him. Her name was [Uncle 1’s Daughter], and they, they got together and she went to visit him, and she didn't -- she (inaudible) [over] looked at Donna there. He probably wouldn't have shared anything. There's confidentiality and they had that kind of relationship. So, um, we believe that our sister is still alive. And there's a few other stories that I could share, but I think, um, my, um, my mom may have had -- she may have, um, traveled to Vancouver. She may have had her room paid by Donna at a hotel, (inaudible). And, um, her breakfast. The story is she went to pay her breakfast and this is what she shared with us, she said somebody paid about her breakfast, but there was nobody there in the restaurant. Somebody paid for her breakfast. You know, and then, um, she went to check-out and her room was paid for. You know, and she said, "Well, I didn't pay for my room. (Inaudible) [I’m going to pay for it right now]." And the desk clerk told her, "No, your room is paid for." And she says, "(inaudible)." [No I don’t –] She says, "I don’t know nobody here in

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(inaudible) [Boston Bar]. I have no friends here. I have no family here. So who would have paid my room? And there's nobody else traveling with us."

So my brother said to me that it's probably my sister. I believe it's my sister.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: When did your mother go to Vancouver?

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: You had -- it was about 25 years ago, 20-25 years ago. She'd travel, frequently travel to Vancouver. And that was the only time that she ever had her room paid for, and breakfast. She never experienced that. It's the one and only time she, she did.

And she has -- she stopped there a few times, and went to that same restaurant, but they did look at the kitchen, they looked at the kitchen to see who was there, after she left. After breakfast, she looked at the kitchen. There's people in the background, but she, she glanced, eh? She said she glanced there. Then she left and she went to, she went to the kitchen -- or the restaurant again to see if there was anybody there she recognized. (Inaudible) [Nobody.] [T]hey were native people there in that kitchen, but was it Donna? May have -
- Donna may have left just briefly. So that's what she thinks. You know, personally, my daughter in 1973, or no --

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: '89.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: (Inaudible) [When you went through].


MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: 1989 through, through -- little waitress there spoke to her, little waitress. (Inaudible).

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: We were just, um, going through to, um, to Mount Currie and Pemberton to go pick some pine mushrooms, and, um, and this was, um, I think it was around the end of September or -- no, or maybe beginning of October. Um, we stayed in Cache Creek the night, and then we carried on with our trip, and we stopped at the restaurant there. And, um, and, um, there was four of us there, and I was looking at my, looking at the menu, and we were going to have breakfast at the restaurant.

And, and then the waitress - I didn't notice - but my partner at the time, he was kind of nudging me and he said, "I think she's talking to you."

And I said,

"Oh."

But he goes, but she's calling you
"Val".
And I said,
"Oh."
And I looked up at her and I said -- and
she goes,
"How are you Val?"
And I said,
"I don't even -- I'm not Val."
And she goes,
"Come on, Val, seriously. How are you
doing?"
And I said,
"I'm not Val. My name's Denise."
And then I, I looked at, at my, at all
the people that I was with, and I said,
"What's my name?"
And they said,
"Denise."
And she, she says,
"Oh, my gosh. I can't believe this."
And she goes, um,
"Val's up at the hall right now or
someplace doing a workshop."
And we were traveling with other people
and they, they wouldn't take me there, because I got
curious after. And I called my dad right away and told him what happened. The lady said I looked just exactly like Val, everything about me. So...

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you.

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: -- and, oh, and it also happened, um -- maybe about years later -- I moved to Vancouver with my brother and, um, and we - at different times - went, um, to the corner store - and that was Mac's store - and, um, there were new, um, owners or management there and they, they sort of looked at me when I walked in that they were, like,

"Hi. How are you doing?"

And they're smiling, and I just thought,

"Oh, they're friendly people."

And I smiled back, and I said,

"I'm good."

And, and they said

"So when did you move here from Lillooet?"

So I kind of, like, you know, what's this -- this is like years after. And then my brother had the same situation. He went in there and they said,

"So you and your sister moved here from Lillooet?"

And we just -- so the story, it happened
a few times, and that's close, very close to Mount Currie.
So, yeah. Right away, we thought of my auntie Donna.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: So we, we feel that, that, um, Donna has a family, you know, (inaudible) [Denise is Pootlass,] her brother is Pootlass. So two having the same experience with, um, people who moved to Vancouver from, from Lillooet, you know, so it's -- Lillooet is pretty close to Boston Flats --

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Um hum.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: -- probably an hour apart.

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: Um, we were down --
I believe it was, um, there's a store down on Hastings. I believe it was the, um, Army and Navy, or somewhere down in that area, and we had his niece Donna with us. And there was a lady that was walking and I -- I didn't see the little girl, and so I started yelling her name. There was this elderly lady that was walking in the area as well, and I started saying, yelling Donna's name, and I said, "Donna, where are you, Donna?"
And I said,
"You can't run off, you got to stay close."
And then this elderly lady heard me
yelling for Donna, and as soon as she heard me, she started
getting really antsy, and she started running towards the
door, and she was gone. But, yeah. I was saying,
"Donna Pootlass, where are you?"
I was mentioning her name, and this
elderly lady looked really nervous about me yelling the
name Donna Pootlass, and as soon as she just kind of looked
back at me. And then I mentioned it to my husband, and this
lady thought I was talking to her. And he said,
"Where did she go?"
I said,
"She ran out the door as soon as I
started yelling Donna's name."
MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Um hum.
MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: Yeah, we tried to
go -- I tried to go out and see where she went, but she was
gone. But she was an older lady. So we've had --
MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: So those are, those
are some of the stories that we have and, um, then my --
our aunt, [Aunt 1] was her name, her married name, they
were best friends. And she, she --
MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: (Inaudible).
MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: -- she seen her at
bingo. I think it was at, um, it's the main bingo
(inaudible).
MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: (Inaudible) bingo hall, but she said that she spotted [Aunt 1] (inaudible).

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Yeah. They were best friends, but [Aunt 1] was in a residential school, and in the summer [Aunt 1] would be home in Bella Coola. And her and Donna would connect up and they were so close, best friends, eh? And [Aunt 1] and my mother are sisters. So Donna was a real, real good friend of [Aunt 1]. But [Aunt 1] seen her at a bingo game and she seen, (inaudible) [[Aunt 1]] there and she up and left]. [Aunt 1] knows her well. There was, they were the same age, I believe. Maybe [Aunt 1] is just a year or two older. So we would -- we thought we better get out there with this. We want to make this statement.

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: (Inaudible).

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: There's one other incident -- or a story. Recently, one of our therapists came into Bella Coola and his name -- he's from Chilliwack -- [Therapist]. [Therapist], um, said he may know Donna. He said that she lives in Chilliwack. So he, um, he shared with us, and gave us some information about, about this lady who was not originally from Chilliwack, and (inaudible) [Sto:lo nation] that's married into his family. He, he was a caregiver. He works in our community quite often with the young people, eh? With the youth? I think
it was about three years ago. He met with our family and
he said he was going back, and I gave him some information
-- he was asking us -- he knew that we were looking for our
sister, now, and he started helping us, looked in the
Sto:lo area, a huge, huge tribal territory (inaudible) [it
is]. And then he came back and then he -- we gave him
information and he went back to Chilliwack, and when we got
that information from him we -- he said he was going back
to Chilliwack, and then we told him we were going to hook
up with him right away, we're coming down. So we sent my
oldest brother, um - his name is Darryl - drove our oldest
(inaudible) [half] brother with him, Donna's biological
brother, his name is Arthur (ph). So they left Bella Coola
right now, the day after, um, [Therapist] was -- he had
time now to, to look and research to see if that was our
sister. And so our family left the next morning early. We
were going to hook up with him in Chilliwack, and then he
called back and, and he told us,

"No. It's not the same person."
He gave us -- I think he gave us her
birthday - that lady - and it wasn't, it wasn't our sister.
So then I called (inaudible) contacted my brother Darryl
(ph), and they turned around a came back from Williams
Lake. You see that just tells you we are still looking,
we're actively looking. So we think that she's still here.
Then --

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: How recent was this when the therapist told you that?

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Three years ago.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Three years ago.

Okay.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Try after that, I, um, we've been searching, we've left messages at Mount Currie, and Lillooet, and, um, I had a couple contact me and they were looking for family in Bella Coola. They were originally from -- it was a lady who was married to a fellow from, from Lillooet, or near Lillooet. I think it's Fountain First Nation, just a few miles from Lillooet, and; but her parents are -- her family is from Mount Currie. And I went to do -- I went and spoke to her and I made a trip down there, just, just to be with her, with them. And she mentioned that her uncle was [Uncle 1]. He had a -- he changed his name, but we knew him as [Uncle’s last name]. Oh no, sorry. [Uncle 1]. And she said that was his uncle. And she says,

"I understand that you're looking for your sister who is [Uncle 1]'s niece."

So we know that (inaudible) we wanted some more details. So I gave her that information and, and
she took me to her -- my wife and I, we went to visit her mother. And, um, um, who was also related to [Uncle 1], [Uncle 1]. I think, um, that was, um, his -- her mother was [Uncle 1]'s niece. So [Uncle 1] was her great-uncle.

So, but I -- what I, I tried to do here with I, I spoke in our language just a little, I said,

"(speaking Nuxalk),"

and she responded, she smiled, she said,

"(speaking Nuxalk)."

I said,

"It's a pleasure to meet you. You're Vera's mother."

And I said,

"Do you know [Uncle 1]?"

And she pointed at a picture on the wall.

(Inaudible) [She said, "That's my uncle."] Then I asked her about Donna, but she couldn't answer. Then I tested her out. I asked her, I told her, I said,

"Do you know (speaking Nuxalk)?"

That's Donna's Nuxalk name, (speaking Nuxalk). And she looked at me and she said,

"(speaking Nuxalk)."

And I said,

"(speaking Nuxalk) was raised by our aunt (speaking Nuxalk), and I was
there too.

And she said,

"(speaking Nuxalk)."

So you could -- I could clearly feel that she had some
blood ties with Nuxalk tribe. (Inaudible) she could speak
-- when I said a word to her, she spoke it clearly. Do you
remember that?

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: (Inaudible).

[Um’hmm]

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: So I said we're
looking for our sister. And I said to her she may have the
name Pootlass. My grandfather, our grandfather changed our
name, his name from Samuel King back in 1948, and he took
his name, his traditional name back in a (inaudible)
[Potlatch] ceremony and changed his name from King to
Pootlass. Pootlass is the Chief's name. So, so then, um,
the -- that she may be going with the name King, K-I-N-G.


MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: So I -- but now
she's, she may have used that name, reverted back -- you
see her name was King, Donna King, from 1938 to 1948,
changed to Pootlass.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: 1938 to 1940?

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Um, '48. She was a
King. Her maiden name was King.
MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: So until 1948, she was King?

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Yeah. And, um, '48 onwards, she was Pootlass.

MS. DOROTHY POOTLASS: (Inaudible).

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: So she may, um, she could have used her -- the old name, King. Um, so that's basically our story. And we are looking for her. We really hope that we could find her. So...

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you. Thank you. It is, um, 10:19 in the morning on April 6th, and we're about to conclude our testimony with Archie Pootlass. Thank you.

MR. ARCHIE POOTLASS: Now, is there a -- does this inquiry have any support -- --- Whereupon the statement concluded at 10:19 a.m.
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best of my skill and ability, accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording the foregoing proceeding.

Carolyn McCarthy, Court Reporter