Sunday April 8, 2018

Statement - Volume 398:

Wendy Redknap, In relation to Eunice Ester Bird

Statement gathered by Daria Boyarchuk

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II
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 398
April 8, 2018
Witness: Wendy Redknap

| Statement by Wendy Redknap                      | 1 |
| Reporter’s certification                        | 12 |

Statement Gatherer: Daria Boyarchuk

Documents submitted with testimony: None.
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.”
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Hi, my name is Daria Boyarchuk, and I am the statement gatherer for the National Inquiry for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It is April 8th, 2018, and we're here in Vancouver. It is 3:16 in the afternoon, and I'm here with Wendy Bird, who has come here --

WENDY REDKNAP: Wendy Redknap.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Wendy ...?

WENDY REDKNAP: Redknap.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay. I apologize for that. Wendy Redknap has come here to share her story with us today, and Wendy had -- had chosen not to give her consent at this stage because she's still not sure, as I understand, whether she wants to allow her story to remain confidential, whether she wants to have her story to be private or whether she wants to -- to disclose. So she may be able to make that decision at the end of her statement, but we will leave it up to her.

And I will allow our health provider to introduce herself at this point.

REBECCA BERMAN: My name's Rebecca Berman.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you. And we have Wendy here. Wendy, this is your time to share your story. And like I said, there is no right or wrong. If there's something that you want to tell us about yourself, about why you're here, I would love to hear about it.

WENDY REDKNAP: My name is Wendy Redknap. That's my married name.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.

WENDY REDKNAP: My sister Eunice, Eunince Ester Bird, she -- she went missing when she was 16. When she was 16, I was 8. That was in the year of 1964 at the end of the summer. Her nickname that the family called her was "Snooksie," [phonetic] and her birth date is [birthdate] so she would be 71 right now.


WENDY REDKNAP: 9-- -- she was born -- or, sorry, she went missing 1964.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay. And born in 1957?
WENDY REDKNAP: 1947.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: '47, I apologize.
WENDY REDKNAP: Yep.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.
WENDY REDKNAP: So --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: And her full name is
Eunice Ester ...?
WENDY REDKNAP: Bird, B-i-r-d.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Bird, thank you. When did she --
what happened to her? How did you find out she went missing?
WENDY REDKNAP: Well, my family -- she just never came home, and me as a child, I just always remembered the last time I seen her was -- we were staying at the Cannery, at Cassiar Cannery, and I slept in this room with my grandparents. It was like a huge room, and it -- there's like a double bed where the four of us kids slept together.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.
WENDY REDKNAP: There was me, my sister Pat [phonetic], my brother Alex [phonetic] -- they're my two youngest brothers, Alex and [D.] [phonetic]. And then in the same room was my grandparents, Ester and Robert Reece [phonetic]. And then during the night, it was dark, and Snooksie came into the room -- like, I woke up, and I seen her talking with our grandmother, and our grandmother was speaking the language and said to get her train case. So Snooksie got the train case and gave it to her because she wanted her last paycheque from the Cannery, and then that's all I remember, and I think I fell asleep. But that was my last memory of my sister, was I -- she came into the room to ask for her last cheque.

And then digging information about -- about her last time anybody seen her, just asking her friends over the years, she was at a birthday party. Other -- some friends said they -- the last time they seen her was out at the highway. She was hitchhiking. She was probably on her way to Quesnel to see her boyfriend again. Nobody ever said the name of the boyfriend.

My parents put in a -- they phoned the RCMP to -- for that -- for my sister, and they said there's nothing they can do. She's 16. She's
probably a runaway, and there's nothing that we can do, so there was nothing ever done that way for my sister.

And I feel that's horrible because nowadays, if, like, you think of a 16-year-old, and you think, "Okay. They're gone. Help me. Help me."

But they say, "No. There's nothing we can do. They ran away."

So, like, I feel like if the RCMP took the call seriously and did -- went looking for my sister, maybe they might have prevented her from leaving town. Maybe they might have prevented her from being killed or whatever could have happened to her. You know, our minds are just all kinds of stories. We don't know. We don't know if she's dead. We don't know if she's somewhere living with her nice, big, new family, you know, which would be wonderful.

But -- and then my father would go on trips. Like, he was -- he was a commercial fisherman. He was a journeyman carpenter, and he'd have to go to Vancouver for different meetings, like union meetings. And then when he was in Vancouver, he'd walk and see if he could see her anywhere.

And then when he was older, he -- like, I taught him how to drive, and then he -- they went on road trips, and they'd go to all parts of BC, and they'd be looking. My mom and dad would be looking for my sister. But the sad thing was family and friends over the years, you know, I think they think they were helping. But they were probably just handing along gossip.

You know, "Oh, I seen her here on Galiano Island. She's working for BC Hydro. She's the one with the big pole that changes the lightbulbs, you know."

"Oh, I seen her getting on a bus in Vancouver, and she had a little boy, and we ran to try and catch up, but we couldn't catch up with her."

So they were -- to me, they were toying with my parents' feelings. Maybe they thought they were helping, you know, but that's -- we don't know.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So when the police called, they said that she was a runaway. Did your family try --
did you guys open the case, or what -- what
happened? Did the case -- actually was opened?
WENDY REDKNAP: No, nothing.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: No? Okay.
WENDY REDKNAP: Nothing was done. They said
apparently she was -- like, had run away from
home before.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.
WENDY REDKNAP: And even though they probably -- say,
for instance, this is hearsay. I don't know how
true it is -- or just things that were passed
down through the years. Say perhaps she had run
away, and the RCMP did bring her home once
before, and then, okay, the parents phone and
say, "Okay. She's gone."
And then they say, "Okay. We can't do
anything. Your daughter's a runaway. She's 16.
She doesn't want to be home anymore. We're not
going to go looking for her anymore, you know."
So then they didn't do any paperwork, no
report, you know. But say perhaps they did do
something. Maybe --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right.
WENDY REDKNAP: -- maybe she would be with us still.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right, right. What about your
parents? Did they talk about your -- did they
talk about your sister? Like, how -- how did
they take it?
WENDY REDKNAP: They were hurt. My mother was a
Christian, and she'd pray her long prayers, and
while she was praying, she'd be crying, you
know --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.
WENDY REDKNAP: -- praying for the safety of the whole
family and her.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: What was she like, your sister?
WENDY REDKNAP: The memories I have of her, as a
little one was I felt like -- I felt like I was
her favourite, and then my -- my brother was a
teenager, and I felt he favoured my other sister,
and then when -- I remember a fight that, okay,
they have to do the dishes, and she'd stick up
for me and say, "Oh, she doesn't have to do the
dishes." You know, that type of thing.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.
WENDY REDKNAP: Silly little memories like that of
her. I questioned people over the years what
kind of person she was, and her friends would
say, "She was so happy. She was so friendly.
She was kind. If -- if you needed anything, she
would take the shirt off her back and give it to
you, you know."

Recently, I asked some elders in my family
what their memories of her were, and they kind of
went, like, like, struggling for words. Like
they -- it's like a part of their memory that
they let go of, you know. They -- they didn't
know what to say to me about my sister.

WENDY REDKNAP: But, you know, with Facebook, I can
connect with other people that knew her, and
they -- there's a Cassiar Cannery group on
Facebook, and somebody piped up on there, "Does
anybody know where my good friend Snooksie is?"
You know, and then my sister got on and tried to
connect with her, tried to private message her.
But we're thinking the woman's in her 70s and not
really that computer literate.

WENDY REDKNAP: So there wasn't a real connection
there, but it's good to know people remember her.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right. And does she -- did you have
a chance to -- to put -- to get your sister's
name on CBC's list of missing women, the like the
list of women who went missing?

WENDY REDKNAP: On the Highway of Tears?

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yes.

WENDY REDKNAP: Yeah. My sister --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Is she on that list?

WENDY REDKNAP: -- Crystal [phonetic] --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

WENDY REDKNAP: -- she's really connected with that,
and she's the reason that we're here right now --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

WENDY REDKNAP: -- so she looks for groups like this
to make sure that they know about our sister,
so --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm. And your sister -- your
sister's name, the one who's giving a statement
at the moment?

WENDY REDKNAP: Crystal, her name is Crystal Bird.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Crystal Bird, okay. Thank you.

WENDY REDKNAP: She wasn't even born when my sister
Eunice went missing.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: So she doesn't really know her, other than the stories --
WENDY REDKNAP: Yeah.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: -- that you share? Okay. Do you guys talk still today about the -- about Eunice and --
WENDY REDKNAP: Crystal and I talk quite a bit. We stir up whatever memories that are there --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.
WENDY REDKNAP: You know, any facts about her, we share that. Any names that come up that might -- you know, this person -- we really want to know what that boyfriend's name in Quesnel is. You know, we asked the different friends that we know. The -- the birthday that Snooksie was going to, her name was A. Stewart [phonetic], and I connected with her on Facebook, and she -- she's the only one, I think, that said she -- she thinks she went hitchhiking to Quesnel to see her boyfriend, but she doesn't have a name for us, so ...
DARIA BOYARCHUK: So your family doesn't have any idea or, like, her friends have no idea the -- the -- who her boyfriend was, or they've never met him, or could never give you his name, so you couldn't really connect --
WENDY REDKNAP: No.
WENDY REDKNAP: I think it would be awesome if the RCMP would look through their archives and see if they have any kind of record on Eunice Ester Bird --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.
WENDY REDKNAP: -- and see what was done back then, to see if she was a runaway and how many times did they bring her home, and was there -- was there anything that they put on record about when my mom and dad seen them last in '64 -- and if they have her fingerprints, if they're able to -- to check those fingerprints with other -- other things that come up. I don't know. It's sad to think this way, but say a Jane Doe was found --
DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'mm-hmm.
WENDY REDKNAP: -- can they check those fingerprints just, you know, so we would know. There's one thing that -- it's not -- it's not a fact. I don't know if you want to call it a fairytale,
but years ago, before I gave my life to the Lord, I went to a psychic, downtown, Prince George. And I had a picture of my father, and he was holding my sister Eunice, and she was like -- she looked like maybe she was three years old. So they were in one of those photo booths, and I brought this picture. And then when I sat with the psychic, the psychic said, "So is this gentleman still with us?"

And I said, "That's my father, and, yeah, he's still alive."

And he -- she said, "Because one person in this picture is no longer with us."

And so then we kind of figured, okay, that's my sister. And then she said that she seen my sister in a car. She was hitchhiking and got picked up by two men, and they were feeding -- well, she said, "Your sister died not knowing."

And I said, "What do you mean?"

And she said, "'Not knowing' means that she was drinking alcohol."

So she wasn't aware that she was dead. They -- they picked her up, and they were drinking alcohol, and then they -- they buried her in a shallow grave. But where they buried her, they were coming out of Rupert, and they didn't cross traffic, and they went into a community that starts with a K.

So I thought, okay, coming out of Rupert, if you're going to cross traffic into Kitwanga or Kitwancool, you know, it couldn't have been those. And then recently, I thought, okay, the community could have been Kitimat because they wouldn't have crossed traffic.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

WENDY REDKNAP: And they said, "Okay. If you go there, not far off the turn off, you'll see in an old cattle crossing -- you'll see a cluster of Aspen." And she said, "You'll see a shallow grave, and that's where you're going to find your sister."

And then she said that one of the guy's names was [V.] or [B.] because she can hear the name [V.] or [B.] being called. And so when you think about it, it's like a fairytale. But then you don't know. You kind of want to have peace. You want to go look there and see,
you know, if it's -- how real it is. Are we
going to find my sister there?

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Have you ever tried going there?

WENDY REDKNAP: No.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: No.

WENDY REDKNAP: No. You -- you don't go to the police
like that, right --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: No.

WENDY REDKNAP: -- and say, "Okay. I talked to a
psychic, and we should go here."

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. No. I understand, of course.

WENDY REDKNAP: But that's -- when you have somebody
missing, and you're always hoping, you know --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

WENDY REDKNAP: -- when you travel, and you see
people's faces, and you look at them, and you
think, "Oh, that looks like one of my sisters.
That looks like my brother. That looks --" you
know, and you see -- and then you sit with them
and talk and ask, "You know, are you -- you know,
where are you from? Are you from Rupert?"

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

WENDY REDKNAP: But you're just always searching;
right?

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Is there anything else that you
would like to share with us? And that is -- on
your lanyard, you have a picture. Whose picture
is it?

WENDY REDKNAP: Yeah. This is -- that's Eunice.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Eunice, okay.

WENDY REDKNAP: I'm thinking she was about close to 16
there. I can't tell you what age she was in this
picture.

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

WENDY REDKNAP: There's -- there's a lot of ways to
identify here. Like, back then, the thing was --
I don't even know -- I don't think her teeth were
bad. But back then, the Aboriginals had this
thing that they look cool with. They took all
their teeth out here, and so she had all the
front teeth out, and she had just a gap, right.
And there was a lot of them then, so she
doesn't -- she's got all her front teeth missing.
Like -- but it would sure be nice to hear what
the RCMP would have to say about any records of
her.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay. So what I can do after is --
after this testimony, I can take it to our file
office here. There are representatives who will
be able to help you to fill out paperwork and
look for these RCMP records. Okay?

WENDY REDKNAP: Yeah. That would be good.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Because they're working together
with the inquiry, and they're able to us and help
you, help families locate, like, autopsy reports
or death certificates or RCMP reports or anything
that families request. So --

WENDY REDKNAP: Yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Do you have any other -- anything
else that's going through your mind or how --
anything you would like to share with us today?

WENDY REDKNAP: No. Just similar things that --

WENDY REDKNAP: Like, I was in a carpentry class, and
this young boy said that his -- his -- he knows
that his family comes out of Hartley Bay and his
last name was Bird. And I was like -- you know,
right a way, I thought, "Could this be my
sister's son?" And, you know -- but turned out
he was -- I was able to connect the dots on who
his family was, but, you know, there's always
that hope.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Of course.

WENDY REDKNAP: I don't know if you guys know that
feeling of a missing piece. You know, you -- you
want closure. You want to know. You want to be
able to hug somebody. Like ...

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

WENDY REDKNAP: That would be wonderful if she were
alive or her kids could come and say "hey," you
know, if she's not dead on that road.

That's going to be good to know that. I can
go to that place that you said.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yes. I'll take you there after
this. So if there's something else that you
would like to add, I encourage you to share with
us. Otherwise, I can -- I can accompany
downstairs, saying -- you can speak to filing
representatives. Okay?

WENDY REDKNAP: Yeah. I think I'm done.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay. Thank you.

WENDY REDKNAP: But I think maybe I would like this to
be made public --

WENDY REDKNAP: -- and that if she does have family out there that can connect -- like, she was 16 in 1964. She was born in 1947. She does have a huge family in the Rupert area. Like, in my family, there was -- I had, like -- a lot of us have passed on by now, but there was my older sister Delores [phonetic], then Irene [phonetic], and then [A.] [phonetic] and then my brother [J.], and after [J.] would have been Snooksie. And then after Snooksie was Pat, my sister Pat and then me and then Alex and [D.], and Crystal is the baby.

And out of that, now Delores has passed on. Irene has passed on. [A.] has suffered an aneurysm. She's not the same anymore. My brother [J.] is still healthy and strong. And then Pat -- my sister Pat has passed on. My younger brother Alex has passed on.

Like, our -- our history is my mother came from the Reece family in Hartley Bay. Her parents were Ester and Robert Reece. My father comes from Prince George, from the [indiscernible] Nation. His -- his father was Charlie Bird and his mother was Virginia Kwaa [phonetic]. And this is the line that Eunice belongs to.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay. Then I will give you the consent form. There are two copies, one for you, and the other one will stay with the inquiry, and one of -- this is the consent form that will allow you to put the initials next to the box you think is the most appropriate for you that allows you to disclose the information that will make your statement public.

So like you mentioned earlier that in the event that your sister will hear or know your story and that your family is still looking for her, then perhaps some -- someone will hear the story, not necessarily your sister, but someone will know and be able to give you some -- some missing pieces of this puzzle.

So the first option that you [indiscernible] -- I found -- I'll just take one copy and read it for you.

The first one says that:

I hereby consent to allow the National
Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to record or take my written statement for use by the [national inquiry]. The [national inquiry] may disclose my name, face, voice, and other identifying information about me, or my family, in my statement, my photographs, audio/visual and other documents ... I further understand that if any identifying information is publicly televised or available social media I cannot later withdraw my consent.

And the second one says that:

The [national inquiry] may not disclose my name, face, voice, and other identifying information about me in my statement, my photographs, audio video [or any] other documents except in accordance with applicable freedom of information and privacy laws.

So, again, this is your choice that I invite you to make at this point. I know you have mentioned it earlier, but you can put your initial next to the space that you feel most comfortable with and then sign at the bottom. And I will ask Rebecca to be a witness to this.

REBECCA BERMANT: Thank you.
DARIA BOYARCHUK: And the second one as well. I will give you a pen. And if you print your name at the bottom now, it'll be great. Thank you. Thank you very much.

WENDY REDKNAP: Thank you.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: It is 3:45 in the afternoon, and we're about to complete this statement. Thank you.

(PROCEEDINGS ADJOURNED AT 3:45 P.M.)
Reporter's Certification:

I, Cordia Wong, Official Reporter in the Province of British Columbia, Canada, do hereby certify:

That the proceedings were transcribed by me from audio files provided of recorded proceedings, and the same is a true and correct and complete transcript of said recording to the best of my skill and ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 15th day of May, 2018.

__________________________
Cordia Wong
Official Reporter