National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
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Marie Mason, In relation to Donald Mason

Statement gathered by Pamela Vernaust

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Statement Gatherer: Pamela Vernaus

Documents submitted with testimony: none.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, October 3, 2018 at 4:02 p.m.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Did you need tea or coffee?

MS. MARIE MASON: I’ll have coffee.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Coffee?

MS. MARIE MASON: With sugar and cream.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. That’s for you.

So today is October 3rd, 2018, and I’m sitting here with Marie Mason, and she’s going to share her truth with us. My name’s Pamela Vernaus. I’m the statement gatherer. Her file number is 1816 and we are at the Winnipeg, the last hearing in Winnipeg for the National Inquiry. So, Marie, whenever you’re ready you can just --

MS. MARIE MASON: Okay. I’m ready. So --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: So you had expressed some -- some topics about your family in terms of some intergenerational and violence that has taken place and sort of what happened with your brother and that you would like to share that with us today. So you’re welcome to just tell your story, or I can help you by asking you specific questions.

MS. MARIE MASON: So you want me to tell my story?
MS. MARIE MASON: And you sit there?

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. Is that okay?

MS. MARIE MASON: No, that’s okay.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: It’s okay. Okay. My --

do you want me to start my story?

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. Sure.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. Okay. My name’s --

like she said, is Marie, and I’m a residential school

survivor for many years. I spent a lot of time in

residential school. Quite a bit. Too many -- too much

time. And in that -- in that time, I was abused by a

people who were supposed to take care of us; the nuns and

the priests. I was abused the nuns that were supposed to

care for us by getting slapped in the head, yelled at and

kicked. Especially this one, who was the head, Mother

Superior. She used to call us “Del” (ph) in French.

She used to call us Stitchy (indiscernible)

kind of a -- anyways, it meant bitch. So -- so anyways,

that’s what she used to call us, hit us -- hit us in the

head. I went through a lot of emotional drama in that

residential school. My mom was a widow. My dad died when

I was six, and so my mother became a widow. There were

eight of us, so she had to leave us in residential school;
me, my two sisters, oh yeah, four sisters. One eventually left. So because of her -- that stuff she had to deal with, being a young widow --

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- she couldn’t --

couldn’t take care of us. We’d go home in the summer.

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: And that’s basically it.

So it was the residential schools, oh yeah, quite hard to deal with.

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: There was one nun that was very -- Sister Supreme, that was very abusive. So I still carry that abuse within me. I eventually left the residential school and my mom had moved to her -- to her original place where she was born, St. Theresa Point. And she took me along and left my siblings in the residential school. Lo and behold when I went back to the reserve, St. Theresa Point, the community didn’t accept me.

So again, I suffered a lot of abuse from the children kicking, being called down. They called me a negro. Maybe because the year I went -- I went to the reserve we had camped all summer --

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- so I was very dark. So
they called me negro. And then when I reacted to the abuse, the yelling you know, I said, “Don’t tell me that. Don’t call me that."

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: “Don’t kick me,” and everything; they started calling me the evil one.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh.

MS. MARIE MASON: Maybe because I had reacted to the -- to the abuse.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: So it was hard living there, so my mom eventually let me go to high school in Guy Hill.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: Which was okay.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah?

MS. MARIE MASON: I enjoyed Guy Hill.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: But in the summers I still had to go home so the abuse went on.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Hmm. Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: This was because I was older, I wasn’t -- I didn’t suffer the physical abuse that much from the -- from the -- from the reserve in (indiscernible) case.
MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Instead it became verbal abuse.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh.

MS. MARIE MASON: So the verbal abuse came in form of me being ugly.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Me being dark or danum (ph) ‘cause at the time I went -- like I said, it was in the fall and I had spent outside, went camping and everything. They called me the negro. Oh, well, whatever. I didn’t mind, but it was -- it came with you know, haunts and slaps and everything; kicking. So the reserve wasn’t very, very good.

So eventually I left, went to high school. And I’d go by once in a while and they used to tell, say it over the radio, the reserve radio, “Oh, she’s back; the evil one.” So it was really very hard. So after a while, I quit going to the reserve and I -- I -- I -- I worked in -- did work and I worked and I took care of myself.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Lo and behold I met this man that -- that we got together.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: And we were really good
together at first. He was a part Sioux and Ojibwe from (indiscernible).

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: He was very, very good.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: But then what happened was when his family came in from the reserve and moved to Winnipeg, he started drinking.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh.

MS. MARIE MASON: So once again, the abuse was there. So -- and I eventually left him. We had three girls. So I took my girls and we left.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Where did you go?

MS. MARIE MASON: And eventually, I decided to go back to school. I went to university and mind you, I didn’t finish university. I got a few more credits to go, which I’ve been laying off. I don’t know why (indiscernible). And I -- me and my girls, we lived together, I took care of them and -- and they -- they grew up. They grew up to be fine girls.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: I had [Daughter 1], who was -- who was really different. She was daddy’s girl.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: And I had [Daughter 2] and
[Daughter 3]. So they grew up and [Daughter 1] eventually moved on and unfortunately this girl couldn’t cope. She didn’t do too good.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Which one?

**MS. MARIE MASON:** Then after a while she was okay.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Yeah?

**MS. MARIE MASON:** She just had to experience you know, a little bit of hardship as my Auntie told me. But I said that to her, they’ve got (indiscernible) here. [Daughter 3] is -- has a lot of issues, emotional issues. And she has -- she has problems with alcoholism.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Okay.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** [One line redacted – personal information].

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Uh-oh.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** But she -- but she takes care of herself.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Yeah?

**MS. MARIE MASON:** She’s really good at taking care of herself.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Okay.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** But once in a while she goes with friends and they binge.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Hmm.
MS. MARIE MASON: So I -- I just watch her.

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: And the other girls are doing good. They’ve got children of their own and --

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- and so I decided to go to university and -- and but, I -- I didn’t finish my university. Maybe because I was having a lot of problems with [Daughter 3] who was doing a lot of stuff. [One line redacted – personal information]. I had to be there with her. So -- and then when she got a little better, she went on her own and I decided to work. I went to work, and I did a lot of things.

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: Yeah?

MS. MARIE MASON: I didn’t stay at one job, and it was maybe because -- because of the lifestyle I had when I was younger. I was always wanting to go, go, go. So I had a lot of jobs.

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: And I worked anywhere from government to sweeping kitchen floors.

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Like, it was a bit of variety.

MS. PAMELA Vernaus: M’hm.
MS. MARIE MASON: And I -- I liked that because it gave me a sense of you know, I can do this. I’ll do this, do this and that, and that --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- so -- so and make it school. My kids are all grown up and I’ve got grandchildren. My grandchildren are -- were a very, very unique. Mainly because my kids were -- were -- they were -- they took care of their children, but one child, [Daughter 3]; the one that has a lot of problems; I took her son and took care of him; [Grandson].

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: He’s a very unique kid.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M’hm. How old is he?

MS. MARIE MASON: He’s now 11.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: 11? Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. And he’s -- right now he’s in foster care.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: Mainly because [Daughter 3] decided she wanted him back.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Hmm.

MS. MARIE MASON: [One line redacted – personal information].

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
MS. MARIE MASON: And (indiscernible). So at that time I decided maybe right now it’s not a good time for me to take him [one line redacted – personal information], and she was really angry with me.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh.

MS. MARIE MASON: So I decided I was -- I have been watching this -- it -- this my grandson of mine. See how he’s doing in foster care.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: How’s he doing?

MS. MARIE MASON: He’s doing very good.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah?

MS. MARIE MASON: The foster care he’s in, it’s a very good foster care. Foster home. [One line redacted – personal information]. So he --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: So you see him a lot? Do you see him often?

MS. MARIE MASON: I -- he comes over often, see how I’m doing.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw.

MS. MARIE MASON: He’s very unreal, very and -- and fortunately he doesn’t do that to his mom.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Good.

MS. MARIE MASON: His mom lives way across town you know? So --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw.
MS. MARIE MASON: -- so I’m his mom ‘cause I took care of him.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw. That’s sweet.

MS. MARIE MASON: I -- I raised him until his mom decided --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- she wanted him, and it didn’t work out.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: So, but he’s -- he’s very -- he’s really -- like, he’ll come down and see --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- “How are you doing granny?” And he keeps telling me when he’s grown up and when I’m old then he can come (indiscernible) --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- but whenever, he’s going to take care of me.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw.

MS. MARIE MASON: And I look at him, “Oh yeah? Really?” Like -- and he’s very sweet and very yeah, giving.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You mentioned something about your brother who’s murdered.

MS. MARIE MASON: Pardon?
MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You mentioned something about your brother?

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. My brother was murdered. And --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Can you talk a little bit about that?

MS. MARIE MASON: Oh yeah. He was a -- he was the youngest brother I had. And what happened to him was he was living on the reserve. And I guess that he -- a lot of people didn’t like him ‘cause he had gone back to St. Therese [sic], which wasn’t his reserve and they didn’t like him.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: So nothing was said about his murder. They sort of hid it.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: How -- when was this?

MS. MARIE MASON: About four -- six years ago.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: And it was in St. Therese Point?

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yes? Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: And --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: What was his name?

MS. MARIE MASON: Donald.
MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Donald?

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. Mason.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Mason? Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: And but nothing was said about his murder.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: It was considered that he just died a natural death, but it became known to me and some members of the family that something was not right.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: And I looked it up -- looked what we call Kimuch (ph) in Cree. Like, it means that I did it in a secret way. I sort of --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- looked in (indiscernible) and I found out that there was murder involved.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: And so that they beat up.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: So how did you find that out?

MS. MARIE MASON: Well, not off the files -- I looked at.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: From the RCMP?

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah.
MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: And 'cause I was working at a nursing station. So I had a helper. But --

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: And access.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- it -- it really say -- where did he, it says possible.

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: Hmm.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- murder (indiscernible).

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: And did they have any -- did they have any possible suspects; the RCMP?

MS. MARIE MASON: No. None.

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: And they never -- did they --

MS. MARIE MASON: No, and they never --

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: -- they never -- never looked into it?

MS. MARIE MASON: -- it was never exposed, never looked into. RCMP wasn’t even called. Nothing.

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: So what was done with the body?

MS. MARIE MASON: Huh?

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: What happened with his body?

MS. MARIE MASON: His what?

MS. PAMELA VERNIAUS: His body? Like, they
just --

**MS. MARIE MASON:** They just took him and buried him. So as as as it is right now he just died. So I just left it -- let it go like that. Like, why bother --

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** M’hm.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** -- dealing with the system?

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Yeah.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** I was dealing with it. So -- so he’s you know, so I just let it go ‘til I -- like, I didn’t want to get all -- everything all in the open and get all you know, upset and everything.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Yeah.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** Meanwhile, everybody was (indiscernible). And so I just leave it. And -- and I know a lot of these things happen on the reserves.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** Yeah.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** A lot. A lot of it. So I said, okay. I’ll let it go.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** M’hm.

**MS. MARIE MASON:** Like, and -- and it was quite hard to deal with. Sometimes I still think about it and yeah.

**MS. PAMELA VERNAUS:** M’hm.
MS. MARIE MASON: But it’s been done. Things that happened, and -- and I go my way.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Go my way and try and live a good life as I could. So --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M’hm. Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- so -- and you know, how I -- brothers and sisters are grown up too and everything. Two of my -- my brother, oldest brother just died last -- last summer. He was one of the reserve Elders. Yeah.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: From which reserve?

MS. MARIE MASON: He was unreal. He --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: From which reserve?

MS. MARIE MASON: Norway House.


MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. Like, we were -- we were generally from Norway House.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You’re from Norway House?

MS. MARIE MASON: But when my mother -- my father died, my mother moved back to St. Theresa.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh, okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: And that was the biggest mistake she made.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You should have stayed
MS. MARIE MASON: Huh?

MS. PAMELA VERNVAUS: You guys should have stayed at Norway House.

MS. MARIE MASON: We should have stayed in Norway House. So --

MS. PAMELA VERNVAUS: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- a lot of stuff was happening to us --

MS. PAMELA VERNVAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- ‘cause we were different people.

MS. PAMELA VERNVAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: We were Cree.

MS. PAMELA VERNVAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: So -- so anyways, that’s what happened and I -- I married a Sioux guy from Long Plain.

MS. PAMELA VERNVAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: It wasn’t a -- a marriage. It was done in the traditions of the Ojibwe.

MS. PAMELA VERNVAUS: Oh really?

MS. MARIE MASON: And it was -- so of course, I once again you know, (indiscernible) upon. As if I never married him. But I just let it go, but what I --
what am I supposed to do? Fight with the two nations of Ojibwes and Cree?

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: M’hm. Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: So I said okay. These things happen at the end of the day.

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: But then he -- he -- he died a few years ago. He -- we did really good. So when his family moved to the reserve --

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: M’hm.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- he went to alcohol, so he became an alcoholic and eventually died because of his alcohols.

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: My girls are grown up and doing okay.

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: Good.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. They’re doing good, so they see -- come and see me once in a while.

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: That’s good.

MS. MARIE MASON: See if I’m still okay.

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah, but they’re --

MS. PAMELA VERN AUS: Well, that’s good.

Yeah.
MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- so I took some university, but then I didn’t finish.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. You were saying that.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So then I said, well, someday maybe.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah, you should go back.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yes. Go back (indiscernible). But you know, me not finishing it doesn’t bother me. It’s I -- I feel happy with it. Like, I’ve got this unfinished business.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: So like, one day I’ll go finish it.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So now, again, brag about some unfinished business.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. Do you have anything else you want to share with the Inquiry?

MS. MARIE MASON: Right now I’m doing okay. My kids are grown up.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.
MS. MARIE MASON: I take care of my grandson.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Until he went into care and he’s doing good.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Good.

MS. MARIE MASON: And so I just -- I am retired and I’m so happy. I feel you know, I earned it.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So --

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. Well, I’d like to thank you for coming today and sharing with us.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. M’hm.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: And I’m going to turn this off.

MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah.

MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: It’s -- I turned this one --

--- Upon adjourning at 4:23 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Anja Curuvija, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.

__________________________
Anja Curuvija

Anja Curuvija
October 22, 2018