National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part I Statement Gathering
Sault College
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

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Tuesday October 16, 2018

Statement - Volume 553
Laura Lacrosse,
In relation to Deborah Sloss

Statement gathered by Daria Boyarchuk & Debbie Bodkin

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II
NOTE

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.”
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Documents submitted by the witness:

Item 1: Police report re: death of Deborah Sloss (one page)
*Sealed by order of Chief Commissioner Marion Buller March 4, 2019.

Item 2: Post-mortem report for Deborah Sloss (five pages)
*Sealed by order of Chief Commissioner Marion Buller March 4, 2019.
--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, October 16, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Hi, my name is Daria Boyarchuk, and I'm a statement gatherer for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Today is October 16th, and we're here, located at Sault College in Sault Ste. Marie. It is 1:30 in the afternoon and I am honoured to welcome here today Laura Lacrosse, who will be sharing her truth. And I'm also joined by our statement gatherer at the Inquiry, Debbie --

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Debbie Bodkin.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you. Laura, as we said before, this is your time, this is your time to start the story wherever you want to begin. And this is also the time for you to share the truth as much as you want to share it, as much as you're comfortable sharing it. So you can begin wherever you feel most comfortable with and let the story unfold.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Okay. The reason I'm here is for my mom. She was found in her apartment July 29th, 1997, she was dead. She was only 42 years old. And procedures that were taken in the investigation, or lack of investigation, into her death is why I'm here and why I'm fighting.

My mom was a recovering alcoholic and crack addict. When I finally did get the autopsy report it had
nothing anatomical, nothing toxicological as a cause of
death. So there was no cause of death and she was 42 years
old. The police had told my Aunt Cathy that it was her
hard lifestyle that killed her.

On the 29th of July she was found, the
autopsy was done July 30th, and her apartment was sealed up
until August 1st. Right now it's just unresolved, I don't
know why she's gone. And the lack of investigation really
-- I don't know.

Right in the first paragraph it says that --
to me what it says is that she's just another dead Indian
because it says, "The victim in this matter was 42 years
old and lived alone at 122 Pembroke Street, in Room 5,
since October 1996. The victim was a native Indian and is
believed to have been from Northern Ontario. It is unknown
at this time if the victim suffered from any illness or
disease. What is known, however; is that the victim was an
alcoholic and a crack addict".

What they don't know about this is that my
mom had been sober since July -- or sorry, January '97,
because she had a discussion with my dad, and they have
been divorced for quite a few years, and she asked if she
could come home, back here to Goulais River outside of
Sault Ste. Marie. And he said if you can get rid of the
alcohol and stuff you're welcome to come home any time. And from what my understanding was, that's why she sobered up, because she needed to be back here with her kids and her husband. My dad didn't remarry, he still thinks the world of my mom.

So yeah, just the fact that they just marked her up as another dead Indian. She's a crack addict and she's an alcoholic. She's still my mother. Right now she's got two, three granddaughters, a grandson, two great-grandsons, and when she died she only had one.

These children are the reason that I keep doing this, because they need to know our history and our family. I'm the only one that can do this and hopefully make it better for generations down the road, so that some other family doesn't have to do this, doesn't have to live through this.

There's a lot of unanswered questions, a lot of inconsistencies with what is written in this police report, what is in the autopsy report and what's in another report that I've misplaced. It's somewhere at home. But in the confusion of everything I don't know where it went to.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** What was the first report you read from?
MS. LAURA LACROSSE: The first one, this --
this is the police report.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: That's the police
report, okay.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: And this sums it up
into what they did. It was reported July 29th, '97, it was
entered the 31st, and the last update was the 31st at that
same time. They didn't even wait until the autopsy report
was back. Like I've got it here, I think it was September
-- September 29th, where it says no anatomical, no
toxicological cause of death.

I don't know what the rules are on opening
an investigation, but I think that a police report should
be left open until they find out how the person died. This
is September 29th and the last entry is the 31st of July,
two days afterwards. And again, August 1st they unsealed
her apartment and took all of her stuff, and put it out on
the street for anybody to take. So I don't have a single
thing from my mom.

That being said, listed as next of kin that
the police had, and it's here in the police report, was
[Deborah’s boyfriend], my mom's ex-boyfriend. I had asked
him, it was mid-August, I had called him because I had
found out they got rid of all my mom's stuff and just put
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it out on the street. So I called him to ask him for a
sweater or anything that she may have left there, just so I
had something. And he said Laurie, I want nothing to do
with it and slammed the phone down.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And sorry, what was his
name?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: [Deborah’s boyfriend]
or something like that. He's since passed. But I want to
know what it is that he wants nothing to do with. What is
it? They didn't -- they didn't contact him to say that she
was gone, they didn't check to see if he knew anything
about it, they didn't do anything.

Now my mom was so badly decomposed, and that
was what brought the police there, because the landlord had
reported the smell -- there's a bad smell when a body
decomposes. I'll just read it here and then take it from
there. It says, "On Tuesday, July 29th, ’97, at about
13:30 hours, the Compt...", which I'm assuming is the
landlord, "...who takes care of the rooming house where the
victim lived, attended her apartment in order to check on
her wellbeing. It seems that they had received complaints
regarding a bad smell coming from the apartment, as well as
the victim had not picked up her family benefits cheque
which was unusual. The Compt advised he entered the
victim's apartment by way of key as the door is equipped with a deadbolt that was locked from the inside. Once inside he found the victim deceased on her bed. Then he exited the apartment without disturbing anything and called 911".

If something had happened to her inside, if somebody else had a key in there, they could have done something in that room. What they were trying to say is like nobody's been there and it's only been her because it was locked from the inside. Well then how did this guy get in with a key to see her dead body? What happened to her? She was only 42 years old.

Yeah, I know like drugs and alcohol and stuff will take a toll on your body, but you would think that in the autopsy report that would show up. The only thing that was not found in -- or done in the autopsy was the contents of her stomach. Because she was so badly decomposed, any kind of trauma unless it was broken bones, obviously would not show with the decomposition and everything like that.

They made sure to note in here that she was lying on her left side, and in one of the reports, I don't know if it's the autopsy report, it says that the pooling from the blood -- when your body dies and how it all pools
together, it's actually on the other side of her body.

Where's the other thing?

My mom -- we found out about my mom by way of a cousin that lived in Toronto, although the police here said that she had two outstanding warrants on CPIC held by Sault Ste. Marie. I had to call my dentist, our family dentist, and ask them to send the dental records down to the coroner to match my mom. I was 24 years old and I just lost my mom.

Another thing here is that the Compt or landlord says that the victim appeared to have lost a lot of weight and did not look to be in good health. But the post mortem right here, it says she was of small build but well nourished. So it's -- what is it? Are you trying to cover your tracks here in the police report, but then the autopsy report's saying she's well nourished and a small build. Like what is going on? There is nothing -- nothing lines up.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** What police service is it?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Toronto Police Department, Division 51.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's who -- sorry, was she -- did she die here in Sault Ste. Marie?
Ms. Laura Lacrosse: No, in Toronto.

Ms. Debbie Bodkin: It was in Toronto, okay.

Ms. Laura Lacrosse: No, she's from Batchewana.

Ms. Debbie Bodkin: Okay.

Ms. Laura Lacrosse: She was born in Espanola and my family's from Batchewana. And my grandma's from Spanish, it's kind of a whole, whole area thing. But through life -- I mean like we were here. I was born in Toronto. My mom and dad met, I was born in Toronto, and then we moved here. And then when they split my mom was in different parts of the country. She was finding different jobs and what have you. She was out west for awhile and then she, she went back to Toronto where her sisters were and where my grandma was.

I know she had her street family who she connected with. I didn't know them or anything, but at times in her life when she was in the addiction and stuff, she felt they were her family and I'm sure they were at that point. But that doesn't mean that anybody should give her any less value in her life. She's still my mom, still.

I'm just going to go through here because like things pop into my head at a time because I get so -- like 21 years later it still affects me too. To think that
I -- you know in my whole life I've been raised that Canada is the greatest country in the world and it's -- I'm so proud to be a Canadian, and it just -- I love this country. But then you look at like what is this, what is this? You can't be a woman, you can't be a Native in this country without having that stigma or what have you?

I have two girls. One's 25, she looks like her father, she's light skinned and hazel eyes and stuff. You wouldn't know she's First Nation. And it's sad that I am happy for that, it's sad. My little girl, she's six, and she does look First Nations and it scares the hell out of me because I'm afraid of a world when she's a little bit older, if they're going to value her and what she's going to have to deal with because of the colour of her skin and the way she looks.

But it's got to stop, and that's why I want to do this because it's got to stop. There's too many valued girls out there that just -- we're going to lose them if something doesn't get done.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Do you have siblings Laura?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** I do, I have a brother. And him and my mom were close before she moved to Toronto, where my mom and I weren't close because I saw the
alcoholism and I saw it, and I was stubborn and I was right. But my brother and her were really close, and then when she moved they kind of lost touch and stuff. But they were always -- and then when she died he really pulled back. I know that he cares, but he has a different way of dealing with things than I do. And I keep him informed of everything I've done, in different interviews I've done and stuff like that. And he listens, but I don't -- but he's not openly affected I guess as much as me. He could be internally, but I mean that's his way.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hmm.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** He's got two children now that -- another reason why I'm doing this is my niece and nephew, so that they know that somebody is fighting for their grandma. They know we can't bring her back, I won't get the answers that I need. I don't want those guys to have to live in a world like that, especially in this country.

So my main thing is I wish -- I wish I knew what the procedure was, and like are the police still -- like in case like this when a dead body is found and they do the autopsy and there's no cause of death, do they just put it on the backburner and just leave it for whatever. Like who is accountable? Somebody needs to be accountable.
I would lose my job if I left something just --

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Hanging.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Exactly. Another thing
-- like I had discussions with one of the detectives, and
I'm not sure if I can name his name but it's here in the
report, and he told me of the state of my mom's apartment
verbally, I don't have anything in writing. He said there
was feces all over the walls, it was dishevelled, the place
was a mess. Now anybody that knew, my mom is, like she was
OCD clean. My mom was a clean freak and is not the way she
was. He also told me, which is not in the police report,
his told me that [one half-sentence about the state of the
body redacted pursuant to Rule 55]. It's not in the
autopsy report. Why would he say that to me and why isn't
it in the autopsy report? You don't dream this stuff up.
I just don't know.

Again, I'm just going to go through because
if I don't I lose my train of thought really quickly
because I get very, like just --

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Take your time.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** I know that I was
questioning too, and they said they were worried about her
family -- her family allowance cheque or what have you, her
not picking it up and it was the 29th of July. Now I know
my mom was on ODSP, and I know that ODSP pays two days before the first of the month. This is what I find -- like question. Two days before the first of the month it's usually -- or the day before the first of the month.

A detective or -- excuse me if I'm wrong.

Someone told me that her cheque was slid under the door as per usual. Then it says that they were worried about her cheque not being picked up. However, there's the 29th, 30th, 31st and the 1st. The cheque should have been issued on the 31st or -- I just find it odd. Like it's the 29th, it's not --

**MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Did you ever find that cheque?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** No, they said it was turned into the police and what have you. But if he entered -- if the landlord entered the apartment on the 29th and he picked it up off the floor -- he had also said -- yeah, it was the landlord that had said the cheque was on the side table in conversation. It's just -- there's no many things that are not right. It's really hard to put it all together without sitting down and breaking down bit by bit. And I shouldn't have to do that, that should have been done by an investigator. So 21 years later I still can't wrap my head around this. It's not right at all.
A few questions that came along. One time my mom's friend I guess you could say, she had met with the Toronto Police Department and I have questions that I have, but I never got an answer to. Because like why, when her ID and uncashed cheque were found, was she identified as a Jane Doe for close to a month when she laid in the morgue? Before like my aunts went and identified her, and I mean with the dental reports and stuff. They knew who she was.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Do you know the name who this friend was who went and spoke to the police, do you want to put that name?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** No, I'd rather not, just because --

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Well she's passed now.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** And I don't -- because she's passed I want to respect that.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** It says here shortly -- this friend here lived in Toronto as well, and that's where my mom met her. "It was like shortly after Deb's death word on the street was that she was murdered and why wasn't it never addressed by the Toronto Police Service"? Like
you know it's kind of -- you know the things with Bruce
McArthur, and I know that he targeted gay men in Toronto
and what have you, in my mind because nothing has been
resolved, what happens back in '97 when maybe he liked
women at that time, but I don't know this and that's wrong.

Here's another thing, what's his name? I
can see his face, he's in there, he killed two women down
there. He was known to frequent that area that my mom
lived in. Who's to say that guy didn't do it? So this
goes on through my life, in my head, and it's completely
unfair because it should have been addressed right off the
hop. So now I don't have to look at this guy and think
well I wonder if he liked women at that time. He was
married with children, who knows, who knows? And it's
unfair in this country that I love. You know like just why
does this happen? It's wrong.

It's questions I'll always have anytime
something new comes up or what have you, and it's unfair my
family has to go through this. My six year old asked me
how come your mommy died? Well I don't know honey, I'm
sorry I can't give you an answer. How fair is that to a
six year old? At least if it was cancer or if it was
something else, I could say she got sick. But she didn't.

That's what I've got for right now. That
being said, with the Bruce McArthur and what have you, I'm not saying it was that, but I mean there's that speculation that could always be there. Something that I had written to a friend of mine that was working with the Sisters in Spirit -- when we were doing the story and stuff, she had asked me like what possibilities I think could have happened in the cause of her death. And what I had written was,

"I don't see any other possibility other than murder with the way that [Deborah's boyfriend], her boyfriend, was with me before my mom's body was found -- the original post mortem shows nothing anatomical, etcetera, the new coroner's investigation report that I acquired in 2009, all of this adds more to the story. As far as how she was found, the condition of her apartment, the other things, do not match the original police report I obtained in 2003 or anything the detectives told me when I was in contact with them in August '97. In my opinion it's that the Toronto Police Department should have done their jobs properly at the time of the incident,
and if this was done there wouldn't be any speculation as to how my mom died.

I did have a list of all of the inconsistencies, but again I couldn't find that paper and I think that's what frustrated me the most this morning and made me break, was because I know that I've done it. And I've done it over the years, and I've done it again, and I've done it again, and I have to relive it, and relive it and relive it. And it's not right, and it's not fair. And I don't want to do this anymore.

Nobody else should have to do this. That's why I'm doing this. Like this is the first time I haven't bawled my eyes out in an interview, because I'm angry now. I'm very angry about it. And it's been 21 years, and that's a long time to have to hold this. That's what I've got for now anyways. I need to have a sip of water and chill out a little bit, because I'm getting more angry.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Do you want that shut off or do you want to just take a --

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** That's fine, that's fine, you can stay on.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay, because I have a couple of questions from this.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Sure.
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MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Why don't you have a little break, and then if you have any. But you clarified that it was -- this all happened in Toronto --

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: -- not up here?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yes.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. Were there any -- besides yourself looking into everything, were there any other family members who -- you mentioned a few, but her sisters or anyone else who were involved in the police investigation, like did --

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: My Aunt Cathy, because lived in Toronto at the time. There was word -- how we found out that my mom was gone was that a cousin that lived in Toronto had called my Aunt Roxanne up in Batchewana, and said I think something's happened to Debbie, you better check. And that's how we found out.

At that point she got in contact with my Aunt Cathy in Toronto, to go and find out what had happened, and that's when the police detective had said to my Aunt Cathy that she liked to party too hard. As far as anything from there I don't know, because I don't know if my aunts were trying to shelter me at that time, they gave me what I needed to know but not -- I don't know specific
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details and stuff, of what happened after that, because
again I was just --

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You were overwhelmed, I'm sure.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Do you have anything?

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: I just wanted to -- you to say your mother's name. Debbie I know, but what is her last name?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: It's Deborah Anne Sloss.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: And how do you spell that?.


MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Thank you.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And you read from a police report. Who -- does it say who it's written by?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yes, [Police Constable].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Ted did you say, sorry?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Right here, [Police Constable], it's right in here.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: [Police Constable].
MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: [Spells name of Police Constable].

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: And then it says "officers" at the bottom here, right down at the bottom there.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Oh yeah, so it's --

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Oh, and here's an investigating -- the detective. So it's these two officers and this detective.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay, so it's [spells name of Police Constable], then [Police Officer], and then you said this is -- was the investigator, [Police Detective].

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: That's [Police Detective].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: [Police Detective]. And you met him. Did you meet any --

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: No, I talked to him on the phone.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Will it be possible to make a copy of the record?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yeah.
MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay, thank you.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: I did -- I went to the pre-inquiry in Thunder Bay, and my aunts went to the ones in Ottawa. In Ottawa my Aunt Susie gave a copy of the post mortem, the police report and some other papers from the Toronto Police Department to Minister Hajdu. I'm not sure where they went to. But yeah, as long as I can keep a copy of this.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Of course.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Like I thought that I had more copies and I'm sure I do, but again just being so quick in trying to put things together, I brought what I could, that I needed.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: If they're already submitted somebody should have -- they should be in the files, right?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: But in case they're not you're more than welcome to -- it's got everything in here including the toxicology reports. There was something in her system, it's called Pheniramine, and it's traces. But when I was looking it up to find out what it was, essentially it's a decongestant. And there was just traces of it, and that was the only drug in her system.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: M'hmm.
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MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Just traces of a decongestant.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And I might have missed this during your story, but do you know who the last family member and when they last saw her prior to this?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: I don't know. But I do know that -- every Sunday we would talk.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: I had lost touch with her for a bit, and I started questioning where she was and stuff when I had talked to [Deborah’s boyfriend] and stuff, because like we had our conversations and what have you. Yeah, I'm not sure who the last person was. It might very well have been my Aunt Marylou because I know that my mom was learning more of the traditional healings, traditional ways and stuff from my aunt and uncle who are elders in their community. And she was pulling through and she was doing well, so up until whatever happened happened.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And maybe -- I know Daria’s been in touch with some of these other relatives, but if you feel comfortable, do you want to list the full names of the other relatives who you either know want to speak with the Inquiry or who you think are important to this?
MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Okay, there's Marylou Smoke. Do you want me to spell it?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: I think she's in the --

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: I have her name, yes.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: And then there's Roxanne Gibbs, Sue Comptain (ph).

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: That one I -- do you know that one too?

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: And Cathy Angus.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: And where does Cathy live?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: She's in Toronto.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: In Toronto, okay.

Thank you.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: [Personal information redacted -- one sentence].

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: And how is she related to your mother?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: They're all sisters.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: They're all sisters, okay.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: After, after your mom
died and, you know, you got a hold of all these reports, 
was there ever a police complaint made through any other 
systems or anything about the investigation that you know 
of?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: No, because I was 24 
years old.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: And who was I to go 
against the police department? And I feel like I could do 
it today, and I'd like to do it today, because this is not 
right. And for me feeling this 21 years later -- like this 
morning I was a complete wreck. And I thought about -- 
when you said you had your 2:00 cancel, I thought you know, 
I'm not going to do this, I'm not. And that's why I'm 
here. But it was like -- it was close.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Touch and go.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: But I am my mother's 
daughter, so call me stubborn. I'm here.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Good for you.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: I've got to take a 
breath.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Is there any other 
messages in particular about indigenous communities, what 
this did to you, anything else you think is important that
you just want to say, get off your chest to the Commissioners about?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yeah, I don't want another child to have to do this in regards to their parent. I mean at 24 I was not a child, but essentially I was. I was a new mother. Kids should not have to do this for their parents. I mean I'm 45 now and I'm still her child. I shouldn't have to remember her in newspaper articles, or CBC interviews, or this Inquiry. You should have good memories of your mother, not what it's put you through after her death.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** For sure.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yeah.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Well I would say she's likely very proud of you, how much strength you're showing just talking about this.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** I hope that doing this helps other kids in the future not have to do this, because my heart's still broken.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Undoubtedly.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** If I had a concrete answer to say okay, she died of cancer, she died of a heart attack, I'd be okay with that. But I'm not okay with no answers. I don't like having to explain to my babies that
I don't know, because to my kids I know everything. They come to me for answers and I can't give them. But what I can give them is that I know that hopefully in the future I'm not having to hear about kids having to go through what I've gone through.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Absolutely. Since you mentioned about your mom and the addictions problems, is there anything about her past that caused the addiction that you --

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yes.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Is there a residential school, anything like that?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Well my grandma was in residential school, my mom wasn't. I don't know a lot about it, but my aunt has talked about -- my Uncle John really talked about it too. It was like -- the way my grandma was because of her residential school experience really played a part -- like I guess my mom and my Uncle John were kind of like the target kids. Now I don't know how true that was because I wasn't around at that time and stuff.

Back in '79 we were travelling to Toronto, my dad, my brother, my mom, my Aunt Roxanne and her boyfriend at the time, we were travelling to Toronto for
Christmas or -- it was wintertime anyhow. We hit the soft shoulder of the road outside of Sudbury and it sucked the truck and we rolled five times. My mom and I were sleeping in the back of the truck, in the camper. The snow machines were on the back, and there was four people. My brother was only three or so.

My Aunt Roxanne, her boyfriend and stuff, my dad were all in the cab of the truck. Well the truck landed on my mom, and my dad lifted the truck off my mom, she was pinned underneath. She ended up with a pin here in one of her shoulders, and another pin in her shin. Before that -- my dad said she changed after that accident. She didn't drink, she didn't -- she was like the model mom, she was just -- but after that accident, that's when she started to drink.

And I believe that she, she suffered post traumatic stress disorder because I couldn't imagine laying underneath a truck and not being able to move when my two children were out in a swamp, not knowing, you know? And I think if she had gotten the help back at that time for the emotions she was going through, we'd be -- we wouldn't be sitting here right now.

Even my mom's family said after she -- after that accident she changed with the drinking and stuff. And
then with drinking -- I meaning drinking gets into this depending on who you're with, and then you know it moves on into something bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger.
And then you end up with the addiction and everything. So I believe honestly just based on what I've heard, is that what happened. Because in that time they didn't have a lot of information about post traumatic stress disorder. Yeah, because my dad said she was an amazing mom.

**MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Would you like to share some good memories of your mom, how you remember her growing up?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** I can remember Eskimo kisses. Some of my Inuit friends probably wouldn't like me saying it that way, but -- and then I can remember like my mom used to give mole they were called, because I guess that's what I called them was mole. And there was this lady that held my mom's picture up on Parliament Hill on one of the vigils and her name's Cathy Meyer, and she's from Yellowknife or something. She held my mom's picture because she's Inuit, and I brought my daughter to a Family of Sisters in Spirits vigil, I think it was in 2013 I brought Mackinlee, my youngest one. And didn't she give Mackinlee a mole. And I thought, you know, my mom was there. She actually got her mole from her Eskimo friend.
I thought yeah.

I remember my mom's laugh, she had a good sense of humour and a good heart. You know like honestly it's hard to find the good, it's hard to find the good because of everything that I've been through in the last 20 years. But I do, I do treasure when I look in the mirror in the morning because I have her eyes. And for about five years after was found dead and people would meet me, they'd say oh, you look so much like your mom. I couldn't handle hearing that. I had such a hard time and it was like just stop and don't talk about it.

But thankfully like with NWAC and the help that we had with Sisters in Spirits and stuff like that, I'm able to talk because I couldn't for a few years at the vigils or the meetings we went to, but now I can talk.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Good for you, talking is part of the healing.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Exactly. And I think that it's really important that, that families -- the stuff that's happening to these families, they need to be able to talk, and they need those resources there. Even if -- like I said, it took five years before I could say thank you when people said that I looked like my mom. It took five years. And there should be things there five years later,
Laura Lacrosse  
(Deborah Sloss)

10 years later. You know it's been 21 years and I still need -- it should be there to make this county great again, right? Sorry, that's my sense of humour. You guys got it.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: We did.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: So Laura, it seems like Sisters in Spirits has been very helpful to you. I understand that's an organization here in Ontario. Do you know if it also exists in other parts of the country?

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: It's -- it was funded and defunded I guess you can say. It was taken away from the Native Women's Association.

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: That's when Bev Jacobs was part of NWAC, she was the President. And she had started the No More Stolen Sisters with Amnesty International, she started writing that. And I'm not sure how Sisters in Spirits came about, but I was able to meet up with families that had similar stories or for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

But you know for so long I thought I was the only one, so again at 24 years old I didn't want to take on the police force and stuff. But had I have had those resources there to find out -- make somebody be accountable at that time -- but yeah, it was funded I think for five
years and it ended in 2011.

But that was my healing, my yearly meetings with the families. And I still communicate with them today, and I still -- like we're friends on Facebook and I still watch their lives and they're my family. My mom always said when she lived out in Edmonton, she always wanted to take me to the West Edmonton Mall, and I was like yeah, how's that ever going to happen and everything. I went to a meeting in Edmonton as a result of Sisters in Spirit, and I got to go to the West Edmonton Mall. and I guess she did it somehow.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Right.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: She got me there.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: In spirit.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Exactly, exactly.

That's what I've got for you right now. I can feel myself starting to get all --

MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK: That's fine.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: I'm a little bit warm and a little bit worn out.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah.

MS. LAURA LACROSSE: I was worn out before I came here, bawling my eyes out, writing this out and what have you. Again, that was just -- anything that I wrote
out here was stuff that we had already -- we were talking
about. So I guess I got it out in my own way and didn't
need that book.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I have no more
questions.

**MS. DARYA BOYARCHUK:** Yes, neither do I.
But if you feel like this is a good space for us to, to
wrap up, one thing that I do want to ask on behalf of the
Inquiry, whether you would like to share your story with
the public. I know you disclosed a few names, some names
were read off from the police report, the investigator,
police officers, are you comfortable making this decision?

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Putting it out there,
yes.

**MS. DARYA BOYARCHUK:** Okay.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Definitely.

**MS. DARYA BOYARCHUK:** Okay. For the
Commission we would like to make it known that Laura
Lacrosse has chosen to make the statement public. It is
2:19 in the afternoon, and we are about to conclude our
statement. Thank you very much Laura.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Thank you Laura.

**MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Thank you.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** You're a very strong
Statement - Public
Laura Lacrosse
(Deborah Sloss)

1   woman.

2     MS. LAURA LACROSSE: I don't feel like it.

3     --- Upon adjourning at 2:19 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Sherry Hobe, 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.

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Sherry Hobe

Sherry Hobe

January 10, 2019