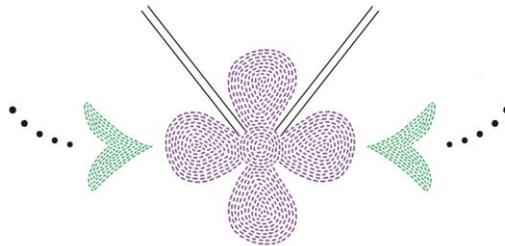


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale
sur les femmes et les filles
autochtones disparues et assassinées

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



PUBLIC

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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Statement Gatherer: Daria Boyarchuk

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.*

Statement - Public
Laura Lacrosse
(Deborah Sloss)

1 --- Upon commencing on Tuesday, October 16, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.

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

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Debbie Bodkin.

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

18 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Okay. The reason I'm
19 here is for my mom. She was found in her apartment July
20 29th, 1997, she was dead. She was only 42 years old. And
21 procedures that were taken in the investigation, or lack of
22 investigation, into her death is why I'm here and why I'm
23 fighting.

24 My mom was a recovering alcoholic and crack
25 addict. When I finally did get the autopsy report it had

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1 nothing anatomical, nothing toxicological as a cause of
2 death. So there was no cause of death and she was 42 years
3 old. The police had told my Aunt Cathy that it was her
4 hard lifestyle that killed her.

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

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

19 What they don't know about this is that my
20 mom had been sober since July -- or sorry, January '97,
21 because she had a discussion with my dad, and they have
22 been divorced for quite a few years, and she asked if she
23 could come home, back here to Goulais River outside of
24 Sault Ste. Marie. And he said if you can get rid of the

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1 alcohol and stuff you're welcome to come home any time.
2 And from what my understanding was, that's why she sobered
3 up, because she needed to be back here with her kids and
4 her husband. My dad didn't remarry, he still thinks the
5 world of my mom.

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

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

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

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** What was the first
24 report you read from?

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1 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** The first one, this --
2 this is the police report.

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

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

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

20 That being said, listed as next of kin that
21 the police had, and it's here in the police report, was
22 [Deborah's boyfriend], my mom's ex-boyfriend. I had asked
23 him, it was mid-August, I had called him because I had
24 found out they got rid of all my mom's stuff and just put

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 it out on the street. So I called him to ask him for a
2 sweater or anything that she may have left there, just so I
3 had something. And he said Laurie, I want nothing to do
4 with it and slammed the phone down.

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

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

13 Now my mom was so badly decomposed, and that
14 was what brought the police there, because the landlord had
15 reported the smell -- there's a bad smell when a body
16 decomposes. I'll just read it here and then take it from
17 there. It says, "On Tuesday, July 29th, '97, at about
18 13:30 hours, the Compt...", which I'm assuming is the
19 landlord, "...who takes care of the rooming house where the
20 victim lived, attended her apartment in order to check on
21 her wellbeing. It seems that they had received complaints
22 regarding a bad smell coming from the apartment, as well as
23 the victim had not picked up her family benefits cheque
24 which was unusual. The Compt advised he entered the

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1 victim's apartment by way of key as the door is equipped
2 with a deadbolt that was locked from the inside. Once
3 inside he found the victim deceased on her bed. Then he
4 exited the apartment without disturbing anything and called
5 911".

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

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

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

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1 together, it's actually on the other side of her body.

2 Where's the other thing?

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

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

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

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

23 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's who -- sorry, was
24 she -- did she die here in Sault Ste. Marie?

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1 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** No, in Toronto.

2 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** It was in Toronto, okay.

3 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** No, she's from
4 Batchewana.

5 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

6 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** She was born in
7 Espanola and my family's from Batchewana. And my grandma's
8 from Spanish, it's kind of a whole, whole area thing. But
9 through life -- I mean like we were here. I was born in
10 Toronto. My mom and dad met, I was born in Toronto, and
11 then we moved here. And then when they split my mom was in
12 different parts of the country. She was finding different
13 jobs and what have you. She was out west for awhile and
14 then she, she went back to Toronto where her sisters were
15 and where my grandma was.

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

22 I'm just going to go through here because
23 like things pop into my head at a time because I get so --
24 like 21 years later it still affects me too. To think that

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1 I -- you know in my whole life I've been raised that Canada
2 is the greatest country in the world and it's -- I'm so
3 proud to be a Canadian, and it just -- I love this country.
4 But then you look at like what is this, what is this? You
5 can't be a woman, you can't be a Native in this country
6 without having that stigma or what have you?

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

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

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

22 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** I do, I have a brother.
23 And him and my mom were close before she moved to Toronto,
24 where my mom and I weren't close because I saw the

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1 alcoholism and I saw it, and I was stubborn and I was
2 right. But my brother and her were really close, and then
3 when she moved they kind of lost touch and stuff. But they
4 were always -- and then when she died he really pulled
5 back. I know that he cares, but he has a different way of
6 dealing with things than I do. And I keep him informed of
7 everything I've done, in different interviews I've done and
8 stuff like that. And he listens, but I don't -- but he's
9 not openly affected I guess as much as me. He could be
10 internally, but I mean that's his way.

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

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

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

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 I would lose my job if I left something just --

2 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Hanging.

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

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

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

21 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** I know that I was
22 questioning too, and they said they were worried about her
23 family -- her family allowance cheque or what have you, her
24 not picking it up and it was the 29th of July. Now I know

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 my mom was on ODSP, and I know that ODSP pays two days
2 before the first of the month. This is what I find -- like
3 question. Two days before the first of the month it's
4 usually -- or the day before the first of the month.

5 A detective or -- excuse me if I'm wrong.
6 Someone told me that her cheque was slid under the door as
7 per usual. Then it says that they were worried about her
8 cheque not being picked up. However, there's the 29th,
9 30th, 31st and the 1st. The cheque should have been issued
10 on the 31st or -- I just find it odd. Like it's the 29th,
11 it's not --

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

14 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** No, they said it was
15 turned into the police and what have you. But if he
16 entered -- if the landlord entered the apartment on the
17 29th and he picked it up off the floor -- he had also said
18 -- yeah, it was the landlord that had said the cheque was
19 on the side table in conversation. It's just -- there's no
20 many things that are not right. It's really hard to put it
21 all together without sitting down and breaking down bit by
22 bit. And I shouldn't have to do that, that should have
23 been done by an investigator. So 21 years later I still
24 can't wrap my head around this. It's not right at all.

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1 A few questions that came along. One time
2 my mom's friend I guess you could say, she had met with the
3 Toronto Police Department and I have questions that I have,
4 but I never got an answer to. Because like why, when her
5 ID and uncashed cheque were found, was she identified as a
6 Jane Doe for close to a month when she laid in the morgue?
7 Before like my aunts went and identified her, and I mean
8 with the dental reports and stuff. They knew who she was.

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

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

14 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

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

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

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

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

20 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** It says here shortly --
21 this friend here lived in Toronto as well, and that's where
22 my mom met her. "It was like shortly after Deb's death
23 word on the street was that she was murdered and why wasn't
24 it never addressed by the Toronto Police Service"? Like

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1 you know it's kind of -- you know the things with Bruce
2 McArthur, and I know that he targeted gay men in Toronto
3 and what have you, in my mind because nothing has been
4 resolved, what happens back in '97 when maybe he liked
5 women at that time, but I don't know this and that's wrong.

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

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

24 That's what I've got for right now. That

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

9 "I don't see any other possibility other
10 than murder with the way that [Deborah's
11 boyfriend], her boyfriend, was with me
12 before my mom's body was found -- the
13 original post mortem shows nothing
14 anatomical, etcetera, the new coroner's
15 investigation report that I acquired in
16 2009, all of this adds more to the story.
17 As far as how she was found, the condition
18 of her apartment, the other things, do not
19 match the original police report I obtained
20 in 2003 or anything the detectives told me
21 when I was in contact with them in August
22 '97. In my opinion it's that the Toronto
23 Police Department should have done their
24 jobs properly at the time of the incident,

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1 and if this was done there wouldn't be any
2 speculation as to how my mom died".

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

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

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

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

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

24 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Sure.

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(Deborah Sloss)

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

4 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yes.

5 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** -- not up here?

6 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yes.

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

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

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

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1 details and stuff, of what happened after that, because
2 again I was just --

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

5 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yeah.

6 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Do you have anything?

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

10 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** It's Deborah Anne
11 Sloss.

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

14 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Deborah is D-E-B-O-R-A-
15 H, Anne A-N-N-E, and Sloss is S-L-O-S-S.

16 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Thank you.

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

19 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yes, [Police
20 Constable].

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

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

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** [Police Constable].

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

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

24 MS. LAURA LACROSSE: Yeah.

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Okay, thank you.

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

9 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Of course.

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

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

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

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

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Just traces of a
2 decongestant.

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

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

8 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

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

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** And maybe -- I know
20 Daria's been in touch with some of these other relatives,
21 but if you feel comfortable, do you want to list the full
22 names of the other relatives who you either know want to
23 speak with the Inquiry or who you think are important to
24 this?

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1 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Okay, there's Marylou
2 Smoke. Do you want me to spell it?

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

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

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

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

9 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Yeah.

10 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Okay.

11 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** And Cathy Angus.

12 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** And where does Cathy
13 live?

14 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** She's in Toronto.

15 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** In Toronto, okay.

16 Thank you.

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

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

21 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** They're all sisters.

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

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** After, after your mom

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 died and, you know, you got a hold of all these reports,
2 was there ever a police complaint made through any other
3 systems or anything about the investigation that you know
4 of?

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

7 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

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

16 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Touch and go.

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

19 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Good for you.

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

22 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Is there any other
23 messages in particular about indigenous communities, what
24 this did to you, anything else you think is important that

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 you just want to say, get off your chest to the
2 Commissioners about?

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

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

13 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yeah.

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

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

20 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Undoubtedly.

21 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** If I had a concrete
22 answer to say okay, she died of cancer, she died of a heart
23 attack, I'd be okay with that. But I'm not okay with no
24 answers. I don't like having to explain to my babies that

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1 I don't know, because to my kids I know everything. They
2 come to me for answers and I can't give them. But what I
3 can give them is that I know that hopefully in the future
4 I'm not having to hear about kids having to go through what
5 I've gone through.

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

10 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Yes.

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

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

22 Back in '79 we were travelling to Toronto,
23 my dad, my brother, my mom, my Aunt Roxanne and her
24 boyfriend at the time, we were travelling to Toronto for

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1 Christmas or -- it was wintertime anyhow. We hit the soft
2 shoulder of the road outside of Sudbury and it sucked the
3 truck and we rolled five times. My mom and I were sleeping
4 in the back of the truck, in the camper. The snow machines
5 were on the back, and there was four people. My brother
6 was only three or so.

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

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

23 Even my mom's family said after she -- after
24 that accident she changed with the drinking and stuff. And

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

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

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

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 I thought yeah.

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

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

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

18 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Exactly. And I think
19 that it's really important that, that families -- the stuff
20 that's happening to these families, they need to be able to
21 talk, and they need those resources there. Even if -- like
22 I said, it took five years before I could say thank you
23 when people said that I looked like my mom. It took five
24 years. And there should be things there five years later,

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1 10 years later. You know it's been 21 years and I still
2 need -- it should be there to make this county great again,
3 right? Sorry, that's my sense of humour. You guys got it.

4 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** We did.

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

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

12 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Okay.

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

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

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(Deborah Sloss)

1 years and it ended in 2011.

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

12 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Right.

13 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** She got me there.

14 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** In spirit.

15 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Exactly, exactly.

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

18 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** That's fine.

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

21 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Yeah.

22 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** I was worn out before I
23 came here, bawling my eyes out, writing this out and what
24 have you. Again, that was just -- anything that I wrote

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1 out here was stuff that we had already -- we were talking
2 about. So I guess I got it out in my own way and didn't
3 need that book.

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

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

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

15 **MS. DARYA BOYARCHUK:** Okay.

16 **MS. LAURA LACROSSE:** Definitely.

17 **MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Okay. For the
18 Commission we would like to make it known that Laura
19 Lacrosse has chosen to make the statement public. It is
20 2:19 in the afternoon, and we are about to conclude our
21 statement. Thank you very much Laura.

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

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

24 **MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** You're a very strong

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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.



Sherry Hobe

January 10, 2019