National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part I Statement Gathering
Garden River First Nations Indian Reserve
Ontario

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Statement - Volume 555

Lionel Desmoulin,
In relation to Shirley Darlene Taylor

Statement gathered by Debbie Bodkin

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Statement Gatherer: Debbie Bodkin

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Statement – Public
Lionel Desmoulin
(Shirley Darlene Taylor)

Garden River First Nations Indian Reserve
--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, October 17, 2018 at 10:31 a.m.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay, we have the equipment all back on again. It is now 10:31 a.m. on Wednesday, October 17th. So as I mentioned Lionel, myself Debbie Bodkin, Daria Boyarchuk, I'm going to basically hand the room over to you to tell your truth, but maybe one thing I should do before you get started is just have who else is here introduce themselves. So I'm just going to turn the camera around. Lizz, if you wouldn't mind just introducing yourself?

MS. LIZZ NOOTCHTAI BRIGGS: Hello, boozhoo, [speaking in Anishnaabe].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And can you say your full name too, Lizz, your surname?

MS. LIZZ NOOTCHTAI BRIGGS: My government name is Lizz Nootchtai Briggs.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Thank you, and Bill?

MR. BILL GEORGE: (Speaking in his native language). I'm Bill George from Oneida.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Thanks very much Bill. And Lizz and Bill are both here for support for yourself, right Lionel?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Yeah.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: So as Daria and I
mentioned before, start wherever you feel comfortable, but
if you'll give your full name, address and then whatever
background you want to speak about, about yourself, and
then share with us whatever it is you're comfortable
sharing, okay?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Alright. My name is
Lionel Desmoulin. My native name is (indiscernible). Well

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: What's your birth date
Lionel, if I may?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: [Birthday], 1957.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And what's the actual
address that we're at?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: [Address].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And is it Sault Ste.
Marie, Garden River, Sault Ste. Marie, is that the proper
address?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Garden River.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay perfect.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: [Address].

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Thank you.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Ontario.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: All yours, sorry to
interrupt you.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Well I don't really
know where to start. When I got some calls from you guys I started thinking and thinking. And I got a call yesterday and I was thinking more, and my mind was all over the place. I did go to one of the big gatherings up in Six Nations. The very last day I was the only one that never said anything at all for the first couple of days. And I was the very last one that day anyways, and I really had a hard time listening to other people's stories. And it's very, very hard to hear that stuff that was told over there.

Right now it's kind of hard for me to even, even know where to begin to tell my story. It's kind of making my mind go all over the place, trying to think what happened. When I heard the news I tried to -- I tried to focus on how I told my children that night. And you know it wasn't a very, very good thing to wake them up in the middle of the night and have to tell them that.

And for me when I heard that -- my children were living at home with me, they were still young. I heard a knock on the door probably about one o'clock in the morning.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Sorry Lionel, I'm just going to ask you to speak up a little bit more because of the plane going over, if you can?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Probably around one
o'clock in the morning -- your guys' technology is shit.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: I know.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: But anyways, right away I knew something was wrong when I seen someone was at the door. I didn't know how bad it was but they told me. And one of my kids happened to get up to see who was at the door too, my oldest. My son, he started crying right away when the cops told us what went down. I had to tell my partner that I was with at the time to keep him quiet in the living room there.

Then I started getting on the phone to make some phone calls to get people over to my house to -- I have three children. I had to get two sets of adults to come in, one for each daughter, to let -- to be there when we told them what happened that night. And it wasn't a very pretty sight for them to wake up as, you know being told what happened to their mom at that time.

You know it was very, very hard for them to hear that. They were in shock, especially when you wake them up to tell them that. To them it was probably just a bad dream. Anyway, when I did tell them that -- I didn't want to wait until daylight. I gathered up all the people, I gathered up some people to be there for the kids at the time, and they did come over. I explained to them why I want them over right now, not in the morning, so they said
yeah okay, we'll be right there, so they came.

After everybody got there, which was probably around three o'clock already, that's when I said okay, everybody's here now, light up a smudge and then tell my daughters that. And you know it was very, very hard for -- to hear the crying in each different room. It's a very good thing I had those people come over to help me with that, especially when the girls heard the news about their mom. I don't think any kid should go through that at any time or any place.

My kids were like -- they were just starting teenage life around that time, around 10 and 11, and the other one was 14, like that. And they were still young and it really hit them hard that night.

And I kind of had to wait for daylight to come, they started to settle down when daylight came. And you know when daylight come the other people that heard about it started coming to my house, and the people that were there earlier that morning, they were going to go home and get rest and then come back later on that day. Again I started making phone calls again, how we were going to get down to Sudbury, and when we're going to leave, and when everything is supposed to happen.

And we finally got down there to Sudbury.

We got there a couple of days ahead of time, before the
funeral and all that, you know, because there was family
members that lived down there, so we were at their place.

I don't know, there's a lot of mixed
feelings amongst the family members over there. They were
really having a hard time. The ones that were there were
trying -- they were trying their best to keep everybody
calm and controlled. You know let's just try to move on
and help each other and be there for each other.

So we had a couple of days to spare before
the funeral, and I was talking to one of the sisters of my
wife that got murdered. And I asked, I asked what about
her personal belongings, did anybody go and get the
personal belongings of hers? They all said -- everybody
said no. Because they lived in Sudbury and I didn't. I
lived down here with my children in Sault Ste. Marie area.

And for me this one sister, we were talking
amongst ourselves asking how do we go about getting her
personal belongings. And just the dad heard us talking and
he says phone this guy, phone this officer, this detective,
whatever, ask him about it. So we did that and they said
we could go there and pick up her stuff. We asked if the
doors were locked and they said no, the door was unlocked.

I didn't know what I was going to walk into
at the time. I thought maybe they cleaned it up a little
bit or whatnot, eh. They didn't do that. It was like I
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walked into a like a little slaughterhouse. There was blood all over the place. I got kind of weak at the knees there, I was walking through the house really slow. Her sister was with me, just the two of us. She was kind of behind me holding my arm, and I was walking with her in silence, just looking and looking.

We made our way to the bedroom, I believe that's where everything happened, started. I don't know, it was like upside down and a mess. You could tell a fight started and where the guy started beating her up. You could tell she must have been bleeding, I don't know, from someplace. There was blood all along the wall, the way he drug her, pushed her against the wall I guess.

All over the floor, up the hallway, and it led into the kitchen. They say that's where they found her on the chair, dead on the chair. I guess he slashed her throat at some point. I don't know where, it could have been in the bedroom and -- it could have been from the bedroom or the living room, there was a whole lot of blood all over the place. She actually made it as far as the chair and that was it, or he took her towards the chair and that was -- I don't know how it went down there.

But anyways, when I walked in there it -- I don't think nobody should have to walk into that kind of mess or be warned at least. Like warn the person that's
going there. I think the cops should have warned us for
one thing. They should have told us that the place was not
cleaned up but still, still a big mess in there. I was
very, very shocked when I went in there. Why would the
cops not tell us that it's still a murder scene in there?
Why didn't they tell us that it wasn't cleaned up? You
know I think about that lots. I still have some pictures
right now how it was.

And we did manage to collect a few
belongings, although the investigation was over. We
managed to get a few of her personal belongings that meant
-- a lot of her stuff was given to her by her children, by
her daughter and that stuff was.

So we packed up some of her stuff and we got
out of there. There was a group standing outside of that
place where she was murdered. They were standing outside
having a smoke and kind shaking, shaking their heads, you
know in disbelief I guess. I'm not one for words either,
but I supposed it's the right, right word. You know why
would somebody let somebody walk into that kind of mess,
you know why didn't they let us know? That's -- like
that's what makes me mad about the Sudbury police.

They should at least let people know what
they're going to walk into, not say go right ahead, you're
allowed to go in there. And that's, that still bothers me
about that. You know they should have warned people
instead of saying go right ahead and go in there, you know?

So anyways, we were done with that and we
left there to get ready for the wake and all that. They
had a fire going for her. I had to ladies do a fire, a
mother and daughter. They wanted to build a fire for my
wife, so I said go ahead. They built the fire outside of
my father-in-law's place in Sudbury. And then we -- the
day for the funeral finally arrived and we all started
going down there.

You know how funerals are, especially -- you
know a lot of people they cry and then they stop, they cry
and then they stop. There's always a process when you go
to funerals, you know, when you open the casket, and when
they bring the body in. There's always somebody crying.
The first time I ever seen her since she got murdered was
in her casket.

I had my children all at the funeral home.
You know they didn't want to come up to the casket. And I
went up to stand by the casket, beside it. I stand beside
the casket there, my hand was like that, extended.
Everybody was coming up, they were talking while I was
still standing there, talking and praying to her.

Rubbing her -- I rubbed her hair like that.
And it was almost every spot on her skull there was a cut,
some sort of a cut. She must have been banged around pretty good before he slashed her throat. On the back of her head she had a big gash back there, cut here, cut there, you good feel it underneath there. I don't recall seeing any, any cuts around the face or bruises. I guess if she probably would have lived, I guess he didn't want her to have any physical evidence on her face, marks. He did all -- he hit her where it couldn't be seen, on the head and the hair.

I remember she used to come and visit us, visit the kids. She always wore this big long nightgown here covering her arms. I always wondered. Around the second or third night one of my girls came to see me. I guess she walked in -- they walked in on her mom changing her clothes. The reason why she wore that kind of nightgown, because all -- both of her legs and her arms were always bruised, always bruised. Her body was full of bruises.

And the kids are like how come my mom's like that, what's wrong with her, they said she's all full of bruises. I said oh, that's why she's probably wearing that big long nightgown, I said hiding all them bruises. I mean you just happened to walk in on her when she was changing, to check to see whether her mom was in the bedroom or not I guess. She was changing in the bedroom when she was
visiting. One of the girls walked in on her and saw all the bruises. The guy would never make no marks around the neck or the face, only where you can't see it. She always wore long sleeves. And I didn't want to tell my kids at the time when they saw their mom like that, when she came down for a visit. We tried to get her -- get to see her as much as possible because I knew -- I know that she was in a real bad relationship.

I don't know why women leave their partners a lot of times, I know why she left me, or part of it why she left me. Because I had worked out of town all the time so -- all the jobs I had were out of town. I was going -- cutting line, cutting line for the hydro company. Ten days on, four days off, like that, those kind of jobs. I always had to leave the city. So that's why, one of the reasons why, I wasn't at home a lot of the time.

So I think that's one of the reasons why she left me, because I wasn't home. She felt alone a lot of times because I was only home for four days at a time, or five days. That's where everything started going downhill. She left me for that guy, because that guy basically had some kind of a job where he came home every eight days or something like that, back home for five.

I kind of knew something was not right a lot of the times when I came home. I think there was a lot of
drinking involved too. She drank, I drank. But there was no violence between me and her. A lot of arguments but no violence. No hitting or slapping or anything like that. So that's how that became -- that's how she ended up not being here today, ending up with that guy. He had -- you know I think they only stayed together -- I think it was only maybe three or four years, and after that she was gone, she was dead.

My children really had a hard time on her death. My oldest daughter, she went into real bad depression. I couldn't go one room to another room, she'd be right behind me. And when I went to bed she was crying and all that, so I said okay then, you sleep on the cot, I'll sleep on the floor. I'll make a floor bed. Because that's the only way she felt safe.

My other daughter barely -- locked herself in our home every day for about a year. She went to school, did her school work, had supper, straight to her room. I didn't see her until she came home the next day from school. She got up in the morning and left. She did that for about a year.

And I had -- I always had a real hard time doing all this by myself. My son turned to street drugs. Today he's still out there. I see him every now and then. Sometimes he looks good, sometimes you can tell he was into
the drugs.

Since then I have six grandchildren though, since then. And I'm -- I raised three of my grandchildren, which I'm talking about my son's kids. He ended up with a messed up partner also. They couldn't watch their kids so I had to step in. I'm still watching kids. You know -- like I love my grandchildren dearly. I have a little brand new grandchild, his name is [Grandchild]. He's a handful, but he's healthy, his parents are healthy. My daughter's a drummer now, she sings in sweat lodges. She'll sing -- if we ask her to sing she'll sing.

And I know my children are scared to lose their father, I'm the only parent left. So we all have to go sometime I tell them, and you're going to have to live on whether you like it or not. You've got to raise your kids, you've got to raise your grandchildren.

To me how do you feel normal each and every day, how do you feel normal, you know? This is my normal in here. This is what makes me feel normal, building this fire. People ask me about fire. I build fires for them. I try to help as many people as I can. I honour my partner that passed away with that murdered and missing sign out there, the red dress. And I do have another dress that I carry to workshops but right now I can't find it. I wanted to bring it in here but it'll probably show up after you
guys leave.

So it's a very, very hard road to walk on.

The past life I had there, I was drinking and driving. But after me and my partner went different ways I sobered up. I started walking the red road, our traditional way. This is how I think I keep myself from not losing it at times. A lot of times I feel all alone even though there's a lot of people that I could turn to. It's very hard some days. I do a lot of smudging.

I try to explain to my grandchildren because I'm raising them, how there grandma was or is. I show them pictures. I say this is your grandma right here. She's not here with us now, she's gone. Gone in the spirit world, she's in a good place. So now you've got your grandpa looking after you. I wouldn't give that up for anything. Just help would probably slow me down but it's not the only thing.

I still have to try to get my daughters to talk about what happened. It's very hard for them also. They went to the very first workshop in Timmins. This one coordinator that was running the show, she was a very rude person, very bossy, and she's the one that kept on phoning. Are you guys coming, are you guys coming? And she got pretty ignorant and smart with my daughter. And I told her let me know when you run into her again, next time I'll go
right up to her and tell her where to go. She's the one that asked to call. Let us -- we didn't ask to get called or whatever, get bullied by her or get smart -- for her to act smart with us over here. Some of the people sitting in here, they know who I'm talking about.

I believe she actually lost one of her siblings too, but that doesn't give her the right to get smart with us guys here. It should be a healing time, not where you get picked on.

And I hope -- I said what I have to say. And if you guys use this little piece you got on me, I hope that helps other families. I do want to the public -- I do want it to be seen wherever they can use it.

No woman should go through any kind of abuse. If a man hits a woman, he's just a coward, he's just a bully. That means he can't go, he can't go against a man because he's just a little girl himself. Probably screams like one too if you slap him. To all you men out there who think about beating your woman you know what, I think you'd better give yourself a good look in the mirror. And you know what, you're not any better than any other man that hits their woman. Women are not made to hit, they're made to love, cherish and be cared for. The women will give you kids, that's your kids.

Today I don't even know where that man is.
He's probably out on parole or -- I don't really know where he is today. And I'd like to find out where he is, not to go and hunt him, just so I don't go in the same area he is. If I ran into him some place down the road, I'll probably make him cry. I don't think I wouldn't hit him, but I'll make him -- ask him why he did that to my wife, hurt my kids. My kids are still suffering today. They still think about their mom, they still cry about their mom. All those -- that man stole 18 years from them. It's still fresh in my mind.

I'd been with her for 18 years before this happened. I thought she would be my lifelong partner until, you know. I couldn't help it, I had to go to work to try to support the family. That's how, that's how my relationship ended with her.

I still think about her every other day. I know she's around to talk to her. I won't go say that to the doctors at the hospital I talk to my wife, she's dead. Right away they think you're crazy. You tell the white doctors, you tell them that you're talking to a spirit they think you're crazy. They don't understand our native way, our traditional way. We feel that connection for the ones who've passed on, we do have that connection. That's how we got our fire. We pray with our tobacco, we put our prayers in that fire and move up to the thunderbirds, take
it to the grave. Our prayers get taken up. So we do have
our ways to connect with the creator in our spirit, our
ancestors who have passed away.

I hope you guys get your, get your whole
story and people get some answers. I know I'm all over the
page, but whatever comes to my mind I say at that time. I
like to have it in order, but that's now how I did it.
That's how the (indiscernible) might do it.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Do you mind if I ask you
just to clarify a few things Lionel, if you're comfortable.
Mostly was names of people just to make the story more
understandable for the Commissioners.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Names.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: The name of your wife?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Shirley Darlene
Taylor.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Alright. And the name
of the man I presume was arrested for her murder?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Don -- I don't know
if you'd say Don Saunders or Donald Saunders. Just use
both names I guess.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay. And I know you
said it was 18 years ago, and maybe at the beginning you
said the date but I missed it. The date of her murder?

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: I don't know the exact day on February.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And this Donald guy was charged with her murder? You said he was in jail.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Well I believe when I first heard about it they said first degree. They went down to second degree, and by the time it reached court time, trial time, it went down to manslaughter.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Okay.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: Now how the hell you get manslaughter when you beat the crap out of a woman, cuts all over her head. I know there were cuts and slashed the jugular vein.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: And it was Sudbury Police you said, and were there any police officers' names that you know of?

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: I don't remember.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: You don't know, okay.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: You now it's just --

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: It's okay.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: It's 18 years ago.

MS. DEBBIE BODKIN: Yeah exactly.

MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN: The guy seemed like a nice cop, that we went and spoke to. But I don't -- I
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don't think it wasn't sinking at the time, maybe he should have told us, you know? Maybe he thinks everybody's okay to walk into a murder scene not cleaned up, it's all bloodied. You know it's awful.

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

**MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN:** All the cops see the little pieces, make sure -- you know tell the people, warn them ahead of time what they're going to walk into. If you want to go in it's up to you. Leave it at that after that.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** M'hm. Well thank you very much for sharing a very difficult story, and you weren't all over the place, you were very easily understood. You laid it out very well, as horrible as it was.

**MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN:** Well I used my level of language.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's fine.

**MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN:** I don't use your guys' level of language because you know why? I don't know how to talk like you guys.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** I don't think I have any different levels either.

**MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN:** Well you usually tell people why don't you come down to our level, speak our level, never mind all those fancy words, you know. We
don't know half of their words.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** Is there anything else you -- you did a wonderful job at the end of saying what you hope comes out of the Inquiry. Any other last comments you want to make, or suggestions, or questions?

**MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN:** Well I don't know, maybe -- I don't know if I'm going to put myself in a -- say something I shouldn't say, but you know maybe if somebody sees this and he wants me to come and tell my story at their community, or at their gathering, or whatever. I'll probably make it a little shorter, but I'll tell it how it is, you know.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** That's wonderful, thank you.

**MS. DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Yeah, thank you.

**MR. LIONEL DESMOULIN:** Yeah, thanks.

**MS. DEBBIE BODKIN:** So thank you again Lionel, and we will shut the camera equipment off now, and it's 13 minutes after 11.

--- Upon adjourning at 11:13 a.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