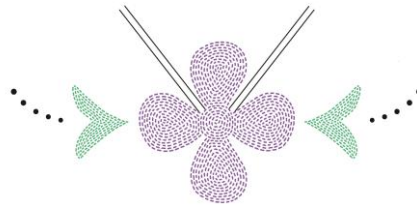


National Inquiry into  
Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls



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  
Bastion Hotel  
Nanaimo, British Columbia**



**PUBLIC**

**Saturday October 20, 2018**

**Statement - Volume 526  
Edna Howard,  
In relation to Claudia Iron-Howard**

**Statement gathered by Courtney Norris-Jones**

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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."

III  
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 526

Edna Howard

October 20, 2018

PAGE

Testimony of Edna Howard . . . . . 1

Reporter's Certification . . . . . 27

Statement Gatherer: Courtney Norris-Jones

**Documents submitted with testimony: none.**

1 Nanaimo, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Saturday, October 20, 2018 at 1:50  
3 p.m.

4 **COURTNEY NORRIS-JONES:** Okay. This is  
5 Courtney Norris Jones, statement taker with the National  
6 Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and  
7 Girls in Nanaimo, BC on October 20th, 2018 and the time is  
8 1:50 P.M. Today I am speaking with Edna Howard of -- I'm  
9 going to attempt your nation again.

10 **EDNA HOWARD:** M'hmm.

11 **COURTNEY NORRIS-JONES:** Aseniwuche ---

12 **EDNA HOWARD:** Yeah.

13 **COURTNEY NORRIS-JONES:** --- Winewak ---

14 **EDNA HOWARD:** Yeah.

15 **COURTNEY NORRIS-JONES:** --- Nation who  
16 resides at [address] in Parksville, BC. Ms. Howard is here  
17 to tell her truth for her daughter Claudia Mary Iron-Howard  
18 who was murdered on June 4th, 2015 in Edmonton, Alberta.  
19 Also present in the room is health support Jackie Brown.  
20 And also, for the record, Edna Howard, you are here  
21 voluntarily to provide your truth and you agree to the  
22 videotaping and audiotaping of your truth. You also  
23 understand at the end of your truth you'll be able to  
24 determine whether you would like your truth to be public or  
25 private at this time. Are you ready to start?

1                   **EDNA HOWARD:** Yeah.

2                   **COURTNEY NORRIS-JONES:** Okay. Whenever  
3 you're ready.

4                   **EDNA HOWARD:** M'hmm. I don't know where to  
5 start. On -- on June 4th, 2015 I was living in Fort St.  
6 John. I was living and working in Fort St. John. And I  
7 had been there since July -- July 2010. I was transferred  
8 there for work. And that day -- that morning I woke up  
9 about -- I think it was about 5:00 in the morning and I  
10 didn't know what was going on but I woke up. I felt like I  
11 was having the worst panic attack in my life. My heart was  
12 just pounding out of my chest, and my mind was racing, and  
13 I couldn't breathe, and I didn't know what was happening.  
14 And I had to walk around in my bedroom and go in the  
15 bathroom, put water on my face and I almost called the  
16 ambulance because it was just so bad. I didn't know what  
17 was going on and I had my -- my -- my two sons were there  
18 and my nephew were there and -- and I didn't want to scare  
19 anybody.

20                   So I just stayed in the room and started --  
21 all of a sudden, a thought came into my mind about my  
22 daughter. My daughter was in Edmonton. And when she came  
23 into my mind, I just started praying. And I prayed that  
24 God would look after her because I wasn't there. I didn't  
25 know what was going on. And so I just prayed. And about

1           7:00, it was about two hours later, I decided that I needed  
2           to start getting ready and go to work. I still didn't know  
3           what that experience meant. Then I went to work and -- and  
4           at the end of the day -- at the beginning of the year a co-  
5           worker and mine had made a decision to walk everyday after  
6           work and that's what we were doing.

7                           And that day I got home and that day, I -- I  
8           didn't find my runners in my vehicle because I normally had  
9           my runners in my car. And for some odd reason I didn't  
10          have them in my car that day. So I had to run home. And  
11          my friend went off to the park where we were going to meet  
12          to do our walk and I ran home and -- and got to my place.  
13          And my son was on -- in the lounge -- lounging chair  
14          outside in the -- in the patio where I could see him. And  
15          -- and my nephew was upstairs doing something. And -- and  
16          I walked in and I found my runners by the door and I put my  
17          first -- the first one on. I was changing shoes and  
18          putting my runners on.

19                           And just as I bent down I -- I noticed a --  
20          a police car came and pulled up -- pulled up across the  
21          street. And -- but they weren't at my place, they weren't  
22          at my driveway so I -- so when I saw that I laugh -- I  
23          laughed and I yelled out to my son, "What did you do?  
24          They're -- they're here," or something like that.

25                           And, anyways, he -- he made a comment and

1 but I went back to putting my shoes on. I went -- bent  
2 over and put the -- my other shoe on. And I came back up  
3 and the two police officers and a woman -- a blonde woman  
4 were coming up the -- the driveway. I could see it because  
5 I have a big window in my door. And -- and I knew  
6 something was wrong because they had their caps on, and  
7 they were -- they just had a real somber look.

8 They knocked on the door and I was standing  
9 right there and I remember thinking I want to run. And I  
10 just wanted to disappear. And I opened the door and they  
11 asked me if I was Edna Howard. And I said, "Yeah." And --  
12 and all I remember was hearing that my daughter had been  
13 killed that morning in Edmonton.

14 And I remember screaming. I remember  
15 screaming for my son. He came running in because he heard  
16 me. I have no idea what I -- why I was screaming but I was  
17 screaming for my son. And he came running in and I  
18 remember he just grabbed me and he was just holding me.  
19 And I was just crying. And the world just stopped. And  
20 then it just became a blur.

21 I remember the police officers coming in and  
22 I don't even remember what -- I remember a tall one and a  
23 shorter one. And -- and the blonde woman. And they came  
24 in and they were -- they asked if there's anybody they  
25 could phone, or if there's anything they could do. And my

1 nephew -- I remember my nephew coming down but when he  
2 heard the police coming in and he heard them -- he heard  
3 them say that my daughter had been killed and he called my  
4 mom -- he called his mom and my mom -- my mother, his  
5 grandmother. They were in Grand Cache so they -- that's  
6 how they found out.

7 And, yeah, I just -- I remember -- and it  
8 was really strange because that day too, my son -- my  
9 youngest son phoned me and asked me -- or he text me and he  
10 asked me if he could go to the skate park and -- after that  
11 school that day and I said, "Yes." So he didn't have to  
12 experience this, he didn't have to see this and he didn't  
13 have to hear it.

14 And I -- I somehow managed to remember that  
15 I had a friend waiting for me to go for a walk. And I  
16 called her and just said, "I can't come," and this has  
17 happened. And she came over right away. And -- and all of  
18 a sudden I had people -- people were just arriving at my  
19 house. And people were coming and going and the lady was  
20 Victim Services.

21 And they gave me a name of a person in the  
22 homes division in Edmonton that I could call. And I called  
23 them right away because I wanted to know -- I wanted to  
24 know what happened.

25 So life, as I knew it, just ended at that



1 moment. Just -- and I remember calling my ex-husband. He  
2 works up at a diamond mine up in Northwest Territories. I  
3 remember calling him and telling him what happened. And he  
4 made arrangements right away to fly -- to -- to fly down to  
5 Fort St. John to come down. And my nephew went and drove  
6 and picked up my son at the skate park. And -- and told  
7 him what had happened.

8 And life just became a nightmare. I don't  
9 remember a lot. I remember the next, I think, three to six  
10 months. I remember talking to a lot of people. I remember  
11 a lot of people talking to me. And I went into -- I  
12 started counselling right away through my employer. They  
13 got me a -- through their Employee Assistance Program I  
14 started seeing a counsellor, Connie (Ph.), in Fort St.  
15 John. And to this day, I have no idea what I said. I  
16 remember going to sit there and all I would do is just  
17 babble for whatever. Just to try to stay sane, just to try  
18 to not lose my mind.

19 I remember going to the hospitals, I  
20 remember going to doctors and everybody -- not everybody  
21 but doctors trying to give me prescriptions of anti-  
22 depressants, anti-anxiety, sleeping medication. And I  
23 couldn't take it. And I didn't want to take it.

24 Yeah, it was just bizarre because it's what  
25 happens, or what happened to me was just life just came to

1 a -- a stop. Like, life kept on going, the world kept on  
2 going but life just came to a stop. And I -- and I just --  
3 it -- just the emotional -- just the emotional decimation  
4 of just not myself but my boys and their dad, and my mom  
5 and dad. And my parents were so close to her.

6 I remember phoning a funeral home. Somebody  
7 else made the arrangements. Yeah. And I remember just a  
8 lot of people just in and out talking to me and doing  
9 things with me and being concerned about me. And all I  
10 could think about is I want to see her. I just wanted to  
11 see her so bad. But I couldn't. And I knew the only way  
12 I'd have to do it is I'd have to die.

13 But I have people here -- I have people here  
14 who love me and I know I couldn't do that. I have my two  
15 boys and I have my grandchildren, and I have a nephew  
16 that's been part of my family forever.

17 So a lot of thoughts about suicide, a lot of  
18 thoughts about just the unknown. Not knowing what happened  
19 to her, not knowing -- just phoning police, wanting  
20 information, knowing that they couldn't give me anything  
21 because I knew that they can't give me anything.

22 But they were good. They were really good  
23 with me. Every time I called or whatever, they were really  
24 responsive and to the point where they finally had to tell  
25 me that it was a public safety matter and I need to not do

1           what I was doing because I was getting mad at them for not  
2           finding an answer, not -- not getting me an answer. But I  
3           knew they were doing everything they could.

4                       And I -- I talked to her friends, I talked  
5           to people that she had been hanging around with in Edmonton  
6           for the last three months. And just trying to find an  
7           answer. Just anything. Anything. And that's when I was  
8           told that I need to back off.

9                       So it was just -- it took so much away from  
10          us. She was my only daughter. She was my oldest child.  
11          And she just brought light into everybody's life. And so  
12          the -- I remember sitting at home one day just thinking I  
13          needed to leave. I had to go somewhere and I didn't know  
14          where I needed to go. And so I talked to my teenager and  
15          said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I'm thinking," -  
16          - I was thinking Calgary, Edmonton or Vancouver some place.  
17          I have no idea why I picked those but that's what I came up  
18          with. And -- and anyways, he just said, "What about  
19          Vancouver Island?" And in my grief state, I said, "What a  
20          great idea. Let's go."

21                      So we flew down here, met my -- met -- met a  
22          friend of mine. But I continued with counselling. I did  
23          all the counselling every -- every week. My employer paid  
24          for all of that, and they also paid for me to come down  
25          here.

1                   The only thing that I remember the police  
2           telling me were -- was that -- that where it had happened.  
3           And it was on the media. It was -- so it was all over the  
4           -- it was all over the papers. And they -- they said her  
5           name publicly so that was pretty brutal, watching the --  
6           watching the coverage, hearing it on the news, and seeing  
7           it in the newspapers and so public.

8                   And, yeah, it was just a blur. But now I  
9           know, today, that that was just -- that's part of the shock  
10          process. I kind of just stayed in that state for a while.  
11          And then my counsellor -- because there was not a lot --  
12          there is no real support in Fort St. John for something  
13          like this, my counsellor suggested I come to Vancouver to a  
14          support group there called Healing After Homicide. It's a  
15          -- an eight-week program. And I came. I remember coming  
16          in August and I flew from Fort St. John. And it was -- it  
17          was covered under my plan.

18                   And I went to the first group and -- and it  
19          was people like me. It was people that had the same  
20          experiences like me. And it was -- it was -- it was  
21          almost, like, a relief because it made me realize I wasn't  
22          alone. That this was not a unique experience. A lot of  
23          people had -- had the same, and some that were very public  
24          to where I remember reading about it in the paper. And  
25          they were in my group. They had -- they had that

1 experience.

2 And -- and so we decided to come down here.  
3 Everything kind of fell into place when we decided to come  
4 down here. An aunt by marriage posted that her -- her  
5 cousin was renting out a -- cousin was renting out a condo  
6 in Parksville. And so I connected with her and I got the  
7 place. So everything kind of fell into place. But, yeah.  
8 That was my last day of work. June 4th, 2015. I couldn't  
9 go back. I -- there was just -- yeah.

10 And when I got down here at the end of  
11 August, we did have her funeral. We -- we -- she was  
12 killed on a Thursday and we had her funeral in Grand Cache,  
13 I think it was on the Monday. And I remember they had to  
14 bring her body back from Edmonton to Grand Prairie. And  
15 because that was the question I asked when I called the --  
16 when I called the Edmonton City Police, the detective. I  
17 said, "How did you guys know? How do you know it was her?"  
18 I thought maybe there was a mistake. He goes, "We knew  
19 because she had a tattoo -- she had a tattoo that was --  
20 ran across her chest that said, "Family first." And so  
21 when they brought her back I wanted to see her. Just to  
22 make sure that it was her.

23 So we went to the funeral home. There was  
24 her dad and me, and her two brothers and my sister and my -  
25 - I remember my sister meeting us there. And it was her.

1           And I saw where she got stabbed. And my son came in, my  
2           oldest son. And I remember him holding her and just  
3           saying, "She's so cold. She needs to wake up." And we had  
4           to drag him out of there.

5                        It just was so surreal. It just didn't feel  
6           like it was -- it was real. And having the funeral in  
7           Grand Cache. And I decided to get her cremated because I  
8           couldn't -- I wanted to have her with me.

9                        And then after we had that, we decided to go  
10          to Edmonton to the spot where she was murdered. And we had  
11          a -- a ceremony there. We had a -- an elder. And also the  
12          pastor from the church. It was -- she was murdered in an  
13          area that was pretty close to a church. He came too and  
14          his congregation and different people from Edmonton.

15                       So I got -- I got to Vancouver Island at the  
16          end of -- at the end of August. My nephew and I drove  
17          down. And my -- my youngest son and -- and his dad went to  
18          California for a -- just to -- for a vacation. And my  
19          oldest son stayed in Fort St. John and he kept the place I  
20          was at, that I was -- I had been renting. And I just left  
21          everything. I left. I came down here with nothing. I  
22          remember packing up my jeep and just bringing our clothes  
23          and just things that we needed. And I rented out a truck  
24          and then we got the bikes and things in there so -- I had  
25          no idea what I was doing. Just -- just on autopilot I

1 think.

2 So we got down here and I continued going to  
3 the group. And I -- and I used to go on the ferry once a  
4 week. It was on Tuesdays, and go to the group. And, yeah,  
5 started meeting people here. And, yeah, it's been -- it's  
6 been a really strange journey because shortly after we got  
7 here, I got a call from the Edmonton City Police, which I  
8 stayed in contact with during that whole time. I got a  
9 call from them. I think it was August 31st or September  
10 1st. It was a Tuesday because I remember I had gone across  
11 on the ferry and my phone had died. And -- and I got to  
12 Vancouver and I got off the -- I got off the express bus.  
13 I -- downtown and I went to the Hyatt -- Tim Hortons by the  
14 Hyatt because I remember they had -- they had outlets there  
15 and I went to go plug my phone in. And -- and my -- my  
16 phone blew up. There was text messages, there were voice  
17 messages, there was -- I -- and so I looked and it was the  
18 -- it was the police and the messages were, "We need to  
19 talk to you right away." And so I called -- I called them.  
20 No, actually, I -- I said, "You can call now. My phone was  
21 dead. It's charging up." And -- and there I was sitting  
22 at Tim Hortons downtown Vancouver by myself when they  
23 called. And they said, "Normally, we would do this in  
24 person when we give -- when we have news about the file.  
25 But we don't have -- but we need to -- we need to talk to

1           you."

2                           And -- and the next thing he said was, "Do  
3           you watch the news or do you read the news?" And I never  
4           did because for some weird reason they don't have Alberta  
5           channels here where I was at. I was at a resort. And they  
6           don't have Alberta papers anywhere. So -- and he -- and he  
7           said, "We've identified the person responsible for your  
8           daughter's death."

9                           But then they -- he -- he told me the  
10          reason why they wanted to talk to me was because they were  
11          going to do a press release in an hour. And what the press  
12          release was about that they -- well, he did tell me they  
13          had -- they had finalized -- they had finished the  
14          investigation. They had been -- they had witness  
15          statements, video surveillance and they also had forensic  
16          evidence. And they had put the file together and they had  
17          just sent it to the crown prosecutor. And there were some  
18          questions they were answering on the file. But before they  
19          could execute the warrant and -- and charge this person, he  
20          had been killed. So he was murdered in Edmonton August  
21          31st, 2015.

22                           And that's how I found out was that. And I  
23          remember sitting there and just crying. Just overwhelmed  
24          and just -- so many things going on. And I asked them not  
25          to -- not to mention my daughter in the press release or



1 any in the -- the media release because I said I didn't  
2 want to talk to my parents. I don't want them to find out  
3 through -- through the TV or anything like that. So they  
4 did honour that. They did the press release.

5 And then a couple days later -- they didn't  
6 notify me on this -- a couple days later it was in the  
7 media again and they did mention my daughter. That -- that  
8 he was the primary suspect and because of his death, my  
9 daughter's case was now considered closed. And the reason  
10 why they did that was because they arrested two young -- or  
11 was it -- I think it was one -- I think it was one -- yeah,  
12 it was one young offender for his murder. So that's how I  
13 found out.

14 And because of that, I made a decision to go  
15 and meet with them. And my sister came with me. So I  
16 think it was in mid -- mid-September. So this was June,  
17 July, August, September, about three and a half months  
18 after my daughter is killed. I went to Edmonton. I flew -  
19 - I think I flew. I don't even know. Like, everything  
20 just stir -- like -- it's like something, like, my brain  
21 quit functioning.

22 But anyways, I -- I flew to Edmonton and I  
23 went with my -- my sister and we met with the -- the  
24 detective that was in charge and my Victim Services  
25 advocate. They had appointed a Victim Services advocate

1           for me. And he came to the meeting and they -- they opened  
2           up the file and they let me know what had happened that  
3           night. And what it was was, so the time that I woke up  
4           that day in Fort St. John on June 4th was the time that she  
5           was stabbed. And the time of death was -- later on, I did  
6           find out the exact time from the autopsy and the -- the  
7           other reports that came -- the toxicology autopsy. Her --  
8           her time of death was listed just after six. And that was  
9           the time when I was just -- I remember just praying and  
10          asking God to look after her because I wasn't there and I  
11          couldn't do nothing.

12                           And -- and so what they told me was they --  
13          that there had been a conflict between two groups of  
14          people. She had nothing to do with it but she came along  
15          and she jumped in to help somebody. So she saved somebody  
16          but she got stabbed. And when I -- when I heard that, I  
17          remember thinking, that would be what she would do because  
18          that's just who she was. And I had been told -- and I had  
19          been told by the police that they didn't know each other  
20          because that was the question I had was did -- did the  
21          person that killed her, did they know each other? Was  
22          there any relationship? Or existing, or did they have  
23          common people? And I've been told, no, there hasn't been,  
24          there was no connection to them.

25                           And then -- and the other thing they told me

1 was the -- was they were really surprised at the amount of  
2 people that came forward. And they said that was just a  
3 testament to who she was and her character. And I just --  
4 was just crying through -- I cried through the whole  
5 meeting. But I wanted to know. And they said the -- I  
6 remember just sitting there crying and saying that I -- I  
7 said, "I know that was God."

8 Because one of the things that I did -- one  
9 of the things that I did after my -- after she was killed  
10 was, my friend Julie flew down from Red Deer to -- to Fort  
11 St. John. She came down and I think it was about the  
12 second or third day after Claudia died that she came. And  
13 I remember her visiting me. And the one thing I remembered  
14 about that visit and what she said was, she just said,  
15 "Edna, the one thing that I want you to do is just pray  
16 that Got puts it into the hearts and minds of the person or  
17 persons responsible to do the right thing and come  
18 forward." And I did. I remember that prayer everyday.  
19 And sometimes that was just my prayer. Just from the time  
20 I woke up to when I went to bed. And just reaching out,  
21 reaching out and -- and when the police told me that, I  
22 just -- I remember just -- just a shock going through my  
23 body and thought, you know, prayers get answered that way  
24 too.

25 And they said they -- they were shocked at

1 the amount of people that came forward. Even -- some of  
2 them even at the risk of their own life and safety.  
3 Because apparently, in that world, that I found out is that  
4 there's -- there's a wall of silence between people that  
5 are on the street, or in that life and the police. But  
6 they said they were really surprised. And I said, "Well,  
7 that's -- that was just the prayer that I prayed the whole  
8 time."

9 And when I got here, then the -- then the --  
10 I went to Vancouver and -- and the day that the -- the RCMP  
11 had called me, I think it was September 1st, I was actually  
12 on my way to my support group. So that was the right place  
13 to be after I got the news because they were able to help  
14 me start processing a lot of even that and what had  
15 happened. And -- and, yeah.

16 So I've learned since -- learned -- learned  
17 since then is that the two young girls that were charged  
18 with his murder, were young offenders -- they're both young  
19 offenders. And they didn't have a relationship, or they  
20 didn't know Claudia. But the -- the person that killed my  
21 daughter knew those two individuals. So they -- they had -  
22 - they had a relationship where there was -- there was  
23 knowledge of each other. And, yeah. It's -- it's just --  
24 it's -- it's been a nightmare.

25 And you know what's really strange is I

1       remember when this started coming out, the Murdered and  
2       Missing Indigenous Women, I remember when it was starting  
3       to come out publicly. I think it was about 2013 or '14  
4       when it was starting to hit the media and -- and I remember  
5       seeing that and I remember thinking, like, it made me  
6       really uncomfortable thinking this should be really --  
7       like, a very private, private personal matter for people  
8       that were involved, and families and -- and the missing and  
9       murdered Indigenous women until it happened to me.

10               And I had to -- and I've learned in the last  
11       three years, like, how important this is. Like, the  
12       stories need to get out. Like, people need to share, like  
13       you guys have on here, the truth. And I had to really -- I  
14       had to really do a little -- like soul searching on my  
15       motive for this and what am I doing this for? And what's  
16       the purpose and what are -- what -- what would the benefit  
17       be?

18               And I think, for me, like, it's just hoping  
19       at the end of the day that, like, even though we've had to  
20       walk through this darkness and all this pain and everything  
21       else that, like, as a family, my kids, my boys and I, and  
22       even my ex-husband and my -- my -- my parents, like, I  
23       think we've come out of it, like, we've stuck together.  
24       We've really stayed together and -- and one of the things  
25       that we have that's really carried us through this whole

1 time is we've always had that faith, we've always had a  
2 belief in God, we've always had something that's bigger and  
3 greater than us that we know is out there and that we, we  
4 can reach out to. And that -- that -- and because there's  
5 been times that -- without that, the last three years, I  
6 don't think I would've survived.

7 And thank God for my boys because I think if  
8 it wasn't for them, that knowing that whatever happened  
9 that that pain that we were experiencing, all of us, that  
10 it would've just been transferred. Would've just been  
11 transferring pain along and -- and I couldn't do that to  
12 anybody. And I think the important thing was too, is just  
13 surrounding myself with really good people. Because I  
14 couldn't -- I remember thinking, the one thought I remember  
15 when the police came to the door and they asked if I was  
16 Edna Howard, and -- and when they -- when they informed me  
17 that my daughter had been killed, I remember thinking -- I  
18 remember the one thing -- the -- thinking that evil cannot  
19 win. I don't know why but I remember just that thought  
20 coming through my head. And -- and, yeah.

21 So it totally destroys lives. Just the --  
22 yeah. And I guess, for me, the biggest thing was where I  
23 was at there's really no support. There's nothing there  
24 for people with my experience. And I just was lucky enough  
25 that I had an employer, and I had the ability to be able to

1 do what I did.

2 And she had four children. They're --  
3 they're in good families. They're -- they're in very  
4 loving -- good, loving families. And -- and they're still  
5 a very big part of our -- part of our life. But they've  
6 lost their mom, like, they're not going to have their  
7 mother to be a part of their life.

8 The one way that I've -- I've really  
9 compared this to is just like having open heart surgery  
10 without the anesthetic. I was just talking to my mom on my  
11 way here. And she was telling me that she's been dreaming  
12 a lot about her. And we remember her when she was really  
13 small, and just her personality shows. Had a loud voice  
14 and she -- she'd walk into a room and she'd own the room.  
15 And shew as just -- she was just light, she was so full of  
16 life and light, and just brought joy to people. Very  
17 caring, compassionate. And she was 29 when she was  
18 murdered.

19 I'm so thankful I have my parents in my life  
20 supporting me and -- and friends. I never thought I'd have  
21 to really look at death and dying, and after life and  
22 everything else associated with it. That's what I've done  
23 for the last three years. Trying to find that light in  
24 that tunnel, seeing it sometimes and starting to see life  
25 in colour a little bit again.

1                   And I guess the other thing is just knowing  
2           my daughter as well as I do, knowing that she wouldn't want  
3           me to suffer. She wouldn't want me to live in pain, or the  
4           rest of her family, he siblings. Because she just was --  
5           that's just how she was like.

6                   You know, I've thought a lot about what we  
7           could do as -- what I could do as an individual, or what we  
8           could do as a society, or what we could change to make a  
9           difference and to -- to -- to change things. And I -- I  
10          have no idea what we could do. I -- I know one -- at one  
11          point there, my thought was that if we had people, if we  
12          have family members or if we have people that are  
13          struggling in -- in addiction and -- and living that life,  
14          and they're struggling out there, and -- is if we had the  
15          ability to be able to go take them, or have them taken, put  
16          into a structured, safe environment. But we don't have  
17          that. We don't have that ability.

18                   And I question it. I, actually, was having  
19          a really good conversation with my ex-husband last night  
20          about it. And I said, "You know, they're mentally  
21          incompetent. They're mentally incapacitated when they're  
22          out there and -- and they're doing things like that.  
23          They're harming other people or whatever it is they're  
24          doing." Or even here in Nanaimo, just down the street, we  
25          have a tent city. We have -- they call it a discontent



1 city. And you know what? Most of those people are  
2 suffering. They're suffering. They're living -- they're -  
3 - no-one makes that choice to go and live out there, live  
4 that life. And I think we've failed as a society. And --  
5 and maybe it's just make those changes. We need to change  
6 some of the rules and how we do things.

7 And that doesn't mean building more jails,  
8 or building more, or -- or increasing funding in children's  
9 services, maybe making changes where they actually  
10 strengthen families and they actually provide real support  
11 and service. And -- and go down that direction, not -- not  
12 the direction that we're going and that we seem to be at  
13 all the time.

14 It's just -- and that just pisses me off  
15 because the -- the way that we have our system today, that  
16 was have our criminal justice system, it's setup is -- and  
17 -- and the children's services, it's set up as an extension  
18 of the residential schools and it just continues to -- to  
19 harm people and to create that dependency. And it just --  
20 it's just such a vicious cycle that I think -- that's  
21 where, I think, as a society that we've really failed. And  
22 we need to really look at that and make those changes.  
23 Otherwise, we're just going to continue to have to grow  
24 these industries. Because that's really all it is, is it's  
25 an industry. And they need to be -- it needs to be

1 changed.

2 And the reason why I talk about that, and  
3 how it's related to my daughter is because my daughter was  
4 living in addiction. She -- she had a fairly good life  
5 until she started drinking when she was about 14 or 15.  
6 And it was -- I -- I always -- my story is I'm always, I  
7 was always shocked that -- it was almost like fish to water  
8 when she found that -- when she found that -- that first  
9 drink. And -- and the from the time from there until she -  
10 - she died. So there's about 14 or 15 years of life where  
11 we were just completely consumed by trying to keep her out  
12 of that, and keep her safe. And -- and get her back into -  
13 - into a life where she could actually have a life that  
14 would be -- that would be completely different from the  
15 path that she chose. And that was the path that she ended  
16 up on and -- and she didn't make it.

17 And I still don't know what the answer is.  
18 All I know is that we need to do it. We need to do it  
19 together. But I guess just to go back even farther than  
20 that too, it's not something that -- that just happens I  
21 don't think. [*Two sentences redacted - personal*  
22 *information*]. And I became an alcoholic as a teenager. And  
23 I remember being in my first treatment centre when I was  
24 18. And so started -- so started on the recovery process  
25 at a really young age.

1                   And I used to think, you know, if I provided  
2           an environment where there was nothing like that, that my  
3           kids would not go through the things that I did. They  
4           wouldn't experience what I did. And so that was my  
5           thinking. And that's how we lived life. That's how we  
6           continued life. And but that -- that didn't make a  
7           difference.

8                   And then if you go farther back into my  
9           parents' life and what they had experienced and first  
10          relocation from Jasper in the early 1900's with my -- my  
11          ancestors and a lot of other -- I think we lost a couple of  
12          aunts in the sixties group and other -- other things that  
13          took place. I know with the Spanish Flu in the early  
14          1900's, that took out -- my grandfather lost both his  
15          parents at the same time, and he was raised by someone that  
16          was -- what I -- we had been told was a very violent, angry  
17          person. So it just goes on and on and on. Like, how do  
18          you stop it? How do you end it? I don't know.

19                   I guess the one thing is just that we've  
20          been doing and I've -- we've been -- we've -- is just  
21          continuing on that path. And -- and, yeah, I -- and that  
22          was one of the reasons why I wouldn't take that medication  
23          that the doctors were -- were trying to prescribe to me  
24          because I -- one of the things they said was that -- as I  
25          was walking out the door, I remember him saying -- the

1 doctor saying, "By the way, two of those are highly  
2 addictive." And I remember thinking, like, I -- I almost  
3 turned around and -- and tore a strip off him but I -- I  
4 just was in my -- my -- my fog so I didn't say nothing.  
5 But the reason why I wouldn't do it is because I -- I have  
6 been in -- I have been in recovery since 1987. And I just -  
7 - yeah, even in my state, I was thinking I can't do that.  
8 Like, why would I do that? But they don't even ask. He  
9 didn't even ask. He didn't want -- like, it wasn't a  
10 question. It was just here you go. You're suffering. You  
11 need -- you need drugs. And I didn't think I did.

12 I remember seeing a psychiatrist in 19 -- in  
13 -- in two-thousand -- I think it was 2016. It was back to  
14 work appointment I had to go to in Calgary. And I remember  
15 talking to her and she said, "You know, medication does  
16 help. It does heal the brain. But at the end of the day,  
17 you still have to deal with the emotional impact." And she  
18 said, "You're doing it right. Even though, like, this  
19 process is going to take a bit longer because your -- your  
20 body and your brain is going -- will have to heal. But  
21 you're also dealing with the emotional impact of it." And  
22 she goes, "That's the right way to do it."

23 And so, yeah. Yeah. It's been -- it's been  
24 a nightmare. It is a nightmare. Doesn't go away. No  
25 matter what I do, how I do things or whatever, it won't

1 bring her back. And I think the best we can do is just try  
2 to live our best life and -- and don't take this on as a --  
3 as -- don't take this on as something that's going to hold  
4 us hostage. Just -- yeah, it's -- yeah.

5 I wish it wasn't part of my story. But I  
6 can't change it. And I think one of the -- one of the  
7 biggest things is just not letting it eat me alive. Just  
8 hanging on to my faith at -- at the end of the day. I may  
9 never know why things happen the way they are, what the  
10 purpose is or anything else like that. I -- I won't --  
11 probably won't know in this lifetime. But it all comes  
12 down to just the fact that I know she wouldn't want me to  
13 suffer. Yeah.

14 **COURTNEY NORRIS-JONES:** Thank you, Mrs.  
15 Howard. Is there anything else -- is there anything else  
16 that you want to add?

17 **EDNA HOWARD:** No, not right now.

18 **COURTNEY NORRIS-JONES:** Okay. So we're  
19 ending recording at 3 P.M.

20 --- Upon adjourning at 3:00 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Jackie Chernoff, 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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Jackie Chernoff

November 22, 2018