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Truth-Gathering Process

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Statement - Volume 593

Barb Dawson,
In relation to Barbara Jack

Statement gathered by Daria Boyarchuk

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Documents provided with testimony: none.
--- Upon commencing on Monday, November 19, 2018 at 9:50 a.m.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Hi, my name is Daria Boyarchuk and I am a statement gatherer with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. And we're here in Edmonton, Alberta on November 18th, 2018. It is 9:50 in the morning. And I am here honoured to -- to be surrounded by Barb Dawson from Lake Country and ---

**BARB DAWSON:** Originally Whitehorse, Yukon.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Whitehorse, Yukon, thank you. And also accompanying her -- his mom is Barb's son [Barb's Son].

**BARB DAWSON:** From Kelowna, BC.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** From Kelowna, BC. Thank you. So, Barb, you wanted to start by talking a little bit about yourself and honouring your ancestors.

**BARB DAWSON:** I -- I would like to say that, first of all, I want to pay respect to the Treaty 6 Territory of the Plains and Wood Cree Indians, and other tribes of Indians of the Fort Carlton -- Fort Pitt Battle River and with Ahesions (Ph.) people for being on their territory.

I'm (inaudible) from Atlin, BC, that's my
mother's side. And my mother is Loraine Dawson. That's her married name. Her family last name is Jack. And my mother is the oldest of her family. She's the matriarch at -- right now. And I had called her about this and so I'm giving my statement with the blessing of my mother's okay for my -- my -- with my mother's blessing, I should say. So -- yeah, so I -- I just wanted to make sure that I -- I'm giving this statement with respect to everybody in my mother's family. And if my mother says it's okay, then it's okay. So nobody else can argue about it.

It's -- and I'm glad my son is here with me being supportive, very good. I -- I still remember my -- my aunt -- my Aunt Barbara who is the reason I'm here.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Was her last name?

BARB DAWSON: Barbara Jack. And I remember her when I was a child. And shew as always really good to me, she was always -- made me happy because it wasn't a very good environment. It was a lot of residential school trauma that was being played out with alcoholism. And my mother's family had a very bad experience, and I guess everybody was drinking. So the environment that my aunt had -- was growing up in wasn't good. And the -- the -- what I remember wasn't good but what I do remember is that my Aunt Barbara made me feel safe. And she would -- she
would play with me and my brother. And just -- she would comfort us. And I just really still think about her. Even though it's been more than half my lifetime.

Yeah, I've never got the chance to speak about her. Nobody speaks about her. But I do remember her and I remember being happy with her. And I'm still -- I'm still sad about the fact that she's gone. And nobody knows what happened, nobody -- what I heard was that she went missing and they found her remains up in Grey Mountain. And I was told that she was identified by her dental records. And this is all new information that I -- what I knew as a child is that she was -- her remains were found and that they found out who she was. And I don't think she was -- I didn't hear about a funeral, I didn't -- yeah, just -- nobody really spoke about it. And but I still think about -- I still carry her memory.

And it's -- I keep thinking that whoever did this to her is probably dead by now. I don't know but, you know, I just think that, you know, that she -- I just wish she was still here.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: When did it happen to her, do you know?

BARB DAWSON: I think about '75, '76.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: And you said her remains were found in Grey Mountains. Was it recent that they were
found there? Or ---

BARB DAWSON: No, it was in, I think, in '76 that they found her.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

BARB DAWSON: Yeah. My grandmother told me about that. My grandmother [Grandmother 1]. I mean, as a kid, you -- you really don't know how to react to something like that. And I just remember her telling me that and just feeling that -- a loss. Yeah, it -- yeah, it still affects me to this day.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Do you ever talk about it with your son? Or is this the first time you hear this story?

[BARB’S SON]: She was mentioning her on the plane, on the trip here. And just, now and then, leading up to this moment.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So this is really the first time when you're learning about your aunt?

[BARB’S SON]: Yes.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

BARB DAWSON: Yeah, I actually never spoke with it about him -- about her to him. He -- he's -- I did tell him why we were coming here so -- and I told him about how she made me feel happy when we were kids because everybody was drinking. So, yeah, she was a huge loss to
me. And I always remember how, you know, people would be hard on her and not -- feeling sad that I wasn't able to, you know, protect her but I was a child myself. And so -- but I do remember, you know, people not being good -- yelling at her and -- and just -- I was -- I was -- I think I was, like, three or four and I wanted to speak up for her but I, you know ---

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** And do you know -- you know, when her remains were found, do you know what actually happened? Does your family know what happened?

**BARB DAWSON:** No. According to my Uncle Bryan Jack, he spoke to the Missing and Murdered Women and they said that they -- due to the -- the condition of her remains that they don't know what happened to her.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** They don't even know what happened?

**BARB DAWSON:** Yeah.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** And that's even more sad, you know, when you find out that your aunt was found somewhere up on the mountain, you know, it just -- it's just really sad. Just breaks my heart to think, you know, how -- how she must have gone. And the fact that nobody was found responsible and -- and the fact, you know, this is still happening. Yeah. It's ---

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** So you were three, four
years old at the time.

BARB DAWSON: I'm -- of my memory of her, yeah. Maybe a little older, I'm not sure. I just remember this is -- my memory of her is in Atlin when my mother would bring us out to Atlin to visit my grandmother because we lived in Whitehorse with my grandparents. So my mother would take us to go visit and it'd be good for a few days and then things would get little crazy. So, yeah. And Barb was there and my Uncle [Uncle 2] was there, that's her brother. So, yeah, it was -- all my memories of her are in Atlin because that's where she lived at the time.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: And Atlin is -- where is it exactly? Which province?

BARB DAWSON: Atlin, BC is the most northern town. It's 50 miles south of the BC Yukon border.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So did she live alone at that time, or was ---

BARB DAWSON: No. No, she was with her mother, my grandmother, [Grandmother 2] and my Uncle [Grandfather] -- or Grandpa [Grandfather]. And they -- they all lived in a -- one house.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: And did your ---

BARB DAWSON: Excuse me.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: --- your mother, did she ever talk about it, or ---
BARB DAWSON: No. I -- I've asked my mother about my auntie and she says, "We just don't talk about it." And I'm, like, "Why?" You know? And maybe it's -- like, it's -- I don't know why but I always wonder, you know, why nobody talks about how she died. Or how come nobody was brought, you know, how come nobody was caught, or nobody, you know, nothing, which is, you know, it's like she never existed, that's the sad thing. And, you know, for me to carry these memories all these years, I still wonder, you know, where this person is that hurt her -- killed her. So it's -- it's -- you know, that's -- that's how she affected me.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: And it's even probably harder because there is not much information that you can find from your family members, right, because you were so young.

BARB DAWSON: No, even, you know, I went -- even went to the -- the graveyard in Atlin and I tried to look for her grave. So that, you know, for me to do that it just -- just tells me how much I still miss her.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: But so there was -- there was a funeral? Or -- because there is a graveyard, right? You said ---

BARB DAWSON: Yeah. They -- I don't know. I asked -- I don't think -- I -- I don't know if there was
a funeral. I'm -- my -- my mother doesn't even know if
there was a funeral, so -- she said she was at the Lower
Post School (Ph.). I'm not sure, yeah, it's just --
doesn't make sense.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

BARB DAWSON: I never heard of a funeral.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. Is it something
that you would like to find out? Like, what happened to
her today? Or how do you -- how do you feel about it?

BARB DAWSON: For sure. I would love if
somebody was responsible, you know, to find the -- not -- I
would love them to find the person that's responsible, you
know. I mean, it should be -- if they can still find out
who, or, you know -- if somebody ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: How.

BARB DAWSON: How. You know, if somebody
came forward, that would be great. I mean, that would be
really good because I just -- it -- it -- for me, it's --
it's -- it's -- it's going -- I'm going to carry this
memory on until -- until I'm gone because, you know, it's
that -- I just want somebody to be held accountable for her
missing, her death because it's -- it just -- I really wish
she was still here. Yeah. You know.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: And I your opinion, what
do you think -- what was the reason behind the -- this
silence about what happened to your aunt and ---

BARB DAWSON: That, I'm not sure. I -- I'm just -- I'm not sure. I spoke with my mother and she's just -- she's, you know, I think it's just people not feeling comfortable talking about somebody who is not hear and -- maybe, I don't know.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Are they still angry?

BARB DAWSON: I think everybody's still very angry with, you know, authorities not doing more. Because it's still happening to other families. So, you know, it's -- I mean, yeah, I still -- you know, when I read in the newspaper, women still going missing, it -- I -- I think about my aunt still, you know.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So is it something that still continues to happen in the -- in your region? Or in Atlin, in that area, or do you think it has gotten better over the years?

BARB DAWSON: Well, there's been a couple of deaths up there that haven't been figured out. But not in Atlin. Atlin is -- I mean, it's on a healing journey. And but nobody's been missing or murdered thankfully. So it's, you know, I -- my aunt was not -- she went missing in Whitehorse and ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So it's not in Atlin? So it's ---
BARB DAWSON: No. She went missing in Whitehorse. I think she was trying to get away from the -- the alcoholism that was in Atlin at the time so ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So when this -- when you said she was found in the -- or the remains were found in -- on Grey Mountain, is it something, like, near the city where she might have gone to? Or -- or, like ---

BARB DAWSON: I -- you know, I -- where she's -- I think she was staying at a foster home ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Okay.

BARB DAWSON: --- because her ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: And how old was she at the time when she disappeared?

BARB DAWSON: I think she was 15.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Fifteen.

BARB DAWSON: I thought 14 but I recently looked at a obituary and it says she was 16. But she was missing for a year and then when they found her she was dead and ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: So you think at this time she was staying in a foster home?

BARB DAWSON: Yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: M'hmm.

BARB DAWSON: I mean, she's 15 ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.
BARB DAWSON: --- so ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right. Do you know what kind of foster home it was? Do you know if she ever shared it with her sister or her mom about her experience there?

BARB DAWSON: No, I don't. I -- my mother is -- she doesn't remember a whole lot right now about things. And she gets frustrated when she tries to think about something and she can't. So it's really hard to talk to her because she's -- yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: But when you say the -- she was running away from -- from alcohol, is it something that was -- that she was, like, finding refuge in when it was -- when things got hard for her? Or ---

BARB DAWSON: I don't think she was drinking, no. No. I remember her just dealing with the fact that she was in the situation. I remember her just, you know, always feeling -- I think she was, like, everybody focused their negative energy towards her and she felt it. And she wanted to get out of it.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: To get out of there.

BARB DAWSON: Yeah.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: I understand.

BARB DAWSON: And I think we found refuge in -- me and my brother [Brother], found refuge with her and she found refuge with us. And that's why we had a
connection. So -- because we were -- she was -- I just remember always being happy when she was there with me. And I don't remember anything -- that time, I don't remember being connected to anybody but her.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Right.

**BARB DAWSON:** So that's why it's such a huge loss.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Right.

**BARB DAWSON:** Huge loss to me. So, I mean, at the time I was more -- I was closer to her than I was to my mother, so, yeah.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Do you have anything else to -- you would like to share?

**BARB DAWSON:** Well, I just -- you know, it's -- I still think, in my head, I still think of the what if's, you know, the what happened? You know, all those questions of that brought the end to her life. I still think about that. Even before this commission happened, you know. Throughout my whole I keep thinking about my Auntie Barb and what life would have been like if she was still around pretty much for some reason. Like, not one year has ever gone by where I didn't think about my Auntie Barb throughout the year. Just remember her long hair, her glasses and smiling, laughing with us. Yeah. So I remember her sleeping on the bed. There's a story one time
that made me feel that, you know, this is maybe why she -- she left, I don't know, or -- there was this -- we were all sleeping in the living room of my grandmother [Grandmother 2]'s house. And apparently there was a porcupine in a tree outside the house and everybody wanted to get up and go look at this porcupine in the tree. And I was woken up to go look at this porcupine in the tree. And they're, like, "Barb, Barb, get up. You got to look out at the porcupine." And I'm standing there looking at this porcupine in a tree but Barb kept on sleeping. So when everybody went back in the house, they got mad at Auntie Barb for -- because she was sleeping still. And I -- to this day, don't understand why it was very important to go look at this porcupine. I -- honestly, just -- it was a traumatic memory because I saw everybody yelling at my Auntie Barb and I didn't want them to. And some people might not like that story but that's how I remember it. I wanted to protect her at that moment but I was a kid.

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** Right. Yeah.

**BARB DAWSON:** I think I remember saying, "Don't yell at Auntie Barb."

**DARIA BOYARCHUK:** And you -- your Auntie Barb mother and her family, were they residential school survivors?

**BARB DAWSON:** Yes. Yes. I think everybody,
yeah, in that family had gone to residential school in one form of another. And, you know, I'm suffering the effects of residential school. I've dealt with my issues -- I'm dealing with my issues. And thankfully, I understood, you know, my -- I understood what's going on and I didn't want that to affect my son so I removed myself from that environment. And my son has ---

   DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

   BARB DAWSON: --- graduated high school, scholarship.


   BARB DAWSON: Forty-thousand-dollar entrance scholarship. And he doesn't drink, smoke, or do drugs. And so, you know, I was able to do that. I wanted to do for him what I wish was done for me.

   DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right.

   BARB DAWSON: And, you know, it's -- my Auntie Barb didn't get to live her life, which is very, very sad for me because she wasn't there for me. She couldn't be there for me because -- it's -- yeah, so -- so it's -- that's why I'm very glad I'm here to -- to let people know that, you know, this is something that needs to stop. It needs to be made, you know, it's -- I mean, I'm still affected by it.

   DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right. Is there anything
else you would like to share [Barb’s Son]? No?

[BARB’S SON]: No.

BARB DAWSON: Yeah, so it's -- it's -- I'm just, you know, just glad that my story can be heard because I kept it to myself all these years.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Something that I wanted to ask you. You said that you moved yourself away, you -- you found a way to separate yourself to heal from all the -- the pain and the -- and intergenerational violence and effects of residential schools. Is there, like, a healing practice that you engaged in? Or what helped you the most for your, yourself, personally?

BARB DAWSON: I just didn't want my son to go through what I went through.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right.

BARB DAWSON: And I -- I know that I still -- I know my weaknesses and I know that if I'm surrounded by -- if I'm in that environment -- that unhealthy environment that I will practice it as well. So I took myself away from it and I tried to nurture him the way I wish I was taken care of. And I think in doing that, you know, I was able to take care of me and him at the same time. So it was a very good -- it was very good thing that I did. You know, I -- I -- I wasn't close with the -- I wasn't -- we're not close to our family in the sense of distance but
I -- I needed to do that to make sure that he was brought up in an environment where I felt was safe. I wanted ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Safe, yeah.

BARB DAWSON: --- yeah. Like, I wanted stability, I wanted ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah.

BARB DAWSON: --- you know, to -- him to feel safe.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Right.

BARB DAWSON: So I managed to do that for him, which is -- which, you know, is -- I hope that, you know, every -- my efforts would give him a better life than what I had to experience. So ---

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. You're a very strong woman, like, to have the strength to just uproot yourself from this environment and to have enough strength to give this love to your son, that's -- that's incredible.

BARB DAWSON: I -- I just, you know, it's -- it's that -- I'm just really glad that I did that because --

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. Of course.

BARB DAWSON: --- I just -- it's -- you know, and I -- I thought -- I thought of the life that my Auntie Barb, you know, what -- what her life might have been like. You know, how -- how would I have interacted
Barb Dawson
(Barbara Jack)

with her now as an adult, you know? You know, how -- how
would my life have been changed if she was still around?
And, you know, it's -- so -- I have managed to keep her
alive in my head.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: I think by you coming here
today, together with your son and you giving voice to the --

BARB DAWSON: Exactly.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: --- [inaudible response]

BARB DAWSON: Yeah. That's what I wanted to
do. I -- I dressed up for her. Yes, I loved her very
much. I didn't know her very long but I loved her very
much. And that's the sad thing. I didn't know her very
long.

DARIA BOYARCHUK: Yeah. It's okay. It is
10:20 in the morning and I will go over the consent form
that I mentioned to you earlier.

BARB DAWSON: Yeah.

--- Upon adjourning at 10:20 a.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

January 9, 2019