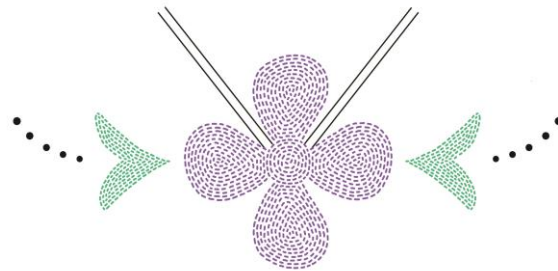


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Edmonton, Alberta**



PUBLIC

**Monday November 19, 2018
Statement - Volume 592**

**Statement of Natasha Saddleback
In relation to Roberta Okeymow**

Statement gathered by Marie-Audrey Girard

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Documents submitted with testimony: none.	

Edmonton, Alberta

1
2 --- Upon commencing on Monday, November 19, 2018 at 11:10
3 a.m.

4 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Okay. So [inaudible
5 response] so as I said, my first question for you this
6 morning is if you agree that we're recording -- camera
7 recording and audio recording this statement today?

8 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** I agree, yeah.

9 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Okay. Thank you very
10 much. Well, my name is Marie-Audrey; I'm from the National
11 Inquiry and I will be with you today.

12 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Okay.

13 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** We are in Edmonton.
14 It's November 19 and the time is 11:10. So I would like --
15 I would like to ask you to introduce yourself, please.

16 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Okay. My name is
17 Natasha Saddleback. I'm from Maskwacis Samson First
18 Nation. I live here in Edmonton though.

19 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** And, Natasha, what
20 would you like to share with us today?

21 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** I want to share the
22 story of my mom, Roberta Yvette Okeymow, I guess, is her
23 married name.

24 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Yes. What would you
25 like to share about your mother?

1 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** So in -- I guess in
2 1998, I would have been in -- I'm pretty sure I was in
3 grade one, my mom was murdered. I believe she was stabbed
4 about 26 times in Millet, Alberta. So I don't know if you
5 want me to just go, like ---

6 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** What -- whatever ---

7 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** --- right into, like,
8 what happened, or ---

9 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- will make you feel
10 ---

11 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Okay.

12 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** I can ask questions if
13 you prefer. Or if you want to continue to talk about what
14 happened, that's okay too. So ---

15 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Okay.

16 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- really how you
17 prefer.

18 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** So, like, I only know
19 because -- I only know what I know based off of what I
20 found online because after her murder I was raised in care.
21 And I wasn't that close to my -- her family. So I -- I
22 really -- and, like, every time I had asked them questions,
23 anyways, they were super uncomfortable and didn't want to
24 talk about it. So any of the information that I know about
25 it was on -- was what I found and researched online. So

1 what I know about it is that she had went to Millet to a
2 pub, a local pub there. And she was with her friend Andy
3 Brackenberg -- Andy Brackenberg -- berry -- I'm not sure.
4 And so I guess they -- they were drinking at his trailer in
5 Millet and then they had went to a pub and had drinks
6 there.

7 They went out for a cigarette and a couple
8 guys were out there having a cigarette as well. And don't
9 know if they were -- they were talking, or, like, or what -
10 - what happened but my mom and this -- this Andy gentleman
11 ended up in the vehicle with -- with these two guys. I'm
12 actually not even sure of the -- I should have read that
13 thing before we started but -- so I think how it was, was
14 that they went to his trailer first and they were bullying
15 them and told them that they wanted some liquor. And Andy
16 said, "Well, all I have is -- is mouthwash."

17 And they had, like, there was some sort of
18 shuffle in the bathroom and my mom started freaking out,
19 and becoming hysterical and, you know, saying, like, she's
20 going to tell the cops, like, you know, like, what they're
21 doing isn't right and she's going to tell the cops. And
22 they ended up murdering Andy and I think he was found in
23 the bathtub. And they took my mom out into a rural area,
24 and there was some struggle and she -- she was begging, you
25 know, like, saying that she was epileptic and that she

1 alcohol were a factor in -- in the -- the case. You know,
2 they -- I don't know if they really -- I think one of the
3 arguments was that she was intoxicated as well. But the
4 murders were definitely on a something. I don't know what
5 so ---

6 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** And -- and how did you
7 get to know about it? Who told you that your mother was --
8 was dead and has been murdered? If someone told you.

9 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** So I was in grade -- I
10 was in grade one and my foster mom at the time had come --
11 picked me up at school. And she -- she had told -- she --
12 she took me home and -- and she had told me what had
13 happened. And apparently she had -- was watching the news
14 the night before and this story had come up on -- on the
15 news. And I don't know why she didn't tell me that
16 morning. She was probably just trying to figure out a way
17 to tell me. And so I don't know if at that time she had
18 told me that she was murdered, or because, you know, I was
19 in grade one.

20 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** You were young.

21 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** And but I do remember
22 the funeral, I remember the wake. I remember going to the
23 funeral. I remember kind of having forced tears though
24 because -- because I was so young and I wasn't -- like, I -
25 - like, I was apprehended from my mom before she was

1 murdered and so it was a really -- like, my relationship
2 with her was already kind of really complicated and I was
3 already living in care for probably about, like, one or two
4 years by that point.

5 So -- so anyways, I don't think my foster
6 mom knew all the details but once I got older, obviously,
7 I'd be kind of curious as to what happened. I did go to
8 the police station in Maskwacis or in Wetaskiwin when I was
9 16 because I had a youth worker who was trying to help me,
10 you know, deal with this stuff. And he -- he kind of gave
11 me a story but, you know, it was such a long time ago at
12 that point that I don't think that the -- like, everything
13 was completely accurate. So the only real statement and
14 facts I have is on the -- on the court case that I found
15 online.

16 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** I see. You know there
17 is that what we call FILU and maybe can talk a little bit
18 more about it after, like, this session. But there is,
19 like, right now, like, an organization that helps people
20 accessing those kinds of records.

21 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Oh, yes.

22 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Like, for FILU so
23 maybe by the end of this session I can give you all this
24 information.

25 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yes.

1 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** And they're there to
2 help people like you who are looking for more information
3 from the institutions, to have access to those information.

4 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah, that'd be good.

5 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** So maybe after I can
6 give you -- give -- give them -- their contact ---

7 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** M'hmm.

8 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- and that's what
9 they're doing right now.

10 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah. Yes.

11 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** So I didn't want to
12 forget about that.

13 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Oh, no, that's okay.

14 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** So that's why I'm
15 telling ---

16 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Okay.

17 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- but more
18 information about it after. So do you remember -- I know
19 you were really young so probably you don't remember but
20 how was the court -- the court process? Do you have any,
21 like, do you remember anything about it? Were you ---

22 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** I don't. I was not
23 really, like, you know, I wasn't told about it, I wasn't,
24 you know, like, a part of it. I do know that because --
25 basically from, like, me in my instance is that, like, my

1 family, her family weren't in a position to take me at the
2 time of her death. Her brothers were in and out of jail as
3 well, and her mom had passed away, and just nobody was able
4 to take me. So I was -- I had to be, you know, in care.
5 So I think maybe if I was, you know, taken from one of my
6 family members, I would be a lot more aware of, you know,
7 that case. But I was in care so ---

8 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Yeah. And do you
9 remember how it affected you when you, like -- when your
10 foster mom told you about it? Do you remember, like, what
11 kind of -- how -- what were the impacts it had on you in
12 your life?

13 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Well, I don't think at
14 that point, I really, fully understood. It was just -- I,
15 like, when I look back it kind of just seems like it was
16 just a dream. Like, I was very, like, I just didn't
17 understand I don't think. Like, I didn't understand the
18 capacity of what was going on like I do now.

19 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Of course. You were -
20 --

21 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

22 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- you were six years
23 old, right.

24 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

25 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** So it's

1 understandable.

2 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah. And I think it
3 was just, like, a slow process of it building up and me
4 realizing, you know, like, I was never going to go -- or
5 know my mom. So it was just, like, a really slow ---

6 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** And you mentioned when
7 you tried to talk about it with your family members, it's a
8 little bit complicated. Can you give us a little bit more
9 details?

10 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** So they just -- I
11 think, like, it -- it -- it's not even that it has to do
12 with my mom. I think it's just, like, the trauma that, you
13 know, even just residential schools have had on my family -
14 - my biological family. Just having a hard time, in
15 general, talking about anything that's happened. So any
16 time I tried to ask questions, it was not something that
17 the, like -- that my people -- us, like, my family
18 especially, were wanting to talk about or deal with.

19 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** I see. I see.

20 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** And I know a lot of my
21 family right now is, you know, is consumed, you know, in
22 that -- that -- that res lifestyle where they are, like,
23 using and abusing, you know, drugs and alcohol. And just
24 in a really, like, sad, dark place.

25 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** M'hmm. So I

1 understand that many members of your family have been to
2 residential school.

3 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah. I don't even
4 really know either. Like I said, I was raised in care so I
5 -- I have no idea of my -- of my history of my family.
6 And, like I said, a lot of them don't want to talk about
7 it.

8 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** M'hmm. I see. I see.
9 But you're still in contact with them?

10 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** No.

11 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** No?

12 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** I'm not -- I'm not in
13 contact with them. I'm at a point right now where I'm just
14 starting to become more cultural -- like, be more a part of
15 my own culture and I'm learning more about that. But I --
16 I think that -- I feel like maybe my -- my birth family is
17 too sick to be, you know, how -- to -- for me to be -- make
18 them a part of my life.

19 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** I see. I see. And
20 what would you like to see in the future, for instance?
21 Like, what, for you, will be a good thing? Like, I know
22 you would like to have more information but what, for
23 yourself, do you need? Like, is there -- do you think you
24 need support? Like, would you need some -- because it's
25 such a big -- and even if you were so young -- six years

1 old is -- but it's still a big trauma, right.

2 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah. I really -- I
3 don't know. I've -- I've been trying to, like, just, like,
4 just even finding out information to, like, heal. I have
5 my own children now and, like, I know from -- from my life
6 that everything that has -- like, the Missing and Murdered
7 Indigenous Women, you know, and the residential schools
8 has, like, like, highly affected my life and how I feel and
9 see myself -- or have felt and seen myself. I -- I just
10 wish that more people would, like -- I guess more people
11 would just talk about it and be more open. Like, it's such
12 a dark thing to talk about though, and nobody wants to hear
13 about it and nobody wants to, you know -- and, like, for
14 me, even as a young child, you know, being raised in care,
15 like, I lived in foster homes, I lived in group homes,
16 just, like, having people as friends who have mothers and
17 fathers, you know, in their lives. Just the -- the
18 normalcy of that and not being able to connect with them
19 that way, not being able to bring up, you know, many
20 memories of, like, you know, if I was bottle fed, or, like,
21 if -- like, how I was -- how I was held, or, like, any --
22 any nicknames like that. Like, it's, like, I don't have
23 that -- that to talk -- talk about or relate to anybody
24 with. Like I do now that I have my own children so I'm,
25 like, super grateful of that.

1 But, yeah, it's just, like, I guess, just,
2 like, the -- the Inquiry is just -- is good -- is -- is a
3 step forward.

4 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Talk about it and,
5 yeah.

6 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

7 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Because when we see
8 these -- that it happened to many, many people and that's
9 true, nobody talks about it.

10 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

11 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** It's really hard to
12 talk about it.

13 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

14 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** And so I think that is
15 a really step -- like, that we can take and really, like,
16 get it out because it happens to many, many people. And,
17 again, it's really hard to talk about it so I think it's
18 necessary to have those kinds of discussion and
19 conversation.

20 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** I did have ice --
21 because I -- I do some, like, I -- I did some -- I do some
22 modelling or whatever for some Aboriginal designers and I
23 did speak at one event, it's called the Walk to End
24 Violence. And I did a speech -- I did a speech where I
25 spoke about my mom for the first time, three years ago, in

1 front of a group of people. It -- so that was kind of the
2 first time I've actually, like, really spoke about it. And
3 then I've kind of gone through some trauma since -- since -
4 - in the last couple years with an abusive relationship.
5 So my healing has been always put on hold. I'm just out of
6 that relationship now so this is kind of a step for me also
7 to, like, go back to healing myself, you know, from, like,
8 because like you said it is a big trauma to, you know, deal
9 with it so -- and ---

10 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** To talk about.

11 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** --- talk about, yeah.

12 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Yeah. And can you
13 tell us a little bit about yourself as well? Like, you
14 said you were -- like, if you want to share about it. You
15 said you were in an abusive relationship but you've been
16 able to get out of that relationship. Do you -- do you
17 want to share some details about it?

18 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** I think, you know, the
19 -- the consequences of, you know, not having a mother to --
20 or my mother being murdered is that I was raised in care.
21 And, you know, like, I don't -- I don't like to bash her
22 much but I did come to a realization that the foster home
23 that I lived with was extremely abusive. And I -- just
24 relationships that I've had since then were -- were
25 abusive. Like, I -- I've let people treat me way -- in

1 ways that I shouldn't have. So but at the same time,
2 there's lots of things because of who I am as a person,
3 that I've accomplished, and done really well because at the
4 same time, there's people who I've met who -- who saw me
5 and believed in me. And that's what's -- has, you know,
6 helped me and, you know, had me make good choices at times
7 in my life.

8 So, like I said, like, speaking and then
9 walking and, like, I -- like, I used to work for the -- for
10 the government human services for a couple years, which
11 was, like, a great experience because I got to learn the
12 other side of, you know, I was raised in care and so being
13 able to learn the other side was very -- it was, like, the
14 -- the -- a really good experience for me.

15 But then, yes it's -- then there's been, you
16 know, I -- I was with a man for ten years and he was -- he
17 was abusive. He wasn't as abusive as my last relationship
18 but my last relationship was very, very abusive. And like
19 I said, I'm just out of it now and I'm in a period of
20 healing, trying to go back to my culture and just trying to
21 deal with everything that has happened to me in my life.

22 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Yeah. And when we're
23 doing those kinds of statements, we always try as well to
24 remember, like, the -- the Missing or Murdered Indigenous
25 Woman for, like, for -- for good memories.

1 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

2 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** I don't know if you
3 have, like, any good memories that you would like to share
4 about your mother. Or something that you heard that, like,
5 you know, when you're happy, that's something that you
6 think of your mother?

7 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** I went to -- I went on
8 a home visit -- I went on a home visit one time and my --
9 because I was named after -- my -- my mom had a cousin who
10 also passed away and her name was Iris [inaudible
11 response]. She ended up killing herself, which is kind of
12 really ironic because it was when I had first gone to a
13 home visit and she was talking to me and, like, she was
14 getting to know me. And I -- I went home and then a week
15 after she had killed herself. So I, like, I feel like my
16 visit was her had caused something in her because, like I
17 said, she was my mom's cousin and best friend and I was
18 actually named after her because my middle name is Iris.

19 But at that time she had told me this story
20 about -- about listening to Ace of Base and dancing --
21 dancing in, like, these heels and her mom, like, you know,
22 yelling, "Will you guys keep it down." But they were just
23 having so much fun. That's, you know, like, one of the --
24 like, the -- one of the only good things and whatever that
25 I have heard about her.

1 I did -- I know that she did go to jail but
2 she had made me some earrings when she was in jail. So I
3 do, you know, I -- I have those still. So I know that, you
4 know, she did -- she -- she thought about me but, you know,
5 yeah, like, trauma and that lifestyle that, you know,
6 intergenerational trauma, whatever, had, you know, caused
7 her to -- to maybe not make some of my decisions but then
8 never, ever, ever meant that she needed to be murdered.

9 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** And, you -- you know,
10 you've been talking about intergenerational trauma ---

11 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

12 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- and the cycle of
13 violence. How do you think ---

14 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** M'hmm.

15 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- we'll break this
16 cycle?

17 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Like, just be aware,
18 you know. Like, being aware. Like, for me and how I'm
19 wanting to stop it is just, like, I just kind of woke up
20 and realized that, you know, like, who I was, you know,
21 despite, you know -- despite who -- what happened to my
22 mom, despite what happened to my dad, despite how I was
23 raised. Like, I still am who I am. And just having the
24 ability to have that, like, be aware of the, like, just
25 loving yourself. You know, loving yourself. That's the

1 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** And, you know, like,
2 men, whoever, like, of all races, they just look at you and
3 it's, like, you don't know, like ---

4 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** What will happen.

5 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah. Well, like, and
6 what their intentions are, you know.

7 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Yeah. I understand.

8 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** So -- so, yeah. I --
9 I'm -- I'm grateful that I don't have to worry about, you
10 know, the -- the men that murdered her. Like, that's --
11 you know, they -- because they -- they're already dead.
12 But, like, I'm -- I'm grateful that I didn't have to worry
13 about them. I just -- I do wish I knew a little bit more.
14 But at the same time, like, me just talking about it is --
15 is healing in itself, you know. Leaving, you know, I'm
16 literally, probably the only one because my -- my
17 biological family is so sick to talk about her to, you
18 know, like, remember her. And -- and that's important.

19 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** It is. And I think
20 what you share is really, really true in so many ways that
21 we have to talk about it but our sister and, you know, our
22 mothers are strong woman and we have -- we have to get this
23 out. Because what we hear in the media, what we see in the
24 media is not the truth, yeah. So I think you're, you know,
25 right on every -- on everything that you just said. And

1 for myself, I don't necessarily have more questions.

2 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** M'hmm.

3 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** What I wanted to ask,
4 I've asked. But I was wondering if there's anything else
5 that you would like to share with us today?

6 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** No. I don't think so,
7 I think just, you know, having her exist still through this
8 is everything so ---

9 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** Well, thank you very
10 much for sharing with us. We know it's not an easy thing
11 to do. So thank you for trusting, well, us and me,
12 personally, and coming here this morning. Because it's
13 really important for us. So thank you very much. So if
14 it's okay with you I will be turning off the camera and ---

15 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Yeah.

16 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** --- the audio
17 recorder. So it's 11:35. The time is 11:35 and I'm
18 turning off the camera.

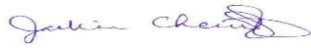
19 **NATASHA SADDLEBACK:** Okay.

20 **MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD:** And the other
21 recorder.

22 --- Upon adjourning at 9:53 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.



Jackie Chernoff

January 9, 2019