

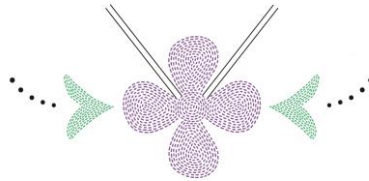
National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 Public Hearings
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel
Elmbridge Room**

Metro Vancouver, British Columbia



Public

Thursday April 5, 2018

**Public Volume 91:
Myrna Abraham,
In relation to Sharon Nora Jane Abraham**

**Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

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Government of Canada	Lucy Bell (Legal Counsel)
Heiltsuk First Nation	Non-Appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society	Non-Appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre	Non-Appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	Non-Appearance
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective	Non-Appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation	Non-Appearance

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Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	

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1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 9:21

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Good morning. Good
4 morning, Commissioner Eyolfson.

5 I would like to introduce you to Myrna
6 Abraham. Myrna will be sharing the story of her sister
7 Sharon Nora Jane Abraham.

8 Before we begin I would ask that the
9 Registrar please promise Myrna in with a feather.

10 **REGISTRAR BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Myrna, do you
11 promise to tell the truth in a good way today?

12 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yes.

13 **REGISTRAR BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Thank you.

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Good morning. So
15 before we actually start talking about Sharon today, I was
16 wondering if we could share a little bit about your family
17 and your background. I know that you're one of many
18 siblings, so maybe you could tell the Commissioner just a
19 little bit about your family background, your parents, your
20 siblings.

21 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Hi. My name is Myrna
22 Abraham. There was eight of us. Sharon was born to my
23 mother, Irene Abraham and also my father, Norman Abraham.
24 My mother was arranged marriage. Sharon is one of the
25 youngest. Sharon and I, we never went to boarding school.

1 The rest of my siblings have gone to a boarding school.

2 Yeah.

3 And then Sharon wasn't raised with us. I
4 think it was the last two years, maybe the last year of my
5 mother's life before we got separated again.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So maybe you can
7 tell us where you're from too, because I understand that
8 you're from Manitoba. So where does your family come from?

9 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** We're from Sagkeeng,
10 Manitoba. That used to be Fort Alexander.

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And I know that you
12 do have a lot of fond memories and I was wondering if you
13 wanted to share any of Sharon's strengths or memories you
14 have growing up with her or spending time with her, even
15 when you were adults, with the Commissioner?

16 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah. Sharon came to
17 live with us for the last year or two years of my mother's
18 life. We were separated when I was six months. I believe
19 I was six months.

20 She ran away from home and like, she was
21 raised with my grandmother and then she came -- and she ran
22 away from home. She came to live with us for the past two
23 years before we were separated again when my mom had
24 passed.

25 And then I was living with my grandmother.

1 And then Sharon, I think she went to go live with my oldest
2 sister Isabel. I'm not quite sure.

3 And then I would see her at school. She was
4 in high school; I was in probably grade school still, into
5 junior high.

6 When I was growing up, there was like, lots
7 of fights because I'm an Abraham. And there was like, a
8 lot of disappointment, I guess, with Abrahams. And then I
9 ran away at, I think, 14, 15, and that's when I really got
10 to hang out with Sharon as much as I wanted.

11 And then I became pregnant. I think I was
12 15, because I had my daughter when I was 16. I gave her up
13 for adoption and I ran away to Winnipeg.

14 And while I was living in Winnipeg I found
15 out that something drastic happened to Sharon, which she
16 was removed from Sagkeeng and she was transferred to my
17 uncle who used to work in Alberta. He was OPP, I believe.
18 And then Sharon went to go live with him.

19 And then my sister Agnes that lived here in
20 Vancouver, she went to Calgary to pick up Sharon and she
21 had brought Sharon here.

22 And then I think in '86 I came out here and
23 I lived out here for maybe six months. Sharon used to
24 babysit my son while I went to school at Native Education.
25 And I guess we missed the snow, we missed the language.

1 And Sharon became pregnant. Well, she had
2 Nicole. And then we had a friend named Desmond that used
3 to come because my partner left me here in Winnipeg alone
4 and then Desmond came to spend time with me. He was a
5 family friend.

6 And then Sharon -- what do you call it --
7 started babysitting for me while I went to school.

8 And then I went back to Winnipeg because
9 like I said, we missed everything back home. He had family
10 down there and I was just being me, I guess. Yeah.

11 And then Sharon came back to Winnipeg with
12 her two daughters. And I had quit drinking already. I
13 have times where I quit drinking for five years, four
14 years, and then I would go back to drinking. But I've been
15 sober for, I think, six, seven years. I'm not sure. Seven
16 years.

17 When the investigators came to tell me about
18 Sharon, I was working two jobs because I became a single
19 parent. No, no, not yet. I was working one job but I was
20 working, like, 16 hours a day. And then when the
21 investigators came to find me, I think I was still with my
22 kids' dad. I'm not sure.

23 But when the investigators came to find me,
24 I guess they came to my place about four times because I
25 was too busy working. And then finally, I came home from

1 work and you know, when you know there is something not
2 good coming, and my legs got weak and I thought I was going
3 to pass out, right? Didn't happen.

4 I went home and then I don't know how Agnes
5 -- I mean, Isabel came to my place or how she found out to
6 come to my place, and my Aunt Grace had come with her when
7 they told us.

8 And then I had a cousin that was alive
9 before he committed suicide, right? And with everything
10 that happened with finding out about Sharon's DNA -- and
11 then they lived, like, two streets down from us. And he
12 was on his way home and he had gotten beaten up and I had
13 to pay for his way to the hospital. They beat him up with
14 those things there that they use for construction.

15 So I'm walking home and I just started
16 crying and I just seen, like, stars and everything went
17 clear. Like, I didn't see nothing but just bright light.

18 And then during this -- I mean, after this,
19 we found out that what happened with Sharon, we had a
20 memorial. But the memorial, that I asked the investigators
21 if I could get some mud, something from the farm so we
22 would have something and there was -- they said they
23 couldn't give us anything because it was all -- what is it
24 called when they -- evidence, yeah.

25 So when we had her service -- well, service

1 -- memorial, we had a empty baby casket. For us, we have a
2 fire for four days. I sat by the fire for the four days.
3 I went inside maybe twice to go sleep. My oldest son, I
4 think he was 15 at the time, maybe 16, yeah, he took care
5 of the fire.

6 I couldn't bring myself to come into the
7 house because I wasn't -- I'm still having a hard time
8 accepting the DNA findings, because I've heard two
9 different DNAs and the last one, I can't -- it's hard to
10 accept that they just found her fingernail.

11 So anyways, we had her casket and there is
12 my nieces that cut their hair and put their hair inside the
13 casket. Other people put tobacco, cigarettes, letters. I
14 didn't put anything. I didn't even go inside the house.

15 And then they took her to the Anglican
16 church because that's where my family is buried. But they
17 don't have her with the other siblings. They have her away
18 from the siblings. Although it was just an empty casket,
19 it would have been nice to have her laid beside my mother
20 or my other siblings because they're all in one row.

21 And then after the time that that happened,
22 I made a commitment of not eating pork. My family, my
23 children, have not eaten pork for a while and then I guess
24 they missed the taste. I don't know.

25 But I do have one son that doesn't eat pork.

1 My son was only 12 years old, my youngest son. He was 6'2"
2 already at 12. He was being harassed by gang members and
3 whatnot, and being Native, it's kind of hard to be a young
4 Native person because you're getting harassed by the
5 police, you're getting harassed by your own Nation.

6 And he started getting paranoid so he went
7 to jail for a while because he started carrying a knife
8 because there was a carload of people that pulled up on him
9 on his way from school to home. And they had threatened
10 him so he started carrying a knife. And he went to school
11 with the knife and he pulled out the knife at school so he
12 ended up going to jail for a while.

13 So that's what happened with him. And today
14 he still doesn't eat pork. He's home now. He's now 21 so
15 he spent 9 years there.

16 And I ended up breaking up my relationship.
17 I don't have trust with men, I guess. And I find that a
18 lot of times there's, like, a lot of advances towards
19 women. Like, it's not only men that make those advances,
20 it's women too. It's like, when I grew up I was molested
21 by male and female.

22 But when Sharon lived with us we used to
23 sleep under the house when my mother would drink, have
24 parties. We'd sleep with the dogs. There was one time we
25 slept in a carpet. And my mom had woke up and she was

1 like, "Where's my children? Where's my children?"

2 And we crawled out of the carpet behind the
3 house and she was happy, I guess, things like that.

4 Like, Sharon -- we never really found safety
5 growing up. We used to sleep under the beds because nobody
6 would be able to touch us under the beds. And then when
7 she took us to start sleeping underneath the house with the
8 dogs, that's where our protection was, right?

9 When my mom had passed, Sharon -- I woke up.
10 Of course, I sleep under the bed because we were all
11 drinking. My mother had gotten us all intoxicated. We had
12 maybe a five, maybe six bedroom, and there was Sharon, my
13 youngest sister -- she has a different dad -- and then my
14 nephew which I called my brother at the time, and Sharon.

15 And when I woke up, I seen my stepdad
16 because I went to go use the washroom. I seen my stepdad
17 coming out of the bedroom. And my mom was breathing, like,
18 really funny, like, a loud snore, right? And I seen Sharon
19 sleeping beside my mother.

20 And it was early morning when Sharon came
21 and told me, "Well, Mom's dead."

22 And I said. "No, she's not dead. She's
23 sleeping."

24 She goes, "Well, come check her pulse."

25 And I didn't know what pulse was because I

1 didn't know. So I checked and when I lifted up my mom's
2 arm she'd just flop back on the bed.

3 And that was the last time -- my mom's
4 birthday is February 16th, so that was the day. They were
5 saying that she arranged that my oldest sister take care of
6 us because she knew she was going to pass. She wasn't
7 supposed to drink because she had that liver disease.
8 Yeah.

9 And that's -- we used to go swimming and
10 while my mom and my stepfather would go fishing. And there
11 was this one time, my stepdad, he threw the hook out to go
12 fishing and we were swimming in the water. Well, he ended
13 up getting Sharon with the hook in the head so he had to --
14 whatever you call it when you pull the fish in. And I
15 guess they had to cut the hook out to take the hook out of
16 her head.

17 Yeah, just like, little things like that.

18 What else could I say?

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you for
20 sharing, particularly about Sharon. I know one of the
21 things you had told me once though is she helped you
22 understand what a birthday is. Did you want to share with
23 the Commissioner that fond memory about how she would make
24 you feel special sometimes?

25 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah, I never knew what

1 a birthday was until my mom had passed. I was living with
2 my grandmother and Sharon was walking down the road. And I
3 didn't know she was coming to see me, but she came with
4 this necklace and it was -- because I'm a Libra, so it had
5 that -- the scales. Yeah, so she gave me that scales and
6 she told me it was my birthday. So I was surprised that I
7 had a birthday because, like, friends at school had
8 birthdays but I didn't have birthdays.

9 So after I found out about birthdays, I was
10 working at Polo Park. You might think I'm crazy. I was
11 working at Polo Park and it was my birthday and I'm walking
12 with my trays because I would clean up the area where
13 people would eat. And I was carrying my trays and I went
14 to go put it on top of the garbage but there was a birthday
15 card that come rolling down. And it hit me right on my
16 foot. And there was a crowd of people that were watching
17 this card come rolling down and hit me on the foot. Like I
18 said, Sharon was the only one that gave me birthday
19 presents or anything. So that was from her again.

20 Like, because I have a hard time accepting
21 that she is gone. So I got this birthday card. And then I
22 went home from work and I got on the bus and there was a
23 watch sitting there. And I figured it was from her again
24 so I carried the watch for a while. I don't know where the
25 watch is.

1 Like, I've worked a lot but somehow, because
2 with -- you mess up your credit so I've been having a hard
3 time to like, trying to find a place and whatnot.

4 And Christmas came and there was -- I think
5 this all happened before the DNA thing came. I don't
6 remember. But I'm positive it happened before all this
7 DNA, before the investigators came.

8 I was sitting and having my lunch break with
9 one of my co-workers and there was a lady -- well, Sharon
10 liked to wear blue jeans. This lady had a blue jean jacket
11 on and blue jeans. And she had a hoodie. And I'm having
12 lunch with my co-worker and this woman come walking and she
13 come walking towards my direction and it's a long walk.
14 And she had no face but she looked directly at me.

15 And I said, "Well, it's too bad for that
16 person because they probably don't have a soul," because my
17 co-worker looked too.

18 I used to work at Polo Park again but this
19 time it was night shift. I quit the day shift because I
20 don't like being around too much bickering. So in
21 February, I was cleaning the offices in Polo Park and I was
22 cleaning the ABC. In this ABC, there wasn't much to do so
23 I just went to go pick up the garbage and there was only
24 one piece of paper in the garbage.

25 But before anything happened, there was

1 like, feathers, all tiny, tiny, little white feathers come
2 down and they fell towards the ground. And when I went to
3 go and pick up my garbage and when I stood up, I just felt
4 like a knife come right across my back. Like, I didn't
5 have no pain or anything. But yeah, like I said, these
6 feathers came. And when I finally was able to move my legs
7 I felt nothing but excruciating pain. And I managed to get
8 to the other office, so I had to phone my supervisor. So
9 that happened there.

10 And I was going into my living room from the
11 kitchen and when I was going into the living room I had no
12 socks or anything. And there was, like, no dirt or
13 anything around, but I got a gush of ashes in my face.
14 Like, there was nothing there. And my kids had just looked
15 at me. I'm like, "Wow."

16 And then before the Inquiry in Winnipeg --
17 what was it -- registration at the Thunderbird House, I was
18 going to go register, and then because I work at the Ab
19 Centre and the Ab Centre is just, like, down the street, I
20 was going to skip. I was going to say, "Forget it."

21 But then the song there, where's there's a
22 memorial for murdered and missing, and once in a while I
23 put it on my Facebook. That song came on and then I said,
24 "Okay then." So I went into the Thunderbird House to go
25 register.

1 Like, we didn't really get much time with
2 Sharon to get to know her, but she's always sending me
3 signals. Like, when we walked through Highway of Tears, I
4 was going to quit because there was issues. And the day I
5 was really going to quit, I seen her picture in one of the
6 trees so I said, "Okay then." So I kept walking.

7 And I was thinking, I don't know what she
8 wants me to do. Then I started thinking, well, maybe this
9 is my healing of what she wants me to do. And I've always
10 held on. I don't know if I was the only one in the family
11 that has held onto her. See, she's calling. Yeah.

12 So yeah, I'm hoping that I get healing from
13 this and I'm hoping that this will be a way of letting her
14 go. They say when you hold on too long to a spirit, it
15 cries. I've been crying.

16 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you for
17 sharing that. I know that you've told the Commissioner and
18 us that you had some hard times growing up, that there was
19 a lot of violence in your life. And I know there was a lot
20 of violence in Sharon's too, not just like, family stuff
21 but through relationships and times when she was out here.

22 I'm going to ask if we can turn to when she
23 was murdered, just so we have a little more information in
24 relation to her loss.

25 And so Sharon was actually one of Robert

1 Pickton's victims and we -- I mean, I know a lot of people
2 out here are familiar with the case. But one of the things
3 I know that you wanted to talk about was the fact that he
4 was never charged with her murder.

5 So earlier you were talking about the fact
6 that police came to collect DNA from family members so that
7 they could check if it matched, and you said that you were
8 having a hard time because it was so little DNA that showed
9 up at the Pickton property, letting go. But there was a
10 point when the investigators came to you and family to get
11 different samples so they could confirm whether it was a
12 match. And do you recall if they did advise you it was a
13 match?

14 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** When they came and did
15 ask for DNA, they didn't tell me they were looking for DNA.
16 All they told me was -- oh, no, no, that's a lie. They did
17 tell me that they were looking for DNA and Sharon, she was
18 raped, why she left the reserve, and she was in the
19 hospital for two weeks. So they were looking for a doctor
20 and the doctor's named Sebal (ph). I'm thinking that was
21 his name.

22 I gave him his name and then there was --
23 she had a funny character, I guess, because she had a
24 doctor named Love and then she had a doctor named -- oh, I
25 forgot what the doctor's name.

1 And then I just found out last year that
2 they were looking for DNA for Nicole and Tikisha (ph).

3 And with her murder, like, it's hard to say
4 that she was actually gone, because I had a hard time
5 accepting with the DNA, with the fingernail, and then I was
6 told earlier with the other DNA, that was easier to accept
7 because it sounded so harsh, gruesome.

8 Yeah, it was really hard to -- what do you
9 call it -- accept that she was Pickton's victim. It's hard
10 to accept that if she was a prostitute -- I knew that she
11 did drink a lot. We've never known her to do drugs. We
12 did know that she was going to -- I think they called it
13 Piggy Palace that time because she hung out with some
14 people that went there.

15 She told us that she seen -- she saw a woman
16 hanging and that they were coming for her, is what we were
17 told.

18 What is really hard to accept from all this
19 is -- what do you call it -- they came to us and told us
20 about her DNA and told us that she was Pickton's victim,
21 but yet he has not been charged for her murder and there
22 will never be a charge for her murder, as far as I know. I
23 got a death certificate. I don't know if any other family
24 members got death certificates.

25 I paid my way to come to the trial. I asked

1 Sagkeeng if they would help me. They did help me with 500.
2 But I was working two jobs. I had to take care of my
3 family. We were raised to be ashamed of Welfare.

4 I just had gotten off the plane and they
5 took -- I think we were staying at the Hyatt. I just got
6 off the taxi and they were just going to go to the trial
7 again. And my nieces were there. And I didn't know where
8 I was going or anything. All I knew was that I was going
9 to the trial.

10 And then they took me to the skytrain where
11 we went to Old Westminster, I think. So we went there and
12 they let me go into the courtroom where the investigators
13 and that were. And Pickton was probably where the ladies
14 are sitting back there from me. And I don't sleep. I
15 don't sleep if I know I have to be somewhere because when I
16 do sleep, I sleep like a log.

17 I didn't sleep until I got here; I mean,
18 like, until I got onto the plane because I didn't want to
19 miss the plane. So I was falling asleep and while I was in
20 the trial I kind of like, jerked, went up with my hands,
21 like, ready to choke. And I knew I could never be able to
22 touch the person that had hurt my sister.

23 It's really hard to accept that her life has
24 been taken this way. Like, our lives were really violent.
25 Like, when she gave birth to my second niece, the man she

1 was with had taken off the doors because she had no
2 privacy. And he used to always beat her. And when she
3 went to the hospital she was hemorrhaging. She had to walk
4 to the hospital while she was in labour.

5 I guess she never really tried to deal with
6 the issues of growing up, where I, for myself, I've done a
7 lot of healing, because when I was pregnant with my
8 daughter, like, I had one of those pregnancies where they
9 have to take out your tubes so I accepted I couldn't have
10 no more kids. And then I became pregnant with my daughter
11 and I did a lot women's groups, a lot of working on myself
12 because I wasn't ready to accept -- like, I wanted to get
13 ready for her because I wanted a daughter. And I always
14 prayed that God would give me a daughter, right?

15 I used to tell my adopted brothers to go get
16 somebody pregnant so I can have a daughter. Yeah.

17 So I finally accepted I couldn't have a
18 daughter -- I mean, I couldn't have children any more
19 because I kept trying and trying. And I met "doh". It's a
20 Homer joke because Homer's sperm got in there.

21 Yeah, I did a lot of work on myself because
22 I gave up my firstborn. She was a daughter. She was a
23 girl and I wasn't able to accept or deal with my own issues
24 as a female and I didn't want her with my family.

25 But I know her today. Like, Jessica, I

1 arranged for her family. I went to go make visits when I
2 was pregnant with Jessica. I would visit the family and
3 got to know them. And when I gave her up, I said that at
4 12 years old, she had to know she was adopted.

5 But then I was gifted a daughter when I did
6 all my own healing and I got pregnant with a boy again.

7 But I just don't know how -- like, I don't
8 know where I'm going. Yeah.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So with you being
10 able to do some of your own healing, Sharon didn't
11 necessarily have that same opportunity. And you had
12 explained how she had experienced a lot of violence. You
13 referenced a rape in the community.

14 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** We don't know anybody
15 that had ---

16 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So and also that she
17 was in abusive relationships because she never really had
18 the opportunity to work on her -- come to terms with the
19 violence she'd had earlier in life. Is that fair?

20 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I want to return
22 back if we can to you coming out. So you pay for yourself
23 but with some support from your First Nation to actually go
24 to a trial where the killer of your sister is not charged
25 with her murder. Why did you want to go to the trial?

1 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** I felt it was important
2 to support Sharon because we have always -- we have come
3 into each other's lives but we were always separated. And
4 I wanted to go to the Pickton trial because I felt it was
5 important. Although I didn't know whether or not if she
6 was really killed, because I don't want to sugar coat it.
7 I'd say she passed or that she just died because it wasn't
8 like that. A lot of people sugar coat it. She was killed
9 and it was torture.

10 And I've always been told you support each
11 other as family. And I guess I was supported because I
12 worked at the PLR as a housekeeper. They let me go for
13 four days so I could attend the trial. They helped me with
14 Sagkeeng with trying to get money from them to support --
15 to help me come to the courts. I managed to stay with one
16 of my nieces that came to the hearing too.

17 I guess you just want to look at the person
18 that has taken your family member but you know there's more
19 than just the one person. And I would like -- and I want
20 justice for her even though I know in probably my lifetime
21 and her daughters' lifetimes that he will never be charged
22 for her murder. But yet they gave me a piece of paper that
23 says that her death, that she -- they gave me a death
24 certificate and there's no saying on how she died on that
25 death certificate.

1 that have 49 women that he should have been convicted for,
2 but only 6 because they found body parts, but they found my
3 sister's DNA and it was enough for them to say that she's
4 dead, that she was murdered.

5 How is that? How can he tell me that she's
6 dead and not charge this person? How does materialistic
7 things become more important than a life?

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And you came out for
9 that trial. Normally, I guess, we could suppose if your
10 sister's murder, if he'd been charged with that, you would
11 have likely been entitled to have some of the funding to
12 come out to participate. But your family didn't actually
13 get to participate in the trial, they just got to watch and
14 only because you paid for it or were supported from other
15 sources; is that true?

16 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah. I was working two
17 jobs and well, one job I was casual so I can work whatever
18 hours I was able to. Like, when I first started with them
19 I used to work 160 hours in 2 weeks and I would work 80
20 hours with the other job. So PLR gave me four days off so
21 I can attend the trial. And then they helped me with
22 communicating with my reserve, Sagkeeng, which they helped
23 me with \$500.

24 And when I wanted to come to the trial,
25 because her two daughters came to the trial and they said

1 only two family members were able to come, I paid for my
2 own airfare. And then the \$500 was for food because they
3 did not support me with the food. But I was able to room
4 with one of my nieces. There is like, really no support.

5 And the only reason that the reserve helped
6 me is because I had to go through the Human Resources that
7 helped me with the PLR. I didn't find out til maybe two
8 years ago that I was supposed to return my -- give them my
9 plane ticket which I paid for myself and I left my children
10 at home which I was lucky I didn't have to pay for
11 childcare too. Yeah.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** You mentioned there
13 was no support. So if I understand correctly, there were a
14 number of family members watching the trial that were not
15 participating in any way other than to observe it whose
16 daughters, sisters, mothers, aunts, nieces, were not the
17 victims that Pickton was facing the charges on. I
18 understand that you guys, the families, kind of created a
19 good support, but were there Victim Support Workers there
20 for families who were not part of those that Mr. Pickton
21 was facing charges on?

22 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** I didn't receive no
23 support, like, from when I went. But I don't know if there
24 was support for my nieces. But we did go for lunch and I
25 did sign a paper where they couldn't use my name on books

1 or on any stories that had to do with the Pickton because
2 at the time I was afraid. I'm still afraid for my daughter
3 because she's my only daughter, right? Like, I gave birth
4 to another one but I still have contact with her. But this
5 is the daughter I raised.

6 My daughter has a hard time. When she
7 leaves the building there's always cars following her,
8 males, men that follow her. She had just had my grandson.
9 He's going to be two this year. She was going to school
10 and I guess there was a man on the bus that started a
11 conversation with her. And she just thought it was a man
12 just talking to her. I was at work.

13 This man said to her, "I've been following
14 you."

15 She didn't know if it was three days, three
16 years, or three weeks. All she heard was "three" before
17 she panicked. She was pushing my grandson. And we're
18 lucky that cell phones exist today, right? She phoned her
19 cousin to come meet her.

20 So she was on the phone with her cousin and
21 the cousin had -- because we live in the same building, we
22 did live in the same building. Our building is getting
23 renovated. So she always had to have escorts when she
24 would leave the building.

25 And just this past winter she had just gone

1 to 7-Eleven. We only live two blocks away from 7-Eleven.
2 A man in a silver car followed her from the building to 7-
3 Eleven. He made sure not to go into the parking lot of 7-
4 Eleven so he stayed on the street in the car. And she had
5 phoned me and told me that there was somebody following
6 her.

7 So one of my neighbours, she always talks
8 about sex trafficking and whatnot and I assumed that this
9 person would be willing to help me, to go and help my
10 daughter because I was taking care of the children and I
11 couldn't leave the children to go get my daughter home
12 safely. So my other neighbours, they know our issue. She
13 was out. And I was panicking. I wanted my daughter to
14 come home, right?

15 So the neighbour across from her had just
16 walked into the building and I told her that she was being
17 followed. So she went to go meet my daughter. And this is
18 a nice-size woman, right, and she's like, she's always been
19 there since we moved into the building. She walked with my
20 daughter from 7-Eleven.

21 They decided to use the main streets to get
22 back to the apartment. And the person that followed her
23 followed them right to the building. And one of the other
24 neighbours from upstairs had come down and she was yelling
25 at the guy, "Why are you following my sister?"

1 And the guy says, "I'm following the girl
2 across the street."

3 There was no other woman across the street.
4 There was just my daughter and the neighbour. So from one
5 door to the other door he followed her right from 7-Eleven.
6 Like, it's together it's maybe two streets, three streets.
7 It's not far.

8 And my daughter has had issues like that so
9 I stopped speaking to media. And when I was speaking to
10 media, when I was more open about this, I had a lot of
11 support. And then I had to take myself away from there so
12 I could -- so my daughter would be safe, which she isn't.

13 My daughter is 200-something pounds, right,
14 and you wouldn't think that a man would follow her at that
15 size. But she's very beautiful and she's normally with her
16 children all the time, which even makes it more scary.

17 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So obviously, no,
18 like, I mean, obviously there's lasting impacts, I mean,
19 impacts from your own childhood and the healing you've had
20 to do, but from the loss of Sharon. And I think you had
21 explained to the Commissioner that you have a hard time
22 letting go and that you're guided by her spirit, but that
23 there's -- like, you still have a hard time accepting. So
24 some of those lasting impacts, they resound past you, it
25 sounds like, into your family.

1 We've briefly talked about this. There was
2 a Commission of Inquiry here in B.C. in relation to Missing
3 and Murdered Women. The Commissioner was Wally Oppal. You
4 didn't participate in that Inquiry at all, despite the fact
5 that Sharon was one of the victims of Robert Pickton, did
6 you?

7 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** No, I didn't even know
8 of it. This is the first -- well, second time besides
9 breakfast that I've heard of it. I don't know if we've
10 heard of it. No.

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So is it fair to say
12 that, like, no one reached out to you in Winnipeg or
13 otherwise to see if you could participate or be involved in
14 that Inquiry?

15 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Nobody has. Would be
16 nice. Like, I think I've done a lot because the way they
17 labelled Sharon, I don't know if she was a prostitute.
18 It's still hard to accept that she was because she was
19 educated. My grandfather had left money for her to go to
20 school so she went to school. Yeah, it's really difficult.

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So you may not know
22 this. If you don't know this, that's fine, you can tell me
23 that. In the report -- so the Inquiry completed and in the
24 report, Commissioner Wally Oppal actually lists 67 women
25 missing from the Downtown Eastside and it includes a list

1 of the Pickton victims not initially on the missing women's
2 poster or who he wasn't charged with. Did you know that
3 your sister Sharon is actually one of the listed people in
4 that report?

5 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** No, I didn't. I didn't.
6 Yeah, this just happened this morning that I found out
7 about this. I had no idea of it.

8 Like, Sharon was loved, you know? We all
9 loved and cared for her. And the way they -- like, yeah,
10 we didn't live in Winnipeg -- I mean in Vancouver here,
11 B.C., but she had a lot of support for family, you know?
12 She didn't reach out for family, probably to the friends.

13 For me, like, not my biological family are -
14 - I feel that are family, but I have healthy people that I
15 consider healthy support me. I'm in a -- well, I was in a
16 drum group with Alia (ph) and to me, they're my family.

17 Like, I do sun dance and I've done a lot of
18 stuff to heal, for me, because I want health. I want to be
19 a better person. I don't want sickness to take over me.

20 And I did it for my children and for my
21 nieces, my nephews, even though, like, Sharon has children
22 out -- had children out here and there was children in
23 Winnipeg for a while that were raised in the system.

24 And Sagkeeng had come to me because I was
25 with my partner at the time and they asked me if I could

1 take care of her three that were here. And because I
2 supported my partner, he said we couldn't take care of them
3 because we already had our four. And without thinking,
4 like, my relationship didn't even last two more months. I
5 could have taken them. I don't know what kind of life I
6 would have given them but they would have had family.

7 And I think that would have meant more to
8 them than it does today because it would have been nice to
9 -- I wanted to come here for my nieces. I wanted them to
10 know that I'm here for them.

11 I've always kept them in my prayer. I
12 always think of them.

13 They didn't have a mother. And the nasty
14 stuff that was told to them, being raised the way they --
15 like, they must be really healthy girls today, like, strong
16 minds because they've had to endure that negativity in
17 their life so they must find some health. I came here for
18 them and I came here for Sharon.

19 I didn't want it private because the way the
20 media represented her -- like she was a prostitute, a
21 junkie - it angers me. I still carry that anger because to
22 me, she was a loving, kind, beautiful person, beautiful
23 soul.

24 Yes, she liked to -- she carried that
25 violence with her because that's what we were raised with.

1 And maybe that's how she only knew how to hold onto family.

2 I lived here for not even a year til I
3 started school at the Ab Centre -- Ab Centre, oh -- Native
4 Education, yeah. But my partner at the time was really
5 abusive too. Like, I came home from school one day and I
6 was in the library. He was with my son. He had a pot of
7 boiling water waiting for me. The only thing that saved me
8 was the cushion on the couch. I used to go to school with
9 marks all over my face. I used to use my hair to hide my
10 face. My neck is very weak because of being dragged around
11 the apartment by my hair.

12 Sharon ended up fighting his wife because of
13 all the violence I went through and it wasn't even her
14 fault. Sharon used to fight a lot of people for me and I
15 wouldn't find out til way later. Yeah.

16 Did I even answer your question? Am I
17 answering your questions?

18 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** No, it's fine.
19 You're answering the questions and ---

20 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- you're welcome
22 to talk more and expand on your answers at any time. I
23 know it's not always a straight path to -- but we
24 appreciate everything you're sharing with us.

25 I believe we have a couple of pictures, if

1 we could pull those up. I know that you want to share
2 pictures and I know one of the things that was important is
3 you're here for your nieces but you're also here because
4 you want -- I understand this is actually, I think, from a
5 quilt. But maybe as the pictures come up you could tell us
6 a little bit about the picture.

7 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** This picture, I don't
8 know where this picture has come from but the quilt,
9 Harriet and I -- it's Harriet's birthday today -- yeah, and
10 this was in Prince George. No, this was in Prince George,
11 yeah. This one was in Prince George and I came into the
12 room and Harriet was doing this for Sharon. And she asked
13 me if I would like to help. The tobacco tie came from me
14 but other than that, Harriet did most of the work, 99.9
15 percent.

16 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And I believe that
17 this then became part of a quilt that -- for in memory of
18 different missing and murdered Indigenous women?

19 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

20 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** There are a couple
21 of other pictures and you may not know or have been the one
22 that took them, but could you guess about the age she would
23 have been in these?

24 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** No, I don't what age.
25 Yeah.

1 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I do know it was
2 important, you had mentioned that it was important that you
3 did want to talk about the way media and public
4 characterized your sister and that you wanted to make sure
5 everyone knew that she was really someone who was loved,
6 and it was important that people see her and know her name
7 and not just think she was whatever the media, whatever the
8 reports thought she was.

9 If there were ways that you could carry her
10 memory forward or like, find a way to commemorate her, what
11 would that look like?

12 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** What I have been doing,
13 I've walked in 2016 -- no, 2011 I've walked with Walk for
14 Justice. I didn't finish it. I didn't complete the walk
15 because like I said, I don't like being around negativity.

16 That was in honour of Sharon because she is
17 a number of females, life givers, tree carriers, because I
18 like to think of the female as a tree. We are root of
19 life. We need earth for that life. We were supposed to be
20 wearing skirts because you can't find a tree without bark.
21 Our arms extend because of family.

22 Like I said of Sharon, I've walked for
23 Sharon. I've gone to a lot of vigils, memorials. We're
24 supposed to have a feast every four years in honour of the
25 person's life, but we have not had a feast because there's

1 a lot of family bickering, issues in the family.

2 So it was 2011, so probably I came to court
3 here in 2009, I think. I'm not sure. Like, I've blacked
4 out a lot of things.

5 I've made a video recording for Sharon.
6 They've edited it a lot so yeah. And then I've walked
7 2015, we walked the Highway of Tears. I've shared a lot
8 for Sharon. I have gone to court hearings for Sharon. I
9 don't know, because media likes to portray her as --
10 portray our trees, our trees of life as they would portray
11 another person in a different country. They would like to
12 take their life and do whatever they want with it, right?

13 I've worked with a lot of newcomers to
14 Canada and they've told me if I've been to a different
15 country I would see a whole lot worse there than you would
16 see in Canada. I've been told when they do their Canadian
17 citizenship that they're not allowed to communicate with
18 Natives, Indians -- don't like the word "Indian" -- because
19 they're told that we're dirty, we're lazy, we don't want to
20 work, that we're alcoholics, that we're drunks.

21 That's one thing I would really love to
22 change in that Immigration because seriously, I believe if
23 I was in a different country, different state, it would be
24 -- I don't know if other people treat their First Nation, I
25 guess, like that because why I use First Nation is because

1 it will be the people that live there, right?

2 I forgot the question.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** No, it's okay.

4 Maybe to follow up on that last thought, like, you would
5 like to see -- would it be a recommendation -- that some of
6 the work that's done when people go through the immigration
7 process, correctly identifies proper information about
8 Indigenous people, proper respect for Indigenous people as
9 opposed to some of the stereotypes and assumptions that
10 have existed for a long time?

11 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** M'hm. Yeah. The only
12 reason I knew that was because like I said, I worked with a
13 lot of newcomers and I've asked her for the book because
14 she said that it was right in the book. And I asked her
15 for the paper. But because we used to work in different
16 shelters, different hospitals, anywhere we were called, so
17 that we never knew if we were going to work with each other
18 that day. This is the only reason I knew that this exists.

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Are any other --
20 like, we know -- thank you for sharing what you do and the
21 walks, but is there something else that we could -- like,
22 that we should be doing more, either as society,
23 governments, or recommendations the Commission can make
24 about how we memorialize the women and sisters that we've
25 lost?

1 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** I don't know if there's
2 an opening for -- if there's a proper way to help our life
3 givers, our trees. Like, for a tree, you have to -- you
4 need that earth, you need the rain, because it brings rain
5 and it brings air. It cleans toxicity.

6 How I think that this would help is if you
7 go into the schools -- schools are so important -- and you
8 teach in school that our people are not what they claim to
9 be. I've met a lot of educated Natives, a lot of strong
10 women, a lot of strong youth.

11 The education in lower income, poverty, is
12 way different than it would be in a higher society. In a
13 higher society, you have children taking care of dolls,
14 taking care of eggs, but in the poverty, you don't have
15 that. It would be nice to have some kind of things hit the
16 children, because children are so important.

17 That's why I took my job is because I felt
18 that children need this, because if you look in the news
19 and then people say children have to respect the elders,
20 but children don't learn how to respect the elder when it's
21 expected, when you don't teach them respect. I always
22 found that they were my teachers in life.

23 And that's why I think that it should help
24 because there should be counselling as a female. Like,
25 people become immune to -- and they think that we all share

1 the same life, which there is some kind of form in it, but
2 -- where am I going?

3 Yeah, it would be really nice to get to our
4 children, some counselling in schools. Like, they have
5 taken so much away from the education level. It takes a
6 lot for a child to ask for help when they've never been
7 given help. I would have liked to have help but I always
8 felt like I was being judged. Yeah, our children need it.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Myrna, I just want
10 to give you a chance in case we've missed anything that you
11 want to share that if there was anything that you wanted to
12 share with the Commissioner before I ask Commissioner
13 Eyolfson if he has questions? If you want to add anything
14 else, please do.

15 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** M'hm. I just want to
16 make sure that everybody knows that we -- every person that
17 has come to share their story is because of the media, the
18 way they portrayed us, because it's not only their lives
19 that are affected, it's our lives too because we have to
20 carry that, and to try and clarify that our women, our
21 young men, and our trannies -- is that what they're called
22 -- yeah, our transgenders, they were loved and they're
23 human.

24 And what is very important to me right now,
25 there's a young girl from back home, and the media turned

1 around and used her like it was her fault that she got
2 killed. It was her fault that why she was found in a
3 river.

4 How do you tell a young girl that -- what
5 was she, 14 -- 15 that it was her fault that she was given
6 this sentence of life that she must be found in a river,
7 she must be wrapped up in a quilt and thrown into the river
8 with 25 pounds from a 70-pound young girl, that it was her
9 fault why she was there? It's not her fault. It's not.

10 Like, yeah, I was coming home -- no, I was
11 going to work when this all happened. I used to be in
12 sweats, like, three or four times a week. I was smudging
13 the crowd that came to represent this young girl, went to
14 support the family, to support her life.

15 You know, it's sad that her life was taken
16 like this, but it opens up Canadians' eyes on how -- and
17 for the media to represent her the way they did and to tell
18 society it was her fault that she had drugs and alcohol in
19 her blood. She was a child. She could have given life,
20 but life was taken.

21 And Colton, I give thanks for Colton too
22 because again, our eyes, the media's eyes need to be open
23 because this is somebody that was accidentally killed, is
24 the way they took -- referred it on the news.

25 I don't know how you can "accidentally" pull

1 the trigger as many times as has. I don't know how Tina
2 Fontaine ended up "accidentally" being in a river. These
3 two young people sacrificed their lives for our lives, for
4 Canada, for their eyes to be open.

5 They always say when you take an animal's
6 life you have to give something for its life or for a
7 plant, when you take it because it's thanks, right?

8 I was adopted into a Duck family but I'm a
9 very stubborn person. How I was adopted into this family
10 is because Marissa Duck was killed on her birthday. She
11 would have been 16. The family had adopted me because I
12 look like Marissa, apparently, forehead and eyes. So they
13 adopted me.

14 But I'm stubborn. Maybe I should have
15 started then to support murdered and missing. I do this
16 because Sharon was not just what they claim. And I don't
17 even know if she was the way the media portrays her. I
18 have asked for answers which I've never gotten. Yeah.

19 I would like to introduce and thank Brenda
20 Wilson and Kelly White and Connie Juelz and then of course,
21 my drum sister. I want to say Alia. I got a bunch of
22 grandchildren with A, and Leah. I guess we've supported
23 each other a lot, yeah. And then my beautiful cousin,
24 which her birthday is today. She's 77, Harriet. And of
25 course, Sharon.

1 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioner
2 Eyolfson, did you have any questions or comments for Myrna?

3 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you,
4 Myrna. Thank you for sharing. You've touched on so many
5 things this morning about Sharon, a bit about your life as
6 well.

7 I do have a couple of questions, just
8 follow-up questions if you don't mind.

9 You mentioned a number of times, you talked
10 about negative portrayal in the media in reference to
11 Sharon and other Indigenous women. I'm wondering if you
12 have any further thoughts on what could be done to change
13 that, any recommendations for the media as to how they
14 could go about changing that so that doesn't continue to
15 happen?

16 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** I went on the internet
17 to look for if there was anything for Sharon, and I looked
18 on the Vancouver Sun. And then there's a lot of videos
19 about the Pickton and how they were all prostitutes and
20 junkies.

21 It would have been nice if somebody actually
22 contacted the family first so they can represent her and
23 show that she wasn't this person -- or she might have been
24 that person, I don't know -- but it would have been nice if
25 they contacted people, one of us or -- because her

1 daughters were underage or looked for a good friend, like.
2 And then they could share their love and the kindness and
3 all the pictures here to show Sharon smiling.

4 She was a happy person, a jokester. I used
5 to call her Silhouette because she's always been so skinny,
6 right, and yeah, skinny, tall. She always laughed with
7 hahaha. She was a belly laugher.

8 It's too bad that they portrayed her like
9 this and portrayed -- I mean, and made Robert Pickton to be
10 a victim, although he wasn't the victim. They said that he
11 was uneducated, but then there was a book that was written.
12 And how does he have this right to write a book when he was
13 uneducated, when it should have been able to reopen another
14 hearing because he wrote this book?

15 It should be able to be enough to start
16 another hearing, to be able to share the stories that he
17 has said. And there might not be stories. And he said
18 there is more than one person that's involved. There might
19 be names in that book. Why can't I see that book? Why
20 can't I hear his side in this book?

21 I was -- I don't know if you were there --
22 there was something going on in Winnipeg anyways at the
23 Delta. I don't remember what it was but it was the day
24 before this happened. And I wanted to speak and I wanted
25 to share something good about her, but I ended up crying

1 because I was angry about this book.

2 It should be more than enough to reopen
3 another court hearing. There should be some more justice
4 happening here rather than only six women out of how many
5 women that were missing? Yeah. Oh yeah, National
6 Roundtable in Winnipeg. Yeah.

7 And how can -- that's how it can happen, is
8 if people look for the family members rather than just
9 jumping to conclusions because it's not our murderers that
10 are the victim, it's the life that has been taken.

11 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you.
12 And I just have one other question if you don't mind. I'm
13 wondering if you have any thoughts or recommendations about
14 -- for people have lost a loved one, about what supports
15 might help, for things that might -- that have helped you
16 or things that weren't there that would have helped you or
17 could?

18 **MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Well, for me, because I
19 follow my traditional ways, I've found my own support in
20 different ways because there was offering of counselling,
21 but then when I went to go meet a counsellor, he was
22 crawling in his chair and it made me really uncomfortable
23 and I haven't gone to a counsellor since. I've gone the
24 one time and I don't know what was wrong with this
25 counsellor.

1 How you can help is if there was more
2 support for extended family. Like, for when I came to the
3 hearing for Pickton, there was only allowed two people.
4 When we wanted to go to the -- where was that one in Prince
5 George? Oh yeah, and for the family meeting that we came
6 to in Prince George two years ago, we were only allowed
7 three -- no, there was four -- three of us that came. It
8 would have been nice that her other children were able to
9 come, like, if we could all have been there for to support
10 her because they have a limit because of budget.

11 If there wasn't such a close notification of
12 when, like, the hearings are going to start, like, this --
13 I just finished my walk and whatnot and I don't even know
14 how far that was towards the finishing of the walk.

15 And did I even answer your question? I'm
16 just babbling.

17 But I feel that it's important, like, very
18 important. If there was -- yeah, if we can extend the
19 support, yeah. Brenda already lives in B.C. and we all
20 came to support another family member but she found that I
21 was here so it was nice. Harriet lives in B.C. My support
22 had a job interview and the other one was out of the city.

23 And it didn't dawn on me that I could have
24 asked one of our elders to tag along with me and be a
25 support. But I think why it didn't turn out that way is

1 because maybe I needed to be alone, away from everybody.
2 That's what I'm thinking. I'm always trying to justify
3 things.

4 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Okay, thank
5 you. So I really want to thank you for coming and sharing
6 and I want to acknowledge your strength and your resilience
7 for sharing some difficult things with us. But I also want
8 to thank you for your recommendations. So thank you for
9 that contribution to the Inquiry and for being here.

10 And I also want to acknowledge and thank all
11 your supports for being here with you as well.

12 And before we wrap up, we have a small gift
13 of appreciation for you sharing the gift of your truths
14 with us. And I'm going to ask Grandmother "Blu" if she
15 will address the small gift we have for you before we
16 adjourn.

17 **GRANDMOTHER LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS-GAUDIO:**
18 We'd like to offer you this eagle feather here to help you
19 with your continue of the healing and to be that helper for
20 you. We know that Sharon was a gift from the Creator and
21 you bringing her information to us helps others, the rest
22 of Canada, know that she was a gift, that her life had
23 value, it had meaning. And you speaking out this way, we'd
24 like to honour you with this because it takes courage to
25 stand before a lot of people and speak your truth.

1 So this will help you with your journey, as
2 well as there are some wild strawberry seeds there. And
3 when you plant them, you'll enjoy the sweetness and you'll
4 remember the good times you had with your sister and with
5 the rest of your family. So thank you.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So before we
7 adjourn, actually, one of our grandmothers is going to sing
8 us.

9 **GRANDMOTHER EUNICE McMILLAN:** My name is
10 Eunice McMillan. I'm from the Homalco Nation which is
11 Campbell River. I lead the Murdered and Missing Women's
12 March every year. So I thought I'd do the -- our song from
13 the march which was given to us by Martina St. Pierre from
14 the Mount Currie, the Women's Warrior.

15

16 --- **CLOSING SONG BY EUNICE McMILLAN**

17

18 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I just ask that we
19 take a short break before the next hearing starts, so 10
20 minutes?

21 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Okay, let's
22 adjourn for 10 minutes.

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you.

24 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you.

25 --- **Exhibits (code: P01P15P0203)**

1 --- **Exhibit 1:** Folder containing four digital images
2 displayed during the public testimony
3 of Myrna Abraham.

4 --- Upon adjourning at 10:54

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LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Karen Noganosh, 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.



Karen Noganosh
April 17, 2018