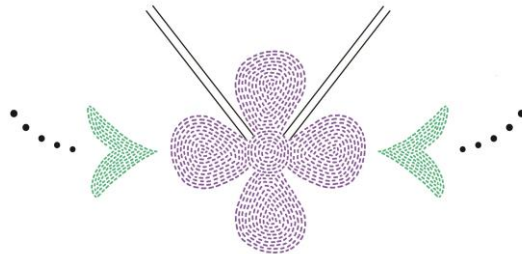


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 1 Statement Gathering
York Boat Inn & Suites
Norway House, Manitoba**



PUBLIC

Wednesday November 8, 2017

**Statement - Volume 186
Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay,
In relation to Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe**

**Statement gathered by Francine Merasty,
Commission Counsel**

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
41-5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2
E-mail: info@irri.net – Phone: 613-748-6043 – Fax: 613-748-8246

II

NOTE

Francine Merasty, Commission Counsel, listened back to the original source recording of this testimony and amended the official transcript by adding in passages spoken by the witnesses in Cree. All amendments are set off with square brackets []. Ms. Merasty made these amendments on November 1, 2018 in Toronto, Ontario.

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Documents provided with oral testimony: none.

Statement -Public 1
Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

Norway House, Manitoba

--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 14:45

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: This is Francine Merasty with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, speaking on the record with ---

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Cecilia Blacksmith, Cross Lake, Manitoba.

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Therese McKay (phon), Cross Lake.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And, we're in Norway House, and the date is November 8, 2017. And, it's 2:45 p.m. Cecilia Blacksmith, Therese McKay, you are here to voluntarily give your statement in the matter of Marcus Blacksmith, and Glenn Colombe. Your statement will be audio recorded today. And, you've also allowed us to videotape your statement. Can you please confirm that you agree with this?

MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Yes.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. So, what do you want to share with the Commissioners today? So, you can just start wherever you want to start.

MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Okay. I want to share my experience in the murder of my son, Marcus Neil Blacksmith. I lost my son to homicide on February 11,

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Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 2014. He is the youngest of my children. He was the baby
2 of the family. And, he was only 19 years old.

3 I'm going to go a little bit on the
4 background on Marcus. When he was 16 years old, he became
5 a Cross Lake firefighter when he was 16 years old, up to
6 where he got murdered. And, Marcus came from a good home.
7 His dad worked for [Company] for almost 40 years. And me,
8 I'm a teacher for 20 years now. And, Marcus was a well,
9 well behaved boy.

10 He was a well-known boy in our community
11 because of his firefighting. And, he had lots of good
12 friends. And, he was very, very active in the community,
13 and around his friends. And, he loved firefighting,
14 through his dad. My husband is also a firefighter. And,
15 my other son is also a firefighter.

16 And, my husband and my other son, they
17 always compete on firefighting competitions. And, that's
18 the reason my late son liked firefighting. He liked to
19 watch his dad compete, his brother compete, and he wanted
20 to be like them. And then in 2013 the Cross Lake
21 Firefighters ask every year, they always go and compete in
22 Winnipeg for firefighting competition. And, in July 2013,
23 they asked Marcus if he wants to join them in this
24 competition. And, he agreed right away.

25 So, they went to Winnipeg, 800 kilometres

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Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 away from my home. So, they went to Winnipeg to compete.
2 And, apparently they won, of all the Manitoba. And, it's
3 called the Regional Firefighters Competition. And, the
4 Cross Lake team won. My husband was there, and my two
5 sons. So, they won the firefighting competition.

6 And then that night, I guess, they went to
7 go celebrate. And then my late son, Marcus, met a girl.
8 That's July 2013. He met a girl in Winnipeg that time.
9 And, I guess he fell in love. Love at first sight, I would
10 say. And, he was only 19 years old that time. He didn't
11 even have a girlfriend yet, when he went to Winnipeg that
12 time for that competition.

13 And so, he met this girl. And then
14 throughout the year it became serious. He fell in love
15 with her right away. And then he started visiting her in
16 Winnipeg. And then, in January, end of January, me and my
17 husband dropped Marcus off. January of 2013, in Winnipeg.
18 We were on our way to Brandon to go visit our daughter.
19 So, we dropped him off in Winnipeg to go visit his
20 girlfriend. And then we told him that we will pick him up
21 on our way back.

22 And then on our way back we texted him that
23 we are on our way to pick him up. And then he texted back
24 and he said he decided to stay with his girlfriend. And
25 then we thought it was okay, so we let him. And so, that's

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Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 the last time we saw him alive, that time we dropped him
2 off end of January.

3 And then he stayed. He stayed and then he
4 called February 4 he called. He said, "I'm going to stay."
5 He's supposed to come home that time, and he called again
6 at home and he said, "I'm going to stay, but I'll be home
7 on the 20th, February 20th." We didn't -- you know, we
8 accepted it. We didn't think of anything.

9 And then Sunday morning, February 9th,
10 exactly at 8:45 a.m. I got a phone call. My phone rang,
11 and I was home alone. And then I got a phone call that my
12 son was stabbed, and he's in Health Science Centre ICU.
13 And then I almost went and see, you know? I didn't know
14 what was his condition, and if it's serious, or -- I know
15 it was serious. They said he was in ICU. And then I
16 called my husband right away to come home. And then I just
17 packed and packed right away.

18 By 11:00 a.m. we were on the road, 800
19 kilometres away. We were on the road to Winnipeg. My mom
20 was with me, and my other sister. And, by Ashern we had
21 another call. They were, you know, preparing us what to
22 expect when we get there.

23 So, we got to Winnipeg. We went straight to
24 the hospital. We went straight to the ICU. We didn't
25 expect what -- you know, to see him like that, in life

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Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 support, fighting for his life. And, not once did he knew
2 that we were there with him. He was unconscious. He was
3 on life support.

4 He fought for his life for two days. He
5 died February 11, 2014. And, I am trying to remember but,
6 it's only a little bit of vivid memories that I have during
7 that time, when I lost him. And, the only vivid memory
8 that I have is during the time of court. That's the only
9 vivid memory that I have.

10 So, I guess that's the only thing I can talk
11 about, is how my son's case was handled. The accused was
12 caught right away that night, when he stabbed my son. He
13 was caught right away. And, he's been in jail since then.

14 So, we started our court in 2015. In April
15 2015 the court started. And, it ended in November 2016.
16 Sporadic dates, we would go to Winnipeg for the court.
17 And, in November 4, to be exact, of 2016, that's where they
18 sentence my son's killer. And, you know, we just met that
19 guy that night, so -- I don't know.

20 So, it's been three years, and I've been,
21 you know, reading news, watching news, about these missing
22 and murdered Indigenous people, men and women. And, I'm,
23 you know, interested in helping out, you know, giving
24 comfort. You know, my fellow grieving mothers the comfort
25 that they need, the support that they need.

1 But, one thing, it's hard to see that
2 missing and murdered men are -- you know, they don't have
3 any solid support. And, that's one thing I want to, you
4 know, recommend for missing and murdered women and men to
5 be together, to combine, because I know lots of missing and
6 murdered men are out in northern Manitoba. And, I wish and
7 hope some day that they will get justice, you know, and
8 find their missing loved ones.

9 And, I'm -- you know, at the present time
10 I'm trying to help my community find their missing men. We
11 have two missing men for over 25 years already. And, I am
12 trying to, you know, get that support for these missing me
13 in our community.

14 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** I want to ask a
15 question. So, how did you, I guess, receive, or what kind
16 of help did you access?

17 **MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH:** To be honest with
18 you, the most help that I got was from my husband. He gave
19 me, you know, this total support, you know, to comfort me.
20 And, he is still. And, also the God. I don't know, he
21 gave me this, you know, these visions, these scriptures to
22 read. And, from these scriptures I understand it from what
23 I went through. And, my husband is my strong supporter.

24 We never had counselling. There's nothing
25 in my community like that. We never had counselling.

1 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Do you think that's
2 something that would be beneficial for you?

3 **MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH:** Oh yes, oh yes. I
4 would like to see mental health counselling, you know, in
5 my community. So, my children, my grandchildren, they kept
6 me going.

7 And, we also put recognition on Mark, on
8 behalf of Marcus. Like, we have floor hockey. He loved
9 floor hockey. So, we named a floor hockey tournament after
10 him. And, this year we're going to devote a scholarship
11 for a (indiscernible) graduate. So, we're going to give
12 out a scholarship on behalf of Marcus. And, what else did
13 we do?

14 Because, you know, when you do stuff in
15 memory of your loved one, it helps you. It heals you. You
16 feel good; you know? And, even his grave, you know, you go
17 there, and if you sit, it's just that I don't want to --
18 and then I feel for the missing that are not found. That
19 must be hard, eh?

20 So, when you do this stuff, when you help
21 people? Because I help a lot of people in Cross Lake.
22 And, when you do stuff in memory of your loved one, you
23 feel good. I feel good.

24 So, hopefully -- we are trying to start
25 another search or this missing person for over 25 years.

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Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 So, we're trying to start another search this coming
2 summer. And, what else did I want to say? You can't give
3 up. You can't. Hope; you know? That's what keeps you
4 going, hope.

5 So, that's my experience, it's my Marcus.

6 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Would you like to
7 make any recommendations to the National Inquiry?

8 **MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH:** When I see on
9 Facebook, I'm on Facebook, and I'm a Facebook friend to
10 Bernice Catcheway (phon), Lydia, all these women that are
11 searching for their daughters. I always, you know, mention
12 can we get our own investigators? We need our own
13 investigators. Somebody that we can trust. That's what
14 kept coming on my mind. And, now, when I read about these
15 missing and murdered, it's hire, hire investigators. And,
16 don't give up searching. Keep voicing, keep that voice
17 coming, you know, the strong voice.

18 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Okay. Do you feel
19 that you've been heard?

20 **MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH:** I did. I did.
21 But, in my third year I'm at peace after the sentencing.
22 I'm at peace. Not totally healed, but my heart is ---

23 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So, how much time did
24 the -- what was the sentence?

25 **MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH:** Ten years.

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Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

9

1 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Do you want to
2 take a break, or do you want to start speaking? (Speaking
3 in Indigenous language). (IN CREE: are you going to speak?)

4 MS. THERESE MCKAY: (Speaking in Indigenous
5 language). [IN CREE: for a short time, yes.]

6 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Can you hold this
7 for me, because I have one at home?

8 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: I'll just put it here
9 for you.

10 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Can I go now? Can
11 I go take a break?

12 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

13 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: But, you can talk
14 to her.

15 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Because I need
16 to ask her questions. Are you going to come back?

17 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Mm-hmm.

18 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Take a break
19 then, and she can just (indiscernible) [IN CREE: and she
20 can talk.]

21 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Okay.

22 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: All right. (Speaking
23 in Indigenous language). [IN CREE: What would you like to
24 speak about?]

25 MS. THERESE MCKAY: (Speaking in Indigenous

1 language) -- 25 years. [IN CREE: This young man my nephew
2 has been lost for over 25 years.]

3 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Your nephew went
4 missing 25 years?

5 **MS. THERESE MCKAY:** Yes, my nephew, he went
6 missing for 25 years. (Speaking in Indigenous language).
7 [IN CREE: When he went missing they searched for him and
8 they could not find him.]

9 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So, they went looking
10 for him, and they never find him?

11 **MS. THERESE MCKAY:** He went in the bush.
12 They didn't find him. They went looking in places away
13 from Cross Lake. The road, you know, the highway. They
14 couldn't find him. Even now, where is he, what happened to
15 him? It's so hard. And, my brother, and his wife, it was
16 their son, they are already gone. They died. They were
17 very, very -- they lost their son. And, my other -- my
18 grandson, her son, he was a very good boy. Very good boy.
19 And then ---

20 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** What was his name?

21 **MS. THERESE MCKAY:** You mean, Marcus? The
22 other one?

23 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Yes.

24 **MS. THERESE MCKAY:** The other one, that was
25 -- Glenn Colombe, that's my brother's son. I was

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(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 mentioning Marcus, my daughter's boy. He was a very good
2 boy. And then when he got in Winnipeg, what he got into,
3 that's what got him, you know, killed. It didn't take
4 long. So, we've been through this for so long. You know,
5 Glenn went missing -- we don't know what happened to him.
6 Nothing. Nothing to, you know -- we tried and find him,
7 but we couldn't. I think of my brother and his wife, I
8 tell them to call, and I tell them to call -- I guess they
9 were very -- because he was missing, they didn't know what
10 happened to him.

11 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: [IN CREE: Is that
12 all?]

13 MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes.

14 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Do you want to make
15 recommendations?

16 [IN CREE:

17 MS. THERESE MCKAY: What do you recommend?

18 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: What do you mean?

19 MS. THERESE MCKAY: What do you think should
20 happen?

21 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: In finding him?

22 MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes.]

23 MS. THERESE MCKAY: Well, try to, you know,
24 find ---

25 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: More investigation.

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Cecilia Blacksmith & Therese McKay
(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 MS. THERESE MCKAY: More investigation.

2 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: More ongoing.

3 MS. THERESE MCKAY: Yes. I would love to
4 know what happened, what happened to him. He's just gone,
5 and no one knows what was -- it was so many years, 25, 28.

6 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: It's going to be 28
7 years. It's going to be 28 years.

8 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Is that was your
9 brother?

10 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: My cousin.

11 MS. THERESE MCKAY: I don't know.

12 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay. Do you want to
13 ask her what would make things better for future
14 generations?

15 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: You know, this,
16 generation, the world is so hard for them. And, I think
17 the two factors that are -- it's alcohol and drugs. I
18 guess, be more strict on the alcohol and drugs. That's the
19 biggest factor of our missing and murdered.

20 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Who are you
21 recommending to be more strict with, the parents or the
22 community?

23 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Justice. The
24 system. I know the fact they're trying really hard, but --
25 I don't know.

1 MS. THERESE MCKAY: There is lots of
2 drinking and lots of drugs; eh?

3 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Yes.

4 MS. THERESE MCKAY: Lots, every day.

5 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: And, I know that's
6 -- I'm assuming that's one of the factors on the missing
7 and murdered. And, mental health, I want to see mental
8 health workers in communities. Because, you know, what I
9 experienced is after my experience I needed help, and I
10 didn't have anybody to turn to, like a mental health
11 counsellor. We need those kind of stuff in our
12 communities.

13 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: [IN CREE: is that
14 all?]

15 MS. THERESE MCKAY: [IN CREE: yes that is
16 all.]

17 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: All right. Well,
18 it's 3:20 p.m.

19 MS. THERESE MCKAY: It's very good that you,
20 you know, let us talk about this.

21 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay.

22 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: Don't stop. Don't
23 stop what you guys are doing, fighting the system. We need
24 the system to, you know, stand by us. And -- yeah. Thank
25 you.

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(Marcus Blacksmith & Glenn Colombe)

1 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: So, it's 3:20 p.m.

2 November 18 in Norway House. And, we're done.

3 MS. CECILIA BLACKSMITH: November 8.

4 MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: November 8; sorry.

5

6

7 --- Upon adjourning

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Shirley Chang, 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.



Shirley Chang

March 27, 2018