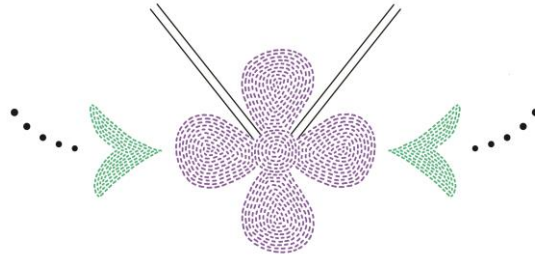


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Prince George, British Columbia**



PUBLIC

Wednesday February 7, 2018

Statement - Volume 20

**Jerome Gunning & Pamela Gunning,
In relation to Rene Gunning, Krystle Knott,
Pamela Napoleon & Abigail Andrews**

Statement gathered by Francine Merasty

International Reporting Inc.

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Documents provided by witness: none.

Statement - Public
Jerome & Pamela Gunning
(Rene Gunning)

1

Prince George, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, February 7, 2018.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: This is Francine Merasty with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, speaking on the record with Jerome Gunning of the Carrier Sekani Nation. And he's travelled here from Tumbler Ridge, B.C. We are in Prince George, and the date is February 7th, 2018. Jerome, you're here to voluntarily give your statement in the matter of your daughter Rene Gunning.

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: And present with us in the room are?

MS. PAMELA GUNNING: I'm his wife, Pamela Gunning.

MS. GERTRUDE PIERRE: I'm Gertrude Pierre, I'm a case support worker.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: 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?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Yeah, I agree.

MS. FRANCINE MERASTY: Okay, so what do you want to share with the Commissioners Jerome?

MR. JEROME GUNNING: Well I'm thankful

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Jerome & Pamela Gunning
(Rene Gunning)

2

1 there's an inquiry going on, but we all know there are,
2 there are a lot of sick people out there, serial killers.
3 And my case is just one of hundreds out there that are
4 unresolved. What I've gone through with myself and my
5 family, it's happening to hundreds of families out there
6 and it's just not right.

7 Like I say, I'm thankful there's an inquiry
8 happening, but I'd like to see action happening. There's
9 outfits in the States that have a place and everything else
10 that work on specifically serial killer cases and stuff
11 like this. This has been going on way too long.

12 The outfit out of Edmonton, Project KARE,
13 they were the ones that contacted me about my daughter
14 being found. And they're short staffed, and underfunded,
15 and there's been many changes in personnel in there and
16 that, that shouldn't be happening. These people care. The
17 ones at Project KARE, they care. Because they came all the
18 way from Edmonton to my workplace in Tumbler Ridge, and
19 took me to the police station where I met them. And they
20 told me in person that my daughter had been found, what was
21 left of her. And I could see it in their faces, they
22 cared.

23 But those people have moved on because
24 that's the way it is down there. It's ridiculous. And
25 everyone that comes in gives me a phone call saying I'm so

1 and so, and I've taken over this case. And it's nice to
2 know that they're still on the case, but at the same time
3 I'm wondering well what's happened previously to the
4 previous people that were on it. You know there should be,
5 there should be funds available to have -- I don't know the
6 words.

7 **MS. GERTRUDE PIERRE:** A task force.

8 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** A task force, yeah.
9 Set up for this sort of thing. Because we all know
10 there's, there's serial killers running out there, and
11 they're still out there.

12 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Can you tell --

13 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And --

14 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Can you tell us a
15 little bit about what happened and -- with your daughter?

16 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** My daughter Rene, was
17 19 years old. She was trying to leave an abusive
18 relationship just after she miscarried with my second
19 grandchild. She wanted to leave this person, and when he
20 was out of town she took the opportunity to hitchhike to
21 Edmonton --

22 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** From --

23 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** -- with a friend.

24 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** From what community?

25 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** From Fort St. John.

1 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Okay.

2 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And they hitchhiked to
3 Edmonton. And on the return trip, they never made it home.
4 She was with another girl, Krystle Knott, and they never
5 made it. They were last seen at the West Edmonton Mall,
6 had just got off the phone with friends of theirs and they
7 told them they were hitchhiking back to Fort St. John.

8 Krystle lives in Dawson Creek and they never
9 made it. It was five and a half years of keeping my hopes
10 up that she would be found alive. And --

11 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** What year did she go
12 missing?

13 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** She went missing in
14 2005 I believe it was.

15 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** I was just thinking
16 that. Today is -- 13 years today she was murdered
17 according to the autopsy. I just realized that.

18 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** They were found 60
19 kilometres southeast of Grande Prairie, 16 kilometres down
20 the Forcey Truck Road. And a gentleman pulled over to the
21 side of the road to relieve himself, and he smelled
22 something rotting. So he finished his business and went
23 looking to see what that smell was.

24 He walked off the highway and in the bush he
25 found a rotting moose carcass. And when he turned around

1 to walk away, 20 feet away he spotted two human skulls. So
2 he reported it to the police and the cordoned the area off.
3 They spent I don't know how many days in there combing the
4 bush. And all that was found was a thigh bone and two
5 skulls. Through DNA they were able to conclude that it was
6 Rene and Krystle. So I know --

7 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And that was me in May
8 2011.

9 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah.

10 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So they went missing
11 in 2005?

12 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** February 5th, 2005.
13 The skulls were found May 21st, 2011. And we got the
14 results from the autopsy -- we were notified in June 2011.
15 And they told us that it was -- that she was -- that they
16 were murdered six years ago. Like on their way home, they
17 never -- I can't remember the exact thing they said. It
18 would have been 13 years ago today.

19 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** So they determined that
20 from the skulls they found?

21 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah.

22 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah. And during that
23 five and a half years she was missing, I personally took
24 four trips to West Edmonton Mall because that was the last
25 place she was seen, and searched for a couple of days each

1 time. And every time I saw a black head of hair walking
2 down, down the hall, my heart would rise and I'd walk up,
3 and walk past her, get upfront and I'd look, and it was
4 never Rene.

5 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, she --

6 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And it was devastating.

7 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And she left behind --
8 when she went missing she left behind a one year old son,
9 one and a half year old son. His name is [Rene's Son],
10 he's 14 now. We're raising him. He's amazing.

11 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And during that five
12 and a half years as well, there was at least five or six
13 times when I would get a call from the police and they'd
14 want me to come to the police station, and they'd ask me
15 questions about what was Rene wearing and stuff like this.
16 And they had a case where they had specific things they
17 wanted me to look at, and they'd show me pictures of her
18 purses and clothing, and stuff like that, pertaining to a
19 different case. And there was -- none of the belongings
20 were ever Rene's. It was pretty gut-wrenching to walk out
21 of the police station knowing that no progress had been
22 made and she was still missing. Because I always kept the
23 hope up that she was alive.

24 She came to me in a dream twice. The first
25 time was shortly after she went missing. In this dream I

Statement - Public
Jerome & Pamela Gunning
(Rene Gunning)

7

1 heard a knock in the door at my apartment. And I was
2 cleaning the apartment, and I stopped what I was doing and
3 I opened up the door and there was Rene standing there.
4 And I said, "Hello stranger, long time no see, come on in".
5 And I turned around to walk away, and she went to step
6 through the threshold, and that was the end of the dream.
7 And I remember I just wanted that to be so real, eh? And
8 I'd wake up and realize it was just a dream. It wasn't a
9 nice feeling.

10 In the second dream a few years later, she
11 came to me and we were talking. I was -- "Where have you
12 been", I was asking her, "We've been looking everywhere for
13 you, where have you been, why didn't you call"? And then
14 she told me in the dream that, "Dad, where they had us they
15 wouldn't let us go". And I was about to ask her another
16 question and my alarm went off, so I had to go to work.
17 And I remember reaching over and trying to shut the alarm
18 off to still say asleep, because I didn't want that dream
19 to end because I wanted more information. And that never
20 happened. I had to believe it was her trying to give me
21 piece of mind because she was still missing.

22 I still go down to Flatbed Creek. That's
23 where I spread her ashes, and I go down there when I'm
24 having rough days, and I still talk to her. I feel like
25 she's there because her first five years of her life she

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Jerome & Pamela Gunning
(Rene Gunning)

8

1 spent in Tumbler Ridge she really lived it there, eh. We
2 spent a lot of time down in that field playing games and
3 stuff. And that's where I spread her ashes, so that's
4 where I go when I'm troubled, or I can't figure things out.

5 I remember when -- one Remembrance Day I
6 went to watch [Rene's Son], he was in Rangers. So they
7 were in the parade and everything else, and they went to
8 the school and did the ceremonies, and he was a Rifle Guard
9 and stuff like that. So I watched all this, and when it
10 was over he said he wanted to walk home with his buddies.
11 They were going to help clean up and he was going to walk
12 home with his friends.

13 So I left and I thought you know, it's
14 Remembrance Day, I'm going to take a trip down to Flatbed.
15 So I went down to Flatbed and I sat there for about an
16 hour, just communicating with Rene, remembering the fun we
17 had in the park that I was looking at.

18 So friends came driving by the highway and
19 they saw me sitting there, and they came down and asked me
20 what I was doing. I said it's Remembrance Day. They said
21 yeah we know, but why are you here? And I said because I'm
22 talking to my daughter, I put her ashes right here. Oh
23 okay. So we had a cigarette and just talked, passed the
24 time. And they jumped in their vehicle to leave and I
25 jumped in mine.

1 And this trailer he was pulling down the
2 road, an eagle came flying about 30 feet above, over top of
3 his truck headed straight for me. And I was mesmerized
4 because I love eagles and they're just coming right for me
5 and hung a right. It went -- and there was a second eagle
6 in the tree there, and it landed right beside the other
7 eagle. So there were two eagles.

8 In Tumbler Ridge you never see two eagles.
9 One -- occasionally you'll see one, but never two. And
10 that was the year that her mother passed away. So I
11 believe that that was Rene passing on the message that she
12 and her mother are together, you know. Because it's -- I
13 don't believe in coincidences like that, eh. They're
14 signs.

15 And every time go to the Sisters and spirit
16 walk, a vigil, I feel her with me. When I go on these --
17 you know it was during the time that she was missing that
18 the first one at Peace River, they asked if I would go up
19 there. And I took [Rene's Son], and I found a part of me
20 that I didn't even know I had pertaining to my ancestral
21 roots. Because being raised in a white family I had lost a
22 lot. But there was something in this ceremony. They
23 opened up their doors for me. There were people that knew
24 how I felt, there was people there that would volunteer to
25 listen to me talk, express my opinion. It opened up doors

1 where I started to go around to powwows and stuff, because
2 that's what I was missing. And I've met a lot of wonderful
3 people over that stretch of time.

4 But I'm just one person. There's hundreds
5 of families out there going through the same thing. And
6 it's not right. You know there's, there's injustice
7 everywhere. You know Fort St. John, I don't know how many
8 of them are missing out there, girls, you know? And it's,
9 it's -- for lack of a better word it's a real redneck town,
10 and it seems like the interest isn't there when it involves
11 native people. Yet when the white woman goes missing
12 there's hell to pay, everyone's up in arms, and it's on the
13 news, you know? And everything except an amber alert
14 because it's not to do with a kid, you know? And it's,
15 it's just not right, it's not right.

16 I'd like to see a task force solely
17 committed to finding these serial killers, because there's
18 more than one out there. Highway of Tears, look at that.
19 That goes right to my hometown.

20 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** It would just be nice
21 if someone made time for it, someone just to make time for
22 us, you know? I've had a lot of friends go missing and get
23 murdered in Fort St. John. They didn't even -- their exact
24 words to me when I went to the police station were, "We
25 don't have time for her right now". It just reminded me of

1 that when he said that. And it just makes me so angry, and
2 it's not fair, it's not fair. And it shouldn't have taken
3 this long for somebody to care, you know? So I'm trying to
4 be grateful but I'm angry, I just want justice for Rene.
5 I'm just --

6 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, I'd like to see
7 it in my lifetime. Because I'm raising [Rene's Son] right
8 now, and he's, he's got so much of Rene. And it's amazing
9 over the years raising him. He's got the same little
10 crooked smile and the same sense of humour. You know
11 that's, that's my higher power, giving me a gift out of all
12 of this. I get a daily reminder of Rene. But I think
13 about her every day.

14 I go to work, I'm sitting on my piece of
15 equipment, my dozer, and the mind just goes and I think
16 about Rene, I think about my family. It never leaves you,
17 it's there every day. It sounds cliché but it's not. And
18 I know I'm not the only person in this, in this state. I
19 know other people are dealing with it their way. I'm not
20 saying it's the right way or wrong way, but with the booze
21 and the drugs. I've been clean and sober 27 years now, and
22 I know that's not the way for me to deal with it.

23 We got -- my understanding is it's given me
24 a new way to live. You know when Rene went missing that
25 was the biggest test of my sobriety. But I knew you were

1 going to give me more than I could handle. But at times I
2 tell you, at times it wasn't easy. Then you put people
3 like Connie Grayeyes in my, in my path. A strong
4 Indigenous people that have a purpose and they do so much
5 good, it's amazing.

6 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** She's a walking angle.

7 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** You know, and that's
8 what -- what a higher power does. It puts the right people
9 in my path right at the moment I need them. Just like the
10 day on Remembrance Day when the two eagles, right when I
11 needed it the most.

12 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Like the gathering.

13 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** You talked about your
14 daughter going missing February 5th, 2005?

15 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** M'hmm.

16 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** How was, how was it
17 reported to police and what was their response?

18 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** At that time [M.],
19 Rene's mom and I were still together and she was the one
20 that reported it. And initially they -- the police looked
21 at the abusive boyfriend, and questioned me, and then it
22 went by the wayside. There's nothing every -- other than
23 getting called to the police station, you know, every so
24 often to try to identify articles of clothing.

25 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** It was never on the

1 news.

2 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Was there ever like
3 posters?

4 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** We made some, but there
5 was nothing when she went missing. There was -- I didn't
6 even know and I knew her, I lived down the street and she
7 spent a lot of time at my house with my step kids at the
8 time.

9 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** It's long before I ever
10 met Pam.

11 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And I didn't even know
12 she went missing until geez, a couple of years later at
13 least because I moved away and came back. But I was -- the
14 whole year that -- like she went missing in February 2005,
15 I didn't leave until November. And I never even knew. Like
16 there's newspaper clippings from Edmonton. She was
17 reported missing in Edmonton a long time after. Those
18 papers were like April, weren't they? I'm pretty sure it
19 was two months before there was a newspaper report, and it
20 was in Edmonton, a missing person report, and I just
21 thought wow. It's the same thing about Abigail Andrews,
22 you know? As soon as they found out she was native they
23 took down billboards and they stopped, like any reports.

24 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, there's a --

25 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Like anything.

1 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** There was a billboard
2 put up because she didn't look native. So at the time they
3 went all out and put a billboard up, right. And then as
4 soon as it was leaked out that she was, she was native, it
5 came down.

6 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** It was like two days
7 later.

8 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I mean that's the
9 mentality of Fort St. John.

10 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** It is, and it's still
11 like that. Look at Pamela Napoleon in 2014, you know.
12 They even went to the police where her body was with dogs
13 and never found her.

14 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** The police said they
15 never found anything, yet somebody went back two days later
16 and --

17 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, two days later
18 her uncle and her remains, she was -- were in the burnt
19 bed. They burnt down the cabin, the person burnt down the
20 cabin. He just got charged this year, four years later.
21 It's ridiculous. And for Joe, there's no support. He was
22 a single dad like he was saying. There's nothing, like
23 nothing. And there's still nothing for him. Like --

24 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** The people at Project
25 KARE contact me every now and then.

1 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** I tried to get
2 information, we want to go to the -- where she was found.
3 We want to go there, we want to put a cross and we want to
4 do a little ceremony.

5 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

6 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And so I contacted --
7 it ended up being a previous officer on the case, the last
8 info we had. That officer got back to us but we never got
9 -- we were requesting a police report so we know where to
10 go.

11 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

12 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And we were told that
13 an officer has to escort us because it's an ongoing
14 investigation.

15 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

16 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** But we -- that was the
17 end. And how many months ago was that? Actually it was
18 emails, eh? And we've heard nothing since. We don't even
19 know the exact location to this day, and it's been seven
20 years. It just makes me so angry, I'm just -- that's why
21 you need to do the (inaudible).

22 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So in regards to
23 support you say there's Project KARE. But what other kind
24 of support are you thinking of, like what could possibly be
25 there for --

1 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Some sort of grief
2 counselling, you know. I've been trying to find something
3 for him.

4 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** They've got grief
5 counsellors and stuff like that but --

6 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And not only talking
7 about -- and the travel, maybe travelling we were told --
8 I was told a couple of weeks ago. I'm waiting -- I left a
9 message, I'm waiting to get a call back.

10 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

11 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And didn't you leave a
12 message with a, with a counsellor there, and never heard
13 back, eh? That -- what's his name, a [J.] or something?

14 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Whatever.

15 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Never, ever returned
16 Joe's call.

17 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And the grief
18 counsellors up in Tumbler Ridge, all they want is your
19 money. And then they give you a sympathetic ear, but they
20 don't know what you're going through, they don't. They
21 give you a poor, "Oh, so sorry for your loss, so sorry".
22 They don't know.

23 When I go to functions like Sisters and
24 Spirit and stuff, and I'm around those people, they know
25 how I feel because they're going through the same thing,

1 you know? I've, I've gone to those and stood up in a room
2 full of -- a room full of people to talk because they have
3 one open mike. And I tell Rene's story, and the tears come
4 down my, my face, and these people know that it's okay. I
5 don't have to live up, up to that facade that you have to
6 outside those doors, you know. I'm a human being, I'm
7 entitled to those feelings and damn it, they hurt.

8 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So is that your
9 recommendation that you would offer to the Inquiry, is to
10 have grief counselling?

11 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, that would be a
12 really big help I think for more -- for a lot of people. I
13 mean look at how everything has been handled now. Just
14 imagine where -- it's like where, where do you turn, you
15 know? Where do you turn?

16 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Like I don't even know
17 where to go to the police to ask for -- you know updates
18 and stuff.

19 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah.

20 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** But I don't know
21 nothing. I could probably contact Project KARE and make
22 them pull out the file and everything else, but they've
23 already let me know that if there are any new developments
24 in the case they'll notify me, right? Well the last I got
25 notified was -- I don't know, I can't even remember. A

1 year and a half ago maybe.

2 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah a year and a half,
3 almost two years. And then I contacted them last year for
4 the -- but we've heard nothing since.

5 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And that's --
6 ironically enough, Connie Grayeyes asked me to go to Ottawa
7 and I was up in the air about the idea. And I was on my
8 loader in Taylor Pitt because I was working there at the
9 time, and my phone rang and it was an update. Because
10 Connie needed a yes or no by the end of that day, and the
11 day that I was supposed to give it to her I got that phone
12 call out of the blue from Project KARE. And it was a new
13 officer introducing himself and saying well, so and so's
14 moved on, but I'm the new officer and I just want to let
15 you know that the case is still open, and that we'll
16 contact you if there's any new developments.

17 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And that was four years
18 ago.

19 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And I took that as a
20 sign that ironically enough, that okay, well it's got to be
21 a sign so I went to Ottawa. I went and protested on
22 Parliament Hill and spoke to the Ministry people there. I
23 keep getting signs this is what has to be done, you have to
24 get the word out there. There's a lot of people that are
25 hurting, going through this stuff, and where do they turn?

1 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So you said that you
2 were in foster -- like you were abducted?

3 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** M'hmm.

4 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** When you were how
5 old?

6 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I was five months old.

7 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Okay. Did you ever
8 know your parents?

9 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** My real parents? I met
10 my dad when I was 17 years old and started meeting some of
11 my family. I met an older sister, a brother and my dad.
12 My mom had already passed away. She was -- I don't know if
13 it's true or not, but I heard that she was fished out from
14 -- fished out of the Fraser River or something. And I
15 don't know.

16 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And what did you meet
17 your sister, when you were 17?

18 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** [M.] yeah, and then
19 [C.].

20 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Okay.

21 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And my brother [F.].

22 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** They were taken to
23 residential schools weren't they, when you were adopted?

24 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, some were taken
25 to residential schools. Three of us were adopted out into

1 white families. Myself to the [Family 1]. [C.] was
2 adopted into a white family in Quesnel, and [E.] was
3 adopted into a white family down in Nanaimo. The rest were
4 raised in residential schools and foster homes.

5 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** You were the
6 youngest?

7 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** No, I'm the middle
8 brother. There's [F.], [L.], myself and [L.].

9 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And did one of your
10 brothers lose both his children in an accident?

11 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah [L.].

12 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** [L.] right, how sad.

13 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Where were your
14 parents from, like your biological parents?

15 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I guess my mom was from
16 the Fort St. James area. My dad, he's half Irish, or I'm
17 half Irish, so I guess he was Irish. I'm not really sure.
18 I met him at 17. I was kind of grateful that I was raised
19 in the [Family 1]. Yeah, it's given me morals and a work
20 ethic, just for lack of a better word. Which was very
21 lacking in what I saw in my dad, he'd sooner drink. I
22 didn't want that.

23 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Like what were the
24 circumstances like leading up to the adoption?

25 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I couldn't tell you, I

1 was five months old and I was adopted into the [Family 1].
2 And they had taken in over the years, I believe it was 39
3 foster kids. And my older brother [J.] told me, he says,
4 "I don't know what dad saw in you". I remember him telling
5 me that one day, "I don't remember what dad saw in you, but
6 dad saw something in you, and out of 39 kids you're the
7 only one to get adopted in the [Family 1]".

8 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Weren't your brothers
9 and sisters that went to the schools taken against their
10 will?

11 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** What?

12 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** [M.] told us that, that
13 the ones that went -- they were forced into residential
14 schools.

15 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, they were --

16 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, they were taken
17 from their parents.

18 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** My older sister and my
19 youngest brother were in residential schools in Lejac, I
20 grew up a mile away from them.

21 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah

22 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I didn't even know.

23 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And it was all against
24 their will.

25 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** But yeah, I was

1 grateful for the way I was raised. I grew up with five,
2 five of us foster kids. Basically we grew up as kids all
3 through in the [Family 1]. [D.P.], [R.P.] and [D.P.],
4 brothers and sisters, [S.C.], [C.P.] and myself. And out
5 of all of us, I don't know, I think I'm the only one that's
6 made something of themselves. Choosing to deal with life
7 in a different way, and I don't choose to live that way
8 anymore.

9 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** How is -- so you got
10 married to Rene's mother?

11 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** We were common law. We
12 had a -- basically a 30 year relationship with a 10 year
13 vacation put in there. She left within a year of Rene
14 being missing, because she couldn't handle running after
15 [Rene's Son]. She said she couldn't handle it but I think
16 it was other things, and she chose to move back down to
17 Nanaimo. So that's okay.

18 During that separation I -- I got clean and
19 sober, and I went down to see them -- like I was one of
20 these once or twice a year dads that would show up with a
21 pocketful of money because I was working out the oil patch,
22 spoil the kids for a week and then bugger off.

23 I went down there and Rene and [C.] were
24 both absent at that time. I found out through [M.] that
25 she had been putting them in foster care and I asked her

1 why, she said she couldn't handle it. So that didn't go
2 over well.

3 Rene had been missing for a couple of days
4 and the police couldn't start a search for her because
5 there hadn't been the amount of time. I went out on the
6 streets, talked to the street people and left my phone
7 number. I got a call within seven or eight hours that Rene
8 was at such and such a place.

9 I went to that place, knocked on the door
10 and the guy said yeah, she was sleeping on the couch. And
11 then I shook her by the shoulder, she opened up her eyes, a
12 big some come onto her face, I goes are you ready to go
13 home babe, and she goes yeah. So I took her back to
14 [M.]'s, and I said okay, sit down, family meeting.

15 So I sat her down, sat [C.] down. She was
16 12 at that time, [C.] was 10, and Craig their older brother
17 -- Craig was [M.]'s first son, my stepson and he was 16. I
18 said family meeting. I said okay -- I looked at the kids
19 and I says your mom says she can't handle you, that she's
20 putting you in foster care and stuff like this. So I'll
21 tell you what, I said I'm getting my act together here, got
22 off the drugs and booze -- because I was still smoking dope
23 at the time. Yeah, I was sober but I was still smoking
24 dope for the seven and a half years.

25 So I said I've got my act together and I'm

1 clean. So I said what I'll do is, I'll come and if you
2 guys want you can come live with me up North, instead of
3 going into foster care, and [C.] goes, "Yeah, I want to
4 come with you", he was 10. "I want to come live with you,
5 Dad". And Rene goes, "Well I want to come live with you
6 too Dad, but all my friends are down here in Nanaimo and I
7 want to stay with my friends". I said, "Okay, it's your
8 choice".

9 And Craig goes, "Well Dad, you know I'm 16
10 and I just think I should stay with Mom because she need
11 help". Okay. So I turned to [C.] and I says, "I'll be
12 back for you in June when you get out of school". I says,
13 "Until then I'll go up North and get a place for use and
14 get ready".

15 So I went back up North, came back in June.
16 I walked in and [C.] was there. I had to stop, load up the
17 car, and we were ready to take off. And then Rene come
18 running around the corner, "I want to go with you, Dad, I
19 want to go too". Apparently she just broke up with some
20 guy. So she was 13. I go, "Okay, grab your stuff". I
21 threw it in the car and brought them up. And then I was a
22 single dad for the next six years, raising those two. And
23 there was a lot of trials and errors I tell you, but we
24 made it. We have a strong family bond.

25 And Rene affected a lot of people. Everyone

1 talks about how she used to help them when they were
2 feeling down, and how she would make them laugh, forget
3 their troubles, yeah. A friend of hers put a Facebook --
4 or not a Facebook thing. What's that app, Rest in Peace
5 Rene?

6 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Rest in Peace Rene,
7 it's Facebook.

8 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** The set up one of those
9 for her.

10 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And made a video to
11 warn the dangers of hitchhiking. So he spread that around
12 a lot through social media. And then we made like a --
13 what looks like a billboard, but it's on social media as
14 well. That's just -- it's pretty much all we can do right
15 now, to get it out there. It's really expensive to rent a
16 billboard. We're saving up to do it, because I -- even if
17 I did it for a month, you know, it's still something. You
18 never know, somebody -- I want to do it outside Edmonton
19 because somebody might recognize her. Somebody out there
20 knows something.

21 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, it looks like it
22 was a truck driver, long haul truck driver.

23 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** I believe that it's --
24 I believe somewhere deep down that it's one of the Highway
25 of Tears killers because there's -- it's so similar, the

1 way it's -- the bodies were found on a logging road,
2 logging side road, and just the way everything was, the way
3 they went missing. But then just recently there was a
4 skull found outside of Edmonton too, and that just kind of
5 -- I was like oh, it's so close to home, like so close to
6 our case. And I just thought maybe -- but at least -- but
7 I can't imagine what Joe's going through.

8 But I know [Rene's Son]'s 14 now and we
9 don't have any answers for him. [*Three lines redacted -*
10 *personal information*]. And I had been trying so hard to
11 find -- I don't even know where to start, I don't even know
12 how to get information, anything. You can't even find any
13 resources like in our area even to go to, you know like
14 Google it. It's just -- it's unreal how little is
15 available like even online.

16 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah.

17 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** It just amazes me.

18 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Are you talking about
19 your grandson's father?

20 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** No.

21 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** No, for Rene.

22 **MR. JEROME:** No, he was never --

23 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** For Rene.

24 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** No.

25 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Like Rene's son's

1 father. But even for Rene itself, like I've just been
2 trying to get any kind of -- like even for grief
3 counselling for him. Like we've been together almost eight
4 years now.

5 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

6 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** And I've been searching
7 and trying and get all -- gathering information since 2010,
8 myself. And it's, it's -- for lack of a better way to put
9 it, pathetic how much there only is, even on her case.

10 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

11 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** It's unreal.

12 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So how long was Rene
13 with -- what's the son's name?

14 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** [Rene's Son].

15 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Yeah, [Rene's Son]'s
16 father?

17 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** [*Two lines redacted -*
18 *personal information*]. According to her friends I wouldn't
19 have approved of him. [*Two lines redacted - personal*
20 *information*]. So they're probably right, you know?

21 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Like were you --

22 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** As for the abusive
23 boyfriend she had --

24 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Oh yeah.

25 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** -- that she was leaving

1 when she hitchhiked away, [K.S.], he's -- he's totally
2 different. She got pregnant with -- from [K.S.] and
3 miscarried my second grandchild at -- I think it was five
4 and a half months. But he was a real winner. Oh, I didn't
5 like him. And she --

6 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So she had a
7 miscarriage, like how long before she went missing?

8 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** A couple of months
9 because it was still winter, snow on the ground.

10 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** And she was also in
11 an abusive relationship?

12 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah.

13 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** How long was she in
14 Edmonton, was she just there for like --

15 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Just --

16 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** One night probably even
17 barely. I expect just a few hours and then come back.

18 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, it was a couple
19 of days that was it, then she was on her way back.

20 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** She was on her way home
21 on the seventh.

22 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So you made some
23 recommendations here for the Inquiry to take into
24 consideration, like a task force for like serial murders,
25 and also to provide grief counselling. Is there anything

1 else that you could think of that -- like for
2 recommendations?

3 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** I don't know, I would
4 suggest something, and I'm not sure how to say it though.
5 Like, like those people that we met -- who were those
6 people we met? That was from Amnesty International, wasn't
7 it? But something like -- they were talking about having
8 somebody that could communicate with the authorities.

9 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

10 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Because there's some
11 information that we can't have access to but they can or
12 something? So just kind of like a go-between maybe, like
13 for --

14 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Like an advocate?

15 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, like an advocate,
16 something like that. Not just for us, but for all these
17 families. Especially in Fort St. John. I have to strongly
18 suggest it in that area.

19 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm.

20 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Because those -- the
21 police don't even talk to us.

22 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Yeah.

23 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** At all. And there's a
24 lot of women from Fort St. John missing.

25 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Like not just

1 Indigenous but --

2 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** No Indigenous. Even --
3 how many are we at? Just in the past -- in 2014 I think we
4 took up 14 posters, and that was only within the past two
5 years, from 2012 to 2014 or something. It was like -- it
6 was just crazy how many. That was just from Fort St. John.

7 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I can't remember.

8 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Like historic cases
9 or just between 2012 and 2014?

10 **MR. PAMELA GUNNING:** I think it was over a
11 period of -- because there was two posters from -- oh,
12 there were murdered, those girls were murdered, Connie's
13 friends. So they knew that those girls had been murdered
14 but all the rest were missing. Oh, and Pam Napolitan (ph).
15 We were standing on Parliament Hill pretty much when we
16 found -- when I found out about her.

17 And so there was three out of 17 I think,
18 that -- of pictures we brought that were murdered and the
19 rest were missing, and it was -- oh my goodness, I can't
20 think. It was a short amount of years, like it wasn't
21 since 1970 or anything like that. They were the most
22 recent cases. And I mean Pam and -- oh, I can't think of
23 her name, Sandra I think it was, Abigail, they'd all gone
24 missing like -- there was like four, four or five that were
25 within the last two years, just two years.

1 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** And is that still
2 along that Highway of Tears?

3 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** No.

4 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** No, they're from Fort
5 St. John, like missing out of Fort St. John.

6 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Northeastern B.C.
7 Highway of Tears is northwest.

8 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** So those are two
9 separate --

10 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah. There was some
11 in the paper awhile back. They figure they could be linked
12 because they wanted to extend the Highway of Tears to the
13 Alberta border. But look at what happened with that Cody
14 Legebokoff. Like that's a 20 year old kid got nabbed with
15 four murders. I think he was Canada's youngest serial
16 killer. He got nabbed and the last person that he killed,
17 the police just fluked on him coming out of the logging
18 road covered in blood.

19 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** She was a white girl.

20 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** And his story didn't
21 jive, so they put him in the back of the cop car. They got
22 Fish & Wildlife to backtrack his tire tracks in the snow
23 and they went and found [D.L.]'s daughter. I grew up less
24 than a mile away from [D.L.]. We talked earlier about
25 Lejac Indian School? Well I lived on top of the hill,

1 Lejac Indian School is a mile away, and [D.L.], the [L.]
2 family lived right across from Lejac Indian School. And
3 his daughter was, was the last one that Cody Legebokoff was
4 nabbed with. So it's ironic how that circumstance, they're
5 just outrageous.

6 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Most of them were all
7 out drinking.

8 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah. They met online
9 apparently. But see, he's only one -- he's a kid. Too
10 young to be nabbed with -- or connected with any of the
11 other older cases and that. You know so there's sick
12 people out there that are doing this. Maybe they'll slip
13 up one day just like Cody slipped up. He slipped up and
14 got caught. Labelled Canada's youngest serial killer. How
15 many people are out there doing it still to this day,
16 looking for their next victims? It's going on right now I
17 guarantee you that. And what's being done about it? Maybe
18 I watch too many TV shows or something. These task forces
19 they have down in the states.

20 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah.

21 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Just -- it sure is made
22 for TV, you know, this stuff. But they have to have that,
23 results, and they have to be doing some good, because their
24 focus is nothing but this. They're not just this case
25 here, and this case, shuffle that one underneath there, you

1 know? That's what we need because these people have to be
2 caught. We have to find justice for the families.

3 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Or something just to
4 tell these people they can't keep doing this. They're --
5 it keeps happening because they keep getting away with it,
6 because nobody's doing anything. They aren't even looking,
7 you know? Well maybe now, but it was too easy for them to
8 pick everybody off. How many women have to go missing
9 before they even -- look at the Picton farm. How does
10 stuff like that even happen in Canada? But I'm really glad
11 there's people like you guys now. I mean it took a lot of
12 years but at least the ball's rolling now. Very grateful
13 for that.

14 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah.

15 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** [Rene's Son]'s not
16 going to grow up, hopefully, not going to grow up having to
17 face the same obstacles. So that's something to be
18 grateful for.

19 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Is there anything
20 else you'd like to add before we --

21 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** No.

22 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Other than thank you.

23 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, I appreciate what
24 you folks are doing. I sure hope something comes out of
25 it.

1 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Just to have a voice
2 now.

3 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** M'hmm. I don't know
4 if I should ask this, but I will. Do you want to share
5 like a memory about your daughter that you like?

6 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Well I told you I used
7 to go sit down by the Flatbed, and there's a park there, a
8 playground. And there's a grassy area right, like grass
9 and everything else, and that's where we used to play
10 football and stuff. Me and my friends are down there and
11 we're playing football, and we had our kids and everything
12 else. And I remember I threw the football at a friend but
13 I under threw it, and Rene was running between him and I
14 and she got corked right in the head, eh? Knocked her ass
15 over teakettle. She got up and I went running up, "Sorry,
16 sorry". I ran up and she gets up, "That's okay Dad".
17 Something about you better throw it better next time, and
18 off she goes, eh. Didn't really phase her.

19 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** She was definitely
20 Daddy's little girl. We found a picture, she wrote on the
21 back.

22 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** I have it in her
23 recovery book.

24 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yep, she wrote on the
25 back of it, "To Daddy, love Daddy's little girl".

1 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Forever.

2 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Yeah, she was smiling.

3 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Yeah, she was always
4 smiling. She affected a lot of people.

5 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** She touched a lot of
6 lives.

7 **MS. FRANCINE MERASTY:** Alright, well thank
8 you for sharing your story. It's 5:54 p.m. and we're done.

9 **MR. JEROME GUNNING:** Alright, well thank you
10 very much.

11 **MS. PAMELA GUNNING:** Thank you.

12 --- Upon adjourning at 5:54 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Sherry Hobe, 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.



Sherry Hobe

September 5, 2018