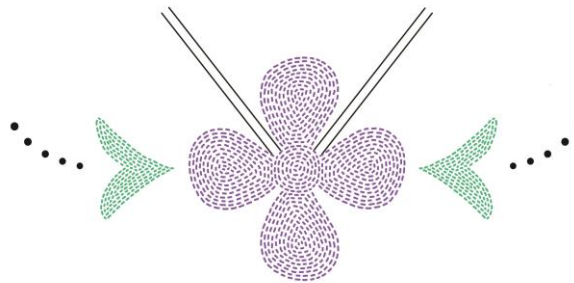


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 Conference & Civic Centre
Prince George, British Columbia**



PUBLIC

February 6, 2018

Statement - Volume 229

**Matilda Wilson & Brenda Wilson,
In relation to Ramona Wilson**

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

Coast Reporting Services Inc.

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Documents submitted with testimony: none.

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

1

FEBRUARY 6, 2018, 12:30 P.M.

1
2 KERRIE REAY: So for the record this is Kerrie Reay. I'm a
3 statement taking -- taker with the National Inquiry
4 into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and
5 Girls. We are in Prince George today on February
6 the 6th, 2018, and it is 12:30 in the afternoon.

7 Speaking today is Matilda Wilson from Smithers.
8 Matilda is with -- from the Gitxsan Nation in
9 Hazelton. That's G-i-t-x-s-a-n. And Matilda is
10 here today to speak about the loss and murder of her
11 daughter Ramona Wilson. Ramona went missing on June
12 the 11th, 1994 in Smithers.

13 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

14 KERRIE REAY: Also in the room with Matilda is her daughter
15 Brenda Wilson, her partner Doug Pete, P-e-t-e, along
16 with Teddy Antoine.

17 MATILDA WILSON: Excuse me. Doug is my partner and Clarence is my
18 daughter's. Have you got that?

19 KERRIE REAY: Yes.

20 MATILDA WILSON: Okay.

21 KERRIE REAY: It's good to clarify.

22 MATILDA WILSON: Okay.

23 KERRIE REAY: Totally, totally good to make sure we get
24 everything right.

25 MATILDA WILSON: Okay.

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

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1 KERRIE REAY: Okay. So I may have said that very quickly. So
2 just for clarification, Doug Pete is Matilda's
3 partner. Also in the room is Teddy Antoine,
4 A-n-t-o-i-n-e, a support worker; Freda Ens -- that's
5 F-r-e-d-a Ens -- with FILU, as a support worker; and
6 Clarence John is son-in-law and partner to Brenda
7 Wilson.

8 And, Matilda, you are here voluntarily. You
9 understand that we are videotaping and audiotaping
10 your truth so that the commissioners can hear what
11 you have to say and that you understand that this
12 will be in the public domain?

13 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

14 KERRIE REAY: Okay. So, Matilda, as I said to you earlier, this
15 is your space, this is your time. And please don't
16 feel rushed. You are here to share your truth on
17 the loss of your daughter Ramona. So I invite you
18 to start whenever you're ready.

19 MATILDA WILSON: Okay. My name's Matilda Wilson. I'd like to
20 invite the Commissioners of the National Inquiry.
21 Thank you to listen to what we have to say. I have
22 my supporters here and my family. It's -- it has
23 been a very difficult journey for me and my
24 families.

25 My youngest daughter, Ramona Lisa Wilson, was

Matilda Wilson

(Ramona Wilson)

1 murdered on June 11th, 1994. She was only 16 years
2 old. And she was missing for 10 months, and she was
3 found behind the Smithers Airport on April 10th,
4 1995. Her murderer has never been found to this
5 day. That will -- this year will be 24 years. And
6 we have a walk for Ramona every second Saturday of
7 June, the Ramona Wilson Walk. Memorial Walk.

8 As I said before, Ramona was the youngest in the
9 family. And as a mother of six children, it was
10 very difficult for our family. I was married when I
11 was very young. And my husband had passed away, and
12 he left me with my children. I had five children
13 from my first husband, and one was adopted out. And
14 then -- and then many years later I had Ramona,
15 which is the youngest, the sixth child. And I was a
16 single mother at the time.

17 When Ramona was first missing, there was no
18 consideration from the RCMP or any other authority
19 that we got in touch with. I don't know if it was
20 because I was a single mother on welfare at the
21 time.

22 And -- and at that time in 1993, before this
23 happened, I was just turning my life around.
24 Because I'd been -- I was fighting alcohol on and
25 off since -- since I completed residential school.

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

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1 Drinking was the answer for me to hide all my
2 feelings, hurt, everything that happened to me.
3 So in 1993 I decided to go to treatment, which I
4 did. I'm glad that I had gone there. Because in
5 1994, just the next -- in June my daughter was
6 missing. And it took 10 months -- it took 10 months
7 before her body was found.
8 And I think -- I think I would have -- I would
9 not have made it if I hadn't gone to treatment. But
10 for all these years, at 44 years old, 1994, I
11 started struggling with alcohol on and off. I was
12 fighting it so hard. Because I knew Ramona and her
13 brothers and sisters wanted me to save myself and
14 stop drinking. And I've been fighting it all this
15 time.
16 I want you, National Inquiry, to know how I've
17 been struggling so much. Sometimes I'd be sober for
18 six months. That's half a year. And then -- and
19 then I don't know what triggers me to start again.
20 And then I don't give up, and I stay on for two
21 months, and then I fall back down.
22 I don't know -- it's not only the loss of my
23 daughter. It started from -- from my -- from my
24 mother's death and my father's death, residential
25 school, everything, and then now not finding out my

1 daughter for -- not finding out who murdered her
2 after 24 years.

3 In this little town of Smithers, National
4 Inquiry, I want you to know there was only -- in
5 1994 there was only about -- the population there
6 was from five to six thousand people. And that's a
7 small little village compared to the cities. And
8 then you wonder why -- why her murderer hasn't been
9 found.

10 It's so difficult on Ramona's brothers and
11 sisters and myself. One of my sons died from
12 alcohol because he could not take the idea that his
13 little baby sister died.

14 As of today, I'm dealing with my son's death. He
15 got into a car accident in September, last
16 September. Or was it -- last September. And I'm
17 also dealing with my older brother. He had a
18 massive heart attack in September.

19 Okay. I'll get this straight. In September 2nd,
20 2016, that's when my son Louis Wilson passed away
21 from a car accident. He was heavily into -- into
22 alcohol. He had told me at one time he was gonna
23 try and go to treatment and quit. I said, "Your
24 little sister Ramona would be happy for you because
25 that's what she wants." But the alcohol was too

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

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1 strong. He died in a car accident. He was driving
2 the truck when this happened September 2016.

3 And then in September 2017, my brother had a
4 massive heart attack and he passed away.

5 And then my oldest sister -- God bless her.
6 Sarah is her name. She has two grandchildren that
7 just passed away besides my brother. Her
8 grandchildren -- her granddaughter died from cancer,
9 ovarian cancer. She was very young. And then her
10 grandson had an accidental death.

11 And this is what I'm carrying with me. I was
12 still -- I'm still grieving my son, and then now I'm
13 grieving my brother and my sister's two
14 grandchildren. And it's a very big load to carry.

15 And this Inquiry. Thank you so much for this
16 Inquiry. Because as you see now how hard we
17 struggle to try and keep everything -- you know, to
18 let the public know that we're still -- we're still
19 hoping that some day we'll put a closure to my
20 youngest daughter Ramona's death. She was murdered,
21 and not a day goes by when I'm wondering how long
22 she had lived before she died. It's a mother's
23 feeling. I just pray to the Lord that she went
24 right away.

25 I just want to say that I want to thank you for

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

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1 putting up this National Inquiry. Because it's very
2 important what you see now is from the heart. I try
3 to be strong every day for myself and for my
4 children. I could have easily went down and be in
5 the gutter forever and never come back out, but I
6 have faith and I have hope. I ask God to help me
7 and guide me every day because it's very difficult
8 to go on sometimes.

9 I am now 67 years old. In May I will be 68. I'm
10 just wondering if there will ever be a closure on my
11 daughter's murder. But I know -- I know the
12 investigators are working hard to try and -- you
13 know, they say the case is ongoing, and I believe in
14 that.

15 Maybe someday we will -- our family -- it will be
16 a glorious day for us if there's closure. There
17 will be sadness. Ramona won't come back, but we'll
18 know what happened, and we'll put it to rest.

19 As you know, how many -- how many children are
20 lost now. The mothers and the other mothers that
21 are murdered, their children are still crying for
22 help to find their loved ones, because some of them
23 have never been found, and that is so, so
24 devastating. Because I went through 10 months of
25 that, me and my family. And imagine going through

1 that when they were young. Some of them were babies
2 when they lost their mother through murder, and they
3 haven't had closure. I know how it felt, the 10
4 months. It was so, so -- you're right in the dark,
5 and you're just wondering if they're holding her
6 captive or they're torturing her. All these things
7 go through your mind. And even today I pray not to
8 think that what my youngest daughter's last breath
9 would be. And I know I also want to protect her.

10 I want you all to know all the families are
11 affected by just one murder. And then there's so
12 many now. If you can solve -- I know they have
13 solved some of the murders. But across BC here,
14 there has never been bodies, remains found there.
15 Just missing. Disappeared. And this is what --
16 that's what we're going to have to try and explain,
17 especially the ones that are just recent. Where do
18 you find them? Isn't that such a mystery, not to
19 find remains of the loved ones that we've never
20 heard of again ever since they've been missing? No
21 body. Nothing. And I can imagine again what the
22 families are going through. I pray -- I pray and I
23 cry sometimes because I can feel their heart. It's
24 so -- it's so difficult to go through this.

25 I want the National Inquiry to know what you've

1 done here is so big. They will be talking about the
2 National Inquiry for years to come. Because this is
3 what -- what you helped us go through. We fought
4 for this for so many years, and now the transit is
5 going, and it lifts our heart up. It gives us hope
6 that there will be less murders across BC.

7 I want to thank the National Inquiry for --
8 especially for the other young -- young people that
9 have lost their mother or their sisters and they let
10 them know what had happened to them, which is
11 another A plus. Because there's some -- there's
12 some families, like the children, that need to know
13 what happened to their -- to their mother or whoever
14 was murdered or things like this. And they take the
15 time to take out the records to let the people
16 know -- let the children know what happened to their
17 parents. And we thank -- we thank everyone that's
18 involved for that, to let -- you know, you don't
19 know if they were murdered or they were -- they were
20 just fighting alcohol or things like this. And it's
21 a peace of mind for each child. And they're grown
22 up now to know what happened to their families.

23 And I really want to say that I would never give
24 my heart out to anybody, even my daughter and my
25 family here, that I've always kept everything to

1 myself because it hurts too much. I want -- I want
2 people to know it's every day that goes by you
3 always think of your child.

4 I want everybody to know you have done so much
5 for putting this National Inquiry, but I wish my
6 brother was here and his wife, because they were my
7 supporter, my family supporters, too. But they --
8 they didn't have a room for them to stay in Prince
9 George to be with me today and tomorrow. And I wish
10 they could have just allowed us to have two family
11 members. That's my brother and his wife. Because
12 they were always with me all the time for their
13 support.

14 And I thank the supporters here and my family
15 here and my daughter here. My daughter Brenda,
16 she's the one that kept me up to keep going.

17 I've seen so many that have lost their loved ones
18 through the years, 24 years, and some of them
19 couldn't get up anymore, like my son. I pray to God
20 every day that I will be strong enough to keep this
21 journey going.

22 I want to -- I want to let everyone know it has
23 took a toll on my -- on my life. Because I'm
24 fighting high blood pressure, and my head is always
25 hurting because of the operations I had from my ear.

1 Because in residential schools they didn't -- they
2 didn't give you a medical checkup whatsoever and
3 your teeth and everything. And I have to suffer
4 through that, too. And I'm just struggling for --
5 to make sure my blood pressure goes down right now.
6 It's very high and I have to -- I just wanted to
7 send that message to all of you. I have to complete
8 this right now.

9 I want to say that I am so glad for my daughter
10 and I standing up for Ramona. We had to make this
11 public, and now we have done this. We thought we
12 had worked for Ramona, and all of a sudden we just
13 realized how many were missing. And we just started
14 asking the families to start -- start making noise
15 and start making -- you know, start making the
16 public aware of what's happening. And there is so
17 many now, and we're so glad that they are all coming
18 out to speak their mind to let the authorities know
19 where they stand with all the murders that has
20 happened across BC and other areas, Winnipeg, all
21 over.

22 I've travelled in quite a few areas, and I'll
23 tell you, there was a lot of discrimination and a
24 lot of the authorities not caring what happened to
25 the Indigenous people. And that has to stop. There

1 has to be a training course for the RCMP and the
2 authorities to understand where we come from.

3 Does it matter if your relative or your daughter
4 was a prostitute? Would you change that for how
5 much you love them? No, you would never do it. And
6 that's what you have to all think about no matter
7 where you come from: On welfare, welfare mother,
8 single mother.

9 I had a husband, and he died and left me with
10 children. And I had the youngest child of my own,
11 the youngest one, and she was murdered. It will be
12 24 years now. And we shall be doing another Ramona
13 Lisa Wilson Memorial Walk in Smithers the second
14 Saturday of June.

15 We wish to make it known that we won't give up
16 and we won't give up for the -- for the missing now
17 and for the murdered. We're walking for them. Not
18 only for my daughter, but for everyone and
19 especially the unsolved murders.

20 And I thank you again. Thank you for everything
21 that you've done for us. And again, my name's
22 Matilda Wilson. I would like to say that I
23 appreciate everything. The authorities are starting
24 to understand us a little. And as I said before,
25 they need more training to know our culture and

1 where we come from, why -- why this has been going
2 on for years, the abuse and the drugs and the
3 alcohol.

4 It stemmed from the residential school. They
5 took our culture away, and they took our parents
6 away, and it did something to every one of us.

7 I was five years old when I was taken away from
8 my parents. I was still -- I was still sleeping
9 with my mom and dad, me and my brother Joe. And
10 something happened after that. And I want you to
11 understand this has really done something to
12 everyone that has gone to residential school, and
13 we're trying our best now to try and have faith and
14 to start walking, because we are strong.

15 We are strong. Our forefathers, foremothers,
16 grandfathers, grandmothers, they were strong. And
17 we shall walk that walk. And the Creator knows that
18 we're there. We shall be -- we are proud of who we
19 are. We respect the authorities. We respect
20 everyone that tries to help us in every way they
21 can. And I thank you so very much again. Thank
22 you. That's it.

23 KERRIE REAY: Well, thank you. That's a -- it takes a lot of
24 courage to share what you have said today. Would
25 you mind if I ask some questions?

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Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

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1 MATILDA WILSON: I have to go to the washroom first.

2 KERRIE REAY: We'll take a break, then. It is 1:03.

3 [PROCEEDINGS ADJOURNED AT 1:03 P.M.]

4 [PROCEEDINGS RESUMED AT 1:14 P.M.]

5 KERRIE REAY: And we are back on the record, and it is 1:14.

6 So, Matilda, again, I just want to thank you so
7 much for the courage that it took to come and speak
8 of such pain here today. You've got wonderful
9 family that have come to support you.

10 But when you spoke, you raised some issues that
11 I'd like to ask some questions about, if I can, that
12 I think is important to this Inquiry. It's
13 important to understand about what happened or what
14 didn't happen when you reported Ramona missing and
15 the response from policing.

16 I think it's also important, if you are ready, if
17 you feel comfortable, to speak about in more detail
18 the impact of the residential experience for you and
19 your family and how that experience that you had in
20 residential school affected your children. And that
21 is one of the things that the Inquiry is really
22 trying to understand, is those systemic issues that
23 continue to go from generation to generation.

24 And what you've spoken about earlier was about
25 the impact of being taken at five. And what I felt

1 we were sharing was the loss of your parents still,
2 still so painful for you and the loss of other
3 families' members as well to alcohol.

4 So if we can, you spoke about the police. You
5 felt that the police didn't respond to you reporting
6 Ramona's being missing because you were a single
7 mother. And I'm just wondering if you can tell the
8 Inquiry what it was for you and working --
9 interacting with the RCMP at Smithers and what
10 happened and what was that like for you and your
11 family.

12 MATILDA WILSON: Okay. It was -- it just felt like there was
13 nowhere to turn to the authorities. If even one
14 authority could understand, "Okay, your daughter's
15 missing. We'll try and help you out." But that
16 wasn't the response. And I keep on wondering myself
17 if I was a working mother and wasn't on welfare
18 they'd have more consideration.

19 KERRIE REAY: Okay. So when did you -- and this isn't
20 investigative. This is to put it in context about
21 how the experience went for you. So when did you
22 report Ramona missing?

23 MATILDA WILSON: Just a week after. And they had told me that
24 she might have took time off or she could be with
25 one of her friends. And I said, "No. Ramona always

1 tells me where she's going and when she's coming
2 back." And I stressed that to them. Anywhere that
3 Ramona wants to go, she will tell me, or either she
4 phones me and tells me where she's at and when she
5 was coming back.

6 At one time or another, she had stayed with
7 friends, and I knew where she was. And she stayed
8 there for quite a few days, and she was still going
9 to school, so it was okay with me. Because, you
10 know, she wanted to spend time away from home for a
11 while. And that's how I know -- I told the RCMP I
12 know she goes to her friends' when she wants time
13 out. She's not gonna go running away somewhere.

14 KERRIE REAY: Right. And so when you went there -- did you go
15 to the police station or did you phone?

16 MATILDA WILSON: We -- my daughter and I and a worker from the
17 friendship centre -- Smithers Friendship Centre went
18 to talk to the RCMP.

19 KERRIE REAY: Okay. Did they invite you in from the counter?
20 Like, did you go into a room, or did everything that
21 you were talking about occur at the counter?

22 MATILDA WILSON: No. We were just at the window, --

23 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

24 MATILDA WILSON: -- right in front of the door.

25 KERRIE REAY: So when that conversation ended, had they opened a

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

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1 file?

2 MATILDA WILSON: No.

3 KERRIE REAY: So you went away?

4 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

5 KERRIE REAY: And what happened next?

6 MATILDA WILSON: We -- me and Brenda and the social -- the
7 worker from the friendship centre started looking
8 around all over town. We drove and we walked and we
9 did everything we could.

10 KERRIE REAY: And how long do you recall that you were looking
11 and the police still weren't involved? Like, how
12 long did it take before they got involved, and what
13 did it take to get them to be involved?

14 MATILDA WILSON: It happened, like, about -- do you recall?

15 BRENDA WILSON: Yeah. So it wasn't a week later after she went
16 missing. It was -- she went missing on the
17 Saturday.

18 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

19 BRENDA WILSON: Which would have been, like, June 11th.

20 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

21 BRENDA WILSON: And she would have come back on the Sunday.

22 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

23 BRENDA WILSON: But there was -- nobody had heard from her on
24 Sunday. And my mom contacted all her friends, and
25 nobody had seen her. So it was the Monday that we

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

18

1 reported her missing because we couldn't find her
2 anywhere and nobody heard from her. She hadn't made
3 it to the dance where she was heading to or to her
4 friends'. And like my mom said, they did the -- we
5 did the report at the window --

6 KERRIE REAY: Oh, so they did take -- they took a report?

7 BRENDA WILSON: They took the information.

8 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

9 BRENDA WILSON: They didn't tell us if there was a file. They
10 never gave us a file number or anything.

11 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

12 BRENDA WILSON: They just said, "Okay, we'll look into it."

13 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

14 BRENDA WILSON: And they would get back to us.

15 KERRIE REAY: Did they?

16 BRENDA WILSON: We hadn't heard anything for about three days.

17 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

18 BRENDA WILSON: And during that time we kept looking and putting
19 out posters. We put it on our local radio, which
20 was -- which was club notes and messages at that
21 time, where it's like, "Ramona, please call home.
22 We're worried about you." And they would actually
23 say it as the message was put out there.

24 And then after that, we started to bring -- we
25 were contacted. Then a missing person's report was

Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

1 put out there. I can't remember if it was us or
2 Crime Stoppers or ...

3 MATILDA WILSON: It was just on CFTK radio.

4 BRENDA WILSON: Yeah, we put -- we actually made our own
5 posters. And they were just black-and-white
6 photocopies that we put all over town and faxed out.
7 Because at that time there's no social media.

8 KERRIE REAY: Right, right.

9 BRENDA WILSON: So we -- we had to drive around, put those
10 posters up, send them out by fax wherever we could.
11 And that had a lot to do with -- if my mom -- if I
12 wasn't connected to a lot of the organizations that
13 I had known, my mom wouldn't have had that resource
14 to put those posters up and send it out to all the
15 different organizations that we had known. So we
16 did that.

17 And there are timelines where the police said
18 they contacted us, but, you know, we don't recall
19 them contacting us until like, like my mom says,
20 probably a week. Just probably about the third day
21 was when they said they would -- they would start a
22 missing -- a missing file on her.

23 But then after that there was no place to look.
24 Like, there was nobody to contact except the
25 friendship centre on what we should do. Like, the

1 RCMP never gave us any tips or clues on what we
2 should be doing. There was no resources available
3 in Smithers at that time as to what we should be
4 doing. We just did everything on instinct of what
5 we should do to try to find her.

6 So it was just consistently doing vigils. We had
7 vigils in Moricetown. We had vigils in Smithers and
8 Hazelton. There were searches done along Highway
9 16.

10 KERRIE REAY: And can I ask -- and just for the record, it's
11 Brenda Wilson who is providing the information in
12 terms of what was happening in terms of the search
13 for her sister Ramona.

14 When you talk about doing the searches, were the
15 RCMP involved? Did the RCMP -- did they have
16 members come out? Did they have the dogs out?

17 MATILDA WILSON: No.

18 KERRIE REAY: Was there any involvement with the RCMP, --

19 MATILDA WILSON: No.

20 KERRIE REAY: -- connecting with you about searches?

21 MATILDA WILSON: No.

22 KERRIE REAY: So this is about the family and the community
23 getting out there, searching for Ramona?

24 MATILDA WILSON: The search and rescue.

25 BRENDA WILSON: Yeah, Moricetown.

1 MATILDA WILSON: In Moricetown.

2 KERRIE REAY: And that is the community of Moricetown. That's a
3 volunteer rescue -- search and rescue --

4 BRENDA WILSON: Yes.

5 KERRIE REAY: -- that came out. And at what point did the RCMP
6 come to take statements from you?

7 MATILDA WILSON: I'm not sure on that.

8 BRENDA WILSON: A lot of that's pretty -- is not clear.

9 Because, as a family member, you have to understand
10 that the process and the events that happened
11 throughout this whole thing is very foggy. Because
12 the focus at that time was just to find Ramona. So
13 everything else is just a blur because of the
14 situation. Our family's in shock. Our family is
15 looking for our sister. We're trying to figure out
16 which avenue to go. So, you know, my mom was unable
17 to really give a clear timeline as to how the events
18 rolled out.

19 So when they did take the statements, that is
20 unclear, but it was probably not too long after when
21 they put the missing -- missing posters out on her.
22 There wasn't an official one, but they started an
23 investigation.

24 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

25 MATILDA WILSON: And on CTV for a few seconds.

Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

1 BRENDA WILSON: Yeah. We had contacts with the media just
2 through the work that I did as a support worker --
3 family support worker. And so we were able to
4 contact CFTK TV and also the radio station to put
5 start putting ads out on her missing.

6 KERRIE REAY: And so in terms of the timeline, were the police
7 in contact with you very much in terms of giving you
8 updates on their investigation?

9 MATILDA WILSON: No. I had just given them of what Ramona was
10 wearing that weekend and where she went to her
11 friends. I had given them the names of her friends,
12 and that was it for the time being. And there was
13 not very much. They weren't at the door, as you may
14 say, knocking on my door, no.

15 KERRIE REAY: And how did you find out that Ramona had been
16 found?

17 MATILDA WILSON: I was in Hazelton at the time, and I was given
18 a phone call. And --

19 KERRIE REAY: Phone call from who? Was it the police?

20 MATILDA WILSON: No, no.

21 KERRIE REAY: That's okay if you can't remember.

22 MATILDA WILSON: It was ...

23 BRENDA WILSON: Victim Services?

24 MATILDA WILSON: [Victims services worker 1], wasn't it? Or was it one of
25 the friendship centre? I don't know. I'm not sure who

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

23

1 was that that phoned me. 1995 --

2 BRENDA WILSON: Was it [Victims services worker 2]?

3 MATILDA WILSON: Pardon?

4 BRENDA WILSON: [Victims services worker 2].

5 MATILDA WILSON: Who?

6 BRENDA WILSON: [Victims services worker 2].

7 MATILDA WILSON: Oh, yes, [Victims services worker 2]. Yeah, she's one of

8 the --

9 BRENDA WILSON: Police-based Victim Services.

10 MATILDA WILSON: Yeah, yeah, she was the one that phoned me.

11 KERRIE REAY: Did she ask you to come to the police station?

12 MATILDA WILSON: They said that they would phone me the next

13 day. Because they were working on Ramona's -- where

14 she was found. She just told me where she was

15 found.

16 KERRIE REAY: So they told you over the telephone?

17 MATILDA WILSON: Mm-hm, yes.

18 KERRIE REAY: And --

19 MATILDA WILSON: We went there, didn't we?

20 BRENDA WILSON: After.

21 MATILDA WILSON: After, yeah.

22 KERRIE REAY: And did Victim Services, were they able to provide

23 you with any support in the next while after Ramona

24 was found?

25 MATILDA WILSON: They were trying, yes. [Victims services worker 2] was

1 there to try and give us, you know, some support.

2 BRENDA WILSON: I just want to respond to that. Because the
3 support that was required wasn't there.

4 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

5 BRENDA WILSON: Like, the way things are done today, being
6 trauma informed and to include that practice, that
7 wasn't available at that time. We weren't brought
8 together as a family or anything like that to -- to
9 talk about or to deal with the grief or pain at that
10 time. There was no real plan in place to say -- to
11 even come together as a family to say this is what's
12 gonna happen and how to deal with the grief or
13 anything like that. So there were no -- there was
14 nothing.

15 MATILDA WILSON: It was more formal than anything. You know,
16 there's a missing person. That's it. And ...

17 BRENDA WILSON: Deal with the grief on your own.

18 MATILDA WILSON: Yeah.

19 KERRIE REAY: Even though there was a Victim Services program in
20 Smithers?

21 BRENDA WILSON: Yeah. They didn't have the training to deal
22 with this -- this kind of grief and loss.

23 KERRIE REAY: Okay, okay.

24 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

25 KERRIE REAY: And have -- have any services been provided to

Matilda Wilson

(Ramona Wilson)

1 help support -- and it sounds like, Brenda, that
2 you've got a lot of that support and training
3 yourself and has helped the family. At the time was
4 there -- it doesn't sound like Smithers had the
5 services at all.

6 MATILDA WILSON: We had to work through -- through the years
7 with publicizing that Ramona was missing. We had to
8 publicize it ourselves with the help of friends,
9 family, and the Smithers Friendship Centre. And
10 then we started this walk for Ramona. And from
11 there everything -- everything -- people started
12 noticing what we were doing. Yes.

13 KERRIE REAY: When you made the comment about being a single mom
14 as maybe the reason that the police were slow to
15 respond, what about racism? Did you think that
16 maybe that that was part of the being slow to say
17 that she was off at a friend's place or, you know,
18 she needed a break? Because that's one of the
19 themes that the Inquiry is looking at in terms of --
20 and you spoke as well about the needing -- the need
21 for placing training to have cultural sensitivity
22 and that. Was there a feeling that there was some
23 racism with the detachment?

24 MATILDA WILSON: I would say in 1994 it had a lot to do with
25 racism.

Statement - Public
Matilda Wilson
(Ramona Wilson)

26

1 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

2 MATILDA WILSON: Yes, through the years. Especially mentioning
3 Melanie Carpenter. We were trying to put up a
4 benefit dance for Ramona, and then they had a big
5 benefit dance for her, and nobody hardly showed up
6 at our benefit dance. And this was the community of
7 Smithers. And they had more support than we had.

8 BRENDA WILSON: For Melanie Carpenter.

9 KERRIE REAY: Did she go missing near Houston? Was she --

10 BRENDA WILSON: In Surrey.

11 MATILDA WILSON: In Surrey.

12 KERRIE REAY: Oh, yes.

13 BRENDA WILSON: In Surrey.

14 KERRIE REAY: Right, right.

15 BRENDA WILSON: So they did a benefit dance for Melanie
16 Carpenter who was not even a part of our community.
17 And the mayor and everyone initiated that. And we
18 had -- we had also started a benefit dance, and we
19 had the dates and everything set, and then they came
20 along with the same date. So it wasn't supported by
21 our community.

22 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

23 BRENDA WILSON: So that's when we realized what we were up
24 against. So we just kept pushing forward.
25 Last year, after, like, 23 -- actually, it's two

1 years ago now. Twenty-two years after Ramona's
2 death, it was the very first time we ever had
3 Ramona's Memorial Walk on Main Street.

4 KERRIE REAY: Oh, okay, okay. And what a great way to
5 commemorate, right? An honour.

6 BRENDA WILSON: But it took that long for them to actually let
7 us use Main Street to do this event. And it wasn't
8 initiated by our family. It was initiated by a
9 non-Native -- one of Ramona's non-Native friends.

10 KERRIE REAY: Isn't that nice. What a tribute.

11 MATILDA WILSON: Yeah.

12 BRENDA WILSON: But the thing is, it's a true fact that you had
13 to be non-Native to initiate that.

14 KERRIE REAY: Yes. And I think that's important for the Inquiry
15 to hear, that in -- 2016?

16 BRENDA WILSON: Yes.

17 KERRIE REAY: In 2016 that it still takes a non-Indigenous
18 person in a community that is very much an
19 Indigenous community -- Smithers and the area. It
20 took a non-Indigenous person to make a wave for
21 somebody who had been so tragically taken in their
22 community that just happen to be Indigenous.

23 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

24 BRENDA WILSON: And even with that fact, she still received
25 backlash, some of the merchants not wanting her to

1 post Ramona's picture up in their stores and the
2 fact of -- or to raise awareness about missing and
3 murdered or to raise awareness that this event was
4 happening on Main Street.

5 KERRIE REAY: And I think, you know, the Commissioners, as part
6 of their recommendations, is how can -- going
7 forward, how can Canada come together to understand
8 that we are all people from Canada and that being
9 Indigenous should not -- should not be taken in a
10 way that you're not important. Because that's what
11 I'm hearing from -- even from the police. "Oh, you
12 know, we're not gonna look for her now because, you
13 know, she's out partying." It's an attitude. And
14 how we can come up with recommendations to help
15 educate people.

16 MATILDA WILSON: Okay. As my way of thinking, it's still
17 happening today with social services taking children
18 away. There has to be another way around for the
19 children to be traumatized for losing their mom and
20 dad again, because they're already being traumatized
21 with everything else that's happening.

22 And there should be a program with all the mom
23 and daddy and the little kids together to work
24 together that they will be together to fight their
25 drugs and alcohol and they'd still be with their

1 family and they can have a person that will look
2 after the children while they're working with the
3 parents so they can still see them at the end of the
4 day. And things like this should be worked out for
5 all families.

6 Because this residential school has really done a
7 toll on most of the Elders that are gone now. And
8 it's still happening today. And that -- I know that
9 would be the answer, if they would have the families
10 together and -- you know, and they have the
11 counselling for the little children, too, and the
12 teenagers and their parents still fighting alcohol.
13 There's a lot of teenagers out there that are lost.
14 And the adults, too. The alcoholics' children,
15 adult children. They also still need counselling,
16 too. And for being taken away to the foster homes
17 and things like this, that all stems from the
18 residential schools.

19 KERRIE REAY: And you spoke briefly --

20 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

21 KERRIE REAY: -- about being a five-year-old being taken away
22 from your parents.

23 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

24 KERRIE REAY: So you truly understand that impact on --
25 emotionally and the pain that that created for you.

1 MATILDA WILSON: Yeah.

2 KERRIE REAY: Would you like to share anything more about that
3 experience? Because we are talking now --

4 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

5 KERRIE REAY: -- in 2018 about the child welfare system across
6 Canada, and your talking is very similar -- what's
7 happening with children going into a foster care
8 system, if I hear what you're saying, is very
9 similar in the sense of what it felt like to be
10 taken and placed in a residential school.

11 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

12 KERRIE REAY: Is there anything you would like to share?

13 MATILDA WILSON: Okay. My brother and I -- all my other
14 siblings had already gone to residential school, the
15 older ones. And then we're the second generation,
16 younger ones. And my brother and I were ready to
17 go, so they took us. And me and my brother were 11
18 months apart. So he was -- I was gonna be six in
19 the residential school, and he was gonna be five at
20 the time.

21 And what happened was they put us -- well, Mom
22 and Dad got a taxi, and they told us that we're
23 gonna be going to residential school in Lejac.

24 KERRIE REAY: Now, Lejac, is that in Lower -- in Lower Post?

25 MATILDA WILSON: Indian residential school in Fraser Lake.

1 KERRIE REAY: Fraser Lake, right.

2 MATILDA WILSON: Yes.

3 KERRIE REAY: Okay.

4 MATILDA WILSON: Yes. But the first thing that happened was, I

5 remember the priest coming in a few days before

6 September 5th or 6th, I think it was. They told my

7 parents that my brother Joe and I were -- they were

8 gonna send us away to Lejac Indian Residential

9 School. And Mom had to tell us this, and she was

10 just crying so much, and she said she didn't want to

11 lose us.

12 My dad was just sitting there. He had his

13 handkerchief with him. His tears were just coming

14 down. He said, you know, "We don't want to send you

15 kids away." He said -- my dad said, you know, "I've

16 already tried. They said they're gonna put me in

17 jail if I try and keep the kids away from going."

18 And that's what their threat was, that they would

19 put my parents in jail if we didn't -- if they

20 didn't allow us to go to residential school.

21 But anyways, they brought us to the train station

22 in New Hazelton. And my mom and dad got off, and

23 they told the taxi to come back in half an hour.

24 And the train came. And Mom -- Mom was just crying,

25 and Dad was holding her. The rest of the little

1 kids -- my sisters were there, too. They were all
2 crying. They know that we're going. And they just
3 kissed us.

4 And then the conductor took my hand and brought
5 me up on the train, told us where to sit. And the
6 train was ready to go. My mom was on the platform
7 there, and Dad was trying to hold her. And she
8 just -- just collapsed on the platform, and she just
9 started crying. I just seen that. And I was trying
10 to wave to her, and she looked up, and she just
11 went -- tears just -- Dad, too. Just tears coming
12 down. I wish they didn't have to suffer like that.

13 And then when we got there, they stripped us off
14 our clothes. And they put this powder on our hair.
15 They put us in the shower. They sent us off to bed.
16 They told us that we had to go in the supper room
17 because that's where they're having supper, but I
18 can't eat because I was just going -- I couldn't --
19 I couldn't swallow. I was just [REGURGITATION
20 NOISE]. I keep on doing that, like, for about a --
21 a whole month I couldn't stop that -- from doing
22 that. I kept [REGURGITATION NOISE]. Sometimes I'd
23 lose my breath. Five or so.

24 And I see the other little kids crying because
25 they just got in there, too. And we're all crying

1 at night. The nuns didn't say anything because they
2 were in the next room. They had their bedroom
3 there. And they just told us to pray. They said
4 that will help you. I couldn't hardly understand
5 what they were saying because I didn't have too much
6 English. My mom and dad always talked to us in our
7 language.

8 But I don't know how long, but I got really sick.
9 My nose started bleeding, and I couldn't swallow
10 anything for about a whole month.

11 I could imagine what my little brother was going
12 through. Because he was just always hanging on to
13 Mom and Dad. I asked him that a few times. He
14 said, "I don't want to talk about it." He's 66
15 years old now, and he doesn't want to recall it. I
16 said how -- I wanted to really know how he -- how he
17 survived the first few weeks.

18 I tried very hard to swallow stuff, and till to
19 this day I still have that. She knows about it. So
20 it really does something to every little child that
21 goes there.

22 I was -- I was 24 when my mother died of a
23 massive heart attack. She was only -- she was only
24 55 years old. And my dad -- I was 29 years old when
25 my dad passed away. He didn't live very long after

1 Mom passed away.

2 So that's why I wonder -- I did go to a few
3 counselling on my own when I moved to Smithers.
4 Because I had too many nightmares. I did this
5 self-help counselling quite a few times because it
6 was -- the nightmares were too harsh.

7 I just don't want to talk about the sexual abuse,
8 what went through that -- through that school. That
9 was kept very quiet, and nobody ever heard about it.
10 It happened to some of the children there, but I
11 prayed so hard that it wouldn't happen to me.

12 And to this day, I know it really -- it really
13 took a toll on all of us, all our families, our
14 children, our children's children, everyone. I know
15 this today. I don't want to say any more about this
16 because I've left it behind.

17 Any more questions?

18 KERRIE REAY: I'd say just you've had enough.

19 MATILDA WILSON: Okay.

20 KERRIE REAY: Is there anything for the commissioners in terms
21 of any last comments -- in terms of any last
22 comments that you would like to make and then we can
23 turn it off?

24 MATILDA WILSON: Pardon?

25 KERRIE REAY: Is there any last comments you would like to make

1 to the commissioners before we turn it off?

2 MATILDA WILSON: Okay. Like I said before, if they can work
3 with all the families together and not separate
4 them, if they have a daycare, they're good. As long
5 as they can see their families at the end of the
6 day, this will all work together with them. And
7 even the little children. And, you know, the
8 teenagers now that are trying to fight alcohol, they
9 can get help, too, from all this.

10 I know my boys are still fighting alcohol right
11 now, too. If they can go with their families, it's
12 not too late to do it now. I had wanted that for
13 my -- for my son Louis, but now he's gone. You
14 know, like they say, family that works together
15 stays together. And that's the whole answer to
16 everything: Not to be ever parted again.

17 Not -- please don't ever take the children away
18 from their parents no matter what. You know, all
19 the families know, the little kids know no matter
20 how, you know, they get hungry or anything, they
21 still love their mom and dad no matter what happens.
22 And that's the way it is. That's all I have to say.
23 Thank you.

24 KERRIE REAY: Thank you. And it's 1:53.

25 [PROCEEDINGS ADJOURNED AT 1:53 P.M.]

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CERTIFICATION

I, GRACE DMITROVIC, Official Reporter in the Province of
British Columbia, Canada, do hereby certify:

That this is a true and accurate transcript of these
proceedings recorded on sound-recording apparatus, transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability in accordance with
applicable standards.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name this
10th day of March, 2018.

GRACE DMITROVIC
Official Reporter