

**IN THE MATTER OF: Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances
Surrounding the Death of Phoenix Sinclair**

**AFFIDAVIT OF SHAVONNE HASTINGS
SWORN the 10th day of May, 2012**

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I, SHAVONNE HASTINGS, of the City of Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba,

MAKE OATH AND SAY THAT:

1. I am currently Director of Operations for the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Family and Community Wellness Centre ("NCN CFS") for Winnipeg and Brandon. I work out of the outreach office in Winnipeg shared by NCN CFS and another agency, Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency ("KSMA").
2. I graduated from the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work in 2001. As a social work student I was an intern with Winnipeg Child and Family Services ("WCFS"). After graduating I was employed by WCFS as a social worker and I held that position until 2005. While I was employed by WCFS I provided intake services and crisis intervention as a frontline protection worker. In that capacity I dealt directly with families both in the office and in the field and, where necessary, participated in apprehensions of children at risk.
3. In 2005 I became a Supervisor with KSMA and NCN CFS. KSMA provides direct services to First Nation members from Norway House Cree Nation, on and off-reserve,

whereas NCN CFS provides direct services to First Nation members from both Nelson House and South Indian Lake, on and off-reserve. As a supervisor, I oversaw a staff of fourteen [14] front line workers and support staff.

4. In 2009 I became Director of Operations for NCN CFS. I oversee a staff of nine [9] social workers and other staff providing support to families such as teaching aids, respite workers and one-to-one. I report directly to the Executive Director of NCN CFS.

5. In all the agencies with which I have been associated, social workers working in the community were issued photo identification. The identification indicates the worker's name, the agency they represent, and bears the Executive Director's signature. The reverse side contains a description of our authority and powers as social workers. When social workers attend at a home in the field they are instructed to show this identification, identify themselves and identify the purpose of the visit. Most social workers also have business cards with their names and professional contact information. These are handed out to clients and others.

6. Social workers providing service in small communities and on reserve become part of the community and, in my experience, their identities and their jobs are well known throughout the community.

7. In my experience, social workers who provide child and family services in larger communities such as Winnipeg are grouped in teams which are assigned to specific

geographic areas and they become well known in those communities. It is frequently the case that, when visiting a neighbourhood or home for the first time, people recognize us as social workers before we even introduce ourselves.

8. Social workers providing front line child and family services do find themselves in emotionally charged circumstances involving people who are having difficulty caring for their children and who understand that their children may be apprehended. Sometimes we must deal with compounding factors such as intoxication, addiction or mental illness. Yelling and harsh language is common in these situations and there can be a risk of violence that must be managed.

9. I have not been involved in any circumstance and I am not aware of any circumstance where the fact that the identity of the social worker was known in advance made any material difference to a volatile situation. In fact, it is difficult to imagine realistic circumstances where prior publication of an identity would make a material difference to the safety of a social worker in an intervention, given the nature and scope of our work.

10. I am aware of at least one instance during my career where an individual unhappy with an intervention or decision by the staff of an agency behaved in a way that has raised a safety concern on the part of an agency and a social worker. Where this occurs the agency has various security measures it can implement and, in the case I referred to, a security guard was hired, calls were screened and the worker was

walked to her car until matters settled down. I am not aware of any instance and cannot think of any circumstances likely to occur where the prior publication of a worker's identity would affect the risk in this type of situation because the affected people will know the identity of the social worker in the ordinary course of the provision of service.

11. I have never been physically assaulted while providing social work services and I am aware of only one situation where a social worker under my supervision has had a physical encounter with a client. In that particular instance, the encounter occurred at a pre-arranged meeting between a social worker and a long term client who threw a coffee cup at the social worker after the social worker advised the client that the agency would be seeking an order of permanent guardianship.

12. Child and family service agencies in Manitoba have policies and procedures in place to manage the risk of violent behavior. In the agencies where I have worked and in the agencies with which I am familiar, social workers are required to attend in teams of two when intervening, apprehending or when they have any concern about risk.

13. In the agencies where I have worked and in the agencies with which I am familiar, there are internal systems to flag files where a home situation may present a risk.

14. There is close cooperation between child and family service agencies and the various police forces in Manitoba. If there is any flag or other cause for concern, social workers are required to attend with police officers.

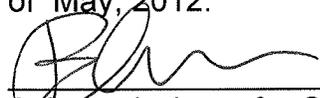
15. It is part of the job of a social worker providing child and family services to deal with potentially volatile individuals. This can be and is managed through good training and by implementing appropriate policies and procedures.

16. There are stresses upon social workers as there are upon other public servants and others in most fields or disciplines that deal with assisting the public, especially people who are disadvantaged, distressed or in danger. One of those stresses shared by many, is that we are accountable for the judgments we make and the way we exercise the powers or responsibilities we are given. When I entered the field I was aware that I was ultimately accountable to the community I serve and the public which funds my work. During my career in the field I have observed proceedings and public debate about the performance of the child welfare system both in particular cases and generally. Social workers and other public servants are often identified in these instances. I have never been promised or given to understand that I would be entitled to anonymity, and have no expectation that I will be able to exercise my powers and functions without the public knowing who I am.

17. These stresses and potential stresses must be managed, both by social workers individually and by their employers and supervisors. In Manitoba, the child welfare

agencies have established "critical incident teams" of professionals whose role it is to assist and counsel social workers who face difficult situations, whether it be an injury to a child in care, a difficult experience with a client, a threat, public controversy or a proceeding.

SWORN before me at the City)
Of Winnipeg, in the Province of)
Manitoba, this 10th day)
of May, 2012.)



A Commissioner for Oaths in and
for the Province of Manitoba.

My Commission expires: 2013/06/16



SHAVONNE HASTINGS