

Your Honor, my name is Deborah Chevalier and I am Nadia Kajouji's mother.

Before I begin, I'd first like to thank the courts for providing me the opportunity to address you today. I'd also like to express my sincerest gratitude and respect to Sgt. Bill Haidar, Commander Neil Nelson, and of course Celia Blay. Without their dedication and tenacity justice in this case would not be possible.

Today, I hope to give you some insight into who Nadia was, reveal some of the impact this crime had upon my family and my life, and also to leave you with some understanding of how I feel in regards to the sentence.

This case has brought with it much attention to the last few months of Nadia's life. It's distressing for me that the emphasis on Nadia's life is only of this short period of time. Her last few months in no way define her.

The day I welcomed Nadia into my life, there is nothing that could have prepared me for the sheer amazement and awe of holding her for the very first time. She was beautiful and she was perfect. She was the miracle in my life that people look for each day. There is no greater miracle than our own child.

I named her Nadia meaning Hope, because that is exactly what she was – everything I'd ever hoped for and every hope I had for the future all wrapped up in that tiny little 7 ½ lb bundle.

Those of us who knew her up until the time she left for university remember the child and then the young lady who's smile would brighten a room just by being in it. She was incredibly witty, caring, and just plain fun to be with.

Academically Nadia was always beyond her years. A program designed to develop potential community leaders selected her to participate; one of only 220 students from across Canada.

She traveled to England to represent Canada in a weeklong academic challenge. The team placed 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Nadia was both the creator and editor of her high school newspaper and was an active member of the debate team. It was actually while participating in a mock trial that she first became excited by her potential to become a lawyer.

Nadia was also active outside of school. In grade 7 she would spend every Sunday morning serving meals at the local soup kitchen. She also served as a Sea Cadet where she won awards every year, including best cadet, the Captains Award, and was even a recipient of the prestigious Medal of Excellence.

She loved fashion, music and literature. More than anything else in life, Nadia wanted children of her own. From the time she could talk she spoke of the children she would one day have.

All of that aside, if I had to choose the one thing that defined her most, it would be her compassion. It was not in Nadia's nature to shy away from a friend, or even a stranger in need of help.

Nadia was not perfect. She'd made a colorful sign that hung on her bedroom door, proudly displaying her name. I often thought she should replace the sign with one that read condemned. She also had her share of trials and tribulations. Like many young people she struggled with her own sexuality, but once she was in high school, she had accepted who she was.

By the time she completed high school it seemed as if the world was hers for the taking. She was quickly accepted at every university she applied to. Her heart was set on studying Public Affairs and Policy Management at Carleton University. Only 100 students each year are accepted into that program. She received an early acceptance and wouldn't even consider the other offers.

When family and friends gathered for her farewell BBQ, there was no one who could foresee or even imagine the tragic twist that her life was about to take. We all knew she had the potential and drive to change the world, and in our hearts we were sure that she would do just that.

Only six months after Nadia left for Ottawa we received a phone call that sent us into a frantic six week long search for her. I don't know how to describe myself during that time except to say that I think I was in a state of shock. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. During those six weeks I went from a size 18 to a size 6. We were traveling between Brampton and Ottawa, a distance of 295 miles, and I never knew where I should be. No matter which city I was in, it always seemed like the wrong one. While in Ottawa I worried that she'd show up at home in Brampton and I wouldn't be there. While in Brampton I feared that she was still in Ottawa and needed me there.

In the early days of the search the snow was several feet high in places. A rescue dog was needed to search areas that were inaccessible. Once after searching for several hours in the snow I became conscious of the fact that with every step snow had been pushing its way into my boots. That knowledge didn't really concern me. It was more a seemingly insignificant awareness.

When winter gave way to spring, we were still searching.

Sunday April 20<sup>th</sup> was the day of my niece Maddie's first communion. It was also the day that Nadia was pulled from the river. The phone call came just as the church service was ending. I don't remember any of what I was told. I remember only that I didn't want to hear it so I just disconnected the call. Then I started to shake. The only other recollection I have is a sound of anguish as my mother cried out in church.

For months afterwards nightmares haunted me and sleep eluded me. The first round of nightmares was the worst. For over two months the same dream refused to leave me. In it monsters with human faces kept hunting – humans hunting humans; nightmares where I couldn't warn anyone of the imminent danger because they could only see the human but not the monster behind the mask.

I had to become adept at suppressing any form of emotion. If something triggered a breakdown in my defenses it would result in an angry emotional rage. To this day an unexpected trigger can still ignite a similar response in me.

Most distressing was how my mind would just shut down. Sometimes I'd have thoughts I wanted to express but they were trapped within my mind. I'd completely lost the capacity to vocalize those thoughts. If you asked me a direct question as simple as my name, I could go completely blank and be unable to recall it. I could be fully aware of everything going on around me and yet incapable of responding to any of it.

It has now been 3 years since all of this happened and the effects still linger. I continue to suffer from nightmares and sleep is erratic. Regardless of the amount of sleep I'm getting at any given time, I never have the desire to get out of bed.

I used to rarely become ill, but that too has changed. Since Nadia's death there were times I was so sick that I had to crawl on my hands and knees get to the bathroom. No matter how ill I become I won't go to a doctor. I haven't seen a doctor since the year that Nadia died, and I have no inclination to do so. The trust that Melchert-Dinkel broke runs far too deep. I can no longer believe or trust that a health care professional has my best interests at heart. I will always question their motives.

I have adapted. I've learnt how to focus my energy on creating an illusion of normalcy within my life. I can look you in the eye when you talk. I can once again follow your conversation. I can even laugh at your jokes – even when they're not funny. What no one will ever be able to understand is the amount of effort that takes me, and how exhausting that can be.

Besides the emotional toll, there was also a considerable financial toll. John and I were fortunate in that his work covered his wages and our hotel room while my work covered the greater portion of my wages. There were still some very large costs we had to bear. Each week there were multiple trips back and forth between Ottawa and our home in Brampton. The cost of gas alone was staggering. The first time we left in such a rush that there was no time to pack anything. I had to buy clothes and toiletries while I was there. I have no way of remembering all the incidental costs while in Ottawa. My friends and family who were traveling to and from Ottawa had to cover their own hotel and were not covered for any of their lost wages. There is absolutely no way of knowing the financial toll during that time. Nadia was missing! No one was keeping tabs or saving receipts. We simply did what ever we could think of to find her and bring her home.

The only costs I can say with accuracy were the funeral costs. John and I had to take out a line of credit, which was used to pay almost \$20,000 towards the funeral, and was further also used to pay off the debt that had accumulated on the credit cards. My brother took an additional \$6,000 from his line of credit to help cover the remaining funeral costs.

It also seems that even after all this time there are always residual costs. I try to travel to Ottawa at least twice a year to tend to her site. Even being here today is costing me time and wages from

work. Some would be quick to point out that it is my choice to do so but, as her mother, it is my responsibility.

Quite a while back victim services informed me that if WMD was found guilty I would be able to file a claim for restitution. I was shocked. Actually I was completely outraged. My anger did not stem from the fact that it would be impossible to remember all the costs involved. It came simply from the fact that being ordered to pay financial costs was being referred to by the courts as 'restitution'. Restitution means to return something to its original state. Even if we could accurately determine all the financial costs involved and even if Melchert-Dinkel was to pay all of those costs, that would still not be restitution. We can never regain what he has taken from us. There can never be restitution.

For nine months Nadia grew within me. At that incredible moment when she took her first breath, she was a stranger to everyone in this world except me. We already knew and loved each other intimately.

There is nothing in life so intense or more powerful than a mother's love; that love is an entity on its own - one with its very own soul. That child came from them, it grew within them, and that child will always be a part of them. For a mother, birth itself is not seen as a separation of the two. I can tell you this – but it is only words, and I suspect that only a mother can truly appreciate the enormity of the truth contained within those words. When Nadia died the best parts of me died with her, and most days what was left behind seems of little consequence.

I can no longer look into my child's eyes every day and be struck by the awe and wonder of my own miracle. Instead I look at photos and am reminded of what was taken from me. I no longer have a child. I will never know the joy of a grandchild. When I leave this earth there will be only a few memories of Nadia and I left behind. Even they will one day fade.

What Melchert-Dinkel did was vile, offensive and most importantly, illegal. He knowingly chose to mastermind the deaths of some and destroy the lives of many. In doing so he also completely shattered a trust that society has bestowed upon those in his profession. Most profound, he would have us believe that it is his right to do so. He would have us believe that some members of society are disposable, but Nadia was not disposable. None of our children are disposable.

When one takes into account his total disregard for human life, the pleasure he derives from being an instrument to death, and his belief that it is his right to do so, can it be possible to reach any conclusion other than that he is a danger to society that must be locked away for the protection of others?

Add to this the fact that through years of practice he has become quite proficient at manipulating the minds of others, then it should become clear why I further believe that all communications he has with others, be it through internet, phone, in person, or otherwise, be supervised and monitored.

If WMD using false pretenses convinced someone to turn over their money or possessions, he would be charged with fraud. And yet, he took much more than money or possessions – he took their lives. If he had been encouraging them to take the life of someone else, he would be charged with conspiracy to commit murder. But I fail to see the difference. A human life is a human life and the emphasis should not be placed on whose life it is.

When a verdict was reached in this case, many people celebrated that justice was served. But I'm here to remind you that a guilty verdict in and of itself is not justice. Justice, by definition, is determined by the administering of a deserved and just punishment. The true test of justice will be determined right here today.

Today the world watches to see the results of this test.

Your Honor, I'm asking you when handing down this sentence not to think of the multitude of media and legal professionals following this case. I ask instead that you consider those that justice is intended for. Think of other victims of crimes like this who need to know that coming forward will not result in them being victimized all over again – only this time by the very systems put in place to protect them. I ask you to consider those of us whose lives have been forever shattered and destroyed by this man. Most of all, I ask you to remember Mark and Nadia. Mark may not have been my child but I think of him often, because through this process he has been connected to Nadia for eternity.

Melchert-Dinkel may be facing possible jail time for his actions, but even with that he will never experience the sorrow and misery he has inflicted on others. Even in jail, he will still be able to enjoy visits from his wife. He will still be able to see and hug his two daughters. He will on his release be reunited with his family and very likely will one day in the future have the pleasure of holding his grandchildren. I on the other hand would give everything I have – I would give my life in a heartbeat, to be able to spend just one more minute with my child again.

Make no mistake about it,

WMD is a predator,

WMD is a killer,

He is in fact a serial killer,

And WMD deserves to be punished to the fullest extent of the law.