R. v. Sangris, 2014 NWTSC 23 S-1-CR-2011-000167

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

IN THE MATTER OF:

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

- v -

## NARCISSE SANGRIS

Transcript of Reasons for Sentence delivered by The Honourable Justice K. Shaner, in Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territories, on January 17, 2014.

## APPEARANCES:

Mr. B. Demone: Counsel on behalf of the Crown

Mr. P. Falvo: Counsel on behalf of the Accused

Charges under ss. 271 C.C. and 151 C.C.

Ban on Publication of Complainant/Witness pursuant to Section 486.4 of the Criminal Code 1 THE COURT: It is my responsibility today,
2 Mr. Sangris, to impose a sentence on you and to
3 tell you why I am imposing that sentence.

Mr. Sangris was convicted of touching for a sexual purpose under section 151 of the Criminal Code on November 28th, 2013. I heard submissions on sentencing yesterday, and I heard from Mr. Sangris just now.

That this is a serious offence is recognized by the Criminal Code. It carries with it a minimum penalty of one year imprisonment when the Crown proceeds by indictment, and a maximum penalty of ten years.

This is perhaps the most difficult thing that a judge has to do. Canadians, people who live here, we value our personal freedom. Jail takes that away. It has a profound effect on offenders and offenders' families and friends. It is something that I have spent a lot of time thinking about in terms of coming up with a sentence that is fair and reasonable for you, Mr. Sangris, in all of the circumstances.

The first thing I want to deal with is the credit for time served. That is an issue that came up yesterday. I did have an opportunity to thoroughly review the transcript of the show cause hearing from March of 2013. I do see that

the judge had concerns about Mr. Sangris and his attendance at the drum dance ceremony, however it is not clear to me that the judge found that he contravened the terms of his recognizance when she heard that matter. I do note that there is on Mr. Sangris' criminal record a conviction for breaching a recognizance, however that is not the same as the judge taking it into account and revoking the recognizance on that basis. She specifically left that for another day. So what that means is that I have some doubt about what the conclusions of the judge hearing the matter were. Mr. Sangris is entitled to the benefit of that doubt. As a result, I have concluded that he is not disentitled to enhanced credit for the time he spent on remand awaiting the disposition of his case.

From what I have read in the PSR and what I heard through submissions, it is my view that there should be enhanced credit given. Mr.

Sangris has used his time on remand exceptionally well: He has become involved with the inmate committee; he's met weekly with the North Slave Correctional Center's traditional liaison elder; and, since July of last year, he has also been attending weekly meetings with North Slave Correctional Centre psychologist, with whom he is

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working on an application to attend a 40 day substance abuse program geared to aboriginal individuals once he is released from custody. In my view, this demonstrates a commitment to rehabilitation and it is worthy of recognition through enhanced credit. Accordingly, I am going to grant enhanced credit to Mr. Sangris at the rate of 1.25 days for each day served, so he will be given credit for a total of 375 days. That, in my view, strikes a balance between the fact that Mr. Sangris did breach the terms of his recognizance and also the work that he has done, since breaching his recognizance, to get a jump-start on rehabilitation.

I am now going to turn to the principles and objectives of sentencing.

The Criminal Code sets out the principles and objectives of sentencing that judges have to follow. I am not going to go through each and every one of these as they are not all relevant to this case. I will, however, explain those principles and objectives that are the focus of a case like this, and it is worth stating as a general context that the emphasis that is placed on each of the principles and objectives very much depends on the offence, the circumstances under which it was committed, and the

circumstances of the offender. It is a highly
individualized process.

Where an offence involves abuse of a person under 18 years of age, as is the case here, the primary consideration is to be given to the objectives of denunciation, which is an expression of society's abhorrence for a particular conduct, and deterrence, both for the offender and the public at large.

The overarching principles that guide judges in giving effect to sentencing objectives are also set out in the Criminal Code. The most important of these is proportionality, which means that a sentence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. That is also called the moral blameworthiness of the offender.

Judges also have to consider aggravating and mitigating factors, and sentences will be increased or decreased accordingly. There is no limit on what can constitute an aggravating factor or a mitigating circumstance, but the Criminal Code deems as aggravating, evidence that an offender abused a person under 18 years of age. This is a reflection of the importance that Parliament and our society places on protecting children.

Parity is another sentencing principle that is set out in the Criminal Code. Simply put, parity requires that sentences should generally be similar for like offences and like circumstances. Using a range of sentence types and times is one of the ways that the court ensures parity.

Finally, judges have to apply the principle of restraint, and that means that they have to consider all of the available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances, with particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders.

The events that form the basis of the conviction in this case took place in Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territories, on April 15th, 2011. The victim, a 14 year old boy, was at a cyber cafe in Yellowknife around three o'clock in the afternoon that day. He was using Facebook to check messages. He received a message from Mr. Sangris on the Facebook Instant Messenger system. The message included an invitation to the victim to come to Mr. Sangris' apartment and view pornography. The victim had never met Mr. Sangris personally, however this was not the first time the two of them had interacted through electronic communications.

- 1 The evidence showed that on March 2nd, 2011, Mr.
- 2 Sangris and the victim had a Facebook
- 3 conversation during which Mr. Sangris invited the
- 4 victim to his apartment. The victim declined
- 5 that invitation.
- 6 Following the Facebook conversation on April
- 7 15th, 2011, however, the victim walked over to
- 8 Mr. Sangris' apartment building. He rang the
- 9 buzzer at the main door and Mr. Sangris came down
- 10 to let him into the building. This was the first
- 11 time the two of them had ever met in person.
- 12 They proceeded to Mr. Sangris' apartment. At
- 13 that point, Mr. Sangris offered the victim
- 14 alcohol and cigarettes, both of which he
- 15 declined. Mr. Sangris then played a pornographic
- DVD for the victim, who was on the couch. He
- 17 then went over to the victim and kissed him on
- 18 the lips and told him not to be afraid. Mr.
- 19 Sangris was naked from the waist down at that
- 20 point. The victim recounted that he could see
- 21 his penis. Next, Mr. Sangris unzipped and took
- down the victim's pants. He rubbed the victim's
- 23 penis and he inserted his finger into the
- 24 victim's anus and moved it back and forth. The
- 25 victim said that this was uncomfortable and that
- it made it very difficult for him to breathe. He
- 27 told Mr. Sangris this, and that at that point Mr.

1 Sangris stopped.

immediately but Mr. Sangris encouraged him to remain in the apartment. I do note that there was no attempt by Mr. Sangris to physically restrain the victim, however at trial the victim testified that he felt he could not leave the apartment because Mr. Sangris was older and stronger than he was. While I am not able to make any conclusions on what, if any, the size difference would have been between the two at the time, Mr. Sangris was definitely an adult, while the victim was merely 14 years old. The victim did leave the apartment and, as he was leaving, Mr. Sangris told him to keep their encounter a secret.

Shortly before the victim left, he asked Mr. Sangris to give him money. At trial, the victim testified that he did so because Mr. Sangris had mentioned giving him money in an earlier Facebook exchange and that he wanted money so that he could go buy something from the store.

Later that evening the victim told his mother what happened.

I have had the benefit of a great deal of background information through representations that were made by Mr. Sangris' lawyer and through

the presentence report, as well as Mr. Sangris'
remarks made here today.

Mr. Sangris is currently 43 years old and he is a Dene man. He was born in Yellowknife and he grew up in Dettah. While he was growing up, Mr. Sangris' parents spent a great deal of time on the land, however Mr. Sangris was often left behind with his grandmother while his parents did this. He told the author of the presentence report that this was because he got scared while they were out on the land and he would get sick, and also because he was considered unlucky. He also told the author that he was the only one of his siblings to be left behind like this. However, another sibling interviewed reported that others of the children were left behind as well in the care of relatives.

The home in which Mr. Sangris grew up definitely had problems. His parents separated often and for varying amounts of time. It appears that his father struggled with alcohol addiction. When his father went on a drinking binge, his mother would shelter the kids by sending them to their grandmother. It was also stated in the presentence report, and represented by counsel, that Mr. Sangris was the object of verbal and physical abuse by his father. Both of

Mr. Sangris' parents attended residential school, and Mr. Sangris attended residential school as well at Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife.

I think it is fair to say that Mr. Sangris has had more than his share of hardship in his life. According to the presentence report, as well as representations made before me yesterday, he was the subject of bullying, harassment, and abuse while he was growing up, linked to his sexual orientation. He also reported that he was himself the victim of sexual abuse on numerous occasions during his childhood, including when he was just six years old and also when he was a teenager at residential school.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Sangris himself has struggled with substance abuse and emotional issues. He was at one point diagnosed with depression. He sought help for these things from time to time, but he has never had much in the way of any formal or structured treatment. And I say that, taking into account the fact that since he has been incarcerated he has taken steps to get more formalized and structured treatment.

I note, however, that one of the individuals that he has gone to for help is Cyndi Caisse.

Ms. Caisse provided a letter of support on Mr.

Sangris' behalf which was tendered during defence

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counsel's submissions. The two of them were first working together on a 24 week program in 2008 which was aimed at individuals suffering the impact of homelessness, addictions, trauma, and other effects of residential schools. According to what is in the presentence report, Mr. Sangris began to meet regularly with Ms. Caisse for his own benefit in 2009, and this continued regularly, even while he was on remand and awaiting trial. Ms. Caisse left the Northwest Territories in September of 2013, however she and Mr. Sangris continue to have contact by telephone.

In addition to the letter from Ms. Caisse which I just mentioned, I had the benefit of reading a number of letters of support from friends and family, all of which depict Mr.

Sangris as a helpful caregiver, who was well loved and trusted by his family and friends.

Clearly, he continues to have their support and this will bode well for him in the days to come.

The Crown is seeking a conditional [sic] sentence in the range of three to four years, as well as a number of ancillary orders. This is in the appropriate range of sentence and it is appropriate to consider this as a starting-point. That is borne out in the cases that the Crown

1 submitted and I will discuss these later on.

Defence counsel seeks a sentence in the range of two to three years, and certainly there are some circumstances in which this court has imposed sentences in that range for crimes of this nature.

It is the Crown's position that this was a major sexual assault upon a child and a custodial sentence is necessary to achieve the objectives of sentencing, particularly denunciation and deterrence. And as I noted earlier, those have to be given primary consideration.

It was unclear to me yesterday whether defence counsel disputed that this was a major sexual assault. He did point out some distinctions between what happened in this case and the act that formed the basis for the conviction in a finding of major sexual assault in one of the cases filed by the Crown, that being R. v. Lepine. Defence counsel pointed out that the victim in that case was asleep at the time that the assault occurred and the perpetrator had a lengthy criminal record. So in those circumstances, I do need to address whether I am characterizing this as a major sexual assault and if so, why.

27 It is trite to say that there are no two

1	cases of a major sexual assault or any sexual
2	assault that will be exactly alike. In making
3	this finding, however, a sentencing judge can
4	look at jurisprudence for guidance as to whether
5	an act can be characterized this way. The Court
6	of Appeal in R. v. Arcand, which has been
7	accepted by our Court of Appeal here and which
8	our court considers binding upon it, said the
9	following at paragraph 171 with respect to what
10	is a major sexual assault:
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12	A sexual assault is a major sexual assault where the sexual assault is
13	of a nature or character such that a
14	reasonable person could foresee that it is likely to cause serious
15	psychological or emotional harm, whether or not physical injury
16	occurs. The harm might come from the force threatened or used or from
17	the sexual aspects of the situation or from any combination of the two.
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19	The Court of Appeal then went on to list
20	examples of what acts would be included in this
21	category, but this is a non-exhaustive list.
22	In this case I have no difficulty concluding
23	that what Mr. Sangris did falls into the category
24	of a major sexual assault. It was an extremely
25	invasive act that, by any standard, violated the
26	victim's sexual integrity, and any reasonable

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person would readily conclude that it would cause

serious psychological or emotional harm, as well as physical pain to the victim. That it did, in fact, have a significant emotional impact on the victim is borne out in his victim impact statement where he wrote that he felt fear, powerlessness, anger, and shame, and that this has changed his attitude towards school.

I was referred to a number of authorities from this jurisdiction by the Crown with respect to the appropriate range of sentence, including R. v. Lepine, which I just mentioned, R. v. Laliberte, R. v. P.S.T, R. v. Griffin, and R. v. Nitsiza. Not surprisingly, there are similarities and differences between these cases and the one before me here today. They are, however, instructional in that they all provide an illustration of what factors are taken into account in determining what an appropriate sentence is within the range that the courts have established.

In Laliberte, the offender had full intercourse with a person under the age of 16. He pled guilty to sexual interference. The sentence imposed was two and a half years. The sentencing judge noted that in cases involving a victim under 18 and an offender in a non-parental role, the starting-point is in the three to four

year range. She acknowledged a sentence of two
and a half years was therefore on the more
lenient end, but she placed great emphasis on the
fact that the offender pled guilty thereby
acknowledging his guilt and expressing remorse.
That factor, the guilty plea, is absent here.

In the P.S.T. case, the offender received a prison term of 36 months for touching his daughter's breasts as she slept. Again, the offender pled guilty, albeit late in the proceedings, and he expressed remorse. The act there was also less serious than the act that was perpetrated on the victim here.

The Griffin case involved the sexual abuse of a stepchild over a period of several months.

Mr. Griffin was convicted following a jury trial, and he was sentenced to three and a half years.

The sentencing judge acknowledged that the starting-point for a crime of this nature perpetuated by a person in a position of trust is four years. However, she noted there was reason to exercise restraint, specifically, the offender was only 27 years of age and he had no criminal record.

In this case I have acknowledged that Mr. Sangris has a very limited and dated record; however, he is significantly older than Mr.

1 Griffin was, being in his 40s.

In the Nitsiza case, the offender had full sexual intercourse with a 13 year old girl on several occasions. He received a sentence of two and a half years following a jury trial. Like the offender in Griffin, Mr. Nitsiza was quite young, being only 22 at the time of conviction. The fact that he had a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder was also taken into account.

Other than the fact that the act was characterized as a major sexual assault, the Lepine case differs quite significantly on the facts. It involved an adult victim and, as I indicated, the offender there had a lengthy criminal record, neither of which are present in the case before me.

There is very little in the way of mitigation in this case. I do acknowledge, though, that today Mr. Sangris stood up and he did apologize for the harm that he caused the victim, as well as the grief that he has caused his family, and he apologized to his community.

There are, however, some very, very
troubling factors in this case. The victim was
14 years old at the time. As I said earlier when
I talked about the principles and objectives of
sentencing, the Criminal Code deems this to be an

1 aggravating factor. As an aggravating factor, it 2 is further exacerbated by the age difference 3 between the victim and Mr. Sangris. Mr. Sangris is not a young man relative to the age of the victim. He was approximately 40 years old at the time, a fully mature, adult man, and as such 6 someone who would reasonably be perceived by a 14 year old as having power and authority.

> A very disturbing aspect of this case is the degree of planning and premeditation that seems to have gone into getting the victim, someone Mr. Sangris had never met personally but who he knew to be a teenaged boy, to come to his apartment that afternoon with the goal of engaging him in sexual activity. As I said previously, this was not the first time the two had exchanges on Facebook. The exchange in March of 2011, which proceeded the April incident, included an invitation to come to Mr. Sangris' apartment, which the victim declined. The exchange that immediately preceded the victim coming to Mr. Sangris' apartment on April 15th, 2011, included a promise to give the victim a movie, specifically girl-on-girl pornography, which the victim was to come over and pick up. I agree with the Crown's submissions that Mr. Sangris manipulated the victim by showing him pornography

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and offering him cigarettes and alcohol. These things are generally forbidden to anyone other than adults, making them tempting bait for teenagers. Certainly this proved to be the case with the pornography that was offered to the victim.

In my view, the fact that Mr. Sangris did, in fact, give the victim money is also aggravating. I recognize it was the victim who asked for the money, but his explanation for making the request was that Mr. Sangris had promised money to him during an earlier Facebook exchange between the two of them. This, too, was bait.

Finally, it is aggravating that Mr. Sangris told the victim to keep what happened a secret. In the circumstances, asking the victim to keep that secret was tantamount to suggesting to him that if the secret was revealed, he, the victim, would face some kind of consequence, and that is a highly manipulative thing to do to a 14 year old boy.

Mr. Sangris' criminal record was tendered as an exhibit. It is dated and very short, and it contains no convictions for similar crimes. It is not an aggravating factor and it is not something I take into account as an aggravating

1 factor.

Mr. Sangris bears a very high degree of moral blameworthiness in this case. The crime was planned and deliberate, and the actions were predatory. He took advantage of a young boy's trust, curiosity, and naivety. He took advantage of his position as an adult vis-à-vis a child, and he used all of this for his own sexual gratification.

The circumstances cry out for consequences that will recognize the legal and moral need for denunciation and deterrence and which will also recognize the need to separate those who commit crimes against children from society.

I spent a lot of time considering Mr.

Sangris' aboriginal status and in particular his experience in residential school, which can only be described as horrific. As I noted, his childhood was very difficult. Frankly, though, I find it difficult to relate this crime to the Gladue factors. Mr. Sangris' actions do not appear to have been driven by the systemic Gladue factors that courts typically see. The nature of this crime and the circumstances surrounding it lead me to the conclusion that his motivation was not driven by factors like poverty or addiction or homelessness, but rather he was driven by

1 sexual gratification. It was planned and
2 deliberate. The victim was lured.

In the circumstances, it is my view that a sentence of a shorter period of incarceration would in fact make a mockery of the Gladue principles and would fail to honour the objectives of denunciation and deterrence.

Moreover, they would fail to take into account the impact on the victim, himself an aboriginal person. He has the right to be protected. That is not to say that your background is not troubling, Mr. Sangris. It is just to say that the Gladue factors really do not have a place in this sentence.

Mr. Sangris, can you please stand up.

Narcisse Sangris, upon being convicted of sexual interference under section 151 of the Criminal Code, and upon considering the circumstances and the nature of the offence as well as your own personal circumstances, I sentence you to a term of three years and six months in prison.

The time that you actually will be required to serve will be reduced by the amount of time you spent in custody awaiting the disposition of your case on an enhanced basis, as I said earlier, of roughly 1.25 days for each day

1	already served, which I will set at 375 days.	
2	Do you understand, Mr. Sangris?	
3	THE ACCUSED: (Non-verbal response).	
4	THE COURT: All right, you can be seated.	
5	I am now going to turn to the ancillary	
6	orders. The Crown asked for a number of these.	
7	First, I will deal with the no contact order	
8	under section 743.21.	
9	There will be an order under section 743.21	
10	of the Criminal Code prohibiting Mr. Sangris from	
11	communicating directly or indirectly with the	
12	victim or the victim's mother for the duration of	
13	the time that he is incarcerated.	
14	There will be a firearms prohibition under	
15	section 109 and that will be in effect for ten	
16	years following Mr. Sangris' release.	
17	The circumstances here also justify imposing	
18	restrictions as set out in section 161(1)(a)	
19	through and including subsection (d) which would	
20	prohibit Mr. Sangris from attending at certain	
21	public areas where children are likely to be	
22	present; prohibiting him from obtaining	
23	employment, whether remunerated or not, or	
24	becoming a volunteer in a capacity, that involves	
25	being in a position of trust or authority towards	
26	any persons under the age of 16 years;	

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prohibiting Mr. Sangris from having contact with

any person under 16, unless under supervision

approved by the court; and prohibiting Mr.

Sangris from using the internet or other digital

network except for the purposes of employment,

treatment, and education. This will be in effect

for ten years.

Now with respect to the conditions on use of the internet or other digital network, I recognize that it is impossible for the court to anticipate every situation where Mr. Sangris may be required to use the internet. Employment, treatment and education are the most common.

However in the event that Mr. Sangris feels it is necessary to use the internet for other purposes, then he will need to come back to court and have the conditions varied to allow him to do so.

That will be in effect for five years following
Mr. Sangris' release from custody.

There will be an order for bodily fluids to be taken from Mr. Sangris for DNA analysis, and an order requiring him to comply with the Sex Offender Information Registration Act pursuant to section 490.012 of the Criminal Code. That will be in effect for a duration of 20 years.

The forfeiture order will go as presented.

Unfortunately, I do not read section 490.1

of the Criminal Code as permitting the court to

- 1 order that the hard drive from Mr. Sangris'
- 2 computer be separated and provided to him. I
- 3 would ask you, Mr. Demone, to consider asking the
- 4 RCMP if they would, or whoever is in the
- 5 possession of the computer, if they will download
- 6 Mr. Sangris' personal photographs, assuming that
- 7 they are appropriate, onto a thumb drive and
- 8 providing that to Mr. Sangris or his counsel.
- 9 MR. DEMONE: Thank you.
- 10 THE COURT: Finally, there will be no
- 11 victims of crime surcharge given the length of
- incarceration and as well the fact that the
- 13 conviction preceded the recent amendments to the
- 14 Criminal Code with respect to the victims of
- 15 crime surcharge.
- 16 Counsel, is there anything else?
- 17 MR. DEMONE: Just one very minor thing,
- 18 Your Honour. I believe it was just a matter of
- 19 misspeaking. You had indicated the Crown sought
- 20 a conditional sentence of three to four years.
- 21 THE COURT: No, a custodial sentence.
- 22 MR. DEMONE: Thank you. Perhaps I
- 23 misheard.
- 24 THE COURT: A custodial sentence, yes.
- 25 MR. DEMONE: Thank you.
- 26 THE COURT: Is there anything else?
- THE COURT CLERK: The DNA order is primary?

1	THE	COURT:	Yes.	
2	THE	COURT CLERK:	Thank you.	
3	THE	COURT:	Anything from you, Mr. Falvo?	
4	MR.	FALVO:	Nothing further, Your Honour.	
5		Thank you.		
6	THE	COURT:	Thank you.	
7		Mr. Sangris,	you have made a commitment to	
8		rehabilitating you	rself and dealing with your	
9		past traumas. You	will have many opportunities	
10		in prison presente	d to you to deal with those	
11		things. You have already started. I will		
12		encourage you to do what you can to take		
13		advantage of those programs and start your		
14		healing process.		
15		As well, I mentioned earlier that you do		
16		continue to have the support of your friends and		
17		family and that will bode very well for you when		
18		you transition back from life in prison into		
19		society. Please keep those contacts alive and		
20		strong.		
21		Thank you very much, counsel. Court is now		
22		concluded.		
23				
24			Certified to be a true and accurate transcript pursuant	
25			to Rule 723 and 724 of the Supreme Court Rules of Court.	
26			Supreme court nated of court.	
27			Annette Wright, RPR, CSR(A) Court Reporter	