

INQUIRY RESPECTING THE TREATMENT, EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES OF INNU IN THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

English Transcript Volume 1

Commissioners: Retired Judge James Igloliorte, Dr. Mike Devine and Anastasia Qupee

Monday 13 February 2023

[redacted]

P. RALPH: Thank you, Commissioner Devine.

And we now invite Mushuau Elder, Joachim Nui, to drum for us.

CHIEF NUI: That's good.

P. RALPH: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Nui in Mushuau-aimun.]

CHIEF NUI: Hello. Hello. Hello. Hello.

Okay. Before my father begins, I would like to introduce him; what he does, and where he came from and just to show you – for those without – who don't know him. The majority of people from here in Sheshatshiu knows what my father does.

Well originally his family are from here. He has two brothers and five sisters, I think. The majority of them have passed on and there's only three of them that still lives here. But I wants to go back to when all his family moved to Sheshatshiu; he used to travel to Sheshatshiu and to Snegamook on – with his family. But when his father decide – when his parents decided to go back to Sheshatshiu he decided to stay home because at that time he was married to my mother and decided to stay with them.

And that's how we – I guess, the Nui family – was in Natuashish. There was only a small number of us back in the day. So that's how my father was – you know – there was only him and my late brother.

My father is 89 years old and there is five boys and two girls and he has a number of adopted kids. So he knows that – you know – I guess looking after the children from other families. But not in the way that this system that has been looking after the other kids. It's different nowadays. It seems like the CSSD is taking over the – the grandparents' duty as caretaker. That's how I look at it, because he was there and the grandparents are supposed to look after the young kids – you know, just to, I guess – to keep them busy and so on.

So before I say anything about his – what he's going to say – I like to – you know – introduce you to my father. You know, he's very respected, and known all over the – I guess – coast of Labrador. Every time I meet some people from the coast they always say: How's your father doing? Is he still walking around? Like a teenager, I said.

But I'll leave that here and I'll get my father to say a few words and I'll translate it for you best I can.

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Nui in Mushuau-aimun.]

CHIEF NUI (providing English translation): Okay.

That was long, but I'll try.

He said, about the drum – you know – back in the day before – before anybody can

touch the drum – you know they – you know they have to – I guess – he's got to get permission from the father. And before, he is not allowed to touch any of the drumming or singing until his father is – I guess – tell the rest.

Okay. Before he starts playing the drum, he said, he had a dream, about the drum itself. That's what the Elders did in the past, you know, they dream about the drums before they can take over the – you know – the singing.

In his dream, there was an Elder that came forward with him – with the drum. And that's when he decided to make his own drum and start playing the – you know – that's where his – most of his songs came from, in his dream.

Okay. Back in – in the – in their, I guess, in their generation, the drum is a very sacred piece – item that needs to be respected. It's not to be used as a – to make – I guess, play around with, and now these days, it seems like everybody is making up, kind of, how to play the drum. That's how he sees it and most of the – most of the people that play the drum are now gone. And there's – nobody seems to be around to – taking their place, which is very, very important.

Okay. He said most of his peers that were growing up with him back in the day, now all have passed on and there's nobody else here to take over. So he says he's the only one left of all his – all of his friends that went hunting with him back in the day are gone and – and he's the only one left in this community.

Okay. He also said that – you know – back in the day, when there was no schools, no buildings to go to, he got most of his – all of us at that time were – got our teachings from our parents. Him, as a – you know – he was taught to hunt and do all of the things that men does, from his father.

Same thing with the females – you know they – they each watch their parents do things. That's how they learned. It's not that – it's not that they go to school here and doing the – what we do here today. And that's how you were raised back then, and that's how all of us was able to be where we are right now.

Okay. He said: I still remembers when my – when me and my father used to walk to Sheshatshiu. I still remember those places where we go. I still knows it, 'cause I can see it when I travel on the plane from here to – no – from Natuashish to Goose Bay. So he knows all the things that – he knows all the area where they went and – and basically that's how they were raised, back in the day.
He said: Where they were raised, and when you – you know – I've always shared my stories to the young generation to let 'em know that's how we live, you know, and how we, you know, survive in the – in the country. And that's – and I usually tell them that this is our lives, this is how we live and this is – you know – life, I guess. In a, short term of a meaning, you know, how they live and not – I guess – not this – this kind of generation.

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Nui in Mushuau-aimun.]

CHIEF NUI: Okay.

Okay. Give you a second.

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Nui in Mushuau-aimun.]

[Music performed.]

ELDER NUI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

[Music performed.]

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Nui in Mushuau-aimun.]

CHIEF NUI: Hello.

He's going to do a last song so it's up to everybody if they want to dance again.

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Nui in Mushuau-aimun.]

CHIEF NUI: This song is – was his father – late father's song. So that's the one he's going to play.

ELDER NUI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

[Music performed.]

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Hart in Innu-aimun.]

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

ELDER NUI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

CHIEF HART: Test. One, Two.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Hart in Innu-aimun.]

CHIEF HART: I know.

[Dialogue between Elder Nui and Chief Hart in Innu-aimun.]

CHIEF HART: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken]

I don't know if – maybe I was already translated?

Okay. I'll just go and translate for myself then.

So I would like – like to thank Joachim, the Elder. It's an honour actually to have Joachim here because since the Elder in our community passed away a few years back, that was playing the drum, Joachim over – took over the invites 'cause where he's the only drummer now.

But I was telling Judge Igloliorte, back in the day when my dad – that my dad is not from here originally – but my grandfather was the drum player. And my dad was telling me how he – he couldn't sit in my grandfather's drum-playing times for a while, before he got accepted. So it wasn't something that was natural. You had to be – I guess – get to – known and get accepted after a while. So it's a very sacred …

And the way I see it, he's the one that keeps an eye on both communities, 'cause he's like – in our – the way I see it, in my views is, he's our leader – he's the top leader. Like, he's the grandfather. And I think the grandfather and the grandmother in the communities are the key for the household; doesn't matter if you have your own house. That's where every – grandchildren will run to if they are in trouble, or just wanting something from the grandparents. But it is important to see this still going on.

And I'm happy that he – he's here, actually, to witness this today; I'm very honoured. And for an Elder to help us to start this Inquiry, I think it's very important. And he probably sees a lot more vision than we see here today. That he – what's going to come out of it. That's how I see it.

Anyway, thank you guys, and I hope everyone has a great day.

P. RALPH: Thank you very much, Chief Hart, again, and thank you to Elder Nui and Elder Penashue. I think it was a fantastic start to the day. I'll let Gerry and Anne translate.

Are they?

Is there translating? Okay.

I think we have translating now? Great.

Yes, thanks again to Elder Penashue and Elder Nui. It was a very meaningful way for the Commissioners and for everyone to

hear from you and to hear the drumming. I think those of us who –

Can't hear anything?

Okay.

I would encourage anyone to read about Elder Nui, and also what it means to be a drummer, and the – the significant role that that plays in the community.

This brings to a close the opening ceremonies today. Tomorrow we'll resume again at 9:30 – and tomorrow morning resume again at 9:30, and first we're going to hear from Annie Picard. She's going to give us the Sheshatshiu Innu timeline. If anyone has not seen that, it's a particularly moving and a fascinating account of the history of the Innu.

And we'll also hear from two Sheshatshiu Elders. We're going to hear from Elder Elizabeth Penashue again tomorrow, and also Elder Penote Antuan.

So anticipate tomorrow is going to be a full day and hopefully be as meaningful and as helpful as today's opening session was. So again, thank you.

So we're finished for the day, but I'd ask for the Commissioners and for the lawyers to stay behind for a few moments.

CLERK (Battcock): That concludes the formal hearings for today.

Thank you all.