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

English Transcript | Volume 16

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

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[redacted]

Recess

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Okay.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken] – [redacted].

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken] – Edward here?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: A minute ago. He just stepped out, I think.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Yeah.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

[Dialogue between Unidentified Speaker and Commissioner Qupee in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

So the next speaker is [redacted].

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [redacted] – [redacted], thank you so much for attending today and giving us your testimony.

We've – we understand that people worry that they will say things that are not only about child protection. They might talk about the justice system, they might talk about incidents that happened in – in the penitentiary, for example. But we don't mind hearing about those experiences.

So I'm talking to all the people here – Innu people – that if you think that you have an observation about what happens in the justice system, what happens in the Social Services, what has happened in child protection, don't be afraid that you're talking about the wrong thing because we realize many, many things are connected together.

So [redacted] as I mentioned earlier, you – you're here, you have it in your mind that you'd like to speak about something and you're quite free to – to talk about and start on your own about anything you want to talk about.

[redacted] [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA (providing English translation): Ehe.

The two things I would like to talk about; first, is about myself, and then my grandchildren.

When I was young I was taken away from my family and I was placed in a group home. I will not name the person who took us to the Social Services because – no longer here with us. I liked it when I was placed in a group home, because it was – because there were Innu workers there and I liked the food they gave us. But I will say this, that I missed my family. I missed being in Nutshimit – in country. I went to school every day when I was in the group home.

While I was in group home something happened and it involved an Innu worker. I requested that I be taken to a Pleasantville Girls' Home after what happened. I can't really talk about what really happened in the group home in our community. One of the Innu workers went with me when I went to transfer to Pleasantville Girls' Home. I liked the idea of being transferred; went to St. John's, and on to Pleasantville. I thought the place would be very nice to be there.

The building seemed like a prison. It had windows but once I was let in, the door was locked behind me. I thought about my community where the group home was, where I was never locked in a room. And then the racism started. The other young people that were there called me Indian, and then the abuse came after that from the white people that were there. I find it too hard to tell that part.

While I was there my cousin called and we were talking in Innu-aimun, the phone was shut off. Somebody yelled – one of the workers yelled: Don't talk in your language. I was just about to tell my cousin of what had happened in that Girls' Home and then the phone just cut off. I was there for a long time and then there was a fire. A friend of mine was brought in and then we were placed where there were Sisters there and then that's an – another abuse that I was given by these Sisters.

They only gave us food once a day: an egg and one bread. We were there for two weeks and this happened every morning. We tried to run away. My friend said to me: We don't know where – where we – where we're going. We'll be hungry if we run away.

One of the teachers remembered us. She came and got us. We were brought back to the building that we were in, where the building was on fire, but we were placed in another part of the building. After that, the Innu worker from the group home and from our community came to get us and brought us back to the group home here in Sheshatshiu.

My friend that was there with me was the only person who knew what I went through when I was at Pleasantville Girls' Home. She was the only one who knew of what had happened to me.

And that's all I want to say for the – that part of my story and the second story that I'm gonna tell you is about my grandkids – about my grandchildren.

I reared up two of my grandchildren, a thirteen-year-old and a six-year-old. The six-year-old is autistic. One of them were in custody in Goose Bay. The one who is autistic, she was placed in Goose Bay.

She was given medication to help her sleep and I still have those, what they gave her. I wanted to bring them here and show it to the Commissioners but I forgot. I was told that my granddaughter had a sleeping issues and that's why they gave him the medication. They gave her two pills. When I say they, it was the social workers who gave the medication to my granddaughter.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: If you want to show us the prescription or the name on the pills you can do that anytime and leave it – leave it with us.

[Dialogue between Interpreter Nuna and [redacted] in Innu-aimun.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: Yeah. She said I will bring them.

[redacted] [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: The medication that they gave my granddaughter was not prescribed by a doctor or pediatrician. They took it from the drugstore themselves, those workers. I wanted to charge those workers but what they did was they gave me back my grandchild – my granddaughter.

And today my granddaughter is very active, very hyper and that. I know that when a child is autistic it's hard. She is in school, she goes to school, and my sister is a respite worker for her.

When I was working, the CSSD approached my employer, and then I was laid off. I am a daycare worker. I've trained for that and I finished the program and I liked working there. I still do. I still like working because I have to be the provider of those grandchildren that I still have. And they wronged me for not letting me to go back to work where I was at the daycare.

Today, I suffer because I have no – nothing to offer my grandchildren. I – I am not the provider now 'cause I am not working. They have nothing, and it frustrates me of what the CSSD did to me at my work.

I really enjoyed my work, I really loved what I was doing where I worked for our kids in my community because I don't want to see of what happened to me in the past with these kids – even my own. That's why I chose that job as a daycare worker.

I had four kids; one of them deceased. I raised – I raised them my own. And I admit I drink. I drink – I do not drink from the Social Services money because they don't give us then. I drink out of my own. Where I get from my Elder's pension from Innu Nation.

Now you see what has happened to me, what CSSD has done to me and my grandkids? Sometimes I send my grandkids to school without having nothing to eat. I am telling the truth.

I was on Facebook, like, about a few weeks ago and I told my story about what the CSSD did to me regarding my employment at daycare. There were a lot of people who helped from my community, who donated. I paid telephone bill and $700 worth of groceries for my grandchildren.

And that's all I want to tell you for now. I'm tired.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, [redacted] for having the strength to talk about matters which are very painful and bring up strong emotions.

So let's make it clear how you would like people to know about this story. For example, your story can be told, even though it's recorded, and only the Commissioners can use it. Or we can identify you with your full name, [redacted] or maybe when we write the report, we can only use your initials, K. J. Or we may leave you completely anonymous, saying that a woman came and spoke to the Commission on today's date but we don't – we don't – she doesn't want to be identified. And we can tell APTN TV the same thing.

It's your choice, and you can always change your mind – whatever you say today. So you can tell the Commissioners if you would like to remain anonymous, or if we can use

your name or if we can only use your name when we write our report. Or you can think about it and come back and tell us.

The other thing we wish to say to you as Commissioners is that you have found it very difficult to talk about the details of some incidents, which is fine by us, but if you'd like to have – if you'd like to have the opportunity to tell that story with a counsellor so that you feel some sense of having done it, you can speak with a counsellor that we have here.

They won't only be here today. They'll be here after today; available for you to call them, available for you to have a session with them at any time.

We also want to let you know that we congratulate you for taking pride in taking care of your grandchildren, taking on that responsibility.

If you're ready to tell us that you'd rather remain anonymous, you can tell me that now. And we – we won't use your name.

[Dialogue between Interpreter Nuna and [redacted] in Innu-aimun.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: She's saying that she don't mind –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

INTERPRETER NUNA: – her name being used.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay. Thank you very much.

You're always welcome back if you have more to say. If you hear another story that makes you think about something else, you can always come back and continue.

INTERPRETER NUNA: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Anastasia, any questions?

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

[redacted] Ehe.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Any questions or comments, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Just a couple of comments and I guess to just – simply to say, thank you for your testimony today. You certainly showed a lot of courage on your behalf and as the Commissioners have already said, in terms of that – you know – the care that you're providing to your – the grandchildren in – in the circumstances that you are.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Fifteen minutes please, Paula. Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Ladies and gentlemen, the sessions are over for today. The next person, we're gonna give them enough time on a – on a different date. But anybody who'd like to sign up to continue at some later date can speak with Peter, right there.