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

English Transcript | Volume 8

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

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COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

And Emma, if you could help me out again, by interpreting.

So, it doesn't matter if you come here and speak for five minutes, or for an hour. We believe you, we respect what you have to say and we will pass on to the governments what we have heard.

We're here to listen.

We are here to learn about Innu way of life and the Innu thoughts about what they have experienced, what you have experienced.

You have told us that in the non-Innu world, in the white world, we rely on laws and people who work in the government to see how these laws can be used in the community.

Innu people are teaching us that these laws and these workers have not been here to help Innu.

Each speaker we have heard right from the beginning in Sheshatshiu and here in Natuashish are teaching us about Innu life.

We already have learned that Innu have experienced great hardship by coming in contact with white laws, non-Innu laws.

This Inquiry – this Commission will have many parts to it. One part is allowing people to come to a session like this and speak to us. Another part will allow families, with their lawyers, to hear the specific details about how they were affected and how their children were hurt under child protection.

Another part will allow us to hire educated scholars, who have learned about the history of Innu since contact with Europeans. Another part will allow us to examine more carefully what kind of laws have been written about child protection, and how they have impacted Innu people.

Even though we will do all that, it is hearing from you, the Innu people, which has a great value for this Inquiry. We thank [redacted] and every person who has come before us, and we continue to invite others to come and speak to the Inquiry.

Takes a lot of strength to speak in public and to talk about your private thoughts – private thoughts. And you continue to tell us that when you do that, it makes you feel better afterwards.

So we'll take a short break and figure out what it is we're gonna do between now and lunch.

Ten minutes, please.

Recess

INTERPRETER NOAH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NOAH (providing English translation): My name is Christine and I want to say some things about the CSSD.

My kids were taken away by the – when I was – when I was still drinking. And they were taken away out – out of the province. They were taken to Edmonton. We also went – went – we went there and my – and one of my grandchild for my late – late son. And after we went there, we went back home and then we started drinking again.

And then they were – they were – they were taken away again, my – my children.

[Dialogue between Interpreter Noah and C. Rich in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER NOAH: My grandchildren were taken away this time.

While we're drinking, I didn't know my – my daughter went into the room, in the – in a – went into the room and took – took the gun

and went – went and took the ammunitions. She was – she was mad at that time and – because of her relationship with this boyfriend, and that's when he – she shot herself.

There was this white guy who was helping – who was helping – who was working with the community. I – I was – I went out and I met him on the road and he – he came over and – and grabbed me and hugged me and told me I'm very sorry.

I saw her when she went out. She was – she went somewhere and there's – someone was – was calling me that she's gone over there. I left my grandkids behind – I left my grandkids behind and – and my late son – and my son, she said, I was getting nervous.

Later on after she got buried, I went back to drinking again to numb my feelings. And after the relocation here in Natuashish – and my other children were sniffing gas. They – they were saying to me that the Social Services always taking – taking us away and – and you don't care about us.

After the relocation, this time my – my son commit suicide. He hung himself. He was also mad and that's why he did that to himself. Four of my children commit suicide and they weren't sick. My late – my late husband was ill, and he passed away in St. John's hospital. Last time I was in bed with him, sleeping beside with him, and I didn't know he pass away.

After – after that, years later when we went back to Natuashish, after years later, we – maybe five years – and then something else happened. And my – this time my son – my other son got killed.

And they – and then next one is my granddaughter. She was also killed in Goose Bay. I have – I have her granddaughter who is in my care, and when I looked at her I see her mother there. Her – her granddaughter – her daughter – great-granddaughter, is in my care and when I looked at my great-granddaughter, I see – I see her mother in – in her figure.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Take a break?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

INTERPRETER NOAH: I just want to let you know that Christine, that's her sister there, Mary Angela, and the other one is her niece.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

Recess

[redacted]