

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

English Transcript | Volume 9

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

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COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much for being here, [redacted].

When you speak, all you gotta do is press on that button, you and Mary Ann, and we'll be able to hear you.

Please feel free to tell us whatever's on your mind, whatever you wanna talk about, we're happy to listen.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just so you know, I'm her lawyer.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We don't have enough money – we don't have enough money to pay you, sorry.

[redacted]: My name is [redacted]. I have decided to share my childhood experience and it doesn't involve CSSD or social record – services. It's not the only – it's not only the CSSD families are affected from.

School and church was also the worst – is – the worst childhood a child could experience. I've been traumatized from it.

As a child from age nine, I experienced abuse – physical and sexual abuse by a priest and Brothers. Their names always

stuck in my head to this day: Brother [redacted] and [redacted]

[Dialogue between Interpreter M. A. Nui and [redacted] in Mushuau-aimun.]

I remember I was one of the youngest girls from age nine to 15, I think, who was really scared of them both.

They used to keep older girls and young – the young ones after school to let them shower, and I went – and went in the shower with them. And I also remember the older girls used to have me to go in the shower first, and I couldn't do anything about it.

I cried for my mom every time I went in, as he was touching me everywhere. His hands were so big and strong, trying to stop him from touching me where I didn't wanna be touched.

This incident traumatized me. I hated going to school and I hated going to church.

The priest also used to come into the school and abuse the young children. Where he would have the children stand in front of the other children, while he – he was hitting them with a – with a belt or with a stick with their pants down.

[Dialogue between Interpreter M. A. Nui and [redacted] in Mushuau-aimun.]

As I was growing up I – I had a little sister. I was always worried about her; she would be in same situation when I was told to leave home and go – for school in – on the island.

I could never tell my parents what happened because I thought they wouldn't believe me.

There was also an incident when I was – when one incident happened with the nuns. Back then we didn't have running water in our homes and we used to have infections on our head and bodies. One time I was really – I really needed to wash my hair because it was very painful, and I had to go to the clinic and ask to take a bath.

The clinic was run by a nun. She told me to leave and head to school. She grabbed me and took me to the door and said: Go straight to school. I left the – I left the clinic and went home. I told my mom what happened. She had breakfast ready when I got home and I was eating, and the nun walked in and pulled me out of the chair and told me to go to school.

INTERPRETER M. A. NUI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

[Dialogue between Interpreter M. A. Nui and [redacted] in Mushuau-aimun.]

[redacted]**:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

I didn't have – I didn't have a chance to wash my hair that day. My parents didn't say anything to the – to her – to the nun; they just said put – to put my coat on and go.

I often ask myself why my parents didn't say anything to her when it happened. I was so furious and I was in pain with the infection I had on my head. Soon after I got into the school, the other nun who was teaching in my class told me to take off my hat, and I didn't want to take it – didn't want to. She grabbed my hat and hit me on the head with a – with a ruler she had on her hand.

[Dialogue between Interpreter M. A. Nui and [redacted] in Mushuau-aimun.]

I started crying and she said: No crying in this classroom. I know that these two nuns are still alive and I don't – but I don't know about the Brothers.

It was in the summer of 1984, when I saw this priest again back in Davis Inlet. I was at the school gym and he was there. He was looking at me. I was pregnant with my first child. He looked at me like he was disgusted with me.

He walked over where I was standing. He didn't get a chance to say anything to me. I was – I was the one who said something. I pointed my finger toward – to my belly and said: You are never touching this baby. After I said that to him I – I looked at him and I spitted on his face and ran out the door.

That was the last time I ever saw him. I let it – later learned that he passed away a few years ago and I wish that he went to Hell.

I learned to live with this pain after all these years. I got married and had children. I managed to get a job at school and work with children, and still work there with them. I've seen a lot of pain and grief in this community, parents losing their children to suicide, and I was one of the parents who went through this. My son, [redacted], took his life in our basement nine years ago.

I have a granddaughter who – who is in my care and she's now 15 years old and she still cries for her uncle. She loved him very much. I had her when she was a baby. Recently, a few years back, her mom was involved with CSSD and her younger siblings were taken away from her mother. CSSD came to my house and asked me if I could take her and have her in my care. I said: What are you talking about? I told her that I have her with me and she's been with me since she was a baby and nobody's taking her. A few months after all – when all this happened, her mom informed me that she had her kids back in her care.

[Dialogue between Interpreter M. A. Nui and [redacted] in Mushuau-aimun.]

A few months after, when all this happened, her mom informed me that she had her kids back in her care. And her worker told her that she can take her daughter away from me, as well, and she would help her get her back. The mother told her that she – she couldn't do it because – and she wouldn't do it because she – she was in a safe place.

INTERPRETER M. A. NUI: Do you wanna stop?

[redacted]: Her mother – her mother wouldn't let her – (inaudible) – the worker told them – her that she can take her daughter away from me as well, and she would help her get her back. The mother told her worker she wouldn't and didn't want to take her because she was in a safe place.

I was not afraid to talk to the social – to CSSD. Next morning I called and requested to see the mother's worker. I had a meeting with her worker that day and I told – I asked her that I was – I told her I was – I was told she wanted to remove my granddaughter in my care.

[Dialogue between Interpreter M. A. Nui and [redacted] in Mushuau-aimun.]

I was told that you wanted to remove my granddaughter in my care. I said the mother doesn't want to, and I explained I raised her since she was a baby with no help from the Social Services. I told her, as well, I never once requested for help to this – with her. And she still lives with me. And I never once received her child tax she's in my care. I applied for her child tax but I was asked for confirmation on adoption. I adopted her traditionally.

A couple of years ago I asked IRT for help one time, to help me to get her child tax and I was told they couldn't help me because I needed adoption papers. I didn't have any problem with one of my daughters when I – when I asked my mom and dad to – to look after her for me when she was a baby because I was struggling, and that – they had – they had no problem getting her child tax credit for her.

I wonder why the IRT workers didn't wanna help, because they're supposed to help. And I also wonder if – what about Jordan's Principle, because I – I wanted – I wanted to request for help with – with her. I'm not

gonna give up on get – trying to get help from Jordan's Principle and the IRT.

Even though we – I was raised in a non-alcoholic home. My parents never drank and they had other children in care. The children who were in my parent's care all left and only one stayed with us and we all accepted her and called her our own sister.

My mom left us a year ago, and today I regret not telling her anything what happened to me when I was a child.

And this is why I decided to let it all go today.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [redacted], [redacted].

Thank you for telling us very painful details that is hard for someone to – to say.

No adult or child should have to suffer as you did. But we do want to tell you that hearing the truth that Innu are saying to us is useful to make changes. We also thank you for your support of children and making sure that Innu values and Innu culture continue to be important.

We thank you both for attending and helping us out.

Thank you very much.

We'll have a short break now, thank you.

P. RALPH: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you (inaudible).

P. RALPH: We're finished for the day.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

C. URQUHART: The prayer.

P. RALPH: Yes, the prayer.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh yes. We'll actually close with a prayer, please.