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

English Transcript | Volume 11

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

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COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We want to introduce Mr. David Penashue, and you can decide, Sir, if you want to speak in Innu-aimun or English. Up to you, and you can decide if you'd like to have Anne translate.

(Inaudible.)

D. PENASHUE: Yeah, I'm okay to translate in –

P. RALPH: So Commissioner, Anne – Anne will still translate into Innu.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Do you want – do you want to translate the Innu?

D. PENASHUE: I'm okay to translate into English, into Innu.

P. RALPH: Okay. Right. The translators –

INTERPRETER NUNA: So he –

P. RALPH: – are for the benefit of people in the room. Yeah, so we'll still need –

INTERPRETER NUNA: – so he's going to do the both of them.

P. RALPH: – oh, okay. Great.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yup.

David, welcome. Thank you for being here.

You have in your mind why you're presenting to the Inquiry; please feel free to speak about whatever you want.

D. PENASHUE: Okay.

My name is David Penashue; I was born and raised in Sheshatshiu. I'm 49 years old. I was traditional adopted for my grandparents. My grandmother name was Naissa – Naissa Penashue and my grandfather, her – his name was Simeon Penashue.

The thing I'm gonna share about is – now, is – is when I – when I was traditional adopted, you know, my grandparents took me a lot to the bush. And my mom, who pass away a couple of years ago, now – must been 17 years ago that he pass away – and there are three of us, you know, in the family. I have a brother and I also have a sister.

My sister was – he got given away from that – from the child youth service. He was taken away and her name was Helen Penashue, but when she was adopted to other side, to non-Native people the – her name is Jill.

And growing up, you know, I was very young age when I knew I had a sister and also my mom, who pass away – you know, I remember when I was young – very young age, you know, my mom was telling me about stories about my – my grand – my – my sister.

And I – my mom had a lot of anger, you know, and she – I remember when I was young she told me about – a story about, you know, when my sister was taken away. My mom couldn't read and my mom was given a paper to sign. She was told this – this – this is only for temporary. And the – the paper that she – I guess, she signed, you know, was – it was adoption paper.

And my mom got so angry, you know. I remembered I was young, you know, my mom used to beat – beat me up a lot, when she was on the – drinking alcohol.

And I remember, couple years ago, I went to the treatment for – for 90 – for 90 days in Windsor, Ontario, and I share a lot about my mom, with my grandparents – my grandparents have passed away a couple years now. And being in the treatment, you know, it helped me a lot to realize, you know, because I was blaming my mom, I was blaming my parents, and I remember that I share about, you know, my mom used to beat me up a lot.

And I remember the – my group leader was telling me – he was saying to me, you know – I remember he said to me: You don't know what happened to your mom when your mom was young. And my mom had a lot of anger about the child youth service. And I got mad – like, in growing up, I got mad with my – my grandparents, got mad at my mom, and I got – I got mad at a lot of people, blaming people.

After I came from the treatment, you know, came out from the treatment and I was – I realized, you know, about my grand – my – my mom. The reason why she was so mad about a lot of things, and the damage – and the damage that she had, you know, emotionally. And that's a part I – I realize, you know, what happened.

But for me – you know, for me right now, you know, I'm – I'm very grateful – I'm very grateful I was traditional adopted for my grandparents. The stuff that I have, the stuff that I know right now, you know, the stuff that I learn, a lot of things in Nutshimit, in the country.

I do a lot of ceremonies, you know, in my community. I do a Sweat Lodge and I do a lot of – like, a lot of invitation from the people when they – when they're struggling that they have – you know, they bring tobacco for me to – to do ceremony for them, in their healing journey.

I was grade – I was in the high school of Peenamin McKenzie School, I was in Grade 9, but in then – in that time also I was in – in Nutshimit, in the country, with my grandparents, taught me a lot of things and

– that stuff that the high school or the universities cannot teach.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

How – I shared this to my sister. I spoke to her about that, and – I think she don't – she didn't get all the – the details –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: (Inaudible.)

D. PENASHUE: – about the – what happened.

But I am – I am fortunate enough, you know, that me as the Innu persons living in the community and, you know, learn – learning about the skills, about Innu people, and learning our traditional teachings, ceremonies … yeah.

And my sister didn't – didn't have that skills – to speak Innu-aimun. I remember my – I told her one time, I said: I'm jealous. You went to university. You went to school. Yeah. I remember he – she said to me too – also he was saying that he'd – but for you, he said. You can speak to our grandmother in the language. He said that, she cannot speak the language.

And – and I just want to say to – to the staff here, thank you for listening to my story.

Tshenashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: One second, now, David. We're gonna –

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – we're gonna respond. Have a seat.

D. PENASHUE: Sorry.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yup, no problem.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Tshenashkumitin. Thank you.

P. RALPH: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Oh, I keep forget – keep forgetting I –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We pay you big money.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Yeah.

I translate for myself. As I – I wanna thank David for coming forward, sharing his story.

And I think that for me, looking back, this is one of the things that we want for the communities, to come together and talk about and listen to other people's stories. And some people are further along in their own healing journey, as David is, and is strong and I appreciate that he – for him to come forward and – and share those stories and – and have the courage to do so.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah. I really agree with you, Anastasia, and thank you, David.

Thank you for recognizing what your mother had to go through –

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – to act the way she did. Thank you for forgiving her. That's really important.

And we learn, even from five minutes or ten minutes when people are speaking, so much about the value of being an Innu person and the value of retaining your culture and your language and everything that you are taught in Nutshimit. So, even though you may think you may not have said very much, you have taught the Inquiry so much about the right way to raise children.

Thank you very much.

D. PENASHUE: Thank you. Tshenashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Mm-hmm. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: So it looks like lunch break?

P. RALPH: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay. One –

P. RALPH: 1:30?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – 1:30. Good. See you at 1:30.