# 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*

Monday | Sheshatshiu | 5 June 2023

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Elizabeth is going to lead us at the start of our day with a prayer.

**ELDER PENASHUE:** [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** All set?

Want to say tshenashkumitin, thank you very much to Elizabeth for her prayer that guides us all today. I'll give my welcomes in a minute, but I'm gonna ask Anastasia to start off our day with her welcome as a Commissioner.

**COMMISSIONER QUPEE:** I – oh – okay.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Thank you. Tshenashkumitin.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Tshenashkumitin.

I want to welcome you all to the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System. This is now our third visit to your community and each time we have received a very warm welcome.

Commissioner Mike Devine sends his regrets as he has an unexpected family circumstance to deal with back home and he can't be here with us.

I want to recognize some special guests we have here today as we begin another session of community and private hearings. Mr. Bill Kennedy and his clients the – Ruby and Simeon Tshakapesh and their family who were here earlier, should be recognized as being one of the main reasons why we're all here today. Simeon has argued long and hard for us to make changes in the community in the way that child protection is delivered, and we're grateful for his hard-headedness and not giving up.

I want to recognize Louise Bradley who is our new healing services coordinator and will be assisting the Inquiry for the – the rest – the year and a half we have remaining.

**INTERPRETER NUNA:** What's her name?

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Louise Bradley.

**INTERPRETER NUNA:** [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** We have hired as a consultant Mr. Kenn Richard, who is a specialist in Indigenous – Indigenous child protection issues.

I want to recognize Mr. Alan Doody, Deputy Minister of Child, Senior and Social Development [sic], and welcome him here today.

The Province and the Innu and Canada what – want change and we are hoping that with all of your input we will make record – recommendations to the government that will provide that change for this community as well as for Natuashish.

We were last in Natuashish with a hearing like this and we had wonderful participation; people who stepped forward to speak with us. And in this community we know that people will step forward to talk about their experiences and the impacts on their lives and their family's lives.

We have – we have found that listening to people's history – their stories, their grief and their trauma – is actually helping us understand what has happened in the past and what is happening today. And we're so grateful that you find the strength to speak your truth to us. It takes true strength to reach out and look for support, but to help your community as well.

I'm asking Caitlin now to give us an outline of how the day is going to look.

**C. URQUHART:** Tshenashkumitin, Commissioner.

Good morning everyone. Thanks for joining us.

Nin au Caitlin, I am one of the lawyers with the Inquiry and I'm just going to provide some brief housekeeping remarks about how the – the day and weeks will unfold.

So the Commissioners will be here Monday to Friday, generally 9:30 to 4:30, hearing directly from community members. On Friday afternoon we're going to have a community meal and entertainment.

Each day we're hoping to hear from four people. We have two people signed up in the morning and two people signed up in the afternoon. To ensure that we can hear from as many people as possible, we've asked people to keep their statements under one hour, but we won't interrupt anyone or cut them off.

After the speakers who've signed up have finished, if we have more time, others who are present are welcome to speak. If you or someone you know wants to speak, please speak to Nathan Penashue – who is around here somewhere – our community liaison worker. Everyone who wants to speak will get a chance to speak whether it's this week or at a future week. We'll keep coming back until we have heard from everyone.

We are so lucky to have Anne here to translate for us. Thank you, Anne.

**INTERPRETER NUNA:** Mm-hmm.

**C. URQUHART:** These meetings are being recorded and the video will only be used by the Inquiry, unless the speaker wants their video shared. And the names of the speakers will not be used unless they've asked us to share their names. So we have asked the media to respect their – the choices of the speaker and we would ask everyone in the room to do the same as well, please.

If you or someone you know wants to speak but they – this does not feel comfortable, you want to speak in private without others present, please let Nathan know and we can arrange for that as well. And if you have any questions, find Nathan. He'll have an answer or he'll know how to find out the answer.

So this morning we're gonna hear from Mary Ann Montague. If you're ready, Mary Ann, you're welcome to – to come up, you can sit here next to Anne.

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

**P. RALPH:** Mary Ann, you have to move your mouth a bit closer to the mic.

**INTERPRETER NUNA:** (Inaudible.)

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** Oh, okay. Okay.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Welcome, Mary Ann.

You can speak in your own language or you can speak in English if you wish. Whatever you're comfortable with.

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** Okay.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

**INTERPRETER NUNA (providing English translation]:** My name is Mary Ann. I am from Sheshatshiu.

I have been in care like many other young people were.

My mother died in the year 1973. After my mother's death, my father started drinking heavily. I was probably around seven or eight years old when I was in care and so were my other siblings. There were four: my brother and my twin brothers.

The – my twin brothers were taken to Davis Inlet. So me and my older brother – and me – were taken to a dormitory here in North West River. There were two dormitories. I remember it was nighttime when I was taken by Social Services. I was sleeping with my grandmother. This happened after 12 midnight. I do not know why they were taking me and there was nobody there to support me. My grandmother did not speak English to support me.

Then I stayed in the dormitory. Around two or three years I was in the dorm. I did not see my twin brothers; they were in Davis Inlet at that time, and when I asked to see my older brother, I was not allowed.

When – also when we were in dorm, we were not fed properly. Nobody ever tried to see how we were doing. We were just there, in that dorm. I did not experience sexual abuse when I was there.

One time I tried to go to this side of the river, Sheshatshiu, I wanted to use the – there was a cable car back then, and I had an accident, a barrel hit me. The guy who worked in the cable car didn't give me a chance to let myself out and that's when the barrel hit me. The barrel – the barrel hit me on my legs – both of my legs.

Somebody grabbed me and took me to the hospital. And I was led back to the dorm and I was in pain again from the accident I had. And I was taken back to the hospital when I had the pains and this time I was admitted. I couldn't walk and they never X-rayed my legs. I was bedridden for two months. The workers in the dormitory didn't even bother to come and check on me or come and see me.

There are many times I would see people from Sheshatshiu walk – walk towards the post office and then that's when I start crying. It's not that long time that I actually realized how broken I had been in that care. It's only recently that I realized.

Yes, both of my – my grandparents used to drink but they still showed us love – the love they had for us – whether it be in the home or in the tent. And when we were in care, and that's when we lost the love that we once had with our grandparents. I did not experience, I did not see love when I was in the dorm. I did not experience it.

We went to Davis Inlet to get my twin brothers. They were unclean. And they did tell stories of how they were treated when they were in care. Sometimes they would hide under the table, and that's where they slept.

To this day I still don't remember, I still do not know who – why we were in care of the Social Services. I am proud to tell you my story, my experience, and to share. Only if my twin brothers were alive today I am pretty sure that they would speak about their experience while they were in care in Davis Inlet. But today I look at it, I'm also speaking on their behalf.

When I had grown into a woman I married and we fostered some children here and Davis Inlet, Natuashish too. There were five of them. I knew what they had thought, because that's where I came from. And I showed them my love for them, and one of them – two of them committed suicide while in my care. They committed suicide because they were drinking.

It has been so many years now that I have kept this inside me of what I had felt, and I'm proud to be here and I thank the Commissioners. And that's it – that's – I'm finished talking now.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Thank you, Mary Ann.

I'm gonna ask you just a couple of questions. What is your mother and father's names?

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** Madeline Nuke –

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Yeah.

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** – and Ponas Nuke.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Yeah.

Also, were you permitted to use your language when you were in the dorm?

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** No.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

**INTERPRETER NUNA:** There were other Innu kids there. We did – we did speak to each other in our mother tongue.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** We're very grateful that you took this opportunity to speak to the Commission.

I get you before you coming. [sic; referring to microphone not on]

We're very grateful that you took this opportunity to speak with us. You've told us about the value of a child having love.

You gonna translate or she okay?

**INTERPRETER NUNA:** [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** Yeah, I – I understand.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** You have told us the value of being part of a family, and you've even told us how we should recommend changes, if the Innu are to have their own child protection system.

You have taught us a lot even in your short statement, so I wanna say thank you very much.

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

[Dialogue between Interpreter Nuna and M. A. Montague in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

**COMMISSIONER QUPEE:** [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I just wanna – I'll translate for myself – I just wanted to thank Mary Ann for her courage to come in and be able to speak about her experience, and – and as she said, it's been, like, so many years that she's – she has carried this in her chest and thinking about it. Walking around in the community thinking about – about her experience.

So I just wanna thank her, and I hope that she'll come back again and speak more.

Thank you.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Thank you very much.

We're gonna be here 'til 12 o'clock before we have a lunch break, so anybody wants to speak with us or come forward. We'll wait to see anybody comes along, but we'll take a few minutes break at this time.

Very good, Mary Ann.

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** Okay. Yeah.

**COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:** Just like me. Not a – not afraid.

**M. A. MONTAGUE:** No.

**Recess**

[redacted]