

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

English Transcript | Volume 14

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

Thursday | Sheshatshiu | 8 June 2023

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Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [Audio recording loss due to technical issue.] – to the Inquiry respecting the treatment, experiences and outcomes of children – Innu families and children – in the child protection system.

Evelyn, what you say in English will be repeated in Innu-aimun for the listening people and for our records.

E. LIDD: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Move right close to that mic so (inaudible).

Thank you.

E. LIDD: I'm Evelyn Lidd. I'm not Innu, but three of my children are.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good.

E. LIDD: I'm Inuit. I have four children. My oldest is also Inuit. Three – three of my children are from Natuashish. A long story with CSSD. I asked them for help when I first moved to Goose Bay with my children. They were young back then. They did help me a little bit, but then they started trying to pick on me and my children because I needed help. I left Natuashish with my children. I left an abusive relationship.

I have so much to say. I'm trying to figure out where to start.

My children were taken from me – stolen from me – on my son's twelfth birthday. We were at Pizza Delight for his birthday supper. While we're there, CSSD called me and asked me where we were. I asked them why and they said: We're taking your kids away from you. So on the way home I told my kids that's what was gonna happen, and so three of my oldest kids ran away and I took my – my smallest, my youngest daughter home. When I got home, CSSD was there waiting for us. So I – I turned around and went to the back door.

After – after going to the back door with my daughter, CSSD told – said that I slammed the door in her face. I didn't slam the door in her face – I just went in and shut the door – and I wouldn't open the door for them for a while. But when I finally let – let them in, they were still looking for my other kids. And then my other kids came home later and then they had the cops there, waiting to take my kids away.

There's no risk for my children, to be taken away, only that I didn't have very much help. I didn't even have help from Nunatsiavut back then.

While they were at the house, the CYFS – CSSD and the RCMP, I had to try and convince my children to go with them. My kids were screaming and crying and they didn't wanna go. I ended up having to tell them that they're gonna use excessive force if you – if you guys don't go with them and that's what they did. They used excessive force on my two oldest.

I was able to take my youngest two without any issues and I brought them to where they were taking them into care. But my two oldest wouldn't leave, so the RCMP hurt my – the RCMP hurt my two oldest children. My eldest daughter wanted to go to the hospital, so I had to call and tell them to take her because of the RCMP hurting her. And the RCMP put my son's arm away, way up in his back. I believe they even had cuffs on him, like he was a criminal. He was only 12. And that's how they got him out and that's how they got him in the vehicle.

My mother was also there; she is really small. And while trying – I'm still trying to get my kids out before they got them out – the social worker came running at my mother: You are obstructing justice, you're obstructing justice. Almost ramming my mother out of the way. I don't think that's obstructing justice, trying – trying to protect your grandkids from white people.

After they finally got my kids, my daughter inboxed me and told me about how the cops hurt her and that she wants to go to the hospital. So I had to call the social workers and tell them they have to take her to the hospital. And I went to the hospital but I didn't stay 'cause I didn't take – I didn't bring a coat and it was getting cold, so I went back home.

My children would – they were moved to an alternative living arrangement. It was called

an ALA home, and that's where they were and that's where I would go visit them. In that home, there was so many health and safety issues, which I noticed. Every time I went there, there was something else that was a health and safety issue there.

So I did a letter to CSSD and wrote about the health and safety issues of this place, the – the ALA home. My daughter was sleeping on a mattress filled with dried period blood, which was not hers. All the beds were really old and ugly and disgusting. The couches were falling apart. A lot of stuff was falling apart there. The stairs in the back was dangerous if my kids were to go out there. So I did the letter. I brought – I made copies for myself, and I hand-delivered it to CSSD on a Wednesday.

And on a Friday – on the Friday after that Wednesday when I went to visit my kids, all the high-up CSSD workers were there with all kinds of new furniture, trying to set it all up because the ALA workers wouldn't do anything. The ALA workers would tell them: It's not my job to do this, it's not my job to do that. They just – it wasn't a good place.

My daughter called me one time and told me that the ALA workers wouldn't pick her up, and it was around 11 o'clock at night. So I had to figure out a way to get her back there. And I had to call the workers, and then I had to call social workers, 'cause they wouldn't pick her up. But they said it was basically more unsafe being with me. But they couldn't even get their workers to care for my children.

My daughter, that same night that she called me saying that they wouldn't pick her up, she called me and told me that a man – she was only 10 or 11 then, 11 years old, then – a man offered her drugs and alcohol and she told the man no and the man said he was gonna kill her because she said no.

She called me again and then I called them and I called the social workers and all of a sudden, the workers that were supposedly taking care of my kids called back: Oh yes, we're allowed to pick her up now. We're allowed to pick her up. Um, uh, I was looking at the wrong thing on the paper, I didn't know we were allowed. So they were trying not to get in trouble from not caring of what happened to her.

They – they didn't stay in ALA very long because ALA – Key Assets was taking over, making their new business with kids, which I cried happy tears, I thought – I thought it would be better. I thought it would be better for my kids. It was, a little bit, but at the same time it wasn't because my still – my kids still would come home, and at first I would always make them go back. But then they would tell me what it's like there and what the workers treated them like. I'm, like, I'm not gonna force my kids to go back to a place where workers are so horrible and so mean to my children.

It was wintertime also once, and my children had no winter clothes. So they would walk home and – snowing – when it was snowing out. And they would be cold when they would get home. But the workers didn't care. They didn't do anything. They were like: They just had to stay out of that house. And after a while, when my kids were always coming home and always staying at home and I wouldn't force them back there, then Key Assets would bang on my door every three hours. And they would say: I wanna see the kids and I wanna make sure they're okay and – and they would talk to me like I would be hurting them or doing stuff to them, and I'm like: They're – they're good. And I wouldn't allow them to come in.

I had to beg and bug CSSD over and over to try and get them to get my children winter clothes. They would always say there's something. They have to get – they have to get the PO, they have to do this, they have to do that. So for a long time they were walking home, even when it's cold, with no winter clothes. And I got tired of that so I would allow them to stay home. For them to take my kids and make life for my kids harder than life already was being Indigenous … I – I couldn't understand.

During all those times, I was in college or I was working. So I was a single mother with four kids doing the best that I could. All the

meetings that I would have with CSSD were horrible. I always had to meet with them weekly or every two weeks.

And the last straw that I had with CSSD on my own was when the social worker said: What is it like to be Inuit? And then she would try and get information on what – what it's like for my children, what it's like for me, what it was like for me. So I knew that – I felt like an experiment to them. And no matter what I did, nothing was ever good enough to give my children back to me, for them.

So I reached out to Nunatsiavut, and I got a youth case manager with Nunatsiavut who I told everything to, and she documented everything that I said. And then she would come to meetings with myself and CSSD 'cause I wasn't going to meet with CSSD alone anymore after the way they've treated me.

The worker couldn't believe the way that CSSD would treat me. She – she would write down – she would document everything they would say to me and how they treated me. And she couldn't believe, like, this organization was able to do that.

I went to a meeting where the social worker would yell at me and yell at me in front of Legal Aid, in front of other CSSD. And I would say something and they would act like she wasn't yelling, and they would act like, oh, well, she raised her voice. But she didn't just raise her voice, she was yelling at me.

The social – the social worker was a really horrible social worker. She came to my home one time and I wouldn't let her in. I opened the door only a little bit and I wouldn't let her in, so she put her leg into my door and if I was anyone else, I would've shut – slammed the door on her leg, but I didn't. She was very forceful and very mean.

Anyway, when my children would always be home anyway, the workers that were at Key Assets, they were getting paid to do nothing when my children would all be home. They wouldn't leave. I was able to get my youngest to go with them sometimes and my second youngest – second child. So I was – I got Nunatsiavut, the youth case manager, she helped me.

We went to court one day and they gave me two of my children the next day, because my children were supposedly in their care but they were never taking care of them. I was my own lawyer then 'cause when I had a lawyer before I wasn't allowed to speak, which I didn't like. So I was my own lawyer with the help of Nunatsiavut being my support and being there with me.

We – instead of CSSD getting me to sign any papers, myself and the Nunatsiavut lady did up a paper for CSSD to sign and even before the court was over, we had a break and CSSD signed the paper and two of my kids were home, which they already were anyway. But, um … so only one child stayed in care. No, two. My eldest daughter and my eldest son, they came home, and two of my youngest daughters stayed in care.

So my daughter, when she was 12 years old, she would always come home and she'd always leave where – where they were in care to go home. And when she came home, I told her to call the worker to come and pick her up. And she called, but I told her: Put it on speaker, I wanna hear what she says. So she put it on speaker and she called the worker and she said: Come and pick me up, I'm at my mom's. The worker said: What are you doing there? Instead of being like, okay, I'll come and pick you up, she yelled at her. And my daughter would tell me that they're not very nice to her.

So the worker came and I – I was too angry to speak to her, the worker, because of the way she treated her. So I just – I saw her come, she knocked on the door, we watched – I watched her for a little bit, and I thought my daughter got in the vehicle with the worker, but she didn't. I went in; I was so angry, I didn't wanna look at her, I didn't wanna see how she treats my daughter.

So I went in thinking everything is okay, my daughter's back there, she's safe, she's okay, but she wasn't. She ended up running away from the worker because of the way she treated her. The worker didn't even try and call me to tell me that my daughter didn't get in the vehicle with her. She – nobody even tried to call me to tell me anything. There was a call, though, when I was sleeping, when me and my kids were asleep, the – on the phone. It was, like, probably 2:30 or 3:30 in the morning. The number where she stayed was on the phone, so I saw that and I called her as soon as I woke up, after I seen the number there.

And when I called, the same girl that yelled at my daughter, she told me that my daughter didn't go home last night and: I was looking for her, I was following her and then I lost her and then I was still looking for her, and all this bullshit, and she, um …

Before I finish that story, my children were somewhat close to where we lived. Not so far. It was far, but not so far. But all of a sudden, one day CSSD moved my children all the way on the – close to the base, across from the KFC and – which made it more unsafe for my children 'cause they were still coming home. They were still walking home. Like, the workers still didn't, like, watch them when they would leave.

My youngest daughter was riding bike on the Kelland Drive, which is the back stretch, which is a very dangerous road. She was very young and after my other child told me, I had to find a ride to go pick her up because of how unsafe that road is. Luckily I was able to find a ride, and picked my daughter up and brought her home.

Also, after that incident – that incident that happened with my daughter when she was 12, was from living all the way far away from me. Yeah, the Key Assets worker didn't call CSSD. She didn't call her supervisor – excuse me. She didn't call anyone about what happened to my daughter – excuse me.

My daughter had been drinking. She was only 12 years old. My daughter had been drinking after this – that worker wasn't – or, after that worker was treating my daughter bad. My daughter didn't like it and she left. And she was drinking and she was raped at 12 years old. And she didn't even call the cops. And my daughter told her what happened; she didn't call the cops, she didn't call the on-call social worker, she didn't call Key Asset's social workers.

After – after she told me that, I – she said my daughter was sleeping now, so I hung up and I had to call the on-call social worker, I had to call the on-call Key Assets manager. I – I called the youth case manager for Nunatsiavut and I couldn't understand why she wouldn't have called the RCMP right away, 'cause my daughter is only 12. The only thing that I thought of was that she must have felt bad because she didn't do a very good job trying to do her job.

So after I called – I ended up even having to call the cops myself, because they still didn't call the cops. So I called the cops and the cops went there and my daughter was sleeping, I guess, and they let her sleep, but they went back later and they took her to the hospital. And a social worker when – my social worker was – who was another social worker – I had so many social workers because I would always complain about the way they treat me.

The social worker said: Well, your daughter doesn't want you there, you're not allowed to come here, when my daughter was at the hospital. And because I was so low and they constantly made me feel like a – I was a horrible person, I was a horrible mother, I didn't go. And I should have, 'cause every child wants their mother when something bad happens like that. But they didn't want me to go there 'cause they didn't want me to ask questions to my daughter.

So I told 'em to call me when she wants me to go there, I'll go there right away. And I – I got so depressed, I just lid [sic] down and didn't know what to do. And I talked to – in Nunatsiavut and told them what happened.

They said I'm – I'm not allowed to go see her. So it was all that, that happened. I think it was a week or so later that me – myself and a Nunatsiavut youth case manager and the social worker had a meeting, or a couple weeks, I think.

So during the meeting, the social worker said: Well, your daughter had the morning-after pill, and myself and the youth case manager couldn't believe what we were hearing, 'cause whenever they have to give you anything for a child, you have – the – the parent has to sign for it. And we both kinda yelled at her: What? Why didn't – why didn't you tell me? Why didn't anybody tell me? I would have had to sign paper for that. And luckily she – the youth case manager – has all that documented.

I – I don't think that would have happened to my daughter if she was at home, 'cause she would always call me, tell me where she is, what she's doing, who she's with. But there was some times in-between where I used to believe what CSSD would show me, that I'm not a good parent, that I'm a bad parent.

So I would just stay away from them. I would ignore calls, I would hope that they're actually getting taken care of the way white people want them to be taken care of. 'Cause in Goose Bay, you're not allowed to be brown. You're not allowed to be Inuit. You're not allowed to be Innu. And if your kids are trying to learn on their own and white people see, they'll call CSSD, because I'm a bad parent for letting my children learn on their own.

There's so many things CSSD has done to myself and my family. It – it's sickening. My children don't like being around people because of what white people have done to my children. They don't trust white people, because white people get away with everything. White people can lie and because they're white, it's the truth. Social workers have lied straight to my face, telling me that I tried to slam the door on them, that I did this and I did that. I never did any of those things.

And I tried getting a lawyer to sue CSSD for what they did – they did to myself and my children, especially to my 12-year-old. My – my daughter is now 18. She doesn't wanna live in Labrador anymore because of what happened to her. She wanted to go to treatment and I – I let her go to treatment and we went to family treatment and they wouldn't allow us – CSSD wouldn't allow my boyfriend to come with me to be my support and to also heal ourselves together. So I – I was only able to last, like, August to November. And I left my daughter in treatment and two of my daughters stayed in treatment.

And my daughter never wants to come back to live in Labrador again. She's now 18 and she's living on her own. She says there's too much trauma and she – she doesn't wanna see the rapists, she doesn't wanna – there were two – two men. She doesn't wanna see them around because one of them is a part of the homeless in Goose Bay, who's always walking around.

I went to the lawyer and spoke to the lawyer and they told me I would have to pay $2,000 just for them to look at our case, and then it would go up from there, and I didn't have $2,000 so I couldn't get a lawyer. Legal Aid was all the way up on – on base, so it was too hard to go up there and talk – talk to them. I talked to a lot of Nunatsiavut to try and get help, nobody would help me. I tried talking to Chief and council and other people in Natuashish and they told me that I should go to Anastasia Qupee. I left a voicemail for Anastasia. I never heard back from her. I wrote up a letter and faxed it to her, and I never heard back either.

So I've been – I did let it go somewhat. I'm still holding it on but not being able to get help. I've stopped trying to get help. But I was told recently that there are lawyers that – that can help but I don't know who they are. So hopefully I can find that out.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Evelyn, I'm gonna interrupt you because of the time of the day. Can you tell me, Paula, what – how many matters are on tomorrow?

CLERK (Battcock): I think there's at least two.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Two? Okay.

Do you live in this community?

E. LIDD: I'm here a lot.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: So could you come by tomorrow?

E. LIDD: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: In the morning?

E. LIDD: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

We're – it's gonna be a case where we try to squeeze you in. We have other people, but we'll try to do that.

E. LIDD: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: But given the time of day, I think we should allow our interpreter to have a break. She's been going all day, much more than anybody else, and sorry to interrupt you, but I think we will take a break.

E. LIDD: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And it might be good for all of us at this time anyway.

E. LIDD: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

We'll do –

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – 9:30.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.