

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

[redacted]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Please – please come back when we're back again, and you think that you'd like to add to your

[redacted]

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, once again, and we're inviting Roxanne – Roxanne Rich.

We ask people to let us know what they're thinking about; their perspective on life in the community, their perspective on issues involving child protection. Anything at all which will inform us and teach us about Innu life, we're happy to hear from you.

Thank you for being here.

R. RICH: Ah, okay.

My name is Roxanne Rich. I'm 51 years old and I live in Sheshatshiu.

When I was young, when I was a baby, I – I was born in North West River at the old hospital that used to be across the river. My mom was only 14 years old when she had me. My dad was only, like, 17 when he had me.

When I was young, I was sent away at foster home in Newfoundland. I don't know where but I was told I was sent away. I don't know what age I was when I was returned home back in the community. My late grandpa, Edward Rich, helped out to get me back home.

When I came back home, I – I was speaking in English. I didn't know my language and I remember how – how there was a lot of drinking going on when I returned home from my community. My parents were drinking a lot, my – my family.

At a young age, I remember I – I – I endured physical and sexually abuse growing up, from – from my dad. I was sexually abused, physically abused. From my mom, I was physically abused. And I was sexually abused – there was a lot of drinking going on in my home where I was growing up and I was sexually abused by other people that were drinking in the house when I was growing up.

And I remember when I was young, I was – I was – I am the oldest in my family in my siblings, and I had brothers and sisters and I – I used to look after them growing up. And I was the one who used to, when I was young, I used to clean up the house after a big party going on in the house.

And I am also the one who used to look after my sisters and my brothers and if there was no food in the house I was the one who would go to a neighbours house and ask them for food so I can feed my – my brothers and my sisters when they were young. I was really mature for my age. I used to be a hard worker. I used to do a lot of cleaning and I did a lot of work.

And after I was brought home from Newfoundland, I guess I – I was never followed up to check on how – how I was doing at home or whatever. I was never checked up. I – I endured a lot. I endured a lot physical abuse.

When I was young – I remember when I was young, my mom was drinking and I remember how she burned smoke butts on my hand, my arms and burning – burned my hair. I remember a public health nurse came to the house one morning and I don't know how old was – I was, but I was young. And I remember this public health nurse came with a Innu woman and they saw my burns, they saw my hair and I guess they reported – reported that abuse through social worker and the social worker came to get me and removed me from my house.

I – I – I was – I was put in a dorm across the river when I was young, and I lived there, I don't know for how long. I remember when I got at the dorm. I remember how disgusted the white people were when they were cleaning me. I had lot of lice. I had – they had to clean me and I didn't quite understand that much but I remember how disgusting I was to them. They cleaned me. They – they cleaned my head in hot water, which it was burning my head and I told them, but they didn't listen to me. All I did was cry and just went – just did whatever they asked me to do.

I remember going back home, and I was returned back home to my parents. And I endured a lot of abuse in that dorm. I remember when I was growing –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I don't wanna stop you, but I'm thinking about poor Anne, here.

R. RICH: Oh, I told her to stop me.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: (Inaudible.)

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

R. RICH: When I was returned home back to my parents' house – I went back home. I remember growing up I used to run away a lot. I used to run away when there was

drinking going on, or I wouldn't come home for a few days. Sometimes I would sleep outside in the woods or in abandoned car or someone's houses. I – I used to run away a lot when I was growing up. Sometimes I would run away to Goose Bay and I would sleep anywhere where I can find a good place to sleep. Usually it was outside.

I remember when I was 11 years old I got really sick of the way I was living. I got really sick of the way I was getting abused – sexually and physically. So one day I went to – at first it used to call Social Services – I used to go – I went down there one time, and I remember I was 11 and I spoke to this social worker. And when I spoke to this social worker, I was kind of like, not to open up that much but tell them a little bit so I can – so they can move me out of that house again.

And I remember when I was telling them I said: They're making me work hard. They're making me do all of this. Like, I only opened up the little bit to tell them what was going on in my home. And this social worker said to me – I went there in the morning, and she told me: Go to school. I'll take care of this. And I remember feeling I was so happy. I was so happy. I'm – they might remove me again. Like, that was the feeling I had that day when I went up to school. I was so – I remember being so excited and happy.

But when I – I went up – I went to school and when lunch came – came back – when lunch was here, I went downstairs to go – I didn't know where I was gonna go. I just went downstairs, and – because the kids were dismissed from school for lunch, and I went downstairs. And when I got downstairs, here was my dad and he looked so mad and angry at me.

And then I caught to him – I met him on the door and he said to me: You're coming home. You called the social worker on us? You're gonna really get it when we get home. And I was so scared when I was walking home with him. I was really scared. I don't know what was gonna happen. But I – when I got home I got hit by my dad a lot and – with a stick, like a hockey stick. I was all bruised up on my body.

And I remembered that time I just didn't wanna open up again. I just didn't wanna tell nobody again what was going on 'cause I really – I really, really trusted the social worker and I really thought she was gonna help me but she didn't.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

R. RICH: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

When I – after that happened, I kinda closed up. I didn't wanna – I didn't wanna tell anybody anything anymore, because I really, really trusted that social worker, that she was gonna really help me. But over the years I endured sexual abuse. I endured physical abuse.

And then one time – one time I was a teenager – when I was growing up I was getting in trouble a lot. I was into fight – I was fighting with other kids. I was always in trouble. I was stealing 'cause I didn't have no money because I – like – like Angela was saying, she had to steal to eat. I did that, too, when I was growing up.

And – and one time I didn't go home for, like, over a week, and I kept sleeping outside or my friend's house or – wherever I can find a place to sleep, I would sleep. And then one time I really wanted to go home because I – I was using the same clothes for, like over a week, and I really wanted to go home and change.

And me and my sister – me and my sister – one of my sisters – we ran away and somehow I told my sister what was going on in our house. I told her that, um, dad is touching me. Dad is doing this to me. And we were in the woods. We were afraid to go home. We were all – already teenagers and we both started crying together in the woods. And we were trying to figure out, but how – how to do this. Like – so she brought

up: let's go to Rose Gregoire and tell her this.

Me, I already told somebody once and it didn't go – it didn't go well. And then I was scared to tell. I was scared to talk to anybody. And – but she – we went to Rose Gregoire's house and – I said it's up to you, we'll go. So we went there. She wasn't home so we went back to the woods. I was scared to go home. She was scared to go home, too.

And then I remember, I said: We gotta go home, I'm hungry. And she was hungry, and I said: We gotta go home. And then we decided to go home. My mom and dad were at the house and I remember how scared I was and we went – I went in the house, and my mom and my dad weren't drinking, they were home. And my mom – my dad tried to come and hit me when I got home, and then my sister tried to stop him.

And then, I remember yelling: If you don't stop doing this I'm gonna tell what you've been doing to me. And – and he stopped. He stopped hitting me, and my sister yelled and said: Yeah, she told me what you've been doing to her. And then my dad got so mad and angry and he started kicking my mom out, me, my siblings, and I remember we went to my aunt's house.

And as we were walking I told my mom, I said: He's been doing this to me. And my mom didn't listen to me. My mom didn't do nothing. Another few years we were still all together and she didn't do nothing. Nobody'd listen to me. We just moved in our aunt's house for a few days and then we went back home and – and then still living in the same situation.

I was never allowed to have any boyfriends. I was never allowed to be – talk about boyfriends or anything like that, because my dad would always get jealous and get mad at me and hit me. I wasn't even allowed to talk to boys or have a friend as a boy, 'cause that's what he was like.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken] – then I – I remember, I just – when I was a teenager, I was in Grade 10 – I just started Grade 10, and I remember I ran away again and I was scared to go home and this time I was by myself. I was scared to go home and I went to school and I didn't know what to do anymore. I – I had this wonderful teacher, and her name was Anne Bitsack and she was – she was my favourite teacher. And I told her what was going on. I told her what was going on in my home.

And then I remember she – she asked Father Chris, our priest – he used to teach in our school – and he asked Father Chris to come in, and then I told him the same thing, too, 'cause I was really frightened going home and I didn't know what else to do, so I talked to my teacher.

And then she made – she made – she made it – she called the social workers. The one that I wanted to go to, Rose Gregoire, came, and the other social worker came and they talked to me and I told them what's been going on and I wasn't sent home – and they didn't send me home, they just try to help me.

And I remember I was placed across the river – people's – someone's house – white people. That's where I was put. I remember my dad was charged. I wasn't returned home. And that's when the anger came out – out of me. I started drinking. I started skipping school. I start stop going to school. I start having a boyfriend and just trying to forget all – I had my freedom, and I went the wrong way and started drinking a lot, growing up, and hanging out where there was drinking going on.

I didn't obey the foster home's rules where I was living. I got drunk and other men abused me while I was drinking and at that time I didn't really care about myself. At that time I hated being a woman. I hated being a girl. I hated being – I really hated myself and I never took care of myself, too, like a woman should. I never really washed myself or – I wasn't really clean. This white woman tried to help me as much as I can but I didn't – I would never listen to her.

And I just felt dirty for so many years. For so many years I felt dirty. I didn't like being a woman.

I got married in a young age. I got married in a young age. Same thing, I went through abuse through that marriage. Domestic violence. My ex-husband knew where I came from. My ex-husband knew where I came from. He knew – he knew my dad molested me. He knew my family molested me, my uncles, my cousins. He knew everything about me.

And in the abusive relationship I was in, he used to throw it at me all the time, making me feel bad about myself more and more. And I've been through a lot. I've been through a lot growing up and being in a young relationship – getting married young – and for years and years I went through it, and somehow I – I woke up when I had my first son. When I was pregnant with my son.

And my son is 28 years old now. He has spina bifida and he's on – on dialysis. And when I had him inside of me, that kind of started work – waking me up and I went through a lot growing up and I didn't want to – I didn't want to treat my children the way I was treated.

I was happy being – gonna be a mother and I knew my son had disability and I knew the challenges I was gonna go through. I remember when I was, like, almost eight months pregnant. I remember his dad was very, very violent and he was beating me up and I remember how – how scared I was and all in my mind I kept saying to myself: I gotta get out. I gotta get out.

But I didn't get out for a while, until he was six months old when – when my son – when I left his dad permanently. My son is 28 years old now, and I remember also, too, like – like, I was on welfare. I used to get $45 every two weeks.

And I remember like I – when I was pregnant – when I was – I didn't have – I didn't have – I wasn't in my – I wasn't in – I wasn't pregnant yet, but I was already married, and I remember me and my ex, like, he used to cheat on me a lot. He used to dump me and go with the other women, and I remember – I remember when I was – when he was dumping me and say: I don't want nothing to do with you. I want to go out with this person. I almost committed suicide. I wanted to kill myself.

And I remember I went to Apenam. I went to Apenam and he was working. He was all by himself in the office. And I was going through a lot; I didn't have much support system in my life, and I went to Apenam. And I remember I went to him and I said to him, I said – I said: I'm really – I'm really thinking of killing myself. I have no reason to live here no more. I really wanna kill myself. I'm – I'm not good – doing good. I'm drinking a lot. I'm – my husband – my boyfriend's beating me up a lot and – and he's cheating on me. And I remember telling that to Apenam, and Apenam told me: Just wait. Just wait.

And I waited for him and he made a call – he made a call somewhere, I don't know where, but he helped me. He – he called Brentwood – Windsor, Ontario – and I remember I went there. I went there for three – three months, I was out there. That was the new beginning of me helping myself.

But I – I came back home and I really thought my marriage would work out. And I got married 1991, and I went – and it didn't go well. I went to Brentwood in 1993 and then when I came back, me and my husband tried to work things out again; but it didn't work out. Still the same. He was abusive and still cheating on me and – but I had my son in 1995 and after he was born, six months, I left the relationship because – because I didn't want my son seeing me getting abused all the time. I didn't want my son to see any violence because I was – I was happy that I had a son.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken] – when around that time my son was born, I started working with the Child, Youth, Family Services. I came to work there. I was there for seven years – over seven years. I used to work as a youth centre – a youth worker. I looked

after the kids that were in trouble. I went to court for them, I visit them at the group home and I worked there for over seven years.

And I couldn't stay there because it was too much for me, 'cause I didn't like the way young kids were treated back then, with the white system, and I didn't agree with the white system, the way my people were treated. And it was too much. I hated it when I had to go into drunk – people that are drinking in the house, and remove the kids.

That was the kind of work I was doing, like a social worker's job. And I remember getting beat up by my people doing that kind of job for so many years, and I didn't like it. And I didn't like the way the system – the way they were teach – treating people.

And when I was working in Child, Youth, Family Services, I – that's where I found my healing. I started – Child, Youth, Family Services paid for my – my trainings. I went through a lot of a training. I went through healing, I went through Nechi, I went through workshops and that's how I started to grow and finding myself and help myself and learn new ways about life, to treat myself good. To treat other people good.

And for years and years I've been in my recovery. I've – I've – it will be 18 years I've been sober in November. That's how I've been helping myself.

Today, I have two stepsons. I have three children biologically. I have two foster kids. My youngest foster kid is 12 and she'll be 13. The other foster kid, I met her when she was almost five – she was five days old when I met her, and she's gonna be 18.

I sobered up when I had her, my first foster kid, when I met her when she was five days old. I was diagnosed I was – I had diabetes, and when the doctor told me I was diabetic, I – I was scared by – he scared me, this doctor, and he asked me if I was drinking and I was honest and I said yeah. Because after Brentwood I felled off the wagon again and – and I was still drinking. But when I was – when I had my kids I never drank when I was pregnant.

I never drank when I was pregnant. I never drank with my first one, my second one, my third one. I only have three kids biologically. I was smart enough not to drink during my pregnancy.

But with this first – I had so many foster kids growing up. I had kids living in my house but this – this kid was very special to me. This was my – one of my aunt's grandchildren. This was my late first cousin's daughter and she was special to me. Even though her mom is originally from Natuashish, I still have her today.

I – my three kids: Philip is my first son and he graduated high school. My second son is Teueikan and he graduated from high school, too. And my daughter, her name is Butterfly and she graduated from high school.

And me, when I was growing up, I really wanted to graduate high school but I didn't 'cause so much was going on. Nobody was there to help me, or there was no role model to help me out when I was growing up. But I remember thinking when I had kids: I don't want my kids to – to have the same regrets I have right now. I don't want them – like, I regret not graduating from high school. I regret not – not – not listening to the other people that try to help me.

And I remember saying to myself, like, when I have my own kids, all of them are gonna graduate from high school. I'm not going to let them go through what I went through. I'm not gonna let them go through without no food. I'm not gonna let my children go through without having proper clothing. Like, I remember saying that to myself, and I said: When I have kids I'm gonna do better for them. They're not gonna go through what I went through.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'm very sorry to interrupt you, but it's lunchtime. Do you wanna come back after lunch? Are you able to? Are you –

R. RICH: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – working?

R. RICH: Mmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You okay with that?

R. RICH: I – I'm hungry too.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Two o'clock.

R. RICH: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We'll start again.

Thank you.

R. RICH: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We're very happy to welcome Roxanne Rich back.

When you left at lunch hour, I'm sorry we interrupted you, but you were talking about your desire to graduate high school but – at – if you never, at least you wanted your children to graduate high school. You wanted them to – your kids to be safe. You wanted them to have food and clothing and – and live a natural – natural peaceful life.

Please continue

R. RICH: Okay.

All my kids are graduated now and I still got my foster girl. She's eight – she's going to be 18 this year. She's in Grade 11 now, my foster girl, she's finishing Grade 11, so hopefully she'll graduate next year.

Before I start, I – I know what a hard road I came from, but today – today as I'm sitting here, I worked really hard to get where I'm at right now. I've worked really hard on my own issues, on my own behaviours. I did a lot of counselling, a lot of workshops, anger management. Going in the country is my biggest healing. My late grandma used to take me in the country and that was a big healing for me.

I'm still in recovery. I'm still helping myself and I try to help my people. I go to sweats. I organize the sweats sometimes in the community and I still do that today. I know today was gonna be really hard for me because I – I asked my husband to make a fire this afternoon so I can have a sweat after this, 'cause it's been really emotional.

But I worked really hard. I forgave my mom and my mom passed away almost five years ago. I forgave my dad and my – my dad is home sick with cancer. He was diagnosed stage 4 cancer last year, and I forgave my dad and I love both of them so much.

Right now, today, the system has failed my little girl. I had a little girl when she was – she was almost seven months old when I had her and it was January 29, 2011, she was brought to my home, cold, and she was just a baby, and CSSD placed her in my house.

I fell in love with her. She was a baby. I fell in love with her. I had her ever since she was almost seven months old and she was returned back home to her parents when she eight years old. I've been a foster mother for so many years and – and I raised her for eight – almost eight years, but she was returned back home.

Last month, May 19, my little girl's younger sister came to the house lunchtime. And this little girl came to me and said to me that Mary wants you to pick her up and I asked her why. And she said: Mary wants some money. I asked my husband: Do you have any money? Can you give it to Mary?

I gave this little girl $30, I said: Here, go give Mary the money. But this little girl didn't wanna leave the house, and then I took a

good look at her and I said to her, I said: Jessie, what's going on? She didn't say nothing. She didn't say nothing.

And I asked her, I said: Is Russell hitting Mary? And she said yes and she said: Mary is all bruised up on her face and I act on it right away. I act on it right away. I just took that little girl Jessie into my truck and I said: Let's go. Let's go get Mary.

And we went to her house and I told little Jessie that was sitting right next to me in my truck, I said: Jessie, whatever happens, you don't open the door when I leave. I'm locking the door. You don't open the door to anybody. I'm gonna go get Mary.

And I went in the house where Mary lived with her parents and I saw my little girl – she's not little no more, but I saw her – and when I came in, she covered her – her hoodie over her face. And I went over and I took it off and I saw her, she was all bruised up on her face.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

R. RICH: I took her out of the house. I took her out of the house, she was trying to look for her boots and I said: No, forget about your boots. I took her, brought her in my truck. Her parents wasn't there, her aunt was there.

And I was so mad after I seen her face and I got mad at – his aunt was babysitting there – babysitting the kids there – and I got mad at the aunt. I said to her: Do you really enjoy watching my girl getting abused like this?

And her response was: I wasn't there. I didn't see it.

I said: Look at her face. You should've taken her and report this. And I was so mad and I just took my girl. I took her to CSSD office, because in the past, when Mary left me, I heard so many things about Mary when she was returned home. I heard so many things.

When she came to visit me, I had – my grandson had iPad and somebody was watching pornography on my grandson's iPad. My grandson was only two. A two-year-old cannot watch a pornography on – on her – on his iPad, and we didn't know who was doing that and I was very concerned. And I reported that to CSSD because the only person who was touching my grandson's iPad was Mary and I was already concerned. What is a eight-year-old doing with pornography on the iPad.

And then I got messages from the family, the mother's sister: Mary and my daughter were watching pornography and Russell, the dad, made him watch the pornography. I even reported that to CSSD.

Nope. Nobody listened to me. I was very concerned over her. I heard she was physically abused. I heard how – I heard he was physically abused. I reported that.

Nope, nobody listened to me. CSSD, I went to RCMP station, I talked to Anastasia several times, even at the gathering, when we had our gathering at Gull Island. My daughter was bruised and scratched on her face and the social worker – the white social worker was there and Germaine Benuen.

I asked Mary – I went to drop her off – junk food for her, because she wasn't in my care and I know her parents are low income, and I always try to help them as much as I can. And I went to buy junk food for my little girl, and I saw Mary, scratch on her face, little bruise on her face, and I went over and I asked Mary what happened. And she said – she said her mom beat her up.

And I got mad and I knew there were social workers in the gathering and I went to look for them. And Germaine Benuen was there, and that was, like, three or four years ago and nobody did anything. He's – she's still live there.

She's still suffer five year – almost five years in that home.

I reported when she was living in my home, when she was in school. I got so many calls

by her teacher of her behaviour. I suspected Mary had, like, a behaviour problem. I already suspected that. Like, I always asked the social worker that was her case, I always asked her: You guys gotta do assessment on her. You gotta do something. Her behaviour, I get so many calls from school and she's not like a normal kid, I said. I – when my kids were in school I never got no calls from teacher that many times. And I asked – I said: You guys gotta do something. You gotta do an assessment on her. But no, no they never did.

My feeling was that Mary always had, like, ADHD behaviour problems. That's what I always suspected but they never listen – listened to me when I was a foster mother to Mary and I kept telling them that. And I still think today she still have that problems.

When I reported that day, I took her to Child, Youth, Family Services – CSSD – and I was asked to take her to emergency hospital and I took her up there. I took her up there and that was the hardest thing – the hardest thing for me to do, but I did do it.

For a few hours we were alone in the room. I kept asking Mary did her dad touched her or did her dad touched her inappropriately or whatever, try to make it easy as much as I can but it took me a few hours – couple hours for her to open up to me. I asked her, later – I told her – I said: I love you Mary. I love you so much, I said.

And I said: Whatever happened to you, it's not your fault. You're just a little girl. I said: It's Russell's fault. He shouldn't be doing this to you. He shouldn't be hitting you. But I said: Whatever it happened, I said, you can talk to me. I believe you and I love you and I'm gonna be here for you. That's what I kept encouraging her.

And then later she opened up to me and she said to me: Mom. Yes? She said, Russell did something to me. And then I asked her, I said: Do you know what a penis is? He said: Yeah. And I said do you know that your – your private spot and he said: yeah. And I asked her did Russell ever put his penis inside of her and she said yes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Do you need a break, Roxanne?

[Dialogue between Interpreter Nuna and R. Rich in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: She wants to continue.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Do you want me to come over to you? (Inaudible) okay? Take your time, Roxanne.

R. RICH: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

R. RICH: When I was up there, after she told me that she went through this, I asked the doctor – because she told me her dad had intercourse with her, I asked the doctor to do a rape kit on her. I asked her when would – when did this last happen to her, and it was on the 19 I went to get her, but on the 17, on a Wednesday, she said that's the last time Russell did something to her. And when she told me that, I told the doctor and I asked the doctor to do the rape kit, and they did the rape kit on her.

She was so brave. She did everything what she was required to do. And the questions, the questions was so hard, but she managed to answer them. And – and she did a statement that night with – to the police, gave out her statement.

And I didn't want nothing to go wrong. I didn't want nothing to go wrong. I – I asked the social worker, I said: You'd better find a really good translator for Mary to give out the statement. You'd better find a really good translator. And you'd better – and I want – want my daughter, Butterfly, to be there and to hold Mary's hand.

And when – when Butterfly – I called my daughter and I told her what was going on and I told Butterfly, I said: You just sit there. You hold your sister's hand. Don't say nothing because I don't want no – I don't want nobody think that we're making her do

this. I don't want nobody to say that to us. Just hold her hand and be there for her. And that's what she did. And we found a translator.

And Mary is 12 years old today. She lives with me ever since that day I went to pick her up, and I'm really struggling right now. She's really giving me a hard time. She's really giving my grandson a hard time, too, but before she lived with me, my grandson is always around me.

Next week we're going to St. John's, she's gonna get an assessment done. I'm going to take her with me. I – I tried to call Charles J., see if she can go in counselling. I'm still waiting for CSSD to find a counsellor for her and that's been like almost a month now that she's been living with me.

I feel like the whole system failed her for so many years. I – I've been through what she's been through and I know how hard it was and that's why it's – I'm taking it so hard, knowing what happened to her. I never wanted any kid to go through what I went through, what she goes through now. It's so hard.

I'm so mad. I'm so mad at the system. I'm really mad at it. I hate social workers. I hate them. I can't deal with them. They've failed me. They've failed my little girl.

I barely have enough room at my house. I had room when – when she wasn't there. Ever since she's came to live with me, I gave up my room. I gave up my room and I said: You have it. I want to make her comfortable as much as I can. I – I bought a camping mattress and that's where I sleep in the living room with my grandson and my husband. That's how much I wanna help her, I just wanna make her feel comfortable.

When I – I've been a foster parent – when I was a foster parent with those two little girls especially, one time – one time, the social workers came to my house and I already had Mary and Jenica, my other daughter, in care. They were like – Jenica was a teenager. And one time, they came to my house trying to remove those two girls out of my house.

I wasn't drinking. I didn't do nothing. They just came in there with the police trying to remove those two girls. I didn't understand why – why they were doing that. I didn't know, they didn't tell me why. And then I fought, because these are my girls, and I didn't want them taken away because I loved them and I didn't want them to stay other place, and I asked the social worker: Why are you removing my girls? I said: You're not removing my girls.

One of my big girl, Jenica, she saw the social worker and she woke up and she said: What's going on? I said: They're trying to take you away. And my daughter ran out the back door – she ran out the back door, ran to my parents' house and my mom, when she was still alive, she said: Jenica came in and locked the door right away. And I asked Jenica: What's going on? Social worker's trying to take me away, she told my mom.

And what happened was somehow, somebody was – there was a domestic violence, and they thought that Douglas was beating up on me – my husband – and no, nothing happened like that, I said. There was no violence. We never had no – like, Douglas wouldn't do that, and it was mistaken. Other couples – they thought it was us but it wasn't us.

And then the second time they tried to remove my two girls, somebody went into their office in here, and they came to the house again with the RCMP and trying to remove my girls and I said: What's going on?

And I was the only one because there was a Elders gathering that I was getting ready to go, in Quebec. My – my husband already left and my – the people that I was supposed to travel with already left, and they came to get my girls and I said: What's going on? And they told me they gotta remove the girls now.

And I said: Why? And they wouldn't answer me. I ended up having – having Eugene come with me. I didn't understand why they were trying to remove my girls. They said I gotta – they gotta do investigation and the kids – and it's gonna take 60 days. And we were at the CSSD so many hours trying to figure out what was going on. They wouldn't tell me why they're taking my kids but they gotta do an investigation on me. And that really, really killed me.

Like – and then they were – they just didn't wanna give it up. They just wanted to take the girls out of my house and I – I was still trying to keep them. But what happened was, I told them, I said: If you remove my girls, if I agree with this, I said, you can do the investigation on me, whatever you – you can do it. I'm not gonna stop you guys. I got nothing to hide.

And they did remove my girls, 60 days, but I told them: You gotta meet me halfway. I said: If I agree for you guys to take the girls out of my house, I said, I want my girls to be placed with my sister because my sister don't drink. Her husband works at the school and I want them there, or I'm not gonna say yes to you guys either.

So I said: You gotta meet me halfway. And that's what happened. The kids stayed at my – my sister's house while I was investigated. And what happened was, at the end, I knew after the 60 days, they told me. They said: Somebody came to CSSD and said that I sexually assaulted them and my husband sexually assaulted this one person. They went in and told the social worker. That's why the kids were removed from my home.

And I was so mad with them. I'm – was really, really mad at them and I – I said: I've been in recovery for so long. I said: I must have done something when I was still drinking in my old days, but since I've been in recovery I haven't done anything like that. But they did remove my girls, and when I got finish investigated and they didn't see no signs of anything they returned Jenica back. They returned my big – my older girl back home.

But with Mary, they – they decide to send her back home to her – not – her parents. And I lost a lot when Mary was gone. I – I missed her so much. I was worried about her so much. I was always concerned. I always heard stuff. Nobody listened to me.

And honest to God, last month when I went to report what happened to her and this social worker that I kept going to, she was crying when she saw Mary's face. She was crying and I felt like I wanted to fucking slap her. You didn't listen to me before, now you're wanting – she wanted to cry. That's how angry I was.

Nobody believed me. I was just – just a third-party message – mess – that I brought in. I didn't see anything. I just heard from this person talking about Mary.

You didn't see anything, Roxanne, you didn't see. You just miss her. That's why you keep reporting it. You just missed her. Yes, I did miss her. I did miss her so much. She was my baby. It killed me when she returned home. It hurt me so much and I missed her.

I even called Child's Advocate in St. John's to help me. Nobody helped me. Nobody helped my little girl. She had to go through this for years.

Now I feel like – I feel like I'm – I gotta clean the mess now, what Mary went through. I gotta do all the work with her now to start over. I gotta start over with her. She's very mean. She's very – she's stealing. She's beating up on my grandson. And I gotta do all the work with her now. Me and my husband gotta do all of the work now.

Ever since she's been back, I get – she doesn't wanna go to school. I get calls from school when she goes to school, that Mary's like this. Mary's behaving like this. In the community people are calling me: Mary is smoking, Mary's doing this. It's just really overwhelming right now. The only thing CSSD is doing now, next week I'm going to St. John's and she's gonna get an assessment done. That's all they're doing

right now and I'm gonna go with her next week.

And I'm still so mad at the system. Just really mad at it. And I – I – I have to work. I really wanna stay home and be with her and work with her, but I can't. I – I got bills, I got – I got a lot of bills to pay and I have to work.

And on top of that, my dad is sick. He has cancer, and he was admitted for a week in hospital and I took a week off, too, to be with him, and I took a week off to try to settle in Mary. It's just too much right now and I'm so mad at the system. I'm so mad at the system. I'm so mad. Everything – like, nobody heard me. Nobody – when I reported, nobody listened to me.

I don't know how – I don't know – I don't know – I don't know what to do. I don't wanna let her go. I feel – I feel mad at myself for not trying harder. For letting her go through this longer. I'm beating up on myself. Why did I stop?

I even reported one time, when I was working in Goose Bay. The dad – the father – Mary's biological dad called me at my – at my work office, all of a sudden. And he called me and he said: Do you know – did you know that your boys molested my daughter? And it was a big a shocker for me, and I said: What?

Did – did – did you know that your sons molested my daughter? And I said: No. And then he just hung up on me and I was – wow. I didn't know what to do. And what I did was, I called CSSD.

I said: The father just called me and said to me, your boys molested my daughter, Mary. And I said: I don't think my boys would do that. They love Mary as their sister. But I got nothing to hide, I got nothing – I'm not gonna cover up my – my boys. If they did something wrong, you investigate it. I'm – I'm okay to doing – to do that, I said.

And Mary was interviewed, my other foster girl was interviewed, and Mary said: No, my brothers never did that. And I think that was like two – two years ago this happened, and I think that's – that's when Mary told me, when we were in the hospital, like, the sexual abuse happened when she was 10 years old.

They took really fast of – investigating me – the – the accusations they received, but when I report what – what I'd been hearing about Mary, no. They didn't act fast on that. It took them almost five years to listen to me, and I am so mad about that. I'm so angry about that.

R. RICH: The one thing that I think about right now is when Mary was returned home she never came to visit us. Only when – in – in the beginning when she left, but after that we haven't seen Mary. The department told me not to go see her and the parents didn't like it. That was the message that we got from the department of CSSD.

My mom died November 26, almost five years ago, and I wanted to go tell Mary that my mom died. I went to CSSD, I said: I need to talk to Mary. I wanna go tell them that her grandmudder died because Mary looked at my mom his grandmudder – her grandmudder, and all – all the kids that were in my care. And I wanted to tell Mary in person that my mom died and that her grandmudder died.

They wouldn't allow me. They said I can't do that; and then they said they will talk to Russell and Tanya. And I said: All I wanna do is I wanna tell Mary that my mom died. She looked at my mom as her grandmudder. No. Russell and Tanya didn't want me to talk to her at all.

And what hurt me was my daughter was in school and she went – Mary went over to her sister, Jenica, and she told – she asked Jenica: Did grandma die? And Jenica said yes, and she – Jenica said she hold her sister in school, crying. And I was so mad at – I was so mad at that. I wanted to tell her. I wanted to comfort her.

I know how my mom loved those kids, too. She loved her grandkids. She took them as

her grandkids and nobody can – cannot bring it back, and I'm so mad at that.

So we'll see where we go from now with her.

So that's it. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I do want to respond, but there's also a person who'd like to speak. You wanna speak about this case, or something on your own?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Something of my own.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay. So what I'll do is I'll finish up speaking here and then we'll take a break and then we'll allow you to – to step forward yourself.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Just give me one minute, please.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: It's very hard to properly respond, to give Roxanne any peace from where we sit right now. It's almost impossible to sum up the tragedy that has happened here in your story. It will take me some time, and I think the Commissioners some time, to think about the impact of what you've said.

When we listen to what you've been through, those of us who are not Innu can scarcely believe that you have the strength to talk about this. Then we realize it is almost the same for every person who has spoken, almost all women.

You have given us much to think about, much to report back to the governments, as well as to the Innu Round Table. All we can understand is, from what you said, how easy it is to do things wrong and how hard it is to do it right.

That's me.

And then, though, we realize that if you can turn your life around, then certainly the laws we help the Innu make can make Innu life better. If you can do it in your own life, we should be able to do it for Innu laws.

So we as Commissioners think about the power that ordinary people have to change things, and that is what you are doing. That is what each of you are doing when you come here to talk to this Commission.

So we can't thank you enough. We invite you to come back if you have more to say, if there's more on your mind. We hope to be back more than once over the next year, for sure.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Oh.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I'm just saying that I'm sorry for what has happened to Roxanne, and I'm glad that she started off her story with telling us about her childhood and how difficult that that was.

And to be able for her to sit and – sit here today – today and talk about her stories is very courageous. And I wish her well this evening as she goes and prepares for her sweat this evening. I wish her well.

Thank you. Tshenashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Fifteen minutes, please.

Thank you.

Recess

[redacted]