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

English Transcript | Volume 15

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

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[redacted]

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COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [Audio recording loss due to technical issue.]

We're pushing things a little bit faster simply because we'd like to get [redacted] and one – maybe another person, for sure, before lunch.

Welcome [redacted] It's a pleasure to have you here. I know that you were here before and you had to wait. Thank you for being patient.

[redacted] [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA (providing English translation): [redacted] says that: Those who have spoken, the women, I heard them and I believe them.

Yes, CSSD has failed us, failed me, because I've been there. But I always thought in my mind: Why me? Many years that it has been with me – the why, why me? And I am almost 55 years old and I have said many times, told many people that talk to me, that who I might talk to, I don't drink. Why did it happen to me? Why?

Before I came here to speak, I felt scared. I don't know why. I felt like I am going to court. Especially after seeing Judge Igloliorte here.

And then my wife told me – she was speaking to me in backroom here – that no, you're not in court. Just tell your own story in your own way, and that helped me to sit here and start my own story.

The system has broken me as an Innu and others in my community. I have seen what the system done in the past and to this day.

Also, my friends that were – my friends before, they're gone. I feel all alone. I'm lost. My community here feels like a ghost town without them and since I have been hearing other stories that I need to share my own.

And there is this first thing that I would like to share. My son was in care of CSSD when he was a baby. My son is now 25 years old, still in care. He's in Goose Bay at the – where they have the elder people stay in the hospital; he's there. I haven't seen my son because CSSD wouldn't – not let me.

My other son, who was traditionally adopted, committed suicide while in their care and that hurts me.

When will we wake up? When will I wake up? That's also in my mind. I always tell my wife that I want to see my son. Sometimes my other siblings, my relatives in the community, ask me – tell me that they have seen my son. Why don't you go see your son? Those are the two words I hear from my relatives and my siblings.

I was reared up by my grandparents. One time my grandfather told me, no matter what happens in your life, and it is gonna be a hard life – it is a hard life – do not revenge or avenge those who – done to you, because in time they will see and hear it themselves. Something will or someone will hurt them as much as you have been hurt; but do not revenge.

Today, I still have the words my grandfather taught me and how they raised me and loved me. He used to tell me: Do not overuse what is being told to you, what I tell you.

I did not understand what he said. I felt lost on those words. I did listen to my grandfather; and today, I understand, I think, what he meant. Because some people tell me, if I don't tell what I need to get out – out of my system – out of – I will be mentally sick. I will be mentally sick.

I worry about myself because in the past I had a heart attack. Sometimes I am alone in my house just thinking, and I know I'm hurting. And friends that I have met through Mary May Healing Centre tell me also that – to get out of my house. Take a walk. Go around. Go see other friends.

But I stop myself doing that and I feel lost and I am trying what they are telling me and I have started going to see them and listen to them. But I think I am not listening to myself, and I need that. I need to do that.

Yesterday I felt sad worrying.

I also wanted to mention that he said he likes music and he listened to music and there was this one song that he played and made him cry.

And one of his brothers visited him and says: My brother gives me strength and I give him strength. He told me to find something to do. He reminded me that I used to make canoes and says to me, we should walk around this community. And I have walked around in my community because I don't have a vehicle.

Then he ask me about treatment, where people have went. He asked me about it and I told him: I want to start in my own way. My own way to heal. I want to start to talk to people who have been there.

When my brother visits, we always listen to each other and I told him: We all know, we see our Elders are slowly going because our grandfadder used to tell me if there is no Elder within a family, within a community, this generation won't be able to do it on their own. To help each other, to give each other the strength. That's still in my mind, what my grandfadder used to say.

There is an Elder here in our community but I cannot visit that Elder because I – I don't know whether I am afraid or just don't want to go because it gives me back memories when I was with my grandfather. And that is where I am stuck today.

Like I said before when I first came here, I felt scared. My wife told me not to be scared. She said when you go in there, there are not many people there. Remember when you played in a band? There were a lot of people there when you played in a band.

I try to believe in myself to do what is best for myself. I will try my best and I know, and I have heard, it is heavy. I told her I will not be strong. Fear that I will face, fear that I have faced in my past of what was done to me too.

But it is good to know that I am here and that I have the support. Because of what my wife told me, they were – there will be people there to support, and especially her support for me.

Before I came – before I came into this room where we are, I was talking to my wife. She asked me: Will you do it in English? I told her: I don't speak – I am not fluent in English. I'll do it in Innu-aimun. Then she said: There is a translator there. Then I will try. But I am scared.

I am tired. A lot of people in this community knows also my wife suffers. Suffers with mental health illness. Sometimes I just want to quit. I wanted to commit suicide. One time there was a cop, whom I knew, came to me and talked to me and he told me: Don't do it.
I told him: You are different. You are different from my background, my past. You don't know me. Where I come from.

He said: [redacted] you have a lot on your mind. Don't just stay in your house. Walk around, visit. I left my house. I did what he wanted me to do. But still, I wanted to go back home. I wish I can find happiness again. It makes me mad when I think of it – of my past, what was done to me, and yes, I tell this to my wife.

I will be able to do it sometime, because I love being around people. I feel their strength and sometimes I don't think about it – think about what I wanted to do with my life. Here, my friend next to me whom I found, who I listened, who I talked to, I know he's here.

There are people sometimes that I tell, that I know the building behind us, the building that is in our community is built for CSSD and it's a big building. I guess there will be more children taken away from our community. More heartaches, more worries for us parents to go through that again. I hate this feeling.

I also think after I have done here, finished here talking, what will I do when I get home today? What will I think? Can't go to anywhere – to anyone, because I am afraid that they will think: Why now [redacted] you come and see me? That's what I'm afraid that they would think.

Yes, I have seen some people, I started telling my story. Then again, the question: Who is listening? Who would listen? Maybe someone who is elderly?

That's in the back of my head and there is a lot that I want to share that is also in the back of my head because I know an Elder will give me the strength to share.

I also wanna tell you that I have a – my other son who is in the community, he drinks. It's only when he drinks when he calls me. I tell him: You only call me when you drink and I've said this before, I don't talk to people who are drinking.

And I tell him: I know you have a child. I want to see my grandchild. Can you bring him or her here? He doesn't answer. I want to see – I want to be with my grandchild because I see the strength that a child can give to other parents and that – I want that too.

He doesn't reply. He hangs up the phone.

[Dialogue between Interpreter Nuna and [redacted] in Sheshatshiu-aimun]

I'd see – I can picture myself in others of what I have heard in this Inquiry. Especially the women who spoke, I hear them being there. I too have something to share and it is really heavy.

I am tired. I was told by people who have the experience to tell their stories: Yes, you will feel like heavy. But once you tell your story, you will feel lighter and be yourself.

INTERPRETER NUNA: I was telling [redacted] that you can also do it in privately with the Commissioners, if he feels he wants to.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

INTERPRETER NUNA: Mmm.

[redacted] [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: He said that's all he wants to say for now because he finds it really hard to tell, yup.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We're very grateful for the strength that you had to find in yourself to come here today.

We'll be back. We'll be back in the fall. We're hoping that people who have already spoke will return and new people will come to speak with us.

We agree with you that you're lucky to have a wife, a support person, and the memory of your grandfather, as well as your brother.

I'm sorry I made you nervous by being here at the beginning, but I think you did extremely well.

Like your grandfather, you're thoughtful, you listen to people and you care about others. And when you speak, we can hear how much you love him and how much you respect him. We look forward to your next chance to continue your story. It will get easier.

For the others, we'll take a short break. I know Emma wanted to speak. I – I think she was next on the list?

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: So we – we sincerely want her to – to participate, so we can go another half an hour after we have a break. Half an hour or 40 minutes or so and allow her, at least, to make a start before we have our lunch.

Ten minutes, please.

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