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

English Transcript | Volume 20

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

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[redacted]

Recess

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Okay, we'll begin with our last speaker, Maggie Antuan.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Okay, go ahead.

M. ANTUAN: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA (providing English translation): My name is Maggie Antuan. I am 36 years old. I was apprehended by CSSD when I was about seven or eight years old. I was placed in different homes and I was sexually abused. I've kept it to myself. I did not tell my parents nor my siblings, only my boyfriend. I thought I was in a safe places where I was placed, but the only safest place I've felt when I was with my grandparents.

I was 17 years old when I had my first child. It was a boy. His name is Jean-Baptiste Shapatesh. When he was two years old, his father committed suicide. I could not care for him so I gave him to my grandparents, traditionally adopted.

I used alcohol to numb my feelings and my pain. I did not care for my boy because I felt he was well taken care of at my grandparents.

When all that drinking happened to me in my life, I had another relationship. This relationship lasted 12 years. The guy I was living with was John Roy. But the relationship did not work out. We were always arguing, fighting, and the CSSD took our kids about three times. We were sent to treatment just to get my kids back.

But we'd relapse after relapse. We always relapsed. My kids were taken to Roddickton, Newfoundland. For five years I did not see them.

After the relationship I had with John Roy, I had another relationship and to this day I'm still with Frederick. We had three children. One of my girls, her name was Fredericka; she is seven years old.

When I was in the hospital, when my daughter was born, CSSD wanted to apprehend my daughter. They told me to look for someone to take care of her and for me to go to a 90-day treatment program. I did not go. So they took her from the hospital.

When they took her, I felt I wanted to do drugs and alcohol. But I decided not to go there. I decided on myself to attend a 28-day family program at Charles J. I was alone. CSSD did not even bother to ask me if I could go there with my children, with my family.

While at Charles J. treatment centre, I heard that CSSD said bad-mouthing about us. Frederick was also in another treatment centre and he got mad, what he had heard. He called them and then I had a phone call from CSSD. They told me they would bring

my daughter at the treatment centre where I was. I finished the program and I did bring my daughter back to our home.

After we went home together, it felt good being together as a family. Later on we went to CSSD, talked to them about bringing my other kids that were in Roddickton. And I will say this, my boyfriend, Frederick, helped me a lot with what I was dealing with.

They did bring my kids back when we had our gathering a couple of weeks ago here in the community. But I noticed by son, Micah, was given medication. A relax medication, I was told later on, to help him relax. And I thought to myself, how can you give a kid a relax pills – medication? Kids are kids.

And I went to my grandpa and told him about it. My grandfather told me to throw away the medication that was given to him. I told Frederick about it, and I said to him: I don't know what to do anymore. So we met – we made arrangements to meet with our community leaders, with CSSD present, because I did not want my kids to go back to Roddickton. And they did – themselves did not want to go back.

I was proud when my kids came home with us. But, sadly, I relapsed again. Then again we were sent to treatment. We've been going in and out of treatments about 10 times. As I sit here today, CSSD is still at our backs.

As you can see, my daughter is here with me in this hearing. She is the one who made me – who has helped me trying to change my life, and that is why I am here today.

CSSD took one of my daughters to St. John's today. I went to their offices this morning. I wanted to know where they took her; they did not want to tell me. And I'd like to let you know my daughter has mental health illness. I did not expect for them to take her to St. John's. I did chat with my daughter. I asked her where she was and she said: I'm in St. John's, Mom.

I blame CSSD for what has happened to my kids. I cry because of what had happened and something happened in my life last night.

And that's all I need to say. Thank you for listening.

[Interpreter repeating previous paragraph due to mic issue.] CSSD took one of her daughters to St. John's today. She went to their offices and asked where she was taken. She was not told anything. And she said her daughter has mental illness and she did not expect CSSD would do that to her again. She chatted with her daughter and she asked her: Where are you? Her daughter replied: I'm in St. John's, Mom. Then she said she started crying. She says: I blame CSSD what has happened to my kids.

Then she says that's all, this is her story. And something else came up last night, something happened and she is dealing with that. And she was glad to have – given the chance also to speak to the Commissioners, the Inquiry.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I thank Maggie for coming. And it's a difficult story, what she's going through, and takes a lot of courage to sit and talk about what's currently happening in her family with her children.

And I thank her for sharing, and people around the room to hear her story. Tshenashkumitin.

And I thank – her grandfather is behind her, Penote; that's her grandfather. So I thank them for coming here.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes, I also want to say thank you for coming and sharing your story today. And I think that this is not a past story. You're currently living it today. So things happened even in the past 24 hours and for you to have the strength and the courage to come here today and still tell

your story really speaks to that, to the strength that you have.

So I just wanted to say that to you. And that I do hope that things work out for you, and thanks again for coming today.

Thank you.

P. RALPH: Anne, do you want to translate?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You go ahead, Anne, you first.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Maggie, for having the strength to be here. You have not been treated right and anybody who has a heart shares your grief and your pain.

You're much stronger than anybody else here to have had to endure all this hardship. But we see you and Frederick interacting with your child and the love you have for your baby and that gives everyone hope. You are a good person, you're a strong person and you're a loving parent.

We can understand when Frederick says: When? When will you be given any peace? And we can't give you an answer, but we want to stand behind you when you say that you will continue to try and deal with the issues of relapse. And you have to be given enough chances – as many as you need – to feel better.

Everyone who comes here to tell us their story has taught us something valuable. And you have done the same thing. We want to wish you all the best and to keep fighting.

Just remember that you have come a very long way and you know that all of us who hear your story want you and your family to succeed.

We will be also closing today with a prayer. So I'll ask –

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Janet.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – Janet if she would step forward.

Thank you, Maggie.

ELDER J. MICHEL: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

ELDER ANTUAN: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: Penote wants to say something.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

ELDER ANTUAN: I'm very – first of all, I'd like to thank you, all of you, for allow me to try to set up our agony in the community. And while she was saying a prayer, I remember all of the people who didn't come home in – at the residential schools.

I also want to wish you a happy journey when you go back to your places, and be safe one, and I'm very thankful.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Penote, I appreciate it.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Tshenashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Stick around for (inaudible).