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

Transcript | Interview Private Session 1

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

Thursday Sheshatshiu October 26, 2023

P. RALPH: Okay, so I think that's lined so that we had – yeah – these two corner seats here.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So I think if he can sit here.

P. RALPH: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: I'll sit here, and Heidi, when she came in she was over there, so that should –

P. RALPH: And that's fine. The way we had it set up with Anastasia – and you can decide –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

P. RALPH: – is that, yesterday, for example, Louisa was here and Anastasia was there. But that's whatever –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah, whatever you want.

P. RALPH: Yeah, so I'll leave you guys to it.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah.

P. RALPH: I'll just hit play. Do you want the CBC –?

E. N.: It could be recorded?

P. RALPH: Yeah.

E. N.: Okay.

P. RALPH: Yeah, let me just get the CBC person here.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah and do you have somebody coming, too, as a support?

E. N.: No.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: But did you want somebody?

E. N.: Hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: That's up to you. It's all up to you.

E. N.: I'm running around like a chicken with it's head off.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, you can sit there or here.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And so if you sat here – if that would be okay with you – would you rather that I sat there or there, beside you?

E. N.: Oh, but what about the camera?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: The camera is going to be there and there, right? CBC will be there and there.

E. N.: Where is CBC's seat?

P. RALPH: CBC will be right there.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: This is set up for there, but we can get the guys to change it so that – if you would rather sit there.

E. N.: Where do I sit?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Either there or there.

E. N.: I feel comfortable here.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, so I'll have a look. Yeah, I think that's – oh, yeah there's lots there. And so would you rather I sat here or sat closer?

E. N.: Probably.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: All right.

P. RALPH: Okay so we're just going to press – it's recording right now, is it?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

P. RALPH: Okay. Fair enough.

So where do you want to set up?

H. ATTER: I'm okay back here but if –

P. RALPH: Okay.

H. ATTER: Edward, is it okay if I'm over here?

E. N.: Yeah.

H. ATTER: Okay.

E. N.: It's okay, yeah.

P. RALPH: Okay. You know where I am if you need me.

E. N.: So everything is ready to go?

Okay, thanks.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: If you're okay there, I'll set up right here.

Now I'm not going to take notes now because this is recorded so I'll get the transcript after.

E. N.: Okay.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So that I won't have my head down the whole time like I'm not listening to you.

E. N.: Okay.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay?

E. N.: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: It will be similar to what people have done. So it's going to be you telling your stories.

E. N.: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So I guess that's what I will start with, is that this is a time for you now to tell us your story, your life story, whatever parts of it you want to tell us about that you would like to share.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And it's entirely open for you to tell us what you want. There's no rush with this. So just take your time. If you need to have pauses, like, that's fine, and if you feel the need to have a break at any time, then absolutely, that's fine.

This is your time and your space, so however you want to do it.

E. N.: Okay.

H. ATTER: If you need a break from this too, you just let me know and I can stop it at any time.

E. N.: Yeah, okay.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I'm Edward. I'm from Sheshatshiu. I'm 59 years old. I'm currently working with the Innu Inquiry as a healing services team lead. I'm a father and, hopefully, a grandfather soon. I lived in Sheshatshiu most of my life. I moved around with work. I worked with the federal government.

When I worked with the federal government, I moved to Nova Scotia, to Amherst. It was more like a partnership between Sheshatshiu First Nations and Indian Affairs. So I was more on a training mission. That was good experience. I did it for a year and then I worked with Sheshatshiu First Nations for a number of years.

I guess I'm here to tell my story. It's nothing I think I always thought I would do. It's not something, I think, that's easy to do. I think it takes courage and strength to do it. I've worked here and listened to these

testimonies and, eventually, I think it brought me to a place I need to tell my story, too. So I was listening to my brother's story yesterday – the other day, I think.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I was going to listen to it, but then I backed away because it kind of scared me. I started to feel emotional. So that kind of scared and I told my coworker I cannot be here listening to his story.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: So I left for half a day.

I never imagined that I would tell my story. I never imagined there would be a place to do it because, one thing, I think I was scared. I was protective about my parents –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

E. N.: – as a young person.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I didn't wanna hurt them and I didn't want my brothers and sisters to know about my story.

Growing up – I was born in 1964 and the way I think – my life sort of changed, I think, growing up over the years. I started to drink. I started to do drugs. A part of me always wondered that story – why do I feel the way I feel?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I wanted some answers. I didn't know what those answers were. I didn't know. But there were times, I think, where I was in relationships and every time – there were probably four or five relationships that I've been in and every time someone got closer, I broke it off.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I broke it off for one reason or another. I didn't know why. I didn't understand why. It went on like this for a while. I didn't really know why. I thought the drinking was for fun at that time. But over the years, the drinking and the drugs started to get me sick.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: And I ended up in the hospital, probably about three or four times from alcohol withdrawals. I kind of hit bottom, I think, somewhere down the road. Then my good friend, which was my boss, too – my behaviour started to impact my work and I was given the ultimatum that: You're gonna lose your job or you're gonna change. So I decided to go to treatment. First time I went to treatment it was back in – I went to Ontario. Then, again, after a while, I think I relapsed. I relapsed several times, because at that time I think it was scary. It was scary being sober.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: Still at that time I didn't know why I was scared of my feelings, I didn't know. There were mistakes in my life I made that sometimes I regret. And those mistakes I now realize were results of what happened in the past, but before that, I didn't realize that.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I think about eight years ago I relapsed again, but this time I think I relapsed, started doing drugs, started doing heavy drugs, cocaine. I remember at that time I think I felt: This is the hardest rock bottom I ever felt.

I remember one time walking – probably about 5 o'clock in the morning – walking down the road in the highway, not knowing where I was going to go. That was a scary moment. I was sort of wanting to run away, I think, but I came back. I came back into my mother's and took – I think it was a sleeping

pill, I think I took. Then I felt better after that. I felt calm and then went to sleep.

At that time, I was also working with the Chief and, again, I was put in that position, my boss confronted me, intervened sort of, and told me again: You know, your job is impacting your work. You gotta go to get help, go to treatment. I was reluctant – I was reluctant. I remember after that I went back after. I didn't listen to him. When I went back after it got worse and worse.

I remember sitting down one morning in my house. My house was smelly, it smelled like smoke. There was no food in the fridge. My daughter was gone, she was with her mother and I felt so alone. I think it was a friend of mine there that said, I need to go to treatment. I remember being very emotional, and that's how it is, I think, when you reach rock bottom.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm, yeah.

E. N.: It's just like being hit by a ton of bricks. I cried and cried and then I cried and cried. I think I got so tired of it. I got so tired of it. Then my neighbour, who also went to treatment, he works in justice, at my home, I got tired then. I remember my anger coming out, too. My anger was towards my dad, thinking: Why did you leave me? Why this? Why that?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I got tired of crying and then that's when I think I surrendered. That's when I said to myself: That's it, I'm done with this. When I surrendered, I went to my friend who was next-door neighbour and he was with the treatment program, with the Brantford treatment program. He was an alumni there and I went there and I talked to him. I talked to him what was happening in my life, what I was doing, the alcohol and the drugs. I told him about that. I was honest and he invited me to a meeting that evening. I believe it was Sunday, he invited me to a meeting that Sunday and I went. I went to that meeting and my recovery started from there. That was back in 2008. I think it was 2008, or it might have been eight years ago.

I remember going to that first meeting and I felt like I was heavy, that I had a very heavy backpack that I was carrying. I was nervous, I was scared; I was scared of being judged. It was the same treatment program that I made fun of, saying, you know, they're not helping people here. They're just controlling people. They're just telling people what to do, this and that. It was a program that I didn't like and so I – but also, at the same time, too, I tried to wiggle my way out of it, to escape.

I remember before going to my friend at the time for that, after my boss confronted me, I remember going to Social Health and meeting the counsellor there who was my uncle, it was Sebastian. He passed away. I said I wanna go to treatment, but I said I wanted to go to treatment, 30-day program. Just to get the people off my back.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: Just to get the people off my back, I wanted to do that. And I remember him saying no, I am not going to send you to a 30-day program. I remember him saying there's a treatment program down the road, a good treatment program that you can go to. And I was angry; I was furious. Because I think I was trying to just get the people off my back and feeling that I wasn't ready.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: So there was a step back before going to that program, before getting invited to that program and then going to that program that evening, I went then – also, I think, the next day, I went to see my boss. Met with my boss privately, and I said I'm gonna go to the treatment program, but I need your support. I said it may be a long process. It may be about three months, four

months I'd say, but I need your support, I said. And he said yes, okay.

So I went there and that's when I think my healing journey started. But in the first two weeks of going there, the battle was inside me. The battle was inside.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

E. N.: These negative thoughts. This is not gonna help me. I'm not going be here. I don't wanna be here. Like, I was barely hanging on to my chair, that evil thinking –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: – that negative thinking: This is not gonna work. You went to treatment four times and it still didn't help you.

So I stuck it out for two weeks and, after two weeks, they finally said do you want to become part of this treatment program. I said yes. I started from there. It might have been October or November that I went in.

I think it was March I graduated. Because the group leaders were from the Brentwood program in Windsor. I went through the process, a good three or four months, you know, and started to clean up my act, started to feel better about myself.

I started to share honestly about myself and about things that went on in my life. I started to share those to people that I trusted. But at the same time, too, I was open to sharing it with others in the community, to help them, too. Treatment, I think, is a stepping stone.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: In the treatment program, I think you build your foundation, you build your supports. As I went to treatment and graduated, I started to go to meetings probably about every night. I went to meetings for about six months, and group meetings, too, I went. Over the years, in the last eight years, I think I started to heal more. But the healing came with a lot of other doors opening, and those doors were doors I didn't expect.

I think when you've experienced trauma in your life, I think some of those traumas, the doors stay locked, some of those traumas. They open up I think when you're ready, and one of those traumas was the answer I think was looking for, because I always felt I was scared of love.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I was scared of love. I was scared of people in authority and I was scared of relationships. I was scared of my feelings.

I remember, over the years, I gradually got adopted by a very nice family, a teacher and a janitor. So I was adopted and I'd stay there. But, yeah, I wouldn't stay there long. I'd stay there now and then for a couple nights. I felt like I was a drifter. I was going from one house to another over – when I was younger, and I only stayed places where I felt welcome.

I was scared of kind people. I remember in school, I was probably in Grade 2 or Grade 3, and I think there was kids of us, they were running down the hallway and the teacher shouted and when the teacher shouted, I stopped and the other kids just went on. Then the other kids were brought back and the teacher brought us in the closet and told us that we should listen, that running and stuff like that.

I remember her saying you should listen. She said the only person that listened and is a good boy is Edward. When he said Edward is a good boy, that just – it made me cry. It made me emotional. It made me – it was just – for some reason, I just cried – I just cried. I didn't know why. So I thought about that in my recovery because these other things were opening up, these memories started to work backwards.

Then, as I got older, to drifting from (inaudible), I was eventually sexually abused by my uncle. I was probably about, like, 12 or 13, somewhere along then. So that abuse went on for years and years. It eventually got into my teens and that's another part of my story. So these other things that happened to me, right? Then as I started to be honest, other things happened.

My mother was sick, my biological mother was sick and I thought I'd go over and visit her at the hospital. She was in ICU. I remember sitting in the chair across from her. I had my phone with me and when she was in her bed, she started to reach out for something, she started to reach out and when she did that, my body became different. My body totally went, like I lost control of my body. My body started to shake, my breathing started to change, my lips started to dry up and I didn't know what the hell was happening. I felt like either I was gonna freeze or I was gonna run.

So I sat there and then I tried to deal with it. I grabbed my phone and started to look at it, but still my body, my reactions were telling me something else, something is not right and I need to get out of here. So I got up and went to the other room where my brothers were watching TV at the hospital, I went there. And how do I shake this off, what I was going through? So I started making jokes with my brothers and sisters, but still it wouldn't go away – it wouldn't go away.

So I left and I went to outside. I went outside to my truck and when I opened the door, the air just swooshed in and I felt like I breathed – when I breathed it felt like I was breathing fire. And this flashback came to me, it was a flashback, I went to my truck and in my truck, that's when I saw it, it was my mother had abandoned me at four or five years old. I saw this in a clear picture, because I remember I was going to the house, it was a brown house and I know that house. I could see my footsteps and I could see I'm following my mom – mother. She went into this house, and when I saw that, you know, I – then she brought me into this house and then she said to the people in the house, there was an elderly woman and an elderly man and her daughter, and she said: Here, take him, I don't want him. At that time, I think I didn't know what was happening.

I remember I started to cry because I could see the clear flashback and the woman picking me up. Then I saw the door closing. That's when I think I started to cry. I started to cry and cry, I wouldn't stop. I wanted my mother back.

Every time I talk about it, it doesn't get any easier. The pain doesn't get any easier.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: That was a very traumatic event.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I remember us sitting on the table and they were trying to get me to stop crying. They were giving me candies, they were giving me chips, they were giving me drinks, but I didn't want none of it. I remember just throwing it to my mother, saying I want my mother. I cried and cried and cried. I wouldn't stop crying. I think eventually they let me go. They knew, I think, I wasn't going to stop crying.

After that, her daughter let me go and she said: Now, you know where your house is? You know where you live? I said yes and I left. I left and I went home. When I got home, there was drinking, drinking at the house. At that time, I think that's when my whole life changed. When you are young, I closed up. I've locked that door –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: – when I was young. Never thought I'd see it. That answered all my problems. That answered the reason why I never

wanted to be in relationships because I was scared –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: You didn't think you were a lovable person, because –

E. N.: I was scared of kind people.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah.

E. N.: I was scared of people in authority. There were times I think when I'm scared of women in authority, which is – there were several times when my boss had confronted me, and my body reacts to that. It feels like my mom confronted me. And when that door opened, the other doors started to open, too.

Because my mom, when I went back, that's when she started to physically abuse me. She abused me over the years, and when I heard the term black sheep of the family, I always could relate to that. I always could because I wouldn't (inaudible). And there's a reason behind it.

And it had to do with my dad, you know? While I was in treatment, I started to put these puzzles together in my life, and I started to see the timeline, and somehow these things started to make sense. 'Cause my dad was happy we're there, you know? I always believed, growing up over the years, drinking, my mother didn't love me over the years. My mother doesn't like me.

There were a number of times I think that I would have died. I remember one time her beating me up. It was probably late at night, 11, and it was a snowstorm and one of my sisters saw it and said fight back, so I did fight back.

When I ran out, I ran out without no coat, without no shoes in a snowstorm. I remember being so scared going around the house, behind the house because I was scared she might follow me and standing there behind the house. I remember the fear, I think, shield me from the cold. I wasn't cold because what I wanted to do was just get away from there, I think.

Then I remember running away. I remember the snow was high and dredging up, you know, and I couldn't feel the snow. I couldn't feel the storm. I just wanted to get as far away. I remember eventually I think my brother, my older brother I think, following me. He must have followed my tracks in the deep snow, and I remember him grabbing me and just putting me over his shoulder. I remember fighting and saying I don't want to go back. I don't want to go home. I don't want to go back there.

But he eventually said, you know, I'll hide you; I'll protect you. I remember he said, when we got there, don't a word, shush, she's out. Then I did and he brought me upstairs. I think my mother knew I was back in the house, and I remember her shouting, running upstairs, and my brother hiding me behind the bed where he was sleeping and my mother saying: Where is he? Where did you put him? I think I must just have fainted because I didn't remember her after that. I think the fear just knocked me out.

So situations like that occurred. Over the years, I think, as I grew older, I started to wander around from house to house, and then started gas sniffing when I was young, started breaking into other things, could get in trouble with the law, and I eventually, you know, stayed in different places.

There were times where I was staying at the priest's house. I think I did that. I remember one time the priest took us to Ontario. I don't know whether he ever told my parents about it. I don't know whether my parents knew about it. I don't know whether anyone cared that I was gone or not. I went with one of my best friends, two of us. I don't know whether we drove or – I think we drove and went to Ontario to a priest (inaudible). That kind of, I think, brought me to a different place.

I remember one priest grabbing me as I was walking, grabbing me and cuddling me on the (inaudible) and I was trying to fight back and then he had put me in a spot where I couldn't move, so I got stuck there. I think those memories, I just closed those memories, I think.

I remember also at the priest's house, I don't know, for some reason I was standing in front of the priest's bedroom and his suitcase was open, right. I saw these magazines that was porn magazine and in his suitcase, he had condoms and he had women's underwear. I remember those. But I didn't think any of it, right? I didn't think any of it.

And he would ask us to have a shower, you know, bathe and you kind of always felt like, you know, someone was watching me while I shower. 'Cause his bathroom light was like that, but also there was a window there and I kinda felt sometimes he was watching us. I felt like somebody was watching, but at that time I didn't know, I didn't think of it as him – think of that in abuse, right?

Yeah, it was kind of scary, but I think every night with my buddy, when we were sleeping in the priest's house, we would get a knife and just use it as a lock, just jam it in the lock so that the priest wouldn't come in at night.

I didn't know at the time what it was, you know, but I think the priest was abusing us in our sleep. I remember when my best friend went to court, I remember getting called from the lawyer, when the lawyer called me to say: Did the priest abuse you? And it was so sudden, right? It scared me. I said: No. I said: No. I just put the phone down and then didn't want to think about it after that, didn't want anything to do with it.

Years later, I told my friend about it. And to this day I (inaudible) our adulthoods, we hadn't talked about it. We hadn't shared about it. I asked my friend one time, I said: Did you see the priest sexually abuse me while I was sleeping? And he said: No. He said: I never looked. He said: I was scared. That's were times when he slept alone and it was only me in the house, and we slept there for a couple of years, I think.

The priest went to court and got charged for sexual abuse with my other friend, but I never said anything. I was scared. You know, I was scared. I think I was scared I would be judged by others; I would be judged by the community. My adoptive parents were very religious and they didn't say (inaudible) by other abuser, my uncle, so it's been years until one of my cousins took him to court and he ended up in jail for it. I remember going to my cousin, saying: Thank you.

The other thing I remember, as I got into treatment, I remember having the courage to go to the corrections centre to confront him. Because the way I felt like, I felt controlled, I felt hurt and so I went there one time to confront him, I said: You stop, stop doing what you're doing. Because when he abused me, I remember him talking to me one time and saying: If you tell anybody, they're not gonna believe you. If you tell anybody, they're gonna blame you. And he said: If you have a girlfriend, I'll kill that girlfriend. If you have friends, I'll do the same thing to them, too. So growing up over the years, even friendships, right, I'd only have friends for a while and then after that I'd leave them because I didn't want them to get hurt.

I remember one time one friend of mine, we were at some place and he got mad. He said to the other friend, you know, he said: Don't be friends with him. If you're friends with him, he's only gonna be friends for a short time and after that he's not gonna care about you. I laughed that off, but like I said, in terms of reason, like, I was protecting them.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: Eventually I was able to tell my biological mother about it, before he passed away. I said to her: Your brother sexually abused me when I was young. And he didn't know what to say, I think I might have scared her, I think. And she said, try to get some help. And then I did get that help.

But over the years, too, you know, growing up, I'm dealing with my issues one at a time and that flashback had a real difference in my recovery. In years later, that big question was, you know, does my mother love me. I tried to answer that. I think it helped. I think the group therapy helped me a lot. I listened a lot and I didn't feel like I was alone in this struggle.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I remember thinking about it, that question, does my mother love me, and I remember one time I was playing at the old school in the backyard and my mother calling me and – that was my biological mother. She called me and I went where she worked in the kitchen and she was measuring me, you know, measuring everything. Then she gave me cookies and milk and I went out to play again.

A couple of months later, I think it was time for First Communion at the church and then (inaudible) came into the house, they had clean clothes, bathed and then she brought out this plastic bag and it was a suit. It was a suit that she sewed herself. She made the suit; she made my pants and my jacket. When I think about that, I think that answers my question, did she love me. I felt (inaudible) of pride, you know? I think that's when I decided to forgive her.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

It seemed like she loved you, but she didn't know how to show it.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And how to be that with her own problems, too.

E. N.: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah.

E. N.: The puzzles that we did together was – she was hurt and I had to go think about her past, too. She grew up in alcoholic family. Her mother died when she was young and she was raised by an alcoholic dad and step-mom. When my father was cheating on her with somebody close to me and she felt hurt, and then she felt I was her target to her, that she was feeling with my dad, that I was her target. She wanted to hurt my dad –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: – the only way –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Displaced.

E. N.: – to do it was give up on me –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: – or abuse me. Let my father see that. And it was years later, I think, I finally got my anger out at my dad. It wasn't my mom all along; it was my dad.

Years later, I think, after being in recovery, I started to work for child protection. I worked with Social Services, back then – '80s, probably? About two or three years, I work with them. In the 1990s (inaudible) I think in 1990s and then, after that, I left because this young girl disclosed sexual abuse. When she disclosed sexual abuse, that brought up feelings I hadn't dealt with.

Then I left the job to work with Innu Nation, in finance. And my drinking was heavier, right?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: So my life then, I was thinking about it before testifying, what does the timeline look like between there and then. And then I'm thinking about, you know, I tried to committed suicide three or four times. I'm thankful sometimes I never succeeded, but I'm also grateful I was raised by a very beautiful family, teacher and a janitor. They looked after me for many years, and I think it was 50 or 55, they finally said that they – and the other thing with my healing, I think when you grow up in a different house, that feeling of belonging, where do you belong, that was another big question: Where do you belong? Also, with my healing, I think I had to – there's only one person in your life that loves you, that matters, I think that's the biggest healing part, I think.

I remember back in, I think it was, 2018 at Gull Island, I went to visit my adopted parents in their tent and there were teachers there. Then my adopted dad, he introduced me and he said: This is my son. He said: I raised him, he's mine. He'd never said that before, over the years. He'd never said that and when he said that, this inner child of mine inside, I felt so small. I went to make my tea and get some bread and sat there. I think I might have been a little bit stunned, I think, when I heard that, I didn't know how to react. I just sat there. After that, I think I left.

When I left and walked out, it was a beautiful evening and this incredible feeling of finding where I belong. It's just an incredible feeling and accepting love from him and from my adopted mom. It was just an incredible feeling. I said to myself: This is it. This is the ultimate day of healing.

Yes, I said, you know I've been through a lot but I'm survivor – I'm survivor. My job has been over the years – in the last 10 years maybe – to protect other children. That's my job and I've done a lot of reading, done a lot of reading on trauma, on healing and educating myself about healing, educating myself about making the system a little bit better.

It was kind of hard to take this job as a healing services team lead for this Inquiry. For one thing, it feels very scary for my own wellness, I think.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, yeah.

E. N.: I wanted to close that door. I didn't want to open that door.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I think listening to others brought me to a place where their courage has helped me to share my story, too, and I'm grateful. I'm grateful for my adopted parents. They done a good job, you know. When they passed away, that kind of scary at the time because I think it was my trauma, I think, reacting to when my dad started to get sick.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: My mom told me about it. Your dad is starting to forget about things, like tea on stove. She said he's burnt the tea twice, and kind of the trauma inside me just flared up and, you know, I'm going to lose my dad.

I remember going to him and I remember buying him – I don't know whether they helped or not – going buying multivitamins. I don't know. I sat down and I said: Here, take this once a day. That's gonna help you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Anything you can do to help.

E. N.: But yeah, he was also struggling, and he was getting older, and I think it was time for him. But I'm grateful for him to say now you are my son.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: That made a big difference. Because I remember one time going back and they were going camping across the river, and I remember them telling me to look after the house while they were gone. I remember eating and looking at them as they drove

off, and immediately I got emotional when I saw them driving. I didn't know why at the time.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: Because my biological parents were two doors down, down the house.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

E. N.: And I remember when I cried at the window, I remember going to their bedroom and just lying there with their blankets and smelling them and just crying myself to sleep, and then waking up feeling better. Because I think my bond was with them; it wasn't my biological parents. I think with my biological parents I'd lost that bond when the abuse was there. After that, I think I didn't trust them. I didn't know whether they loved me or not –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: – and that was that, so I stuck to the people that cared about me, people that loved me. And I'm grateful for that, you know?

The healing, I think – I'm 59 – there's a time in your life when you tell yourself this is set time. My healing's over, it's time to enjoy life now, time to let things go, but I know the pain will always be there because of the kind of work that I do –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: – trying to protect other children.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: You understand it, and where it's come from.

E. N.: Hmm?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: You understand it; you know where it's come from.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So that helps you too, right?

E. N.: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah.

E. N.: And I'm able to navigate it.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: And I'm able – it's very easy now and then to reach out for help, instead of being scared. But I'm grateful this Inquiry happened in my town. I think it was a healing Inquiry for me. It helped me because I'm grateful, I think, seeing the people that are sharing their stories. Down the road, it's going to help them; it's going to heal them.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I think the only place we will heal is within our community. The people in our community will heal, not the people that are going to be on the outside.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

E. N.: It's gonna be the people, I think, psychologists and stuff like that. I think the healing is gonna be about community wellness.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm, that's right.

E. N.: Because you see a lot of alcohol and drugs, and those people that are selling drugs, that are taking advantage of other people, right?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah.

E. N.: Also in politics it's the same, you know? Those people sometimes that want to run, take advantage of other people's vulnerabilities. Those that don't help, that just brings the community down a lot more.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

E. N.: I have to be honest. I'm tired of covering up the community problems.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah.

E. N.: I think it's about time that you take that sheet and uncover it and just see what goes on in our community. How do we heal it? We'll never heal if we start to hurt each other, you know? I think drugs and alcohol had done a very serious damage.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: Especially – I have friends that sell drugs and I feel sorry for them, but I don't talk to them. I don't want to be part of that problem, and I'm grateful. I know they don't like me. I know that, because I work in healing, I work in helping people, like working prevention of child abuse and helping families, you know, and protecting kids. But I believe we need to heal as a community.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm. Yes.

E. N.: That's it.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Well, just a few comments and some feedback, is that, when I hear your story, your life was very much, you know, what happened in your childhood –

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: – and the trauma of that –

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: – and how we talked about –

E. N.: And the other thing I think that I didn't share –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

E. N.: – is the important thing, I think, in this. The place that my mother abandoned me is a woman who worked with Social Services.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Oh, okay.

E. N.: Who worked for services for 10, 20 years, I think.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

E. N.: And growing up over the years, she never came and see me, she never came to talk to me, she never said: Do you need help?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: And she knew I was abandoned, as a person who works in social work, she didn't come to help me. And that's why I think the other things, the other abuses came into play, sexual abuse.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: Had I had someone at a younger age that was protecting me, like Social Services, I probably would not have ended up in those situations.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: I would never have ended up in the priest's house, teacher's house, and the other side, I think my courage and my strength, I have to be grateful for. I tried to commit suicide three times, I'm glad I didn't.

I remember I worked with IRT and that worked to help to tell me – because I remember my anger coming at one time, because we did a session on colonization.

When we did a session on colonization and the blanket – you ever do the blanket format?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: I don't think so.

E. N.: Yeah, when we did that, that came out, and Social Services was there, that's where my anger came out. That's when I said, you know, Social Services didn't protect, I became abused.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

E. N.: The person who worked with Social Services who knew that I was abandoned, probably knew I was being abused. She never once came to me. That's sometimes heartbreaking. I know that most people will say the system wasn't protect, you know. I think about that, you know, I think about was the system – (inaudible) system was colonial system and was that the intended purpose, right? I think about that. But that is what I find, it didn't protect me in the long run.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: You know, maybe she thought that Social Services wouldn't be protective.

E. N.: At that time, yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: She had so many stories, you know, that ended up being – regardless of how things were here, maybe she thought that was better than if you were sent somewhere else.

E. N.: Yeah, she probably thought I was in –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: But I do thank you for sharing this morning so openly. I'm so sorry that you've had the many, many challenges that you have in your life.

But I think at one point you said you're a survivor.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: I wouldn't say that, I would say that you're a thriver. You not only survived, but you thrived.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: I think you're doing very well.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So I congratulation you on that.

You talked about gratitude at the end and how grateful you are for that.

E. N.: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: You talk about mistakes you've made in your life. Well, I don't know anyone who's lived your age or my age who doesn't look back and say mistakes that we've made. We've all made them, big and small.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: That's part of the human condition, I think.

It's not about the mistakes you've made but all the good things that you do and that you're continuing to do today.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Obviously, from the way I heard you talk, is that, you know, you didn't know what was – something was wrong, but you didn't know. It was so bottled up in there you couldn't in any way, but gradually it sounds like pieces started to come out and gradually you got to a point – you talk about the lowest point where you said you had to do it and begin to understand that.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Certainly, it's very – I found it very – it's emotional and deep when you talked about the flashback that you had and how vivid it was in your memory, and that's what you held for years when – you know, I think you now realize your mother wasn't able to. She didn't have the know-how to do it and figured that this might be a better way to protect you.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: But at that time, at four or five years of age, then, you can see why you thought that.

So, you know, you've done a lot, and the last thing that you said was talk about, with the Inquiry, how it's – and I'm glad to hear that, I guess because I'm so involved with that – that it can be a healing place for people. I think that's part of why we talk about, in the Inquiry, you know, as Commissioners and staff, is that, like, part of this, in actual fact, is the reconciliation aspect to it, you know?

E. N.: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: For so many people to come and speak publicly and privately to people, as you've said at the very beginning, it takes a lot of strength and courage.

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And, you know, you've demonstrated that this morning. So I thank you for that.

E. N.: Also, working over the years, I did – what was it I did? I worked in education. That was 20 years ago, I think 20 or 25 years ago – 2003, I think, working as education director. As an education director, I actually started to do an assessment to try to bring social work training to our community.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

E. N.: There's actually an assessment that I did with – I don't know if you remember. You might not remember Gail Baikie?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Oh yes, yes. I know of her.

E. N.: Gail was one, the other one was, I think, Bella. Isabella?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Leslie Bella?

E. N.: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah, I've worked with her until she retired. Yeah, okay.

E. N.: The former Chief that I worked with on that is here, Paul Rich.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

E. N.: And I showed – he doesn't remember some of the things I said. I showed him the letter that was written to him by the university, I think. Then I showed him the assessment, just to remind him. Twenty-five years ago –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

E. N.: – I think, I tried to do something about it.

But anyway, that's –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: It takes a while.

E. N.: Yeah.

H. ATTER: Can I double-check your current job title?

E. N.: My current job title is healing services team lead –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

E. N.: – throughout the Inquiry.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Inquiry. Thank you.

All the best.

E. N.: Yup.