

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

English Transcript | Volume 25

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

Natuashish

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COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, so we're ready to start again.

Thank you.

So now we'll have our next speaker and –

M. A. RICH: Hi, my name is Mary Agathe Rich. I'm from Natuashish. I'm originally born in Davis Inlet.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE (providing English translation): She says she wants to talk about – she wanna share a story about when she was in school. She's gonna start when she was in Grade 1.

She said, she remember that's when it starts, the abuse, when she was in school and when she was hit and also putting – going to the office and beat in there, in school. She was still in school when she was in Grade 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 and 7.

She said, she had – she was with the foster parents and sometimes she lied to them because she'd never go to school when she's supposed to be in school. But, she said, she was too afraid to go back to school because she was hit in school.

Maybe she's in eight – maybe eight or nine when she first started sniffing gas. She said, she started sniffing gas just to forget things, about what happened in school, and she was not enjoying it. It's not – it didn't help her, gas sniffing.

She said that, when she was 12, she was still sniffing and she didn't stop sniffing. It was a long time, she said, she was still on

the gas for a long time. So, she said, the Social Services took her and the Social Services were involved. So, she was taken to a group home.

She said when she was 12, her sister committed suicide and, she said, she couldn't stop sniffing gas; she kept on going. So, when she was 15, she was returned to Davis Inlet. She said, she started sniffing again and she also was pregnant and she still was into sniffing gas.

And when we moved to Natuashish, she said her brother committed suicide. She was – like, Social Services were involved in him, too. Social Services took my other sister – sister or brother?

M. A. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Sister – oh, brother. She said, Social Services took him away and now she – he's still there. He didn't come back.

When her brother died, she said, she didn't go back to sniffing gas or anything, didn't do – touch anything. She said, I feel like I was getting stronger, like something is showing to me that these things were happening, and it was showing to her that she got stronger. She didn't – because she didn't touch anything. Her brother, she said, was killed. Somebody killed him.

Yeah, she says she went – she still – it's still strong in her mind that – what happened but, she said, she wants to do something. She went to the court and she's still working on that. She said, she's doing that for her brother – her brother that died.

She said: The CSSD is thinking that the people are bad – bad people. People change, things happen and that's what's happening. There's a lot of things that the CSSD did to the people and they hurt a lot of people in so many things. When the CSSD tell people that they're bad people – parent, it's not true, he said.

It took her seven years to get her kids back and her grandchild. She said: The parents are not bad parents. It's the social worker who call the parents bad parents. She said: I almost believed her, the social worker, when they said I was a bad parent. I almost believed that. But it's not true.

She said, when CSSD says something about parents, they're believed. Like, the other workers believe them. But they don't know this. It's not that they're bad – they're not bad parents. They're not bad people. We're not bad people because even though we're not white people, you know, it's just like it's hard for the Innu to be believed when they say something or do something.

A mother have a heart, she said, but the CSSD don't know how much they hurt the parents when they took the children away. She said, she had struggled, too, for a long time. When the children were taken away, she ended up drinking. She said, my son was taken away. She might be one day or two days old and she didn't know where he was. She recently find him. She said, the social worker lied to me and saying that my child is in Labrador City. The whole time my son was in Goose Bay.

My daughter was – [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. A. RICH: Uh-huh, Faith.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Her daughter named Faith; she committed suicide in Goose Bay. It was a social worker that also paid the ticket for her daughter to go see her son, her kid –

M. A. RICH: Her daughter.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Her daughter in Goose Bay.

Am I making sense?

P. RALPH: They paid for her to go see the baby in Goose Bay.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Yeah, yeah, her daughter, Faith.

M. A. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Yeah, Faith went to see her daughter in Goose Bay. They also paid the – her hotel, too.

When they heard that she was drinking then, they ended up not letting her stay in the – in a hotel where she was. But when she was drinking, that's when they did that. She was cut off in a hotel and the ticket was also cut off and that's when my daughter died over there, and she didn't know where to stay.

She said, the – I think the Social Services should take – give the kids back to the families now, because, she said, the kids are start talking only in English. And the kid that – one of the kids that was up there was given the antidepressant pills and he can't do anything for himself.

And she said, the other thing is that there was no counselling for her child in there. She said: I had to do everything for him and he was not learning anything when he was out there where he was taken, like counselling and other stuff. She didn't – he didn't learn much out there – didn't learn much.

M. A. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: The foster home did that?

M. A. RICH: Uh-huh.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Social Services took my children, she said, then she – they were saying that he were going to take them to the treatment program, but ended up in the foster home. And, she said, there was no certification for my children. When you complete a program, you get certificate. She said: There was nothing like that if they were in foster home.

That's all she want to say. She said, thank you.

P. RALPH: Thank you.

M. A. RICH: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you very much for speaking to us today. My deepest condolence on the loss of your child. There are many things here that you've told us that give us cause for concern and I think it would be helpful to us as we go forward as an Inquiry to make some recommendations that are going to hopefully address some of the issues that have been presented today.

Of course, we're hearing from many people so, you know, already we're hearing many similar kinds of things. So, thank you for that. Really appreciate it.

M. A. RICH: Mm-hmm.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I'd just like to thank Marie Agathe for coming and giving her thoughts and her story to us and I know that we will cross paths again in the new year, her and her partner Stephen.

So, thank you.

M. A. RICH: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: Thank you.

N. BYRNE: Thank you.

P. RALPH: So –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Would you like to take a break now?

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So, Peter, there is nobody right now –

P. RALPH: There's no one lined up now, so I guess a few minutes and see –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah, we'll take a few minutes break. We have somebody

who is coming in via Zoom, we expect, today. So, we're waiting on that.

Thank you.

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