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November 28, 2023

Mary Jane Poker:

I'll talk about in the past, when I was young. My late mother let me go. I remember -- I remember I was older now. 1970, something around there. Around 1979. I remember I was at the dorm. I don't know how old I was. I can barely remember.

I remember some. A lot of times I was under the table. I don't know what happened when -- wondering what happened to me. Because I was always underneath a table. I don't know what happened. This is what I remember, me always underneath the table. That's all I could remember is underneath the table. Maybe it's the workers. I didn't want to go to them. That's all I remember.

Where was my mother? And I'm just wondering where I was staying. I was told I was mostly in the hospital. My grandmother told me a story about I was -- you were young. You were always sick, really sick. There was a bridge at the -- across North West (phonetic).

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The cable car was broken. And my grandmother told me that I was -- they took me on the sled and took me down to the hospital across.

Then she went to the hospital. I was told that I would have died if I wasn't taken to the hospital. I was told I was -- I would have died. My grandmother told me. She always tell me about this story. Maybe just a couple months old.

And a lot of times they were going to give up on me. The social services would have taken me away. My grandfather didn't want that to happen. She said -- she told my grandmother that they'd never see me again if I let go. And that's the time that they let -- they kept me. They used to always go to the country. They're always out in the country.

But I don't know what happened when I was in a dorm. I barely remember. But I was -- maybe I was out in the bush then, like, around that time. I remember how scared I was, always afraid. But there's nothing there I could remember.

I remember when I was in the hospital, I tried to run away. I took off out of the hospital. I remember the hospital -- the first hospital

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across the river. There are grass behind the -- there was stairs down around that area. That's where I run. I remember. I do remember. I remember chased. I was in the hospital, outside one time. I tried to walk away. But I don't know. I don't know. Maybe I was going home. I was (inaudible) know where I was going. I was just walking around outside.

And some -- one Innu person came and told me to go in. You're going to get lost. I couldn't remember who it is. Maybe one of the Penashues, maybe one of Mary Adele's son. A woman, maybe Louisa or Emma. I remember one of them. But I barely remember where I was.

Maybe that's what happened. Maybe I took off. Maybe near -- maybe the dorm was near the hospital. Maybe I was running off from there. I don't remember. But I remember just being there outside hospital.

And then my grandfather took me -- grandparents. And I remember. And then we were always out in the bush (inaudible). And when I was in the bush, they said I was burnt. As under my crotch, that's where I had the -- that's the

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poker stick. And she was playing with it. I was playing with it. And then they picked me up.

And the plane got stuck in the ice -- on the ice when it landed. It couldn't go. The nurse and the doctor were on the plane. And they were stuck for a while. And then, after they did manage to get the plane out, they took me out. That's when I was a little girl.

I feel so good when I'm in the bush. I remember my mother, too, when I was young. I was small. I barely remember. My mom was very drunk. My grandma was holding me. My mother -- my late mom told my mom, I'm going to take Mary Jane. I still -- I remember that. All of a sudden my mother grabbed my hair, pulling my hair. She was drunk. She pulled my hair.

And I remember going in bed and just screaming, covered myself. That's what I remember. But I remember the other stuff that happened to me. I don't know. I don't remember. Maybe long -- that was a long time ago. I don't know how long I was in dorm, also, when I stayed there. I don't know. I don't know how long I was there.

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Then I was always -- I remember, I was always being in the bush. And every spring and every fall, I used to be out in the bush. Later on, when I got older, I was 17 years old when the last time I went out to the bush with my grandparents. My grandmother was still alive.

And then I got pregnant. And I was going through a hard time when I -- I remember that. I went through a really hard time. And social services were after me. I tried twice to attempt suicide. I went to the hospital.

Social services took me away when I was 13 or 14 years old. I was put somewhere else in the -- another house. I was there for two years. Then I got really -- I went through a hard time. I start drinking, drinking a lot.

I was so scared when I was told that social services was going to take me away. I was so scared. And when I'm told social services are here, I used to be so frightened. Maybe I was afraid where I was -- maybe I was afraid where I was across the river. I had to -- I was scared. I was so scared. And I was scared to be alone or even the lights to be turned off in the room, I'm

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-- I got still scared. Maybe that's where -- what happened in there, where I was looked after. I'm still afraid to be alone in the room by myself.

My grandmother -- grandparents were really looking after me. Took good care of me, my grandmother. They always take me out to the bush. I was always out in the bush. I can -- I only go to school a little while, in January and February. That's when I go to school. After that, in March, I go back to school until June. That's when I come back.

Sometimes, a little bit in September, I go back to school just a little bit. Then I went to the bush and come back in December. And when I come back, I go back to school again and just a little bit. It was just like that. It was like that when I was in school, just a little bit -- still a little bit in school.

Did -- you never went back to the country after your grandparents are gone. She said, I never went back to school after my grandparents -- went back to the bush, my grandparents were gone. I think sometimes, like, I was drinking so

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much. I haven't been drinking for 16 months now. I only -- sometimes -- in two years, I just go back to it again. And that's how I am like. Sometimes I go back to drinking and off again and back again to drinking.

I'm taking care of my grandkids today. I have three, three kids. I don't want to see them taken away or shipped away somewhere. I want to keep them. I don't want them to be speaking English and/or be abused if they were with the other White foster parents.

One of my grandkids is 13, 12, and 4: two girls and one boy. The boy is 4 years old. I always see kids looked after somewhere. I feel sad for them kids. That's why I took my grandkids. I don't want them to be sent somewhere to be looked after anywhere else.

And when I was in school, maybe that's grade two or three, I remember a teacher -- an Innu teacher, she hit me very hard. Do your work, he said. I did it different. So she got really -- really got mad at me. Hit me on the head really hard. I always remember that, the woman that did that to me.

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But maybe I'm not the only one. Maybe he's doing -- thinking she might be doing to the other kids. Yeah, she hit me really hard. Because I don't know my school work. She got really mad at me and was -- really hit me hard on my head. I couldn't cry. I just sat there. I got scared. I was just sitting there in the school.

Too much going on when I was in -- when we were out in the bush. I saw a kid burnt. When -- well, the kid burnt, and he died. The house -- their tent was burnt. And that's why the child got burnt. He was only ten months old. He got burnt. I remember seeing this kid, what she looks like and the way it was burnt, too. That's what I saw. I always think about that. I was always thinking about that.

And then I saw my brother has an accident -- a rifle -- with a rifle. My brother got hit -- got shot. It was accidental. When she grabbed the gun, he got shot. And then it just went off. And I saw. I think I was maybe 13 years old when that happened. I saw what happened.

There was always a lot of drinking when I was young, where I was when I was a little girl, a

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little kid. My grandmother was not the only one who doesn't drink. She never drink. There's a lot of people drinking in there.

Me and my grandmother used to take off when I was a kid. My brother, too, Richard. We used taxi. We'd take off and we went to the new housing, where Sebastian used to live. And that's where we used to go. There used to be a tent. And that's where we slept, in the tent there. And after all the -- and after the drinking was over, we go back down there again, back home.

It used to bother me so much. My eyes used to be sore from the smoke when people used to smoke. And there's music. And there's parties in the house. And I can't sleep. And I was, like, thinking that I was in a really -- a lot of drinking that was around there. But my grandmother never drank.

But the only place I really feel good and feel safe is out in the bush. I don't go hungry either. And it's really good out there.

There used to be kids who used to make fun of me. They used to call me bastard. That's what

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they used to be calling me when they used to argue with me, fight with me. I used to be so embarrassed when I was in school.

And a lot of things happened when I was a kid. But I couldn't remember all of it. This is the only one I remember, being in the hospital across the river. I remember the clinic, hospital. There used to be a place where there used to be occasion where kids were have to stay in (inaudible). I remember all that when I was at the hospital. I was only small, maybe not even one years old maybe. I remember being on there. And I'll be sitting there on the bed, kids' bed. There are other kids there, too.

And when I was at the dorm, maybe I was four years old -- four, three years old, maybe. I think that's how old I was when I was in the dorm. I was so scared. Maybe there ain't no women there working, maybe. But I can't remember. I remember seeing some people but I can't go to them.

I'm just wondering now why I was so scared. And I was always hiding in a table -- under a table. But I can't remember. I don't remember

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what happened there. Maybe something happened.

I used to not like it when my grandparents used to leave, when they used to go somewhere. And I used to scream and crying for them. I want to be with them. I feel safe around them. And when they're not around, I used to be so lonely for them.

I remember when I was in school, I used to be so scared in school when I first went to school. I used to just sit on the -- sit on the chair. I started peeing. I was afraid of the teacher. I sat there, and I peed myself. I didn't tell anybody. I was afraid to tell that I want to go use the washroom. But anyway, I ended up peeing myself. And I was sent to -- taken to my home.

That's what I remember. That's what happened to me. I can't remember other things. That's it. I can't remember anything.

If you remember anything, you can still talk -- you can come and tell your story again. She's done.

(Mary Jane Poker - English Audio concludes.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Beverly Guest, of Elite Transcription, of St. John's, in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, hereby certify that the foregoing pages, numbered 1 to 11, dated January 22, 2026, are a true and correct transcript of the proceedings which has been transcribed by me to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability.

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