

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

English Transcript | Volume 26

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

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

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Nympha (inaudible).

P. RALPH: What's that?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: (Inaudible.)

N. BYRNE: (Inaudible.)

P. RALPH: Yes. (Inaudible.)

N. BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

I just said like, when I do my programs, I always collect tears because those are hurts and they're very painful, and it's no good to put them in the garbage because you're throwing all of this things that you're feeling in the garbage. But to burn them, it's the sacred way of really looking at how sacred our lives are, how sacred our tears are.

And this is the reason why I start doing this because when I do my grief work with people, I always collect their tears so I can burn them and – 'cause they're sacred. Yeah, I always do that and burn it with the tobacco 'cause there's only one God we're talking about here. We only need one God and, you know, a lot of times I've heard Elders say that God is picking us – that he'll help us if we ask for help. So, the tears are very sacred, so we have to put them in the fire.

I will do that and what I'll do is put tobacco in there, and when it – we always use tobacco before we do – like if I offer somebody – if I need help, I have to get tobacco – get someone because it's – they said sometimes if you give me – if I have to give an Elder that tobacco, he have a helper, through him, that – to seek that. And that's the way we we're supposed to be doing that because they're sacred.

And 'cause I like – I was – I have papers here because I was translating. I had to put them all in here, too, so I could burn them, because I respect people, I respect the ways – all that (inaudible) working at that for 18 – like, you know, since I was 18, but I'm learning more stuff as I go.

So, this is where I'm – I'm putting these tears in here, so I want you to understand and I want people to know that that's sacred. The tears are very sacred.

So, I'll put it right there so if somebody cries and we put it in here.

P. RALPH: Okay. Thank you.

N. BYRNE: (Inaudible.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is this going to be my support?

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, good morning everyone, and thank you for the prayers and, Nympha, for your words.

As I mentioned yesterday about the healing services, we'll be doing this every morning. And so, the healing support services workers here today are Emma Ashini, here. Emma, show – oh, there she is. Mary Jane Edmonds and then we have George Maringapasi as a counsellor.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: I did good?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, (inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Close.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: By the end of the week.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: I'll have it by the end of the week.

P. RALPH: And don't forget to give Nympha a chance to translate.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Oh yeah.

And the last person is Louise Bradley, our consultant.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Mm-hmm.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken] – sorry, George – [Mushuau-aimun spoken].

What is your name again, I forget?

P. RALPH: Louise.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Louise.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And I have to apologize; I missed Ivy. She was right here in front of me. That's why I didn't see her. So, it's Ivy Pijogge-Andrew. I got it right this morning?

INTERPRETER PIJOGGE-ANDREW: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you.

So, Mary Catherine, thank you for coming back this morning. For those who weren't here yesterday, she spoke yesterday and was willing to come back today.

So, whenever you're ready, move ahead and just talk about –

P. RALPH: One other item is that Veronica's here as well this morning. So, once Mary Catherine is finished this morning, then we'll get to Veronica. I just want to let people know what's happening.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay. Thank you.

M. C. RICH: Mm-hmm.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE (providing English translation): They said: I won't say much because I have to go back to work.

She said after she went home yesterday, she thought about a lot of things. She was thinking about things – what she had said, and she said that the first one that I've talked about in the morning, yesterday, I should have kept going with that one.

She said, I forgot – as I was sitting here, she said, she was thinking about yesterday that she forgot the Elders that used to come here. She said: I forgot about them because they're the ones who used to sit around with us when we're in circles.

She said: They were my family. The two ladies Agathe and Mary Jane were my father's nieces, and the other ones were my uncle's wife's – wife one of the uncles, Munik was her auntie – Munik Rich.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. C. RICH: Mm-hmm.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: And Marie Josette [read: Georgette] Mistenapeo, those are her – that's her aunts.

She said that that was – they should have been the first ones I should have talked about because they were the Elders that were here. She said: I should have said something about them. They're the ones that were always here when there's things going on in this building.

I wants – I wanna talk about the – talk about my mother and father. Yesterday she started talking about that, about living out in the bush, out in the country. Sometimes when we were out in the bush, sometimes we have nothing to eat. There was no motors – like, stuff like a Ski-Doo or

something. Like when she said motors, all those generators and stuff like that, there's nothing that – that's a machine. Machines – I never seen machines.

They said: My father never used a plane to go to the country when he goes to the country. He only used dog team with our komatik, and to haul stuff on that komatik – their gear.

She said, I never really thought of, like, we – now she never thought of her parents being dead. Like, they are going to be gone soon or anything like that, she said, I never think like that about death.

'Cause, she said, I thought, when they get older, they will pass away; they will die. But she said – 'cause she remembered that there used to be, when – as the Elder get older, they die, she said, but I never thought this would happen, like the – her father would be – gonna die young.

She said, she knows her father's father, but the father – the great-grandfather's father, she said, I don't know that one. Sometimes people ask me if I knew them. She said, I don't know, because I was never – nobody ever talked about it or, you know, even her mother's mother, she knows her but she don't know the great-grandmother's mother. She said, sometimes people ask me those things and, she said, I can't tell them because I don't know – don't know them.

She said, the things that she remembers are the only things that she can talk about, because she can't really talk about the things that she don't know. 'Cause – which she doesn't see. Like, she said, that's the only however far I can go, is how far I know – I know things.

She said: I don't wanna go to the things that I used to be a long time ago. He said, when I tell story I don't lie – don't want to lie, because years back, she said, she used to do all kinds of things. She used to steal, she used to – you know, like she used to do things, stealing and stuff, and she didn't want to be there anymore. She said, I've done all these things, I've – I was not good.

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

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She said –

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

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Mm-hmm.

It's my story, she said, that she used to drink too much, too. And she used to be abusive towards other people, verbally, and she made a lot of mistakes in her life. She said, I wanna talk about those, I don't want – I'm not lying, the things I'm sharing here, 'cause I was like that.

She said, I'm not trying to be perfect and not pretend to be perfect, but today, he said, I've done some things – she done things right, and I'm not gonna pretend I'm better than anybody, 'cause I'm not. She said: I am not also perfect.

She said, I don't like to go to confession to the – with the – to go to the priest and have confession. She said: It's a lot easier for me to tell my story, my mistakes, everything that I've done, and people to hear what I have to say. And she said that's – she said, it's easier for her to talk like this, so people can hear.

She said: My mistakes, people hear my mistakes and they see my mistakes but I'm not here to be perfect, but I'm also sharing my story so people will know where I came from, too.

She said: When I'm drinking, I used to abandon my children and I lied to them, too, and I used to tell them I'm going to look for food for you guys to eat, but that was a lie. I lied to them. I was out to go out for a drink.

Sometimes there's no food in my house and there's also no wood to – for my children to

keep warm. I used to not listen to my mother, too. When my husband is in jail and when she's telling me to look after my children, I didn't listen to my mother.

So today, since my mother is gone – you know, like my mother, what she had said to her. And she says she felt it now and she sees what's happening, 'cause she's going through the very same thing now today.

She said: And her mother, like she – when she used to tell her not to do things and the things that she didn't listen to her mother, she said, this – I feel it and I know how that must have felt like that when I didn't listen to her when she was trying to get her to stop what she's doing.

She said, all my stuff depended on my mother, 'cause I didn't do the things – like, today, what I'm doing is sewing, and I used to watch – watched her mother when she used to do all these things. She used to look after everything, she said, her mother. She said: I looked up to her. Maybe I was so dependent on her 'cause I remember, she said, she used to make mitts for my husband, and also make moccasins for him. And I'm – and I'm just sitting there; I didn't do anything.

But today, she said, she start sewing again and she said, I didn't – like, she can do the sewing. She said: I know. So, that's what she's doing right now.

She said her – one day there was a gathering up here in Natuashish and her mother was – this was before we moved up here. She said her mother was very sick, she was starting to get very sick and, she said, the people were given the canvas in the community. And she was thinking, you know, who is gonna do my tent? Who is gonna make my tent because my mother is very sick?

She said to herself she should start doing that, cutting up the canvas and make her own tent. She said my daughter is here, named Philomena, she's working here and she was helping her mother.

She said when I was starting cutting the – she doesn't know how to – where she's gonna start, how she's gonna cut up the tent. She said, I'm sitting there, she said, and I felt like my mother was right behind me and is just telling me to do it this way, to cut it up this way and, she said, that's how I – she felt her mother was behind her, showing her or telling her how to do that, how to cut up the tent.

So, you said, we finished the tent; we did it. We finished the tent and sewing it. We got it done. So that was the first time she started doing things on her own.

She said, after she finished that tent, it came out really good, and then she was trying to find somebody – looking for somebody to talk to. Like, she didn't really have anybody to share it with, what – her experience with her mother. She said: I went to visit Sister Joan, she was one of the nuns in the community, and then she told her what she felt, like her mother was just teaching her. And that's – she understood her, but some of the things that she said, I tried my English, like, she tried to speak 'cause she was by herself. But Sister Joan told her that her mother really cares and loves her very much.

So, she said, she started doing all that stuff, like sewing – she started sewing. She makes stuff for her husband, make mitts and moccasins and things that he need. She said, she stayed up all night sewing, she want – he have to finish it when her husband is getting ready to go hunting. She did complete her sewing and after her husband goes off hunting, she's resting then.

She said: I learned that from my mother; I got it from her, from sewing. She used to observe and also watch her, what she is doing when she is sewing and all the things that she have done in the country. Her

mother is the one who was doing all that and, she said, she learned that from her.

She said, I was teaching – start teaching the young women how to sew moccasins – do sewing, then they really knew how to sew their moccasins. They did complete their sewing. They learn how to do it and they know how to make them now.

And that's it, thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you very much, Mary Catherine, for sharing with us again this morning. Really thoughtful things you had to say and the last things you were saying, very much, about how your mother was there behind you as you learned how to sew, I found that somewhat compelling for me.

So, thank you.

INTERPRETER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I was just saying to her that thank you for coming. And that story about her feeling her mother's presence, I share that experience as well.

I've begun to teach myself what my mother has done. Like, when we were in – out on the land and one of them was cleaning caribou skins. So, I started doing that – I've watched her many times and I've started doing that, thinking about her.

And that's what keeps the memories alive and the teachings, and when I first started taking the fur off the skin I could – I almost heard my mother's voice encouraging me to do that. And I still feel that today and I'm still learning as well and thinking about the things that she used to do and trying to get that back.

So, I do share her experience and I thank her for sharing that story with us.

Thank you.

P. RALPH: (Inaudible) so Veronica needs to speak to Paula and Louise. So, we'll take a 10-minute break.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Yeah.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Recess