

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

English Transcript | Volume 27

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

Wednesday | Natuashish | 29 November 2023

[redacted]

Recess

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: [Inquiry in progress at start of recording] and welcome to Aldea.

And so, it's just – tell your story, your experiences in whatever form that you want. Please take your time; there's no rush. And if you need a break at any time, let us know.

Nympha will be – you'll be doing, I assume, the translation. Is that the planning? Okay.

All right, so whenever you're ready.

P. RALPH: Does Aldea wanna go see (inaudible) or (inaudible)?

[Dialogue between A. Piwas and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She wants to talk about the CSSD first.

A. PIWAS: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE (providing English translation): My grandchildren were taken away, my son's kids. It's been three years now CSSD took them.

They were given back – the kids were taken back and she was – the kids were given to her, the first time they were taken away. He got them back.

So when they start drinking again, the kids were taken away again. And after he sober up, he couldn't really go to his kids because Social Services had told him he couldn't be close to them 'cause if he does, he would be – they would be taken away.

His kids were always crying when the kids saw him. The kids really want to go home and they're calling their father.

Whenever one of the boys, one of the kids, the boys saw the father walking by she'd be screaming and crying, wanting to be with her father – with his father and hanging on to him.

CSSD really make me angry. My son always – when she's trying to hug his children, they just do it really fast so the social workers won't see him – when she's – when he's hugging his children.

He can't even go to our house – their house, Aldea's house.

The kids are looked after by their grandmother today, the other grandmother.

She need to get help first or go to treatment in order to get the kids back.

It's been three years this – since the kids are taken away now and she said, he always ask – he didn't hardly see his kids maybe only couple hours and when the kids sees her and the kids always ask her: Where's our dad?

She said, my son is in house arrest right now. He was always charged when he was drinking and, ever since he was younger, he was drinking and still drink. Like, he's 36 now today – 36 years old.

My son came to me. He said, the last time that the children were taken away, one of them, he said, if you don't take them, they're gonna be sent out and I really don't want them to be where they're – where they don't know people. And that's what my son told me, he said.

He is alone in his house. He said: I miss my kids. I will get them back again and I'll give

up my drinking. Because he been sober now for four months. She said, since I'm alone in the house, I only walk around, and he's alone in his house. And she feel like everybody – like nobody likes him, everybody hates him. That's how she felt, because he's in his house by himself.

He put a rope around his neck, but he had a knife also and he almost blacked out. He managed to cut the knife – to cut the rope. He was hanging. He didn't tell me this, but her sister told me what he did. He spoke to me – talk to me when he came to the house.

He said that he's really afraid that the children will be taken away and that if they're moved somewhere that the people, they don't know. They might be moved in there.

He said when I was a young boy, I was raped by a woman.

[Dialogue between A. Piwas and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: He said he know the man that – a guy and a woman that did that. I don't want anything like that happen to my kids if the social workers are put placement in somebody's home.

She said, when he told me that about that rape, he said, I cried so hard because I never expected that to happen to him. I asked him who they are and I ask if they're my brothers or sisters or a family member doing that. He said, I was very angry when he had told her. He said, that's not the family members; it's not them.

He said, they're still here, the ones that did that to him, but he won't mention the names. He said, when I see those two people, they can't even look at me when I see them. They probably think that I never remembered that time that happened but he said, I remember what happened.

He said, I talked to him for a long time, just to get him to talk to me and let me know who the people were, but he won't tell me. He said, he remember that and that he said they probably remember what they did to me, he said, but they're the ones who's gonna live with that, what they put him through.

When he had his first girlfriend, he was very abusive towards her and the relationship didn't get – wasn't working.

He said, not long ago, he told me a story. He told me a story what happened and that's why he's abusive towards women. He was very angry with that woman that sexually abused him.

He said, he will work on himself now and he'll get his kids back and he will go off to the land with them. He'll be spending time in the country.

In the summertime, he was in jail from beating up on his girlfriend really bad. She ended up in the hospital. She said, I remember him coming into the house crying really hard. He said, I don't remember what I did, I think I almost killed my – his girlfriend. He said, I'm never gonna drink again. He never drink ever since that happened; he haven't been drinking.

Today, they're not allowed to go out with each other, him and his girlfriend.

He said, he came into our house one time and he slept there for two days. The girlfriend came over and start beating the door, looking for him. But he didn't wanted to go to her.

She was very drunk. She said: I'm gonna beat up your trucks. I'm gonna beat up your vehicles and she trying to get into the house. And she hit Aldea's husband, when she's trying to get in.

She said, my son was having a panic – he was panicking when he heard her coming –

when she was there. She was just walking around and then she – he went into the washroom, closing the door. She said – he said that he – nobody will listen to him. The police are not going to listen to him. They're going to put me in jail, he said.

She said: We told him he didn't do anything. We didn't want her to come in, in our house. We're the ones, we didn't bring her – bring her in. He said: But the cops are gonna take me away. Her son said: The cops are gonna take me away because they don't believe me. When I tell them something, they didn't listen to me. And I feel like nobody's gonna listen to me. That's what the son said.

The way he was talking, I feel like he's gonna commit suicide, the way he was talking. He said: I don't wanna go to jail.

She said: I remember my dream, my brother's daughter committed suicide. I remember hearing her saying: I don't wanna go to jail; I'm not going to jail. And that's when she remembers her dream, that her son had said that, too, like he said: I don't wanna go to jail. I'm not going to jail. I'm gonna take my life. And this – in the dream, the niece was saying, she commit – she said her niece committed suicide in her dream. And she said: I believe the dream that I dream about was my son. 'Cause he keeps saying: I don't wanna go to jail and I'm not going to jail again.

She said: I didn't tell my son about the dream, and I never asked anything, she said. But we stayed up all night, 4 o'clock in the morning – until 4 o'clock in the morning, after that happened, when the girlfriend come in and beating the door. And she said: we were – like, I watch him, the way he was, he was like in a panic. And he said: We were just talking to him. Aldea and her husband were talking to him.

When he was ready to go to bed, that's when we all went to bed. She said, sometimes, she was thinking about the people that abused – sexually abused her boy – her little boy. He said: Who are those people? And I'm thinking I must be right there talking to them all the time, but I don't know who they are.

The other one is my daughter. CSSD, who had involved – she said not – her daughter said Social Services, that they're not gonna listen to me. But she was also in jail, too.

She said, her daughter said it's better that I die if my kids are taken away from me. Why should I be here if I don't have anybody, like, her kids being away – taken away. It's not like that they abused their children. They care for their kids. It's the relationships that they're having problems with.

My other – my daughter also was sexual abused when she was a little girl. She said, I was – I often wondered why they were so angry, my son and my daughter. They get a lot of anger in them. And she said: They used to get really mad at me, too.

They shared with her, later on, what happened when there was both – they were sexually abused. They told her that you weren't there when you were sexually abused. And you – why weren't you there? You were not even there.

She said she was – she said: I'm sorry I wasn't there; I didn't mean not to be there. The two kids, they're the ones that have a really hard time in their lives right now, and because of the anger, too; they're very angry.

She used to always ask them: What's happening? She said: Maybe you didn't tell me everything what's happening 'cause you're very angry? The two kids she was talking about, she told them maybe you never tell me everything.

That's when they start talking about what happened in the past when they were small.

Today, they are very over – really overprotective over the children now

because what they went through. They don't want that to happen to their kids.

So I shared my – I shared with them what happened to me when I was young, because I was raped by a young guy.

After she told them, she said there is many, many kids that goes through with that when there's a drinking happening in homes and she said, I was one of them.

Her son said that the grandmother – he told the grandmother what happened, but the grandmother never listened to him. And that the grandmother was also drinking and then he didn't say anything because of her grandmother not listening to him; others will not listening to him, too. And then when he turned 12, he start to do drugs. He was always fighting. She said, I'm mad at myself 'cause I wasn't there.

After their father died, I couldn't stay in same place, in the same home we used to stay. I was attempt – I was always attempting suicide; always end up in the clinic. He always end up in the hospital in Goose Bay. Because when my boyfriend died, he said that's when I didn't stay at home and that's when all things were happening to the kids, she said. And I didn't drink, but I couldn't stay in the same place, in the same home where boyfriend died.

And she said, my son, when he was in jail one time, the cops handcuffed him on the chair – and he was beat up by police.

She said, today he's afraid to go to jail 'cause he's saying that no one knows what's – what the cops are doing to the people that are in jail. She said, he went to jail at the LCC in the summertime and, she said, he saw people doing crack cocaine in jail and nothing is happening in there. No one do – did anything about it. She said: I'm wondering why nobody knows about what's going on in LCC with the RCMP. The RCMP don't know what's happening in there. It's just, like, nothing is really done about that in jail. Nothing is done.

She said: I was very angry when he told me that the police was handcuff him on the chair and when the cop was beating him up. He said, how can anybody believe me about when the cops was handcuffing me and beating me up and what's happening in – at the LCC.

He said today – he's so different today. He's changed. He said, he told his mother that he missed a lot of things like Nutshimit, like the country. He said, you are – you guys are always there. She said when I tell him what we do in the country, he's so happy. And he always – she always tell him the things that they do out there, while they're living out there in the country. She said, I missed out a lot – a lot of things.

She said: He will go to Nutshimit, out in the country. First, he wants to go to the treatment program. He wants to go out for three months and get his kids back and then go out to the country with her – with his parents and the children.

He said, for the first time, he said, I invited him to a Nutshimit, out in the bush. And she took the kids, took the boys out to the country to walk – walking expedition for the boys. So, he invite – she invited him. So he said: He was walking with us. And I – she said, I see how happy he is when he was walking and being out at – out on the land.

She said: I took the boys out in the bush and I took the boys – the boys came with me. He said, I invited my son to come with us. He said, when we were out there, he was so happy. I could see it on – like, being out on the land, he was very happy.

And he said I was happy when – he was very happy when they went – there was a waterfalls down where they were walking and they went over there, her son, Robbie, and another guy who was always in jail, also. The two of them went to the waterfalls

and she told them, you can go down and check it out and I'll stay here and cook for you guys because he had boys, too, the young boy's expedition. And he said the other guy was also – went down to see the waterfalls.

So when they came back, they said: It's just like heaven here. No wonder you're so happy that you – when you're walking, you know, like, you see many things. The scenery is so beautiful. And just like – she said, I could see the look on their faces when they came back from that waterfalls and they look like kids. They look so happy, like, you know, when a child is really happy and that's how they are. Their faces changed. They're – they look so good and so happy.

I said, I'll let them know when she goes again with the kids so that they can be with her again and with the other kids, too. I said: It's so nice here. No wonder you guys like to walk, and the scenery is so beautiful. He said: Invite us next time when you go in again, we will walk with you and the kids.

He said, I hired those two, her son and the other guy who was also in jail. He said, I was always watching them when they're walking, they look so different. They look happier. And you could see them sometimes when we're all with the boys, the young boys. They're all together and those two guys go on the other side and just raise their hands up in the air and saying prayers. And she said it was where I saw how happy they changed – their faces changed and they looked different. She said, they want to go back with her – go up with her when they go out again on the expedition with the boys; there to help out.

She said that I forgot to mention that earlier that the two guys that with – that were with him, her son and the other guy, they were always in the community, they were never really out in the bush and all they did was do drugs when they're in the community.

So, when they went with her, she said, we're always meet – you know, they always gather and meet and talk, and they also eat together. And one of the guys that was helping her, saying: It's gonna be different when you get back to Natuashish. It's just like, we don't know each other, we walk past each other, we won't talk to each other. Today, we work together when we are here in the bush and we eat together, too. Those things are gonna change. Like, it's not gonna – it's just like – like we don't know each other. And also he said: Invite us again when you take the kids on the expedition again to Nutshimit, out in the country, so we'll go with you.

She said, next year, they have a plan already again that they're gonna go out; she's gonna take the boys again in the expedition. Even the boys always messaging her tell her what food they would like to – for her to cook, to eat, cook.

Next year, she had planned to stay also out in the bush for three months and the kids knew that she's gonna be out there and they wanted to stay with her. But, she said, I'm not sure if the family – if the parents are gonna say it's okay. But, she said, they are already messaging her and wanted to go with her next year for three months out in the bush.

That's all she had to say.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you very much for speaking to us today. I think it's another experiences that we're hearing today from you that we've heard in terms of CSSD and how it's not working for the Innu Nation. And, as you may be aware, there's plans to change with a new Innu child welfare.

In the meantime, it's – what you've expressed has been obviously an extremely difficult situation with CSSD and I think that despite the (inaudible) challenges you've

talked about in your life, you come here today with such courage and strength and it's very admirable that you were able to do that today.

So, I thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I want to thank Aldea for coming and speaking and sharing her story, especially about her children and her grandchildren. It's tough, and I am thinking about their mother. She was a lovely woman. And I'm thinking about her and it makes me smile because when I was Grand Chief, I'd come to Natuashish and my hair was, like, really curly and she would sit and her sister, Philomene, after the meeting, come here, she said, and I said: What? She said: I really don't like your hair; it's so messy. She said: I wish I had a comb; I would comb your hair. And I said: You never listened to my meeting.

So, just thinking of happy thoughts of their mom.

Tshenashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Peter, do we have anybody waiting or what's –?

P. RALPH: I'm not sure. We are checking on it.

Judith Rich was scheduled to go this afternoon. I don't know if – she wasn't here earlier (inaudible) –

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Gonna check with (inaudible) –

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Mm-hmm.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She said she have two grandkids that she's traditionally –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Adopted?

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Adopted, yeah –?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Mm-hmm.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: – to bring here.
P. RALPH: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]