

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

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

[Song performed.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, good morning, everyone.

Thank you, Nympha, and thank you, Mary Catherine.

So –

P. RALPH: Yeah (inaudible) I have four people here this morning that want to speak. There were two that were scheduled –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Right.

P. RALPH: – which was Marie and Aldea. Veronica's here again to speak, and now if we can hear from Mary Catherine first and then we'll get to the other people that are here to speak.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, thank you.

Thank you for your patience, and we have extra people this morning. Just briefly then, to go over for today, the – to mention again, the healing services that we have here. And so, if you have – in need of, you know as you hear people speak today or if it triggers something for you, the healing support workers are here and so it's best to contact Louise Bradley here – is the consultant, and she can direct you to whoever you may want to speak with.

Would also say that, you know, as you prepare for today, if you are triggered, if you have something to think about, some of your own experiences, think about people that you can go to, such as family or friends, or even going in the bush or anything that might help you.

The other thing I just wanted to mention, of course, that there's food out in the kitchen, snacks for people as well as coffee, and we also have the tent outside that people can go to if they just want to have some kind of quiet and some healing for themselves. So that's also available.

If there's nothing else, then Mary Catherine can start.

M. C. RICH: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, thank you.

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

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

INTERPRETER BYRNE (providing English translation): I'm happy to be here again, and to see women coming in here, too. And all – and the children too, I'm happy to see them here.

She said, sometimes it is very hard to talk about the hardship, the hard things that – she said, I know sometimes she get's stuck with things she was – sometimes she can't tell what really is going on because of gossip. Sometimes she is afraid and sometimes somebody will make fun of her, and sometimes it is very embarrassing to talk about and, she said, it embarrasses me. And those things stop me from telling my story, to tell things, what's happening.

She said, she feel like, you know, the reason – when she is talking about these things, it feels good. When she opens up, she said, it triggers and it also helps with – to have a –

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Mm-hmm.

Okay, so she can have the strength to do this and have to have a strong heart and also to feel good about herself, that she can do this.

She said, the other thing is not – it's not just me, she said, that she's doing this – I'm doing this for women also so they can walk in a good way, also, too, for healing and

also learn to feel good about themselves. She said, she feels good about herself when she talks about this and, she said, it helps the women. I want the women to feel that about themself and also to have strength and not to lose their power also.

She said, I don't remember the year when we went up to Sheshatshiu. We walked up there with some people and the people that came with us were – they died now. She said, they were with their brothers and her sisters, her mom and dad when they were out there. And she said, there's only three of us alive now and one brother and the rest are gone now, her brothers and sisters.

She said, I just want to tell a story about when we were living out in the bush, out in the country. There's no Ski-Doos; we don't have Ski-Doos. We don't use Ski-Doos and we don't use chainsaws. Those things we don't have. We only have dog team and we only use axe and bucksaw and snowshoes.

She said, there were many of us when we went to Sheshatshiu. There were Elders, like William Katshinak, Senior, Pokue –

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Pokue, that's another – the Innu name from the Elder, but I forgot his name. I think she said his name is Pien.

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: And also his – her dad, Ben Rich, William Katshinak, Ken Katshinak and Joseph Katshinak.

She said, when it came – the spring came, they only build the canoes. She said, I was only young back then and I don't know how old I was, but when they build the canoes and they – we paddle up the rest of the way to Sheshatshiu.

She said, I remember all these things, that's why I'm – the story I'm telling, I remember it very clearly – clear. She said, I remember when we went down there, we made it to Sheshatshiu for the first time, was the first time I see my mother's mother, when we got to Sheshatshiu. But my mother's father was already died. I met all my mother's brothers and their sisters.

When we got – when were down there – when we went out to Sheshatshiu, maybe we stayed only two or three months and that's where my brother got married. She said, my brother got – after my brother got married, we went back to –

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Yeah, we went back to Davis Inlet and we were with my grandmother and my brothers and my family. I didn't know we had –

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: – we had a sister. She said, I didn't know.

She said, when you're in Nutshimit, she said, she didn't know her mother was pregnant and her mother was in labour while they were out in the bush. She said, my father woke us up, all of us, me and my brothers. We were told to go out there and get some wood. And he woke us up and told us to leave and get wood, but also find the dead wood. The baby is coming, he said. I was just – I was surprised. I don't know what it meant, you know, with the wood – the dried, dead wood.

There were only two of them that looked after mother, when her mother was in labour. That was her father and my grandmother, she said.

She said, they did cut the tree – the dead tree. They just push it – the dead tree – and it fell. And after that tree fell, we heard the baby crying. It was the – her little sister that was born.

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Her father – their father called them. She said: I asked myself, how can that be? There's only my mom – my grandmother and my dad delivering the baby, doing – helping my mom while she was in labour and having her baby.

She said: I was just wondering, how did they do that? How did they deliver the baby when there was no doctor or nurses? She said: I didn't have faith in them. She said: How come I never had faith in them for doing what they did, helping deliver the baby? And she said, she never talked about that.

She said, my little sister was a big baby and when we arrived to Davis Inlet, my baby – the baby got really sick; my little sister got really sick. She said: We went to the country and our sister was sent to the hospital. She said, she remember when her dad and her father and her father's brother were fighting. She said, there was a woman who told the police – no, the priest. They said, a woman – she said, I don't remember a woman – I don't know the woman who told the priest about that fighting.

She said: Not long after, my little sister went to the hospital. They bring her back to Davis Inlet, but the surgery that she – she had the surgery. It was not healed.

They blame it on the priest. They think that the priest was the one who called to bring the – to bring that baby back. And the wound wasn't healed. And also, he said, the father – they are saying that maybe the father – maybe the priest was saying that the father is angry because the child is in the hospital.

After they bring my little sister back, we went back to the country. Travelled back up to the country. There were people that we – camped with us, but they're all gone now; they're dead now.

She said, they don't know how long they were out in the country. Her little sister got very, very sick. There was a plane going by and it was very high, she said, up in the air, and they also – the people put the fire on the ice so they can – the smoke, the signal for the plane.

Nobody came to check us or to see how we're doing, and that's where my sister died, out in the country.

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She was the last child in the family.

She said, I'm just here to talk about myself, all the stuff that I do, the things that I do that I – she's not –

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: – she's not very happy about the things that she did. She said, that's why I'm here.

She said, I was not really listening. You know, I went to the treatment many times and when she's in there she – when hear somebody talking, she said, I feel like somebody there, that person is talking about me and I feel a lot of anger and rage inside of me, 'cause it wasn't me that that person was talking about, it was herself. But it – all the things that she said, it triggered her.

She said that I'm not here to make anybody to feel bad or make fun of anybody. She said, many of the women that are in this room are my relatives, they're my cousins. I'm not here for show or to show-off or to make fun of anybody. I'm just here to talk about myself.

She said, I really didn't know, not knowing myself, the way I'm living and also I had somebody to talk to, someone to – I was talking to someone about the abuse, but I really didn't know what kind of person I am. So it just like – when I was talking to that person, it just like – it woke me up. It woke me up because the person was listening to her and when she didn't feel really good about herself.

The person that she had talked to, I said, one day she said – he said to her, just stop talking about your husband, talk about yourself for a change. She said, I couldn't understand what that person was saying to me. She said, to think about myself, you will eventually find yourself. He said, I could not understand what she was trying to tell me.

She said, sometimes I lie down in bed and thinking: What am I doing? And then she went back to the past, what happened 'cause her parents used to be drinking. She said, that's when I started – you know, that's where it started, in the past that happened. She said, I think about what happened, what I saw when I was young. I remember it all, she said, and I share it with that person that was listening to me when I was talking to that person.

He said: I see all these things that happen, women battered, like, women beat up, abused. And I used to think that's not – that's never gonna happen to me, when I see the women beat up. She said, I – when I got older, I see a lot of drinking, too. When she was younger, she'd see a lot of drinking in the past and the women are beat up.

She said, and I remember in the past when I used to hang out with the young – my friends and also the boys, playing with the boys, too. I see the past, that – what happened in the past.

She said, when I think about the things that I do when I was younger, and also the things that I do, and when I was sharing with that person that I have talked to, he said, I can't really tell everything, but this is how much I know, like, the way I live, the way my life was, and to tell that person, know what – the person told me, the one I'm talking to, to know what to do with that, what to do with the past, the things that happened. All the things that I do were bad things, and I made a lot of mistakes in my life, she said.

And it's also helping when the – even – when the women are abused, the things that I do, like, to get that to happen to that – those women. She said: It's the things that I do that have hurt people.

And the person that she was talking to, she said, I was so happy that I did take some stuff out of me that I've – that hurt me in the past. The things that I did, it just like, I was talking and dump it to that person to listen, my bad mistakes. And it feels like that I did took out a lot of stuff out of me, because I was talking about it.

And then one day the guy – the person told me to sit down. He said, can you sit down with the women, the ones that you were – like, cheated with their – with them – with other men, the women's husbands. He said, can you sit down with those women to talk to them about it and – [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. C. RICH: Mm-hmm.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: And for the – to ask for forgiveness. And her friends too, the things that they do with them when they were younger. And told to – if she can sit down with those young – the women, the friends when they were small and also the boys – the boys they used to play with and she wants – the guy – the person told him to – told her to go and talk to those to ask for forgiveness.

But, she said, he – the person really frightened me when – when the person said to go in and sit and talk to them about what happened, like it's just to get the forgiveness and also just to share what happened.

She said –

[Dialogue between M. C. Rich and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: He said, 'cause I never sat down with anybody before to tell what happened, to confront them what she did in the past.

Am I making any sense?

P. RALPH: Yes, yeah.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She said: First, I start with my sister, talk to them about what I did, what I did to her when she was young. I invited her – first, I invited her and then, she said, when she came in, I lock all the doors. There was only two of us. She said: I told her if you want to charge me, charge me. And if you don't want to be – don't want to talk to me, don't want to be around me, that's fine, too, 'cause I made a mistake. I do – I did that. I did make mistake.

She said, but I gave her a chance – gave her – to do – like, if she wants to not talk to me, she don't have to talk to me. She said: I don't like what I did to her. She said: When I start talking to her about what I did to her, she was crying so hard. She cried a lot. She said, I didn't – I told my sister I didn't mean to do that because I didn't know any better, what I did to you.

She said: I thought about it, the things that I did and how am I gonna do this. She said: I was so afraid. Afraid also that if I confront the woman that what I did, and tell the woman, afraid that the women are gonna be beat up. That's what scared me, she said. She said: I really needed to tell my friend. I wanted her to know, but also with her husband.

She said: I started with my sister and then this time she was – she try not – the other – she said, I tried another one to talk to somebody else. It was another woman who was a friend of mine. I told her to come up to my house and with her husband. So, both of them came, her and her husband. Same thing I did is lock the door and close the curtains and I told them I want to talk – I wanted to tell my friend something.

She said: I was so frightened. Not sure with how she's going to handle it. So I tell my friends what – I told her what I did with her husband. Don't know where to start. 'Cause we used to live out in the bush a long time ago, with them.

We were always together. I told them I missed them, 'cause we used to live in the bush all the time. But I was already married then with my husband. But I told her same thing. I said, if you can't – I don't know what you're gonna do – like, gonna deal with this, but I wanted to tell you what I did. 'Cause she was talking to her friend.

She said: I told her that I miss her. And to break the relationship between them, with her and her friend, she said, I told my friend straight out, the clothes I wear, and where I happened when I was with her husband. Didn't – I didn't want to hide anything to her. She said, she cried and we cried together.

I didn't know how she was going to handle it. And I was also afraid that she might get beat, like, get hit or beat up again. I didn't – she said: I didn't want to see that to happen. (Inaudible) I was very nervous when I was – when I spoke to her about what happened. And I didn't want to break the relationship between us, 'cause I miss them because they're my friends.

She said, after that – after they were talking that's – she talked to them, she said, she feel better. It just like a relief that nothing happened, that the woman was not hit or anything. She said: I feel much better. I was happy to sit down with them, too.

And after I talked to that – after I spoke, the guy spoke, too, and told his. And I'm so happy that I never – I would have never done this – I would never do this again. Some of the women that I stole – that I was going out with, their husbands are – died now. They are gone. But I'm happy, she said. I feel so much better that I had to talk about this and get it out of my chest and to be, like – you know, it's okay to tell the story because these things happened and the things that she did was not – she was not happy about.

She said: There wasn't just those women there. There are other women that I sat down and talked to, the people that I've hurt, that I hurted them – I hurt them. And she said: And to sit down with them, it feels so good. It just – it makes me feel so strong and powerful, like, inside. I feel like I took a lot of stuff out of me and it feels lighter. It just – it's powerful.

She said, the person that I was talking to after the things that she did with – like, to talk to the people, she said, I feel like I have a lot of strength in me and I feel so, so much better and feels really good.

She said, after she spoke to the couple, she said, we were laughing so hard because when she invited them, she didn't tell them why she was inviting them and the guy said: I thought we're here to have porcupine.

That's it for now.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

M. C. RICH: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: I thank Mary Catherine for coming again this morning, sharing her story and that's one of the highlights, I guess, as well, when we hear from Elders talking about growing up on the land. That said a lot, that we don't hear too much of that and it is good to hear the stories and certainly the stories she talked around – about her healing journey and, today, she is a strong woman and to continue on that journey.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you also. You know, you've talked about, certainly, many challenges that you've had in your life and – but I'm hearing for – what I'm hearing from you this morning is I hear a very strong woman who has had a tremendous amount of courage and resilience and strength to come to where you've come today. And it certainly sounds like you're on a very good path and I certainly wish you all the best with that and continue on that good path.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Take 10 minutes?

P. RALPH: Ten-minute break.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Yeah.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So, we'll take 10 minutes.

Recess

