

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

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Recess

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, so we'll start again. And welcome, Marie Rose.

So Nympha, are you doing – you're doing translation, right?

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah, so just give her a break, so she can translate. And – but, basically, to, you know, welcome here this morning and tell of your experiences in whatever areas that you want to. And we will – you will speak without interruption, basically, so we'll take it from there.

Thank you.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

M. R. PASTITSHI: Hi, my name is Mary Rose Pastitshi. I'm from here – no, I live here for like 27 years, almost 30 years, but I'm (inaudible) from in Sheshatshiu.

And I'm gonna talk in my own language. I'm so nervous and I'll try my best and I'm gonna need translator because I'm more comfortable to talk my own language.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

P. RALPH: That's okay, you don't have to do that. You can start anywhere – you can now go ahead.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She will talk about when she was young. She's wanna talk about when she was young.

M. R. PASTITSHI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Mm-hmm.

She grew up in alcoholic family. I was only young when I had my first child. They said that's when – they remember when they took us to the dorm. I remember I – my little sister, I used to take care of her. There's only two of us girls. I have five brothers.

She said, I can't really remember when I was out in the dorm. I can just remember pieces by pieces. We were on small beds. They were long, small beds. She said, my sister got sick one night. Nobody seemed to listen to her. She said, I really wanna go to her when she was crying. She was – crib?

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She was in the crib.

When the – when we were given a bath, it really hurts us 'cause there's pinching when we were taken out – when they took us a bath – gave us a bath. This is how far she could remember.

One time my sister and I left 'cause there was a lot of drinking. She said, we left at 12 o'clock at night and my sister didn't – couldn't find her shoes. So I had to carry her on my back.

While we were walking down the road, there was a vehicle stop – stopping and it was a priest. The priest asked us – took us and he asked us where our parents are. So I told him that they were drinking.

He took us to his home. He put us by the table to sit. We sat by the table. He gave us some juice and cookies.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She stand by the covers. He was standing there.

I was so afraid of the priest. He was looking at me. I was so afraid of him, because I'm the oldest girl. He was looking at me. I was afraid.

He gave us pyjamas to put on and told us he's going – that we're sleeping – gonna sleep there after we ate.

I – we went to the bed. There was a small bed, but I slept in the corner. I was afraid of the priest, the way he was looking at me.

And in the morning when we woke up, I woke up on the floor. I didn't know how I end up on the floor. I don't know what happened; that maybe he put her there.

My sister asked me: Why am I on the floor 'cause I was sleep – you were sleeping on the corner? I said, how did you end up there? She told her sister, I don't know.

She said, the priest told us not to go home, that she will call the social worker. She said, I think I wants a social worker and that we'll be sent away.

After when we went outside, we went outside then, told us go outside. And then we took off, 'cause our house is not too far from where the priest's house is. She said, we took off.

She said, after, later on when I became 12 years old, I was always outside and hang out with girls. I thought they were my family; always hang out with them.

She said, after, later on I used to do break and enter, stealing food in the store, I used to break in the store. And because we don't have any food, we steal food.

So, after, later on she was sent to St. John's, when she was 12 years old. She went to girls' home in St. John's, maybe three to four months. The white girls were always fighting us. There was only three of us Innu girls in the girls' home.

We were always – we were locked in a really dark room. There was three days when they were locked in a dark room.

When we first got there, we were told that we were gonna be there for one – [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. R. PASTITSHI: Mm-hmm.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: – one month in a dark room.

One of my friend that me – that was locked up with us in the dark room, she got sick. She was just, like, out of her mind. And her name is Jennifer. After four months they took us back, and there I was – stayed in a group home.

Said: I was thinking, like, the alcohol wins, 'cause of my parents – my mother was always drinking – was drinking. And I said alcohol won, because my mother couldn't stop drinking.

My children – the alcohol took my children, too. They died from alcohol. My son's name is Courage and he was 22 when he died from alcohol. My daughter's name is Journey. She's 17?

M. R. PASTITSHI: Mm-hmm.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She was 17 when she died from alcohol. She said, I was thinking, like, the alcohol is still in control in my – in the family. She said: My three brothers are still drinking very heavily. My brother end up in the hospital because of the drinking. He almost died. He's in St. John's. [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. R. PASTITSHI: Mm-hmm.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: He's still in St. John's.

And my first son is in jail right now because of alcoholism. He was – the brother that is in the hospital was the – he was the one doing that. Her son was beating him up. He is charged for attempted murder.

I don't want to lose another child. She said: I love both my son and my brother. She said, not too long ago, like, it's on like five years ago, she lost her mom and dad and her son and her grandson and there was two – in those five years, there was another one, her daughter –

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Her son, Courage.

Natuashish Elders really helped me with the grief that she went through. They told her what to do. They told her to keep praying. Yes, prayer helps me – I feel the prayer really helps me.

My dreams also help me. I dream about my children and they're very happy. And, just like me, I'm playing around in the air, flying in the sky. She says that's when she's flying, like – and she said she went to the house where her daughter died, just like I'm searching for her – in my dreams, she said.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She said when she was flying in the air, looking for her daughter in the house, somebody call out to her and saying your daughter is not here. Your daughter is in the sky.

My son, Courage died in the – froze to death when she was – when he was drunk, in the woods. That's the dream I had too, we – just like I'm floating up in the air. It feels like I'm floating and I – went to the woods, searching for my son, looking for him. I couldn't find him. I didn't see him.

In the dream I remember that call – that somebody calling me that my daughter was not in the house. She thought about it in her dream when she search in the woods for her son.

I was dreaming about my mom and dad. My dad is very angry in my dream. Somebody, a woman, was beat up and my father said that she's not gonna make it.

My dad was very close to me. I was a daddy's girl. And she really loved my daughter, my late daughter.

My daughter, I heard that she was beat up by another woman and – a woman – and somebody told me that somebody did kill my daughter. The woman was drinking with my daughter, it was when they were drinking.

M. R. PASTITSHI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She wants to take a break now.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She's feeling a bit dizzy.

P. RALPH: Want some water?

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, so we should be good for 1:30?

Okay, break.

Recess

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: [Inquiry in progress at start of recording] – and take your time; no rush.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She's gonna start again.

M. R. PASTITSHI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: She's gonna go back again, and she find it very hard, but she wants to feel better. You know, she wants to get better.

She spoke about alcohol. Earlier, she said she spoken about alcohol, how the alcohol control her family. She said: I grew up like that. My mom never had time for me or to tell her anything. But she was always drinking.

I'm the one that – when my dad is fighting my mother, I'm the one – like in the nighttime, I always stop my father from fighting my mom, 'cause he used to fight my mom.

My father never abused me or sexual abuse me. Even when my dad is drinking, he listens to me, when I talk to him. I look for food so I can feed my sister. When there is drinking, I am the one who cleans the house, too.

One of my brothers – I didn't know he was my brother – my grandmother kept her – looked after him, and he was living in Quebec. That's where my grandmother was.

When there's drinking in our house, there's lots of men. My brother used – my brothers used to drink with their friends, guys, in her house. They said: That's when the sexual abuse start happening. It's 'cause of those guys, my brother's friends. And they came into our room. I remember those two men that raped me. Sometimes when I see those guys, I remember. I remember them and I remember what they did. And after that happened, I was afraid that this is going to happen to my sister. I watched her closely.

She said, and then – back then, it's just like she was afraid of what happened. Like, she had fear and she hated what happened when she was young and she – when she was – all the stuff that happened. And she said she tried to take her life. She didn't want to live.

Then I thought; Who's going to look after my sister if I kill myself? My mother was drinking then, drinking too much, too.

Later on, when I was a teenager, I got pregnant. A man, the father of her child, was 26 years old and she was only 16 years old when she got pregnant. The father was older than her and then she – when she thinking about – looking back at that, it wasn't – like, you know, she was only 16

years old. And then it was just like she said, nobody would listen to her 'cause the other guy is older.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: The father was older than her; 26 years old. The man is no longer here.

She was afraid when she knew that she was pregnant. That's when I tried again, tried to take my life.

She said: Many times I think about taking my life is when my daughter died and, when my son died, I didn't feel like I was strong enough. One time, I was thinking too much about suicide and taking her life. She said, she had a dream that she did commit suicide and, she said, she saw herself in the dark and she see her children in the light and they were crying – really crying for her.

He said, later, on that time, she stopped doing that, trying to take her life. She said, she was afraid that her dream – about her dream. Like, when somebody died taking their life, they're in a dark place. 'Cause she see it in her dream. Taking her life, she would be in the dark place.

I only have one daughter and she was my – one of my last child. I thought I'll never have a girl again – another girl. My daughter's niece was given to me. Her name is Journey.

She looks like her – like Journey, her daughter, Journey looks just like her auntie. The Elders she talked about earlier that told her to use prayers and, she said, I believe them, it just – it came true, what they said to me. I see it. I see what they said to her.

I'm keeping my – I'm taking care of my grandchildren – she said, one of the one's name is Joseph and Joseph looks like Courage when – that's her son, Courage – Joseph looked like him when Courage was only small.

This morning when I got up, I got a little bit nervous and scared, because I will be talking here, today. I believe that prayer is very powerful. She said that I'm keeping two children, Jacob and Journey, and I think there is four kids now.

[Dialogue between M. R. Pastitshi and Interpreter Byrne in Mushuau-aimun.]

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Four children altogether. She said, I am very thankful.

Thank you for listening.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: First of all, Mary Rose, thank you for coming here today to speak to us. So very sorry to hear of your many loses in your lifetime. Also, pretty well amazed at how you've turned your life around and seem to be in a good place today. And so I hope that the nervousness this morning wasn't really – that it wasn't that bad here for you. And I wish you all the very best.

M. R. PASTITSHI: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I'm glad that Mary Rose came in and spoke today. And I notice, like, just gaining strength and be able to talk and name her kids, that strength.

And Mary Rose was with us when we were at Seal Lake for the women's grief and wellness week, we did at a place called Seal Lake. And a plane – the float plane came and the women that wanted to go home were running towards, like, heading towards the plane and Mary Rose was the last one to come. She came back, she turned around. I'm not gonna get a seat there, she said. And I said: No, no, go, go. I said, you don't know, I said, until you try. Like, you might get a seat. And she got there and the plane took off and there was no Mary Rose. She got on the plane.

And so that's the kind of analogy I was thinking about when she was saying that

there's many times that she would've given up hope, but things work out at the end.

Thank you.

P. RALPH: Take a few minutes just to –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes, a few minutes break.

Recess