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

English Transcript | Volume 28

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

Thursday | Natuashish | 30 November 2023

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Recess

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: So, we will go ahead and start. For support, we have Emma Ashini and Commissioner Mike Devine is in another room having a private session with a community member. So once he's finished, he will join us, and Ivy's also here.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

V. RICH: I was here Tuesday; I had my speech – part of my speech – but there was also a reason why I didn't come back for a few days, because I felt embarrassed for whatever reason. But I said why – why am I embarrassed because that's why I was here? That's the whole purpose of me being here to tell my story.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

So, I want to continue with my story, where I grow up. It's like I told everybody, I, myself, has been a foster child all my life until age 15. Age 15 I thought, well, I'm grown up now; it's time to go on my own. So, I got into – with a boy and I end up getting pregnant at a young – very young age. I was pregnant at age 15; I had my son at age 16. Today, he is 32 years old, still lives at home, no children, but he helps me a lot. He is my protector. He protects me and he helps me with my foster children.

I want to talk about – I want to continue talking about where I was put in a foster home. I have something towards my biological mother. I don't know what it is, but I despise her because she left me at the hospital.

So, my mom left me in the hospital after I was born because the man she was with at the time wasn't my father. Maybe I shouldn't feel like that towards my mom. Maybe she did the right thing.

So I guess the hospital and the Social Services, at the time, contacted my grandparents and my grandparents went to pick me up at the hospital or Social Services. They brought me home. They were gonna put me in another – in a foster home if nobody was picking me up.

So I was saying maybe I shouldn't feel that despise or that grudge or whatever I have feeling towards this woman, my biological mother. Maybe I should have thanked her because I would have been the target in that family for abuse, sexual abuse, whatever kind of abuse, because this man and my mom have children and he abused them all. Maybe I am lucky because I was never – I never, ever experienced that kind of pain, being abused.

All those years I wasted holding this grudge against her. It's only on Tuesday, since I came here, that I thought, really thought of this. Maybe I shouldn't treated her like that. Maybe she saved my life. Maybe I would've been a drunk or drug addict.

It's like every time I see pictures of my siblings, my half-siblings in Sheshatshiu, I know why they're like that. I know why they drink so much. I know why they're into drugs so much, because they're trying to numb the pain that their father caused. And I'm very grateful I was never, ever part of that pain.

It's like it – all the pictures that I see being posted from my siblings, they're all about drinking, doing drugs, playing bingo, and every time I see pictures and this man is always, always without a shirt, like, no shirt, just sitting there, no shirt, no top, every picture I've ever seen.

So all the things that I was talking about Tuesday and the things that I was planning to talk about, like I – it hit me. Like, I don't know, I guess maybe it's the first time I ever said anything about this.

I find that my strength comes from my kids. They saved my life. I know I saved theirs, and that's what keeps me going day to day, week after week, year after year.

And all these foster kids that I have, I call them my – all my kids, because they're my kids. I know they have their family, yes, but once you bring kids into my home for me to care of, they're my kids. They're my kids to love. I've never once push away a child and I will never push away a child. I'm 48 years old; I'm gonna continue raising kids.

Even if it means foster kids, I'm gonna continue until I can't do it anymore, 'cause I love all children. And I protect them at all cost if they're in my home and I will never let anybody hurt them, because I was never hurt. I was protected. I was loved and the woman – the only woman that ever loved me like that, I will never find love like that again.

I lost two kids – well, I had a miscarriage twice. So, the two kids that I have, the four-year-old and the six-year-old, I treasure them because I think God gave me those kids because I lost my two. And I always wondered if one was a boy and one was a girl, and this is why I love my little boy and my little girl so much.

Cherish is her name. She's four years old and I gave her that name 'cause I'm gonna cherish her for the rest of my life. And Hunter, I gave him that name, too, because I want him to be a hunter when he grows up.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I was just saying that I want to thank Veronica for coming back, because it is difficult once you start to open up and share your story. And it's just natural, when we go back home, we start thinking about other things that come up. And it was the right thing for her to do to come back and share more of her thoughts.

And, also, that sometimes we don't think, like, the contribution we make to our communities. And the biggest contribution we can make is being the foster parents to our own Innu kids. And that is the greatest contribution. And I want to thank Veronica for that, because the kids are here, the kids can see if the families want to see their children and she does have a lot of love for those kids.

Thank you.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: So (inaudible) leave her there. What do you think?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

P. RALPH: Yeah, okay.

Could we get everyone to leave this room? We're gonna do a private session so we need to get everyone out.

Thanks.

Translation – do you want to translate that?

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: (Inaudible) you stay in with us.

E. ASHINI: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]