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

English Transcript | Volume 41

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

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[Smudging performed.]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

N. BYRNE: We have something for you guys.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh.

N. BYRNE: She's babysitting.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: She's leaving – she's travelling (inaudible).

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, I see.

Thank you so much.

It's bear skin. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you very much, Nympha.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We want to thank Nympha, again, for the smudge.

She has explained to us that by breathing in the smoke, by being covered with the smoke, we're all purified so that when we think about the work we have to do, then we are all of one mind. And we remember that smoke rises and we expect that with that smoke, the Creator will hear what we are asking and what we're talking about.

Elizabeth, do you want to add any more? You're good with that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Nympha, you're good with that explanation?

N. BYRNE: Yeah, that's good.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Our speaker today is Nympha Byrne – Nympha Rich. And the last time, you were talking about your experiences with Health Canada and how that affected you. And how the attitude towards you, of not trusting you, you carried with you for a long time. And that was the last point you were making.

N. BYRNE: Mm-hmm.

I don't want to talk about them right now. I wanted to talk more about how my life was when I was a kid and the stuff that I see happening in the bush. Like, when we were living in the country, when I start talking about it and I said to myself when I went home, that was a beautiful way of life, you know, when I talked about it.

I wanted to start by saying, yes, we have a lot of stuff happening in our community. There's a lot of drugs. Yes, there's a lot of drugs. And I notice a lot of young people, they look older in their age – they shouldn't be – when I see them now 'cause I'm a mental health worker and I run programs here in the Healing Lodge to help people and talk about how that affects our bodies, the drugs.

That's those areas that I'm working when I work with people. And right now, I started learning about traditional – smudging, knowing the plants, what to use. 'Cause my grandmother was a healer. She knows a lot of plants and how to work with people if they have pneumonia, if they have snow blindness and all kinds of stuff.

And she also knows what kind of stuff to use when you cut yourself. She used to use, you know, the tree from that sap, those bubbles on the fir tree. That's the one I remember her telling me 'cause my sister cut herself with the chisel. We weren't allowed to touch that chisel 'cause it was very, very sharp.

So when my mom and dad took off out to go fishing, she left that chisel there and she told my sisters – told us, don't touch that because it's very sharp. You can really hurt yourself on that. But, anyway, what happened was my sister said, don't tell

anybody we're going to take it. We're going to go chisel; go get some codfish.

So I didn't say anything. And I said but Dad don't want us to touch that. So, anyway, she took it. We took off. My grandmother was babysitting us. So only one – she was just trying to hit the ice; she hit her toe. I had to bring her home. She was just crying and we went home. And that's when my grandmother looked at us, she was just kind of angry with us 'cause we took that.

So my grandma told me to go in the woods and look. She's telling me this tree that had bubbles in it, take that out – the sap from that tree – and bring it over. So I went, took that sap in the little cup and bring it to my grandmother. And she closed that cut really good. Today, you wouldn't notice if there was a cut there 'cause she got it really tight.

She was bleeding a lot, but that tree, from that sap, really did a good job on her toe. You can't even see the scar. And these are the things that I think that I really like to continue to learn that 'cause I know my work is very hard sometimes. I get very tired.

I'm going to speak in Innu.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

When I talked about the medicines we use now when we detox people, we detox them in the sweat lodge. And we also detox them with the Labrador tea. We make Labrador tea so that they wouldn't be feeling like they're craving for more stuff.

Yeah, 'cause I notice sometimes when people are coming in to be in the program I see withdrawals. They get mad at us. They'll say stuff to us and they get angry and that's how I know because people are wanting that. They want more but they can't have it when they're in a program.

There's an Elder that was the one who told us to give them the Labrador tea for detox. I asked that Elder: How much do we give them? He said, that's however long. It will help their bodies get stronger and not craving.

Like I said, there is a lot of things that I'm learning right now. When you're having problems with – your health problems, you can even use the tree. From the tree bark, boil it and soak your feet in it to get detoxed – the detox out of your body. A lot of times I think we eat so many things also, that are not too good for us, like, in the stores.

What I also noticed was there is another kind of creams that you can make. You make your own creams to help you heal when you have some eczema or other skin problems. What I've heard an Elder said one time is our natural medicines are better than the doctor's medicines and you guys are not using it. That's what he said to me. And this is why I'm saying to myself, maybe it's my next step now to do something else and learn that and heal it that way.

And the medicines that the doctor gave us, it's just like creams, eh? They go inside your skin and stays on there; it doesn't really heal us. And then we have to continue to use it. But the medicines I think in our traditional medicines, it just like pulls out that sickness or it pulls out whatever the diseases we have, like skin diseases.

And, you know, that's why I'm saying to myself this may be my next step is to do that, is to help people that way. We have all kinds of medicines in there with all kinds of diseases but I want to stop there about that thought.

There's an Elder named Bobby Neacappo. He's a Cree from Chisasibi but he passed away last year. He had given me a lot of stuff to learn how to make those medicines. And I really miss that man because he started me up a lot of stuff. I wrote some stuff down that he had shown me.

And the other thing that I was going to talk about is when we were out in the bush, my dad was a storyteller. He was always telling us legends and that's how we sleep. We don't have any books, like storybooks. My dad would tell his legends to us and that's

how we sleep. You know, we don't make a sound when he tells us those stories, talking about legends.

Even when he goes off hunting all day, he still have the time in the night before we go to bed to tell us the stories, the legends. Yeah, even when he was walking, like, going far and he comes back, he still have the time to tell us stories before we go to bed.

And when I'm really sitting down and thinking about the country when I was growing up out there, there's so many things that I have observed about my mom's work and my dad and the stuff that we were taught to do. Like watching my mom cleaning hides, cleaning them inside and outside and then tanning them.

And those things that she used to use, we used to go out in the bush for her to get the dead wood, the dry wood for smoking the hides. That's the stuff we used to do for my mom. And whenever she don't have time to do other things, we'll be the ones getting boughs for her, putting them on the floor, cleaning our floor, get wood and then we all go with her when she get wood.

But we also get water and we watch her when she does cutting the animals, you know, cleaning them and the way they cut them when they cook them. And I remember seeing her cleaning a beaver, the way she was cutting it. She always boiled that beaver. And many times my dad used to also roast it by the fire, by our stove.

It's not just my mother, my grandmother was living with us. They both do that hides cleaning and also cutting the animals, cleaning it. There's a way to cut the animals also. And I noticed sometimes my dad will show my mom how to cut them. And my grandmother will show my dad and my mom how to do that, how to cut them.

When I think about it, I didn't really have much grease. It's just the animal grease that we eat. And the stuff like that is healthier than the stuff we buy in the store these days.

Because my dad was always out in the bush hunting all the time – first thing in the morning, come in in the nighttime – we have to do the chores and help our mom with cleaning and getting bottles of water. Help her if we have to move our tent, and we will all set it up together. And help my mom because my dad was a provider for the hunting, provide us food, and my mom was taking good care of us in the tent and teaching us how to help and not to be lazy.

We have to do that because my grandmother used to say, laziness is not going to take you anywhere; you're not going to learn anything. That's what my grandmother used to tell us.

My mom used to always cook for us and we'll do all the chores for her. And she'll be doing the cooking and sometimes my older sister will take my mother's role; she'll cook. And also, if my mom need to come with us, do something out like getting water or wood, my older sister will do my mother's role, the cooking.

'Cause when we were out in the bush, also, we used to pick berries: cloudberries and blackberries, redberries and blueberries. And my mother used to make jam with those berries. We didn't have any fruits that we have now, like strawberries and all these grapes and apples and other stuff. That's the stuff that we eat was those berries.

We didn't have any milk either. The only milk I used to remember seeing is from mother nursing the babies, my brothers, my sisters. But we don't have, like, skim milk that we have here now.

And when I look at it now when I'm talking, how beautiful life is, you know? The food that I remember, all the traditional food we used to eat is: beaver, otter, bear – we used to eat bear – caribou meat and all the small games like partridges, rabbits and other small games like muskrat – we used to eat muskrat, too.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
Porcupine.

N. BYRNE: Porcupine, too. Uh oh, I didn't write it all.

Wolves we used to eat also, and foxes. I remember having the feast on the fox with the next-door neighbour, Philip Rich. And also we used to eat otters and muskrat, the beaver.

We used to eat squirrels. 'Cause I remember one time my brother, the older boy, used to go hunting and he used to bring squirrels. And I remember there was also a game on that. We used to skin them – take the skin out of it – and we'd roast them on the top of the stove. And we all have a sharp stick, then, when it's cooked, we have to jab it in there. Whoever jabbed the heart will eat the squirrel.

There was a lot of things that came up as I was talking the first time. And we used to also have a game out of a rabbit skull. I don't know what they'd call it, but we used to have a wood and the string and then you have to try to get – I don't know what's that called. Whoever can do it many times is the winner. You know, like you'd be winning.

There's some games we used to play a long time ago. And feast – when we also have feast – mukushan; like caribou bones, caribou meat – people gathered in one tent. And I remember when I was younger, you're not allowed – we're still today not allowed to waste it on the floor or on the boughs. We're not allowed to do that.

And I remember my first one when I went. My mom took me and my dad to the makushan where somebody was having a feast in their tent. So we went in. I remember my dad was the one who used to get a piece of caribou meat and dip it into that caribou grease. And he was the one who put it in my mouth because he made sure I didn't waste anything. That's how much people really care and to make sure and also respect the animals; make sure we don't waste anything.

I see that some places now, that they don't do that. But in Natuashish, I see them do that; they don't waste anything. They still do it the way that they used to, how they used to take care of the bones. I noticed that. I am very happy to see that because I've seen there's young people there that are doing that like taking care of the bones, crush the bones and then invite people to come in and join them.

But my grandmother used to say after we had that feast, you know the caribou feast, there used to be a dance but I don't see that here today. Like, yeah, people will have the feast and then there was no dance.

And It's not just the – when we say makushan, we also have makushan fish. There's fish that we were not allowed to take out; it's called kukamess. That's the fish out in – I know that they're in Kamestastin. They're very big fish. We're not allowed to waste that.

And I remember in spring times, we're not allowed to take the fish out after you cook it. You don't take it out; you have to have feast and tell people to come in and eat with you. And that's that fish. Any other fish, like in the wintertime if you catch fish, you can't even just throw the bones away. You have to make sure you put it in the fire. It's just putting it in the (inaudible).

But I remember, too, my dad every time we have fish, he will do an offering first. And also, I remember him using tobacco when he offers. And I remember him putting a little bit of tea or water on the top of the stove when he does offering.

The other animal is the otter. We can't take it outside. We have to eat it in wherever it's cooked. When my dad cook it, he would invite people to come in and eat with us. There is a lot of things I remember seeing when I was younger, the stuff that was done. I remember my father offering food to this person that passed away.

And it was an old shaman; his name was Sam Rich. That's the one he used to use. He used to always offer him and ask him for food. And this man, I remember, it never lets him down, the spirit of Sam Rich. He always brings something. He could bring

porcupine. He could bring an otter. That ritual, like this thing here, I still does that too. I started this spring. I had to offer some fish to my mother and father. We respect the animals in that way.

It's not just the men that does all the bones. The women will always help take the meat out of the bones. So there's men and women doing that and I really loved that. I like what I see, you know?

That's the stuff that I see, you know – I'm sharing with you – when I was growing up, 'cause there's a lot of spirituality there, too. But when I was growing up there was no sweat lodge and there was no shaking tent. They weren't allowed to do that 'cause of the priest, and I didn't see that.

But I hear a lot of stories, what people used to tell us. My grandmother used to tell us, my dad used to tell us, my mom used to tell us stories about that stuff. My mom remembers seeing someone performing that shaking tent. My mom told me one time while they were performing the shaking tent, she went in there.

Even the animal bones, we had to always burn it, like the fish bones. In the wintertime when they used to catch fish and we're not allowed to waste any bones, we have to put it in the fire. Those were the things I remember 'cause the Masters will not be happy with you if you throw the bones around – the fish Master.

So that's the stuff I remember hearing when I was a young kid. And I remember people coming in to eat in our tent. There was a lot of laughter in there – all that storytelling and laughter.

I remember one time in Davis Inlet, there used to be a hall by the church building. And I remember there's two Elders who used to sing the drum and everybody would be dancing. I remember the old people dancing. I remember those two people sitting there, the Elders, with a long string and they're sitting with their drums.

And they used to always make everybody laugh 'cause I remember them teasing each other all the time. And I remember 'cause we were young, we weren't allowed to dance. We have to watch them. But I remember my dad carrying my little brother around his shoulders and he would be dancing around.

Those things I remember, they're beautiful things that I thought that I would share it with you. In our culture also, sharing is a big thing, and respect. You're not allowed to disrespect any animals either. Those were the teachings that I remember hearing that we're not allowed to do.

Even the bear, we're not allowed to disrespect the bear either 'cause my dad used to say it hears you, when you talk about the bear. And he said, don't ever think negative about the bear 'cause I remember one time this young guy saw a bear and he was going to shoot it and in his mind, he said, I'm thinking I'm going to kill it; he missed. That's the example that I'm telling you that you're not to say anything or to even think that way about the animals.

And those were the things I remember like that, in the hall in Davis Inlet when there was a dance and when they have makushan, we'll be sitting around to eat. And there would been always Elders come in first to eat. My grandmother told me a long time ago, after the makushan there is a celebration; we just dance. And she said there's always a lot of laughter.

When we travel by dog team, I mentioned that when we were going to be setting up, we would be a crowd of people, you know, other families, maybe three or four families with us. And I remember, as a kid, we would just be sliding and you can hear people laughing and singing while they're doing their tents. And there's always stories – I could hear some people telling stories.

And one man, I remember, who used to camp with us; he was such a good hunter. His name was Napeo; his name is Sam Napeo. He's the one I used to hear all the time singing when we stop to set up our

tents. And after everything all set up, I could hear him laughing and also singing.

It used to be so nice 'cause I remembered they used to visit each other and they would be telling stories. I wanted to make sure I follow my father when he's going to go visit those buddies, like Napeo and the other ones, so I can hear the stories they're talking about. It's mostly their hunting stories they always talk about. Sometimes I don't like to miss a thing 'cause I want to hear what's happening.

Yeah, that's all I could hear, and the kids sliding, up the hill. I never see a kid hit or hurt or shout out – somebody shouting at their kid. You know, I don't hear that. But the only time I hear it is just to be careful when we're sliding. That's the only time I remember – some of the parents telling the kids not to go up too far to slide 'cause there's trees this way down and there's the ice pans.

Yeah, that was the only time I hear the kids are shout at, is when not to touch the sharp axes or anything like that or to hurt them self going down the hill and sliding.

I remember one time when we were sliding, there was a really big dogsled, and the men were ready to go hunting. And one of our friends, she was told, I remember hearing that parent saying don't touch those big komatik – those are the dogsleds. I remember her saying yes to her father. And as soon as the men went, she told us to take those komatik – those dogsled – and we went up to the hill.

We were only small then. So we climbed on that hill and then we slide down the hill with those sled. We were told not touch them. They said you're going to break them if you do that 'cause we need those. Those are dogsled, you are not allowed to touch them 'cause they're used to go on the dog team.

But we did. We climb up on the hill and we slide down. And there was about seven of us kids on the sled and we went straight down. They were very, very fast and you could hear them rumble going downhill. There was a tree – there was only one tree right there – and we went straight to that tree.

One of my friends, her name was Penash, she was the youngest one. I remember hearing the others saying jump off, jump off, jump off! And my sister grabbed me from my back and I went. My friend, Penash, was the only one on that komatik. She went so fast straight to the tree.

I said oh my God, she's really hurting herself. She was just crying but she didn't hurt herself, but it was really fast on this. That time, I remember we all went on it 'cause one of our friends told us, come on, let's go and we'll slide. Oh, sometimes the things we do, we remember that and we laugh about it.

But as I got a little bit older, we used to just take off, go hiking on the mountains just to check, you know? You see the mountain sometimes and then when you see that mountain, you just want to go up and climb it and that's what we used to do. And there was a lot of rivers we used to cross, too.

Katie Rich's family were the ones that used to always be camping with us, so there is sometimes five to six of us gone off hiking. Our parents were not worried about us 'cause – yes, there is wolves; yes, there are bears. They were never really worried about us when we go off. And sometimes we'd be gone for all day and come back again. They were never telling us not to do that, not to go anywhere.

And I also remember the paddling through the rivers and then make a portage out there. We used to come from Davis Inlet and there's a river up there. And then at the end, there's still a trail up there. You can go up there. Around there, there's a puddle of – there's a lot of fish in there. That's where we used to fish, first.

And then we'll climb up the mountain and that's where my dad used to hunt caribou. He used to take our canoe and all our gear. We all have stuff that we took, like the one I remember me carrying was always a kettle.

I always had to carry a kettle. That's when we were younger.

Yeah, there's a lot of good things when I think about – yes, we are all talking about bad things that happened but, today, I just wanted to share that. I wanted to share that with you how good Nutshimit was for our families. And I can talk again 'cause I still have some stuff, but I wanted to stop here and grasp this beautiful story that I'm telling you.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I want to thank Nympha for coming and sharing her story. And I think that by sharing stories of what life was like being out on the land with your families is very important to the Commission, because it lets people know that people weren't always in the communities; people were out on the land before they came here. And to share that to the Commission is very important and to hear those type of experiences and stories that people have told us.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes, I'd also like to thank you for sharing that. And, certainly, it was good to hear those uplifting stories of happy times when you lived in the bush. So if I could, there's a couple of things I'd like to ask you about.

The first thing is, I think, fairly straightforward because you mentioned different animals that you ate for food. And I'm not sure if there's any that you didn't eat. Was it pretty well every animal or was there some that you weren't –

N. BYRNE: Weasels, we don't eat.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: No weasel.

N. BYRNE: They are really not the ones I would eat, that one.

But there is a part of some animals that we're not allowed to eat; the men can eat. And there's some parts that men can't eat, that a woman can eat.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

N. BYRNE: Like, some of it is caribou or a bear. I got to try to remember some of it 'cause I remember there's some parts that we're not allowed to eat, only – or an Elder can eat.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

N. BYRNE: Yeah, the Elder.

It's just like when I talk about that fish, the kukamess, the Elder eats the part of the tail, tail part. If you cut that tail part, half of the fish, you give that to the Elder. As I remember it my grandmother was always given that tail part.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Translate that please.

N. BYRNE: Huh?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Translate –

N. BYRNE: Oh.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Oh.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – into Innu-aimun.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: You're our translator.

N. BYRNE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You can start from –

N. BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

There is also an animal – I got to try to remember which one this is – that we eat wherever you have pain. If you have joint pains or if your leg pains or something, that's the part of the animal that you eat. But I got to remember which one.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

N. BYRNE: I don't remember. I don't know if it's an otter or whatever it is – which one.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

N. BYRNE: But we also used the grease from the animals when somebody is in pain.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

The other thing I wanted to ask you about is you described your father as being the provider and then the different things that your mother did. So my question to you is about them as husband and wife. Would you say that they were equal in their relationship with each other – kind of interdependent, if you like?

N. BYRNE: Yeah.

My mother never complains about my father going off in the country. My father never come in complaining about my mom, saying you don't do this, you didn't do this; they respect one another. Because I notice every time my dad is out by himself coming home, my mom always – I don't know how she knows this – she said he'll be here soon.

Like, even in the nighttime, she said he'll be here soon and then she start cooking. Cooking caribou meat, making bread, bannock and also make tea. Make sure my dad eats when he comes in. But my dad, sometimes when he leaves, he makes sure he gets wood, also.

You know, there would be time that you'd be resting, and do things – like, not really resting. He's still doing something in the tent, like doing the carving stuff. I remember when my little brother was small he used to carve stuff, so he can take a break just to be with my mom.

There was never nothing, I never heard them saying you didn't do this, you didn't do that before you go. I hear that now. I hear that you never did this before you left. You're supposed to do this. You're supposed to go to the store and get this. Like, I hear that now but I never hear that. They never really get mad at each other. I never see them get mad at each other 'cause all they do is work, work, work.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yeah.

N. BYRNE: Yeah. Did I –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes. Thank you.

N. BYRNE: – does that answer your question?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Oh yes, perfect.

P. RALPH: Don't forget to translate that.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you.

N. BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

I never heard that. I never ever heard my dad and mom saying stuff like that to each other.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Nympha, for telling us the happy side of Innu life in Nutshimit.

And we've heard that many times from many people. There's a lady named Lynne Fitzhugh who wrote a book called *The Labradorians*. And she gathered information from interviews with many people in Labrador as well as articles from *Them Days* magazine. So when you talk about healing and Innu healing, she told a story in this by interviewing this woman from near old Davis Inlet, Saunders. And this lady said Edward Rich and two Innu Elder women saved her life.

N. BYRNE: What's the woman's name in the story?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: She was a Saunders; I think her last name was Saunders.

N. BYRNE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: She explained how she had complications after childbirth. And her father knew that Edward Rich could understand English and he called for Edward to come and visit them.

So the father was asking Edward if he could find someone to help his daughter who was quite ill. And she says that when he came back with one or two Innu women, they laid warm stones on her stomach and that way they were able to help her after childbirth to get better.

N. BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

The warm stove, you said?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Stones, rocks.

N. BYRNE: Rocks, okay.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: So she was saying how grateful she was for the Innu having saved her life.

In another story Edward was talking to a white man, I think his name was Max Budgell. And he was explaining to Max Budgell how the Innu would crawl into the bears' den in the spring when they wanted to hunt bears. So Edward said the Innu men would crawl into the den and sometimes they, if the bear would keep sleeping, would actually shoot the bear inside the den and then drag it out.

But Edward said if the bear woke up, what the Innu man would do is go back out and stand with his back to the bear and say in Innu-aimun: Go back in your den. And the bear would go back in. So Max Budgell said to Edward, well, can I do the same thing? And Edward said no. The bear only understands Innu-aimun.

So thank you for sharing your memories with us. It adds to our knowledge of how Innu lived and it adds to the rich culture that is the Innu culture.

N. BYRNE: I seen that before happening, somebody crawling.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

N. BYRNE: I seen my dad and there's other men – Joseph Piwas, too, I think – I see them do that.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Is that right?

N. BYRNE: But they let them come out –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mm-hmm.

N. BYRNE: – and they said move this way, move that way.

All the kids see the bear coming out and jumping out. We didn't see it – like my dad and the other men see where it jumped so they got it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes.

N. BYRNE: That was in springtime.

P. RALPH: Nympha, just a couple of questions.

It's interesting to hear you talk about how the animals were treated, I guess, in preparation for eating them. It does seem like there's almost a religious-quality ritual to how the Innu dealt with the animals.

N. BYRNE: The animals that we eat, my dad is really traditional. There's also a spirituality. Like, I don't know how the traditional –

P. RALPH: Maybe that's the word I should have used: spiritual, as opposed to religious.

N. BYRNE: Yeah, because when my father is hunting, he cannot wound an animal. And

if it's wounded, he have to go and make sure he finds it. That's what he used to do.

'Cause I remember one time, when we lived not too far from here, there was a guy who was very abusive, like he doesn't care about anything, and he shot a raven. When we used to go get boughs we used to see all these tracks. I told my dad there is tracks there. It looks like geese but it's not geese, but it's a bird and it's walking around in there and there's trail everywhere.

What happened was he shot that bird and he didn't kill it – that was in the fall. And my dad went over there to see what it was and he said it was a raven. And he said he had a dream that he have to kill that, make sure that bird is dead and we have to eat it.

So what he did was he went out first thing in the morning, he told my grandmother the dream and he came back with that bird. My grandmother plucked it and he roast it by the fire. Every one of us kids in that tent have to eat pieces and they gave us pieces to eat.

P. RALPH: Yeah.

N. BYRNE: And the bones were thrown in the fire. That's that respect –

P. RALPH: Right.

N. BYRNE: – (inaudible).

P. RALPH: And any sense of what could happen if your father hadn't done that?

N. BYRNE: They're very powerful birds, those ones, the crow. We would have been starving or the weather would have been really bad for a long time. Those were the things that we have to be very careful.

So we don't waste animals, we don't make it suffer and leave it walking around wounded and those were the things that I remember, what he did –

P. RALPH: Right.

N. BYRNE: – that we're not allowed to do that.

P. RALPH: Do you want to translate?

N. BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

I'm just giving you a little stuff that I'm telling you. There's a whole lot of stuff that I know. Like some other people here knows what not to do and the things that we eat and how we treat the animals. So it's just a little bit –

P. RALPH: Yeah – no, no, thank you.

N. BYRNE: Yeah.

P. RALPH: Just one last question: I guess you can remember your parents or grandparents telling you if you don't respect the animals, bad things will happen; if you treat the animals with respect, then good things can happen?

N. BYRNE: Respecting is the animals is – I don't know.

For myself, the stuff that I heard from my grandmother is just like I said: you don't waste that stuff at all. And the other thing is that you won't be able to catch the fish, 'cause the animals have Masters: the water, the four-legged, every little thing.

That's the stuff that, if I heard – like, years ago there was a story about these boys. They plucked one of the birds and let it fly away. And later on, they died from the cold because they plucked that bird. It was a whisker jack, I think. I heard that story long time ago.

That's what the stories that were told by us; not to do that. Things can happen to you. You don't go there and hit a dog and cripple a dog. Those things can happen to you. You don't go do that.

Did I answer your question?

P. RALPH: Very well. Thank you very much.

N. BYRNE: 'Cause today I notice kids don't care. They don't worry what they do. And I see that now, what happened; this is happening here. And that's what's missing right now is that, now, we have Elders here, there's people my age that still carried that teaching that you're not allowed to do that. I think it should start somewhere so the kids would know the laws of the culture.

Yeah, I really believe that they should be taught and to be told not to do these things. 'Cause I remember there a few months ago, somebody stabbed a dog. And there was a knife on it, there was somebody saying. And that's really scary. You don't do stuff like that. And that's what's missing right now, is that teaching, the laws from our culture.

I really believe there's a lot of things that still need to be done to help our children here and to help the parents. The young parents especially. That's what I notice that they still have to learn – they still have a lot of learning to do. And I still have a lot of learning. I'm learning while I'm here and I watch and observe. 'Cause I'm still learning today; I'm just sharing what I know.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

N. BYRNE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay, we'll have another break now please.

Recess