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March 20, 2025

MS. WANDA LUNDRIGAN, AFFIRMED,
DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. MICHAEL COLLINS

MICHAEL COLLINS:
Hi, Wanda.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Hi, Michael.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
Just to begin with, could you tell me something about your education?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Okay. Well, I graduated with my bachelor of social work in 1979. In the early '80s, I began a master's in social work, and I completed all my coursework and a field practicum. And I was doing some work on my thesis. And my thesis supervisor actually left the School of Social Work. I went into a different position. I had a job. I didn't finish it.

And the rest of my education has been doing leadership courses or certificate programs or in-service-type training. I did conflict

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resolution, mediation, strategic planning. I did a lot of other educational courses along the way.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
How did you first come to work in the child welfare business?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
So in January of 1980, I started work with the Department of Social Services, at that time, in Child Protection on Bell Island. And I spent two years working in that position and then transferred to Corrections.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
And did you have any experiences in that role that would have influenced your perception of child protection issues?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, yes. Well, when I went to work on Bell Island, of course, it was post-boom for Bell Island. So the mines had shut down, a lot of people had left the community. There were a lot of social issues, some poverty. There was enormous amount of child protection issues, more in terms of parents who really needed some intervention on how to parent, how to maintain a

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house, how to budget.

At that point in time, we actually had homemakers that we used for prevention and to try and avoid removing children from the home. But I had the occasion in that two-year period to remove several children for various reasons. Sometimes short-term, sometimes long-term. Three of whom I had -- at the time, I thought it was such a good idea. Three children, three boys, I had placed in Mount Cashel, who were there for several years.

I was very young, very new to the profession. There was really no introduction, no on-the-job training. It was kind of sink or swim. So it was an eye-opener for me. I mean, the one thing I learned is that I knew very little. I didn't have much life experience to be able to cope with the kind of problems that were presented.

You know, I did work with the RCMP and with the hospital and, you know, the schools at the time. But, again, it was somewhat fragmented

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because everybody had a different role to play. And we were all kind of busy enough, trying to take care of our own areas of responsibilities.

Actually, when I finished my tenure in Child Protection and went to Corrections, that's what prompted me to go back to university and say, I need more education. I mean, I need to learn more academically and life experience-wise.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
So your career in Corrections, how long were you there?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, I have to tell you, I don't have my resume anymore so I had to really think through this, because I think 20 years. It seemed like forever because I did so much when I went to the Department of Justice. So many things happened while I was there. So at least 20 years.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
And did you have any involvement in child protection issues while you were there?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
I didn't have any direct involvement with child

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protection issues. In terms of my role as a probation officer and then, subsequently, I was appointed as chief adult probation officer for the province. But at that time, I was still pretty involved in community work.

Even as a student, I had been president of the Newfoundland Association of Social Workers. When I first went to Corrections, in the role of probation officer, I actually got introduced to the labour movement and became, like, a shop steward and did some training in labour relations.

I worked on a women's committee for NAPE. You had the opportunity to go to a conference in New York, an international conference, like, where Gloria Steinem spoke. I mean, I had some good opportunities in my 20s.

I was the president of the Newfoundland Association of Social Workers. I was a chairperson of the Working Group on Child Sexual Abuse with the Community Services Council, which

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was a, you know, fairly large group of people who worked in that area. Most of that work had been prompted by the Hughes Inquiry, or certainly, what happened at Mount Cashel.

Also, even though I had finished my work in child welfare on Bell Island, the three boys that I placed in Mount Cashel, I was following. I lived close by to Mount Cashel. I still live with my parents, typical towny, and I had occasion to visit them on a fairly frequent basis. So I spent quite a bit of time, unannounced time, unscheduled time at Mount Cashel. And I know after the fact that the three boys that I placed at Mount Cashel were all victims of sexual abuse. One or two of them who had gone forward and pursued litigation, and one who hadn't.

The one who hadn't, I basically kept a relationship with him until he was 16 or 17. So I had seen that side. So I was peripherally involved in issues around child welfare, but not as a result of my employment.

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MICHAEL COLLINS:

Did you have any involvement in Indigenous or in Innu issues?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Not specifically. Now, again, when I worked in Justice when I started, we had only five probation offices in the province. When I became chief adult probation, we expanded that to 15 offices. So, you know, I had a probation officer in Goose Bay, who worked in Sheshatshiu, who was actually married to an Innu person. And I had an office in Nain with an Indigenous person who was our probation officer for a period of time, who had gone to law school. And I, you know, was very connected to the prison system. So I was certainly aware that we were well overrepresented in prison by Indigenous people. So I had many occasions to visit Labrador, talk with my staff, meet with judges and other professionals in the community. Again, more to discuss issues regarding the complexities of working in an Innu and Inuit culture. But again, it wasn't a core of my responsibilities. It was always there as an area that was problematic.

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And, of course, we had probation people in Central Newfoundland who were responsible for Conne River. So, you know, I was a bit familiar with that community and had occasion to visit Conne River when I was with Justice. And then I had no relationship, basically, personally or professionally, with Indigenous groups until I got reunited at Child, Youth and Family Services in 2009.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Now, stepping backwards, where did you go after Corrections in government?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

So when I was chief adult probation officer, I was seconded to Executive Council to work as a policy analyst. So I was responsible for social departments. You know, I wouldn't even be able to say what the names of the departments were because they change so often, but all the social departments. So Health, Justice, Education, those kind of departments. The economic policy analysts were focused on, you know, Finance, IGA (Intergovernmental Affairs). I was not responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

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at that time.

So, you know, our job, of course, as the executive branch, we were basically the Office of the Premier. And we would have to review all the cabinet papers, do research, send them back to departments. If, you know, there was some tweaking that was necessary, do notes on them. So I was there for a couple of years. That was a really good experience in terms of learning about the difference between the elected government and the bureaucratic arm of government. You know, how the two had slightly different objectives. And as an analyst, you were in a position where you had to give your best advice, but clearly, the government had to make the decisions on the direction in which they wished to go, the government of the day. I worked for so many premiers I wouldn't be able to name them.

So when I was at Executive Council, they farmed me out because that's the way it worked back then. Like, I didn't ask to go to Executive Council. I didn't apply. I don't think I knew

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it existed. I guess I sort of did, but I didn't really because it had no bearing on my career up to that point. So when you get a call from the clerk, and you kind of go up, and they say, okay, you're going to do this, you're like, yeah, okay, whatever.

I had a lot of experience with policy because I wrote a lot of policy when I was with Justice. I mean, I was the lead on the Victim Services Program, for that to start. I was the lead on electronic monitoring when the Province introduced that. I was the chair of the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador. So I was very involved in policy. I always was involved in policy and advancing issues of social justice. And that was part of my role with the Newfoundland Association of Social Workers and as the Newfoundland representative to the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and I was the treasurer of the Canadian Association of Social Workers for a period. So at this point, I'm gone from my leadership in the union to leadership roles in government as a manager.

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So I went to Government Services, where I was responsible, well, for a tonne of stuff. Government Services is a big department. And I also worked there for a couple of years as director of policy and planning. Then I went to Work Services and Transportation as director of policy and planning for a couple of years. And then I was seconded or taken to become part of a leadership team for the transition of Child, Youth and Family Services from Health and Community Services.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So before we get to that, you mentioned that you had a fair bit of involvement over the years in social work as a profession.

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Yes.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Did you ever have any involvement in government, in the regulation of social work?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Oh, yes. Because at the time -- well, as a board member of NYSW and the Canadian Association, we were always interested in the regulation of

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social work practice. So it was becoming common for social workers, you know, throughout the country to start to regulate their own profession. But when I was in Government Services, the government basically had directed us to regulate many professions. So social work being one of them, engineers, accountants. I mean, there were so many. And basically, at that time, government had kind of boilerplate legislation that, you know, reflected nuances of various professions, obviously. But for the most part, it was, you know, the self-regulation of title and practice. So legislation was put into place, and, you know, then decisions had to be made with the profession and with government about what positions would have to be registered in order to practice. For example, probation officers were exempt at that time because we had criminologists. We had social workers. Actually, I had made a case that we -- even though I was responsible, at one time, for probation officers, that they should be included in social work regulation. But anyway. So in order to call yourself, like, Wanda Lundrigan,

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BSW, RSW, you had to be registered. You could not purport yourself to be a social worker if you weren't registered, even if you had the academic credentials.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

And in the child protection field, what consequence did the regulation of social work as a profession have?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

So child protection workers were definitely identified as people who had to be registered as social workers, but there was also some provision, like, for grandfathering and opportunities, like, to upgrade your education and various things. But, you know, there were people who worked in communities and community organizations who didn't have social work degrees but certainly did a lot of social work tasks. Some of them were, like, assistants to social workers. Some of them were called community service workers. They came with varying degrees of experience and educational backgrounds.

So, you know, it was a little bit challenging

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and confusing for the profession and, you know, the regulatory bodies for a while, but I mean, it pretty well has worked itself out over time. It took a long time for negotiations and discussions and points of view and who should do what. It was not so straightforward as some other professions because a lot of people who were social workers, they actually had a BA in social work. The School of Social Work didn't even start in Newfoundland until, I think it was, around 19 -- in '74 I started. So I think it was only like 1972 or 1971. Before that, you could get a BA with a concentration or a major in social work. So we had a tonne of those people who got exemptions to be registered and were required to upgrade.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Did the regulation of social work cause any difficulties down the road for filling positions, especially in the rural communities or for recruiting people without formal education?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Absolutely. Of course, it would. Of course, it would. I mean, you would have to be aware that

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recruitment of social workers was difficult enough, I mean, in rural Newfoundland. Talk about in Labrador and Aboriginal communities, our School of Social Work at that time, back in the '80s, there was certainly not a focus, or there weren't courses offered, you know, specifically on the complexities of working with Aboriginal people or understanding, you know, their history or their culture.

We did have a fair bit of focus on community development back then. You know, we were taught more from a systems perspective than a clinical intervention perspective. In my mind, that made us very different than psychologists until the profession got more professionalized and people could do master's in counselling. In my mind, social work kind of moved away from its roots, but that's an aside.

So, yeah. So you really needed the experience of the people who were in the communities to take responsibility or at least assist in the care. That's why, like, we have an Assistant Probation

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Officer Program. So we looked at a combination of skills. We looked at community service workers that, again, you know, they had some education, but they had a lot of practical working knowledge. And they had the understanding of the communities that they lived in that, you know, we just didn't.

So there was no availability of an Indigenous social work program, not in Newfoundland, certainly. And even the School of Social Work had no association with Indigenous social work programs to encourage and enable Indigenous students to be educated in that way and still be able to be in their own communities. They do now. I mean, I'm going back to the '80s, really, and '90s.

So, yeah, to recruit social workers was hard and to recruit social workers in rural and Indigenous communities was near impossible.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

At the time you were in Government Services, was that when the decision was made to regulate

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social work as a profession?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, see, it started, like, even long before. I mean, you know, the ideas being thrown around and the concepts and what the profession saw as necessary in terms of regulation, my goodness, started in the early '80s, but it was into 2000s by the time there was, you know, proclamation of acts. I can't even remember -- well, when I was actually still in Justice, I think there was an act. There was an act before this more, kind of, boilerplate legislation that, when I was in Government Services, we worked on. So social work was already working on an act to regulate the profession.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
You were involved in this conversation in several capacities for decades.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Yes. Yes.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
In that time, do you remember much discussion about how this would affect Indigenous communities and Innu communities?

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WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
No. No. I don't even know -- I mean, I feel certain, you know, that it could possibly have been mentioned or referenced. And there were other provinces who had more experience with, you know, the western provinces, British Columbia, who had, like, far more experience and a bigger Indigenous population and were further advanced in a whole lot of areas to do with Indigenous culture than we were in Newfoundland. I mean, it took us a long while to catch up, in my humble opinion, with the atrocities that happened to our Indigenous people in Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, in Labrador, more specifically, and in other parts of the country, as well. We didn't know. We didn't think of it because -- or we thought of it, but peripherally because we were focused on our own, you know, fairly homogenous white population. So way back when, was it given due consideration? Absolutely not.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
Okay. So when you first moved back into the child protection sphere can you describe what roles you occupied?

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WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Yes, many years later. Okay. So, again, I mean, I am so bad on dates, but I do know because I Googled myself yesterday. It's pretty bad when you got to Google yourself just to figure out when you went to work. But anyway, I think it was 2009 that I first started. I was appointed to a leadership team consisting of three people. And Susan Abel, who did the Clinical Services Review, was one of them, and two others. And there was a deputy minister appointed at the same time. So, basically, we were a department of four who were tasked with the responsibility of transitioning all the child protection programs from Health and Community Services, at that time, into Child, Youth and Family Services, which was going to be its own department. The government had made that decision based on a number. The Turner Inquiry, the Clinical Services Review, the Deloitte Report, and just what was happening. So once they made that decision, we were focused, of course, identifying, you know, a structure, what we believed was ideal, what was happening. We had to get the workers over, but we also had to

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deal with the issues identified in the Clinical Services Review so that we were not only looking at a transition of employees to rename -- to, yeah, move to its own department. We were very much involved in a transformation process. We had a vision of the way that Child, Youth and Family Services should operate as compared to how it was operating. You know, we were trying to work out how many supervisors did we need to how many ratios to social workers, how many cases were ideal for a child protection worker to have. We had split jurisdiction for Youth Corrections. We had the community, and at that point, Justice had custodial responsibility for young offenders. We knew that the legislation, the Child Welfare Act, required an overhaul and, you know, a tonne of legislative changes.

I mean, we spent an enormous amount of time trying to work through logistical and practical details, as well as, you know, an idea of how the Department could look, what needed to be changed, how we could close cases. And I mean, again, we already knew, even at that point, Aboriginal

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issues, they were always there. They were in the forefront. They were focused on, and then not, and then again. So that was another issue that was kind of, like, an issue in and of itself because the work that we were doing, the training our social workers had in the mainstream, again, they were not prepared. They did not have the skills or the wherewithal or the education or the experience to work in Aboriginal communities without a hell of a lot of guidance and direction and changes in policy and practice. You know, we were recruiting.

It was no joy to go to work for Child, Youth and Family Services. Like, no one said, oh, I can't wait to -- well, some people actually did and spent years in protection. But, I mean, when I went there in 2009, it was no joy to work in child protection. We had the least experienced social work staff when we required the most experienced social work staff because the work is that tough. The issues are so complex. And we recognize that. We knew that we had a staff who they had their bachelor of social work all right,

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but they had little else. And there was little in-service training. And again, people were placed in positions without mentorship or structural support that they needed or what they needed to learn, specifically to do the work in rural, and in particular, Aboriginal communities.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So I'm going to suggest that we run through the positions you occupied and then talk about the issues and how they changed during your time.

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Okay. So that was fine. So in 2011, I was appointed as assistant deputy minister of Regional Operations and Service Delivery. So that meant I was responsible for all the social workers in the province, all 700 of them, and all the offices. And that required a bunch of recruitment of, you know, regional directors, and you know, positions changed, job descriptions were rewritten, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And were still, at the same time, trying, you know, to work on the other big issues, like making sure that we were true to the clinical review and the steps that it had recommended that

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we take, at least in terms of what we really could be responsible for.

I mean, you know, government is interesting because every department has a mandate, and the minister gets a mandate letter, but there's a lot of silos. The right hand often doesn't quite know what the left hand is doing. And that's not by design as much as it is by accident. And it is repetitive, and it continues to happen. And people change. Governments change. Policies change. We learn more. But I was -- during my tenure, you know -- so, yeah. I'm not quite sure what I'm trying to get at, but I think what I'm saying is that there were challenges and obstacles that sometimes made it more difficult to achieve what were mutual goals of departments. It wasn't like, you know, Health had a different goal than Child, Youth and Family Services, than Aboriginal Affairs.

The other thing is, so when I was doing work, for example, when were looking at what the Innu wanted -- let's just talk about the Innu because

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that's what you're focused on. So the Innu and Sheshatshiu, IGA had already -- it would be IGA at the time, they had a whole arm in government who were working on things like land claims and, you know, monetary compensation and who got what and who's going to be responsible for what and what laws applied and what shouldn't apply and the whole discussion of devolution.

I mean, I think everybody, even back then, had in their minds that, at some point, we have to devolve down to enabling. I shouldn't even say "allowing." Of course, allowing, but enabling, you know, Innu people to be the masters of their own situation, you know? Provide the services, do the prevention.

And then you had the federal and provincial government. Well, the federal government took responsibility for prevention, but the provincial government had responsibility for a different part.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

All right.

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WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
I know. That's a lot of talking.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
Let's try to split up the issues if we could. So your role is, you started off in the transitional committee.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Right.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
Then you moved --
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
To assistant deputy minister because the transition committee then devolved. We were done.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
And how long were you in that role?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, until I retired.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
And so I'm just going to run through some of the issues you mentioned and see if you can tell me -- this isn't an inquiry into you.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
No, I understand.

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MICHAEL COLLINS:
We'd like to know, broadly speaking, what was happening in government, and even more so, what were the pros and cons people were talking about? In these conversations, when a decision was made, what were the alternatives? What were the costs and benefits? And we're not interested really in who was saying that but what kind of ideas were in the room. So to begin with, one of the issues you mentioned there was caseloads.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Right. In terms of social work.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
What was the problem, and what were the obstacles and the alternatives.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Okay. So we had very high caseloads all across the province and certainly in Labrador, as well. But a lot of these cases, what were listed as cases weren't actually active cases. There had been no intervention or no contact with these families that were still being counted as part of a caseload. So say there was a thousand active cases. It was thousands. Really, when you do a file review, and you realize -- because social workers didn't have time to close them, so they just went to a back of a drawer. They were never properly documented, closed properly, removed from the active caseload.

And then turnover was huge, you know, in child protection workers. So then the new worker came. And so they had this massive caseload and crisis management is what social workers did. It's what is immediate and present that I cannot attend to.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
Do you remember what --
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
And paperwork, case records. So there was multiple issues that prevented social workers from having case plans that were realistic, you know, that they could present to courts, that they could actually operationalize and show that there was progress.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
And so what steps do you remember considering or taking?

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WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, so we were working towards a model. One supervisor, six social workers. One social worker, 20 cases. Then we had to look at the complexity of cases. We looked at the training that people needed. We undertook a big review of the child welfare legislation at that particular time, a lot of consultation, and a lot of legal advice. I mean, we had a lawyer that was seconded just to our department to help us work through that over several months. We looked at other models. We looked at other jurisdictions in Canada. We looked at other countries. We looked at best practice. I mean, we were doing a lot of different things simultaneously.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
When you talked about Bell Island, you said, a lot of parents they just need lessons and some support in how to parent.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Yes.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
So do you remember any policy decisions about preventive services and trying to cut that part

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of the mandate, or...

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

You know what? That was really tough because, I mean, unfortunately, the money and the kind of agreements we had with the federal government really didn't allow, well, to the extent that it should have probably, allow us to have prevention programs. And prevention -- I shouldn't say -- I mean, everyone believes in prevention, but actually, prevention services are expensive. They cost a lot of money. They cost a lot of time. They require a real belief that this is worth the effort, that we are keeping children safe, and we are keeping them at home. And prevention services, you know, in all aspects of our life, of course, again, they're harder to define, they're harder to prove positive outcomes. So, again, there never has been and never will be enough prevention services. It's not publicly palatable.

I mean, I remember when were involved with a group decision-making project that was a model, like, a couple of the social work professors, you

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know, had developed and sold the government as a project and got some funding from the federal government and the provincial government. And it was a three-year kind of pilot project. Now, it cost a lot of money. It could cost a million dollars for a family altogether over time. You know, and this was taken from a New Zealand model of Indigenous people, but it was labor-intensive and it cost a lot of money, because decisions were being made in a circle with family members, with professionals. And then measuring outcomes was tough. It was tough. It was a project I fully supported.

But anyway, of course, again, funding ended, and that kind of died away. But the principles of sensing (phonetic) circles, the principles of restorative justice, you know, there was a lot to be learned about all of that, that we could incorporate at least into some of our discussions and policy.

So, yeah. So our legislative mandate was protection of children. How we did that very

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much depended on the amount of money that was available. I mean, we were trying to attract... We did a whole review of, like, compensation for foster families because we believed that to attract good foster parents and foster homes, you know, we really needed to reach out, and we really needed to compensate them at a realistic rate. I mean, foster parents, you know, had the responsibility of caring for children that required all the same benefits, you know, that your own child would have in terms of recreation, education, and to a higher degree. Because we, as the state, have to do extra. I mean, we have to be really good at trying to provide that child with the things that they need to grow up safe and healthy. You know, the standard of care has to be really good, and it wasn't. It was not.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Of preventive services, do you remember a decision to cut that out of your mandate?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

No. We never, ever cut preventive. I mean, I don't remember us, like, saying, oh, yeah, well, let's just forget preventative service. I can't

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ever remember that ever happening anywhere. But, I mean, like, we supported a whole lot of things that were going on in prevention, like special daycare programs, like Daybreak. That's just an example. But our social workers weren't employed. They were not. So if you consider, were they going into the homes? We lost Homemaker Services, but that had been taken out long before I went back. We had it when I started. It was way gone when I went back.

So were our social workers working with the families that were on their caseload to prevent those children from coming into care and providing mental health services to the children? No, we weren't. So I guess, if I think about it, prevention was recognized as the best intervention, but we were crisis-driven. We were protection-driven. We were identifying situations too late. You know, they were coming to our attention when there was no amount of prevention that could happen at that moment in time when a child had to be removed. So, no. Yeah. So, yeah. Prevention was way down on the

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list of that mandate.

Now, having said that, we did have children who were on our caseloads that were in need of protection that were not removed. We had more children that were never removed and more families that actually never lost their children because there were case plans put in place, and there were, you know, contacts. We had a special group of social workers at the Janeway who worked specifically with families that were with help, but CYFS actually paid for that kind of service. We actually eventually took them in, as well.

So it's not like the only cases Child, Youth and Family had were children who were, you know, rounded up and brought into care. So more than were not.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Is it fair to summarize what you're saying, that preventive services was never removed from the mandate, but it was de-prioritized because it's expensive and the outcomes are difficult to measure?

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WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

That would be my belief. Others may not have that belief, but we have never put the money in prevention that we needed to. We just haven't, and we're still not. I'll stand by that forever.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Another question. So do you remember risk assessment?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Yes.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

What was that about?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

So when I was in Department of Justice, one of the things that we were working on was a risk assessment for offenders. We worked very collaboratively with the federal government and with some renowned criminologists and professors of criminology, assessing risk for offenders to re-offend. Because we had no tool as such. So over the course of a couple of years, we developed a risk assessment tool that had, you know, a lot -- we tested it. It never did, by the way. It was never culturally sensitive, and

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we knew that. We knew it when we developed it. The people who were guiding us, the scholars, they knew it. But it was a big advancement for us because what we recognized is that intervention -- so for offenders, now, there should be the least amount of intervention that is necessary to provide the greatest chance of a person not re-offending. That over-intervention is a bad thing.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Now, in the time --

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

And then we did -- so I had had that experience way back when. So we had a policy shop now in Child, Youth and Family Services, as well. And we had some people that had many years of experience with child welfare during the tenure that I was away. So we were looking at risk assessment tools, how often should visits be made? How should recordings be done? What are the risks to the children in terms of physical, emotional, safety? And what is a plan that can be realistically put in place to mitigate those risks so that children can either be returned,

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reconciled with their parents, or not removed at all? And how many visits, you know, do they need? So it involved a lot because it was tangled up in looking at risk factors. You know, systemic things - poverty, health, addictions, history of violence - you know, all these factors, of course, are risk factors in terms of a child in need of protection or a safety plan for a mother and children. I mean, it's tangled up with so many other issues. Again, mostly system to child protection, to crime, to mental health, to addictions. There's so much overlap.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So apart from the detailed questions about how to design a risk assessment tool why was a risk assessment tool seen as necessary?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Because it gave us an opportunity to use something, to have a guide in terms of assisting social workers in the intervention that was required. Like, it's not necessary to visit a family on your protection caseload who are easy and interesting and are doing fairly well, like, on a weekly basis, and you know, have a cup of

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tea and see how things are going, when you got the neighbour across the street who's really tough and difficult and you don't necessarily want to see them every week. And so, you know, you got to have intervention that's based on what risk factors are there. Not what you perceive to be chat therapy, catch-up. My gosh, these are very complicated subjects. But a tool, you know, that measures, that is proven to be a good indicator, that is validated, you know, scientifically in terms of as scientific as we can be in social sciences. You know, when we did risk assessments on offenders, it doesn't mean that, as someone who was low risk, didn't, you know, go commit some random murder in ten years' time. That would happen, but it told us what was the likelihood of somebody re-offending. And it was low, let them go. And same in child welfare practice. What is the likelihood? How best can we identify that likelihood and then identify what needs to happen to mitigate those factors?

So everybody was kind of operating from at least an instrument that, you know, told us

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something. Not everything -- none of these are perfect, but, you know, you got a consistency, so you know what's being done, like, at the beginning. It's documented. It's subject to change. You develop a case plan around it. You update that.

Like, recordkeeping was a real problem. People weren't keeping records. They didn't have time, whatever. It didn't matter, but it was essential in order to track any kind of progress or to know if social workers were spending their time in the right places. They needed to know that, too. They'd have no way of knowing. It was very, and I don't want to say, airy-fairy, but it was like, what am I going to do today? And which of these are going to blow up in my face if I don't, you know, take action? And then you'd get a case that it could literally require your full week. It could take every single hour and then beyond those hours. Trying to account for that or explain that. And then you're missing out on other stuff.

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So, I mean, the accountability mechanisms need to be in place so that we don't have tragedies, we don't have deaths, or we reduce. Again, it's all about harm reduction. So you reduce, as much as you can, those absolutely tragic events from happening.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

And so the absolute tragic events we're talking about here, what are those?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Deaths. That's the worst.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Deaths of a child in their home or a child in care?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Both. Both.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Both.

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Any child death is a tragedy, as we know. I mean, unless it's due to illness. But certainly, I mean, death of a child who's actually in the care of the State is horrific and should be. And should never, ever -- we should prevent that at

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all costs, knowing that it will happen. It will happen on occasion, period. Death of a child in their own home by a parent, you know, by physical abuse, by neglect to an extent that a child is starving, is emotionally, physically not thriving. I mean, there's so many situations where parents, who are so badly addicted to their own drugs or whatever that they're just not able. They cannot provide supervision, or they can't provide for their children.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Would the risks being contemplated include the risk of a child losing contact with their culture? Emotional risk?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Yes. I mean, emotional risk is really important. You know, I mean, physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural. I don't know how we decide which is more important. I guess it's like hierarchy of needs, you know? You got to have food. You got to have shelter. After that, you need all the other things. So, yeah.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So do you remember any discussion about the

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number of children removed from Innu communities and placed in foster homes elsewhere?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Yes. Yes, lots.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Were there any options or alternatives considered to try to reduce that?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Yes. Well, we were working very hard on trying to reunite or get more capacity in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish to be able to bring children safely back to their communities. A lot of our Innu children were placed on the Northern Peninsula. It was quite far. They went months, often, without visitations. I don't mean they got lost, but they kind of did because the efforts, again, toward reconciliation of, you know, children and parents, it was kind of, like -- how do I say? Almost, like, put on the back burner. The children were safe where they were, or so it seemed. The depth of having, you know, removed them from a culture that is the essence of their being wasn't -- I don't think it was considered as seriously or as much as it should

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have been, absolutely. Like, they were physically cared for. They were going to school. They seemed to be adjusting. Like, was there consideration given to, well, how do we maintain their cultural identity? How do we continue to teach them? How do we not try and absorb them into a white rural community, culture? Like, I mean, it took me years, and I still struggle, like, to realize the impact of some of the decisions that leaders and government made because of ignorance, lack of understanding, lack of knowledge, ignorance, and a very, you know, patriarchal view.

Yeah. Yeah. But it was hard. It was hard. We couldn't take -- I don't remember how many, but I mean, it was a lot of children. And just, like, say, okay, now we're going to, somehow, throw them back into... They'd been out, a lot of them, for long periods of time. So how do we do that properly? How do you get them back? How do you...

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So specifically, what are the obstacles? You

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don't have enough homes?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

We don't have the homes. We don't have the infrastructure, the group homes. We don't have the foster homes. We couldn't find kinship, like, extended family who had the capability. You know, there was a need to build capacity. You know, we had a generation of parents who never knew how to parent because they weren't taught how to parent because they were removed themselves from home. I mean, it'll take us another 200 years, and we might not get it right then.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

That's pessimistic.

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

No. I mean, it was generations in the making. And, okay, that may be a bit extreme. But, no, I'm optimistic that we are moving in the right direction. But it's so...

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Do you remember what kinds of steps were taken to improve capacity?

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WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Well, I mean, there was leaders in the Innu -- there was a group home in Sheshatshiu. There were lots of kinship arrangements I also led. There was a lot of children being taken care of by aunts and grandparents and extended family. There was a group home. You know, we were trying to enter into memorandums of understanding with the Innu Nation. And, again, we were doing that.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Let's leave that for one moment. We'll come back to that if that's okay?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Okay. Again, so we were trying to build capacity, find out what the Innu needed or wanted. Now, simultaneously -- and, again, I talk about silos because I think it's really important. So I knew there was an Innu Round Table. I knew there were land claims people. I knew there was Aboriginal -- I knew there was a tonne of other people who were doing all -- but I didn't know, really. I can't say that I really knew. I knew bits and pieces. It didn't seem like there was anyone informing. I didn't quite

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know what was going on with the federal government. I knew the province was trying to negotiate, you know, better deals in terms of service delivery, prevention services. The federal government seemed to be up -- anyway, but I didn't know the specifics. No one ever, kind of, wrote a note or something that said, this is what is happening to the Innu people of Labrador. Or not to them, with them, to them, for them. Like, health. Here's what Child, Youth and Family Services. Here's what the land claims people are doing. Here's what the purpose of the Innu Round Table is. Like, there was a lot of round tables and negotiations and partnerships going on, but...

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So you were a senior person in a senior role.

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Yes. I was the assistant deputy minister then.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

But you didn't know what was going on?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

I knew little bits and pieces. Like, I had contacts, like, you know, with Labrador

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Aboriginal Affairs. I wasn't part of the Innu Round Table. I might have attended a meeting. I wasn't really sure exactly what they were all doing. I had some interaction with, like, the federal government who were working, you know, in those areas. And it all seemed very complex to me, quite frankly. And I knew bits and pieces, but I can't say I knew enough. And, in fact, I should have known more because I think it would have assisted us in informing us as to maybe we could move in this direction a bit more or that, you know? Maybe not. I don't know.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So staying on capacity building for the moment. Do you remember any ideas for building capacity more rapidly that never came to fruition? They were never funded? They were never approved?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Well, for example, training. Training of the group home staff that currently existed. Training support. How could you support and not take over? Where could we find the expertise? We couldn't provide them with the expertise, my crew. We were all pretty well white social

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workers. We did have some Indigenous people working for us. But, again, you know, they were difficult roles because they were responsible for administrating a program and laws, but they were very, very engaged, involved, committed to the community. They understood. They were married. They had spouses who were Innu. And it's, like, almost policing, you know, if you were Innu. It's the right thing, but it's really hard, too. So people in those positions needed to be supported in a different way and their expertise needed... Yeah, we needed to listen to them at the same time. At the same time, we were like, oh, my God. Like, we have a mandate. We can't be putting children at risk. And we can't do this, and we can't do that, but we could have done more.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So what I'm understanding and what I'm hearing is that you could have expanded capacity more rapidly had there been a consensus about how to do so?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Yes. Had there been a consensus, had there been

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an infrastructure to allow -- like, the School of Social Work, at that time, had they opened up positions or recognized a need for Indigenous training in social work, or had there been lots of things. Had there been more coordination, had there been more money. So, yeah. Yeah. Yes. There were things that could have happened way more rapidly with other things in place, absolutely, that didn't.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

And so you've indicated you didn't have a complete picture of what was going on?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

No. Well, and maybe I should have.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So that's one kind of thing.

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Right.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

And then another thing is funding.

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Funding was huge.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

And were there internal disagreements about what

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kinds of things would be appropriate within...
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
It wasn't so much disagreements. It was like throwing up your hands. It was like mystification.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
So this wasn't the case where there were people in the office with strongly conflicting opinions?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Oh, God, no.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
It was the case where people didn't know what to do?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
No, didn't know the answers. Didn't. You know, brainstorm. Like, knew there was a problem but didn't know how to fix it, seriously. And, yeah. It wasn't, like, oh, my God. Like, well, we should take them all and, you know, relocate them all to Corner Brook, you know, everyone in Sheshatshiu. No. There was no disputing the fact that the results had to come from within, that, you know, we had to be moving toward a devolution of government, laws, services,

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healthcare, social services, education. Like, Innu Aboriginal people had the right and deserved to preserve their culture in a way that they knew and felt was the right way.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
So I've left devolution until now. So I've heard you say that everyone agreed sort of in principle.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, I thought they did.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
But what were the obstacles to devolving?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, there had to be changes in the legislation. There had to be agreement with the Innu people and their leadership. There had to be some understanding with the federal government about -- you know, I mean, we have provincial laws. We have federal laws. Well, federal laws supersede provincial laws, which supersede local laws, blah, blah, blah.

I mean, the whole truth and reconciliation movement required so many things to happen. You

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know, money was huge. The issue of money was huge. And separate that from, like, land claims and who owned what and who got what. But just the funding required to build that capacity, to support that group home, to pay the staff.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
So to separate out devolution from capacity.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Yeah. But you can't really. You just can't because you can't devolve a service to someone. You can't say, okay, now you're responsible. Have at it. Good luck to you. See you. You know, without some infrastructure and guidance and support and capacity building and training and real honest-to-God acknowledgement that you are working with them or on behalf of them as opposed to directing them and telling them what's necessary.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
When you say "capacity building," was there a view that capacity was an obstacle to devolution and a lack of capacity was a...
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
I think there was a general feeling that until

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capacity -- yeah. I think capacity had to be built for the Innu leaders, as well as the people who were going to be working in those areas, to have the skills. How they got them would have to be through programs that were Aboriginal nature. You know, no good to send them down to a community college, again, not to learn and how to make a difference in their own communities. Community development capacity even as much as individual capacity, working together, yeah. And having a skilled labour force. And then also, recognizing that, you know, a lot of people, they have their own issues, too. You know, a community of a couple of thousand people in Sheshatshiu were, I would say, intergenerational trauma. And so there'd be nobody -- not that we're any better, but I mean, the history that we understand better now, you know, absolutely demonstrates there was no one given a free ticket. There was no one who, you know, did not feel the effects of what their parents experienced, their grandparents, their own children.

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MICHAEL COLLINS:
So the capacity would mean, in order to give Innu Nation the authority to run their own civil service, they would, maybe, sort of already need to have a civil service. Is that what you're...
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Yes. Well, they'd need to have the tools in their toolbox, yes, to be able or to say, we're ready.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
And this was --
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
We're ready. Like, I had a fair bit of experience in Conne River. They had a different history. Don't get me wrong. But I mean, they were doing it. They were running fairly smoothly on their own without much...
MICHAEL COLLINS:
So was it fair --
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
So it was there.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
So is it fair to say that the view -- that many within the provincial government felt that until

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they perceived Innu Nation running smoothly, it wouldn't be responsible to devolve?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Yeah. Well, I mean, no. I think there's a bit of that. So, yeah. That's always that little paternalistic perspective that is either -- it's probably not really even based in reality, but it certainly existed. But also, yeah, a fear. I don't know. Oh, Jesus knows, it's not because we didn't want to give up power. God, I would have loved to have said many times, oh, my goodness, yes, I agree. Do it. What can I do for you?

But, yeah. We had to straighten out agreements and laws and, you know, how it was going to be different. Yeah. There was a lot. And there was also misunderstandings. Like, you know, what we, white, us, also believed, you know, it was different. Not better. Different. Not better at all. Worse for their culture. Are you out of time?
MICHAEL COLLINS:
Can we take a break for a couple of minutes?

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WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Sure.

(Off the Record)

MICHAEL COLLINS:
During your time in government, what kind of priority did Indigenous child protection issues have?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Well, it was a priority, but it was one of several competing priorities. But it was a priority.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
In particular, when you were responding to the recommendations of the Turner Report and another report, the Clinical Services Review, were Indigenous or Innu concerns --
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
They weren't paramount at all.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
They weren't paramount, no.
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
I mean, there was nothing -- I can't recall

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anything in the Turner Inquiry. I can't recall a whole lot about that inquiry. But anyway, and even in our Clinical Services Review, the focus was not on Innu or any Indigenous children. No, I can't say it was. It was really after we, you know, transitioned the Department that, you know, we certainly recognized that, oh, my, you know, this is an ongoing issue that's separate from the generalities of the Clinical Services Review. This is different. This is complex. This is special. This requires a different kind of attention.

So, yes. It was really after I became the ADM of Regional Operations and Service Delivery and, of course, had staff on the ground in those areas and had a regional director in place that, yeah, it took on a life of its own.
MICHAEL COLLINS:
How much of your time or energy or focus would it have taken during those days?
WANDA LUNDRIGAN:
Not enough. And it was fits and spurts. Yeah. Because I spent a fair bit of time in Labrador

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during my tenure, believe it or not. But again, it was fits and spurts. That's the best way I can describe it. It was like, you know, a couple steps forward, one back, stuff getting put on the wayside. Like, an MOU that we had started in 2011 wasn't, you know, actually signed until 2012. And then, you know, the service delivery in Natuashish, trying to find solutions to have workers on the ground up there. I went to Natuashish.

But, yeah. It was fits and spurts. So I don't know. I wouldn't be able to say a percentage, but it was certainly not the majority or half of my work.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So for the service delivery in Natuashish, do you remember what solution you may have come up with?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Well, at that point, I mean, literally, we just could not keep staff so we developed a program for fly-in/fly-out. Because they were already doing some fly-ins, but it was, like, on a weekly basis. So it was really inconsistent. And there

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was absolutely no consistency. You know, a different person would show up every other time. I mean, it was hard. And so we developed a program that we'd have. We wanted two core teams of workers that would stay a couple of weeks and then come out and go, the same team, for at least six months. That was kind of, like, the deal. And we had a bit of incentive for that. Anyway, we did start that. And, you know, we had meetings again with the community groups that were there and the police and health. And, yeah, I went up there. But it certainly was not adequate. It just wasn't adequate. It was kind of, like, another Band-Aid.

Then, of course, we had some good workers who actually agreed and participated in that. And then they had more experience and then more wisdom from their work to kind of help inform us. But, I mean, they were, like, throwing up their hands, too. I mean, they knew they, you know, they couldn't do it. They knew that. They knew that they were limited in their ability to intervene. So anyway, it is what it is. It was

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what we did at the time, out of probably desperation, more than anything. We were legally required to, you know, have something. We just couldn't abandon the community because, again, we had legislation that required us to provide services for all the children in Newfoundland and Labrador. So, yeah. It was kind of a...

MICHAEL COLLINS:

If you hadn't had the legislation, would anyone have wanted to abandon the community?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

No. I mean, well, I'm sure there were days. No. I mean, I say that very facetious. No. It was all bad enough, you know, that we had to -- everyone was relocated from Davis Inlet. We had the experience of sending out a tonne of children to a facility in St. John's because of glue sniffing and then throwing them back again without wraparound support. But we just made a tonne of mistakes. I mean, and I say mistakes because they were mistakes, but they were not bad-intentioned mistakes. They were desperate attempts to do something, you know, with the agreement. You know, I mean, I wasn't around.

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I don't know about the relocation from Davis to Natuashish. I know it happened. I know there was agreement from the Innu, but I mean, I'm sure they were desperate at that point, too. But I don't know. I mean, and it's so far. You know, I mean, the logistics of getting into the community. So this is why -- this even makes it more important, you know, that they be self-sufficient in all their affairs. "Self-sufficient" might not even be the right word. But, yeah, able to run their affairs as they see fit. Making sure, you know, again, if people are not dying hand over fist.

I mean, you know, I think about, like, so many suicides. I think about so much grief, so much pain. So much. It's very overwhelming.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So stepping back from all of this, what do you think has changed in the system since you started working in it?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

So, I mean, you know, I'm not in the know anymore. I try my very best not to be. No. But

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I mean, you know, I know. Like, I had people who worked for me when I was ADM who are involved now on a full-time basis with Aboriginal -- with making things happen, who are, like, the leads in terms of child protection and agreements with the federal -- the Innu Round Table has moved. The federal government has invested a lot more money. You know, it really is strides towards self-government and self-service, you know, providing services that are culturally appropriate to the Innu people of Natuashish and Sheshatshiu. Group homes. There's education. I know there's an affiliation with a community college or a university in BC. I know that the Nunatsiavut government has a social work prof who does Indigenous teaching there, so that there's, you know, a recognition. Again, that, you know, skills and opportunities need to be provided for individuals who want to stay within their own culture and bring more skills and expertise to that culture.

So I don't know specifically. I just know that the landscape has changed for the better,

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obviously. And I'm sure there's, you know, still steps to go. I mean, my original director, who I had in Child, Youth and Family Services, is basically on contract with Aboriginal groups, again, to assist and help guide and help provide, you know, advice and help with strategic planning, so their service delivery models are going to work or got a good chance. They have a better chance of working. There's a lot going on that I obviously wouldn't be aware of. I'm out of government ten years.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

So another way, over the course of your career, what do you think ought to have changed but never did?

WANDA LUNDRIGAN:

Oh, my gosh. There's an awful lot of things. And, I mean, specifically, I think -- well, I wouldn't say never changed, but I think it took us way too long, way too long, to understand the special requirements of our Aboriginal populations and to treat them with a lens of respect and acknowledgement of their experience historically over time. And dealing with being

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inundated with white culture, white laws, white norms, white language way too long. And, you know, I don't think we're there. I think that we're getting better.

I mean, and the other thing is, you know -- and I say this, again, this is from a social work, my own experience. Things change but stay the same in so many ways. You know, we are getting better, but we are nowhere near addressing the systemic problems that create so many other problems, you know, poverty, again, supports for families, addictions, mental health. Like, everyone knows that these determinants of health, including social health, are so important. You know, spirituality. Like, human development is complex. And, you know, we make strides, then, again, we step backwards. We think, okay, well, we got a bit of a handle on this problem, so let's move on. And, again, the way that, you know, we only got so much money. And the priorities of the general Joe on the street, and that includes most people, they don't know anything, we don't know anything about the

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Innu culture. We don't do enough to educate. Like, truth and reconciliation to the average person, it just means nothing. They're like, geez, don't the Native people get enough? Like, aren't we giving them too much? I mean, so how do you change fundamental, I mean, societal? I can't make everyone think like I do, obviously. I can't make people compassionate. I can't make people believe there is a better way for us to organize our society or that our priorities on expenditures, you know, are not my priorities. I'm not in politics. That's the difference between bureaucrats and politicians.

So, you know, like I said, things change but remain the same, just like a different name on a different problem, a crises, intervene. You think it's okay, so you change focus and, you know, we move ahead, and then we don't. It's the way of democracy.

MICHAEL COLLINS:

Thank you very much.

(Matter concludes.)

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