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

Transcript | Interview Private Session 2

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

Thursday April 10, 2025

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good? Thank you.

I'm gonna say hello again.

T. PASTITSHI: Hi.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Jim, and you're Tricia.

T. PASTITSHI: Yes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And –

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Jessica.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Jessica, yeah, that's right.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Cousin.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Terrance.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How are you?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good, good.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And this is Mike Collins. He's a lawyer with the Inquiry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

T. PASTITSHI: Okay, hi.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And, of course, everyone knows Sean.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: The whole community does.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We're so happy to have you here, and we're so glad that you would want to come and tell us your story or any thoughts you have about child protection or your own history. We're here to gather any information that Innu people want to tell us.

Now Nashtash is going to do a session tomorrow, but I'm gonna do one today.

T. PASTITSHI: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'm so glad you're here, and if you're – you want to tell us why you're here, you can tell us that, or I can ask you questions. Whatever you like.

T. PASTITSHI: Either way, I really don't mind.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay, you start off. Just start off by telling us your name so we can pick it up on the tape.

T. PASTITSHI: Hi, my name is Tricia Pastitshi. I'm 36 years old, and today is my birthday.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, cool. Happy Birthday.

T. PASTITSHI: Thank you.

I think I was probably 13 at the time when I got sent to Ontario – North Bay, Ontario. It was – I remember the day was, like, March 5. And then I just turned, when I was in Ontario, 14.

I didn't speak – I didn't really speak English at that time. I only speak – like, speak Innu at that time. I didn't understand English; I didn't really know English that good.

So when I was – back in the day, I used to sniff gas, right? So a lot of people – a lot of Social Services sent out to group home.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: That's right.

T. PASTITSHI: And some of them sent to Charles J.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I was supposed – I sent first at the Charles J. with the kids. Then I ran away from there, so they moved me to a group home. So when I was sniffing gas that day – it was night, though, but I asked my dad that I wanna get some help. I didn't wanna stay here. I didn't wanna go house to houses, right?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good.

T. PASTITSHI: So they used to move me house to house to house.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And when I asked my dad, I needed to get some help. Like, I didn't want to go house to house. I was really tired of it. So I told my dad that I need some treatment, I need to get some help.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: What is your father's name?

T. PASTITSHI: Geoffrey Pastitshi.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

T. PASTITSHI: He went to Social Services to talk to workers. There were a lot of kids sent out to North Bay, Ontario.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And somewhere in Ontario, some of the kids were there, too, right, but I didn't know where exactly replaced the kids to, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sure.

T. PASTITSHI: And when I got sent out there, I asked Social Services that – if the Innu person can come with me when they – when I go to Ontario. They said yes. At that time, the social worker was named Mary Jane Nui.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I asked – like, I didn't want – when I came to Ontario, they showed me where I'm gonna sleep and what time is the supper and I met the family. I didn't really comfortable that night – that night when I came. It was really late, too. And I was crying because Mary Jane was staying at the hotel. And I told –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And it was a long time ago, and you remember it very clearly.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, I remember everything what happened.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I told her that I don't wanna stay. I wanna come with you. I wanna stay to where you are so I can communicate, so I can talk Innu, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Because I was really talking really good Innu.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I was crying. She said: No, you can stay here because that's where you're gonna live until you get some help, and I said no. I was begging her, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And she finally said yes. So I stayed with her until she flied out back to – in Sheshatshiu.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: They were talking English with me. I already told Mary Jane: Can you tell them that I don't really speak English at that time. And they were speaking English, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I didn't know what they were saying at all. Like, I only speak Innu when I was here. That's where I grew up, in Sheshatshiu, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And you were about 13?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And then when she left that day, I went to the room and I, like – I don't know. I didn't feel, like – I wasn't really too comfortable.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Like, I wanna talk Innu, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I didn't know how to speak English with them in that time. But I remember they were saying school. I know school, right. They were saying English school, something about school.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And finally somebody came in, in my community, a girl was named Chelsea Penashue, was there too, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sure.

T. PASTITSHI: And I found I was really happy she was there, so I can communicate with her. And they tell me not to speak Innu because – they only tell me to speak English. We're – wasn't allowed to speak Innu at all. And I started to cry because I told Chelsea: Why we're not allowed to speak Innu? And I got sent in the room. I don't know why – what did I did. Why I was punished.

I'm sorry I'm crying.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: That's okay.

T. PASTITSHI: Because I kept this inside me so long.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Of course.

T. PASTITSHI: And I can't – I don't know how to talk about it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Not at all. We are very happy. Whatever you want to say, you say.

T. PASTITSHI: I was in the room for two days. I didn't know what did I did wrong, because I already told them that – or Mary Jane already told them that like, I couldn't speak Innu – like, I couldn't speak English at all, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I tell Chelsea that – she was speaking English – I told them: Tell them that I don't speak English.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Why I'm punished, right.

And Chelsea communicate with me, saying that you're gonna start school, you gotta speak English, right. When we we're sitting down in the table, when we're – like, the foster parents around, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I told them that I wanted to use the phone. I wanna go home, pack, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I was like, why I wasn't allowed to speak my own language? Because it's my first language, right.

I wasn't allowed to use the phone for months before I can – and I told her that, to teach me English so I can talk to them, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: What was the name of the facility in North Bay? What was it called?

T. PASTITSHI: In North Bay, what do you mean?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: The place you went to, was there a name on it? Like –

T. PASTITSHI: The –

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: It don't matter if you don't remember, I just –

[Dialogue between T. Pastitshi and Unidentified Speaker in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He said it was foster parents, couples.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, I see. You weren't, like, going to Ranch Ehrlo or one of those. It was a foster home.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay. Thank you.

T. PASTITSHI: And they told me that when – before Mary Jane Nui left to go to the airport, they only told me I will be here just six months.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Right.

T. PASTITSHI: Then go back home.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Right.

T. PASTITSHI: I was there for five years.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: What was the name of the family?

T. PASTITSHI: The family name – Lorna – Lorna Burdette.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And Michelle Burdette.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

You were there for five years.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, but they only told me I will be here for just six months, right. It turns out it was five years.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Did you use your Innu language at all while you were there? Could you speak to anybody in Innu-aimun?

T. PASTITSHI: No, I have to sometimes sneak out in the room so I can talk to her in my language, and most of the nights I sneak out just to talk to her.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And how long did Chelsea stay there?

T. PASTITSHI: Um, three and a half years.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Wow.

What are your other memories about there?

T. PASTITSHI: When I used to go to YMCA, there was Innu people, like, Innu kids, too. I seen them, right. I know them from back home. I used to sniff gas with them.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I was so happy, right. And I talked my language right away.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: When I see them, I said I miss my language, I wanna talk. And there was, like, workers, like, works with us during the day, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sure.

T. PASTITSHI: And they were mad at us because we were speaking Innu. And they were talking to my foster mother, and she was mad because: I told you not to speak Innu when you –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mm-hmm.

T. PASTITSHI: – when the worker's around. You gotta speak English all times.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How many times were you allowed to come home and come back to Sheshatshiu in those five years?

T. PASTITSHI: In five years, I was allowed to come home after almost four years since I'd been there.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Wow.

T. PASTITSHI: I only – we only allowed to talk on the phone for 15, 10 minutes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How many times a week?

T. PASTITSHI: Every one month.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Once a week, 15 minutes.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

M. COLLINS: Once a month or once a week?

T. PASTITSHI: Every one month.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, every month.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, every month.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Not a week, every month.

T. PASTITSHI: Because it was a long distance, they could tell us –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay. That's what they used – that's what they said.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How many times did somebody from Child, Youth and Family Services here in Sheshatshiu or in Newfoundland talk to you?

[Dialogue between T. Pastitshi and Unidentified Speaker in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you repeat the question?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

Did anybody from Sheshatshiu Child, Youth and Family Services or a worker ever call you and say: How are you doing? How are things going? What do you want to tell us? Anybody ever call you like that from home?

[Dialogue between T. Pastitshi and Unidentified Speaker in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

M. COLLINS: You were in Davis Inlet at that time, were you? Did you – where were you at 13? Where did you live?

T. PASTITSHI: When I was 13? I went to – I was – pretty much grew up in Sheshatshiu.

M. COLLINS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay, yeah.

Well anyway, the question was did anybody ever try to call you and say how are you doing, are you feeling good?

T. PASTITSHI: No, no one called, no one check. That was the last time I seen her. When she flew back home, I never seen her again after.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Go ahead. Anything else on your mind?

T. PASTITSHI: Then I went to school and start to English. I watch people talk, right, like, so I can communicate too, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: That's how I was learning.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: So I can talk fast in English.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: That's right.

T. PASTITSHI: So I was watching every word, what they say, so I can speak, like, English.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And they told me to – it was during the day I go to school, like, half a day to speak – like, they teach me ABCs, they teach me that kinda stuff –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: – and how to read. It was a really hard time to read, to be honest. I learned it on the computer. There was a computer that you can – it would read to you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, and they give me every two weeks, how much I learn. So they are kinda, like, testing me, where my level at to reading. It took me almost four years to speak really good English since I'd been there.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sure.

T. PASTITSHI: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And you speak very good right now, too.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: But you speak both languages now?

T. PASTITSHI: I kinda lost a little bit, and still today, I'm still learning how to speak Innu. It took me quite a while to pick up my language back. And I'm still learning from today, and I don't wanna say anything wrong because I'm scared they're gonna laugh at me or something.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay, I understand.

So you can talk about your time there, or you can talk about when you finished there and whatever else you did afterwards; how you came back home.

T. PASTITSHI: I was always, like, running away, middle of the night, so I can collect call with – talk to my mother. I ran away middle of the night just to talk to her, just to hear her voice so I can talk my language.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Where would you go to make the phone call?

T. PASTITSHI: There was on the streets for the – you can make a collect call or –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: – those kinda phones.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I used that. I called my dad in the middle of the night. He didn't pick up. So I'd collect call to – so I can talk to my mom. She'd finally pick up right away, and I

said – she'd tell me what's wrong, why are you calling in the middle of the night? Is there anything wrong, right.

I told her that I ran away just to hear your voice, so I can talk my language to her, right. She said I'm going to Social Services to talk to them, I don't like – she only said I don't like how they're, like –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Right.

T. PASTITSHI: – I told my mom I wanted to speak Innu. I'm not allowed to speak Innu. I really wanna go back home. She was working on to come back here, but I wasn't allowed to talk on the phone for two, three months maybe. I remember it. Only Chelsea was allowed every one month to call the parents.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Do you think it's right to treat children like that?

T. PASTITSHI: To be honest, no.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: No.

T. PASTITSHI: It wasn't right. If you wanna talk to your – if you wanna hear your mom or dad, you really wanna hear them, right. And I was so mad at them. Like, even though I ran away, at least I can still call for them, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: But no, I have to wait for at least two or three months so I can make a phone call back every fifth – like, say 15 minutes, and then another month later, 15 minutes. It was like that.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Just for the tape and the record, tell us who's here with you as your support right there sitting beside you.

Who's here with you?

T. PASTITSHI: Jessica is my cousin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And –

T. PASTITSHI: And Terrance is my cousin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Yeah, you were talking about not being able to speak and wanting to speak. Anything more you wanna tell us about that time period?

T. PASTITSHI: A lot.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Go ahead.

T. PASTITSHI: Like, what I seen – when I go YMCA, when I go, like, go, let's say for shopping for the clothes, let's say that – I used to see Innu kids there. But I have to speak English.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah. He said no. My worker said no Innu, just English, right. And I start to lose my language because all of us has to speak English right there with them, right. So they can hear every conversation, what we say.

We all, like, other – the other kids, we all planned out to run away so we can go home because we were speaking Innu because all of them were so mad, why we're not allowed to speak our language. Like, that's not right, they said, right. We should go home –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Were they younger or older than you?

T. PASTITSHI: They were younger than me.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Can you remember how many altogether?

T. PASTITSHI: There was probably seven kids together.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Wow.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Do you know where they were staying?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, I know where they were staying.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: With foster homes like you?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay.

T. PASTITSHI: But I wasn't allowed to see them at the house though. But I can – we can only go to YMCA just to swim or, like, there is only – or going to school, some of them.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How many times did you see an Ontario social worker or case worker come and check on you and check on your foster parents?

T. PASTITSHI: Every one year.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Like, not once a month?

T. PASTITSHI: No, every one year.

Every summer they came; June or July sometimes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: What did they do while they were there?

T. PASTITSHI: They're – my foster parents gave them an update, how I act and how is the school, how much money I spend, or how many times I got in trouble.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

T. PASTITSHI: All that kinda stuff.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I was there, too, when they have the meeting. Sometimes I didn't wanna listen, to be honest.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

What happened after that, then?

T. PASTITSHI: They say that they're gonna see me in a couple months and it turns out every – like, in next year, in the summer, I see them again, right. They said that they're gonna try to do every six months for a meeting.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Only update us with that, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: But it only turned every year.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How many times were you contacted by a social worker from Newfoundland and Labrador to see how you were doing?

T. PASTITSHI: From, like, here in Sheshatshiu?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: From here, yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: They never contact us.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Never contacted you?

T. PASTITSHI: No, they only just sent us from Ontario and that's the last time I seen the social worker from that day she fly away.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How did that make you feel?

T. PASTITSHI: I felt like I was abandoned, to be honest. I felt like they left me here for good.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: When did you finally leave and how did that happen? Can you remember that?

T. PASTITSHI: I graduated high school.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh.

T. PASTITSHI: And it was in June in 2008.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

T. PASTITSHI: I graduated from high school.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I went back home because my mom didn't like it, because I started to speak English with her.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: She told me to speak Innu. This is not your first language.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: You gotta speak Innu. You gotta come back home. After I graduated, around, say, in August, I decided – I told her I wanted to go to college, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: To study – a Native art school.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: But she said no, come back home. You're starting to lose your language, she says.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay. Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I started to speak more English with her. I didn't know the words in Innu no more, so I have to ask her what is this, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: But she said no, you can't go to college over there. You should go to Goose Bay in college because this English you're speaking to me, I don't like it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: You used to speak Innu to me, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Tricia, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

T. PASTITSHI: I have one older sister, and I have two younger sisters.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Any brothers?

T. PASTITSHI: No.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Did you ever have any contact with them when you were away in Ontario?

T. PASTITSHI: No, only my mother. I talked to her on the phone because I only had 15 minutes to call her.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

How did you get home? Did somebody come and get you?

T. PASTITSHI: From Ontario, one of the social workers fly here with me.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay.

T. PASTITSHI: It was a worker, too. One of the workers and one social worker.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

T. PASTITSHI: But it was only just a couple of days here.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Then I have to go back. Then –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: What do you mean? You got here and then you had to go back? Back where?

T. PASTITSHI: Back to Ontario, in North Bay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: After you graduated?

T. PASTITSHI: No, I was here before. Just only, like, only short visit right, because I asked – I begged them, too, like, I wanna go back home.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, yes.

T. PASTITSHI: I wanna see my mom, right, and see my little sister and see my sister.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How many times a year did that happen?

T. PASTITSHI: It was – I came here only four or five days, then I have to go back because the – like, it was in March time, because it was break time from school, right. I was in high school.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Did you do that every year?

T. PASTITSHI: No, that was my – after three years, when I was over there, I went to school and came back after July – I mean June, after – I was Grade 11 that time, Grade 11.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: (Inaudible) yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I was here for six weeks with my uncle. I stayed at his house. He drove all the way to Ontario to – because he wanted to do a family trip.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: So he did that.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: What was your uncle's name?

T. PASTITSHI: Gregory Pastitshi.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

So he took you back?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: What grade did you start when you went there first? Was it Grade 8?

T. PASTITSHI: I was – yeah, Grade 8.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

And this trip happened when you were finished Grade 11?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I told my uncle I wanna give up, I don't wanna go back.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And he said go one more year. You're gonna be graduated next year anyway, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay, yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Because in all my family and (inaudible), I'll be the first one who graduated in high school, and on my dad's side, on my – I will be the second person graduated, right. So –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Congratulations.

T. PASTITSHI: And he told me, like, I really wanna go home, I wanna start learning more – Innu back, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I said no, you can do it. Like, it's just one year. One more year, you can graduate, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I said okay. After a year come, I finally graduated in high school, right. It was my plan to go to art school for a year, but when I was – and my mom started to realize this, I said – she said – she told me that: It's time for you to come home. I don't like you to keep speaking English every time when you talk to me. You gotta learn how to speak your first language.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: So after you got back to Labrador, Sheshatshiu –

T. PASTITSHI: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – did you go to school or college or get work? What did you do?

T. PASTITSHI: After that –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You we're only 19 – 18 or 19.

T. PASTITSHI: Nineteen.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: After that, I stayed home for, at least, let's say five or six months before I started working from Voisey Bay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh really? What did you do there?

T. PASTITSHI: I was kitchen helper.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

How did you get the job?

T. PASTITSHI: I asked my dad to help me, where I can reply [read: apply] to get to Voisey Bay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And his –

[Dialogue between T. Pastitshi and Unidentified Speaker in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

T. PASTITSHI: His ex-girlfriend was, like – can help you with reply, [read: apply] right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How long did you work there?

T. PASTITSHI: Eight years.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Really?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, I started in – yeah, I worked there for eight years, and my mom told me that she was getting sick. It's time to give up so I can help her.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay.

Do you have any children?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, I got one child, but I adopted the other child.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

How old are they?

T. PASTITSHI: Axel is nine.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: They took him when he was newborn baby because my sister had the baby blue, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: So she couldn't take care of it at that time. So the Social Services came and I told my mom that maybe we should keep him, because I don't want him to go to a foster home –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: – like me, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I didn't want him to grow up like me, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Because my mom listened to me talking about it and I don't want – I told him – I told her that I don't want him to grow up to go house to houses, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And my mom said – she said yes right away, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay.

T. PASTITSHI: Like, she did help me raise him.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: So how are they doing?

T. PASTITSHI: He's really doing good, but when I was talking to him today – I talked to him this morning, he said that he misses his little brother.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

He said, did you ever hear of my little brother. I said he – maybe I'll check later and see how he's doing, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Which one is the adopted child, and which one –

T. PASTITSHI: Oh, Axel.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And then what's the name of the other child?

T. PASTITSHI: This is my first child that I had.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: His name is Skyler.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, he's eight months.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh yes.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah. My cousin Jessica take care of my youngest one.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sure.

T. PASTITSHI: And my other child is in his auntie's at – April.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, because I'm doing six weeks program for the treatment right now.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Because what happened to me when I was – because what happened in Ontario. That's my focus on right now, to talk about it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah, you're grieving, and you went – you're going for trauma health. How are you finding that?

T. PASTITSHI: To be honest, I only can talk by little, listen to others. So that's how I'm learning, just to listen to it, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes.

T. PASTITSHI: How they grieving, too, if they had –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Like, I learned from – I'm not the only one person who was traumatized in their life, too. They have traumatized them, too. So I'm learning and –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Do you find that helpful, to learn that it's not only you, but other people have the same kind of issues that they're willing to share.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, they do.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And you're sharing?

T. PASTITSHI: I just starting, a couple of days ago.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah, so you're just wondering how its going.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah, it's – because it's really hard for me to still open up.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Of course.

T. PASTITSHI: Because I kept this so long, I didn't talk about it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I shut it, I guess.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: But it's now to – I'm right – at the point right now to open up.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You're ready now. You're getting ready (inaudible). Good for you.

T. PASTITSHI: That's where I'm at. That's my journey right now.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah, well we're very proud of you, and we want to congratulate you for being brave.

Do you think it's right for government workers to treat children like you were, to send them off and lose their language. Do you think that's correct?

T. PASTITSHI: No, not at all. I miss my language. I really do miss it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I was really good at speaking Innu.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And today I'm really having a hard time to speak it, and I have to speak in English sometimes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sure.

T. PASTITSHI: And I don't wanna ask and say that – what are they saying, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Are you proud to be an Innu person?

T. PASTITSHI: I am proud. But I'm just ashamed that I lost it, a lot of it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah. Yeah.

But you can understand that it was not your fault. You understand that?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And you understand that Innu people would like to see their community strong and the language strong and the culture strong, correct?

T. PASTITSHI: Yes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah, and you're helping.

T. PASTITSHI: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You're helping. That's good.

What else would you like to say to the Commission and to your community about how you grew up and your experiences? Anything else you want to say?

[Dialogue between T. Pastitshi and Unidentified Speaker in Sheshatshiu-aimun.]

T. PASTITSHI: Before I came back here, I didn't know drugs at all, right. I didn't know, because when I came back, I was really good. I wanted to go to school. I didn't tell my mom that I'm really – I was really ashamed of – like, I didn't – like, I told her – she was the one who teach me a lot of – in Innu way, right, to talk.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mm-hmm.

T. PASTITSHI: And I started to get into drugs because I was ashamed, what happened, right. And I started to do cocaine and weed. But I didn't drink though, I didn't like the taste of alcohol.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mm-hmm.

T. PASTITSHI: But – and I was numbing the pain.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Of course.

T. PASTITSHI: And I kept doing it and doing it until I was – until I smoked crack. And for some reason, at that point I dreamt about somebody who passed away, who was really close to me.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: She told me that – wake up, Tricia, wake up. Time to get some help. And she told me in my dreams that: I know you've been numbing this pain for a long time. You've been shutting it out.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: You didn't wanna talk about it. And she said – she told me to pick up the phone and call. It is time for you to wake up.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: In your dream?

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah. And when I woke up and I was looking at my kids and I started to cry. So I told the Social Services I need help and I was really tired of it, and holding it, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good for you.

T. PASTITSHI: But the (inaudible) can you ask my cousin to look after my kid so I can get some help. It was my late mom, I dreamt about her. That was her.

And then I called the social worker this morning and I told her: Can you tell her to take care of my child and my other child to go into her auntie's. And my other child said: I don't wanna go in my grandma's house because his grandkids are bullying me, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Calling me names. I wanna stay with my auntie April, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I told her I'm gonna work on that right now. And she – my child said that why are you abandoning me? Why? You don't love me anymore? You don't love us, right?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And that hurt me a lot.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Of course.

T. PASTITSHI: I said: I'm not abandoning you, I need to get some help. I wanna be a better mom. I told him that. Because I told him that I numbed the pain a long time. It's time to get it out, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And he told me: Are you sure you're gonna get some help. Are you gonna come back to me?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes.

T. PASTITSHI: And I said: Yes, I am gonna come back. And I told him that I am gonna come back when I feel better. He told me that: I'm pretty sure you're gonna be a really good mom when you come back, right. And I just laughed it off.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: He said: Is my little brother gonna come with me too? And I said: No, he's going to other place for now.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, okay. Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And he cried, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: He loves his little brother.

T. PASTITSHI: Yes, oh, he used to watch him when I was, like, sleeping, right, and I always said: How come I'm not hearing the child crying, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: He's the one who fed him right there, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I said how did you learn how to use – to make a baby bottle?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Cool.

T. PASTITSHI: He said: Because I watch you so many times making a baby bottle, right. I said: Next time just wake me up, like, when he cries, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And he said that – I told – he told me that what do you mean, going to treatment, Mom?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I said this is where your mom's gonna be feeling better, get some help, get some – a better mom when she comes back, right. And he told me that: But I wanna go with my little brother, right. He said what about my little brother, if he cries in middle of the night, right. And I just feel so bad.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah. It made you feel guilty.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah. I told him I'd be gone for at least six to eight weeks, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: At that time.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Where are you gonna take your treatment? Apenam's House?

T. PASTITSHI: Yes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

T. PASTITSHI: That's where I'm at right now.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I'm so glad when the Social Services told me that my cousin saying yes for my little baby, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I told April that; she said yes, too.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes.

T. PASTITSHI: So I know the kids are safe. I know they're fed well.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: Taken care of really well. But there's some points I would – like, I have withdrawals in the middle of the nights, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Of course.

T. PASTITSHI: It's really hard for me to sleep at night. And I'm taking a lot of pills right now because I'm diabetic and high blood pressure.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes, that's right.

T. PASTITSHI: So withdrawals are, like, oh my God.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: But for the last two nights since I've been there, I've been sleeping good. The withdrawals are not bothering me right now.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, good. Good for you.

T. PASTITSHI: But only before I went there, it was, like, really hard for me.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: I wanted to give up the next day and I started to pack, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh, yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And some of the women said that – said: Why you wanna give up? You're here now, like, I'm trying to get to know you –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes.

T. PASTITSHI: – try to get to know us, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes.

T. PASTITSHI: And the next day, there was two people that I know that I was really, really close to, and I said: What are you doing here? I said I'm doing here – going to treatment to get some help. And both of them – one of them was my neighbour, right. I used to see her.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: She was – I used to hang around with her when I was a kid, right. And the other one I know, I knows her from Voisey Bay. I used to work with her. And I was so happy at least I know those two people, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I told them that a couple of days ago, I wanna go home, like, I wanna give up this.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I wanna just – but it was, like, it was just all in my head trying to trigger me, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Correct.

T. PASTITSHI: And – but my heart keeps saying stay, stay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good.

T. PASTITSHI: You can do this. You can do it, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good.

T. PASTITSHI: I didn't know which one to listen to, my heart or my – that –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I know.

T. PASTITSHI: All this stuff is coming up to me sometimes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: But I think you know you're a good mother and you're a good person. You know that –

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – right? That's true.

T. PASTITSHI: A lot – but – and I started to pray. I never prayed for a long time. And one of the ladies gave me a Bible to read, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And yesterday, I went to the clinic and there was my cousin. I never talked to her for eight years.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And I was praying for her, like, before at the clinic, right, to forgive me, to talk to me. Like, I missed her, right. And she came up when I was at the clinic. She said: I hear something. I said: What you hear? And she said: You're going to treatment and I'm really proud of you. And she started to talk to me, like, do you need some shampoos or stuff like that, that I want or need, or smokes, right. I never talked to that person for eight years, and she was really talking to me really good, like, we're getting – like, we were – been talking for –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Of course.

T. PASTITSHI: – for a long time, you know. And before she took off after the clinic, she said: I love you, and don't give up. Keep going. You can do it. I'll be there when you graduate.

And that really, really, like, oh my God. God can really listen to your prays. Like, he really does. That really – I didn't say I love you back, right, but it was, like – it really shocked me. It's, like, God can work everything, right. Like, they say God can work in mysterious ways. He really does.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Oh. Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: And he brought my smokes that I needed or sweaters and some clothes that I needed, right. She brought that up at – there, and she dropped a card for – a birthday card, and she brought the flowers for me. She said: I brought your smokes and I brought whatever you need, right.

And my – I called my auntie that – last night, and we were really talking really good and stuff, but she – when she was talking to me on the phone, she said – I told her this treatment's really hard and I don't really wanna talk, but I do wanna let it out, let my emotion come to me.

So it finally hit me, and she said – she never, ever say that to me, since I was a kid, too. I never heard her say – she said: I love you. I never heard that, especially my mom and my dad when I was growing up.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mm-hmm.

T. PASTITSHI: But they show me love, but they never said I love you. And my auntie said that to me, I love you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mm-hmm.

T. PASTITSHI: And don't give up on this. Keep going. You're doing good. Just call me. Whatever you need, I'll be here, okay? And I was, like, why are people are saying to me? I didn't – like, I didn't say I love you back. I don't know how to say it back. And I tried to get to know myself (inaudible) back, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: But it felt really good to hear them, to hear both of them, right, saying it back to me.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good.

T. PASTITSHI: And I start to read more Bible, and my commitment this morning was I told the girls don't mess with a Bible. A Bible can really help you, right. Even though when you're alone sometimes, I'm alone, right, reading the Bible. And it really, really helped me. Like, I could –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: That's good to know.

T. PASTITSHI: I could talk to him, right, even though reading it and I can talk to him in my head and pray – starting to pray more now.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

T. PASTITSHI: A lot of people are coming back in my life, right. And I tell him that – to heal me, to get – to be a better mom than I was when I was an addict, right. That's why what I told him for my commitment for the girls, I said don't mess with a Bible. God is, like, works in a mysterious way. And I told them that what happened yesterday. Like, I told him that – they never said anything, like, in my life that they never loved me, right.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Right.

T. PASTITSHI: And it really scared me to be honest. Like, I was shocked, right. And I told them maybe you guys should pray, like, to get to know him too. You know, I told them that – not to mess with a Bible. The Bible works.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Well, Tricia, you're making us happy. You're making us very proud of you, I can tell you. And I'm so glad you have supports here, that you're able to say this. I'm gonna give Michael a chance to ask any questions. You have anything to say?

M. COLLINS: I don't (inaudible) thank you very much. Thank you for telling your story.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

M. COLLINS: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We really are, and you're kind, you're thoughtful, you're a sensitive person. So be thankful of the people who are helping you, and you will also be that kind of person. You're doing great.

Thank you very much for coming.

T. PASTITSHI: You're welcome.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You'll help a lot of people.

T. PASTITSHI: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good.

Thank you.

T. PASTITSHI: You're welcome. Thank you.