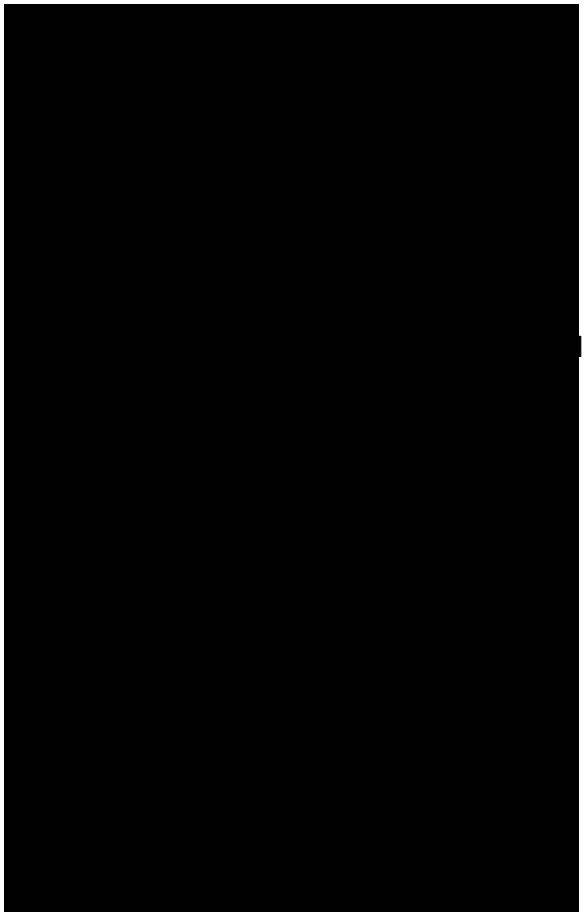
INQUIRY RESPECTING THE TREATMENT, EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES OF INNU IN THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

English Transcript Volume 51

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

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Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Welcome back.

Please, everyone, we'll continue our session now at this time.

C. URQUHART: Thank you, Commissioner.

Next, we'll have George Gregoire. He is joining us virtually, today, from Goose Bay.

Good afternoon, Mr. Gregoire.

I think Gerry is supposed to be with him. Is Gerry with you?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Yeah, I'm here. I'm here.

C. URQUHART: Okay. We can't hear you, I'm afraid.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Test. Test. Test. Do you hear me?

C. URQUHART: Gerry, can you hear us?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Yeah, I can hear you pretty good.

C. URQUHART: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We're in session, please.

Thank you.

C. URQUHART: Can we ask for Eastern Audio to turn the volume up for the online participant because we can't hear him in the room, or at least not clearly.

You're able to hear us clearly?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Pretty good, yeah.

C. URQUHART: Okay, that's better. Thank you.

So, Mr. Gregoire, I understand that Gerry's going to – your son is gonna help to relay the questions to you.

The first question I have is around your role in the People's Inquiry and the *Gathering Voices* report?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Hold on. What I'm doing right now is I'm writing down what you had said and my father is going to take a look at the question.

Can you repeat the question again, please?

C. URQUHART: What was your role in the People's Inquiry and the *Gathering Voices* report?

[Dialogue between Elder G. Gregoire and Gerry Gregoire in Mushuau-aimun.]

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: My role was for *Gathering Voices* was to interview the

Elders or the young people in the community. I do a lot of these out by the camps. By that time, I had a hip replacements, but I managed to drive on Ski-Doo anyway to reach the camps outside Davis Inlet. It was not easy though but I made it. I do a lot of interviews. I'm not – wasn't the only one. There was other people work with me.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

GERRY GREGOIRE: I think that was the answer.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: It wasn't easy though, but I did it. Too bad I almost dead. They call me Mr. Deadman.

C. URQUHART: And a funny one.

What was the impact of the report on the community?

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: Well, after the report released, *Gathering Voices*, by that time I was working with alcohol program. When the priest look at, read it, Father Jim – I guess was his name – MacDonald – Jim MacDonald, that's the priest in Davis Inlet, then I was kicked out from the office, called the mission building, so I have to look for a place to work.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

GERRY GREGOIRE: The next question.

C. URQUHART: Did it impact relationships with governments, provincial and federal?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Did it impact relationship between who?

C. URQUHART: The Innu governments and the provincial and federal governments, so Newfoundland and Labrador, and Canada.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: Well, that's a very good question.

I don't have no idea what they did, what relationship between Innu and provincial and federal government. Yes, but the only thing I know of, the thing that happened was the suspended their rights. That's all I know.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

That's all I know.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Next question.

C. URQUHART: When you were working with and a director of the Mushuau National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program or NNADAP, do you remember what kinds of programming were happening at that time?

And for the benefit of Commissioners, at P-302, we have a letter that Mr. Gregoire wrote in his role as director.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: At that time when I was working there as the director, we had some AA meetings, too, and some – had a sweat, sometimes we having trouble outside, but as myself, I was not trained a counsellor, but I've been drinking very heavily many years. I know a lot about alcohol, how it affects some of my family and to my community. I can always talk about myself, not using someone's name.

[Musuhaua-aimun spoken.]

GERRY GREGOIRE: Next question.

C. URQUHART: That was in the 1990s. What were some of the challenges that you had in that role?

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

GERRY GREGOIRE: (Inaudible.)

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: When I worked with the alcohol centre in Davis Inlet, there were other people working for me there, too.

They're all passed away, anyway. The hardest part was where we were working was only very small building for three of us working there and then can't move around very much.

When someone comes to see us, me or the other counsellor, one of us had to leave because we had to be in private. So that's the hardest part that I know of besides that – I didn't – that building was the mission building, you know. And that priest was a hard man. But I was really, really angry at him. I was very angry at him. I didn't think, but I called bishop in Labrador City myself and told him about what happened. I said to the bishop: If you don't get rid of him, then you'll see me on the CBC. He said: Hold on, hold on, wait a minute. Next week, the priest was gone, Father Jim MacDonald.

To work with young people wasn't the problem. To send the people – the priest (inaudible) of young people that doesn't help anyway. Any person, Elder or young people, have to be ready to go to treatment. You can't force anyone, the Mounties cannot force, the court cannot force anyone to go to treatment; has no right to force them. They have a right. They have to make their own decision, it's time for themself to help themself, then they are ready. It's not gonna help them, just sent them off to treatment. It's not gonna help you.

In fact, by example, I went to treatment in North West River, on the other side of the river, me and my wife, late wife, didn't help me because the two of you should go, we weren't ready for that. Until one day late Abraham, my friend, run the treatment in Lobstick, then I was very open, very open. That helped me lots.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Next question.

C. URQUHART: So you mentioned that people have to be ready for treatment. What else is important to Innu for healing and treatment programs?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Can you repeat the question again, the second sentence?

C. URQUHART: What is important for Innu for healing and treatment programs?

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: We all know, everyone knows that, when our healing programs are important to anyone to – especially for the non-Innu, I guess, but Innu has to understand this is very real to them, in my days. They haven't seen healing program before. So that's the first time. When they went there, probably don't know it, but say, now because they weren't ready – when I said, they weren't ready.

Something, if you (inaudible) need a help, you just can't go ahead and say to this guy: Okay, I need help now with my problem. That's not gonna help you. Unless you – it comes from your heart, you're ready to help. You have to come from – not someone else force you there.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Next question.

C. URQUHART: So other than being ready, what else is important for a treatment program? Is Innu language, or culture, or Nutshimit important to be part of it?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Can you repeat the question, again? What is important, you said?

C. URQUHART: Yes, for treatment programs.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Other than being ready, what is – can you repeat the question there?

C. URQUHART: Yeah, so aside from being ready, what else is important for –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: (Inaudible.)

C. URQUHART: So what is important for a treatment program for Innu and some of the things, like, Innu language, culture and

Nutshimit, are those important to a treatment program?

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: There are many Indigenous people's programs in the west, but the language is different. Like, for example, if I say – even someone who speak English good, if he's Innu, or if you have someone as a translator to go with them, the English words we have here, we don't have that in Innu – we don't have in Innu what it's mean. Like a court, for example, the judge and Crown and the lawyer use it. You can't translate that because we don't have that words.

The same thing for treatment if you go, if I had a translator. That's a big problem. And none of the western Aboriginal people's treatment centres have (inaudible.) They are Aboriginal people, but the language is different, very different. The problem is probably the same, but (inaudible). I seen – like myself I have (inaudible) problems of drinking.

Now what happened in Davis childs is die from. The other thing she used to say, I hate the (inaudible). I really miss them, the young people who died.

Same things happening out there. What can we do to make the community healthy? Who kept (inaudible) from the white people. What I see myself is people in the community try their best to work together, all the different programs, the Band Council, Innu Nation or alcohol program, whatever, they must try to work together. That's the best way to heal the community. If not, they all go separate ways, that's not good. Not a good time. I hope you know what I mean that.

We talk about in old days, I remember myself, we used to spend in the bush, a long time. We didn't have much, but we survived. We ate wild food. We would get (inaudible) from the Hudson Bay Company that – never have that for a whole year. We had to eat wild food all the time. It was a hard way of living, but it's a beautiful way of living. I remember that very well myself – very well.

Now when I gets back, my father was drinking – a drinker too. My mother wasn't drinking until he was 60 years old, 50, 60 years when he started drinking. That doesn't mean my mother, my father, forced me to drink. I choose to drink. I choose to drink. Once they start selling liquor and beer (inaudible), more drinking, the more I drank. I end up many times in hospital, many times. I end up many times in jail: St. John's penitentiary, old penitentiary. I have nothing to hide about, but I'm not ashamed of that. It was my fault.

C. URQUHART: So despite those challenges, you did have leadership roles with the Mushuau Innu First Nation Band Council. Can you speak about those experiences? I believe in 1982 to '83 and then again in the late '90s.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

Well, I cannot speak on behalf of the leaders. They (inaudible) we have to respect them. We have to respect our leaders. I know in Davis not much different once, I can't say that. But I still – as the Innu people, we have to respect each other anyway. I'm not going to say they didn't do their job. They are doing the best, I guess, to do their job, but they didn't have enough money from the government. That was hard for the community.

I remember the time in Sheshatshiu workshop, the RCMP's workshop, it's about drugs. They tell us how to fix for the people who want this drugs and this drugs and this drugs. I was there. I never said anything; I just listened. I listened and I heard the kind of drugs that I never heard before in my life. That was the first time I heard. So I left. Seems to me it's nothing but teaching how to use drugs. That's what I see, myself.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Hold on.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: What do you mean (inaudible).

Well, one thing about myself, like I told you, I was drinking too. I was a heavy drinker,

but there are times when I stopped drinking for a number of months. When the time comes when I stop drinking, I do lots – lots for my family, for my community, especially for hunting. I share what I have with the Elders – other Elders in the community.

No, that was in Davis Inlet, even though it wasn't easy to go out hunting, like sometimes it's very, very cold. I have my friend, Kaniuekutat, he used to go with me when I go out hunting. He died now. I'm all by myself.

In Davis Inlet, I know there was – like I said, I used to drink a lot. I have nothing to shame about. But when I stopped drinking, I stopped (inaudible). I know alcohol is not doing any good to anyone, not only Innu, but to the white people too. Doing a lot bad things happen when drinking too much.

I don't like to talk about what we lose. In Davis, so many young people and children, I don't like to talk about it. It's sad. It hurt the whole community.

One thing I really miss Davis Inlet, myself. It was a beautiful place first. When they first built the houses 1960s, same time in Sheshatshiu they built houses. The government, whoever, the premier, Smallwood, just give the people empty houses, nothing, just the woodstove, honey bucket, that's all; no water, nothing.

I used to work in North West River, bringing in the military beds and mattresses from the base in Goose Bay and sent us some to Davis Inlet, some in Sheshatshiu, to most people who had military beds. Everything share, that's what it's like. This empty house has nothing. This was discrimination (inaudible).

GERRY GREGOIRE: That's next question, I think.

C. URQUHART: Can you speak more about the move then from Davis to Natuashish?

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: I spent 32 years in Davis Inlet. It was 1968 when I first moved to Davis. After I get married, my wife, she was from Davis Inlet and ever since never went back in 32 years. They talk a lot about – a lot of them have more of a relocation.

Me and John Poker, the late John Poker, my friend, the Elder, one time we went to the Zoar, halfway to Nain. He said to me, if we should be relocated, that's where we should located here, beautiful place, but it was quite a ways from Davis Inlet to Zoar.

It was the night before the move happened that was discovered of [Mushuau-aimun spoken].

GERRY GREGOIRE: Mainly, the Voisey Bay commission.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: Voisey Bay, yeah.

We had a meeting with those people. All they said, they promised a lot of jobs, a lot of work for the young people. They never kept that promise. Now this day, how many people are working in Voisey's Bay? How many Innu from Davis Inlet? How many Innu from Sheshatshiu are working there?

Look at my children. None of them are working, with after all the promises they make. Muskrat Falls, look at it. How many people are working there now, Innu people working? Churchill Falls, it's all flooded, the hunting and trapping area where Innu used to be. I remember that. I was only young, but I remember it very well. There were many different Innu names in that place, but everything is on the bottom, all flooded.

I know it's good to have money, also money could do lots of damage to Innu people.

After the move, first, we were supposed to move – the year they could move, they had a meeting. I attend the meeting myself. Was discussed about the ban of alcohol. That was before the move. It was gonna move that year anyway, the houses they're building, the contractor started building the houses. Then we were asked to raise the hands, those in favour to ban alcohol. Most of them people did.

I didn't raise my hand because I thought it needed to be discussed, a few more meetings about that, because we don't know how it will affect that. I was worried more to the young people, worried about young people, if they go ahead anyway (inaudible) now how many young people died now, freeze to death outside the community, outside hotel, outside the shelter in Goose Bay (inaudible)? How many of them? Lots. This is what I tell you it's gonna happen.

Natuashish is a nice community. There's a lot of houses that burned down. What they should have done was first they should have hired independent housing inspector, before anyone moved to house. That's what they should be done. Now, we cannot – they said we can't drink tap water; we have to get water from the river. But some people find it hard to get drinking water, those people that don't have Ski-Doos or those people who don't have trucks. If road is not plowed there, what can they do? They have no choice but to drink that water. This is what happened. Anyway, that's the truth.

In my days, in my time, in my own time, people keep moving everywhere by walking, hauling, dragging. Wherever they camp, they drink water. Water was very clean. Now we can't even drink water there. They sell drinking water in bottles in Co-op. Really crazy, I don't ever – they gonna make a lot of money selling water because we can't drink water anymore. That's crazy.

It's not the Innu who polluted our land; it's the white government did that. Tshakashue-matshinteuiau wasn't that big. Now it's a very big lake. It's all flooded. We look at that, they said, there's no caribou – there's no caribou left alive – 800,000 caribou, where's all gone? They say the stocks were dead. Well, probably they're right because they polluted their feeding ground. It's not from the Innu. Ten thousand caribou drowned at Quebec, the dam.

I went to Quebec once in Chisasibi to talk about it. I said: Did you went to see the caribou that drowned in the river? He said: Yes, they was a lot of us. I said: There were 10,000 caribou drowned. And he said to me: That's a big lie. There were over 20,000 caribou drowned. That's what he told me, this legal guy, and he speak to me in language, because I can understand Cree. Just the government was trying best they can to cover themselves, I said, destroying all of the Innu lands.

I'm just trying to – let me see what I write in.

C. URQUHART: I'm wondering if you can speak to how the impacts of the flooding and the loss of caribou impacts the community and Innu culture.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: Yes, everyone can see that the dams were here, everybody (inaudible). If you go down to the Michikamau, Churchill Falls, or if you fly through the air, you'll see one big area is all flat. I've been there before but I was working with BRINCO, Quebec (inaudible) just paddling around there. I see many old campsite, many Innu left the traps, steel traps, hanging by the tree, some of them fell to the ground, camping ground. Now, everything is under water – everything. It was a beautiful place before it was flooded. I'm telling the truth because I was there.

GERRY GREGOIRE: I guess next question.

C. URQUHART: I wanted to actually go back and ask one more question about Davis and when you were on Band Council and what issues were important at that time.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: (Inaudible) the housing repair for (inaudible), housing repair and water, hot water for the Elders.

In Davis there was always people outside the communities, spending time with the families in springtime and in the fall. That's what they – they always do that. I used to love to be in the tent and the kids (inaudible). Now the children – I'm very sad to think about our children. What's gonna happen to them?

I could say this: Today, education – white education – is very important, very important, because he could help a lot of

young people, as long as they don't drink or do drugs. He was come and help the community. He could become leaders – our future leaders, future leaders too. And he's very young today, but it's our future leaders.

I may not be see there – I may not be there, but I'd like to see some of the young people be well educated and become leaders; not only leaders, they can became police officers or lawyers, a judge, a nurse, a doctor, can be him. That's what I'd like to see happen in the future.

Now in (inaudible) we had no doctor in Natuashish. Only one visitor a month – one doctor, one month. That's just it. I don't know if there's a doctor in Nain or not. Anyway, we had a doctor – one visiting doctor once a month. The rest was good enough.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Next question.

C. URQUHART: You've mentioned a few times that you're worried about the kids, about the children, and I wonder if you can –

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: Very important –

C. URQUHART: – say more about why – sorry – why you're worried and what you think the problems they're facing are.

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: Yes, I had very good reasons because the way I used to live with my parents in the bush, they will never see that again. They will never see that. They probably do some reading, read on the books, written down some of the things, but they will never see it themselves.

What worries me is drugs and I hope we can find a way to help young people because we all know our young people is our future leaders. We have to teach them about the way of life in the past, at least tell them the way people used to live. Someone write a book about how the people used to live in Davis Inlet. I didn't like it myself, I used to see my father how he used to live in the country, in the bush; same in Natuashish. They are great hunters. They were great hunters some of them Natuashish people. They all gone now, passed away.

Now in Natuashish, they have many young hunters that are real good hunters – real good. They learn from the parents. I know that; I see them. They are good hunters. My worries about them since our way of life slowly faded away, so they need a white education to support themselves, to support a family and, at the same time, try to learn their own way of life. You don't have to go back many years back, as long as they know about life in the bush, they'll be okay. That's what I like to see that.

If you learn about life in the bush and see how to set up a tent, a place where you can set up a tent, a place when there's hardly snow, a place where you can put a tent, sometimes a bad place to set up a tent is very cold. You have to find the right place to set a tent in when you don't have much snow.

We had a lot of snow, you can put up your tent anywhere. I could explain everything about this myself, what I know about it, how that. That's what I like to see the young people learn, as for us being educated to the same time. That's what I like to see, so other young kids might follow.

The teachers in Davis Inlet are very important to me. I respect them very much, the white, outside teachers. They're doing a good job teaching the young people, not like in Davis Inlet, some teachers are hard, but now with the change, there are very nice teachers in that part.

The store don't have much. In the big store, it don't have much. Now, not too many Innu work in store. I don't even know who is the manager in the store – store manager in Davis Inlet. I don't even know that. Max was the store manager. He's gone now, retired. Now I don't know who is the store manager.

He's always run out of something in springtime. The store needs to order some things that the people need – that the people need. But they just orders them, they

don't tell it for the people – order people what they need in the store – sad. Okay.

What can we do with them?

C. URQUHART: So Commissioners, given the time, I think that the hopeful note of thinking about young people learning about Innu culture on the land, where to set up their tents and the pride of the great hunters of this community is probably as good a place to end as any.

So what we'd like to do is invite Mr. Gregoire to speak at the formal hearings in September and we'll send those details along so that he can finish his testimony and for the other counsel to have an opportunity to ask any questions that they may have.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah, and Nashtash is going to give a thanks.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: So Gerry can hear me?

GERRY GREGOIRE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

GERRY GREGOIRE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

I'd like to thank my uncle George for his time today and sharing his stories and his views on the communities and his experiences. I especially liked, for him, reminded again of my mother, the stories that she used to share about Michikamau, the Churchill River, and her experience when that was flooded. So that brought, for me, back memories of mom's stories. So, again, I'd like to thank my uncle George.

Tshinashkumitin and I look forward to seeing him again in September.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

ELDER G. GREGOIRE: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: All good, Gerry?

GERRY GREGOIRE: Yeah, we're all good.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay. Make sure you say thank for us. Thank you very much for helping us out.

GERRY GREGOIRE: Yeah, thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

That ends the session for today. We'll see you back tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.