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

Monday 07 July 2025

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [Inquiry in progress at start of recording.]

Nympha Byrne-Rich, would you like to say a prayer?

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Yes. Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: That guy's gonna say a prayer, too. That – yeah, Richard.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sure.

R. PADDOCK: Our Creator and our Father, we do thank you, Lord, for this day. There are words that this is a day that the Lord has made and we will rejoice and be glad in it. And so we thank you, Lord, for your blessings upon each and every one that is here.

We pray today, Lord, over these hearings for the next two weeks, pray for the Commissioners, Lord, for the lawyers, for the counsellors, Lord; we pray for Nympha as she interprets, everyone gathered here, our sound techs and media. We thank you, Lord, for their time; we thank you, Lord, for the open hearts.

We especially pray today, Lord, for those families that will come before this Inquiry and we ask today, Lord, where there is confusion, let there be wisdom; where there is hate, let there be love.

We pray, Lord, for those families, their hearts. We pray, Lord, where there's broken hearts, Father, that they would be mending, and where there would be untrust, today, Lord, we pray for assurance.

Father, we ask that you come with the power of your spirit, Lord, and preside over these hearings for the next two weeks, and we just pray, Lord, that as we walk on the path, your words says in Proverbs, trust in you, lean not on our own understanding, but acknowledge you in all of our ways and you will make the crooked paths straight.

So that is our prayer today, Lord, as we look to you, Father, to make the crooked ways straight.

In your name we pray.

Amen.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Amen.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay. Thank you.

Tshinashkumitin now to Nympha, all of you who are present from the community, as well as everyone who is part of the Inquiry team. We're very, very happy to have you here.

I'm wondering if I should wait for interpretation in what sense – do we want to do that? You need the paper, Nympha, and pen?

INTERPRETER BYRNE: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I want to say thank you to Nympha for offering the smudge, to the pastor for the prayer and to all community members who are here today.

I want to refresh your memory about what this Inquiry is all about.

Firstly, this will allow Innu people to tell us their story, their truth, their history and their experiences.

Secondly, the Government of Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the government of the Innu – the Innu Nation – have asked us to make sure that we change the child protection and the child welfare system for Innu. And the way we do that is listen to Innu history, listen to workers

who have worked in the community for so long and have done things correctly for the Innu in child protection, so that we make recommendations to those governments to make changes.

Number three, the new government – Newfoundland and Labrador government – and Canada have asked us to do investigations of children who died during custody or after custody when they had been in the child protection system.

So these were three things, generally speaking, that we have been asked to do and today we're in the session called formal hearing. That simply means what we're going to hear has already been arranged for us to hear.

Mushuau Innu have always welcomed this Inquiry. Their leaders have always done the best that they could to help us through the process of visiting your community. The same goes for the community of Sheshatshiu.

I'll now ask Commissioner Anastasia Qupee to offer her welcome.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I'd like to say that I'm glad to be here, we're glad to be here this morning and I'm grateful and thankful for the people that have come forward with their stories, since we've had the Inquiry. It's been tough, but we have to do this for people to be able to speak up and share their stories, as Jim said.

And in the coming days, I know that the work will be harder, but we have to all get strength from each other, give strength to each other, give strength to the families and be a circle of support for them and for everyone.

So, again, thank you. Tshinashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We're so grateful that Nashtash – Anastasia – is part of the Inquiry of Commissioners because she allows us to understand Innu people and she allows Innu people to feel comfortable. So we're grateful for that.

So as the three of us here, counting lawyers, our administrative staff, the staff who takes care of all the details for the Inquiry, lawyers for the families, and the families, talking about three dozen people who are directly involved with giving you information from the Inquiry.

And, of course, we have with us all of this equipment, the recording equipment that allows us to reach out to other people and to preserve what we have heard in the communities, to become part of the information that the governments will be able to share over many years. So we're grateful for Eastern Audio and the few men who are always with us on our travels through the communities.

Professor Mike Devine is a retired Memorial University social work prof – professor – and his expertise is to make sure that, as we move forward with our recommendations, you'll be able to see through his eyes and his experience, what would work best with how the Innu are telling us they have made such great efforts in child protection over the last 25 or 30 years.

So we'll introduce ourselves. We have – I'm sorry, I'll introduce the Commissioners. We have Professor Mike Devine, my name is James Igloliorte, we have Nashtash – Anastasia Qupee – and then we're gonna go around the room and simply say your name and affiliation, if you want to, and tell us what role you're playing – if you want to – in the Inquiry.

We'll start with Kenn Richard.

K. RICHARD: Hello everybody, my name is Kenn Richard, I'm from Manitoba. I'm from

the Red River settlements there, up and down the Red River and Assiniboine River, the Métis settlements. I'm a social worker. I have been a founding director of Indigenous authorities in Toronto and served in that function for many years. My role here has been as the lead investigator into the six little kids who – ah, shall I do that all over again?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: If you don't mind that'll help (inaudible) what you said.

K. RICHARD: I'm sorry?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Start again.

K. RICHARD: Yeah. I'm still Kenn Richard, and my family is from the Red River in central Manitoba, although I have been working in Toronto. I'm the founder of Native Child and Family Services, which is a full authority under the Ontario legislation. I'm a social worker, proud father of two kids, and have been employed as the lead investigator in this Inquiry for a couple of years now. I'm very grateful for having that opportunity.

Miigwech. Thank you.

E. MINTY: Hi, I'm Edith Minty. I am also a registered social worker. I am here representing the provincial government, the Department of Families and Affordability, formerly CSSD. I'm also really grateful to be here and to have the opportunity to participate in this process.

Thanks.

G. RICH: Good morning, my name is Gregory Rich. I'm the CEO of Innu Development Limited Partnership, and I'm from Natuashish. I work in Goose Bay and I'm very grateful to be here again.

Thank you.

R. PADDOCK: Good morning, my name is Richard Paddock, and I'm an ordained minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm simply here for community support and to support the Commission in any way that I can.

Thank you.

H. POPURI: Good morning, I am Haritha Popuri. I am a lawyer with OKT. I represent the Innu organizations. My co-counsel is also participating online today, Jolene Ashini.

D. BENUEN: Good morning, my name is Damien Benuen. I work for Innu Nation as a land rights and negotiations and I'm here, recommended by the mother of the late Jacob Collins and it's – I'm his great nephew – I mean like, he was my great nephew and just so glad to be here today.

Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

L ANDREW: Good morning, I'm Lyla Andrew and I have had the privilege to be a witness in the formal hearings already for this Inquiry and I am here today because I wish to participate in a circle that is happening this week here, but I'm also here because I work for the Innu Round Table Secretariat and have for the last 10 years.

This Innu-led organization is working as hard as it can to try and bring about meaningful change to the child welfare system and looking forward as the Innu law on child well-being, child and family well-being is developed, looking forward to the recommendations that come out of this entire process. So that's me.

Thank you.

I. PIJOGGE-ANDREW: Hi, I'm Ivy Pijogge-Andrew. I'm from Natuashish. I work with the Inquiry as a team lead and liaison and I'm also here as a healing support.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'm just going to interrupt Ivy because I grew up with her father, Sam, and I know her grandfather, Muniss Pijogge. Muniss used to tease me every time I went to visit. He'd say: Oh dear, Mother, look at Jim, in the piss-pot trying to swim. One leg out and one leg in. Oh dear, Mother, look at Jim.

So I'll always remember her.

C. BOYDE: Okay, well, I can't top that recitation.

My name is Catherine Boyde, I'm here on behalf of the provincial government. This is my first time at one of these hearings. I'm fairly new to the Inquiry process, and I'm looking forward to hearing what everyone has to say and hopefully learning quite a lot.

Thank you.

R. MOSS: Good morning, I'm Riley Moss. I'm investigation counsel with the Commission. I work with Caitlin, mostly, day-to-day, and I'm going to be participating in the circle hearing that is happening this week, so I'm really grateful to be here.

N. BYRNE: Good morning, my name is Nympha Byrne. I'm the interpreter for the Inquiry and I'm also a mental health and addictions worker, and I'm glad to be here. I'm here to support also.

C. URQUHART: Nympha's really underselling it. She's sort of our everywoman. Does a bit of everything, and, yeah, we're very grateful for her agreeing to support this Inquiry. We think it's really important work and we're glad she's able to carve out some time for us, given that she's pulled in a lot of different directions everyday. So, glad to have you.

My name is Caitlyn Urquhart. I'm lead Commission counsel and so work with a lot of different folks in this room to try and make these hearings happen, and, of course, tshinashkumitin to the community for hosting us. Really grateful to be here, and I think we have some really interesting and very important work to do over the next two weeks. So looking forward to have those unfold.

H. GILLIS: My name's Heather Gillis. I'm with CBC news, and this is my first time in Natuashish, and I'm here to cover the Inquiry and help share your stories as the Inquiry unfolds.

T. DENNISTON: Good morning, my name is Tracy Denniston. I'm originally a Winters from Hopedale; Hopedale is my home. I'm currently a masters-in-social-work student at Memorial University. I'm nearly done my program. I'm here to support the families with the Inquiry, and I bring with me about 25 years of front-line crisis trauma work.

So thank you.

D. PENASHUE: Tshinashkumitin. Thank you.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

I just wanna say I'm very honoured to be here today, guys. You know my name is David Penashue. I used to work for SIFN, Sheshatshiu First Nation. I started working there in 1999. Now I'm working for the Inquiry for one year and helping out with the circle and supporting the people from both communities, Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. You know, I'm very honoured to be in this team, and hopefully they learn things about me and learn about them also.

Tshinashkumitin. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Caitlin, can you speak to the co-operation we've had with the Innu community to have David here today.

C. URQUHART: Yes, we're very fortunate that the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation

agreed to give us David on loan for a year. He has a wealth of expertise and knowledge and experience in conducting circle practice as well as a lot of ceremony and Innu healing. So we're really grateful to have him joining us and this is his first official day today so we're delighted to be welcoming him and glad that he's able to be here in the room.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Thank you, David.

And, finally, I'm getting back now to the welcome from Commissioner Devine. We are two of the grumpy old men on the Inquiry, working with –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Matching shirts.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – working with a very young woman. It's difficult to keep up with her.

Michael, I'll ask you to offer your welcome.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you, Jim.

I would like to add my thanks to the Elders and to the leadership for their support and to the community for welcoming us back once again. I look forward to our work here at the Healing Lodge, to learn more about the history and the experiences of the Mushuau Innu.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Done?

Oh sorry.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: It's important for us to be here in the community for these hearings, but we also realize that it's very difficult stories to tell as well as to hear. We're committed to doing everything to do no further harm, even though the stories can be hard to hear sometime.

We're grateful for the witnesses, for their strength to share their wisdom, knowledge and their experiences.

We want to acknowledge the healing services team, which is led by Ivy Pijogge-Andrew. The other members of the team are Tracy Winters-Denniston, Nympha Byrne, of course, Beverley Nuna, who is here in the building, as well as David Penashue.

I also wanted to add that David Penashue will be doing a sweat this evening, so if anybody is interested, contact David who has just introduced himself.

With regard to the healing services team, they are here to support people, whether you are speaking today or you are listening. So they will be in the building and in the room if you find some of the stories difficult. So, certainly, reach out to them if you need to; that's why they're there.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Commissioner Devine.

I'll now ask Caitlin to explain the setup we have here. She's gonna do my remarks on this area and who will be speaking. After she's done, we'll take five minutes to refresh our coffee.

C. URQUHART: Thank you, Commissioners.

I just want to echo again, tshinashkumitin, thank you to the Mushuau Innu community for welcoming us. Commissioner Igloliorte touched on this, but I think it bears repeating, that over the next two weeks, we will be digging into two of the six investigations that the Inquiry is conducting into the passing of Innu children who had been in the care of the child protection system.

The families requested these investigations because they believe that their child or grandchild's time in care contributed to their death.

The hearings for the investigations are designed to be relational and restorative.

We need to know better to do better and so these hearing circles are intended to help us understand what has happened so that we can create a better future for Innu children.

These children weren't born into a vacuum. They were born into their particular context. They were born in Davis Inlet as Mushuau Innu in the late 1990s.

They, we – and I say we but I mostly mean the kakeshau –

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: – kakeshau or the non-Innu folks in a room – are learning about Mushuau Innu history today. We'll be learning about some of the pivotal moments, like settlement in new Davis, the 1992 fire and the Peoples' Inquiry that resulted from that, as well as the move to Natuashish. We'll also hear about Innu political organization and resistance to colonization.

This context is foundational for the investigations and in order to understand Mushuau, the challenges that Mushuau Innu face, as well as the resilience of the community.

We will start with two videos that were recorded with Gregory Rich and the interpretation is simultaneous in the video.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

Grand Chief?

C. URQUHART: Yes.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: The Innu folks in the room get to hear it first that time.

Mr. Rich will be speaking about his life and experiences on Band Council, as well as Chief and as Grand Chief of Innu Nation, and following the videos, we are very fortunate to have Mr. Rich in the room and he will be available to add anything further, as well as to answer any questions that the lawyers for the different governments, so the province, Canada and the Innu governments, may have, which you've already translated.

Following that, we'll have lunch and just to preview what will be happening after lunch, we'll have Mr. George Gregoire joining us virtually to speak about his experiences.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

Was he recorded?

C. URQUHART: He'll be on video.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: Oh, [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: For anyone who would like to listen to the video in Innu-aimun, or if you would like amplification so you would like to hear it louder, there are headsets at the back of the room.

And, finally, before we begin, I'll take this opportunity to enter Exhibits P-169 through P-367.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: So noted.

C. URQUHART: Thank you.

So we can now take five?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Not yet.

C. URQUHART: Sorry.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Nashtash is gonna give the conclusion for this session. Damien is our boss and his cook tells us that we have to be at the hotel 12 o'clock for lunch, and we'll be back at 1, so if we interrupt the proceedings, it'll be because we're on that kind of a schedule.

Nashtash.

INTERPRETER BYRNE: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: Okay, thank you both, Nympha and Caitlin.

So now that we've given some background information and the death investigations, we'll take a five-minute break and come back and watch the videos.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

We're back ladies and gentlemen. We're gonna proceed with the videos now.

[Video played.]

C. URQUHART: So we'll invite Gregory up to the witness table here.

On behalf of Commission counsel, I won't have any questions so I'm going to step aside and Haritha will come here for the Innu representative organizations.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you so much, Gregory. Thank you, Haritha.

You remind whoever is doing the questioning about the mute, how that works, how you want that to work, that there are some issues with that.

H. POPURI: Yes, so that will be for my colleague, Jolene, when she's questioning George Gregoire because they're both participating online, just if there's a way to indicate that they need to be unmuted, the folks at Eastern Audio will make sure that's done. So perhaps if the Commissioners could just make note of that before she begins, she'll be able to actually pose her questions so we can hear them.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I think we've got it.

H. POPURI: It's just to signal to the guys there.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: (Inaudible) can't hear you. Your mic needs to be unmuted.

H. POPURI: They cannot unmute themselves, only Eastern Audio can. So it's just a signal to them to unmute.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Signal to our (inaudible).

H. POPURI: Yes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you both. Please proceed.

H. POPURI: Should I wait for Nympha? Is she –

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

H. POPURI: Oh, thank you.

So in the interest of time, Mr. Rich, I'm going to just jump around a little bit and ask you about five or so questions in total.

So thank you for the testimony that you gave in May of last year. One thing I wanted to start with is your observation or your description of the day schools as one of the systems that destroyed the Innu way of life, or at least tried to.

Do you see any connections there with the child protection system?

GREGORY RICH: You know, I've said it in past that there are many ways that the Innu are affected in accomplishing things and one of them is the school, because when I shared my story there, and also witnessing the abuse that happened in the school is, it's a way of putting the Innu down, you know, not be able to accomplish things that we were aiming for and there's a lot of things happen in the school when I was growing up.

Like I said before, I wanted to be someone, but I couldn't because I got beat up at school. When you look at the education system in native communities and also you look at the stories happening across Canada where there's a residential schools, it's kind of form of residential school where the school where we were going to. Because it's a day school where we experience hardships, where we experience abuse from the teachers, and when I think about today, it's very similar of residential schools and the day schools. But the residential schools are more severe, you know, and ours were – there were physical abuse, but the trauma is the same. The trauma is the same. The emotional trauma is the same.

H. POPURI: Thank you for that.

Would you say that there are any parallels to the trauma of Innu kids in the child protection system?

GREGORY RICH: Yes, most definitely.

I know the child welfare system, I've said in the past, it's very bad for the parents and also for the child that is removed. Also, at the education level, there's a whole lot of issues happen in the school and also a lot of issue happened at the CSSD because we were – if you have child removed from a family, the damage has started. The damage has started and it's gonna go to many years, to many years for the child. And for me, personally, when I was going to school, when I got beat up by a teacher, the trauma was still there and that's how I – I don't see – I see a differences in emotional, because once a child is removed from his family, the damage has started. Because I've seen this in the past and I want to make it very clear and I want to stress out the importance of it.

When I was in Roddickton with my wife and we were driving down to St. John's and there were youth gathering there, where all the former – no, not the former – the current foster kids in a non-native home, we drove down there. It's probably an hour to go in there from driving through St. John's and I see these kids, these kids were, a lot of those kids, Innu kids and I think about them.

I was sitting by the door and I was looking at them. I said to myself, mentally, I said: What's gonna happen to these kids when they go home? None of the kids were speaking Innu and it was very emotional for me to look at them, you know. I can only think that these kids are lost because they have been removed by CSSD and I kind of think what's going to happen to them, you know, because we see that in the community when they come in, they are very different people. And some of them don't survive and some of them are going in trouble with the law and so on. When I think about it, what's gonna happen, I've said it in the past: We need to work together to save these kids.

One of the things to do is, I thought about, is transition – transition of returning them home. And that's really important. I think there's hope there for them, but Innu and the department must work together.

H. POPURI: So building on that, in your view, what would it look like for the department and for Innu to work together from day one, as you said?

GREGORY RICH: Can you repeat that?

H. POPURI: What would it look like for there to be a good relationship between the

department and Innu so that they are working together?

GREGORY RICH: I think it would look like better hope for their kids that are in care. Because I've said, right now in both communities there's a lot of division between the department and the Innu because of the past wrongdoings that happened to the Innu.

When I was looking at the video there, I remember I was telling you the story where the CSSD come into the home and removed the child in the parent's home, right – in the parents' home. And these things that happened in the past are starting to be addressed and establish a good working relationship. That's a start.

Also, there are other areas too that happened. There was things happening to the Innu in the past. There was missionaries, there were schools, there were correctional facilities, justice, that need to be addressed. There's a lot of work that needs to be done, and one of them is correcting the CSSD wrongdoings that happened in the past.

We need to correct that and we need to sit at the table together to share our ideas. How can we keep a child in the community? Because a lot of those kids are outside the communities and not with their parents. Because some of the things that I think about is, what's going on with these kids that are out there? What's happening? I hear stories that happened. One of the – she's an adult now, told me a story of what happened when she was in the care.

So I think what we need to do now is come together, sit down at the table and share our ideas. Because I think if we come together and share our ideas, good things will come up.

We know there is past wrongs in the past. We need to deal with them as well, and I think the department needs – the province needs to help these families that they were hurt of this department. They need to come together and help families, and I think that's one of the starting process of addressing this problem.

H. POPURI: Going back to what you said about kids who were taken from the community and how they become lost or disconnected, do you have ideas about what supports or resources they could have here in Natuashish so that they can have a connection again when they come back?

GREGORY RICH: When I was involved in meetings with the province and the federal, one of the things that I learned talking to the governments, they spent $50 million for five years of this foster care – $50 million for five years, and one of the arguments that we use is: Why don't we bring this $50 million in the community and help the kids? That's one of the things we suggested to them.

And I think the department needs to find resources within the community because there's a chance – when they're in a community – there's a chance that they would not lose their language, they would not lose their identity, and it's a completely different story when they are placed outside the community. I think we need to keep the kids in the community as much as we can.

Because within the community I believe there's help for the child and the parents in the community because I haven't heard any things happen outside the community where they would provide help to the child that's out there. I've never heard stories on that. And I think the option – I think it's a good option that they remain in the community that's with the parents so they can be helped and so on.

H. POPURI: Okay, I'm going to shift topics a little bit and ask about something related to relocation, so the relocation from Davis Inlet to Natuashish.

In your view, were enough resources devoted to addressing the social and mental health challenges the community was facing before the transition to Natuashish so that they wouldn't bring the same problems with them from Davis Inlet to Natuashish? Was there enough of an investment in programs and services at that time?

GREGORY RICH: You know, back in Davis, there was a lot of struggle in Davis. There was a lot of drinking. There was a lot of drugs used by the people. The resources available, though, was very limited.

I was born in Davis and growing up I witnessed a lot of stuff and, at the same time, we witness good things as well. I think the Innu people's important resource was going into the country because that's how we survived in the country for thousands of years. We were in the country, we were nomad people surviving on the land and I think that's one of the resources that the Innu people depend on, especially my parents.

The resources within the community were very limited and there was a lack of funding in all areas of our organizations. I think we came a long way to this day, with the resources that we have now, and I think we could have accomplished more if these obstacles were not in the way, you know, like the CSSD and the education, the failure of education in Davis.

There were a lot of things happening in schools and a lot of things happening in the justice systems and CSSD. And I think I always think about this, it's more like a plan so Innu people cannot succeed, you know. That's my thinking and I think that's why the governments – if you read the Royal Commission and all the child welfare inquiry, there were a lot of mentions of child welfare inquiry in those reports.

H. POPURI: So for the sake of time, I'm just going to direct the Commissioners to take a look at a couple of documents. I will provide the Exhibit numbers afterwards, but for the three that I have, it's the Health Assessment of Davis Inlet, which I believe is Exhibit P-262 and specifically pages nine to 10, which note the issues and gaps in supports that Canada provided in Davis Inlet after the Gathering Voices inquiry or in response to it.

The second document is Hearing the Voices, which is Exhibit P-367, as well as the statement of political commitments. I'll get you the Exhibit number after, but these two documents set out the, sort of, political demands of the Mushuau Innu following *Gathering Voices*. These included relocation as well as a number of other healing measures.

Okay. I just have two more questions and then –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Counsel.

So noted.

H. POPURI: Thank you.

I have just two more questions for you, Mr. Rich.

So this is going back to the 1990s, after the *Gathering Voices* report. If you are able to comment, we were hoping to ask these questions to Ms. Katie Rich as she was in leadership at the time, but to the extent you are able to comment, how would you say Canada and the province responded to the Inquiry and the report that came out of it?

GREGORY RICH: You know, if you look at all the reports, there's a lot of recommendations there that Canada needs to do and the province as well. But when you look at them today, we're still struggling to get those answers. An example will be: Why are we running into these policies to better the lives of the children, also to the families? There are many things that

Canada need to respond and also to the province.

For example, a lot of the people in – not a whole lot, but especially the young people – they need some of help for their, for example, would be mental illness. For the last three or four years, if you look at the statistics of mostly the young people, we're losing young people in the community. I think that's one area that the governments need to address, is provide mental illness to our young people and also to treatment for the young people.

Because, right now, in both communities – the reason I'm saying this, I'm honest with you, I'm honest with you of what's happening in the community. If you see the two communities, there's a lot of hard-core drugs that are in the communities. There's cocaine, there's meth, all kinds of drugs that our young people are injecting into themselves.

I think one area that the governments need to come in is help the Innu people as much as they can, because it's part of the young people are dealing with generational trauma. That's what I believe this is what's happening to our people, especially our young people.

One of the root causes with the CSSD and also the correctional centres, the justice system and also the school because the schools in both communities, students in there suffered a lot of emotional and sexual and physical abuse by the teachers and also by the people that are in the church.

I think the governments need to come together and listen to these things that's happening in the community. The report talks about all of it, and I don't know why the governments are not more involvement, like, the reconciliation was part of it. I think the governments need to listen to us, this is happening. And also, they listen to us because we are experiencing it in our communities and this is happening. They need to come together and listen to us.

H. POPURI: Thank you.

I think maybe just one last question, which is if there's anything else you would like to say to the Commissioners in terms of what you hope to come out of this Inquiry.

GREGORY RICH: I want to say I'm always eager and ready to be involved in this Inquiry, because I wanna see things change. I wanna see things change in CSSD. I want the kids to come home to their homes because those kids that are in care, the process have started, I guess, things bad will happen to them; believe me, I've seen it.

They're in a place where there is like a foreign place for them and they need to be back in the community, there need to be a transitional period. There need to be a process where they can return home and learn their way of life. And at the same time, we need to help the parents and also the child's siblings because not only the child is hurt, parents are hurt as well, brothers and sisters are hurt as well. We need to return them home.

How to do that? How can we start the process? How can we also involve the parents to let them know that child is coming?

There's a lot of stuff here that I think needs exploring and it's gonna take time, it's not that we're gonna call a child come home the next day. There's a process needs to follow and developing this process you need to involve the Innu. That's the most important. The department cannot do it on their own, they need to involve the leadership, the parents and the Elders and so on.

I thank you for listening to me and I'm always here to help you.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Counsel.

Do you intend to bring in further counsel online, or what's happening right now?

H. POPURI: No, that will follow the examination of the next witness.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'll ask Commissioner Devine to respond first or make any comments while our witness is here.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Just a few comments, and there's quite a lot you've given us to think about and I think some very good recommendations and strong recommendations.

It's interesting with some of it because, again, what you've repeated in summary is involvement of the Innu in this process and it's interesting that it's still not happening. That's what I find interesting. I like the idea that you talk about to start the process of doing that because I think it comes from a good place in your heart, that's what I'm hearing, because you want to have the children come home. You want to have people to maintain their culture and traditions and that.

And also, as you say, involving not just the child or the youth, but the siblings, the parents, which really talks about a community approach, which is what I think us, as Commissioners, have, you know, I think very early come to realize that we can't just look at the child protection system today, but we have to look at the whole community today, as well as – again, as you stated – the history, the trauma that's happened in the past. It's not in the past only; people still carry that today.
So we really need to be very much aware of that and look at ways that we can help it to be a healing community, so what supports are needed from there.

So thank you very much for your attendance today and the past number of times.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Nashtash.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Tshinashkumitin.

I was just saying to Greg that I'm pleased that he came forward to meet with the Commission and talk about his story and to share that. And as Jim had mentioned this morning about all this technology that we have going here when we have the sessions, it's very important that this is documented because a lot of people have talked about the history. And going forward, that's what young people moving forward need to hear, and the challenges that Innu people faced when they were in the community and going to school and the different types of organizations or institutions that came into our communities and changed us, changed our families, changed our children, and I think that's very important.

And so I thank Greg for that stories that he has shared with us and that he spoke about intergenerational trauma. I'm glad that he spoke about that because that's something that we will keep repeating and we keep hearing from the stories that people have come forward with. So, again, thank you.

Tshinashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Tshinashkumitin as well from myself, Gregory.

The Innu have had many leaders in the past, many resilient people, many proud, strong people, and you have demonstrated

that, where you care so much for Innu as well as especially the youth.

We are an Inquiry that makes recommendations for governments to act on: Canadian government, provincial government, Innu government. We will hear from everyone. We will hear from reports. We will hear from scientists. We will hear from researchers. We will hear from contractors and ordinary people. And we will try to make sure that our recommendations come from what leaders have told us as well.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Go ahead, please, Caitlin with your next process.

C. URQUHART: We'll return at 3, if that's okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLIOLORTE: Ten minutes break, please.

Thank you.

Recess