

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

**WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS OF THE
INNU REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATIONS**

which are:

Innu Nation

Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation

Mushuau Innu First Nation

**and also on behalf of the Innu Round Table Secretariat (IRTS)
which is jointly represented with the Innu Representative Organizations**

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PART I – INTRODUCTION

*I hope we can find a way to help young people
because we all know our young people [are] our future leaders.”*

- Elder George Gregoire¹

1. In this Inquiry, the Commissioners heard from Tshenut (Innu Elders or older people), Innu youth, Innu parents, survivors, community members, experts, government officials and service providers. They also received extensive documentary, historical and expert evidence concerning the treatment, experiences and outcomes of Innu children in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) child protection services and the historical, social and systemic circumstances that shaped them.
2. The Innu Representative Organizations organize their submissions around three areas of focus. First, they look to the past because the treatment, experiences and outcomes of Innu children within NL child protection services cannot be understood without Innu history, including the disruptions to Innu ways of living, parenting and thriving in Nitassinan. Second, they address systemic issues within NL child protection services. Finally, they look toward the future and the shared goal of this Inquiry: a future where Innu children know who they are and where they belong, while remaining connected to their families, communities, language, Innu-aitun and Nitassinan.
3. The experiences of Innu children are shaped by generations of colonial policies and actions that disrupted Innu governance, caregiving, education and the transmission of Innu-aitun. Before colonial intervention, Innu learned through family and community while living in relationship with Nutshimit, which shaped how children were raised, how families were supported and how communities would respond when children and parents needed help. Forced settlement, the dispossession of Nitassinan, church-run institutions, abuse, exclusion from services available to other First Nations and decades of inadequate government support profoundly altered the circumstances in which Innu children and families lived.
4. It is in this colonial context that successive waves of federal and provincial policies, funding approaches and service models formed a child and family services system focused on removal of Innu children rather than preventing harm and strengthening families before crises developed. These service models fail to respond to Innu reality

¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of George Gregoire, July 7, 2025, p. 19.

or to recognize the vital importance of language, Innu-aitun, community and extended family to children's wellbeing. These systemic failures were and remain known to both governments and persist despite repeated concerns being raised and opportunities to act. That must change.

5. Lasting change requires more than better individual decisions or practices. It requires governments to address the conditions that contribute to the harms examined by this Inquiry, strengthen prevention and family support, and support a system founded upon Innu laws, values and priorities.
6. The root causes of Innu children becoming involved in NL child protection services must remain front of mind. Colonial disruption, collective trauma and the imposition of non-Innu systems that displaced Innu ways of caring for children need to be addressed to chart a course forward. This means sustained investment in Innu-designed and Innu-delivered services, programs and laws that strengthen families, promote healing and support children within their families, communities, language, Innu-aitun and lands.
7. The future is more than aspirational. It is already being built. The Innu have maintained their knowledge, responsibilities and approaches to caring for children. Responsibility for the wellbeing of Innu children has always rested with the Innu, even when governments assumed authority over child and family services. The Innu have strengthened community-based services, expanded prevention initiatives, developed Innu-led programs and undertaken the work necessary to assume jurisdiction under an Innu law. The transition to Innu jurisdiction is therefore not the beginning of this work. It continues work already underway within Innu communities.
8. The success of this transition will depend on how the provincial and federal governments respond. The relationship between the Innu, Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador must become one of partnership, rather than unilateral direction. Governments must support Innu leadership, provide flexible, equitable and sustained resources, respect Innu decision-making and recognize that rebuilding child and family services after generations of colonial disruption demands long-term commitment, accountability and trust.
9. The recommendations of the Innu Representative Organizations identify the commitments, resources and concrete actions required by Canada and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador to support change. Accountability must also accompany these steps. Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador should

acknowledge and apologize for the harms caused by NL child protection services and related colonial systems. Both governments should also establish a process to monitor, track and publicly report on implementation of the Commissioners' final recommendations. Ultimately, the measure of success must be whether Innu children are safe, more connected, better supported and able to grow up within their families, communities, language, Innu-aitun and lands. That is the future this Inquiry must help secure.

PART II – INNU EXPERIENCE

The Importance of Innu History

1. The history of the Innu provides essential context for this Inquiry and for understanding the experiences of Innu children, families and communities within NL child protection services.
2. For generations, the Innu exercised their own laws, governance, family structures, and systems of care across the 800,000-square-kilometre territory encompassing large portions of the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula that the Innu call Nitassinan.²
3. Colonial policies and state interventions disrupted those systems, displaced Innu communities from their lands, undermined traditional governance and family structures and separated Innu children from their families and way of life. The evidence before the Inquiry reveals how these historic and ongoing actions created lasting harms that continue to affect Innu individuals, families and communities today.

Pre-contact: Historical Context and Innu Connection to Nitassinan

“We were healthy and happy.”

– Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue³

4. Prior to contact with European settlers, Innu lived nomadically in small interdependent groups.⁴ For thousands of years, the Innu followed the migration patterns of animals

² Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, pp. 3, 8.

³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Tshaukuesh Penashue, February 16, 2023, p. 6.

⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, Transcript, September 9, 2025, pp. 6-7; Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, p. 5.

along Nitassinan.⁵ Innu worked together and helped each other; “everyone in the family had a purpose.”⁶

5. Information was passed down and shared by previous generations of Innu, allowing Innu children and youth to develop a deep connection with Nitassinan.⁷ As nomadic peoples living on the land, Innu children learned essential skills from nuclear and extended families.⁸
6. For the Innu, being on the land is commonly referred to as “Nutshimit”.⁹ Nutshimit is where Innu had lived for centuries prior to contact with non-Innu.¹⁰ It is also a place where essential life skills are taught and it served as a place to practice identity.¹¹ Nutshimit was, and is, a place of healing for the Innu and a place to maintain well-being.¹²
7. This connection is reflected in testimony about post-contact periods when witnesses described life in Nutshimit before settlement, for example:

There were usually three or four families together in one camp when they went to Nutshimit. Families were happy. It was the happiness that I experienced being there in Nutshimit. Young boys would learn from their father and their grandfather, and the girls would learn from their mother and their grandmother. I remember this because I was there. It was a happy place for me in Nutshimit.

- Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue¹³

⁵ Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, pp. 3, 8.

⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Annie Picard, February 14, 2023, p. 7.

⁷ Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, pp. 5, 8; Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, Transcript, September 9, 2025, p. 7.

⁸ Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, pp. 5, 8

⁹ Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, p. 3.

¹⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 5.

¹¹ Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, p. 33.

¹² Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, p. 33.

¹³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16, 2023, p. 6.

8. Being on the land was the most important thing for Innu because the land took care of the Innu, it provided them with everything needed to survive.¹⁴ And in turn, Innu respected every aspect of the land.¹⁵

Early Contact with Europeans

“In essence, this was the very beginning of the end for our nomadic culture but, obviously, we could not possibly have known that then.”

– Apetet Andrew¹⁶

9. Among the first to make contact with Innu were Europeans in the 1600s, followed by explorers and later, settlers.¹⁷ Contact in this early period initiated a series of changes that eventually contributed to the disruption and eventual decline of the Innu nomadic way of life.¹⁸ Although the Innu could not have anticipated the consequences of that early contact, colonial expansion and government intervention ultimately undermined the Innu nomadic lifestyle and their systems of governance, family and survival.¹⁹
10. Europeans arrived with the objective of making Nitassinan more accessible for the arrival of more Europeans.²⁰ Their focus was not on the interests of the Innu, but rather on the perceived wealth and resources of the territory and how they could advance the interests of European monarchies.²¹ These early encounters also gave rise to European perceptions of Innu that were grounded in notions of European superiority.²² Innu were labelled “savages” and were described as “being like wild animals, uncontrollable, uncivilized and preliterate.”²³

¹⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Annie Picard, February 14, 2023, p. 7 and Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16, 2023, p. 9.

¹⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Annie Picard, February 14, 2023, p. 7.

¹⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

¹⁷ Exhibit P-437, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward, p. 8.

¹⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

¹⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

²⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

²¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

²² Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 13.

²³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

Early Jesuit Missionary Activity Among the Innu

“This work that you’re doing is the Devil’s work.”

– Elder Joachim Nui ²⁴

11. Some early recorded encounters between the Innu and Christianity occurred through Jesuit missionaries during the early 17th century in what is now Quebec.²⁵ To aid European aims, Jesuit missionaries sought to gain control over Indigenous peoples they encountered by converting Innu to Christianity.²⁶
12. That control was exercised through direct interference with Innu-aitun and spiritual belief. Jesuit missionaries prohibited the sharing of Innu legends, outlawed drumming and restricted the transmission of Innu spiritual beliefs.²⁷ The purpose of outlawing and restricting Innu practices was to cut off the transmission of knowledge to the younger Innu generation.²⁸
13. The disruption of the transmission of knowledge to younger Innu generations contributed to the decline and, in some communities, the complete loss of important spiritual practices. Following contact with missionaries and priests, practices such as the shaking tent ceremony were prohibited and declined over time.²⁹ The shaking tent had been an important aspect to Innu survival and spirituality, used by Tshenut and shamans to locate game during periods of scarcity and to seek spiritual guidance.³⁰
14. As part of broader efforts to colonize Innu, Jesuit missionaries and priests devised a strategy to proceed in stages. First, they sought to ensure Innu settled into villages.³¹ They did so on the basis that “not much ought to be hoped for from the Savages as long as they are wanderers; you will instruct them today, tomorrow hunger snatches your hearers away, forcing them to go and seek their food in the rivers and woods.”³² The

²⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, p. 18.

²⁵ Exhibit P-434, pp. 3, 8, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries*, 1896.

²⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

²⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 4.

²⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 4.

²⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, p. 18.

³⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Nui, February 16, 2023, p. 10.

³¹ Exhibit P-434, p.3, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries*.

³² Exhibit P-434, p.3, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries*, 1896.

intention was to keep Innu sedentary so that they no longer leave settlements to hunt, fish and gather food off the land.³³

15. Once the Innu had been settled in permanent communities and separated from their nomadic way of life, missionaries and priests sought to replace Innu land-based practices with agriculture.³⁴ The next step of the colonial encounter was the removal of Innu children from their families for the purposes of educating them in European ways.³⁵ Separating Innu children from their parents, extended families and language interrupted the transmission of Innu knowledge and identity and would facilitate assimilation into a colonial society.
16. The Labrador Innu did not settle in permanent villages until much later, in the mid-20th century, as described further below, following missionary activity by the Oblates and government intervention. However, aspects of the assimilationist objectives first associated with early missionary activity were later reflected in colonial policies and practices that contributed to the transition from a nomadic way of life to settled communities.

The Expansion of the Fur Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company

"... now they're not following the animals as they normally would; now they're doing a bit more trapping."

- Annie (Picard) Gregoire Apau³⁶

17. Over time, the Hudson's Bay Company established trading posts across Canada and expanded the fur trade. The fur trade significantly altered the Innu way of life by disrupting traditional patterns of movement and increasing reliance on trading posts.³⁷ Over time, many Innu became dependent on returning to these posts to exchange furs

³³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 8.

³⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 10; Exhibit P-434, p. 4, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791*, 1896.

³⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 10; Exhibit P-434, p. 4, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791*, 1896.

³⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Annie Picard, February 14, 2023, p. 10.

³⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, Transcript, September 9, 2025, p. 14.

for supplies, materials and other necessities,³⁸ contributing to a gradual shift away from a fully land-based way of life.³⁹

18. The trapping industry affected the availability of wild game, reducing a vital food source for the Innu.⁴⁰ It also required the Innu to travel greater distances both to hunt and to bring back furs to trade. Innu struggled to gather sufficient furs to keep themselves alive.⁴¹ As a result, Innu became increasingly dependent on Western foods.⁴²
19. As European settlement expanded and trading posts, such as the Hudson's Bay Company, were established, the freedom and ability to live and move throughout Nitassinan were "gradually eroded" as others now began to assert control and ownership over the land.⁴³

Catholic Church Influence in Nitassinan

"I didn't know as a child but I do now, that our parents and grandparents couldn't hold off the colonial process being brought down on us"

– Apetet Andrew⁴⁴

20. In the early 20th century,⁴⁵ Catholic priests, primarily from the Oblates, visited or resided in what would later become the Innu villages of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet.⁴⁶ At that time, no formal schools had been established, but Sheshatshiu was a place where Innu would live in tents along the river during the summer months.⁴⁷

³⁸ Exhibit P-011, PDF p.18, *Rich C., Testimony* [Transcript of hearing], December 1992, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: vol 1.

³⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 14; Exhibit P-011, *Rich C., Testimony* [Transcript of hearing], December 1992, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: vol 1, PDF p. 18.

⁴⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 15; Exhibit P-029, p. 34 [pdf 43], *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁴¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 15.

⁴² Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 15.

⁴³ Exhibit P-005, p. 7, *Nitinikiau Innusi: I keep the Land Alive*, January 1, 2019, by Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue.

⁴⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, Transcript, September 9, 2025, p. 14.

⁴⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 21.

⁴⁶ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 13; Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 21 and Gregory Rich, May 25, 2024, p. 43.

⁴⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 13.

21. The presence of Catholic priests living amongst the Innu increased the frequency and intensity of contact. For Innu, it was described as a period in which “everything changed,”⁴⁸ as Catholic missionary influence gradually became more significant.⁴⁹ Catholic priests were afforded considerable authority by both church and government institutions and played an influential role in shaping relations with the Innu. The authority was exercised within a broader colonial narrative that viewed the Innu ways of living as inferior and contributed to the circumstances in which Innu “could be made to feel inferior.”⁵⁰
22. The effects of this influence extended beyond religious instruction to the continued suppression of Innu spiritual and cultural practices. Priests encouraged Innu men to travel to Nutshimit alone to hunt, leaving women and children settled in communities rather than following the Innu practice of families living and travelling together on the land.⁵¹ At the same time, priests continued earlier Jesuit efforts to suppress Innu beliefs and ceremonies. Innu drumming, an important piece of Innu cultural and spiritual life historically associated with celebrations of successful hunts, was discouraged by Catholic priests as “evil.”⁵² As one witness explained, “[t]he celebrations of a successful hunt used to come with the drumming and dancing. That was – they couldn’t practice that anymore when the priest said – you know, you can’t, because it’s evil and it’s making you do evil things.”⁵³ This contributed to the erosion of cultural continuity and the suppression of key Innu practices within Innu communities.
23. As this influence grew, Catholic priests began baptizing children and conducting marriages within Innu communities.⁵⁴ The priests also began promoting the importance of formal education and encouraged families to remain in these areas year-round with assurances of new homes.⁵⁵ These expectations were not ultimately fulfilled, including promises related to housing and basic infrastructure such as running water,⁵⁶ as described below.
24. Even where assurances of improved housing were provided, these efforts had profound consequences beyond the physical relocation of Innu families. The growing influence of the Catholic Church, combined with incentives associated with

⁴⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Annie Picard, February 14, 2023, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8.

⁵¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Tshaukuesh Penashue, February 17, 2023, p. 7.

⁵² Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 21

⁵³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 21.

⁵⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, p. 11.

settlement, contributed to divisions within Innu communities regarding the value of Innu knowledge and ways of life. Testimony revealed there were “profound implications in creating divisions amongst us about the value of our own cultural knowledge in contrast with the value of associating with the church.”⁵⁷

25. As a result of settlement, increasing Catholic missionary and priest influence, and the beginning of formal education, Innu children were increasingly separated from the environments in which they historically had been raised in for thousands of years. Innu children “were no longer being raised up immersed in Innu culture.”⁵⁸ Expert witnesses further testified that constant presence of priests and missionaries, together with Innu witnessing the abuse of adults and children in the communities by missionaries and priests, created an environment of fear⁵⁹ within these newly settled Innu communities.
26. Instead, Innu ways of living were being replaced by a “new and unknown culture of trauma.”⁶⁰ Healthy Innu ways of being were being displaced by the “powerful processes of the church and education.”⁶¹

Confederation of Newfoundland and Labrador and Innu Exclusion

*“And now that is all lost.
It was taken away from them... the government took that away.”*

– Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue ⁶²

27. In 1949, Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada. The Terms of the Union made no reference to Indigenous people living within its province.⁶³ At the time, neither the provincial nor federal government undertook consultation with Indigenous peoples in relation to the union.⁶⁴
28. The failure to consult the Innu and to treat them in the same manner as other Indigenous peoples in Canada following Confederation had significant consequences. Although the Government of Canada accepted the Innu into land claim negotiations in

⁵⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Amy Bombay, December 2, 2025, p. 28.

⁶⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 5.

⁶¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 5.

⁶² Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16, 2023, p. 9.

⁶³ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter.

⁶⁴ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter.

the 1970s,⁶⁵ it did not treat the Innu in the same manner as other First Nations in Canada.⁶⁶ As a result, Innu were not eligible to access federal funding, programs, services and legal protections available to First Nations registered under the *Indian Act*.⁶⁷ Over time, this included supports for housing, family violence prevention, the delivery of education services, children's programs, health programs, as well as programs addressing alcohol and substance abuse.⁶⁸

29. This exclusion impaired the ability of Innu communities to address health, social, economic and community challenges⁶⁹ and had significant consequences for Innu children and youth.⁷⁰ The absence of federal recognition also left Innu lands, resources and Innu-aitun more vulnerable to external control and exploitation.⁷¹ These barriers persisted for decades and compounded the impacts of other colonial policies affecting the Innu.

⁶⁵ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter.

⁶⁶ Exhibit P-029, p. 19, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁶⁷ Exhibit P-029, pp. 33, 38, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae; Exhibit P-438, p. 81, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter.

⁶⁸ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter; Exhibit P-029, pp. 18, 30-33, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁶⁹ Exhibit P-438, p. 81, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter; Exhibit P-029, pp. 20, 25, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁷⁰ Exhibit P-438, p. 81, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter; Exhibit P-029, p. 19, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁷¹ Exhibit P-438, p. 77, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter.

Forced Settlement and the Creation of Permanent Innu Communities

“They weren’t happy in there because of the way the house was built; no running water and the houses were really cold.”

– Mary Pia Benuen ⁷²

30. Following Confederation, provincial policies forced Innu to settle into permanent communities beginning in the 1950s and extending through the 1960s.⁷³ This transition not only dispossessed Innu of their land, it ended the Innu’s nomadic way of life, which had enormous impacts on Innu families and their well-being.⁷⁴ Testimony provided that the implications of such an abrupt transition were significant. After living nomadically for thousands of years, the Innu were, within a single generation, forced to adopt a “sedentary village life.”⁷⁵
31. Two Innu communities were established in Labrador.

Sheshatshiu

32. Situated near the Northwest River Hudson’s Bay Company trading post, Sheshatshiu was a well known gathering place for the Innu.⁷⁶ Following the permanent relocation of the Innu to Sheshatshiu, provincial government policy prohibited traditional Innu hunting and made enrolment of children in non-Innu schools mandatory.⁷⁷
33. The permanent relocation of the Innu was viewed as a long-range “programme for rehabilitation”.⁷⁸ Internal government records also reflected assimilationist assumptions. In describing the programme, the Deputy Minister of Public Welfare wrote that experience with Indigenous peoples elsewhere had shown that teaching

⁷² Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, June 3, 2024, p. 10.

⁷³ Exhibit P-437, p. 8, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁷⁴ Exhibit P-437, p. 8, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁷⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁶ Exhibit P-437, pp. 7-8, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward; Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁷ Exhibit P-437, p. 9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁷⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 1.

English and providing employment were insufficient because “there are deeply rooted psychological attitudes to be overcome.”⁷⁹

34. Most of the homes in Sheshatshiu were constructed, in phases, during the 1960s.⁸⁰ The homes provided to Innu were described as “shacks,”⁸¹ with newsprint used “to line the walls in winter.”⁸² These homes lacked basic services, including electricity or running water.⁸³ Although housing was introduced in stages as part of the settlement process, the original homes built in Sheshatshiu were described as “mainly dilapidated, inadequate, filthy hovels, in which no human being should be asked to live.”⁸⁴

The relocation of the Mushuau Innu

“[T]he government relocated the Innu to be with the Inuit together in Nutak and they were transported on a – on a shipping vessel.”

*– Mary Jane Edmonds*⁸⁵

35. At present, the Mushuau Innu live in Natuashish, the only community to which they chose and voluntarily relocated to in 2002.⁸⁶ However, the Mushuau Innu experienced numerous forced relocations throughout their history.
36. In the early part of the 20th century, the Mushuau Innu had been seasonally visiting a trading post at old Davis Inlet, particularly in summer. In 1948, they were forcibly relocated from old Davis Inlet to the far northern coastal community of Nutak.⁸⁷ The Mushuau Innu were placed in the hold of a ship alongside its cargo.⁸⁸ The relocation uprooted them from their seasonal patterns of movements and imposed a sedentary way of life for which neither the people nor the land was suited. Within weeks of their arrival in Nutak, Innu moved to treed areas such as Okak Bay because the surrounding

⁷⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, June 4, 2024, p. 16.

⁸¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

⁸² Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

⁸³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, June 4, 2024, p. 16; Exhibit P-150, pp. 28-29, *Observations on Health Services Delivery in Northern Labrador*, April 11, 1975, by O.J. Rath.

⁸⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 21.

⁸⁶ Exhibit P-437, p. 8-9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁸⁷ Exhibit P-437, p. 8-9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁸⁸ Exhibit P-029, p. 35, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

area of Nutak was treeless.⁸⁹ However, the barren ground surrounding Okak Bay made hunting difficult.⁹⁰ Dissatisfied with the relocation,⁹¹ the Innu walked back to old Davis Inlet the following year.⁹²

37. The Mushuau Innu experienced a second forced relocation in 1967, when they were forced to move to the island of Davis Inlet (sometimes referred to as “New” Davis Inlet or simply “Davis Inlet”).⁹³ As a traditionally in-land nomadic people, the island setting was unfamiliar and created significant challenges.⁹⁴ Upon relocation, they were given poorly insulated homes that lacked running water.⁹⁵
38. Located on an island, Davis Inlet posed significant seasonal and transportation challenges for the Mushuau Innu. Poor ice conditions often prevented travel to and from the mainland for extended periods during freeze-up and break-up.⁹⁶ Innu residents described being unable to travel safely to the mainland during these periods, explaining that “[w]e cannot go to the mainland because its too dangerous. In the spring, people are afraid they will go through the ice, we are stuck on the island for months.”⁹⁷
39. The forced relocations of the Mushuau Innu resulted in the loss of their land-based ways of life, the disruption of language and cultural identity and the imposition of non-Innu systems of governance, education and childcare. These changes have contributed to collective and inter-generational trauma.⁹⁸

⁸⁹ Exhibit P-029, pp. 35-36, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁹⁰ Exhibit P-029, pp. 35-36, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁹¹ Exhibit P-029, p. 36, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

⁹² Exhibit P-437, pp. 8-9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁹³ Exhibit P-437, pp. 8-9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 1, 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁹⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Melody Ninomiya and Leonor Ward, October 1, 2025, p. 2.

⁹⁵ Exhibit P-437, pp. 8-9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

⁹⁶ Exhibit P-006, p. 7, *Executive Summary: Gathering Voices: Finding the Strength to Help Our Children*, 1995, by Mushuau Innu Band Council and the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association.

⁹⁷ Exhibit P-006, p. 7, *Executive Summary: Gathering Voices: Finding the Strength to Help Our Children*, 1995, by Mushuau Innu Band Council and the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association.

⁹⁸ Exhibit P-453, p. 5, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

40. This trauma is exhibited through mental distress, substance abuse, family violence, child protection services involvement, incarceration and suicide.⁹⁹ Davis Inlet also lacked adequate programming and services to support those individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges.¹⁰⁰ Children and youth were removed from community to access treatment services,¹⁰¹ and Innu residents were required to travel, by plane, to the town of Goose Bay to obtain basic health care.¹⁰²

Church-Run Education and the Suppression of Innu-aitun

“It was also a time when the abuse happened – [such as] the strapping – abusing children, and this time, too, the parents feared and respected the priest.”

*– Mary Jane Edmonds*¹⁰³

41. Roman Catholics and Moravian missionaries established churches and schools throughout Labrador,¹⁰⁴ which were used to impose religious instruction.¹⁰⁵ School curricula were grounded in religious and colonial culture, values and language.¹⁰⁶ Even Innu parents were forced into religious instruction.¹⁰⁷ Inquiry evidence revealed that “[t]he intent was to strip Indigenous groups of their autonomy, language, culture and traditions.”¹⁰⁸
42. Formal education became a critical force for change in the lives of Innu children.¹⁰⁹ Innu children were forced to attend these schools¹¹⁰ to unlearn their very identity. Educators were focused on change and not education.¹¹¹ Innu traditions, language,

⁹⁹ Exhibit P-453, p. 5, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

¹⁰⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kathleen Benuen, February 16, 2023, p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kathleen Benuen, February 16, 2023, p. 31.

¹⁰² Formal Hearing Testimony of Kathleen Benuen, February 16, 2023, p. 33.

¹⁰³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹⁰⁵ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹⁰⁶ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹⁰⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Penote Antuan, February 14, 2023, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹⁰⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹¹¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, Transcript, September 10, 2025, p. 3.

values and their way of life, which had sustained them for thousands of years, were framed as inferior.¹¹²

43. Innu children sat in classrooms where the Catholic priest was firmly in charge.¹¹³ Children endured physical and sexual abuse at these schools and from school personnel, as described by a number of Inquiry witnesses.¹¹⁴ Abuse was used by priests to “maintain control over what were essentially defenseless children.”¹¹⁵ Children could not go home and tell their parents about the abuse because the very priest who abused these children would abuse their parents as well.¹¹⁶
44. An Innu witness described the rampant physical and sexual abuse by priests, Catholic “brothers” and teachers in Sheshatshiu as “the most profound and tragic illustration”¹¹⁷ of colonial power. This abuse was not limited to Sheshatshiu; the Mushuau Innu also experienced the same abuse in Davis Inlet.¹¹⁸ Several priests were involved in such abuse. For example, the abuse was referred to as a “cancerous legacy” that has persisted since the time of Father Pirson.”¹¹⁹ Evidence and witness testimony before the Inquiry indicated that Father Pirson abused Innu children, women and men, beginning in the 1960s, or earlier.¹²⁰ Testimony further revealed that some individuals abused by Father Pirson then went on to abuse other children.¹²¹ Father Len Paradis engaged in sexual abuse of Innu children in Sheshatshiu which an Innu parent reported to the Bishop, Peter Alfred Sutton, in Quebec. The Bishop moved Father Paradis to Davis Inlet, where he sexually abused more Innu children.¹²²

¹¹² Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹¹³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, Transcript, September 10, 2025, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 14 and Mary Jane Edmond, February 16, 2023; Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu, April 17 and 19, 2023; Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, pp. 8-9; David Nui, April 18, 2023, pp. 11, 14; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023; Mushuau Innu, April 20, 2023; Marie Martha Andrew, June 7, 2023, p. 7; Gervais Penashue, October 24, 2023; Mushuau Innu, June 25, 2024, p. 17; Mary Catherine Rich, November 27, 2023.

¹¹⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8.

¹¹⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 9.

¹¹⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8.

¹²⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8.

¹²¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8.

¹²² Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 2-4; Community Hearing Testimonies of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, October 26, 2023, pp. 6-7 and Gervais Penashue, October 24, 2023, pp. 4-6.

45. Formal education for the Innu had a detrimental impact on their preservation, practice, and inter-generational transmission of knowledge, which takes place on the land. Forced schooling also affected Tshenut who have long had an Innu societal role as holders of knowledge and transmitters of the way of life.¹²³ Tshenut were no longer in charge of rearing up healthy young Innu. Innu, much like other Indigenous groups across Canada never had a voice, nor were they consulted in decisions that would, and have, dramatically impacted their lives.¹²⁴
46. The influence of priests extended beyond religion and education. Priests also played a significant role in the early administration of child welfare together with medical authorities.¹²⁵ In practice, they exercised considerable discretionary authority over decisions affecting Innu children and families.¹²⁶ Parents and Innu community members had no realistic ability to have a say in these decisions, let alone challenge them.
47. Evidence before the Inquiry indicated that priests were involved with the removal of Innu children from their families, including for the purpose of adoption.¹²⁷ With the involvement of medical authorities, Innu babies and young children were placed in an “Infants’ home”, operated by the International Grenfell Association,¹²⁸ and a number of Innu children were sent to live in the dormitory of the Yale School, often known simply as “the dorm” in Northwest River.¹²⁹ These children were removed from surrounding communities and placed in these institutions because they were considered “disadvantaged and misused.”¹³⁰ A number of Innu children experienced severe physical and sexual abuse in these facilities, particularly the dorm in Northwest River.¹³¹

¹²³ Exhibit P-437, p. 9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

¹²⁴ Exhibit P-438, p. 75, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹²⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, June 6, 2024, p. 16.

¹²⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Annie Picard, February 14, 2023, p. 12.

¹²⁷ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Lyla Andrew, June 6, 2024, p. 16 and Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 19.

¹²⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, June 4, 2024, p. 21.

¹²⁹ Exhibit P-438, p. 76, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹³⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, June 4, 2024, p. 21.

¹³¹ Witnesses describing this, including descriptions of abuse at the dormitory in Northwest River (Yale School), included: Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024 pp. 10-12; Community Hearing Testimonies of Mary Ann Montague, June 5, 2023, p. 3; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 2; Michel Pastitshi, June 7, 2023, pp. 15-16; Roxanne Rich, June 8, 2023, p. 8; of Janet Michel, October 16, 2023, pp. 5-6; Michel Pastitshi, October 25, 2023, p. 7; Paul Rich, October 26, 2023, pp. 8, 11; Marie Rose Pastitshi, November 29, 2023, p. 7.

48. Beginning in the late 1950s, priests also facilitated the placement of Innu children in Catholic residential schools, including Mount Cashel, located on the island of Newfoundland.¹³² At Mount Cashel, Innu children were subjected to physical and sexual abuse which was rampant there, as shown in its own public inquiry (the Hughes Inquiry) and subsequent litigation. In addition, Innu students experienced racism and were prohibited from speaking Innu-aimun.¹³³ These experiences contributed to the loss of language, Innu-aitun, identity, and in many cases, left children unable to communicate with their families upon returning home, disrupting family relationships and the transmission of Innu knowledge and ways of being.¹³⁴
49. At least 19 Innu witnesses described sexual abuse by priests in the Innu communities, teachers at the day schools, at Mount Cashel, or at the dorm in Northwest River. At least 28 Innu witnesses described physical or other abuse in those contexts.¹³⁵ This is by no means a tally of all victims, but it shows that these were pervasive issues. Innu children in the early generations after settlement were not safe, and the initial wave of abuse was by non-Innu adults.
50. The abuse experienced by Innu children in those first few generations after settlement had profound and lasting impacts. Research has shown that Indigenous parenting and caregiving practices were disrupted and, in some contexts, “replaced with abusive child-rearing models that were modelled by the priests, nuns and other school staff...”.¹³⁶ Testimony revealed that at the time there were no processes for children to be able to address the harm they experienced and address the confusion that they were living with.¹³⁷
51. Research has further observed that some students exposed to these abusive school environments “adopted the maladaptive beliefs that this type of abuse and treating each other was something normal because they were socialized to just go along with that.”¹³⁸ Or they simply could not cope. Inquiry evidence indicated that, within Innu

¹³² Formal Hearing Testimonies of Elder Penote Antuan, February 14, 2023, p. 27 and Jack Penashue, January 24, 2024, p. 39.

¹³³ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Elder Penote Antuan, February 14, 2023, p. 27-28; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16-17, 2023, pp. 21-22; Community Hearing Testimonies of Gervais Penashue, October 24, 2023, pp. 5-6, and Elder Penote Antuan, October 25, 2023, p. 4-5.

¹³⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Penote Antuan, February 14, 2023, p. 28.

¹³⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Jerome Jack, June 7, 2023, p. 10; Mary Julianna Rich, June 7, 2023, p. 5; Edward Nuna, October 26, 2023, pp. 6-7; Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8.

¹³⁶ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Amy Bombay, December 2, 2025, p. 30 and October 24, 2025, p. 7.

¹³⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 17.

¹³⁸ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Amy Bombay, December 2, 2025, p. 30 and October 24, 2025, p. 7.

communities, the abuse of Innu children by Innu adults emerged in this context,¹³⁹ reflecting the inter-generational impacts of abuse and trauma.

The Development of Social Services in Innu Communities

“... we were living as if we had our legs cut off at the knees. I don’t know how else to express it more clearly than this. Our hearts and minds could still feel and think but they were filling up with sadness, grief and loss.”

– Apetet Andrew¹⁴⁰

52. Government involvement in the lives of Innu families increased with the introduction of welfare agents¹⁴¹ and the provincial department of Public Welfare¹⁴² in the 1950s.¹⁴³ Welfare policies and practices were disruptive and oppressive to the Innu.¹⁴⁴ Consistent with Catholic priests and oblates, welfare agents affected the manner in which Innu families spent time in Nutshimit; men were “encouraged to go into Nutshimit for economic benefit,¹⁴⁵ without their families.”¹⁴⁶ Access to Family Allowance financial supports were increasingly used to require Innu families to remain in the community, and send their children to the Catholic day schools.¹⁴⁷
53. The first provincial Social Services office in the communities was established in Sheshatshiu in the late 1970s, in or about 1978, allowing its expansion into child protection activities.¹⁴⁸ By this time, the cumulative impacts of relocation, cultural disruption and social change were already profound.¹⁴⁹ Alcohol abuse was described

¹³⁹ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 18, and Jack Penashue, January 24, 2024, p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 1.

¹⁴² Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Exhibit P-438, p. 79, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹⁴⁵ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 5 and Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16-17, 2023, p. 10, who recalled the priest visiting her parents’ tent, to tell her father only to hunt with other men, and to forbid the women and children from leaving the village.

¹⁴⁶ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 5 and Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16-17, 2023, p. 10, who recalled the priest visiting her parents’ tent, to tell her father only to hunt with other men, and to forbid the women and children from leaving the village.

¹⁴⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, p. 8; Elder Penote Antuan, February 15, 2023, p. 5; Germaine Benuen, February 14, 2023, p. 13 and Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 13-15.

¹⁴⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, June 6, 2024, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 8.

as being in every family,¹⁵⁰ and that “every adult was in pain and that pain was being passed down to the children.” Although the term *trauma* was not commonly used at the time, the Innu now understand that as a people, they “were living as a collective trauma.”¹⁵¹

54. In its early years, the Department of Social Services had limited involvement in the lives of Innu families. The primary form of assistance available to the Innu was in the provision of social assistance payments (commonly referred to as child welfare allowance).¹⁵² Despite the growing role of government agencies, priests continued to exercise significant influence within Innu communities. Priests used their authority to compel school attendance, by threatening that social assistance payments would be withheld if Innu children did not attend school.¹⁵³ This contributed to an environment in which access to basic necessities was tied to compliance with church and government expectations.
55. During the late 1970s through the 1980s, Social Services had limited knowledge of the circumstances facing many Innu families and would often only become aware of concerns if they were brought forward by community members.¹⁵⁴ Evidence before the Inquiry revealed that, during this period, some families were experiencing difficulties in raising children, yet these concerns were rarely reported to NL child protection services.¹⁵⁵
56. Reluctance was rooted in a longstanding distrust of non-Innu institutions and officials. By this time, Innu had experienced decades of intervention by churches and governments that had caused enormous harm, which remained ongoing, and Innu had learned to be deeply suspicious of non-Innu coming into their communities.¹⁵⁶ Social Services staff were non-Innu and they had the authority over the eligibility for child welfare allowance.¹⁵⁷ This dynamic contributed to a reluctance among families to engage with NL child protection services or the department of Social Services, even when support was needed.
57. The Inquiry heard personal testimonies of children growing up who needed help, and were left without protection. Some went hungry, slept outside, and experienced or

¹⁵⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 6.

¹⁵¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 6.

¹⁵² Formal Hearing Testimonies of Elder Penote Antuan, February 15, 2023, p. 5 and Lyla Andrew, June 6, 2024, p.17.

¹⁵³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Penote Antuan, February 15, 2023, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 4-6.

¹⁵⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 12.

witnessed abuse.¹⁵⁸ Overall, at least 20 Innu shared such stories, where a child (usually the speaker) had been left for an extended period in harmful home circumstances, without sufficient support or intervention.¹⁵⁹

58. The policies of the early NL child protection system did not “reflect reality because they had never been developed for the Innu.”¹⁶⁰ The Social Services system was not designed to address the level of harm and disruption that existed within Innu communities.¹⁶¹
59. By the time Social Services was a factor, the Innu had been forced to settle in permanent communities, children were required to attend school, families had become dependent on wage labour and social assistance to meet basic needs, and Innu had been affected by the abuse perpetrated by priests and those they enabled.¹⁶² Alcohol misuse, family violence and the inter-generational impacts of trauma had become increasingly prevalent.¹⁶³ Despite these circumstances, the NL child protection system continued to apply policies and approaches that had been developed without consideration of Innu realities and experiences.

Continuing Dispossession of Nitassinan

“...when they went back after it was flooded, everything was gone.”

*– Germaine Benuen*¹⁶⁴

60. Land dispossession, often described by the Innu as policy changes, initiated a pattern of alcohol abuse, violence, family breakdown, suicide, accidents and illness.¹⁶⁵ Innu

¹⁵⁸ For example: Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, pp. 18-19; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 1; Marie Pokue, June 26, 2024, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Our analysis of Innu inquiry testimonies. Note that this reflects all time periods. See e.g. Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023 p. 7-8 and Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023, p. 11. See also Nympha Rich, April 17, 2023; George Gregoire, April 17, 2023; Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023; Justine Noah, April 18, 2023; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023; Christine Rich, April 19, 2023; Kenny Nuna, November 8, 2024; Edward Nuna, October 26, 2023; Sheshatshiu Innu, April 10, 2025; David Rich, October 18, 2023; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 24-26, 2024 and Marie Pokue, January 26, 2024.

¹⁶⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 20.

¹⁶² Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 9, 16-18.

¹⁶³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 8, 16-19.

¹⁶⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, February 14, 2023, p. 13.

¹⁶⁵ Exhibit P-437, p. 9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

were forcefully removed from Nitassinan and placed into small communities year-round. Dispossession of Innu lands was even furthered through resource development, such as mining, flooding of lands for hydroelectric projects, and increased NATO military activity over Nitassinan.¹⁶⁶

61. During the period following Confederation, Meshikamau (known as the Smallwood Reservoir) was flooded as part of Churchill Falls hydroelectric development. For the Innu, Meshikamau was an important area within Nitassinan where families hunted, camped, stored supplies and buried their dead.¹⁶⁷ The Innu were not consulted regarding either the hydroelectric dam or the flooding of these lands,¹⁶⁸ and when the Innu returned to these lands, “everything was gone.”¹⁶⁹
62. Although the Innu were informed that a dam would be constructed on the Churchill River, they were not provided with sufficient information to understand the project’s implications.¹⁷⁰ The concept of a dam was understood in terms of natural barriers, such as those created by beaver dams on rivers.¹⁷¹ The Innu “had no concept on how much land, the thousands of acres, would be flooded.”¹⁷² As a result, the Innu were unable to understand the extent of the impact the project would have on Nitassinan and their way of life.
63. Beginning in the 1980s,¹⁷³ portions of Nitassinan were used for military low-level flight training. Inquiry testimony revealed this period as one of the first times Innu collectively said “enough.”¹⁷⁴ The low-level flight training became a catalyst for public opposition and advocacy, marking one of the first occasions on which Innu publicly asserted concerns about their lands, environment and the violation of their rights.¹⁷⁵
64. By this time, the Innu had been living in permanent settlements for less than 50 years. Although efforts were being made to reconnect with Nutshimit through initiatives such as an outpost program, Innu families returning to the land were confronted with

¹⁶⁶ Exhibit P-437, p. 9, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*, July 2025, by Melody Morton Ninomiya & Leonor Ward.

¹⁶⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, February 14, 2023, p. 13; Formal Hearing Testimony of George Gregoire, July 7, 2025, p. 17.

¹⁶⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, February 14, 2023, p. 13.

¹⁶⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, February 14, 2023, p. 13.

¹⁷⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

¹⁷² Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

¹⁷³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Nykesha Gregoire, January 24, 2024, p. 18.

¹⁷⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 13.

military aircraft flying overhead at low altitudes.¹⁷⁶ Children would scream and run for cover as jets passed overhead.¹⁷⁷ For many Innu, this was their first time hearing about low-level flight training, let alone experience with it.¹⁷⁸ Having already been displaced from their nomadic ways and much of Nitassinan, Innu who returned to the land were now forced to contend with yet another intrusion upon their ability to use and enjoy their territory.

65. The flooding of Meshikamau and the use of Nitassinan for military training reflected a broader pattern in which decisions affecting Innu lands continued to be made without meaningful participation. These developments further restricted the ability of Innu to use, occupy and maintain relationships with Nitassinan, compounding the impacts of earlier settlement policies and land dispossession.
66. Innu men and women were imprisoned for protesting these incursions on their lands and continued violation of their rights.¹⁷⁹ These protests were a response to decades of dispossession and exclusion from decisions affecting Nitassinan. Innu questioned if the government would ever change the way they treat Indigenous peoples.¹⁸⁰

Cumulative Impacts of Colonialism on Innu Children and Families

“I think it is a tragedy that through the deliberate action of governments and priests to diminish the value of our nomadic culture that these experiences are rarely now shared. As a result, many Innu are afraid and they don’t genuinely know how to feel safe.”

– Apetet Andrew¹⁸¹

67. The evidence before the Inquiry demonstrates that involvement of Innu children and families with NL child protection services did not arise in isolation. Rather, it occurred within a context shaped by centuries of colonial intervention.¹⁸² The suppression of Innu spiritual and cultural practices, the disruption of family and community structures through settlement and formal education, the abuse experienced in church-run institutions, the dispossession of Nitassinan and the exclusion of the Innu

¹⁷⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Helen Aster, January 24, 2024, p. 8.

¹⁷⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Helen Aster, January 24, 2024, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Helen Aster, January 24, 2024, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Nykesha Gregoire, January 24, 2024, p. 18.

¹⁸⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Nykesha Gregoire, January 24, 2024, p. 18.

¹⁸¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8.

¹⁸² See *Catholic Church Influence in Nitassinan* (paras. 20–26); *Forced Settlement and the Creation of Permanent Innu Communities* (paras. 30–40); *Church-Run Education and the Suppression of Innu-aitun* (paras. 41–59); and *Continuing Dispossession of Nitassinan* (paras. 60–68).

from programs and protections available to other Indigenous peoples collectively undermined Innu systems of care and wellbeing.¹⁸³

68. These policies and practices fundamentally altered the circumstances in which Innu children were raised. The transmission of language, Innu-aitun, land-based knowledge and family relationships was disrupted. Innu communities experienced increasing poverty, inadequate housing, substance misuse, family violence and unresolved trauma.¹⁸⁴ By the time formal child protection services became involved in Innu communities, many of the conditions that brought families into contact with those systems had already been created or intensified by government and church actions.¹⁸⁵
69. As described above, the differential treatment of the Innu following Confederation and the Terms of the Union constituted a breach of Canada's constitutional obligations to the Innu.¹⁸⁶ By excluding the Innu from the opportunity to be registered under the *Indian Act* and from its benefits, programs, services and protections available to other First Nations, Canada failed to discharge its fiduciary obligations. At minimum, the fiduciary relationship required that the Innu would not be subjected to discriminatory treatment¹⁸⁷ and that the Government of Canada is to act for the "benefit of aboriginal peoples."¹⁸⁸ Instead, Canada failed to extend to the Innu the same opportunities, supports and protections available to other Indigenous peoples.
70. The effects of these colonial policies and interventions did not end with the generations that first experienced them. The disruption of Innu family structures, cultural transmission, language, relationships with Nitassinan and traditional systems of care contributed to trauma that was carried across generations.¹⁸⁹ The resulting

¹⁸³ Exhibit P-438, p. 80, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter; Exhibit P-453, p. 5, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

¹⁸⁴ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Wendy White, December 1, 2025, p. 6; Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 17-18, 103, February 18, 2025, pp. 18, 27-28, April 8, 2025, p. 6, June 6, 2024, pp. 9, 14; Mary Pia Benuen, June 3, 2024, p. 15, June 4, 2024, p. 16; Amy Bombay, September 24, 2025, pp. 3-5, Dr. Melody Morton Ninomiya, December 2, 2025, p. 14.

¹⁸⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, pp. 9-11.

¹⁸⁶ Exhibit P-029, p. 38, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 1993, by Donald M. McRae; Exhibit P-438, p. 77, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

¹⁸⁷ Exhibit P-029, p. 38, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

¹⁸⁸ Exhibit P-029, p. 38, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 1993, by Donald M. McRae.

¹⁸⁹ Exhibit P-436, pp. 19-21, *Direct and Multigenerational Trauma: A Contributing Factor to High Rates of Child Welfare Involvement Among Innu and Other First Nations in Canada*, October 2025, by Amy Bombay.

social and economic inequities, together with the impacts of unresolved trauma, affected the ability of families and communities to maintain wellbeing and increased vulnerability to challenges such as poverty, substance misuse, family violence and mental distress.¹⁹⁰ These harms were not isolated individual experiences but reflected broader patterns of collective and inter-generational trauma that continued to influence the circumstances of subsequent generations of Innu children and families, including those who later came into contact with child protection systems.¹⁹¹

“It’s all connected ... – one pain to another.”

- Gabriel Rich¹⁹²

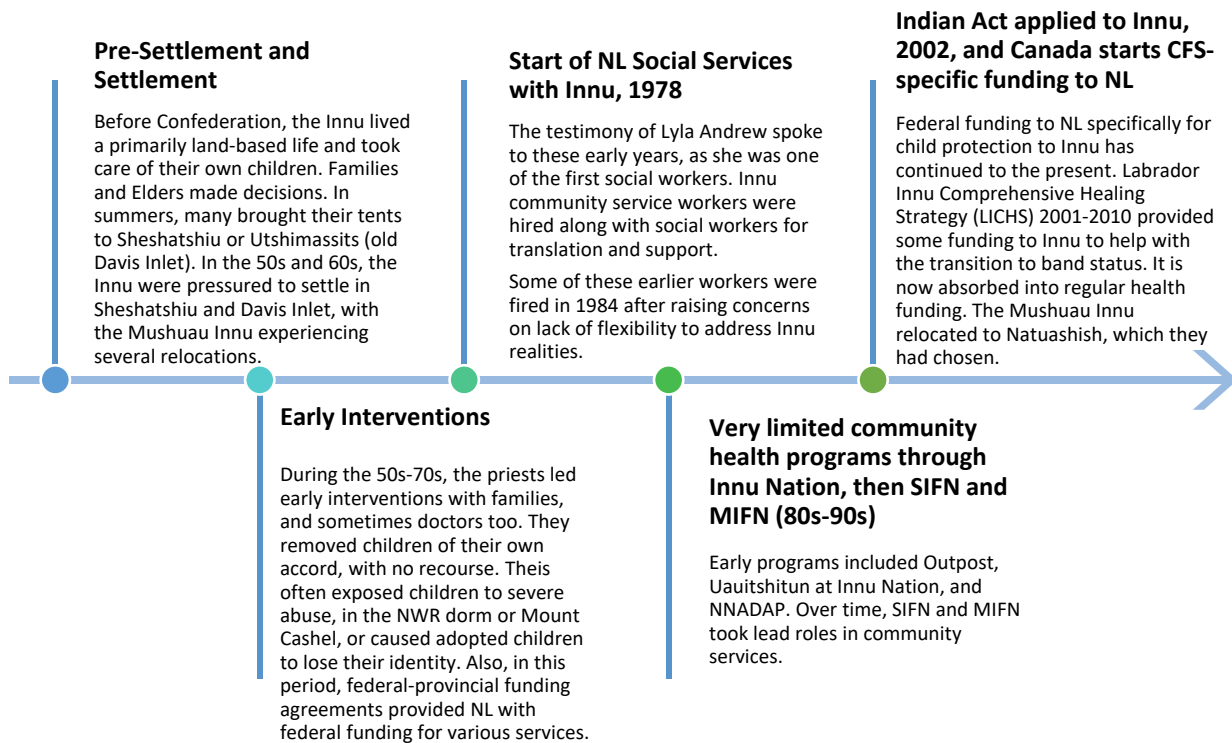
¹⁹⁰ Exhibit P-436, pp. 1-3, 19-20, *Direct and Multigenerational Trauma: A Contributing Factor to High Rates of Child Welfare Involvement Among Innu and Other First Nations in Canada*, October 2025, by Amy Bombay.

¹⁹¹ Exhibit P-436, pp. 20-21, *Direct and Multigenerational Trauma: A Contributing Factor to High Rates of Child Welfare Involvement Among Innu and Other First Nations in Canada*, October 2025, by Amy Bombay.

¹⁹² Community Hearing Testimony of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 12.

A timeline of child and family services in relation to the Innu

These brief visual timelines are designed to be viewed together across two pages.



Provincial Legislation

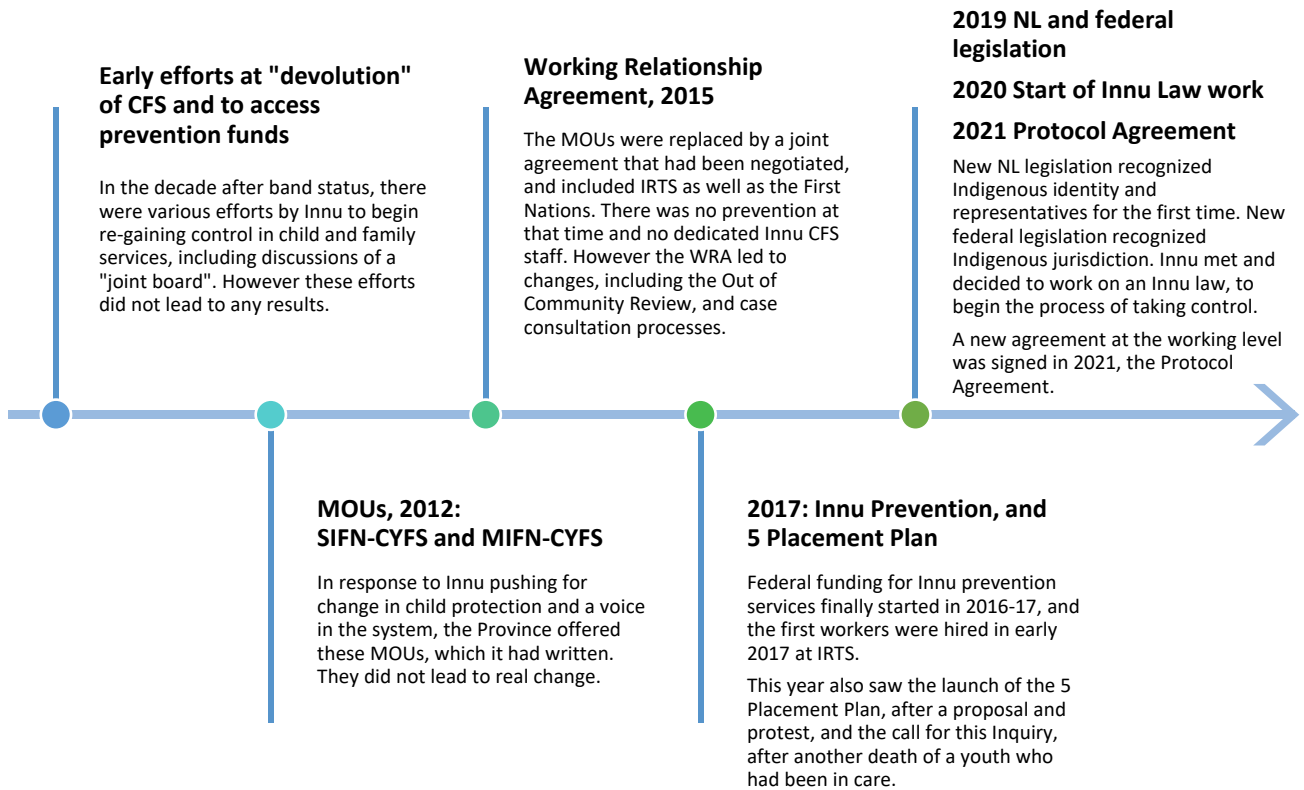
	1964 Child Welfare Act, significant amendments 1972, 1990	Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2000
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Provincial Reviews

	Hughes Inquiry, 1989-1992	
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Provincial Restructuring

	Dept. of Social Services, 1974-1997	Regional Health and Community Services Boards, 1998-2009
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	Child and Youth Care and Protection Act, 2011	Children, Youth and Families Act, 2019
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Turner, 2006	Deloitte & Touche, 2007	Fowler, 2008; Clinical Services Review, 2008	
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Dept of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS), 2009-2016	Dept of CSSD, 2016-2025	Dept of FamA, 2025	Dept of SSWB, 2025+
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The Harms of Removing Innu Children From Innu Communities

71. As provincial child protection expanded, the removal of Innu children from their families, and often from their communities, became increasingly common. The Inquiry heard extensive evidence about the profound harms caused by these removals.
72. One of the clearest messages to emerge from Inquiry testimony of Innu witnesses was that Innu children should not be removed from their communities. Over 30 Innu witnesses spoke to this point. Innu stressed the importance of keeping Innu children within Innu communities, language, and Innu-aitun, for their safety and well-being. They spoke to the harms that were involved with the experience of removal, which generally outweighed any benefits. They urged that Innu children should remain in Innu communities, not be taken out, with perhaps only the very rarest of exceptions.¹⁹³
73. This message came from adults who had been removed as children; from parents who had lost their children; from siblings who saw the impacts of removal on their other siblings; from grandparents and community leaders who saw the impacts within their extended families and within the whole community. It came from Innu who have worked in the system themselves.
74. Witnesses identified many reasons why Innu children should remain within their communities, and as far as possible within their extended families. While the importance of Innu-aitun and identity is discussed further below, the evidence also

¹⁹³ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, pp. 7-10; Helen Aster, January 23, p. 8; Janet Bellefleur and Nykesha Gregoire, January 24, 2024, pp. 19, 29-31; Jack Penashue, January 25, pp. 9, 12, January 26, 2024, pp. 3-5, 13, 17-18; Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 8-9; Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 9-11, 13; Elder Penote Antuan, October 25, 2023, pp. 2-4; George Gregoire, April 17, 2023, p. 11-12; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 3, 7; Gregory Rich, April 20, 2023, pp. 6-7; Bernard Rich Green, April 20, 2023 pp. 9-11; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, October 26, 2023 pp. 4-5 and June 5, 2023, pp. 11-12; Matthew Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 9; Florence Milley, June 9, 2023 pp. 2, 5; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, pp. 4-6; Sheshatshiu Innu, June 5, 2023, pp. 14-15; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 5; Jerome Jack, June 7, 2023 pp. 12-13; Elder Penote Antuan, October 16, 2023, pp. 2-3 and October 17, 2023; Frederick Pinette, October 16, 2023, pp. 9-12; Eugene Hart, October 26, 2023, pp. 20-21; Basile Penashue, October 26, 2023, pp. 22-25; Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, pp. 2-4, 6; Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, pp. 17-18, 21; Shelton Toma, June 27, 2024, p. 12; Kenny Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 7-8; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 6, 2024, pp. 4-8, 11-12; Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, pp. 2, 4-5, 7. Rarely, some exceptions were raised, such as an Innu placement located outside the Innu communities, a family placement outside the Innu communities (in a mixed family), or a few cases of positive long-term relationships with non-Innu foster parents. For example, see generally: Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023; Geroge Gregoire, April 17, 2023; David Nui, April 18, 2023, and client feedback from Innu organizations.

demonstrated that removal often failed to protect Innu children from physical harm while in care.

75. In many testimonies, Innu children who were separated from their communities (whether by the actual child protection services or earlier priest-led interventions) were sexually abused while away from their communities. The evidence revealed a disturbing pattern. In at least 32 testimonies, people told personal stories of such abuse occurring to themselves or their close family members.¹⁹⁴ At least 13 of these cases involved foster care, a group home or youth home connected to provincial child protection intervention.¹⁹⁵
76. This is extremely serious abuse. These interventions, while potentially well-meaning, exposed these children to worse harm. They were not safe. The impacts of such abuse on the child, on their adult life, and on future generations, are enormous. The risks associated with such abuse must not be underestimated.
77. Other forms of abuse, such as physical abuse or unspecified abuse, were also described related to placements out of community, including at least 17 people who spoke about such abuse in a foster care placement, group home or youth home.¹⁹⁶
78. Some witnesses helped explain why separation from Innu surroundings increased the risk of serious sexual and physical abuse. A child who is separated is vulnerable. A child removed from the people they trust and from those who share their language and cultural background may be less likely to disclose abuse or seek help.¹⁹⁷ This isolation can leave children particularly vulnerable to further harm.

¹⁹⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, p. 7; Bernadette Nui, April 18, 2023, pp. 21-22; George Gregoire, April 17, 2023, p. 12; Florence Milley, June 9, 2023, pp. 3, 5 and November 6, 2024, pp. 9-10; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, pp. 1-2, 4; Sheshatshiu Innu, June 5, 2023, p. 14; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 2-3; and Ken Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 6-7.

¹⁹⁵ Community Hearing Testimonies of Bernard Rich Green, April 20, 2023, p. 9, Mary Juliana Rich, June 7, 2023, p. 3, Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 17, Maggie Antuan, October 18, 2023, p. 10; Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, p. 2; Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, p. 11.

¹⁹⁶ Review of Innu inquiry testimony. In relation to physical abuse in various settings, see for example: Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, p. 2, and Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 17-19; Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023, p. 11; Matthew Andrew, October 17, 2023, pp. 9-10; Bernard Rich Green, April 20, 2023, p. 9; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 12; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, pp. 3, 6; Sheshatshiu Innu, June 5, 2023, p. 14; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 2-3; Janet Michel October 16, 2023, pp. 5-6; Elder Penote Anutan, October 25, 2023, p. 5; Kenny Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 6-7; Florence Milley, June 9, 2023, p. 3.

¹⁹⁷ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, pp. 7-8; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, pp. 17-19; George Gregoire, April 17, 2023, pp. 11-12; Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023, p. 11;

79. Beyond abuse, separation from the community can itself traumatize Innu children and youth. Even where a placement is physically safe, the emotional harm caused by separation can be severe. It can lead to further harms and safety risks, including a real risk of youth suicide during or after being in care, as well as other forms of self-harm including substance abuse.¹⁹⁸ Children struggle to understand their isolation and identity, and the loss of consistent caregivers undermines their sense of safety, connection, self-worth and belonging.¹⁹⁹
80. Foster care survivor Chelsea Penashue reflected on how much she missed her extended family while in care in Ontario, and how that trauma rippled through her life:

I just felt like I was a nobody when I was in North Bay. Like, [...] – I felt so empty inside. ...

And I will forgive the CSSD what they done, but I will never forget the pain that I have. They took all my teenage years from me. Like, all that time, I could've spent time with my grandparents. And I couldn't – the time that I – the years that were taken from me, I could've spent that time with my grandmother before she passed away.

Today, I always still wonder if she ever fought for me. I know she did but I just wanna hear it from her. And I swore, I really miss my grandma so much. I feel like I just have this big hole in me that were – I have a hard time filling that hole, that's just wanting my grandparents and, like, I had to fill that hole with drugs and alcohol and the things that I did growing up.

I will – I never want to see my children go through what I went through and to have the hurt that I have – like, I still have. I never want my other kids to have that.

– Chelsea Penashue, Sheshatshiu²⁰⁰

Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 3; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 2; Florence Milley, June 9, 2023, pp. 3-4, and Janet Michel, October 16, 2023, pp. 5-6.

¹⁹⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, p. 8; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 18; George Gregoire, April 17, 2023, pp. 11-12; Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023, p. 11; Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 3; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023 pp. 3-4; Florence Milley, June 9, 2023, pp. 3-4; Janet Michel, October 16, 2023, pp. 5-6; Opening prayer by Elder Antuan, January 23, 2024, p. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, pp. 7-8; Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023, p.11; Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, pp. 17-18; Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, p. 2; Gregory Rich, April 20, 2023, p. 6; Sheshatshiu Innu, June 5, 2023, p. 14; Nympha Rich, April 17, 2023, pp. 7-8; Bernard Rich Green, April 20, 2023, pp. 9-11; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 2; Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, pp. 3; Elder Penote Antuan, October 17, 2023, p. 6; Formal Hearing Testimony of Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 8, 11.

²⁰⁰ Community Hearing Testimony of Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 21.

81. Children need love, within a family and community context, not just care.²⁰¹ For many, being removed from their homes has led to feelings of loss, isolation, and disconnection; particularly when Innu children have been placed outside of their communities or with caregivers who have limited understanding of Innu-aitun.²⁰²

82. Another survivor of foster care outside the community, Munik Penashue, spoke about the importance of being raised with love, which she did not experience in care:

They would take care of your immunization, your teeth, your glasses, your ears, all of that. They would never take care of your heart or your mind.

As a child, they wouldn't – there was no care, no love, absolutely none of that in foster care. I felt alone for such a long, long time.

*– Munik Penashue, Natuashish*²⁰³

83. Involvement in NL child protective services often caused severe emotional harm and disruption to the children's sense of stability and belonging. Apprehensions often occurred suddenly and children were often not informed where they were going.

I didn't know what was happening. Every time I – they always – they always told me: Oh, you gotta go now. I didn't know what the hell is going on. Like, where am I going?

*- Mary Angela Gregoire, Sheshatshiu*²⁰⁴

84. These experiences can traumatize any child, and have indeed traumatized many Innu in their childhoods. These experiences have contributed to social, emotional, and mental health challenges that can continue into adulthood. Some children and youth developed addictions and other mental health challenges; some experienced anger,

²⁰¹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 12 and Frederick Pinette, October 16, 2023, p. 13.

²⁰² Community Hearing Testimony of Gregory Rich, April 20, 2023, p. 6.

²⁰³ Community Hearing Testimony of Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, p. 6.

²⁰⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, p. 4.

low self-esteem, and difficulty with trust.²⁰⁵ The long-term effects can continue across generations.²⁰⁶

85. If the cause of the removal involved the child or youth's own struggles due to trauma, taking them far away runs a significant risk of making it worse. There are places that may sell themselves as "therapeutic", but whether they will actually provide effective therapy to Innu youth is a different question. Many of the places Innu youth were sent to out of province for therapeutic purposes did not actually provide any therapy.²⁰⁷
86. And if a struggling child or youth feels isolated, lonely, misses family, feels like no one cares about them, and feels that they don't belong anywhere – none of this helps the child or youth.²⁰⁸
87. One witness described needing help as a child, but "*they only – they took me away [...]. I didn't get any help that I was looking for*" (Justine Noah).²⁰⁹
88. For Innu, the added factor of loss of identity and language is a major additional harm that occurs when children are removed from their communities. Identity and language are important.²¹⁰ "*[C]ulture is one of the things that strengthens yourself and the people around you. It provides healing. It provides a framework [...] – like a base for your strength.*"²¹¹
89. If that base is corroded, children and youth suffer. For example, Thunderheart Tshakapesh said the following, while placed across the country for his own benefit:

²⁰⁵ Exhibit P-453, pp. 5-6, *Investigator's Report*, March 2006, by Ken Richard and Tara Petti; Exhibit P-436, p. 7, *Direct and Multigenerational Trauma: A contributing factor to high rates of child welfare involvement among Innu and other First Nation's*, October 2025, by Amy Bombay; Exhibit P-438, p. 70, 73, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Cation in the interests of the health, well-being and protection of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter.

²⁰⁶ Exhibit P-436, pp. 20-21, *Direct and Multigenerational Trauma: A contributing factor to high rates of child welfare involvement among Innu and other First Nation's*, October 2025, by Amy Bombay.

²⁰⁷ Exhibit P-453, pp. 8-10, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Black.

²⁰⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, pp. 19, 21; Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, pp. 2, 6; Shelton Toma, June 27, 2024, p. 14, and Daniel Pone Pinette, October 26, 2023, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Helen Aster, January 23-24, 2024, p. 28; Community Hearing Testimonies of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 11; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 11; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 5; ; Frederick Pinette, October 16, 2023, p. 12; Elder Penote Anutan, October 17, 2023, pp. 6-7; Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 3; Basile Penashue, October 26, 2023, p. 24; Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, p. 6, and Sheshatshiu Innu, April 10, 2025, pp. 2, 4-5.

²¹¹ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 28, 2023, p. 16.

I feel so homesick please I just want to go home.

I am losing my language here.

I don't want to live like a white boy I just want to live like an Innu boy again.

*I have been down for a couple of days I'm starting not to eat, I just want to go home.*²¹²

90. Thunderheart tragically took his life some time after, having returned home from care and struggling to re-adjust. Thunderheart's words above speak to the pain of loss of Innu-aitun and language, as well as missing family, home, love and connection.
91. Many Innu children placed away from the communities in care lost consistent access to Innu-aitun and language.²¹³ This led to disconnection and to the loss of access to Nutshimit, where Innu-aitun is practiced and transmitted.²¹⁴ Nutshimit, often referred to as "the country",²¹⁵ is recognized as a place of health and safety.²¹⁶ Innu land offers important protection for Innu well-being.²¹⁷
92. Opportunities to spend time in Nutshimit are limited in various ways when Innu children are removed from their physical communities. Children immediately lose opportunities for meaningful access to both Nutshimit itself and to the benefits of spending time with family in Nutshimit. Meaningful access to the land itself includes opportunities to hunt, pick berries, and to share these skills with other Innu;

²¹² As cited in the final written submissions of the family of Thunderheart Tshakapesh, being Simeon and Ruby Tshakapesh, p. 7, submitted by legal counsel James Maher, April 10, 2026.

²¹³ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, p. 18 and Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 8.

²¹⁴ For background on the importance and effect of time in Nutshimit for Innu, see comments from Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, page 10: "[time in Nutshimit] does make a lot of difference in my life. Spending time and learning from my parents when I do watch them work their hardest in the country, in Nutshimit, and learning from them and them teaching us now to live out in Nutshimit. And I'm happy to say that I did live through Nutshimit life with my parents. I have learned a lot from them and I did learn a lot from my grandparents, too, whom we always went with every fall, every spring [...] and it makes me look at two worlds. One world that is very, very happy and free, we can roam around free in Nutshimit [...] outside Nutshimit, everything is a struggle. You struggle everyday how are you going to deal with what's being thrown at you, what your experiences are."

²¹⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16, 2023, p. 3.

²¹⁶ Community Hearing of Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, pp. 18-19.

²¹⁷ Exhibit P-437, pp. 19-20, *A Review of Specialized Programs/Services Accessed by Innu Children/Youth and their Reported Experiences and Outcomes*; Community Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 5, 2024, p. 2 and Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 2.

meaningful access to time with families in Nutshimit includes opportunities to learn from family members, help others, and to develop a sense of pride in their work.²¹⁸

93. Short visits help a bit, but they are not enough to truly sustain language or Innu-aitun.

Last year I was teaching my daughter Innu and she's learning really well – she was learning really well. She was catching a lot of it while we were just having conversation, and she started using them. But after CSSD took her away, she was like, what's that?

Today she's trying to learn. Each time we have a visit, she's trying to re-learn her language, but she can't. She only stays for a week, three days. How can she learn any of – how can she learn her identity, because that's where our healing is, our identity.

- Sheshatshiu Innu²¹⁹

94. These compounded losses of Innu-aitun, language and identity inherently affect an Innu child or youth's ability to develop a healthy sense of identity as an Innu person.²²⁰
95. Such a sense of isolation can lead to feelings of alienation, particularly when youth later seek to reconnect with their families and communities.²²¹ Many children returned home, either as adults or as youth who had aged out of provincial child protective services, unable to speak their language, unable to know what to do in Nutshimit, and often unable to connect with their families in a meaningful way.²²²
96. Many witnesses spoke out in detail about the harm that results from a loss of Innu-aitun and language, and related loss of identity and loss of a sense of belonging. They described the trauma this causes to the child or youth, which can have serious

²¹⁸ See for example Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16, 2023, pp. 5-6; where Elder Penashue recalls what she has seen in Nutshimit, the roles men and women took, and the positive impact it had on the Innu.

²¹⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 11.

²²⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, pp. 8-9; He testified that, when "you have a child removed from a family, the damage has started. The damage has started and its gonna go many years, too many years for the child." He explained that when children are kept in community, there is a change they don't lose their language and identity, but it is "a completely different story" when they are placed in non-Innu environments.

²²¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, p. 10.

²²² Formal Hearing Testimonies of Elder Penote Antuan, February 14, 2023, pp. 28-29 and February 15, 2023, p. 2.

consequences for their safety and well-being, both while they are away and over the long-term, even if they return. The impact may be lifelong. It can lead to sadness, addiction, isolation, loneliness, feeling left out, and feeling ashamed. It can make reintegration into community much more difficult after the care placement ends. It can ultimately lead to loss of life.²²³

97. Language loss, for example, affects the young person's relationships with their family members and other community members, and compromises opportunities to rebuild:

Today my kids are adults. They have lost their language, Innu-aimun. They don't understand me when I talk to them. They say to me, what are you saying? I think that this is what CSSD has done to my children. My daughter tells me that she wishes she speaks Innu-aimun and hopes she understands it. As for myself I am not fluent in English, but I do ask my husband to tell me what my daughter is saying. My daughter have told me many times that she knows that I don't understand her when she speaks English to me.

- Annie Nuna, Sheshatshiu²²⁴

98. In the absence of a strong foundation in language, Innu-aitun and family connection, some young people who returned have subsequently left their communities again, lost their own children to the NL child protection system, or did not survive.²²⁵ The 6 investigations into the cases of youth who did not survive are important to reflect seriously on. At a minimum, for many Innu, the effects of being removed from their

²²³ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023, pp. 11-12; Simeon Tshakapesh, October 17, 2023, pp. 14-15; Gabriel Irch, April 19, 2023, pp. 10-13; Elder Penote Antuan, October 16, 2023, pp. 1-2 and October 17, 2023, pp. 5-6; Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 3; Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, pp. 18-20; Joachim Selma, November 28, 2023, pp. 13-14; Sheila Cooper and Jason Katshinak, November 6, 2024, pp. 3-4; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Helen Aster, January 23, 2024, pp. 25, 27-28; and Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, pp. 8, 11.

²²⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Annie Nuna, November 8, 2024, pp. 2-3.

²²⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, June 3, 2024, p. 22; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Faith Nalin Rich, paras 5-8; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation James Poker, pp. 14-16; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation Thunderheart Tshakapesh, pp. 2, 13-14; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation Jacob Collins, pp. 3, 13-14; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo, pp. 3-4; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Wally Rich, pp. 3, 12-13; Community Hearing Testimony of Pien Gregoire, November 5, 2024, p. 7.

families and communities continued into adulthood and influenced their relationships and parenting.²²⁶

I didn't believe in myself, that I could be a mom. I didn't know – I was thinking, how am I gonna raise him? I had nothing and I felt like I was a nobody.

- Chelsea Penashue²²⁷

99. This brings us full circle to parents. In addition to the impact on children and youth themselves, removal impacts the parents too. Having their children removed so far away further traumatizes parents, and other family members as well.²²⁸
100. Parents who lost their child have expressed feelings of grief, shame, and helplessness.²²⁹ Parents were hurt and felt that they suffered “psychological damage” when they did not receive updates on their children.²³⁰ In some cases, children were placed out of province without their parents’ knowledge.²³¹ Poor communication with parents and lack of timely information sharing or empowerment of parents was identified as a systemic issue in the 6 investigations.²³² Sometimes parents learned important information from third parties.²³³
101. Other members of the family, like younger siblings, experienced the same stress.²³⁴ These experiences caused further trauma in the Innu communities.

²²⁶ For example, Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024 p. 8 and Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 9-10.

²²⁷ Community Hearing Testimony of Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 21, who was in foster care out of province.

²²⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, p. 7, and Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, pp. 17-18.

²²⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 11.

²³⁰ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 10.

²³¹ In addition to the investigations, this also came up in other testimonies, such as in the Community Hearing Testimonies of Pien Gregoire, November 5, 2024, pp. 5-6; and Annie Nuna, November 8, 2024, p. 3.

²³² Exhibit P-453, p. 11, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

²³³ Such as Pien Gregoire, November 5, 2024, p. 6, who described his family's experience when his child was transferred to Ontario from Labrador without his family's knowledge: “But they didn't give him back. They didn't give him back – my child – and then, eventually, they sent him to [town], Ontario. They didn't tell us that. They said they would never send [him] outside without – they will never send him back, that's what they told us. But without our knowing, [he] was gone. We went to the Social Services building and they didn't tell us nothing. Instead, we heard it from somebody else.”

²³⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p.10; Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, p. 17; David Nui, April 18, 2023, p. 12; Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, pp. 17-18; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 19-20; Kevin Pastiwet, October 23, 2023, pp. 5-6.

102. It is important to remember that, while the best interest of a child is the focus of provincial child protection, and is extremely important, ignoring the impact on the parents altogether neglects how well-being is interconnected. If parent healing is less likely, then family reunification is less likely; and that may lead families to miss out on an important opportunity to meet the best interests of the child. Parent well-being also affects that child over the long term (including as a youth or young adult), and risks affecting other children as well (younger siblings for example).
103. Re-traumatizing parents also contributes to inter-generational trauma. Breaking that cycle is the major challenge facing Innu communities. Everyone surrounding those communities should be thinking of what they can do to help with that enormous challenge, rather than making it worse – with all the ripple effects that entails. It is a challenge faced on a personal level, a family level, and indeed at a community level.
104. That brings us to the community impacts. Having children removed outside the community traumatizes the whole community.²³⁵

When you take a child, it is taking part of us, because that's our child, an Innu child.

- Mary Martha (Manimat) Andrew²³⁶

105. Mary Jane Edmonds (Manishan) put it this way:

So don't think one child is just one family, it's the whole community. It's the whole community's child.

So when something happens like this, the whole community comes together. They come together, they weep, they grieve and then they have to work on moving on.

So it's not a single-person tragedy, it's the whole – it's – it's us – the Innu.

Not just Innu in Natuashish, but when something happens in Sheshatshiu, too, we feel it, because these are our people, these are our friends, our relatives, our aunties, uncles. Those two communities are connected. When one tragedy happens the two communities know it, they feel it.

²³⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, p. 18.

²³⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Manimat (Marie Martha) Andrew, October 23, 2023, p. 3.

I think it can't go away thinking, you know, this is just one family; it's the whole community. It's families together. ²³⁷

106. Removal of children has ripple effects throughout the whole Innu Nation. The Innu face the challenge of an ongoing loss of cultural continuity and opportunities to share knowledge across generations.²³⁸ Inter-generational integrity is critical to the transmission of Innu-aitun and language.
107. While some degree of effort has likely been made by child protection in the past to keep Innu children within their home communities, it is worth emphasizing that Innu could see – and their stories vividly showed – that the risks of placements outside the communities were seriously underestimated. Non-Innu people thought those placements would be safe for Innu. In large part, they were not.
108. Non-Innu also thought they knew better about this than Innu. They thought that professional degrees, standardized policies, or perhaps even white skin and mainstream Canadian culture gave them a superior understanding of what was best for Innu children. They were wrong.
109. The overrepresentation of Innu in NL child protective services continues to affect Innu, individuals, families, and communities. Innu still have to advocate for culturally grounded approaches to child and family services in order to prioritize community connection, family preservation, and the well-being of Innu children; while also taking on the significant task of individual and community healing.²³⁹
110. It is important to hear the lesson here that staying within an Innu context is not just a “nice to have” extra. Innu children need to remain connected to be safe.

²³⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, p. 27. Mary Jane (Manishan) was presenting on the Mushuau Innu timeline, and in her capacity as Senior Innu Representative with Prevention Services at the Innu Round Table Secretariat. Our understanding is that these comments were about the death of James Poker, and then of Kirby Mistenapeo, after their respective release from care.

²³⁸ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, p. 10; Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 47-48, April 8, 2025, pp. 13-14; Exhibit P-436, pp. 22-23, *Direct and Multigenerational Trauma: A contributing factor to high rates of child welfare involvement among Innu and other First Nation's*, October 2025, by Amy Bombay; Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Penote Antuan, February 14, 2023, pp. 28-29; Elder Antuan explains his own journey of learning his language and culture. His personal experience of disconnection [not how I ultimately want to word this] and how that further affected his own children.

²³⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, December 1, 2025, pp. 6, 16, 19; Report to the Inquiry on Innu Services, November 2025, pp. 14, 17-20.

“[W]hen the social workers took the child away from the parent, it’s not protection. It hurt the parent, it hurt the child, it hurt the whole community. That’s not a good idea. To do that – to have [real] child protection, we have to find a way how to do it. ... It is important – very important to protect a child.”

- George Gregoire, Natuashish²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ Community Hearing Testimony , George Gregoire, April 17, 2023, p. 12.

Other Key Aspects of Innu Experience

111. Removal from the community was a defining, negative experience that came forward from Innu testimony, as explored in the section above. A number of other themes emerged from Innu testimony at the Inquiry. It is not possible to encapsulate all the stories in a short summary. Each person's story deserves its own attention. However, the stories also speak to a collective experience.
112. Several leading themes emerged from the evidence, including the need to:
- a. Value and transmit Innu language and Innu-aitun;
 - b. Centre love, family relationships and belonging;
 - c. Listen more closely to children and youth;
 - d. Provide families with more help and support, based on a fuller understanding of their needs;
 - e. Require NL child protection services to understand children, families and their circumstances before acting; and
 - f. Recognize the importance of understanding Innu history and trauma.

Valuing and Transmitting Innu-aimun and Innu-aitun

113. Many Innu witnesses strongly emphasized the importance of Innu-aimun and Innu-aitun. This links with the key message explored above about avoiding removal from community. As one speaker put it, "*never remove the children from their culture*", and many echoed that message.²⁴¹
114. However, it also goes beyond the issue of not removing children from the Innu ways of being and living. It is about what we *do*, not just what we *don't* do.

²⁴¹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, p. 6; Elder Penote Antuan, October 16, 2023 and October 17, 2023, p. 7; Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 3; Basile Penashue, October 26, 2023, p. 24; Joachim Selma, November 28, 2023, p. 16; Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, p. 18; and Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Penote Antuan, February 14, 2023, p. 24 and February 15, 2023, p. 1.

115. Building up cultural strength starts from inside the communities. It needs support from many levels. It can also face threats from many places, not just from the removal of children.

Growing up, I felt very ashamed to be Innu. I feel ashamed to say it now. Now, I'm proud but when I was younger, I wasn't 'cause I wasn't seeing good things. But, now that I'm older, I understand why those things were happening. I would always see white, non-Innu people putting Innu people down, and I didn't want to be in the group that was put down.²⁴²

116. Another witness had a similar message, in which removal outside the community plays one part of the story but only one part:

[Outside the community] how can [my daughter] learn her identity, because that's where our healing is, our identity. You know, unlearning behaviours and finding self-worth where there is generations of shame, and that can't just be brushed off. It's not as easy as you think. My grandmother, shamed; my mother, shamed; me, myself, I've been shamed; and now my daughter is in a white community saying she knows the difference. She's saying: Oh, they're looking at us differently because we're Innu. She's only 7 years old.²⁴³

117. Witnesses urged more efforts towards restoring and supporting Innu-aimun and Innu-aitun.²⁴⁴ This includes community programming, with support from external governments, as well as each person taking responsibility and action. One speaker noted that when they were younger, it felt easy to ignore Innu traditions, to think that older people will always be there to carry out these traditions for us. It can be hard to realize that we need to take action ourselves. She described coming to that realization herself, later in life.²⁴⁵

118. Innu witnesses expressed pride in Innu-aitun, and talked about the importance of pride. For example, it is important for Innu and non-Innu to know that Innu children used to be well-cared for, that Innu had successful lives in Nutshimit, without others controlling them.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 28, 2023, p. 15.

²⁴³ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 11.

²⁴⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Etienne Rich, October 26, 2023, p. 14.

²⁴⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 28, 2023, p. 3.

²⁴⁶ Community Hearing Testimonies of Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 2-3; Simeon Tshakapesh, October 17, 2023, pp. 14-15; Mushuau Innu, June 27, 2024, pp. 1-7, and Joachim Nui, February 15, 2023, pp. 10-11, 22

119. Having pride in Innu-aitun, language, and identity can make a genuine positive difference in the lives of Innu children and families. We should support positive services and supports at the community level, from the start of each child's life and extending throughout the whole community, to help people find that sense of pride, and promote it within future generations. Innu children, youth and young adults need a realistic sense of hope for the future, with the ability to contribute meaningfully in their work as adults. This should include a strong, foundational education in both Innu and non-Innu ways of life and fluency in both Innu-aimun and English.²⁴⁷
120. It seems more than obvious but needs to be said: if a child or youth is in care, they must be allowed to speak Innu-aimun. Their language must be promoted, not discouraged. Cases in which language use was discouraged or prohibited were not only described in relation to settings from several generations ago; witnesses also described recent experiences of being told not to speak Innu-aimun in modern foster homes or group care settings, including for example in Ontario foster homes and at Ranch Ehrlo, within the last 10-15 years.²⁴⁸

Centering love and family relationships

121. The importance of love in a child's life cannot be overstated. A care placement without love is not a good place for a child to live and grow. Children need to feel loved, and to know in their heart that people love them.²⁴⁹
122. Witnesses urged that the system keep children within extended family to the greatest extent possible, as an important way to help ensure children experience love. When children are removed from their family, including from their extended family, there is harm done to the child, especially if they are not in a loving community placement.²⁵⁰
123. Conversely, as noted above, distant placements or adoptions far from family and community often lacked love, even if care was provided.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Community Hearing Testimonies of Paul Rich, October 26, 2023, p. 9; Etienne Rich, October 26, 2023, pp. 13-14; Mushuau Innu, June 27, 2024, pp. 7, 11, and Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 8-9, 13.

²⁴⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, p. 4; Sheshatshiu Innu, April 10, 2025, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mary Ann Montague, June 5, 2023, pp. 3-4; David Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 5; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 12; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 2, 4 and Frederick Pinette, October 16, 2023, p. 13.

²⁵⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, June 5, 2023, pp. 12-13; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 6-8; David Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 5, and Frederick Pinette, October 16, 2023, pp. 10-11.

²⁵¹ Community Hearing Testimony of Bernard Rich Green, April 20, 2023, p. 10.

124. In addition, Innu witnesses explained that parents and extended family members are important in a child's life, even if they cannot care for them day to day. Their relationships with the child will usually benefit the child (with rare exceptions), and needs to be promoted and supported. This remains true even if the family member is not doing well all the time. For example, if a family member has episodes of substance use and episodes of sobriety, there can be benefits to promoting healthy, loving relationships and interactions with their children during the times where this is possible. Too often, the provincial system has kept children away from such adults at all times. That overlooks the importance of love in the child's life, and the role of these relationships over the long term in the course of a person's life. The child's perspective and reactions should guide this, not a strict rule.²⁵²
125. Allowing a struggling parent to connect with their child also helps the parent heal. It can motivate parents to keep working, when changing their life and overcoming trauma is very hard. Without connection, they can lose hope and give up. As noted above, a parent's well-being will impact the child's well-being as well, not only at the immediate moment but well into the future.²⁵³
126. Innu parents who carry their own trauma still want to be good parents.²⁵⁴ Through their own words, it is possible to see that Innu parents were, and are, negatively impacted when they work hard to support their personal healing and to be involved in their child's life, only to be told they still cannot care for their own child.²⁵⁵ This can be demoralizing and can set back progress for the parent and for the prospects of family reunification in the child's interest.

*I've lived in chaos for a very, very long time [...] I suffer from complex trauma, but that hasn't stopped me from wanting to be a mom to my children. I never wanted to hurt my children, but I was the one who had to figure out everything. It felt a lot of it I had to do on my own.*²⁵⁶

127. In some instances where this has occurred, parents have gone back to using alcohol or other substances after they are told their children would remain in care.²⁵⁷ Tragically, the Inquiry heard that one mother committed suicide after being told she

²⁵² Community Hearing Testimonies of Mary Ann Montague, June 5, 2023, pp. 2-3; Basile Penashue, October 25, 2023, p. 24; Joachim Selma, November 28, 2023, p. 18; Mushuau Innu, November 29, 2023, p. 3.

²⁵³ Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, November 29, 2023, p. 3.

²⁵⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2025, p.13 and Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 7, 2024, pp. 1-2.

²⁵⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 7, 2024, pp. 1-2.

²⁵⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 13.

²⁵⁷ Community Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 7, 2024, pp. 1-2.

will not get her children back.²⁵⁸ Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue described how she has seen some parents lose hope, which only makes things worse:

*When kids are apprehended and when families finish their treatment, I think there should be an aftercare in place for them because these families look forward to having their children back in their homes with them and I think maybe that is why people give up because CSSD keep telling them it is not time, yet, for the kids to go back home [...] They did all the things that CSSD have asked them [...] I think that's why sometimes parents give up. They go back to drinking, doing drugs. Maybe if their kids were given back to them, maybe they would go on trying to live a healthy lifestyles.*²⁵⁹

128. Sibling relationships are really important too, and deserve more support and attention. Some described the experience of having their sibling relationships treated as being unimportant, and felt harm and loss from the absence of that connection, the missed opportunities to spend time together, and damage done to the relationship. Siblings should be able to grow up together as much as possible, and otherwise supported to see each other as much as possible with the necessary travel and escort supports.²⁶⁰
129. In cases that involve youth mental health, it is all the more important to involve family members who love the child and have been involved in raising them. Good quality medical care for youth mental health cannot be provided without the involvement of loving family members or other regular caregivers who know that youth well. Family should receive information and be part of the discussion and decision-making. There are difficult decisions to make with serious pros and cons, and these need all the information and perspectives to be brought forward. Too often, youth in these situations have been taken into care in order to receive help, and the family is sidelined in that process, with social workers making decisions instead of family members who really know and love the child or youth.²⁶¹
130. In addition, if a youth is struggling, they need to feel love, connection and consistent support. Sending them away to various homes and treatment centres is risky. They often feel lonely, unloved, disconnected, which can often make things worse.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheila Cooper, November 6, 2024, p. 4.

²⁵⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 7, 2024, p 1.

²⁶⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mary Ann Montague, June 5, 2023, pp. 2-3; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 18-19.

²⁶¹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Matthew Andrew and Victoria McKay, October 17, 2023, p. 10.

²⁶² Community Hearing Testimony of Shelton Toma, June 27, 2024, pp. 15-16.

131. Experienced Innu foster parents spoke about the importance of fostering with love, not just as a place to stay.²⁶³ They also called for us to pay attention to the bonds that may have developed in a foster home, and look at relationships from the child's perspective. Sometimes foster parents and children really love each other, and this should not be disrupted easily. If reunification with parents is going to occur, the child's perspective must be taken into account, and treated with sensitivity. The relationship they have formed should be treated with respect, for example, allowing time to transition, say goodbye, and maintain contact. Innu foster parents spoke of experiences where this did not occur, which traumatized the children affected.²⁶⁴
132. The need to be loved by a parent-type person in our life is not just a need we have as a child, it extends into adulthood. We should pay attention to building lasting family relationships for children and youth, including young adults. This can include adoptive families (whether formal or informal), where a child/youth feels they can really express and accept love, and feels a sense of home and belonging. One speaker told a moving story about being sometimes cared for by a certain couple in the community, but it never really gelled into a clear adoption nor was he consistently living with them. It was only as an older adult that they identified him as their son, and this was very meaningful and healing for him. He now refers to them as his adoptive parents.²⁶⁵

Listening more closely to children and youth

133. Many Innu expressed that children and youth need to really be listened to. Their experience was that the current child protection system does not do a good enough job listening to children and youth. They urged us to take the perspectives of children and youth more seriously in decision-making about their own lives.²⁶⁶
134. A point raised a number of times is that children should have some agency in choosing where to go and who to live with. Some adults may always feel they know better than the child about their best interests, but that is often not the case. There are delicate pros and cons to different living situations, that the child sees first hand, and often there is no perfect solution. We should listen to children about where they want to be,

²⁶³ Community Hearing Testimony of Veronica Rich, November 30, 2023, p. 9.

²⁶⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, pp. 5-6 and Sheila Cooper, November 6, 2024, pp. 3-5.

²⁶⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Edward Nuna, October 26, 2023, p. 10.

²⁶⁶ Community Hearing Testimonies of Nympha Rich April 17, 2023, pp. 7-8; Justin Noah, April 18, 2023, pp. 2-3; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 17; Evelyn Lidd, June 8, 2023, pp. 20-21; Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 3; Elder Penote Antuan, October 17, 2023, pp. 5-6; Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 17; Ruby Tshakapesh, October 26, 2023, pp. 16, 18; Veronica Rich, November 28, 2023, p. 6; Mushuau Innu, June 25, 2024, pp. 3-6; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, pp. 8-9; Annie Margaret Nuna, November 8, 2024, p. 3.

where they feel the safest, happiest, and that they belong. It does not help to force a child away from the family they actually want to be with.²⁶⁷

135. Sometimes children have expressed themselves with their feet, so to speak, by physically returning to the place they want to be (or a person they want to be with), or leaving a place they do not want to be (or a person they do not want to be with). Treating this as just “running away” misbehaviour misses the point. We should listen, taking it seriously.²⁶⁸
136. Abuse occurs in some homes or placements, as described further above. If we do not listen closely to children and take them seriously, they may be too afraid to disclose, or they may not be believed.²⁶⁹
137. Each case is unique. There’s a balance between permanency and family reunification, and the views and feelings of the children need to be heard and respected in those difficult decisions. We cannot assume a particular placement is the right one, even one with a parent or family member. We need to really listen, and keep listening.²⁷⁰
138. For example:
- a. A witness spoke about being forced to return to her mother’s home, despite her mother having been abusive. She did not feel safe there, and there continued to be unhealthy behavior in the home.²⁷¹
 - b. A child had negative experiences in two placements with their aunts. It is easy to think that a case where a family placement is found has been “solved” and then turn our attention to something else. However, it is crucial to keep an eye on that child, and a listening ear.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 17 and Ruby Tshakapesh, October 26, 2023, p. 18.

²⁶⁸ Community Hearing Testimony of Evelyn Lidd, June 8, 2023, pp. 20-23; Final Submission James Poker, pp. 11-12; Final Submission Kirby Mistenapeo, pp. 3, 20.

²⁶⁹ See for example, Community Hearing Testimony of Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, pp. 2-3.

²⁷⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Jeannie Nuna, October 26, 2023, p. 4; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 2, and testimonies cited below.

²⁷¹ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 9.

²⁷² Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, June 25, 2024, pp. 4-5.

- c. A youth developed a positive relationship with a non-Innu foster family and wanted to remain there at age 16, having been in care a long time. This was very hard for his mom, who wanted him back, but she respected his choice.²⁷³
 - d. A child had been with the same Innu foster parents from birth to age 4, and then was suddenly placed back with his biological mom very suddenly, without a transition. This was really traumatic for the child and foster parents. It felt like an apprehension. The child was very upset and calling for his mom, i.e. foster mom. He eventually returned to them, at first sporadically, and then longer term.²⁷⁴
139. We need to reach out to children and youth, build trusting relationships with them,²⁷⁵ speak with them, and ask them about their views and experiences. We must put ourselves in the shoes of that child or youth, and have empathy and compassion for them and their feelings. We need to try to really understand them. This includes older children or youth acting out with their own problematic behaviours. And it includes paying more attention to what children and youth have gone through, such as grief/loss, or abuse.²⁷⁶
140. If children and youth are not listened to, things can escalate to serious risks and harms. For example, Wally Rich was a youth in care who wanted to come home. He expressed he might end his life. This should have been explored diligently and immediately, e.g. what was making him so unhappy in his placement (which had several serious issues later described), and what options could be considered (his parents were already on their healing journey). That did not occur in time. Feeling hopeless, and without someone really taking the time to hear from him, he took his life.²⁷⁷

Providing more help for families, and what kind of help is needed

141. Families need more help. This came up frequently. In particular, people need help that is compassionate and respects their dignity, one described it as “*humanitarian*”.

²⁷³ Community Hearing Testimony of Annie Margaret Nuna, November 8, 2024, p. 3.

²⁷⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Jeannie Nuna, October 26, 2023, p. 4 and Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, pp. 8-9.

²⁷⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Elder Penote Antuan, October 25, 2023, pp. 4, 6.

²⁷⁶ Community Hearing Testimonies of Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, pp. 2-3; Elder Penote Antuan, October 17, 2023, pp. 5-6; Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 18-19, and Veronica Rich, November 28, 2023, p. 6.

²⁷⁷ Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Wally Rich, p. 7, 15-17, 22, paras. 10, 32-37, 51; See also Community Hearing Testimony of Nympha Rich, April 17, 2023.

People should not be afraid to ask for help, and help should be provided in a way that makes the person feel glad they asked for help, not regret it.²⁷⁸

142. In many cases, people spoke about the absence of help, of wishing more help had been available. But sometimes people also spoke gratefully about the help they had received, such as from IRTS Prevention, First Nation service providers, and family, friends or other support people.²⁷⁹

143. People also spoke about specific kinds of programs or supports that are needed, such as:

- People and programs to work with them in their homes.²⁸⁰
- Services that help with the home environment and the family's quality of life.²⁸¹
- Programs that prioritize taking people to Nutshimit.²⁸²
- Positive encouragement, to not give up and feel hope for the future.²⁸³
- Help to recover from childhood abuse, loss/grief, and other trauma, to help start to heal from these serious impacts, to help break the cycle.²⁸⁴
- A full continuum of help for substance abuse, locally available, including counselling, detox, treatment, and consistent after-care.²⁸⁵
- Healthy social and recreational opportunities for adults.²⁸⁶
- More help for young pregnant moms.²⁸⁷
- Help to face grief; some encouraged more pro-active and routine support in the wake of a loss, for prevention purposes; one story in particular shared how a

²⁷⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, pp. 1-2; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 4-5, and Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 12.

²⁷⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Kevin Pastiwet, October 23, 2023, pp. 8-9, 11-15.

²⁸⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu April 19, 2023, pp. 3, 7, and Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 7, 2024, pp. 2-3

²⁸¹ Community Hearing Testimony of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 13.

²⁸² Community Hearing Testimony of Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, p. 13; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Helen Aster, January 23, 2024, pp. 21, 26; Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 6, 23, and January 26, 2024, p. 18; see also further detail on Nutshimit at the end of the section below, "What helps with healing?"

²⁸³ Community Hearing Testimonies of Evelyn Lidd June 8, 2023, pp. 20-21, and Frederick Pinette, October 16, 2023, p. 12 14.

²⁸⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Mary Agathe Rich, November 27, 2023, pp. 14-15; Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 6-7, and January 26, 2024, p. 6.

²⁸⁵ Community Hearing Testimonies of Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, p. 4; Maggie Antuan, October 18, 2023, pp. 10-11; Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, p. 11; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 7, 2024, p. 1; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Helen Aster, January 24, 2024, p. 2; Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 6-7 and George Gregoire, July 7, 2024, pp. 15-16.

²⁸⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Maggie Antuan, October 18, 2023, pp. 10-11.

²⁸⁷ Community Hearing Testimony of Jolene Penashue, June 9, 2023, pp. 1-2; Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, pp. 26, 30, and January 23, 2024, pp. 15-16.

parent's grief escalated into her substance abuse, which left her children unattended, which left them vulnerable to sexual abuse by other people (which obviously had an enormous negative lifelong impact on them); it is worth noting that with all the trauma Innu experience, grief can suddenly escalate that trauma and create risks.²⁸⁸

- Help for mothers living in situations of domestic violence.²⁸⁹
- Help for fathers engaging in violence.²⁹⁰
- Caregiving when parents need to go to treatment / recovery.²⁹¹
- Support with problem-solving or figuring out arrangements when circumstances change, for example if a parent or caregiver becomes sick.²⁹²
- Prevention support generally, to figure out what can be done to prevent apprehension.²⁹³
- Teaching parents.²⁹⁴
- Supports for earlier reunification; i.e. we should try to minimize the length of time a family is separated and work on strategies to promote earlier reunification, with supports, to help parents stay motivated and avoid falling into a trap of escalating depression, addiction, hopelessness, and negativity; it was noted that the Charles J. program is usually full, with a long waitlist, and does not provide a long enough program for all families; witnesses called for more programming support in this area.²⁹⁵
- If a home's physical safety is an issue, that issue should be addressed.²⁹⁶
- Children and youth need a variety of services to help them, including more child psychologists, therapists, and counsellors, who are qualified to deal with trauma and accessible, including in our school systems.²⁹⁷

²⁸⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 18-19; Mushuau Innu, November 29, 2023, p. 3, and Ruby Tshakapesh, October 25, 2023, pp. 16-17.

²⁸⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 27, 2023, p. 7.

²⁹⁰ Community Hearing Testimony of Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, pp. 3-4.

²⁹¹ Community Hearing Testimony of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 12.

²⁹² Community Hearing Testimony of Annie Margaret Nuna, November 8, 2024, pp. 2-3.

²⁹³ Community Hearing Testimonies of Kenny Nuna, November 8, 2024, pp. 5-7; Daniel Pone Pinette, October 26, 2023, pp. 3; Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, p. 14; and Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 15-16, 19.

²⁹⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Manimat (Marie Martha) Andrew, October 23, 2023, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ Community Hearing Testimonies of Kenny Nuna, October 24, 2023; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024 and Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 7, 2024.

²⁹⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 27, 2023, pp. 8-9.

²⁹⁷ Community Hearing Testimonies of Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 13-14; Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, pp. 7, 10, and Formal Hearing Testimony of Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 11.

- Children and youth who have experienced abuse need high quality, experienced counselling (this has not been regularly occurring).²⁹⁸
- All children and youth need to know Innu workers who they trust and can go to for support and intervention.²⁹⁹
- Children and youth need help to process their feelings, including feelings of abandonment and other trauma, to understand what they are going through in their family life and in the community; without that help, children and youth often fall quickly into addiction themselves to try to bury those feelings; this needs to include children in traditional adoption as well as those in official care settings, and the help should be pro-active.³⁰⁰

144. In describing the help required, people also said:

- Support should be available 24/7.³⁰¹
- The people directly involved in a program, who experience it, need to be involved in decisions about it.³⁰²

145. Many people shared tangible details about what specific actions helped with healing in their real life experience:

- Speaking from the heart. This came up frequently. Sharing our stories and our tears is valuable. It's important to tell the truth and learn from what has happened. Sharing is hard, sometimes very hard. But a safe space can help people share, with supports available. Sharing your experience can help a person let go of their pain. For example, one speaker described feeling lighter, that sharing allowed difficult feelings and memories inside her to be able to come out of her body: *"it feels like I ... took a lot of stuff out of me, because I was talking about it."* Sharing can also help the speaker reflect in a new way, drawing connections, learning new lessons, and seeing things in a different light.

²⁹⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, pp.10-12; Ken Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 6-7, and Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, p. 9, 12.

²⁹⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Gervais Penashue, October 24, 2023, pp. 4-5.

³⁰⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Joey Michel, June 27, 2024, p. 18; Michel Nuna, October 18, 2023, p. 2 and Julianna Hill, October 18, 2023, p. 6.

³⁰¹ Community Hearing Testimony of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 12.

³⁰² Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 20, 2023, p. 7 and Formal Hearing Testimony of Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 11.

Sometimes sharing can also help others, by building connection and helping to break the cycle of pain and trauma.³⁰³

- Connecting with others with similar experiences. For example, a residential school survivor found that realizing that she was not alone in her experience opened doors to healing.³⁰⁴
- Spending time in Nutshimit; see below for further comments.
- Active outreach and support / prevention at a time of grief/loss. Families need services and supports to be pro-active at that time.³⁰⁵
- Recognizing the underlying trauma that lies behind the substance misuse and other behaviours.³⁰⁶
- Recognizing guilt and shame, and working through those very difficult emotions.³⁰⁷
- Understanding that grief takes time, has a big impact, and cannot be rushed.³⁰⁸
- Having a family member or other support person be with you when you are struggling, standing by you, spending time together, being open to talking and listening in a non-judgmental way. For example, a grandmother spoke about spending time with her grandson who has an addiction. In another story, a witness described how someone helped them by listening and guiding them. The helper's attributes included: really listening, being non-judgmental, being patient, having a consistent relationship, building trust and going deeper into issues gradually over time. The breakthroughs did not happen right away. Once trust was established, the helper asked thought-provoking questions, and made gentle suggestions that allowed the speaker to take her own actions to try to resolve harms from the past that were weighing on her. This story did not identify

³⁰³ Community Hearing Testimonies of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 5, 2024, pp. 2-3; David Nui, April 18, 2023, p. 15; Mary Julianna Rich, June 7, 2023, p. 5; Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 15; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 18; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 8-9; Sheshatshiu Innu, June 9, 2023, p. 8; Elder Penote Antuan, October 17, 2023, p. 7; Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 29, 2023, p. 5; Veronica Rich, November 30, 2023, p. 8; Ken Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 6-7; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 2-3, and George Gregoire, July 7, 2024, pp. 2, 15.

³⁰⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 4-5 and Formal Hearing Testimony of George Gregoire, July 7, 2025, pp. 14-15.

³⁰⁵ Community Hearing Testimonies of Simeon Tshakapesh and Ruby Tshakapesh, November 4, 2024, pp. 11, 13.

³⁰⁶ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, pp. 7-8; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 17-18; Gabriel Rich April 19, 2023, p. 11; Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, p. 15, and Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 3-4.

³⁰⁷ Community Hearing Testimony of Christine Rich, April 20, 2023, pp. 2-3.

³⁰⁸ Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, p. 3, and Christine Rich, April 20, 2023, pp. 2-3.

if this person was an Innu or non-Innu, or whether they were a professional or not.³⁰⁹

- Sweat lodges and other ceremonies.³¹⁰
- Innu-led counselling and meetings.³¹¹
- Walking outside, being in nature.³¹²
- Laughter.³¹³
- Engaging in traditional Innu cultural and/or land-based activities; this can give a sense of well-being from the connection to family, to Innu ancestors, to Innu way of life, and even to future generations who may be learning the activity.³¹⁴
- Elders providing support, guidance and encouraging spiritual strength.³¹⁵
- Taking preventative steps early on before larger problems start.³¹⁶
- Helping others. Giving back to the community can keep you going, and feel purpose and a sense of agency in the interest of helping children and the next generation.³¹⁷
- Finding a role model. A speaker described how connecting with her sister who was in a better place helped her see it could be possible to have a better life.³¹⁸
- Understanding the history of inter-generational trauma affecting our parents/family, and the Innu communities, can help healing. For example, one foster care survivor started her healing journey when learning about residential schools at college, and from there gaining an understanding of her father's experience, and from there of her own experience in foster care. It was meaningful to be able to put her traumatic experiences into context.³¹⁹

³⁰⁹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 5, 2024, p. 3; Sheshatshiu Innu, June 9, 2023, p. 7; Daniel Pone Pinette, October 26, 2023, p. 3, and Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 29, 2023, p. 4.

³¹⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, p. 7; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 7; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 8-9; Formal Hearing Testimony of George Gregoire, July 7, 2024, pp. 14, 19.

³¹¹ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, p. 8; Formal Hearing Testimony of George Gregoire, July 7, 2024, pp. 3, 16.

³¹² Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, June 9, 2023, pp. 7-8.

³¹³ Community Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 23, 2024, p. 13.

³¹⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 28, 2023, p. 5, and Sheshatshiu Innu, November 28, 2023, pp. 15-16.

³¹⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Mary Rose Pastitshi, November 29, 2023, p. 8.

³¹⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, pp. 7-8.

³¹⁷ Community Hearing Testimonies of Julianna Rich, June 7, 2023, p. 5, and Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 5.

³¹⁸ Community Hearing Testimony of Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 4.

³¹⁹ Community Hearing Testimonies of David Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 5; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 28, 2023, p. 15; Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, pp. 5-6; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, pp. 8-9 and Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 6.

- Help processing and understanding your own feelings and experiences, including for children and youth.³²⁰
- Reconnecting with Innu-aitun identity, community, and family.³²¹
- Raising children.³²²
- Intensive/specialised therapy; especially for survivors of sexual abuse and other serious childhood trauma.³²³
- Giving a sincere apology, being honest with ourselves and others about our mistakes can help us overcome our shame, move past it, and feel less burdened; note that this links to concepts of restorative justice, which values telling the truth directly to those affected.³²⁴
- Hearing a sincere apology; similarly, this links to concepts of restorative justice.³²⁵
- For some, forgiveness helped them heal.³²⁶
- For some, connecting with spirituality and/or religion helped them heal. In one story, the use of prayer helped connect to spiritual strength, a sense of purpose, a sense of love and support, having hope for the future, having faith that things can improve. Connecting with others in a church community can also be positive.³²⁷
- For some people, dreams were important to healing and connected to Innu spirituality. One speaker experienced dreams that connected her to family members who had died. The dreams contained messages that integrated her hopes and fears, her past trauma and her future. They inspired her to live, rather than take her life. They helped with her grief over the deaths of loved ones including her children. One of the dreams also provided a way to consider the impact of her actions on other people, by imagining other peoples' feelings, including feelings of loved ones who are no longer alive.³²⁸

³²⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Michel Nuna, October 18, 2023, p. 2; David Rich, October 18, 2023, p. 8 and Julianna Hill, October 18, 2023, pp. 5-6.

³²¹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Bernard Rich Green, April 20, 2023, p. 9, and Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, pp. 6-7.

³²² Community Hearing Testimony of David Rich, April 11, 2025, p. 3.

³²³ Community Hearing Testimony of Maggie Antuan, October 18, 2023, pp. 10-11.

³²⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Edler Penote Antuan, October 16, 2023, p. 2; Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 28, 2023, pp. 3-4 and November 29, 2023, pp. 4-5.

³²⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Elder Penote Antuan, October 16, 2023, p. 2.

³²⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of David Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 5.

³²⁷ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mary Rose Pastitshi, November 29, 2023, p. 8; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, pp. 5-6; Jolene Penashue, June 9, 2023, p. 2; Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, p. 17, and Sheshatshiu Innu, April 11, 2025, pp. 14-17.

³²⁸ Community Hearing Testimony of Mary Rose Pastitshi, November 29, 2023, p. 8.

- Having someone show they care about you, even in small ways, can be healing. A mom in an Innu treatment program recounted being really helped by: 1) a friend who picked up her clothes, brought her a birthday card and flowers, and brought her basic things like smokes; 2) people in treatment encouraging her to stay, telling her she can do it; and 3) an aunt telling her she loves her. These small measures of positive encouragement, love and caring meant a lot to her at that moment.³²⁹
- For children and youth, having at least one trusted, caring adult in your life is really important for healing and wellbeing.³³⁰

146. Speakers noted that people need to be ready for treatment for it to make a difference. You cannot force someone to be ready. Facing your trauma is very scary. It can take time, and can sometimes involve flashbacks or other serious challenges that feel worse before it feels better. There may be layers to go through.³³¹

147. Many Innu witnesses said we need to trust in Innu ways of healing, to support them and build them up.³³² Having accessible Innu treatment programs is so important. One mom described how important it was that she was able to access an Innu treatment program locally right away when she became ready to do so. Seizing that moment is critical. The mom felt connected and supported at treatment. She did not have to go far away. Staying local allowed more opportunities to re-connect with Innu people from her family and community within treatment and in and around her treatment; this is an important part of her healing journey. It is rebuilding her family, her sense of love and connection, which she had lost. It is rebuilding her social life within the community, by connecting and re-connecting her to healthier people who are in recovery like she is.³³³

148. Caution was recommended about the following forms of healing that come from outside the Innu communities:

³²⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, pp. 17-18.

³³⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Edward Nuna, October 26, 2023, p. 5, and Sheshatshiu Innu, April 11, 2025, pp. 1213, 25-26.

³³¹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Edward Nuna, October 26, 2023, pp. 4-5; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 6, 2024, pp. 8-10; Sheshatshiu Innu, April 10, 2025, pp. 5-6; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Mary Pia Benuen, January 23, 2024, p. 11 and George Gregoire, July 7, 2024, p. 15.

³³² Community Hearing Testimonies of Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 20; Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, p. 13; Sheshatshiu Innu April 10, 2025, pp. 4-5; Formal Hearing of George Gregoire, July 7, 2024, p. 16.

³³³ Community Hearing Testimony of Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, pp. 16-17; see also Testimony of Sheshatshiu Innu, April 10, 2025, p. 5, 8, 10.

- a. Psychological medication should be treated with caution, especially because numbing the feelings will not make the underlying issues go away. Some felt that family members were negatively changed by such medication, sometimes followed by suicide or deteriorating health. This is not to say such medication will never be helpful in all cases, but some Innu witnesses urged that caution should be used, while ensuring that underlying trauma is addressed.³³⁴
 - b. We should not assume that Western systems and a control-focused environment will “fix” someone. Sometimes non-Innu healing establishments sell themselves on their authority and professional accreditations. But we have to remember that this has failed Innu a number of times before. This is not to say all western or medicalized healing is not effective; rather, Innu witnesses tended to say that it should be approached with caution and with lessons learned in mind.³³⁵
149. As noted above, Nutshimit was frequently raised as really important for healing, and a source of Innu well-being in the first place before healing may need to take place. Nutshimit was described as a place of health and safety, a place to experience Innu-aitun and connection.³³⁶ Innu witnesses said:
- It is important to protect the land, to safeguard this source of well-being.³³⁷
 - People advocated spending time in Nutshimit for healing and wellness, ideally longer periods of time if possible, and to do so with extended family and/or other community members. They noted it is important for Innu of all ages.³³⁸

³³⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 17; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, p. 20; Matthew Andrew and Victoria McKay October 17, 2023, pp. 9-10.

³³⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 21.

³³⁶ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, pp. 18-19; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, November 5, 2024, pp. 1-2; Mushuau Innu, November 29, 2023, p. 2; David Rich, April 11, 2025, pp. 1-2; Daniel Pone Pinette, October 26, 2023, p. 3; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 6, 2024, p. 13; Janet Michel, October 16, 2023, p. 6; Manimat (Mary Martha) Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 2; Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 27, 2023, p. 7; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 28, 2023, p. 16; Nympha Bryne, June 25, 2024, pp. 13-14; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, p. 8; Helen Aster, January 23, 2024, p. 21; Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, p. 23; and Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 2.

³³⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, February 16, 2023, pp. 3, 9, and Community Hearing Testimony of Elizabeth Penashue November 5, 2024, p. 1 and Formal Hearing Testimony Apetet Andrew, September 9, 2025, p. 7.

³³⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mushuau Innu, November 29, 2023, p. 2 and David Rich, April 11, 2025, p. 2.

- Some spoke specifically about spending time in Nutshimit, with family, to help process tragic grief and loss. They said it was helpful.³³⁹
- Spending time in Nutshimit can help with Innu-aimun learning and retention. It helps transmit Innu-aimun and Innu-aitun to the next generation, which is important to Innu well-being (see above).³⁴⁰
- Some noted that it is easier to be healthy in Nutshimit, for example avoiding substances, while this is harder in the community.³⁴¹

Child protection needs to do a better job understanding before acting

150. A number of Innu witnesses expressed that too many apprehensions have occurred too quickly, without taking the time to really understand what is going on, and to figure out what the best course of action is. It is important to take the time to really understand, while not making assumptions about what is happening within a family, or what the impact is. You need to visit the family, get to know them (parents, children, grandparents, etc.), and understand the whole situation before decisions can be made about what to do.³⁴²
151. Innu noted that to date, most social workers have been non-Innu. They have tended to have limited experience in the Innu communities. They often do not know much about the Innu families they are making decisions about.³⁴³ Good practice in those circumstances requires a great deal of humility; that is not always present.
152. Before deciding to remove a child, it is important to really explore all options and consider if there are other options that would be less traumatic for the children, and better overall.³⁴⁴
153. Several stories involved quick apprehensions in circumstances that did not seem justified, at least based on the information presented. While there could be more to

³³⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Daniel Pone Pinette, October 26, 2023, p. 3.

³⁴⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 6, 2024, p. 12-14, and Kevin Pastiwet, October 23, 2023, p. 5, 11.

³⁴¹ Community Hearing Testimony of David Rich, October 18, 2023, pp. 8-9, and Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22-23, 2024, p. 10.

³⁴² Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, pp. 16.

³⁴³ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Elder Tshaukuesh Penashue, February 16, 2023, p. 11; Mary Jane Edmonds, February 16, 2023, pp. 23, 25; Kathleen Benuen, February 16, 2023, p. 30; Kenn Richard, March 31, 2026, pp. 54-55; Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 87-88, 145; Amanda Rich, December 1, 2025, pp. 22-23; and Lyla Andrew, April 8, 2025, pp. 7-8, 11, February 17, 2025, pp. 76-78 February 18, 2025, pp. 6-7, 31, June 6, 2024, pp. 7, 10.

³⁴⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Michel Pastitshi, October 25, 2023, p. 8.

the story, the main point observed here is that it is important not to jump to conclusions, or react too quickly in a way that can cause more harm. “Apprehend first ask questions later” is a terrible approach that traumatizes children. Everything is connected, and focusing on a single incident can be misleading. The Innu believe in a holistic approach to solving problems. There is not just a single cause to a problem or situation, and one issue or incident cannot be understood in isolation.³⁴⁵ We should also consider the role of harm reduction, recalling that parents may not be perfect or may make mistakes but may still be the best place to raise that child, with love. For example:

- Children were taken away from grandparents who functioned as parents, when the grandparents had been drinking for an evening but had used a babysitter.³⁴⁶
- A baby was apprehended from the hospital using tricks and deception, without giving parents a chance, and without discussing concerns or trying to work out a plan with parents, grandparents and support people.³⁴⁷
- A granddaughter was taken from the grandparents, and they said it was not explained why. It is possible that because they were already considered a foster placement, they were not treated as having rights in the system. However, this neglects the feelings of the child and impact on the child. Alternative placements should not be easily disrupted without a close look.³⁴⁸
- Children were quickly taken away from a stable, loving Innu foster placement when a child had come to accidental harm. Accidental harm should be looked at calmly and without rushing to conclusions, whether with parents or foster parents. An accident that could have been avoided may warrant education, planning or other support, but seems it should rarely warrant apprehension, and certainly not in a rush. The fact is, children can experience harm even when under the care of good caregivers. Separating the child from their loving caregiver only makes things worse, causing more trauma for the child.³⁴⁹

154. Extended family need to be listened to as part of this process. Leaving a child at home is not always the right answer either. In one case, the grandmother and auntie expressed serious concerns to child protection services, that they felt were not listened to. The child was in circumstances that were not safe, and very tragically, the child died.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, pp. 18-19.

³⁴⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Michel Pastitshi, June 7, 2023, p. 15.

³⁴⁷ Community Hearing Testimony of David Rich, October 18, 2023, p. 9.

³⁴⁸ Community Hearing Testimony of Matthew Andrew and Victoria McKay, October 17, 2023, p. 9.

³⁴⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Julianna Hill, October 18, 2023, pp. 5-6.

³⁵⁰ Community Hearing Testimony of Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 6-7.

155. We need to be thoughtful and sensitive to the different relationships that children can have with alternative caregiver parents (e.g. foster parents), and how it feels from the child's perspective. These relationships are not all the same. The key question is not the legal status, it should be about the child. How does the child feel, what are the dynamics around that child. For example, a foster placement that started from infancy, within an Innu family, may feel a lot more like adoption from the perspective of the foster parents and children. However, current rules allow foster placements to be ended essentially at a whim, without much process, due to any minor policy breach or small issue. This does not pay enough attention to the child's feelings and best interests, or their long term relationships (e.g. with foster parents, foster siblings and extended foster family).³⁵¹
156. Drinking needs to be considered more carefully, based on genuine risk to the child, balanced against alternatives. Drinking can be a serious child protection concern, but should not automatically lead to removal of children. Some people drink responsibly. Even drinking that is occasionally problematic can sometimes be managed with children staying home (for example, with another safe adult). Each situation needs to be carefully considered on the facts. It is also important to avoid racism or stereotypes. It is worth thinking: how would a non-Innu family be treated on these facts? Responsible drinking is often assumed for non-Innu (i.e. the assumption is that drinking is generally responsible drinking and is probably fine, or even if occasionally problematic that it can likely be managed with the children staying home), but the opposite is sometimes assumed for Innu (i.e. the assumption that any drinking is a serious child protection issue, and should lead to child protection involvement and probably the removal of the children).³⁵²
157. It is important to keep re-assessing what is happening, carefully, and what is in the best interests of the children. A case was described where children in care kept physically returning to their mom on their own. This occurred in Goose Bay, and they sometimes walked or biked across town. This constant running away from care put the children in danger, with unclear supervision. In the end, a serious incident did result, in which a child was seriously harmed by a third party while out on the street. If kids are returning to parents, it is worth a hard look to see if that may be the best place for them. It may ultimately be less risky than trying to force kids into a placement.³⁵³
158. False disclosures from children are rare but possible. Disclosures of abuse need to be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly (see above about listening to children). But

³⁵¹ Community Hearing Testimonies of Jeanie Nuna, October 26, 2023, pp. 3-4; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 5 and Matthew Andrew and Victoria McKay, October 17, 2023, pp. 9-10.

³⁵² Community Hearing Testimony of Michel Pastitshi, June 7, 2023, p. 15.

³⁵³ Community Hearing Testimony of Evelyn Lidd, June 8, 2023, p. 23.

in rare cases, it is possible for children to lie, and this should be considered as one possibility. A story was told about a child who later admitted to lying about experiencing physical abuse, in order to have a chance to go to Goose Bay. Reasons a child might lie include: wanting power over their parents in relation to normal parent/child conflict (e.g. opposition to parental rules); or wanting to go to town (e.g. from Natuashish), which may feel like an exciting opportunity. Investigations should be thorough and fair, with good translation. They should take into account things like whether the child is showing signs of fear or signs of trust/comfort, whether the child wants to be with the people accused / in their home, and if relevant signs such as bruises or other physical evidence. Extended family members may also be able to offer context or background information.³⁵⁴

The importance of understanding Innu history and trauma

I'm an inter-generational survivor, and I need to break that cycle.

- Gabriel Rich³⁵⁵

159. Understanding Innu history and the causes and effects of inter-generational trauma within the Innu communities is essential.
160. It is important for workers in all aspects of child and family services (protection, prevention, placements, policy, higher levels within government), to have this understanding in doing their work.³⁵⁶
161. It is also essential for every community member, because it is their own history, and having an understanding of it can bring insight into their own experience and can help with healing (as noted above).³⁵⁷
162. Innu timeline training is a strong basis for this. In addition to community-specific details, some of the key general points everyone needs to know include:

³⁵⁴ Community Hearing Testimony of Mary Jane Edmonds, June 25, 2024, p. 10-11.

³⁵⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 15.

³⁵⁶ *The Innu Healing Strategy: an Innu Plan jointly developed by Innu of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish*, 2024, by SIFN, MIFN and IRTS, pp. 2-7, 11, 22-25, 27, 31-32; Formal Inquiry Testimonies of Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 11; Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 39-41, 145-146; William English, March 26, 2026, pp. 7-9; Wendy White, December 1, 2025, p. 6; Ken Barter, December 3, 2025, p. 27; Dr. Melody Morton Ninomiya, December 2, 2025, pp. 7-8, 14; Amy Bombay, September 24, 2025, p. 13; Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 11; Michelle Shallow, April 10, 2025, pp. 8-9; and Dr. Melody Morton Ninomiya, September 1, 2025, pp. 6-8.

³⁵⁷ Community Hearing Testimonies of Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, p. 5; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 13; and Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 24, 2024, p. 3.

- Inter-generational trauma and institutional abuse play an important role as sources of trauma in the Innu communities.³⁵⁸
- Priests, schools and social services have caused severe trauma within the Innu communities.³⁵⁹ It is important for people to understand that history, including the role of coercive control in making children vulnerable to predators (parents feeling intimidated; children having nowhere to go for help; etc.).³⁶⁰
- Settlement into village life has changed Innu ways of living as well. People who knew how to live on the land were left without a clear way of life. Modern housing also reduced openness, visiting, and working together, in contrast to life in tents.³⁶¹
- Substance abuse is the result of untreated traumas. If people are not provided a better way to deal with their pain and anger from childhood abuse, they often turn to substances to numb their pain.³⁶²
- The past, present and future are connected. The legacy of inter-generational trauma can keep going until it is stopped.³⁶³
- It is really hard to break the cycle of trauma. Victims may feel ashamed. People who abused others or neglected their children may feel ashamed. People may carry abusive experiences with them for many years. It can be very hard to speak about it. It is not easy to resolve.³⁶⁴
- By now, the level of trauma has risen to such an extent that people can get used to terrible situations, and awful events can become routine or normalized. We have to be mindful of this problem.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁸ Community Hearing Testimonies of David Nui, April 18, 2023, pp. 12, 14; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, pp. 19-20; Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, pp. 10-11; Jerome Jack, June 7, 2023, pp. 10-11; Simeon Tshakapesh and Ruby Tshakapesh, November 4, 2024, p. 10; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 24, 2024, pp. 23-24; Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 11.

³⁵⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, pp. 18-19; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, p. 4; Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 11, and Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, p. 8-9.

³⁶⁰ Community Hearing Testimonies of: Mushuau Innu, April 20, 2023, pp. 14-15; David Nui, April 18, 2023, pp. 11-12, and Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 24, pp. 8-9.

³⁶¹ Community Hearing Testimonies of David Nui, April 18, 2023, p. 14, and Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 27, 2023, p. 6.

³⁶² Community Hearing Testimonies of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 11; Christine Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 9; Jerome Jack, June 7, 2023, p. 10; Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, p. 10 and Jack Penashue, January 24, 2024, p. 34.

³⁶³ Community Hearing Testimonies of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 9; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, pp. 7-9.

³⁶⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Mary Rose Pastitshi, November 29, 2023, pp. 9-10; Emma Milley, June 9, 2023, pp. 9-10; David Nui, April 18, 2023, p. 14, Christine Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 9; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, p. 2 and Apetet Andrew, September 10, 2025, pp. 9-10.

³⁶⁵ Community Hearing Testimony of David Nui, April 18, 2023, p. 14.

- There are Innu breaking the cycle of inter-generational trauma, as hard as it is. The Innu are resilient and have survived, despite this legacy.³⁶⁶

The Innu experience in numbers

163. A great deal of the Inquiry has focused on hearing Innu experiences from Innu people themselves, first hand. This is extremely valuable.
164. The numbers also tell a story. They help to count up Innu people who had similar experiences – being taken into care, for example. How many were affected at any given time? This helps us understand the scale of a given issue or experience.
165. Each number represents a real person, with a depth of experience that the number alone cannot convey. There are stories these numbers cannot tell. But to an extent, they can help provide a frame of reference, putting the more detailed testimony into perspective.

The number of Innu children in care increased dramatically, then decreased

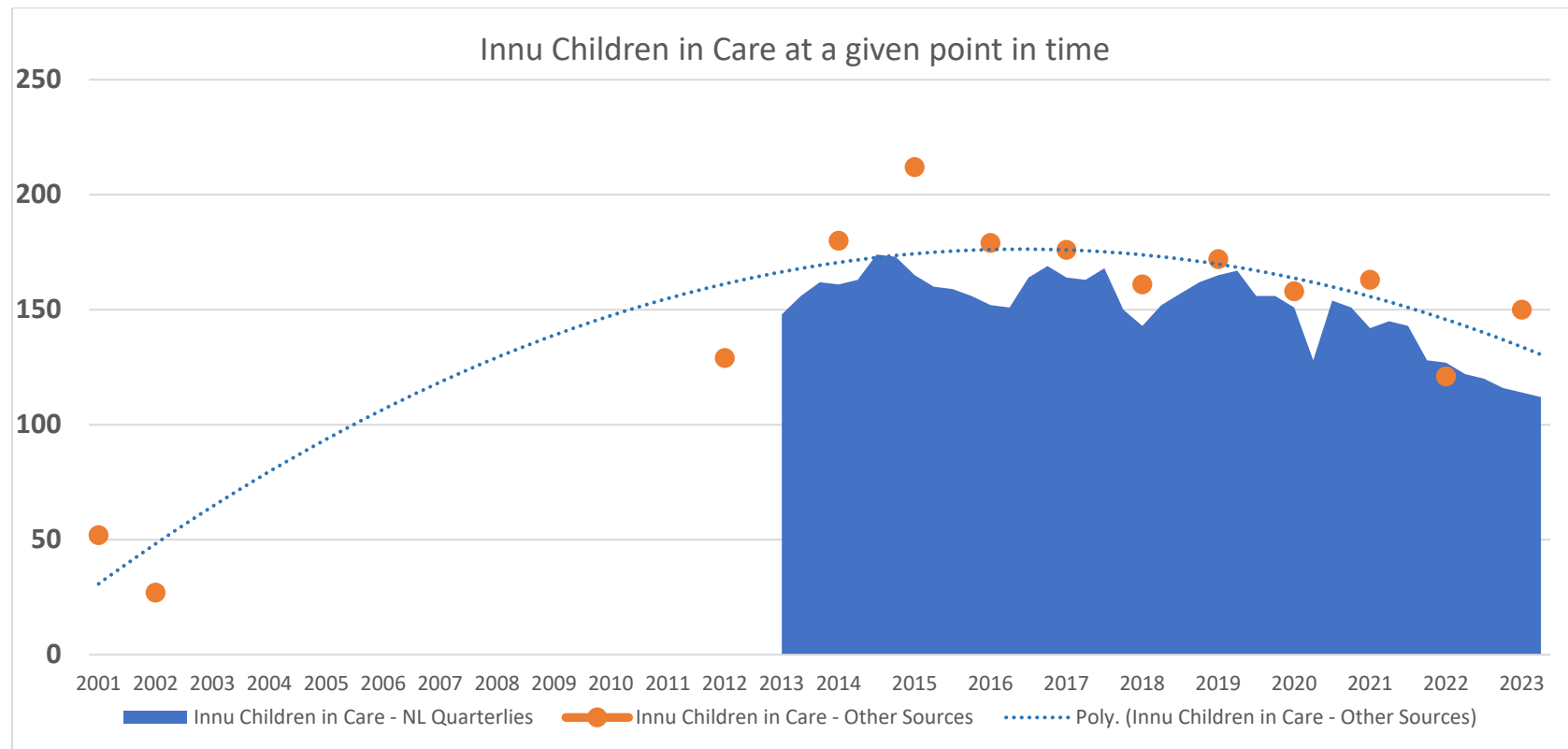
166. The Inquiry was only able to get expert analysis of statistics from 2018 to 2025. The Province moved to its current database provider in 2018 and consistent data was only available from that point onwards in a digital format that the researchers could use.³⁶⁷ Statistics prior to 2018 were originally kept in a different provincial database since approximately the year 2000. Although that data was migrated to the current provincial database, a frustrating gap in data has remained for purposes of this Inquiry. The Province provided some Innu data dating from 2013-2023 (contained in its Quarterly Reports) but has not provided this Inquiry any pre-2013 data on its services to Innu children and families.
167. We have done our best to identify relevant, reliable references to such data in written Inquiry documents such as reports and presentations. This identified some data back to 2012, and for 2001-2002, allowing for a sense of how the numbers in care increased in that time frame. However, a decade gap in actual data remains from 2002-2012.

³⁶⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Gabriel Rich, April 19, 2023, p. 15, and Formal Hearing Testimony of Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, p. 9.

³⁶⁷ Exhibit P-458, p. 12, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, April 30, 2026, by Barbara Fallon & Tara Black.

168. The chart below shows the number of Innu children in care at a given point in time, compiled from the Province's Quarterly Reports, and additional data references contained in Inquiry documents, including sources compiled by Michael Batchelor and others. Where more than one data source was applicable for a given year, an average was used for that year.

Chart 1: How Many Innu Children Were in Care at a Given Point in Time? ³⁶⁸



³⁶⁸ Source for NL Quarterlies shown in blue: ICC-9164 NL Quarterly Reports trends; Sources for points shown in orange, for Chart 2 (see below) or for both: Exhibits P-168, P-344, P-199, C-025, C-026, C-027, C-028, C-023, C-024, C-039, C-002, C-030, C-041, C-042, C-031, C-008, C-009, C-038, C-032, C-033, C-034, C-035, C-012, C-013, C-014, C-015, C-016, C-017, C-018, C-019, C-020, C-021, C-022, C-029, C-043, C-045, C-010, C-036, C-006, C-005, C-037, C-007, C-011, C-001, C-003, C-004, C-040, P-080, P-130. Where there were multiple sources available for a given year, the source that appeared to be most reliable was used. If multiple reliable sources were available for the same year, an average was used. We wish to recognize the work of Michael Batchelor, whose report and testimony, Exhibit P-459, March 30, 2026, assisted with this chart.

169. A large number of Innu children have been apprehended from their parents or caregivers under provincial authority, and placed into provincial care. The number of Innu children in that position at any given time increased significantly from the 2000s through to the mid 2010s, and then began to decrease.

A closer look at the period of escalation

170. In 2002, when SIFN and MIFN became bands, Canada first started directly funding the “maintenance” (per diem) costs for Innu children to go into care under bilateral ISC-NL funding agreements specifically for child and family services. At that time, initially, the number of Innu children in care was significant, but much lower than it eventually became.

171. A decade later, the number of Innu children in care had multiplied several times over. By the time available data picks up, we see that the number of Innu children in care was high and escalating rapidly in the early 2010s.

172. As shown in Chart 1 above, the peak came in approximately 2014 or 2015. The peak number shown in NL’s Quarterly Reports was 174 in September 2014,³⁶⁹ while the highest recorded in other reliable sources was 212 as of June 2015.³⁷⁰

173. Why did the number of Innu children in care escalate? In our view, the increase in Innu children in care in the period leading up to 2014-2015 is best explained by the following factors:

- a. Continuing inter-generational trauma, and not enough support to help address and heal that trauma;
- b. The availability of *unlimited* federal funding to subsidize the placement of Innu children into care, coupled with *limited* funding for other provincial child protection operations (e.g. staff), and *no* funding for prevention services; and
- c. Lack of provincial collaboration with Innu service providers.

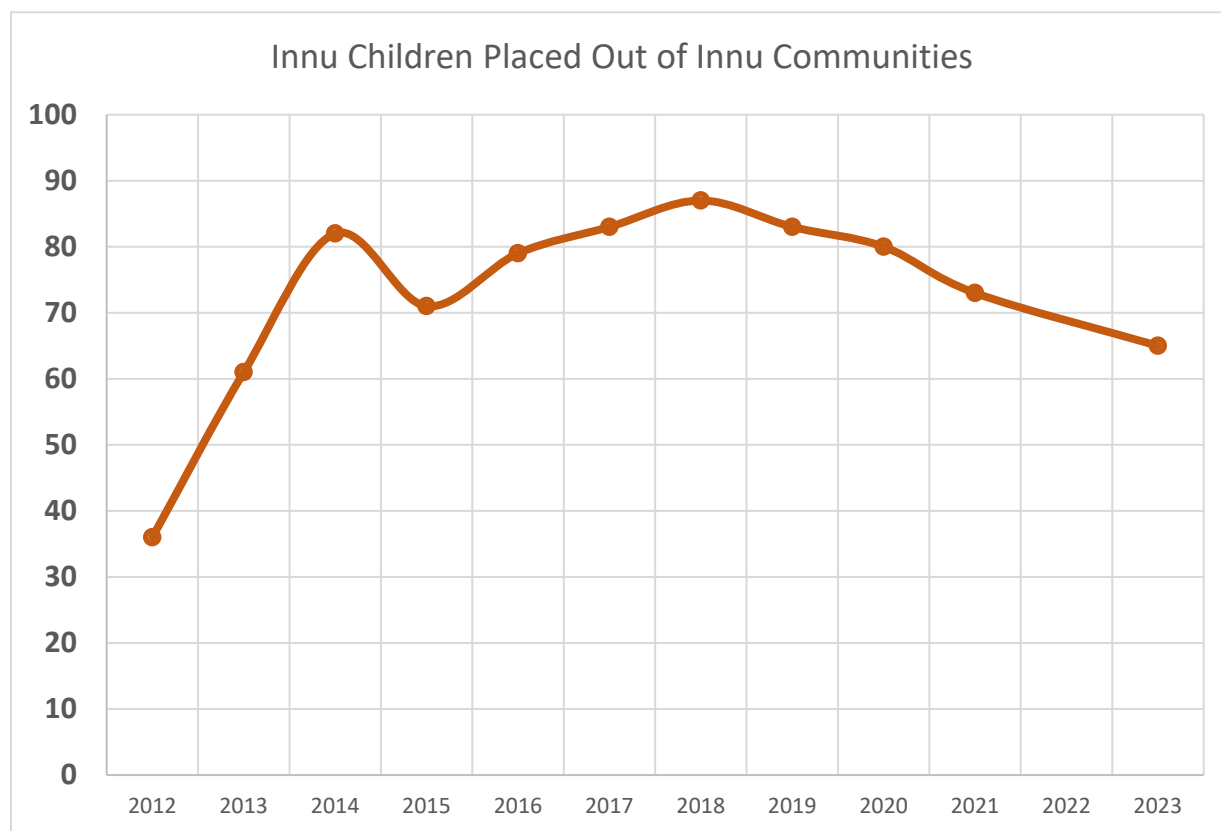
174. Of the Innu children taken into provincial care, a number of them were sent out of the Innu communities. This crucial issue was explored through Innu testimonies in some detail above, and had an enormous personal impact on Innu children, families, and communities.

³⁶⁹ C-052, p. 4, *Program Statistics - Child Protection and In-Care (Quarter 2 2014/2015)*.

³⁷⁰ Exhibit P-344, pp. 5-6, *Keeping Innu Children Closer to Home: A Framework to Create New Placement Opportunities in the Labrador Innu Communities* (2016). It contains detailed Innu-specific statistics as of 2015.

175. In terms of the numbers, data were not available for all years, but do show a rapidly increasing and then slowly decreasing trend in relation to out-of-community placement of Innu children.

Chart 2: How Many Innu Children Were Placed Outside the Innu Communities? ³⁷¹



176. As of the last available data, the number of Innu children placed outside the Innu communities still remains a challenge. There are still dozens of Innu children in out-of-community placements.
177. At times, some of these children have been sent out-of-province. This experience was described further in several testimonies (see above), and was also a feature of 5 of the 6 investigations this Inquiry conducted at the request of the families of youth who died.

³⁷¹ See the list of “other sources” compiled for Chart 1. While not every document cited there was used for this chart, this was not separately tracked.

178. It appears that the use of out-of-province placements likely peaked in the early 2010s as well. A document showing a review of Innu out-of-province placement numbers showed 31 such placements in 2012, decreasing from there down to 13 as of 2017.³⁷²

A closer look at the period of improvement

179. The decrease shows many bumps in the road, but the decreasing trend since 2014/15 is clear. It has accumulated to a decrease of 36% based on the quarterly reports (a consistent source). In other words, the total number of Innu children in care has decreased by about a third in the last decade.
180. It is worth noting that the Innu child population overall has continued to *increase* over the last decade.³⁷³ To see such a dramatic decrease in Innu children in care during the same period shows that there has been even more progress than the raw numbers alone would suggest.
181. What led to this improvement? A number of things began to change, starting in 2014-2017 and continuing from there, as shown briefly in the timeline above and explored further throughout these submissions. This includes:
- a. Improved collaboration between the Province and Innu service providers, first with the creation of the Working Relationship Agreement, negotiated in 2014-2015, and later replaced by the Protocol Agreement; and
 - b. The launch of Innu Prevention Services starting from 2017, supported by the start of federal prevention funding, including the added role of Innu Representatives which started from 2019.
182. Above, we noted a third factor that we believe drove high numbers of Innu children into care, inter-generational trauma. This remains very challenging. Levels of Innu inter-generational trauma remain high. Support to alleviate that trauma remains insufficient.
183. This trauma is not just flowing from the past, it also continues to be generated from recent actions. Consider, for example, the hundreds of Innu children in care in the 2010s, many of which had negative experiences as this Inquiry has heard. They are now coming of age and becoming parents, and their trauma remains significant.

³⁷² Exhibit C-032, p. 21, *Materials from the CYFS Committee*, June 7, 2017.

³⁷³ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Michael Batchelor, March 30, 2026; William English, March 26, 2026, pp. 164-165; Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 122, February 18, 2025, pp. 54; and Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2024, pp. 23-24.

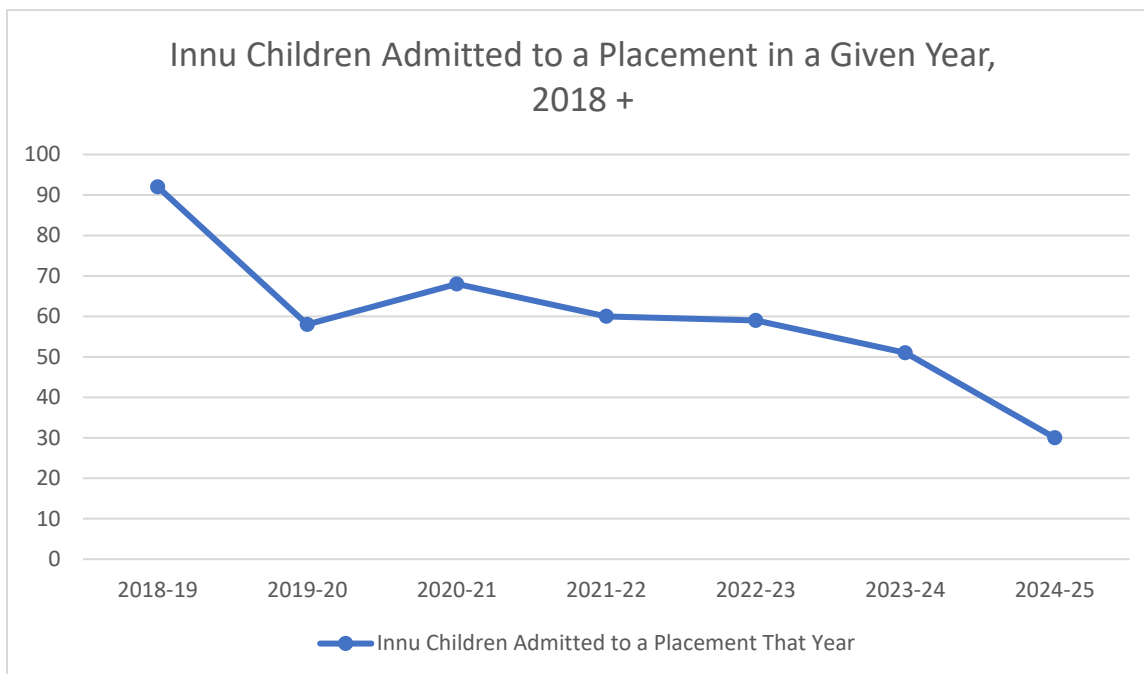
184. Nevertheless, Innu Prevention Services and higher levels of Innu-NL cooperation have had a significant positive impact.
185. The report of Dr. Barbara Fallon and Dr. Tara Black analyzed data from the provincial database, which was only available from 2018-19 onwards. Instead of looking at a point in time, they use different metrics, including some that look at all of the children who experienced a care placement in a given year. It is consistent with the data above, in that it shows a decreasing trend in the number of children in care over the time period 2018-19 to 2024-25.³⁷⁴
186. Dr. Fallon and Dr. Black's research documented that there are also changes in the approaches to how child protection is occurring. For example, in 2018-19, if an Innu family was subject to an investigation, it was very likely that those children would be taken into care or other out-of-home placement. Back then, nearly three quarters of the time (71.3% of the time), an investigation of an Innu family led to a child being admitted and going into a placement.³⁷⁵
187. In the 6 years since then, this rate of admission has dropped by 82%. In the most recent year, only 12.9% of investigations led to a child going into a placement.³⁷⁶
188. As a result, it is unsurprising that the absolute numbers of children going into some form of placement each year have gone way down too, as shown in this chart, created from information in Table 4 of Dr. Fallon and Dr. Black's report:

³⁷⁴ See e.g. Exhibit P-458, Table 5, p. 28-29, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, April 30, 2026 by Barbara Fallon & Tara Black . Note that the categories foster care, group care, and other as shown in Table 5 relate to formal "in care" status, i.e. in provincial care under provincial legislation. This chart also shows kinship care, which is not considered to be "in care" with the province under their legislation (it is legally considered by NL to be a voluntary arrangement between the parents and caregiver), despite some provincial funding and some provincial involvement in those placements within what they call the Protective Intervention Program.

³⁷⁵ Exhibit P-458, Table 4, p. 26-27, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, April 30, 2026, by Barbara Fallon & Tara Black.

³⁷⁶ Exhibit P-458, Table 4, p. 26-27, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, April 30, 2026, by Barbara Fallon & Tara Black.

Chart 3: Admissions to a Placement Per Year ³⁷⁷



189. This fits with the experience of Innu Prevention Services, which has observed that the work of Innu prevention along with advocacy by Innu Representatives has dramatically cut down the numbers of Innu children who need to leave their homes.
190. When they do leave home, they more often do so now under different arrangements than used to be the case.

More Often in Kinship Care

- a. Kinship care has become more commonly used. Kinship care means care within the extended family or Innu community that occurs with the *consent* of the parent, *and* with provincial financial support and oversight. Dr. Fallon and Dr. Black note that the percentage of placement days that are in kinship placements has increased from 57% to 67% since 2018-19.³⁷⁸ Kinship has always been used to an extent. Years ago, it was known as “Child Welfare Allowance”. But in the last few years, the proportion of cases using kinship

³⁷⁷ Exhibit P-458, Table 4, p. 26-27, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, April 30, 2026, by Barbara Fallon & Tara Black. This includes both formal “in care” placements in provincial care as well as kinship placements in which the province was involved which are tracked through the PIP program.

³⁷⁸ Exhibit P-458, Table 5, p. 30. *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, April 30, 2026, by Barbara Fallon & Tara Black.

care has increased, while the proportion using formal provincial care has declined.

- b. Again, our view is that this reflects the work of Innu Prevention Services, including Innu Representatives, who have been able to work successfully in many cases with both parents and provincial child protection, to create arrangements that everyone agrees to. This helps avoid the need for contentious court proceedings. Using kinship arrangements increases the empowerment of Innu parents and caregivers within the dynamic of a placement, and decreases (to an extent) the role of provincial child protection, though it still has a role.

Less Likely To Be Out of Community

- c. Innu children in care are also less likely to be placed out of the Innu communities or out of province than they used to be, as shown above (See Chart 2 and surrounding discussion).
- d. We believe this reflects Innu work from Innu Prevention Services (similar to above) as well as the work of the Innu placement facilities initiative (5 Placement Plan).
- e. The 5 staffed Innu placement homes have prevented over 120 children from being removed from the Innu communities as of mid-2025.³⁷⁹ This has made a really important difference in the lives of these children. The placement homes continue to play a critical role in maintaining and building on progress to date.

³⁷⁹ Exhibit P-441, p. 38, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

PART III – SPECIFIC ISSUES IN THE SYSTEM

Section Overview

191. Canada's primary role in Innu child protection has been as a funder. Today, it funds services for the Innu that are delivered through the Province and through Innu prevention services. The funding to the Province took shape more clearly in 2002 when the Innu First Nations became bands under the *Indian Act*. At that time, Canada's standard funding program for First Nations child and family services kicked in, which provided uncapped funding for children in care, and limited funding for basic operations. Prevention funding only came after years of advocacy from the Innu, and after a finding by a human rights tribunal that Canada's funding model was discriminatory. Some funding was added for Innu Representative services (advocacy for families interacting with child protection), and youth leaving care (which Canada calls Post-Majority Services and Supports). Over time, Canada has improved its funding programs and approaches to Innu child protection services. However, there is still much more to do to ensure that child protection funding is responsive to the actual needs of Innu children.
192. The Province has been providing child protection services to the Innu since the late 1970s, and continues to do so. The Province's services have been, and remain, protection-driven and reactive; for a while, a "family services" component provided some minimal support to struggling families, but that program was eliminated in the move to the 2010 legislation, consolidating a strict approach with a notable absence of prevention programming, funding or mandate. Rounds of legislative and administrative restructuring of provincial child protection services have not yielded improved outcomes. Key persistent issues include insufficient funding and staffing.
193. The high numbers of Innu children that were taken away from their homes, as noted above, is not only the result of inter-generational trauma, though that is significant. It is also a predictable structural consequence of federal and provincial systems set up mainly to remove Innu children but not prevent or resolve the circumstances that led to removal, nor to help them reintegrate upon their return.
194. The shortcomings in the funding, staffing and programming for child and family services provided to the Innu have long been known by Canada and the Province. Systemic failures were regularly raised by Innu, government staff, and outside reports without meaningful action to remedy problems.
195. In recent years, Innu advocacy has led to changes. There are new agreements in place for provincial and Innu collaboration. There is increased federal funding for prevention

and related services. And the Innu are now developing their own child and family services law, which is explored more in Section IV. However, the shift to an Innu system will take time, and support. There are a number of actions that Canada and NL can and must take now, to create real change for Innu families and improve outcomes for Innu children.

Federal and Provincial Roles, Responsibilities, and Failings

(i) Shortcomings in Federal and Provincial Funding

196. Both Canada and the Province are involved in funding essential services. While the federal government has, over time, taken on a greater role (both with the Innu and with First Nations across Canada), there is no hard line as between federal and provincial responsibility when it comes to funding services. They both have a role.

197. As Professor Donald McRae found in his 2021 report (discussed further below):

The federal and provincial governments also have an obligation to ensure substantive equality in access to basic services and the essentials of life, such as healthcare, housing, education, policing and child and family services, including special measures to address and overcome the legacy of historic wrongs, such as the half century which the Innu were denied access to federal services and benefits under the *Indian Act*.³⁸⁰

198. Both governments have obligations to treat the Innu fairly whenever they fund or deliver services. That includes consideration of substantive equality, meaning, taking into account real Innu needs, including differences related to Innu-aitun language, remoteness, and the legacy of historic disadvantage.³⁸¹

Failure to provide equitable funding for a variety of Innu services

199. Canada and the Province did not formally address the status of Innu or other Indigenous peoples when Newfoundland and Labrador entered Confederation in 1949.³⁸² Canada chose to keep the Innu outside the *Indian Act*, without consultation,

³⁸⁰ *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donlad McRae, p. 33.

³⁸¹ *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al v Attorney General of Canada (for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)*, 2016 CHRT 2, at paras 402-403.

³⁸² Exhibit P-031, p. 6, *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donlad McRae.

and did not provide alternative means to address their needs. Instead, “for a period of almost a half century, Innu communities and individuals were denied access to many of the basic services and benefits provided to other First Nations.”³⁸³ This affected many areas, including health, addictions, education, housing, and others.

200. These “other” areas are absolutely crucial to the picture of child and family services. Child and family services cannot be viewed in isolation. Trauma related to the impacts of colonization has soaked into the Innu communities. Recovery from that trauma is multi-faceted. It affects all areas of life – physical health, emotional and psychological health, patterns of distress including substance use/addictions and crime rates, educational needs and outcomes, poverty, economy, housing, and more.³⁸⁴
201. The ability of the Innu communities to recover and rebuild a healthy society in which children are thriving is dependent on strong, flexible supports in all of these areas. That has not been present, either in the past, or today.
202. Canada’s neglectful treatment of the Innu in the first few decades after Confederation was documented by law Professor Donald McRae in a 1993 Report prepared for the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Professor McRae concluded that Canada had breached its constitutional responsibilities and fiduciary duties to the Innu, which had a significant detrimental impact on Innu well-being.³⁸⁵
203. Professor McRae noted in his Follow-up Reports to the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2002 and 2021 that Canada’s subsequent acknowledgement of responsibility led to gradual changes. But the path to funding for services remained slow and contested.
204. Professor McRae had not recommended that the Innu be forced to go under the *Indian Act*; rather, he had encouraged that they have access to equal services and supports, and that their land claim and self-government agreement negotiations move forward more quickly. However, rights-based negotiations took time (they are still ongoing), and equal access to services did not result in the meantime. In March 1997 the federal government passed an Order in Council stating that the Innu would be treated on the same basis as though they were under the *Indian Act*, with access to comparable funding.³⁸⁶ However, Professor McRae found, in his 2002 report, that the federal

³⁸³ Exhibit P-031, p. 6, *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donlad McRae.

³⁸⁴ See for example, Exhibit P-436, p. 7, *Direct and Multigenerational Trauma: A contributing factor to high rates of child welfare involvement among Innu and other First Nation’s*, October 2025, by Amy Bombay.

³⁸⁵ Exhibit P-031, p. 6, *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, 2021, by Donlad McRae.

³⁸⁶ Exhibit P-031, p. 40, *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donlad McRae.

government was unable to meaningfully operationalize such an approach. The Innu therefore decided, in 1999, to come under the *Indian Act*.³⁸⁷ That took effect in 2002.

205. As part of the transition to band status, the federal government increased its funding. One component of that, in the health sector, was the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHHS). LICHHS was a transitional measure that helped bridge the gap between the prior state of neglect and more standardized federal funding to First Nations.³⁸⁸ After a few years, Innu funding came under regular federal funding streams.
206. Yet funding for a variety of services that link to child and family services still has serious problems.
207. It is inadequate in amount, in most if not all areas. Funding amounts are typically tied to the funding arbitrarily determined to be available, and from there typically divided by formulas. They are rarely connected to realistic assessments of needs. In his experience working for ISC, Steve Joudry described federal programs as designed around numbers, while actual need was treated as an afterthought.³⁸⁹
208. To take just one example, federal funding for Innu education was at first based on a comparison to provincial funding, then a purely federal formula, and then again based on a comparison to provincial funding. It has never been based on an assessment of the needs of Innu children, based on their identity, language, trauma, and social reality. MTIE, the Innu school board, has been trying to get equitable funding tied to Innu needs for years, without success.³⁹⁰
209. Gaps have been documented in many other areas too; for example Professor Donald McRae's 2021 report indicated critical gaps in mental and physical health care, addictions, shelters for women and children fleeing violence, housing, education, policing, community safety, justice system diversion and healing for offenders, employment support, and child care – in addition to child and family services.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Exhibit P-030, p. 21 (PDF), *Report on the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Treatment of the Innu of Labrador by the Government of Canada*, March 26, 2002, by Donald McRae and Constance Backhouse, 2002.

³⁸⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, September 12, 2025, pp. 1-3.

³⁸⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, July 15, 2025, pp. 24-26.

³⁹⁰ Exhibit P-441, pp. 48-49, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al. see also Exhibit P-031, pp. 65-70, *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donlad McRae.

³⁹¹ Exhibit P-031, p. 54-76, *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donlad McRae.

210. The quantity of support remains out of scale with needs. In addition, the way in which support is provided creates additional barriers.
211. Funding is usually inflexible. It is based on narrowly defined categories, with pre-determined rules. Innu governments and their organizations are forced to spend a great deal of time chasing potential opportunities and trying to make their needs fit into the available boxes (along with writing the necessary applications). Innu governments have very little leeway to be responsive to Innu priorities, or to be creative in designing Innu-specific solutions.³⁹²
212. It is also, in many cases, short-term. With some exceptions, many areas of funding expire after a few years. For example, both SIFN and MIFN built up programming recently related to youth, e.g. creating positive community programming for children and youth. This type of programming was noted by investigators Kenn Richard and Tara Petti as critical for youth well-being, and important to reduce child protection services involvement for older children and youth in crisis.³⁹³ The funding for this came from a youth crime prevention fund, but was limited to five years. Just as these programs ramped up, they had to wind down.³⁹⁴

Funding in child and family services was inadequate and incentivized removals

213. Both Canada and the Province have been involved in funding Innu child and family services, with Canada having taken on the greater role. But this federal funding was structured in a way that encouraged the removal of Innu children from their communities.
214. Once the Innu First Nations became Bands under the *Indian Act* in 2002, Canada entered into updated bilateral funding agreements with the Province to fund services for the Innu (there were predecessor funding agreements pre-*Indian Act* registration). As of 2002, this included a bilateral agreement specifically dedicated to funding Innu child and family services.³⁹⁵

³⁹² Formal Hearing Testimonies of Helen Aster, January 24, 2024, pp. 4-6; Steve Joudry September 12, 2025, p. 13; Exhibit P-441, pp. 48-49, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025.

³⁹³ Exhibit P-453, p. 12, *Investigator's Report*; Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 2026, pp. 97-100.

³⁹⁴ Exhibit P-441, p. 28, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

³⁹⁵ See Exhibits P-379, 2002; P-380, 2003; P-381, 2003; P-382, 2003; P-383, 2006; P-384, 2005; P-385, 2006; P-386, 2007; P-387, 2008; P-388, 2009; P-389, 2010; P-390, 2011; P-391, 2012; P-392, 2013; P-393, 2015; P-394, 2016; P-395, 2017; P-396, 2018; P-397, 2019; P-398, 2020; P-399, 2021; P-401, 2022.

215. Canada’s funding model in this period up to 2016 was described by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in its 2016 merits decision in *Caring Society*. If a child went into care, the daily “per diem” costs of keeping that child in care, known as “maintenance” costs, would be reimbursed at their actual cost. Beyond that, the agreements provided pre-determined funding for basic operations, which helped to partially sustain the costs of child protection social workers and related offices.³⁹⁶
216. Notably, there was no federal funding for prevention services or supports for families, to help avoid the need for apprehension of children or promote reunification. In contrast, when Innu children were taken into care, service providers had access to uncapped federal funding. As a result, the funding structure incentivised removal as the means to obtain supports for Innu children in need.
217. As Germaine Benuen, Executive Director of the Innu Round Table Secretariat, put it: “the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has received unlimited federal funding to take our children from our communities and from their families. We couldn’t even get any money to prevent that from happening.”³⁹⁷
218. Steve Joudry, who gave evidence about his time working for the federal government in funding services in the Atlantic Region, observed that federal officials saw child protection cases skyrocketing in First Nations communities across the Atlantic Region and knew that what they were doing was not working.³⁹⁸ Yet, they persisted.
219. After 2016, federal funding shifted somewhat in the wake of the finding by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal that Canada was discriminating against First Nations children through its funding model in child and family services. Those decisions combined with sustained Innu advocacy led to the start of prevention funding for the Innu, and the creation of Innu Prevention Services delivered by the Innu Round Table Secretariat (IRTS) in both Innu communities.
220. This initial prevention funding in 2016 was “not much.”³⁹⁹ Subsequent increases in funding have improved Innu prevention services, and have added some funds for Innu Representatives (which Canada calls First Nations Representative Services) and for

³⁹⁶ *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al v Attorney General of Canada (for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)*, 2016 CHRT 2, at paras 125-126, 128; See also Formal Hearing Testimony of Molly Churhill, September 8, 2025; Exhibit P-031, p. 62, *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donlad McRae and also Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, July 15, 2025, pp. 12, 14–15.

³⁹⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, December 1, 2025, pp. 9–11.

³⁹⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, July 15, 2025, pp. 28-29.

³⁹⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, February 14, 2023, pp. 21–22.

services for youth leaving care (which Canada calls Post-Majority Services and Supports). But there are still a number of unmet needs.

221. Capital infrastructure is just starting to catch up, and many needs have been identified that have not yet been realized. This includes office and program spaces, transitional housing for youth leaving care, accommodations to facilitate visits and community connection for children in care outside the communities, supportive housing that facilitates families to stay together or reunite, staff accommodations, and adequate placement facility buildings in both communities.⁴⁰⁰
222. Services for Innu youth leaving care are just beginning to develop. Some progress started around 2019, when the Province changed its legislation and policies in order to extend care to age 18, and improve its Youth Services program after youth leave care. However, most Innu youth who have been in care do not trust the Province, and frequently reject provincial services.⁴⁰¹ In 2022, Canada first started to offer funding in Post-Majority Services and Supports; initially the Innu were too overwhelmed with building prevention services to take up that opportunity, and the Province was not willing to expand its role beyond its own program. In the last two years, IRTS has started building out a PMSS-funded service for youth leaving care. It is still in very early stages.⁴⁰² Given how many Innu children have been taken into care, the number of potentially eligible youth is very high. Innu staff report that, in consultation with the Province, they have identified up to 200 eligible youth.⁴⁰³
223. At this time, funding is only available on the basis of Innu who live on reserve. Innu who live off reserve are not taken into account in federal funding, and there is no provincial funding to the Innu in child and family services.
224. Many areas within prevention itself are also just starting to build, and will require much greater support. This includes services to support families in their recovery from trauma, addictions and to meet essential healing needs, including both Nutshimit-based and community-based programming; intensive in-home supports to promote better reunification and keep more children safely at home; and much more.⁴⁰⁴ Many

⁴⁰⁰ Exhibit P-441, pp. 18-19, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

⁴⁰¹ Exhibit P-444, p. 11, *Submission for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, this is shown, for example, in the cases of several Inquiry investigations. It is reported by Innu staff to still be a strong factor.

⁴⁰² Exhibit P-441, p. 9, *Report on the Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025; Formal Hearing Testimony of Amanda Rich, December 1, 2025, p. 18.

⁴⁰³ Exhibit P-448, p. 21, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System (Draft Report)*, March 5, 2026, by Barbara Fallon and Tara Black

⁴⁰⁴ Exhibit P-441, pp. 33-34, *Report on the Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025; Formal Hearing Testimonies of

service offerings are just at the beginning stages of starting to build up and develop, and need much greater support.

(ii) The Province Has Not Set Up Its System To Succeed

225. Despite cycles of legislative change and organizational restructuring, the provincial system has failed to keep Innu children safe, and in many cases, has caused Innu children harm.

A “policing” approach that does not match Innu needs or Innu-aitun

226. The provincial system is primarily focused on assessing risk to children by parents, and reacting to that risk. This approach was amplified by the Turner review (2006 reports), and the introduction of the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* in 2011.⁴⁰⁵

227. The legislation and structure of the provincial program is reactive. Social workers are not equipped to design or deliver programming, or to intervene early to support parents, a family, or the whole community in raising children and preventing child protection issues from escalating. Instead, social workers serve “a policing function”⁴⁰⁶ – interventions occur when a family is in crisis, and court-ordered removal of children has often resulted.

228. There are several problems with the policing approach to child protection. It places undue blame on parents and ignores the larger social issues or “root causes” that parents struggle with when raising children, which are often beyond their immediate control. This fosters an adversarial and paternalistic rather than collaborative approach with parents.⁴⁰⁷ It misses opportunities to support children by supporting the actual child themselves (e.g. with services they require), or with the services their

Amanda Rich, December 1, 2025, pp. 6, 18, 23-24; Helen Aster January 23, 2024, pp. 20-23 and Kathleen Benuen, February 16, 2023, pp. 31-33.

⁴⁰⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p 95 (“any kind of focus on prevention was completely gone...The legislation is about protecting.”); see also generally pp. 92-95; Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, p. 28 (“But CYFS was structured in such a way that it’s only when the concern came in the form of a child protection report...There was no prevention. ...when you’re only coming at it at the point there’s a crisis, chances are you are not going to be very effective.”); Formal Hearing Testimony of Michelle Shallow, March 19, 2025, p. 27 (“The focus was on providing and ensuring protection of children who were deemed to be at risk of abuse or neglect”); Formal Hearing Testimony of Wanda Lundrigan, March 20, 2025, p. 32 (“we were crisis-driven. We were protection-driven. We were identifying situations too late. ... Prevention was way down on the list of that mandate.”).

⁴⁰⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrews, February 17, 2025, p. 97, lines 6-9.

⁴⁰⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony Ken Barter, October 2, 2025, p. 3; Exhibit P-438, p.51, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, January 1, 2025, by Ken Barter.

families or communities require to heal. It lacks meaningful regard for Innu ways of life, values, and continuing experiences with colonialism.

229. It also looks narrowly for risk in one place – the parental home – and fails to adequately appreciate the risks that result from well-meaning intervention. As detailed above, Innu children have often not been safe when the system has removed them from the care of their parents, and especially when removed from their communities (see the section above on Innu Experience – The Harms of Removing Innu Children from Innu Communities). The six cases of Innu youth who lost their lives, as this Inquiry has examined, provide examples of just how tragic these risks can become. Countless more cases show these risks transpiring among people who have managed to survive, despite the odds, as many Innu testimonies to this Inquiry showed. The Province’s approach is not designed to adequately consider how removing Innu children from their communities could be very unsafe and traumatizing.⁴⁰⁸
230. Insufficient staffing, explored further below, interacts with this narrowly-focused approach. Social workers and community workers who are overburdened do not have capacity to intervene early. When intervening reactively, at such a late stage, sustainable options to address child protection issues are much more limited.
231. The emphasis on risk links to the Province’s bureaucratic approach to child protection. The Province implements rigid policies and tools to achieve “consistency in investigations and decision-making so interventions with children and families are defensible” and thus (in its view) more protected against legal liability.⁴⁰⁹
232. Such a defensive compliance culture prevents social workers from exercising the professional discretion and creativity necessary to help families and adapt to local contexts.⁴¹⁰ As Jack Penashue testified, provincial social workers in the Innu

⁴⁰⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, p. 21, lines 6-18 (“taking children into case and placing them out of the community, on the one hand, that could be viewed as a safe situation for that child; but on the other hand, how do you assess the risk that’s associated with loss of connection, loss of relationship to people who may only speak your first language. Loss of place, loss of identity...all of those things are also about the safety, the safe development of an individual child’s identity”); Formal Hearing Testimony of Wanda Lundrigan, March 20, 2025, pp. 41-42 (“The depth of having...removed them from a culture that is the essence to their being wasn’t...considered as seriously or as much as it should have been”).

⁴⁰⁹ Exhibit P-438, p. 51, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Cation in the interests of the health, well-being and protection of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador, 2025*, by Ken Barter; Formal Hearing Testimony of Ken Barter, December 3, 2025, p. 11 (“they created a legislation to serve the organization, not to serve the parents and the kids and the families and communities”). Note that in reality, this approach does not necessarily serve as an effective shield against liability, if it in fact perpetuates harm.

⁴¹⁰ See for instance Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 12-14 (example of situation where policy would have required removal of a child, but upon having an open conversation with the family, he was able to find a solution where the child could remain at home with the mother); Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 127-128 (example of legislation preventing social workers

communities were primarily concerned with their own liability. He described the situation as the system being “more focused on protecting social workers than protecting families.”⁴¹¹ Both Jack Penashue and Lyla Andrew described a system too rigid to allow workers to meaningfully adapt services to Innu-aitun or needs.⁴¹²

233. The criteria for assessing “risk” in child protection were created for and based on the experiences of the non-Innu settler population in Newfoundland and Labrador. The underlying assumption was that “only a certain percentage of the population would ever require Child Protection Services”.⁴¹³ This approach ignores the unique context of Innu communities, who continue to face the impacts of colonialism and inter-generational trauma. The issues are compounded by the fact that training for staff is “one-size-fits-all” and there is no variation in terms of region or community.⁴¹⁴
234. As a result, effectively “all [Innu] households would be at [deemed] risk based on the fact of this collective trauma of colonization”.⁴¹⁵ It pathologizes Innu parents, rather than acknowledging the structural effects of colonialism.⁴¹⁶ The Province’s risk assessment “was, at the outset, setting [the Innu] up.”⁴¹⁷
235. The failure of this approach is visible during the response to the elevated rates of gas sniffing among Innu youth in the early 2000s.⁴¹⁸ Lyla Andrew testified that, at that time, CYFS had no real options for parents seeking help other than to remove children: in

from taking proactive steps to assist a first-time mother, if they declined working with the provincial child protection system) and pp. 130-133 (example of standardized requirement for having one bedroom for each child in a foster home was much less relevant for Innu communities); Exhibit P-438, pp. 65-66, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter; Formal Hearing Testimony of Ken Barter, Dec 3, 2025, p. 3 (“And there have been incidents, particularly since the Zachary Turner death, where social workers have been on record to say they are afraid. They were afraid to make decisions...because of not getting the support that they require, not having the professional discretion and autonomy to really act in the best interest of the families that they’re working with”).

⁴¹¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 25, 2024, pp. 10, 14–15; Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 21.

⁴¹² Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 1 and Lyla Andrew, June 7, 2024, pp. 5-6.

⁴¹³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, p. 5, lines 8-9.

⁴¹⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Michelle Shallow, March 19, 2025, p. 18, lines 7-24.

⁴¹⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, p. 16 (this is Caitlin’s wording but still think its relevant; see generally 12-17).

⁴¹⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, p. 19; see also Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, June 7, 2024, p. 3 (“the child welfare system focuses on distress in individual families, it doesn’t focus on an entire community which is in distress”)

⁴¹⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, p. 5, line 18.

⁴¹⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, April 8, 2025, p 8.

particular, the gas-sniffing removals of that era were carried out without the Province preparing or supporting the workers or the families.⁴¹⁹

236. The Province's idea of what counts as risk is based on Eurocentric values and expectations, with a focus on an individual parent's ability to care for a child. This overlooks the support that an Innu child and parents could get from their wider community.⁴²⁰ The Innu approach to child rearing is communal and collective. Innu parents often rely on extended family members and other community members for support. It also overlooks the support the child's Innu community *should* get from government partners; the injustice in which the risk takes place is ignored.
237. The appropriate assessment of Innu child protection needs cannot be adequately understood or addressed through the individualized lens of "risk", nor traced solely to parenting choices. Rather, it must be understood in the historical context of colonialism, and its systemic impacts on the Innu. So, too, must the response.

Failed service delivery model

238. The provincial child protection system is notoriously struggling with recruitment and retention of social workers, "heavy workloads" and high staff turnover.⁴²¹ In Natuashish, the Province historically "could not keep staff".⁴²² Insufficient staffing was discussed in numerous Inquiry documents from across many time periods.⁴²³
239. In response, the Province developed a rotational staffing model for the Innu communities. Under this model, social workers spend about two weeks in community, and two weeks out of community.⁴²⁴
240. This rotational service delivery model to Innu communities is fundamentally flawed. "While this approach may have solved one problem, it created another,"⁴²⁵ found this

⁴¹⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, April 8, 2025, pp. 8–9, 14.

⁴²⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, pp. 8-12.

⁴²¹ Exhibit P-438, p. 54, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Cation in the interests of the health, well-being and protection of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador, 2025*, by Ken Barter.

⁴²² Formal Hearing Testimony of Wanda Lundrigan, March 20, 2025, p. 57, lines 20-24 and p. 58, lines 20-21.

⁴²³ For just a few examples, see e.g. Exhibit P-438, pp. 12, 68, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Cation in the interests of the health, well-being and protection of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador, 2025*, by Ken Barter; Exhibit P-339, p. 88, *Organizational and Operational Review of CYFS*.

⁴²⁴ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Wanda Lundrigan, March 20, 2025, p. 58, lines 3-11 and Germaine Benuen, December 1, 2025, p. 22; Exhibit P-454, p. 24, para 4.28, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴²⁵ Exhibit P-453, p. 8, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

Inquiry's investigation team. It is "another Band-Aid"⁴²⁶ in the Province's own words, not a long-term sustainable solution.

241. Rotations mean limited opportunity for relationship development and integration. These are serious problems in their own right. The even larger problem is that Innu communities are only receiving part-time child protection services. Notably, when a social worker is off the rotation, there is no replacement – there are simply "gaps in service" for periods of two weeks or more.⁴²⁷ It is not a true shift system. It is part-time child protection.
242. Supervisors are, in theory, supposed to be responsible as a back-up for a file when the assigned social worker is gone, but they have other work. They have refused to make decisions or take any action on a file when the assigned social worker is gone.⁴²⁸
243. As a result, when social workers leave the community, "the files can remain untouched for long periods...and this can cause harm to Innu children because of delayed decision-making, a lack of relationships and inconsistent practice", as indicated by Wendy White, then speaking as Assistant Prevention Agency Director and now Acting Prevention Agency Director.⁴²⁹ Former judge William English found that "important opportunities are lost to address parent and child needs such as mental health difficulties, addiction treatment, and child care."⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Wanda Lundrigan, March 20, 2025, p. 58, lines 13-14.

⁴²⁷ Exhibit P-454, p. 20, para 4.29, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English ("notwithstanding the high level of dedication of the social workers involved, this rotational system can give rise to gaps in service"); see also Formal Hearing Testimony of December 1, 2025, p. 22 (Wendy White and Amanda Rich confirming there is no replacement social worker during off-rotation periods, and that "for periods of up to 14 days or more at a time, a child in care does not have that case worker").

⁴²⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, December 1, 2025, p. 22 ("Usually, the supervisor said their social worker is not here, we can't do this, we can't do that until he's back or she's back"); Exhibit P-454, p. 21, para 4.30, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English ("When the responsible social worker familiar to Innu parents and their files is not available, problems can occur. I have been told the situation is sometimes more complex when resident supervisors or social workers are not able or prepared to deal with an issue related to the parents or the children, either because they do not feel it is urgent or they feel only the assigned social worker should make that decision."); see also Formal Hearing Testimony of William English, March 23, 2026, p. 51, lines 1-8 ("So one of the concerns is that what happens when, you know, the responsible social worker is not present or available because they're doing something else...what happens for decision that had to be made in their absence? I suspect that burden falls on someone else who perhaps doesn't feel prepared to do it.")

⁴²⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Wendy White, December 1, 2025, p. 22.

⁴³⁰ Exhibit P-454, para 12.23, p. 57, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

244. It is unethical and irresponsible for the Province to provide child protection services to the Innu on a part-time basis. This cannot continue.
245. There is not a shred of evidence that the rotational model has any basis in standard or acceptable practice. It is directly contrary to previous recommendations in child protection in this Province, which have repeatedly recommended more staffing and lower caseloads, not part-time service that leaves caseloads essentially un-staffed half the time. For example, the Turner Review specifically said, at Recommendation 7.15:
- THAT when a worker responsible for a child entitled to any service under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* is on leave, or absent for whatever reason, another worker must be assigned and the persons responsible for the child in care be informed of the name of that person to ensure constant monitoring of the child's safety and security.⁴³¹
246. Indeed, as indicated by former judge William English in his report for the Inquiry, "it is not the norm in this Province for social work services to be intermittent, remote, or rotational. There is no reason why that should be accepted as the norm for Innu or other communities in Labrador."⁴³²
247. The impacts of the rotational model on relationship building and quality of service are also important. Investigators Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, who have extensive experience with First Nations child and family services across Canada, noted that "[l]ack of service continuity worked against the formation of trusting relationships between Innu clients and their non-Innu helpers". Without this trust, early intervention and collaborative problem solving becomes difficult, particularly given the traumatic history between Innu and state service providers.⁴³³
248. The Province must urgently change the staffing model in the Innu communities, to ensure full-time coverage. It must also do more to promote the use of full-time non-rotational workers living in or near Innu communities. Relatedly, the Province must do more to reduce its vacancy rate for staff serving the Innu communities.
249. At the same time, as part of a longer-term fix, both the Province and Canada should continue to support the Innu efforts to "recruit from within and to educate from within" as indicated by Dr. Ken Barter.⁴³⁴ This should include strong support for the laddered

⁴³¹ Exhibit P-054, p. 140, *Turner Review and Investigation Volume 2*, 2006, by Peter Markesteyn and David C. Day.

⁴³² Exhibit P-454, para 12.23, p. 57, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴³³ Exhibit P-453, p.8, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴³⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Ken Barter, December 3, 2025, p. 28.

community-based social work education program now operated by IRTS in collaboration with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.⁴³⁵ Sustaining such programs on an ongoing basis is key to longer-term success.

250. Finally, the Province should make the simple changes that IRTS has urged to help with service coordination and alignment between provincial and Innu services.⁴³⁶ This includes things like:

- appointing a provincial director responsible for Innu child and family services coordination and the transition to Innu jurisdiction;
- having all Innu children in care come under the administration of the Innu Zone Manager for their home community, rather than the Zone Manager affiliated with the location of their placement; and
- ensuring their legislation supports the implementation of agreements with the Innu.

[Disempowerment of Innu parents/caregivers, and of children/youth](#)

251. Many Innu witnesses spoke about suffering from communication gaps, language barriers, and being tricked and manipulated into things they did not understand. This is wrong. It is important for children, youth, parents and other family members to be heard, to be understood, and to fully understand what is happening, and why.⁴³⁷

252. Indeed, as Kenn Richard and Tara Petti stated in their final Investigator's Report:

A pervasive theme throughout the Investigations is the ever-present disempowerment of Innu parents, caregivers, and youth in decisions that directly affected their lives. All families felt that they were routinely excluded from meaningful participation in case planning, placement decisions, and treatment choices.

...

These practices reflect systemic racism and a fundamental failure to respect Indigenous family autonomy, youth agency, and the inherent rights of Innu people to participate in decisions concerning their children.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Exhibit P-441, pp. 16-17, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

⁴³⁶ See Exhibit P-444, p. 2, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025; and see the Recommendations section below.

⁴³⁷ See e.g. Community Hearing Testimonies of Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 11; Elder Penote Antuan, October 25, 2023, pp. 4-6; Forming Hearing Testimony of Helen Aster, January 23, 2024, p. 26. See also all 6 investigations and related Final Submissions of each family.

⁴³⁸ Exhibit P-453, pp. 6-7, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

253. Empowerment is especially important when trying to address a child or youth's health or behavioural struggles. As much as possible, the child or youth themselves, along with their parents and key caregivers, should be part of medical conversations, included in appointments, and part of the discussion about medication and other treatment. However, the child protection system can cut them off. This is not only frustrating, but it also poses serious additional risks for the child or youth's well-being. Having a loving family member involved, who knows the child's history and background, and who the child trusts, is an enormous asset in navigating any health or mental health situation for a child or youth. Its absence can be a serious risk.⁴³⁹
254. Notably, medical care for Innu that does not have strong communication with Innu may not take into account critical information. This can be very dangerous. A story was told about a young adult who was prescribed addictive drugs when they already had an addiction; they overdosed and died.⁴⁴⁰ A story was told about a baby who died following a breakdown in communication.⁴⁴¹ James Poker's father was unaware his teenage son (still a minor) had been prescribed psychotropic medication when he returned from care; he did not know until he found the pills after James' death.⁴⁴² There are many more examples. Strong communication can save lives.
255. There have been cases where Innu signed papers they did not understand, with devastating life-long consequences. For example, David Penashue recalled a particularly damaging experience where his mother was not properly informed about paperwork she was presented:
- My mom couldn't read and my mom was given a paper to sign. She was told this – this – this is only for temporary. And the – the paper that she – I guess, she signed, you know – was, it was [an] adoption paper.*⁴⁴³
256. Parents and caregivers need information about what is happening with their children and need to be brought into discussions. Parents with children in care have sometimes not been told critical information, such as about: a serious incident that led to their

⁴³⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Kevin Pastiwet, October 23, 2023, pp. 7-8, 12-13, and Pien Gregoire, November 5, 2024, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴⁰ Community Hearing Testimony of Ruby Tshakapesh, October 26, 2023, p. 16.

⁴⁴¹ Community Hearing Testimony Mani Kateri (Mary Catherine Rich), November 29, 2023, p. 3.

⁴⁴² Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of James Poker, p. 11.

⁴⁴³ Community Hearing Testimony of David Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 5.

child's hospitalization,⁴⁴⁴ the child running away,⁴⁴⁵ or even the child returning from care.⁴⁴⁶

257. An Innu caregiver who fostered Faith Rich for years described having “no voice” in decisions about her; this shows that her knowledge of Faith’s struggles and of what might help Faith was treated as non-existent or without value. Fundamentally, “Faith’s family and caregivers were treated as parties on the periphery rather than key players in Faith’s life.”⁴⁴⁷ That experience resonates with experiences told many times over in the six investigations and throughout other Innu testimony.
258. Repeated failures to clearly communicate with families inevitably increased distrust and tension between Innu and provincial child protective services.⁴⁴⁸
259. Provincial policies and training should be updated to increase and improve communications with children and youth themselves, along with Innu parents, caregivers and key extended family members. The default should be open, timely and honest communication, that involves meaningful listening and discussion, not just conveying information and decisions after the fact.

[Insufficient services for Innu children coming into care](#)

260. Children should be safe and well cared for in provincial care. They should have access to necessary services to keep them healthy. Indeed, the Province apprehended some Innu children and placed them outside of their communities specifically on the basis that such placements would provide necessary therapeutic or clinical support for Innu children facing complex medical and behavioral issues. It is a serious concern that for many children and youth, going into care seemed to be the only way to access such health services – that is unacceptable.⁴⁴⁹
261. However, it seems especially tragic that even having taken that severe measure, many Innu children did not actually receive the services they needed while in provincial care.
262. Several out-of-province foster homes used routinely by NL child protection services – such as Quinte Children’s Home and Broken Arrow Residential Treatment Services,

⁴⁴⁴ Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Thunderheart Tshakapesh, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁴⁵ Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of James Poker, pp. 11-12; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Jacob Collins, p. 9; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo (Piwas), p. 20.

⁴⁴⁶ Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of James Poker, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁴⁷ Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Faith Nalin Rich, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁸ Exhibit P-453, p. 11, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴⁴⁹ For example, Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo (Piwas), p. 4; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Jacob Collins, p. 8; and others.

both in Ontario – purported to provide “therapeutic” or “residential treatment” programs but did not. In reality, “[r]ather than being therapeutic, these placements often exacerbated mental health symptoms. Behaviour management and structure regularly substituted for genuine treatment, and children’s emotional distress was frequently misunderstood or minimized.”⁴⁵⁰

263. The investigations found that the Innu children and youth placed there in order to receive specialized help for substance use, suicide risk and serious mental health concerns did not in fact receive any clinical therapy. The evidence of professional assessment and diagnosis, professional counseling let alone psychiatric services, or other structured treatment services ranged from none at all, to very limited and very late.⁴⁵¹ These allegedly therapeutic placements provided little more than “physical containment”.⁴⁵²
264. In addition, out-of-community provincial placements failed to understand the importance of Innu-aitun for the health and safety of Innu children. The placement home and the province typically did not make any effort to ensure Innu children could remain connected to Innu-aitun. Some children did not visit their home community for years.⁴⁵³
265. The Investigators highlighted a systemic “failure to provide Innu-specific, land-based, and culturally grounded healing” approach when children and youth need help.⁴⁵⁴ “Cultural programming, where present, was often generic or based on other Indigenous cultures, failing to reflect Innu identity, values, or ways of knowing.”⁴⁵⁵
266. The result was immense cultural dislocation and loneliness. Their mental state deteriorated due to isolation and loss of identity. This, in turn, puts Innu children at higher risk of harm. Some Innu youth attempted to return home on their own, in dangerous conditions.

⁴⁵⁰ Exhibit P-453, p. 9, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴⁵¹ Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of James Poker, pp. 9, 12-13; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Thunderheart Tshakapesh, pp. 6-7, 11-13; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Jacob Collins, pp. 12-14; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo (Piwas), pp. 14, 17-19, 22, 24.

⁴⁵² Exhibit P-453, p. 8, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴⁵³ See e.g. Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Jacob Collins, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁴ Exhibit P-453, p. 12, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴⁵⁵ Exhibit P-453, p. 9, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

Insufficient support for Innu youth leaving care

267. The provincial system has not equipped Innu youth to return home and reintegrate into their communities after they exit provincial care.⁴⁵⁶
268. In every case examined within this Inquiry's investigations in which a youth left care (either by aging out or other discharge), the youth were sent back home without any sort of plan to readjust to living in their community, or to continue access to the medical and therapeutic care that they needed.⁴⁵⁷ Reintegration planning and services were absent.
269. To take children away and then spit them back out of the system without support is irresponsible, indeed unconscionable. It had enormous impacts on the lives of Innu youth. In some cases, they did not survive.
270. As mentioned above, some improvements have occurred in this area, both provincially and federally (see section above, under the heading "Funding in child and family services was inadequate and incentivized removals"). However, there remain significant gaps. Innu youth still do not trust provincial child protection, so have low uptake with provincial Youth Services. The federal Post-Majority Services and Support program is new but already seems likely to be heavily restricted going forward,⁴⁵⁸ despite high needs to grow this program to serve the large numbers of Innu youth who were in care. And it is not clear yet if support will be available for the construction of youth transitional housing, which is needed in both Innu communities.

Removal used as a primary intervention

271. As discussed in Part I above, removing an Innu child from their family and community is incredibly traumatic. Yet, in Innu communities, "child removal was most often the primary intervention, particularly in response to gasoline sniffing, suicidal ideation, or

⁴⁵⁶ Exhibit P-453, pp. 11-12, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴⁵⁷ See Exhibit P-453, pp. 11-12, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of James Poker, pp. 13-16; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Thunderheart Tshakapesh, pp. 13-14; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Jacob Collins, pp. 12-14; Final submissions on Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo (Piwas), pp. 22-24; Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Faith Nain Rich, paras 12-18.

⁴⁵⁸ Based on the federal government's reformed approach to child and family services, as per its public filings at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, see e.g. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/2025-12/Canada%27s%20National%20Plan%20on%20Long-Term%20Reform%20and%20Requested%20Remedies%20Outside%20Ontario.pdf](https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/2025-12/Canada%27s%20National%20Plan%20on%20Long-Term%20Reform%20and%20Requested%20Remedies%20Outside%20Ontario.pdf), December 22, 2025.

behavioural distress. Child removal should always be the last option, yet all too often it was the first.”⁴⁵⁹

272. This was shown both in testimonies and in the statistics. As indicated above, even just 8 years ago, if an Innu family was investigated by child protection services, it was very likely that their child would be removed from their home.⁴⁶⁰

273. A number of factors likely contributed to this dynamic, including:

- a. The “policing” approach described above that is narrowly focused on risk of harm by parents;
- b. The failed service delivery model that provides part-time social workers with high caseloads and limited time, resources, support or flexibility in options for intervention; and
- c. Lack of prevention services before 2017 and, to this day, insufficient support for a range of essential services in the Innu communities.

274. Innu communities face the unique and devastating impacts of colonialism, while also lacking access to services to respond to these impacts (e.g. sufficient housing, healthcare, substance abuse treatment, and other necessary social services). Placing a child into care (and oftentimes, removing them from Innu communities) was often seen by child protection – and sometimes even by parents, caregivers or leadership – as the only way Innu children could access the services they need. Though as noted above, it has often failed to do even that, and increasingly Innu families and leaders have pushed back strongly against the removal of children.⁴⁶¹

275. There has certainly been progress in this regard, as the data and service provider testimony both show. But that progress remains fragile. It will take sustained and deeper support for both Innu prevention and Innu placement services, as well as

⁴⁵⁹ Exhibit P-453, p. 8, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴⁶⁰ See above, *The Innu Experience in Numbers*, in the section “A Closer Look at the Period of Improvement”, as per the research in Exhibit P-458, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, Table 4, p. 26-27, 2026, by Barbara Fallon and Tara Black.

⁴⁶¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 102-14 (describing Sheshatshiu’s decision to ask the Province to take responsibility for children during the gas sniffing crisis); Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, pp. 20-21 (describing Innu parents who ask the Province to take custody of their child because they fear for their child’s safety and risk of suicide); Formal Hearing Testimony of Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, p. 10, (describing that when children were in traumatic circumstances, such as the gas sniffing crisis, “the norm was to remove the child from the community...for the benefit of their own safety”); see also Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo (Piwas), pp. 18-23.

continued progress on broader community trauma, in order to maintain and continue improving on this recent trend.

Reliance on placement of Innu children outside of the community

276. When removal occurs, the placement was too often outside of Innu communities, and sometimes out of province entirely. Notably, the Investigators reported that in five out of six cases they reviewed, there was an “excessive reliance on out-of-province placements, including residential treatment programs and therapeutic foster homes in southern Ontario and Saskatchewan.”⁴⁶²
277. A significant factor that led to some out-of-community placements, and particularly out-of-province placements, is that a number of Innu children that come in contact with the child protection system have complex needs, due to inter-generational trauma.⁴⁶³ Some Innu children with medical needs have gone into care to be closer to hospital and other specialized resources. There is also a short supply of youth treatment services both in Labrador and in NL more broadly, and Innu youth with serious mental health issues or addictions have sometimes been sent long distances to access services.⁴⁶⁴ It is worth noting however, as addressed above, that such services were often not consistently delivered even after such long journeys.
278. A number of other children were removed from the Innu communities just because they needed a placement.
279. Generic and rigid standards have made it difficult to approve many Innu people as foster parents and to place Innu children within extended families. For instance, requiring a foster home to have a bedroom for each child is not relevant for Innu communities, where physical space is already limited and where sharing a bedroom is the norm. Additionally, in Innu communities – where people are overrepresented in child protection services and criminal justice system – background and clearance checks present obstacles for many potential Innu caregivers.⁴⁶⁵ It is important when placing children to have processes that can quickly gather information on a person’s

⁴⁶² Exhibit P-453, p. 8, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

⁴⁶³ Exhibit P-453, p. 4, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti; our own final subs, paras 67-70 and 159-162 (as of Jul 8, 2026).

⁴⁶⁴ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Jack Penashue, January 26, 2024, pp. 4-5 and Lyla Andrews, April 8, 2025, pp. 6, 8 (describing lack of solvent abuse treatment facilities in Atlantic Canada; primary response to gas sniffing was to send children out of community “as a crisis response”); Exhibit P-453, p. 8, *Investigator’s Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti (“All cases reviewed revealed the absence or scarcity of accessible, preventative, and remedial services in Natuashish and the broader Labrador region.”)

⁴⁶⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Jennifer Barnes, April 10, 2025, p. 6.

background and most importantly, their *current* well-being; this is quite do-able with close collaboration with Innu staff. It requires provincial flexibility and policy support.

280. For the Innu who were able to be approved as foster parents, they often did not receive adequate financial support from the Province. A foster parent training program was available, but it originated as a standardized international program; it had little relevance in an Innu context and was usually unavailable. There was no evidence, prior to 2015, that there was any training, recruitment or retention program for Innu foster parents specifically.⁴⁶⁶ It took sustained advocacy by Innu Prevention Services for the Province to finally recognize the value that Innu foster parents on the basis of the Innu-aitun and language support they provide to Innu children, and that this has as much value as standardized training.⁴⁶⁷
281. Governments – both federal and provincial – were slow to support structured Innu placement options. The road to the substantial completion of the 5-placement-plan was a long one.
282. Both Innu communities do not have sufficient physical structures to operate as placement homes, as they had to cobble together solutions without dedicated capital funding. In Natuashish, front-line workers explored the possibility of extending the use of an existing women’s or youth shelter to house children in care. Similarly, in Sheshatshiu, there were discussions around fixing an abandoned house and hiring staff to support an in-community placement. However, “no resources” and “no funding for resources” were forthcoming to support these initiatives.⁴⁶⁸ The Province did not have “a line item or budget item for allocation of capital works projects or infrastructure in Child, Youth and Family Services.”⁴⁶⁹
283. Even once the federal and provincial governments recognized the urgent need for placement homes within the two Innu communities, senior representatives were skeptical that such homes would work and reluctant to provide the necessary funding and support.⁴⁷⁰ It took a lot of work and a lot of convincing to make the Innu placement plans a reality.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Jennifer Barnes, April 9, 2025, p. 20.

⁴⁶⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Amanda Rich, December 1, 2025, pp. 14, 18.

⁴⁶⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 18, 2025, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁶⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Wanda Lundrigan, April 9, 2025, p. 20.

⁴⁷⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, August 6, 2025, pp. 36-37 (describing skepticism of assistant deputy minister of provincial Child and Family Service; “it almost looked as if she was trying to sabotage what we were doing”); Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, September 12, 2025, pp. 15-16 (describing skepticism of senior federal representatives).

⁴⁷¹ For more details, see the section below on Innu-led services, and see Exhibit P-441, pp. 35-38, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

284. As noted in the previous section on reducing removal from home generally, maintaining and building further on the reduction in placements outside the Innu communities will require significant further support. This includes ongoing support for the Innu placement providers, SIM and MEGH, and investment in suitable infrastructure for their services. It includes expanding on supports to Innu foster families. And it includes building out greater community-based and community-partnered services for complex needs, including options for youth treatment and health services.

Lack of service delivery in Innu-aimun

285. All problems above are exacerbated by the fact that the Province largely delivers its services in English, but the language of the Innu is Innu-aimun.

286. Language barriers arise at all stages of the provincial system. Social workers are often unable to get basic information from Innu family and community members.⁴⁷² It is difficult for Innu caregivers to advocate for their family members. Innu children in care can face significant difficulty in communicating their needs, engaging with health professionals, or in reporting any abuse or harm that is occurring in their placement.

287. Numerous Innu witnesses emphasized the importance of retaining Innu-aimun. It is crucial to Innu identity, and for Innu to be able to speak openly with one another, to connect with one another.⁴⁷³

288. Yet, while in provincial care, many Innu children did not have an opportunity to speak Innu-aimun. Foster parents and provincial staff would only communicate in English. In fact, there were disturbingly recent reports that some foster parents or care home staff would prohibit children from speaking Innu-aimun.⁴⁷⁴

289. The Province must ensure that Innu children are able to speak Innu-aimun freely. This is their right, and it must be supported and encouraged, not discouraged or denied.

⁴⁷² Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, June 6, 2024, Lyla, p. 8

⁴⁷³ Community Hearing Testimonies of George Gregoire, April 17, 2023, pp. 11-12; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, p. 7; Sheshatshiu Innu B, March 21, 2023, pp. 11; Simeon Tshakapesh and Ruby Tshakapesh, November 4, 2024, pp. 7-8, 10; David Nui, April 18, 2023, pp. 11-12; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, June 5, 2023, p. 11; Elder Penote Antuan, October 16, 2023, pp. 1-2 and October 17, 2023, pp. 5-6; Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, p. 18; Etienne Rich, October 26, 2023, pp. 13-14; Basile Penashue, October 26, 2023, pp. 23-24; Annie Margaret Nuna, November 8, 2024, pp. 2-3; Formal Hearing Testimonies of Helen Aster, January 23, 2024, pp. 25, 27-28 and Gregory Rich, July 7, 2025, pp. 8, 11.

⁴⁷⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, p. 3 and Sheshatshiu Innu, April 10, 2025, p. 2; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo (Piwas), p. 15; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Jacob Collins, p. 10.

290. The Province also needs to ensure access to Innu-aimun within its range of services, including when interacting with parents and other family members, as well as with youth themselves as applicable. They need to deepen efforts to hire and retain Innu staff, including community workers who can provide translation, while also working closely with IRTS staff (Prevention services, including Innu Representatives) who can provide language and cultural translation in the course of their advocacy and support services.

Obstacles in access to justice

291. Access to justice for Innu parents and children in the child protection system is an inseparable dimension of child and family services for Innu. Former judge English's expert report concludes that "Innu must be much more involved in their justice system in general, and in the cause of child protection in particular. Child protection systems need Innu to play more prominent roles in them."⁴⁷⁵

292. The Province is responsible for the appointment and funding of judges, court staff and legal aid, interpretation services, and court facilities in child protection cases.⁴⁷⁶ The federal government provides some funding for Indigenous justice initiatives, including some of the court interpretation in the case of the Innu.

293. Former judge English identified the following gaps in the legal system with regard to Innu child protection cases, and related remedies:

- a. Eligibility and access to legal aid: "To be assisted by Legal Aid, a parent must qualify for legal aid under its eligibility rules... Once denied Legal Aid, parents have few good options for legal representation."⁴⁷⁷ He recommended full Legal Aid coverage for Innu parents in all child protection cases.⁴⁷⁸
- b. Shortage of qualified counsel: "those lawyers who regularly handle child protection cases in Labrador are few in number."⁴⁷⁹ He recommended publicly-funded counsel through an Innu agency if Legal Aid options have been exhausted.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁵ Exhibit P-454, p. 3, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁷⁶ Exhibit P-454, pp. 1–4, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁷⁷ Exhibit P-454, p. 14, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁷⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of William English, March 26, 2026, pp. 102–103, 105.

⁴⁷⁹ Exhibit P-454, p. 32, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁸⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of William English, March 26, 2026, p. 102, lines 1–8.

- c. Cultural and language needs: “Speaking and understanding Innu-aimun are skills that would enhance the experience between the representative and their client. Using interpreters is a poor, though often necessary, substitute for fluency.”⁴⁸¹ He also noted that “there is no program for the training and support of Innu interpreters in Labrador or elsewhere in the Province.”⁴⁸² He recommended a pilot project for Innu interpreter training in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, with two or three trained and qualified interpreters, including proper compensation, and time off.
- d. Ineffective timelines: “there are no effective time limits in Labrador for hearings of indigenous, including Innu, child protection cases.”⁴⁸³ He recommended a review, and consideration of judicial and other remedies. He also encouraged the expansion of dispute resolution methods – judicial case conferences, mediation, and alternative dispute resolution.⁴⁸⁴
- e. Lack of community-based hearing spaces: “The absence of suitable hearing spaces in Innu communities' forces parents to travel long distances or participate remotely, further reducing their access to justice.”⁴⁸⁵ Parents frequently participate in hearings remotely, which can result in their not understanding or being heard. This can rise to the level of unfairness and engender resentment of the legal process.⁴⁸⁶ He recommended dedicated, in-community court “hearing spaces” in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, with appropriate technology and infrastructure.
- f. Need for full-time community-based Innu social workers: “The absence of full-time, community-based Innu social workers is a major flaw in the child protection legal system.”⁴⁸⁷ He urged the Province to address its service delivery model. He also encouraged more Innu positions to be resourced (and trained) in order to support Innu parents in understanding the legal process.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸¹Exhibit P-454, pp. 37-38, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁸² Exhibit P-454, p. 42, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁸³ Exhibit P-454, p. 46, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁸⁴Formal Hearing Testimony of William English, March 26, 2026, pp. 172–176, 183.

⁴⁸⁵ Exhibit P-454, pp. 63-64, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁸⁶ Exhibit P-454, p. 29, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁸⁷ Exhibit P-454, pp. 56–58, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁴⁸⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of William English, March 26, 2026, March 26, 2026, pp. 142, 144, 170.

Federal and Provincial Awareness of Systemic Failures

294. The alarm bells about the systemic issues facing child protection services in Innu communities have been sounding loudly for decades.
295. In 1984, four provincial social service workers raised concerns about the Province's treatment of the Innu. They refused to implement policies they believed were harmful to Innu families, asking for flexibility to adapt to Innu needs. Lyla Andrew was one of those workers, along with Innu community worker Sebastian Nuna and two other social workers. Lyla testified that their stand did not prompt a policy review. Instead, it prompted termination. All four social services workers were fired.⁴⁸⁹
296. In 1992, Lyla prepared a report for Innu Nation and the Province, with the assistance of Nastash Andrew (now Commissioner Qupee) and Lousia Penashue, *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, based on interviews with Innu people, about Innu experiences of social services. It recommended substantial changes to the delivery of social services in the Innu communities, focusing primarily on a fundamental shift back to Innu control.⁴⁹⁰ These recommendations "fell on deaf ears".⁴⁹¹
297. The 1993 McRae Report put the federal government on detailed notice of long-term discrimination, including the lack of funding for housing, services and basic infrastructure in the Innu communities. The 2002 and 2021 Follow-up Reports confirmed that a number of issues identified in 1993 had not been resolved.⁴⁹²
298. In 2007, a letter from Daniel Ashini, Innu Nation President, to the Province stressed Innu concerns about children being placed outside Innu communities and no room for maintenance of a relationship with Innu-aitun and family. The Innu called for devolution of child protection services.⁴⁹³ Many more letters followed over the following decade or so.
299. Steve Joudry confirmed that, as of 2012, provincial workers were openly observing that the Innu communities were in serious trouble and that nothing in their training had

⁴⁸⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, June 7, 2024, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁰ Exhibit P-116, pp. 26-27 (also P-045), *Changes to the Delivery of Social Services in Sheshatshiu and Utshimassit: Whose Life is it Anyway?*, 1992, by Lyla Andrew.

⁴⁹¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, p. 52.

⁴⁹² Exhibit P-029, pp. 24-27, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald McRae; Exhibit P-030, *Report on the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Treatment of the Innu of Labrador by the Government of Canada*, March 26, 2002, by Donald McRae and Constance Backhouse, 2002; Exhibit P-031 *Follow-up Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador*, August 9, 2021, by Donald McRae.

⁴⁹³ Exhibit P-070, *Letter re: Child, Youth and Family Services in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish*, 2007; Exhibit P-071, *Response Letter*, 2007.

enabled them to help an entire people needing healing.⁴⁹⁴ In 2015, an internal provincial Position Note on Aboriginal Children in Care acknowledged the over-representation of Innu in the child protection system.⁴⁹⁵

300. In 2017, these calls for action culminated in the demand for this Inquiry, in the wake of several deaths of Innu youth.⁴⁹⁶ What needs to follow now is action toward self-determined Innu services.

⁴⁹⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, August 6, 2025, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁹⁵ Exhibit P-165, p. 2, *Position Note — Aboriginal Children in Care*, 2015.

⁴⁹⁶ Exhibit P-166, *Email correspondence re: letters to Federal government jointly from Innu Nation and Government of NL*, 2017.

PART IV – A FOUNDATION FOR INNU CONTROL

The growing role of an Innu approach

301. It has been about seven decades since the Innu first experienced settlement and intensive colonization, and nearly five decades since the provincial child protection system started to be imposed.
302. During this time, an Innu approach has been growing. This section of our submissions will walk us through what that looks like, and where it is headed.
303. Resistance is one form of Innu action against the imposition of the child protection system. Over time, a second response has grown as well: Innu-led services. We have very briefly summarized some key elements of that history here, as well as a snapshot of current Innu services.
304. Looking ahead, this section then outlines the plans for next steps, centred around completing the transition to Innu control, and what is needed to support that key transition.

Resistance

305. Since the imposition of external child protection systems, many Innu pushed back to resist what was happening to the children of their communities, in various ways both big and small, despite a pervasive feeling of powerlessness.
306. Many examples of that resistance came up in Innu testimony. A few include:
- a. Many family members – parents, grandparents, other community members – have advocated for the return of children and youth taken away.⁴⁹⁷
 - b. Family advocacy has also helped avoid having children sent away in the nick of time. For example, a witness told about a traditional adoption in their extended family. The child protection system did not explore that option initially, but rather planned to send the child out of the community to a non-Innu home. Luckily the family was able to intervene in time.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁷ This arose frequently in Innu testimony. See e.g. Community Hearing Testimony of Florence Milley, November 6, 2024, p. 11.

⁴⁹⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 1-2 and Marie Martha Andrew, June 7, 2023, p. 7.

- c. An Innu woman who worked as a community service worker in social services in the 1980s told a story about seeing a social worker in Davis Inlet working on a pile of papers. She asked about them, and was told that the papers were about children who were going to be apprehended and sent away, based on the school Principal's report that their families were not taking proper care of them. The Innu worker could see this was wrong; the Principal did not have much knowledge of Innu families, and neither did the social worker. Neither had actually looked into these cases. And yet, they were going to use their powerful positions to break up Innu families. The Innu worker resisted in the way she felt she could in the moment: *"I took those papers; I throw them in the fire. I burnt them. We used to have a barrel outside. I throw them in there and burnt them. 'Cause I told her: You have to go visit people first, to really see what's going on in the home. You just don't write reports like that."*⁴⁹⁹
- d. Sometimes Innu simply barred the door to social workers' entry. In earlier years, sometimes that worked. For example, Mary Pia Benuen told about her father refusing entry to social services, threatening violence. As a result, she and her siblings did not go into care. She was grateful, but it is not without downside; while they avoided the trauma of removal and placement away from community, they remained in harm's way in their parents' care. The children needed help, yet the parents and children both knew that the "help" being offered was not going to truly help.⁵⁰⁰
- e. Innu leadership called for this Inquiry. They knew that things were not right. They called for accountability and change. Before that, the evidence also shows many examples of Innu leadership writing letters, raising concerns at meetings such as Innu Round Table meetings, and using the opportunities and tools available to them to push for change.
- f. Even children and youth themselves took acts of resistance, in so far as they could, sometimes putting themselves in danger as they did so. For example, some children and youth ran away from non-Innu care placements, including out of province placements. Some even tried to walk home, from no matter how far. One youth tried walking home from Ontario on Highway 401.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, p. 16-17.

⁵⁰⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Mary Pia Benuen, January 22, 2023, p. 7.

⁵⁰¹ For example, this was documented in several of the 6 investigations. See for example, Exhibit P-453, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, p. 6; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of James Poker, April 15, 2026, p. 16; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowdon John Mistenapeo (Piwas), April 15, 2026, p. 3.

Innu-led services

307. An element of resistance continues. But over time, it has been joined by a larger movement to grow Innu-led services based in Innu ways.

[Innu Caregiving](#)

308. The first example of this is simply Innu caregivers stepping up to provide care. This is critical and important to recognize. Over the years, many Innu took direct action to care for their own people. The care of children in need, by Innu for Innu, is one of the most significant and positive actions that Innu have made, and continue to make, to provide their own child and family services. It changes what child services looks like for Innu children.

309. This has occurred in many forms, including:

- a. Traditional adoption or informal caregiving (without court orders or financial support);⁵⁰²
- b. Kinship care, previously known as Child Welfare Allowance (care with the consent of parents and child protection, with limited financial support);
- c. Formal foster care (the child is in provincial care under provincial legislation, and financial support is provided);
- d. Third party custody (a court order puts the child into the caregiver's guardianship; it has sometimes followed after a long period of foster care, especially in recent years);⁵⁰³ and
- e. Formal adoption (with a court order; while now rare, there are still occasional examples).

310. Innu caregivers, including Innu foster parents, deserve recognition for providing this frontline service. Without it, so many Innu children would have grown up worse off.

311. When Innu provide such care, they may not think of it as a “service”. That may not be the right name for it. But whatever you call it, the fact is that it replaces what could otherwise happen in a non-Innu way with an Innu-led experience for that child. When Innu care for a child, that care is provided with Innu-aitun, helping a child be raised

⁵⁰² See for example: Formal Hearing Testimonies of Helen Aster, January 23, 2024, p. 24 and Lyla Andrew, June 6, 2024, p. 19; Community Hearing Testimonies of Edward Nuna, October 26, 2023, p. 10; Basile Penashue, October 26, 2023, p. 23; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, p. 20 and Pien Gregoire, November 5, 2024, p. 8.

⁵⁰³ *Children, Youth and Families Act*, SNL 2018, c C-12.3, s. 32; see in particular s. 32(2).

with a connection to Innu-aitun, their community, and often with their language. It makes an enormous difference.

312. The Inquiry heard many examples of this. For example, experienced Innu foster parents spoke about the importance of fostering with love, not just as a place to stay.⁵⁰⁴ Extended families often spoke about offering care within their family if they could do so.⁵⁰⁵

313. When children stay within the extended family/community and experience love, this helps the child, and even future generations of children by helping to break the cycle of trauma.⁵⁰⁶

Collective Innu Services

314. Beyond care by Innu families, broader collective Innu responses grew over the years as well.

315. As noted above, Innu were not treated as “bands” under the *Indian Act* until 2002. This severely limited the federal funding available for Innu services before that time. Professor McRae’s report in the 1990s found that Innu were deprived of access to services and funding for services, in a way that disadvantaged them as compared with other First Nations.⁵⁰⁷

316. As Innu pushed back against that injustice, small amounts of funding became available that grew over time. Innu Nation became an organized entity starting in the late 1970s. In 1997 an order confirmed that the First Nations should be treated on the same basis as bands (though that order did not work as well as was hoped).⁵⁰⁸ Early Innu programs in areas such as addictions counselling, healing and outpost (supporting families to spend time on the land) started in the 1990s. This continued to grow with the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy, which was in place from 2001-2010 to assist in bridging the transition to band status.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁴ Community Hearing Testimonies of Veronica Rich November 30, 2023, p. 9 and Mary Ann Montague, June 5, 2023, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁵ Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, p. 9; David Nui, April 18, 2023, p. 5-6; Bernadette Nui, April 18, 2023, pp. 20-21; Jerome Jack, June 7, 2023, p. 12; Matthew Andrew, October 17, 2023, pp. 9-10 and Joey Michel, June 27, 2024, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁰⁶ Community Hearing Testimony of Marie Rose Pastitshi, November 29, 2023, pp. 9-11.

⁵⁰⁷ Exhibit P-029, pp. 23-29, *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, August 18, 1993, by Donald McRae.

⁵⁰⁸ Exhibit P-030, p.16, *Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Treatment of the Innu of Labrador by the Government of Canada*, March 26, 2002, by Donald McRae and Constance Backhouse.. 16.

⁵⁰⁹ Exhibit P-030, in particular see p.33, *Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Treatment of the Innu of Labrador by the Government of Canada*, March 26, 2002, by Donald McRae and Constance

317. Innu community-based programs struggled, and continue to struggle, with barriers such as insufficient funding, inconsistent and patchwork funding compiled from many temporary sources, staffing challenges, and high levels of inter-generational trauma.
318. And yet Innu persisted, continuing to grow and develop programs to try to meet community needs.
319. Taking over the education system from the province was a top priority after the transition to band status. This was important for the safety of children, because the prior education system was a frequent source of child abuse.⁵¹⁰
320. As the devolution of education service delivery progressed and took effect in 2009, Innu attention turned increasingly over the following decade to child and family services. In those same years, Innu observed the provincial system turning from bad to worse. As noted above, the provincial system became even more restrictive, avoiding the concepts of prevention or family support, and focusing even more strictly on a policing-type approach using the tools of investigation and apprehension. In the meantime, federal funding for the in-care stream had become reliably available to the province, and indeed unlimited. As shown in the charts above, increasing numbers of Innu children started to be taken into care, and more started to be shipped out of the Innu communities.
321. Innu leadership pushed for structural change. For a period of time in the mid-2000s there were discussions about forming a joint board to co-administer Innu child and family services between the province and the Innu. However, these early discussions about “devolution” using a joint board stalled out.⁵¹¹
322. Innu health/healing staff at MIFN and SIFN pushed for provincial social workers to involve them at a minimum. They told provincial child protection that they needed to

Backhouse; Exhibit P-138, *Impact Evaluation of the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy*, December 7, 2009, by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

⁵¹⁰ See for example the school-based abuse mentioned in several Inquiry testimonies, including Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, March 21, 2023, pp. 7-8; Mushuau Innu, April 17, 2023, p. 20; Justine Noah, April 18, 2023, pp. 5, 8-9, 11; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, p. 19; Mushuau Innu, April 18, 2023, pp. 18-19; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, p. 5; Mushuau Innu, April 20, 2023, pp. 14-15; Mary Ann Montague, June 5, 2023, pp. 2-3; David Nuke, June 5, 2023, p. 8; Marie Martha Andrew, June 7, 2023, p. 7; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, p. 6; Elder Penote Antuan, October 17, 2023, p. 5; Jarvis Penashue, October 24, 2023, p. 3; and Mary Catherine Rich, November 27, 2023, p. 4.

⁵¹¹ See e.g. Exhibit P-070, p. 2, *Request for meeting re Child, Youth and Family Services in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish*, January 15, 2007, by Daniel Ashini – Innu Nation; Exhibit P-071, p. 2, *Response from Gov. Newfoundland to letter from Innu Nation (Jan 15 2007) regarding meeting*, February 27, 2007, by Minister Ross Wiseman; Exhibit P-072, p. 3, *Provincial Support for the Labrador Innu*, October 10, 2010.

hear from Innu, not just make decisions on their own. Eventually, this led to a series of agreements, each replacing the next:

- a. *The 2012 MOUs between the province and each of SIFN and MIFN.*⁵¹² These came in response to Innu requests but the texts were unilaterally written by the Province. The Innu did not find them effective.
 - b. *The 2015 Working Relationship Agreement.*⁵¹³ This was a jointly negotiated agreement and signalled a major step forward. For the first time, the Province was required to engage Innu in case planning when delivering child protection to Innu. However, the Working Relationship Agreement preceded the availability of any full-time Innu staff in child and family services, as there was no dedicated funding for Innu prevention services at that time. As that progressed, a new agreement was required.
 - c. *The 2021 Protocol Agreement, which remains in place at this time.*⁵¹⁴ This agreement, also jointly negotiated, has the most detailed arrangements, and included full information sharing. It also has the benefit of critical developments in the surrounding context, including funded Innu prevention services, new provincial legislation, and new federal legislation. The role of Innu Representatives was recognized in both of these pieces of legislation, and is further supported by the Protocol Agreement.
323. Through these years, the Innu also worked on articulating their own model of services, the Innu Care Approach (see the *Guide to the Innu Care Approach*, 2017).⁵¹⁵
324. Over those years, Innu increasingly noticed that federal funding was unjust too. In other parts of Canada, a few areas started to receive federal prevention funding in the mid-2000s. Innu called for similar funding, i.e. funding to help them work specifically to reduce the need for child protection intervention with families, and to reduce the severity of that intervention in particular to reduce children going into care, and especially care outside the communities.

⁵¹² Exhibit P-037, *Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and Mushuau Innu First Nation*, 2012 and Exhibit P-038, *Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation*, 2012.

⁵¹³ Exhibit P-050, *Working Relationship Agreement*, 2015

⁵¹⁴ Exhibit P-049, *Innu Protocol Agreement*, 2021

⁵¹⁵ Exhibit P-042, *A Guide to the Innu Care Approach*, 2017, by the Innu Round Table Secretariat.

325. As detailed in the affidavit of Germaine Benuen, and in her formal hearing evidence along with that of Wendy White, prevention funding did not come easily to the Innu. They had to fight every step of the way.⁵¹⁶
326. There was no funding for Innu prevention services, and thus no such services, until 2016-17. In the meantime, Canada provided the Province with unlimited case-based funding if a child was put into care, called “maintenance” funding, plus provincial “operations” funding. In early 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that this funding model discriminated against First Nations children, and provided incentives for children to be removed and put into care.⁵¹⁷
327. Indeed, during that time, the number of Innu children in care rose dramatically, as shown above.⁵¹⁸
328. In the summer after the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling in 2016, Canada at long last advised that some funding would be made available to the Innu for prevention services within child and family services. With funding finally started, Innu prevention services got organized launched in early 2017 at the Innu Round Table Secretariat (IRTS).⁵¹⁹
329. Even after that, funding levels remained low and unequal until Innu launched their own human rights complaint in 2020.⁵²⁰ Following that, temporary Innu-specific agreements on funding coupled with national developments led to funding improvements in the next few years, followed by the formal settlement of the Innu human rights complaint in 2023.⁵²¹ Innu now receive prevention funding on the same basis as other First Nations.
330. In addition to launching prevention services in 2017, around the same time Innu also pushed the federal and provincial governments to support the creation of Innu placement facilities too.

⁵¹⁶ Formal Hearing Testimonies of Wendy White, Germaine Benuen and Amanda Rich, December 1, 2025, in particular see pp. 7, 11, 17, 21; Exhibit P-169, pp.12-17, *Affidavit of Germaine Benuen*, October 30, 2020.

⁵¹⁷ *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v Attorney General of Canada (for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)*, 2016 CHRT 2 at paras 458,472-473. For more details, see also the section above, “Funding in child and family services was inadequate and incentivized removals” in Part III.

⁵¹⁸ See section above, “The Innu Experience in Numbers” within Part II.

⁵¹⁹ Exhibit P-441, pp. 7-8, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

⁵²⁰ Exhibit P-169, p.18, *Affidavit of Germaine Benuen*, October 30, 2020.

⁵²¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Germaine Benuen, December 1, 2025, pp. 10-12.

331. While families provide care to Innu children in need wherever possible, too many children were being sent away. Sometimes this was to access more services, including the high level of structure and supervision that a staffed placement service can provide to children with more complex needs. Some youth were sent to distant placements for “treatment”, though the investigations found that most of those placements did not provide actual treatment (no counselling/therapy, and no to minimal clinical interventions). Some children were sent to placements out of the community just because a local placement could not be located quickly enough.
332. The 2015 Working Relationship Agreement included a commitment for the Province and the Innu to work together on an “out of community review”, looking at such cases, why they occurred and what could be done.⁵²² That occurred in 2016.⁵²³ It led to the creation of an Innu proposal to develop five Innu-run staffed placement facilities, to supplement family-based care and fill a critical gap. This proposal was called *Keeping Innu Children Closer to Home* proposal, also known as the “5-Placement Plan”.⁵²⁴
333. The 5-Placement Plan initially met with provincial doubts and federal apathy. It finally got traction in 2017 after significant Innu efforts, including a campaign called Bring Our Innu Children Home and a protest at the federal Minister’s Canada Day Picnic.⁵²⁵ Gradually, the plan began to be implemented.
334. These 5 staffed homes opened between 2018-2025. They are detailed further below.

⁵²² Exhibit P-050, *Working Relationship Agreement signed by CYFS SIFN MIFN and IRTS*, September 15, 2015, by Province of NL, SIFN, MIFN, IRTS, pp. 4-5.

⁵²³ Exhibit P-168, *Sheshatshiu Innu Out-of-Community Placement Review Report*, May 10, 2016, by Lyla Andrew, Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵²⁴ Exhibit P-432, *The 5 Placement Plan: Keeping Innu Children Closer to Home*, N.D., by Innu Round Table Secretariat; Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Jourdy, August 6, 2025, p. 36, lines 14-24 and p. 37 lines, 1-12.

⁵²⁵ Exhibit P-441, p. 35, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN, et al.

Innu-led programs today

335. The *Report on Innu Services*,⁵²⁶ and testimony of various Innu witnesses, paints a picture of Innu services as they are now. The report can be consulted for more detail but it will be briefly summarized here, in relation to:

- a. Innu Prevention Services;
- b. Innu placement services;
- c. Supportive services provided to children and families by the First Nations and MTIE at the community level.

Innu Prevention Services

336. As mentioned above, Innu Prevention Services started operating at IRTS in 2017. It started with a team of seven workers across both Innu communities.⁵²⁷ Today there are about 35 full time staff and about four part time staff, across both Innu communities.⁵²⁸ These numbers continue to grow as the programming grows.

337. The services are guided by Innu principles, including:

- a. The Innu Care Approach;
- b. The Innu Healing Strategy, including Innu Healing Values;
- c. Three things that every Innu child needs.⁵²⁹

338. While the range of services provided continues to grow and develop, current services include:

- a. Innu Representatives who engage with families involved with child protection or at high risk, to advocate for the best interests of Innu children. As part of

⁵²⁶ Exhibit P-411, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN, et al.

⁵²⁷ Exhibit P-411, p. 7, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

⁵²⁸ Exhibit P-411, p. 13, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

⁵²⁹ Exhibit P-411, pp. 9-12, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.; See also Exhibit P-042, *A Guide to the Innu Care Approach*, 2017, by IRTS; and P-016, *The Innu Healing Strategy: an Innu Plan jointly developed by Innu of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish*, 2024, by SIFN, MIFN and IRTS.

their advocacy, they engage with provincial child protection services as well as court if necessary.

- b. Prevention services generally – This includes a number of supportive services to help families stabilize and heal. Direct services include direct interventions with families and children, cultural connections work with children in care out of the community, after hours emergency on call work, therapeutic land-based programming, and peer support. It also includes Uauitshitun, a new program providing short-term financial help of various kinds to families for specifically assessed needs in areas such as food security, children’s needs, transportation, short term shelter, and so on, where addressing that need could help reduce the risk of children going into care or lessen child protection intervention needs. Prevention services also helps coordinate care and make referrals to other services, such as those provided by the First Nations, by NL Health Services, or other providers.
 - c. Post-majority support services – This is another new program that helps youth exiting care. IRTS is gradually building out services to reach these youth, and support them in areas such as mentoring, well-being, housing, basic needs, skill-development, access to education, and so on.
339. All of this work is federally funded, through Canada’s First Nations Child and Family Services Program (FNCFS Program). SIFN and MIFN have directed those funds to flow to IRTS. The funding received by IRTS is split: some is retained by IRTS to support the services described above, while some amounts go to SIFN and MIFN to support their community-wide prevention programming, i.e. it contributes some funds to the SIFN and MIFN services described below (which may also be funded in part by other sources).
340. The growth of Innu Prevention Services has made significant achievements. Since they started work:
- a. There has been a large reduction in the number of Innu children in out-of-home placements (whether formal care, kinship care or otherwise). The study by Dr. Fallon and Dr. Black found that the number of Innu children admitted into out of home placements through the child protection system each year dropped from 92 children in 2018-19 down to 30 children in 2024-25. This is a reduction of 67%. In other words, **only a third as many Innu children are going into any form of placement each year.**⁵³⁰

⁵³⁰ Exhibit P-448, p. 24, in particular see table 3, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System (Draft Report)*, March 5, 2026, by Barbara Fallon and Tara Black.

- b. Although the frequency of investigations has grown a bit,⁵³¹ **the chances that an investigation will lead to a placement decreased by 82%.** It used to be that a child went into a placement in connection with the vast majority of investigations of Innu families, over 71% of the time. Now, this only occurs in about 13% of investigations.⁵³²
- c. When it is not safe for a child to remain at home or return home, more often kinship care is being used. The total number of Innu children in formal foster care in a given year decreased from 69 in 2018-19 down to 55 in 2024-25. In that time period the number in kinship care increased from 141 to 165. Dr. Fallon and Dr. Black noted that proportion of days spent in formal foster care vs kinship care has also seen a similar shift, with **kinship increasing from 57% to 67% of the days in care, and foster care decreasing from 33% to 21% of the days in care.** This is a shift in the type of placements used. Kinship is in many ways a less intrusive response than foster care as it has the consent of the parent, avoids court, and the child is not legally in the care of province. Kinship care is, by definition, within the child's family or Innu community, while foster care may or may not be. Dr. Fallon and Dr. Black noted that, especially in comparison with foster placements outside the community or in non-Indigenous homes, "[k]inship care is widely recognized as a preferred placement option for Indigenous children, as it supports cultural continuity, maintains connections to family and community, and reduces the harms associated with placement in non-Indigenous homes."⁵³³
- d. The advocacy of Innu Prevention Services led to Innu foster parents receiving equal pay with non-Indigenous foster parents who received standardized training. This recognizes the value of Innu-aimun, Innu-aitun and Innu community in deciding on placements for Innu children. It also helps better support Innu children in care with their daily needs, especially given the high cost of living in Labrador.⁵³⁴

⁵³¹ Exhibit P-448, p.21, in particular see table 1, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System (Draft Report)*, March 5, 2026, by Barbara Fallon and Tara Black. The number of investigations per year has risen from 150 to 200, which appears to be an increase from about 13% of Innu children per year to about 17% of Innu children per year. However, it is known that the Innu child population has grown in this time period, and Dr. Fallon and Dr. Black did not have updated population data available in order to take this into account. It is not clear how much of the increase could be explained by population growth.

⁵³² Exhibit P-448, in particular see table 3, pp.23-24, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System (Draft Report)*, March 5, 2026, by Barbara Fallon and Tara Black.

⁵³³ Exhibit P-448, in particular see table 4, pp.25-27, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System (Draft Report)*, March 5, 2026, by Barbara Fallon and Tara Black.

⁵³⁴ Exhibit P-411, p.16, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IFN, SIFN, MIFN, et al.

Innu placement services

341. Between 2018 and 2025, five staffed Innu placement facilities opened, operated by two Innu placement organizations:
- a. SIM – Shusheshipian Ishpitentamun Mitshuap, created by SIFN, operates:
 - i. 1 group home in Sheshatshiu, and
 - ii. 2 emergency placement homes (EPHs) in Sheshatshiu;
 - b. MEGH – Mushuau Innu Emergency Placement and Group Home, created by MIFN, operates:
 - i. 1 emergency placement homes (EPHs) in Natuashish, and
 - ii. 1 hybrid group (combining characteristics of a group home and EPH) in Goose Bay.
342. As of fall 2025 as stated in the *Innu Services Report*, over 120 Innu children and youth have been placed in those homes. They were able to remain in their community and stay connected to their families, friends, language and Innu-aitun.⁵³⁵
343. The success of these organizations and their placements is remarkable. That said, they are not without challenges. Staffing and operating services 24/7 in traumatized communities is far from easy. Each of SIM and MEGH has had to temporarily close a facility for a period of time in order to replenish staffing levels and re-build training and capacity. Additionally, capital funding was not initially available to allow for a group home to be built as originally planned in Natuashish. This led to the decision to begin operations in a rented facility in Goose Bay. Following an order of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, federal funding is now available for capital projects, and a project is underway to build a facility in Natuashish and move operations there. That project is moving through initial feasibility/design stages at this time.

⁵³⁵ Exhibit P-411, p.38, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IFN, SIFN, MIFN, et al.

Supportive services provided by the First Nations and MTIE

344. Well-being starts at the community level. Services provided by MIFN and SIFN are critical to supporting children, youth and families within the context of the whole community.
345. The *Innu Services Report* provides a summary of relevant services each offers, as of fall 2025. In addition, staff directors testified from each community including: Kathleen Benuen, MIFN Health Director; Helen Aster, SIFN Social Health Director, Jack Penashue, former SIFN Social Health Director, and Mary Pia Benuen, SIFN Primary Health Director.
346. Each community provides *some* services related to physical health, mental health, addictions, and healing/recovery. Some basic emergency services are offered such as a women's shelter. There are limited programs targeting the early years, including a small Head Start program, and in Sheshatshiu a very small day care. Schools operate pre-K to 12 in both communities. In recent years, Jordan's Principle has tried to fill gaps, particularly for children and youth with special needs, but it is a band-aid effort and its availability has been dramatically cut back in the past year.⁵³⁶
347. There remain significant needs at the community level, to expand and strengthen services and increase community well-being. Critical gaps include, for example:
- Continued influx of illegal drugs;
 - Lack of stable, strong support for addictions/trauma treatment either at Apenam's Way (operated by SIFN) or land-based (both communities);
 - Lack of any alternative options for accessing residential/intensive addictions/trauma treatment in Labrador, and certainly none that include Innu-aitun or Innu-aimun;
 - Delays and waitlists in accessing distant treatment programs, in addition to the cultural and language barriers experienced within those programs;
 - Lack of child/youth addictions and child/youth mental health services;
 - Insufficient access to ongoing counselling/therapy and specialized mental health care within the community, including for after-care or to meet other client needs, including both trained Innu services and access to professional clinical services, for both children/youth and adults;
 - Lack of sufficient medical care generally, including lack of family doctors in both communities, and challenges related to nursing, hospital services, and coordination/relationship with NL Health Services;

⁵³⁶ Exhibit P-411, pp. 12, 40, 41, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IFN, SIFN, MIFN, et al. The changes in Jordan's Principle relate to Canada's Operational Bulletin in Jordan's Principle released February 10, 2025.

- Positive cultural, recreational, land-based and outreach programming for children and youth, and/or families, including after-school and summer programming, is spotty and mainly supported by temporary funding sources; programming has not had the chance to develop in a sustained way;
- Limited outreach and programming for pregnant mothers and limited programming for young parents;
- Insufficient funding and related service levels and offerings in Innu education, which has limited Innu-aimun education, challenged recruitment, and restricted services to Innu children with special needs; and
- Insufficient housing supply.

348. Some of the critical issues limiting program expansion include:⁵³⁷

- insufficient funding opportunities;
- inadequate funding for operating services, especially within Labrador and given costs associated with remoteness and northern living;
- funding that is piecemeal, not long-term, and/or not sufficiently flexible, limiting its ability to meet real needs;
- lack of accommodation for potential staff; and
- insufficient staff capacity, and challenges in recruiting outside staff.

An Innu-led model for tomorrow: Innu services under an Innu law

I wish we could govern ourselves, and we would take over Social Services, and then we can work. We're not stupid. We can do the job ourselves. With probably some training, we certainly can do it.

- Rose Gregoire, Natuashish Community Service Worker,
1992 testimony to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal
Peoples⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Exhibit P-411, p. 26, 33-34, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IFN, SIFN, MIFN, et al.

⁵³⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Nykesha Gregoire, January 24, 2024, p. 19; Exhibit P-010, p. 85, lines 6-10, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples - Sheshatshiu (vol 2)*, June 18, 1992.

I pray to God that one day we'll have – we will run our own, like, Innu people working towards helping the kids and the young moms and the parents here in the community.

- Marie Martha Andrew, June 7, 2023, testimony to this Inquiry⁵³⁹

349. Since external child and family service systems were imposed, first informally after settlement, and then more formally starting in the late 1970s, Innu have called repeatedly to restore their own control. At long last, there are signs that these calls are being heard.
350. In 2019, the government of Canada passed a law called *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (the “Federal Act”).⁵⁴⁰ It recognizes Indigenous jurisdiction in child and family services. It came into force on January 1, 2020. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld the constitutionality of this legislation in 2024.⁵⁴¹
351. In January 2020, Innu Nation brought together Innu leadership and staff for a summit on Innu child and family services in the wake of this new Federal Act. They decided to begin work on an Innu law. At that meeting, Innu Nation asked the IRTS to act as the technical lead for this initiative.
352. Soon after, Innu Nation served notice on the federal and provincial governments of its intention to take on this jurisdiction.⁵⁴²
353. At that time, Innu leadership had called for this Inquiry, but it had yet to begin. The Innu anticipated that this Inquiry would be an important part of this journey:
- a. It would provide an opportunity for hearing the truth, acknowledging the past, and, hopefully, provide the necessary groundwork for moving forward with the federal and provincial governments into a new relationship.
 - b. It could also provide the Innu with material that can help inform an Innu law, including from community testimony as well as from various experts. Innu

⁵³⁹ Community Hearing Testimony of Marie Martha Andrew, June 7, 2023.

⁵⁴⁰ *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, SC 2019, c 24.

⁵⁴¹ *Reference re An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, 2024 SCC 5.

⁵⁴² Government of Canada, “Indigenous child and family services legislation, Notices of intent to exercise legislative authority”, online: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1608565826510/1608565862367#s3>. *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, SC 2019, c 24, s. 20(1) provides for an Indigenous governing body acting on behalf of an Indigenous group to give notice of their intent to exercise legislative authority relating to child and family services. Innu Nation provided this notice on behalf of SIFN and MIFN on February 6, 2020.

want to learn the lessons of the past when creating new legal frameworks and new services.

354. Work on the Innu law has been taking place over the past several years. Various things have slowed that work at times, including the pandemic, the demands of this Inquiry itself, and the ongoing work on the ground. Work to date has included meeting with Elders and analysing older recordings of Elder interviews; analysis of written sources including Innu legends, academic articles about Innu and more; analysis of Inquiry testimony; and group meetings with knowledgeable staff and community members (first under the name Innu Law Committee, then under the Pathways Committee, and now under an Innu Law Working Group).⁵⁴³ The Innu law in child and family services is in active development.
355. Changing over to an Innu system is not something that happens overnight. Indeed that transition towards Innu services is already taking place, as described above. Bringing an Innu law into force will be one more step in that journey. It will be an important step, but it will not be an endpoint. The Innu law is planned to take effect in stages. The first phase will be a law that supports prevention and prevention-related services based on Innu principles, and sets up the governance framework the Innu want to use going forward.⁵⁴⁴ It will take time to reach the complete transition of child protection services to full Innu jurisdiction and service delivery.
356. And it is not a silver bullet. As explained by Amanda Rich, Innu Prevention Director in December 2025, “The Innu do not have – won’t have – a clean slate when we do take over this service.”⁵⁴⁵ The trauma will still be there. It will take time to heal.
357. Yes, the time has come for Innu to take over child and family services, and to design and carry out those services in an Innu way. It is not going to be rushed, but it is happening.
358. That process needs a great deal of support to succeed. That is discussed further in the next section.

⁵⁴³ Exhibit P-411, pp.17-18, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IFN, SIFN, MIFN, et al.

⁵⁴⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Amanda Rich, December 1, 2025, p. 19.

⁵⁴⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Amanda Rich, December 1, 2025, p. 17.

What is needed to support that better future?

359. There's still a long way to go. Implementing the Innu vision takes time. It also takes partners – in particular the federal and provincial governments – to show real commitment, new levels of flexibility, depth of support, and genuine understanding.
360. Our recommendations outline this in more detail. We call on all parties to work with the Innu to implement each and every one of these recommendations. They are each a critical part of the picture.
361. Here, we want to highlight a few overarching themes, focusing on what partners can do to support the Innu throughout the transition to Innu control and the implementation of Innu laws and services.

Real Commitment

362. Innu need partners that stand by them through thick and thin. Who root for them, and celebrate their success. And who step up for them in hard times, with empathy, and without turning to paternalism, blame or stereotypes.
363. There are changes that need to happen right away. But it also takes patience to see this full transition through. And the relationships must continue into the future, well beyond that transition.
364. The Innu, provincial, and federal governments will change their roles, but will continue in a government to government to government relationship in new ways. The commitment needs to be there for the long haul, with the necessary attention it deserves.

New Levels of Flexibility

365. Even while some people within the government want to be supportive, bureaucratic rules that are too restrictive can create enormous barriers. Flexibility does not come naturally within large governments. But to support Innu governance, especially in child and family services, new levels of flexibility are necessary.
366. For example, right now most of the funding that Innu rely on for services – and not just in child and family services, but in all the areas that contribute to the picture of child and family services i.e. those related to well-being – is often in narrow boxes. These little boxes each have their own timelines and limitations. One is available for one year,

for one purpose. Then it disappears. Another is available for three years, for another purpose. Then it disappears.

367. Making funding more sustainable, long term, and consolidated is crucial. The funding package for Innu child protection services must:
- a. Include up-front transition funding;
 - b. Cover the actual costs of services, including remoteness, staffing needs, capital infrastructure and travel;
 - c. Be multi-year (5-10 years) and allow the Innu to redirect funds between programs and services and retain unexpended funds at year-end to re-invest in child protection services in subsequent years;
 - d. Be set through meaningful involvement of the Innu and clear rules to facilitate joint decision making over funding changes;
 - e. Include an escalator to reflect population size, the level of need and risk, service demand, and inflation;
 - f. Provide specific funding envelopes for governance structures, administration, planning, and data systems; and,
 - g. Include a program review study halfway through the funding period to evaluate the funding package and provide an assessment for future funding needs.
368. A specific example is the federal funding related to supporting law-development and capacity building. That funding expires after five years. That is an arbitrary length of time that does not reflect real needs in traumatized communities, dealing with a wide range of challenges, and who are re-building their governance and legal frameworks from the ground up, as well as growing and operating services. This deadline should be eliminated.
369. Funding is not the only context for flexibility. Provincial rules can also be too restrictive, and have created barriers. A still current example is with child protection record checks and related police checks. Innu have urged clear processes that integrate knowledgeable Innu people to help streamline the process, assess screening results quickly, and give a more nuanced and accurate picture. This is important, because even though these rules are intended to create safety, they can place children at greater risk if they end up fuelling a pipeline towards out of community placements, or create staffing gaps in the staffed Innu placement facilities.

Depth of Support

370. Support needs to dig deep. What is needed for real change is not easy.
371. For both federal and provincial governments, there are resource commitments that need to not only increase but shift to a different level.
372. An example of this is the way in which provincial services are not operating at currently anywhere close to a reasonable range of functioning. They are staffed half time, and barely that considering vacancies and turnover. No one can expect that system to succeed. Turning it over to the Innu will set them up to fail unless these significant resource gaps are brought up to allow a reasonable standard of service. The province and federal government should together invest in significant improvements, even before the transition to an Innu system.
373. The resource gap includes funding for child and family services specifically but not only. We will never see real change in child protection services if we do not also address the root causes (in particular, inter-generational trauma, poverty, and unmet needs in child development), and the services that speak to them (major improvements in health care including mental health and addictions care; major improvements in foundational areas for socio-economic well-being such as housing and education; and major improvements in the availability and coordination of services for children with specific needs). Both levels of government have important roles in these areas.
374. If we keep underfunding and underserving these areas, we will keep seeing families disintegrate. That is not acceptable.
375. Innu deserve the same chances at healthy, stable lives as other Canadians. To get there means addressing the legacy of colonization and its impacts. It is indeed a real shift.

Genuine Understanding

376. Finally, partners need open minds, and to take steps to learn. The people within various parts of the government working with Innu, or who have decision-making power that affect the Innu, need to know and understand the Innu.
377. Training, reading and listening can help (including participating in this Inquiry, or accessing its materials). But at its core, it is about relationships. Amanda Rich, as Innu Prevention Director, spoke to the Inquiry about the central role of relationships. “[I]n

order for the province to understand why the Innu is asking for what they're asking for, they need to understand. So I got with my group and I was, like, I think we need to invite the province on Innu territory. Not in offices, not in a formal meeting boardroom; let's bring them on Innu territory and have some real, honest discussions."

378. Innu Prevention Services invested in relationship-building with both provincial and federal officials. And they found that the strength of those relationships have been foundational to the success of Innu programs, and to the ability to keep growing those programs with trust and confidence.

PART V – RECOMMENDATIONS

379. Innu Prevention Services has identified 3 things that every Innu child needs:

1. To learn where they will always belong.
2. Opportunities in Nutshimit to experience Innu-aitun and learn Innu history.
3. At least one consistent & healthy Innu adult in their life.

380. The recommendations of the Innu Representative Organizations are centred on meeting these needs and are grounded in the evidence before the Inquiry, which demonstrates that the overrepresentation of Innu children in child protection services arises from multiple, interconnected factors. These factors include the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, the disruption of Innu families, Innu-aitun and systems of governance, the effects of collective and inter-generational trauma, and persistent social and economic challenges. Meaningful reform requires a comprehensive response that addresses these interconnected causes while supporting Innu-led services, healing, and self-determination grounded in Innu knowledge and values.

1. To learn where they will always belong.

Innu children belong within their nation, the Innu Nation. We want to welcome each Innu child into a healthy family and community, with the services in place that our children need to thrive. And we need to listen, really listen, to each child and youth. A sense of belonging includes the knowledge that you are respected and heard, because you matter.

Essential Services

1. Canada and the Province must invest in addressing the root causes⁵⁴⁶ of child protection services involvement, including:
 - a. Poverty and income insecurity;
 - b. Shortage of housing; and
 - c. Unaddressed inter-generational trauma.
2. Canada should ensure equitable and sustainable funding for Innu education, including support for the implementation of the Regional Education Agreement with Mamu Tshishkutamashutau-Innu Education (MTIE). Innu schools serving Innu children should provide strong bi-cultural learning environments and have access to the psycho-social, developmental and other school-based supports necessary to help children learn, thrive and maintain strong connections to Innu-aitun and communities. We urge the federal government to support the Regional Education Agreement with MTIE to ensure that all Innu children receive the education and supports they need to succeed and to promote their well-being as children, youth and adults, including supports for children with special needs.
3. Provincial and federal governments must help the Innu to expand and strengthen community-based prevention and health/wellness/educational services in Innu communities, in particular by funding Innu services, including:
 - a. early screening, assessment, diagnosis, support and follow-up services for special needs including developmental, learning, cognitive or psychiatric issues, as well as physical issues, recognizing that unmet needs can escalate

⁵⁴⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Lyla Andrew, February 17, 2025, pp. 8, 16-19, 103, 124, February 18, 2025, pp. 18, 27-28, April 8, 2025, p. 6, June 6, 2024, pp. 9, 14; Wendy White, December 1, 2025, p. 6; Mary Pia Benuen, June 3, 2024, p. 15, June 4, 2024, p. 16; Amy Bombay, September 24, 2025, pp. 3-5, 8; Dr. Melody Morton Ninomiya, December 2, 2025, p. 14; Dr. Ken Barter, September 10, 2025, pp. 3, 5 and December 3, 2025, pp. 4, 6, 14; Gregory Rich July 7, 2025 p. 11; Exhibit P-438, p. 80, *Straight to the Point: A Call for Action in the Interests of the Health, Well-Being and Protection of Children and Youth in Newfoundland & Labrador*, 2025, by Ken Barter; Exhibit P-453, p. 5, *Investigator's Report*, March 2026, by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti.

into child protection involvement, placements in care, serious distress and other high-risk outcomes for children and youth.⁵⁴⁷

- b. positive programming that is widely available to all Innu children and youth, including after-school programs, summer camps, mentoring and youth outreach work;
- c. parenting programs and other support for parents;
- d. child, youth and adult mental health services, that provide stabilization and ongoing support;
- e. child, youth and adult addictions programs, including intervention, detoxification, treatment, counselling, after-care programs; and
- f. land-based and cultural programs.⁵⁴⁸

4. Further to #3:

- a. Services should take into account and fully respect an Innu traditional approach / Innu knowledge, and be open to Innu ways of healing, including land-based programs.⁵⁴⁹
- b. Services should also draw on best practices and professional expertise from a medical/western perspective, and have access to professionals with that expertise, where appropriate.⁵⁵⁰
- c. Collaboration between service providers is important, including schools (MTIE), SIFN/MIFN health services, the provincial health system, child and family services prevention services (IRT), placement services providers (including but not limited to SIM and MEGH), and protection services (now still with NL). There needs to be more support for coordinated and multi-sector approaches.
- d. Reliance on federal FNCFS Prevention funding is not the main solution to this. Reliance on child and family services funding alone is not ever going to be sufficient to meet the full range of core child, youth and family needs in Innu communities. Federal and provincial governments should provide adequate, long-term and flexible funding through the relevant sectors, including health, education, housing, community infrastructure, Innu-aitun and recreation.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁷ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 53-54.

⁵⁴⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 144, 170-172, 201.

⁵⁴⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 69, 98, 135.

⁵⁵⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 69, 98, 135.

⁵⁵¹ See e.g. Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry August 6, 2025, pp. 33-35.

Each of these needs strong core funding to support well-being, and there is no way that FNCFS Prevention funding alone could or should be relied on to address the major needs in these sectors. Funding should be provided at levels sufficient to meet identified needs and should be flexible and adaptable to Innu priorities and realities of Innu programs.⁵⁵² Funding should be stable and long-term, reducing reliance on fragmented, short-term funding arrangements.⁵⁵³

- e. FNCFS Prevention funding should remain available, sufficient and flexible to address service gaps and support community priorities, focusing on child and family services dimensions (see also #7 below).
5. Governments, service providers and funding bodies should recognize, support and respect Innu healing programs as valid approaches to healing and wellness. Evaluation of healing programs should take into account their effectiveness for Innu participants and should not rely solely on western models of accreditation or professional certification.
 6. Land-based programming should be recognized and supported as a core prevention, healing and wellness service for Innu children, youth and families.⁵⁵⁴
 7. Innu should be supported to implement universal, proactive prevention services for Innu children and families beginning prenatally and continuing from birth, including outreach and supports for all pregnant mothers and infants. These services, and related funding, should recognize the high levels of inter-generational trauma and child protection involvement in Innu communities.
 8. Canada and the Province should work with the Innu to significantly expand and strengthen services for Innu children and youth leaving care, including transitional housing, reintegration supports and ongoing aftercare. Services should include:
 - a. ongoing case management and continuity of support before, during and after the transition from care;

⁵⁵² See e.g. Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry August 6, 2025, pp. 33-35.

⁵⁵³ For a few examples, see Exhibit P-441, p. 34, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IFN, SIFN, MIFN et al. For example, youth programming in both communities is mainly funded by temporary funding that is expiring. Youth programming is essential for prevention, to building a positive self-identity and keep youth involved in activities they care about, rather than drifting into drug or alcohol use.

⁵⁵⁴ See: Part 2. *Opportunities in Nutshimit to experience Innu children and learn Innu history*.

- b. active involvement of youth, family members, service providers and other supports in transition planning and implementation;
- c. counselling, mentoring and cultural supports, including support for youth who feel disconnected from Innu-aitun, language or community;
- d. support for family reunification and community reintegration, including the use of circles and other culturally appropriate approaches where appropriate;
- e. assistance with housing, education, training, employment, life skills and basic living expenses;⁵⁵⁵ and
- f. the development of transitional housing options in both Innu communities, including dedicated spaces with appropriate staff support.

See also #27 below, on transition planning before the child/youth leaves care.

Really Listening to Children and Youth

9. Children and youth need to be considered an active agent in their own healing and care.⁵⁵⁶ They need to be given information. They need to be asked questions and given safe opportunities to speak. They need to be taken seriously. Decisions affecting Innu children and youth should be guided by their best interests, individual circumstances and expressed views. Policies, practices and placement decisions should allow sufficient flexibility to respond to the unique needs, relationships and cultural connections of each child or youth.⁵⁵⁷
10. Listening to Innu children and youth does not mean that their wishes will determine every decision. Children and youth should be supported to express their views, and those views should be heard, respected and given meaningful consideration. Decision-making should be grounded in relationships, trust and a genuine commitment to understanding the child's perspective.
11. Ensure that transitions involving Innu children and youth, including placement changes, reunification and transitions into or out of care, are child-centred, trauma-informed and

⁵⁵⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁵⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp.193-196.

⁵⁵⁷ Evidence before the Inquiry highlighted the significant risks associated with unnecessarily removing Innu children and youth from their families and communities, while also demonstrating the importance of considering each child's individual circumstances, wishes, relationships and cultural connections when making placement decisions. The Inquiry also heard evidence that some children and youth developed important and lasting attachments in out-of-community placements, underscoring the need for flexibility and individualized decision-making in determining a child's best interests.

culturally safe. Transitions should be carefully planned, minimize disruption and maintain important relationships, cultural connections and supports wherever possible. Too often, such transitions are not giving enough priority to the child or youth's feelings and how it will be experienced from their perspective.

12. If an Innu child or youth dies while involved with, or following involvement with, the child protection system, an independent review should be conducted that includes a review of documents, interviews, and facilitated circle involving family members, community representatives and relevant service providers. The review process should seek to understand the circumstances surrounding the death, identify lessons learned and support accountability, healing and system improvement. The review process should be informed by the principles and approaches used in this Inquiry.⁵⁵⁸

Keeping the Connection

13. Amend provincial legislation to ensure that Innu children in care are always permitted and encouraged to speak Innu-aimun. No child should be denied or restricted from using Innu-aimun while in care, including in out-of-community and out-of-province placements.⁵⁵⁹
14. Amend legislation to ensure that Innu children in care have access to, and are supported in accessing, cultural practices, experiences and relationships that maintain and strengthen their Innu identity.
15. Support and strengthen family- and community-based care arrangements, including care provided by grandparents, extended family members and other trusted caregivers. This may require greater flexibility and support than is currently available. Standards related to housing, licensing, previous child protection involvement or criminal records should not automatically prevent consideration of a placement where it may otherwise be in the child's best interests. Decision-makers should consider the whole circumstances of the child and caregiver, including the child's need for family, community and cultural connection, and identify the supports necessary to help the placement succeed. The best interests of the child should remain the overriding consideration.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ This recommendation flows from the impact of the investigation processes conducted in this Inquiry, including the circles. Some families specifically made this recommendation; see e.g. Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Kirby Snowden John Mistenapeo (Piwas), p. 25.

⁵⁵⁹ Several cases came up where people spoke about being prohibited or discouraged from speaking Innu-aimun in non-Innu placements. This came up in several community hearing testimonies, as well as several of the investigations. This included cases that appeared to be fairly recent, and certainly within the last 20 years. See for example (ii) The Province Has Not Set Up Its System To Succeed - Lack of Service Delivery in Innu-aimun.

⁵⁶⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp.188-193.

16. Where non-Innu placements cannot be avoided, additional measures should be implemented to ensure that Innu children and youth maintain meaningful connections to their language, Innu-aitun family and community. Cultural Connection Plans (CCPs) alone are insufficient. The Province should:

- a. require CCPs only for Innu children in non-Innu placements;
- b. ensure that staffed placements serving Innu children and youth have access to personnel who speak and understand Innu-aitun to support communication with children, youth and families and to support language development;
- c. where such personnel are unavailable, provide resources for translators, interpreters and Innu-aitun instructors;
- d. provide the staffing, funding and other resources necessary to facilitate regular family, community and cultural connections, including visits.

2. Opportunities in Nutshimit.

Innu land, Nitassinan, is a foundational source of Innu well-being, especially when people spend time out in the country, Nutshimit, connecting with Innu traditions that go back generations. All Innu children need that connection, no matter where they are living or in what arrangement. Their families need that connection too.

17. Innu-aitun and Nutshimit-based (land-based) programs and activities are critical to the holistic health of Innu children and their families. These must be seen and funded as baseline services for Innu even when they may not meet western standards of accreditation or compliance. (See also #3-6 above.)
18. Increase and establish sustainable funding for land-based programming, recreation and cultural development in Innu communities. These programs should be broadly available to support universal, community-based prevention and promote the well-being of Innu children, youth and families.
19. Where an Innu child is placed outside their home community, they should be provided with regular and meaningful opportunities to maintain connections with their family, community, Innu-aitun and language, including participation in land-based activities and experiences in Nutshimit. (See also #16 above.)

3. At least one consistent & healthy Innu adult in their life.

It is beneficial to have many consistent and healthy adults in a child's life. At a bare minimum, each Innu child needs at least one such adult. In most cases, this should be an Innu caregiver. In rare cases, for example in a blended family, or in other situations where a child in care has made strong connections with non-Innu, it might work to have a healthy non-Innu person be a caregiver, while Innu adults provide a strong, consistent connection in other ways.

Support for parents and reunification

20. Support efforts to reunify children with their parents and home communities, where appropriate. Policies should be updated to ensure this is the central goal. Reunification planning should begin as early as possible and be supported through clear planning, appropriate services and realistic, consistent expectations for parents and caregivers.
21. Reunification should not mark the end of service involvement. Children, parents and caregivers should continue to receive supports following reunification, including emotional support, respite, parenting assistance and other services necessary to strengthen family relationships, promote stability and reduce the risk of future child protection involvement.

Placement Planning

22. Non-Innu, out-of-community and out-of-province placements should be minimized and used only where necessary. They rarely work well, and bring significant risks.⁵⁶¹ To support this, NL's child protection services (SSWB) should:
 - a. Improve access to mental health and other specialized treatment services / specialized placement within Innu communities to reduce the need for

⁵⁶¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, p.63; Community Hearing Testimonies of Sheshatshiu Innu, November 5, 2024, p. 9-11, 13; Elder Penote Antuan, October 25, 2023, pp. 2-4; George Gregoire, April 17, 2023, p. 11-12; Mushuau Innu, April 19, 2023, pp. 3, 7; Gregory Rich, April 20, 2023, pp. 6-7; Bernard Rich Green, April 20, 2023 pp. 9-11; Elder Tshaukuesh (Elizabeth) Penashue, October 26, 2023 pp. 4-5 and June 5, 2023, pp. 11-12; Matthew Andrew, October 17, 2023, p. 9; Florence Milley, June 9, 2023 pp. 2, 5; Mary Angela Gregoire, June 8, 2023, pp. 4-6; Sheshatshiu Innu, June 5, 2023, pp. 14-15; Joanna Michel, June 6, 2023, p. 5; Jerome Jack, June 7, 2023 pp. 12-13; Elder Penote Antuan, October 16, 2023, pp. 2-3 and October 17, 2023; Frederick Pinette, October 16, 2023, pp. 9-12; Eugene Hart, October 26, 2023, pp. 20-21; Basile Penashue, October 26, 2023, pp. 22-25; Munik Penashue, November 30, 2023, pp. 2-4, 6; Chelsea Penashue, October 17, 2023, pp. 17-18, 21; Shelton Toma, June 27, 2024, p. 12; Kenny Milley, November 6, 2024, pp. 7-8; Sheshatshiu Innu, November 6, 2024, pp. 4-8, 11-12 and Tricia Pastitshi, April 10, 2025, pp. 2, 4-5, 7.

distance placements, collaborating with other service providers (see also #3 above);

- b. Continue to support building, licensing, operation and sustainability of placement options within the community, both with families and in staffed placements provided through Innu providers such as SIM and MEGH;
- c. Increase funding and support to recruit, retain and support Innu caregivers and foster parents. This includes flexibility and discretion where appropriate in assessing suitability. There should be a clear, consistent process to address record check assessment in a collaborative way as between Innu and provincial service providers; and
- d. Require that no placement outside the child's community be considered until all reasonable options for placement within the child's family and community, with supports to maintain and strengthen Innu-aitun, have been fully explored, and ensure this is implemented, including providing training on how to do that.

Support for caregivers

- 23. Support children, youth and families through flexible arrangements that do not depend on formal child protection status or legal designations. Services, supports and financial assistance should be available based on identified needs and should recognize and strengthen family- and community-based caregiving arrangements. The kinship program in particular needs attention to ensure adequate support.
- 24. Update rules and policies to assist traditional adoptive parents to be better recognized by government departments, including for medical, educational, and other purposes. Traditional adoptive parents should be able to access services, information and decision-making processes affecting the children in their care.
- 25. Strengthen supports for foster parents and other caregivers of Innu children and youth. This should include access to relevant information about the child, timely and accurate communication regarding plans and expectations, ongoing follow-up and resources, emotional support, and recognition of the important role caregivers play in promoting the well-being of children and youth.
- 26. Development and implementation of culturally relevant and safe training for foster parents who care for Innu children/youth. This training should be developed in partnership with the Innu communities and should be available to both Innu and non-Innu caregivers. Training should include Innu history, Innu-aitun, Innu-aimun, inter-generational trauma and the importance of maintaining family, community and cultural connections.

Transitions out of care

27. Children and youth in care should receive early, individualized and community-driven transition planning when preparing to leave care. Transition planning should:

- a. begin as early as possible and be community-driven,⁵⁶² maintain connections with family, community and other important supports throughout a child's time in care;⁵⁶³
- b. identify a lead agency, dedicated worker or other accountable person to coordinate the transition process;⁵⁶⁴ and
- c. allow flexibility on timing accordingly to reflect the readiness and needs to the youth.⁵⁶⁵

Ensuring the Provincial child protection system is equipped to respond

28. Appoint a provincial director responsible for Innu child and family services coordination and the transition to Innu jurisdiction.⁵⁶⁶ Given the Innu are committed to assuming jurisdiction using the recognition provided under the federal legislation, the Province should designate a dedicated official within the Office of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation or the SSWB to coordinate and support that transition. See also the section below for more on this transition.

29. All Innu children in care should officially come under the administration of the Innu Zone Manager for their home community, rather than the Zone Manager affiliated with the location of their placement. This will help with Protocol compliance, coordination with Innu Representatives and others in Innu Prevention Services, and with tracking. The Province should establish policies to support collaboration between the Innu Zone Manager and staff in the placement location. While local staff at the placement location will continue to play an important role in service delivery, overall case planning, coordination and decision-making should remain connected to the child's home community, i.e. should be within the Innu Zone.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶² Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, p. 227.

⁵⁶³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 160-161.

⁵⁶⁴ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁶⁵ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 227-228.

⁵⁶⁶ Exhibit P-444, p.4, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁶⁷ See Exhibit P-444, p. 10, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

30. Amend the Children, Youth and Families Act (CYFA) to specifically address, and include, the best interests of Innu children.⁵⁶⁸ The Province should ensure that these considerations are fully reflected in policy, practice and decision-making affecting Innu children and families.
31. NL must develop and implement a workforce strategy to ensure stable, continuous and adequately staffed child protection services for Innu communities. The Province should:
- a. ensure continuous file coverage and service delivery, whether or not a rotational model is used for staffing (i.e. protection files cannot be staffed part time, they need a responsible person at all times, who is familiar with the file and able to move decisions forward);
 - b. increase the number of positions, which would be required further to (a) in order to provide consistent services;⁵⁶⁹
 - c. promote the recruitment and retention of full-time workers living in or near Innu communities, as much as possible;
 - d. reduce staff vacancies through improved compensation, housing supports, incentives and working conditions;⁵⁷⁰ and
 - e. support long-term workforce stability and continuity of relationships for children, youth and families.
32. Mandatory training for all child protection staff serving Innu Zones, trauma informed knowledge and practices must be acknowledged by SSWB as the shared framework on which collaborative work with Innu moves forward. As a priority, staff in the Innu Zones of SSWB must receive training on, at minimum:
- a. Innu history, inter-generational trauma, and trauma-informed practices;
 - b. anti-racism;
 - c. unique impacts of being disconnected from the land (Nutshimit) and land-based cultural practices;
 - d. Innu expectations, in dealing with parents who are struggling, for an approach that is compassionate, respectful and treats people with dignity;

⁵⁶⁸ Exhibit, P-444, pp. 4-5, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁶⁹ See e.g. Exhibit P-454, pp. 60-62, *A Report on Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they Affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English; Submissions of Nunatsiavut Government paras 33-34.

⁵⁷⁰ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, p.180.

- e. the Federal legislation, including the minimum standards;
 - f. the Protocol Agreement and any other applicable agreements with Innu as may be developed; and
 - g. Innu services, including an orientation to working in Innu communities and collaboration with IRTS staff.
33. NL should update its policies and practices to improve communication with parents when child protection is involved or a child is in care. Communication should be timely, honest, accessible and meaningful.⁵⁷¹ The Province should:
- a. ensure translation is available whenever needed, and increase the use of Innu-aimun in communications;
 - b. adopt a presumption of open communication, subject only to limited exceptions where necessary to protect a child;
 - c. ensure that parents are actively involved in discussions regarding health care, treatment plans, incidents, discharge planning, placement changes and the well-being of their child; and
 - d. communicate significant developments, incidents and concerns promptly and transparently.
34. Specifically, to increase the use of Innu-aimun in communications, NL should professionalize and expand Innu interpretation services in the delivery of child protection services and in legal proceedings involving Innu families (especially child protection proceedings),⁵⁷² including:
- a. Funding and implementing a 5-year pilot project in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish to train Innu interpreters in both communities to support child protection cases and Innu who must engage with the legal system;
 - b. creating and funding three permanent Innu interpreter positions through provincial court services.
35. Canada should work with IRTS on funding for First Nation Representatives Services to ensure there are sufficient Innu Representatives available to support communication, understanding and engagement with Innu families involved with child protection services. This links with #32, above.

⁵⁷¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 46-47.

⁵⁷² Exhibit P-454, pp. 58-59, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

36. NL should work with IRTS to strengthen and formalize the role of Innu Representatives within the child protection system. Innu Representatives should be recognized as essential participants in supporting communication, collaboration and culturally appropriate decision-making.⁵⁷³ This includes:
- a. required consultation with an Innu Representative before the province consents to an adoption under its adoption legislation;⁵⁷⁴
 - b. requiring plans of care to be collaborative with Innu Representatives.⁵⁷⁵
 - c. ensuring that Innu children have access to an Innu Representative during interviews.⁵⁷⁶
37. NL should mandate the use of collaborative plans of care in court proceedings. Plans of care should be developed jointly by provincial child protection staff and Innu Representatives and presented to the court as collaborative plans whenever possible.⁵⁷⁷
38. The Province should ensure that all placements serving Innu children and youth are properly supervised, monitored and held accountable to applicable standards. Any departure from established standards should be clearly documented, justified and demonstrated to be in the best interests of the child. The Province must maintain effective oversight and respond promptly to concerns affecting the quality and safety of care because it should not tolerate ongoing non-compliance.⁵⁷⁸
39. NL should amend the CYFA to provide greater flexibility in timelines that may result in children entering continuous custody. The legislation should allow decision-makers to take into account the progress, circumstances and efforts of parents, as well as the child's best interests, when determining whether additional time for reunification is appropriate.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷³ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 153-155; Final Submissions Regarding the Death Investigation of Faith Nalin Rich, para 26, PDF p. 10.

⁵⁷⁴ See P-444, p. 6, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁷⁵ See P-444, p. 9, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁷⁶ See P-444, p. 9, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁷⁷ See P-444, p. 9, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁷⁸ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp.151, 221-222.

⁵⁷⁹ See Exhibit P-444, p. 6, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

40. NL should update policies and procedures governing child protection clearance checks to ensure that they are fair, transparent and responsive to the circumstances of Innu children, families and caregivers. Clearance checks should support informed decision-making while allowing appropriate flexibility and consideration of context.⁵⁸⁰
41. NL's legislation should have a clear connection to agreements between the Province and the Innu relating to child and family services, including the Protocol Agreement and any successor agreements. Legislation should provide a framework that promotes compliance, accountability and collaborative implementation of such agreements.⁵⁸¹
42. The Province must commit to meaningful and timely systemic transformation in its approach to Innu children, youth and families. This commitment should be reflected in the implementation of these recommendations, supported by concrete actions, adequate resources and sustained leadership.
43. The Province must continue to engage in a reconciliation process with the Innu that supports truth-telling, accountability, and the development of renewed relationships founded on collaboration, mutual respect, communication and improved services.⁵⁸²

Ensuring the legal system is equipped to respond

44. NL should expand access to legal aid services for Innu families in child protection matters.⁵⁸³ This should include:
- a. expanding legal aid eligibility so that all Innu parents in child protection cases can receive legal representation;
 - b. legal help should be available earlier, including at the prevention, investigation and pre-hearing stage;
 - c. ensuring regular and predictable in-person access to legal aid lawyers within Innu communities.
45. Establish and support dedicated court hearing spaces in both Innu communities (both in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish) to improve access to the court system.⁵⁸⁴ Canada and

⁵⁸⁰ See Exhibit P-444, pp. 6-7, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁸¹ See Exhibit P-444, p. 11, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat.

⁵⁸² Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp. 135, 166.

⁵⁸³ Exhibit P-454, pp. 54-55, *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

⁵⁸⁴ Exhibit P-454, pp. 66-68. *A Report on the Aspects of Legal Representation and Court Process in Labrador as they affect Parents of Innu Children*, April 6, 2026, by William English.

the Province should work in partnership with SIFN and MIFN to provide the capital, operational and technical supports necessary for these hearing spaces. This should include:

- a. re-establishing a regular circuit court in Sheshatshiu, allowing for in-person court attendance on a regular basis in both communities;
- b. ensuring that there are dedicated court hearing spaces in both communities, which are equipped with reliable technology and connectivity to support remote participation where necessary; and
- c. provide ongoing technical and administrative support for the operations of the hearing spaces.

46. NL should develop and implement a practice direction for Innu child protection cases. This practice direction should include:

- a. judicial case conferences to mediate issues in child protection cases;
- b. in-person hearings to take place in the community by default, unless all parties consent to another arrangement and meaningful participation can be ensured;
- c. a regular and predictable schedule for court sittings and legal aid services within the communities.

Strongly supporting the transition to fully Innu child and family services

47. The successful transition to Innu jurisdiction over child and family services to be priority for all governments and organizations involved in serving Innu children and families.⁵⁸⁵ Governments should work in partnership with the Innu to ensure that the transition is adequately supported, properly resourced and guided by the best interests and well-being of Innu children, youth and families.⁵⁸⁶

48. The Province to amend its legislation to affirm support for Indigenous jurisdiction, including through recognition of, and consistency with, the federal legislation respecting Indigenous child and family services.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁵ See for instance: Page 19 of the Formal Hearing Testimonies of Steve Joudry, September 12, 2025; pp. 39-40, 40-41, 156 and Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, op.156.

⁵⁸⁶ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, p.229.

⁵⁸⁷ See Exhibit P-444, pp. 3-4, *Submissions for the Review of the Children, Youth and Families Act*, August 15, 2025, by Innu Round Table Secretariat. Example referred to there from BC.

49. Canada and NL and others should work with the Innu, including IRTS and MTIE, along with the SIFN and MIFN, to help support the development of an Innu workforce capable of leading and delivering child, family and community services.⁵⁸⁸ Governments, educational institutions and service providers should expand accessible education, training and professional development opportunities that allow Innu community members to obtain qualifications and experience while remaining connected to their communities.⁵⁸⁹ Priority areas should include social work, mental health, counselling, psychology and other professions that support the well-being of Innu children, youth and families. This includes continuing to financially support the ladder program now being delivered by Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.⁵⁹⁰
50. All parties should continue to support Innu efforts to recruit from within and educate from within. Long-term workforce development initiatives should focus on increasing the number of Innu professionals equipped to serve Innu children, youth and families.
51. Canada should provide sustained growth in prevention funding to support the development and implementation of Innu child and family services. Prevention funding should be flexible, long-term and sufficient to support a strong continuum of services focused on family well-being, early intervention and community-based prevention.
52. The federal and provincial governments should provide flexible, long-term funding to support Innu law development, implementation planning and related capacity-building activities. Funding arrangements should recognize the complexity of the transition to Innu jurisdiction and should not be constrained by arbitrary timelines that do not reflect the realities of nation-building and system development. Canada's 5 year limit on Capacity Building funding for this purpose is too restrictive and not realistic. Note that in some provinces, provincial governments have supported jurisdiction transitions with funding in addition to the federal funding, and this should be considered by NL as well.
53. The federal and provincial governments should be ready to provide strong, long-term financial support for the implementation of Innu child and family services laws and the exercise of Innu jurisdiction. Funding should be needs-based, multi-year and sufficiently flexible to support the development of an effective Innu child and family services system, rather than relying on existing funding formulas or assumptions. Funding approaches should take into account:
- a. the need to develop alternatives to existing child protection models, i.e. funding will not necessarily align with current funding (if it did, it would just

⁵⁸⁸ See: Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, September 12, 2025, p.20

⁵⁸⁹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, p. 181.

⁵⁹⁰ Exhibit P-441, p. 17, *Report on Innu Services for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, November 11, 2025, by IRTS, SIFN, MIFN et al.

repeat current deficiencies, and fail to address the positive changes that an Innu system is bringing about);

- b. existing staffing shortages and service gaps;
- c. meeting capital infrastructure needs (see below);
- d. ongoing investments in Innu capacity development, education and training;
- e. the fact that Innu workers are going to need significant supports and different staffing models to allow for their own well-being and the fact that they are immersed in inter-generational trauma throughout their families and communities; and
- f. the long-term nature of nation-building, system development and implementation.⁵⁹¹

54. Federal and provincial governments should provide capital and operations & maintenance funding to develop and sustain the infrastructure required for Innu child and family services. Priority investments should include:

- a. significant office and program space for Innu child and family services in both Sheshatshiu and Natuashish;
- b. sufficient spaces for healing and community services work to occur in and around both Innu communities, including spaces in which to do counseling, addictions treatment, family-based programming, and cabins to support land-based programming;⁵⁹²
- c. meeting the needs of Innu-run placement facilities and related infrastructure, including but not limited to: replacing older buildings in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish that were transitioned to the emergency placement homes in Natuashish and to the group home in Sheshatshiu without adequate capital support (those facilities do not meet the needs of the service; purpose-built placement facilities will be much more effective); ensuring the group home now in Goose Bay can move successfully to Natuashish; facilities for staff accommodations in Natuashish (which may be part of the group home building proposal); updates to the emergency placement homes in Sheshatshiu to meet current needs; and office spaces for both SIM and MEGH;

⁵⁹¹ Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petti, March 31, 2026, pp.230-231.

⁵⁹² Formal Hearing Testimony of Kenn Richard and Tara Petty, March 31, 2026, p. 180.

- d. supportive youth transitional housing in both communities, to provide safe, service-supported housing for youth leaving care and reintegrating into the community;
 - e. supportive family reunification housing in both communities, to support intensive services that can help avoid separation or facilitate reunification/reintegration;
 - f. facilities that can provide accommodations for visits to the communities by children/youth in care and their caregivers; and
 - g. accommodations for staff, including professional and/or rotational staff.
55. The Province should work in partnership with the Innu to support ongoing data collection, research, analysis and reporting related to Innu child and family services. This should include continued participation in initiatives such as OCANDS, support for Innu-led data analysis and tracking, and the development of information systems that assist with planning, evaluation, accountability and continuous improvement.⁵⁹³ This should begin right away, to build on the work done at the Inquiry. It is also critical to supporting the transition to Innu jurisdiction in a way that allows for evidence-informed planning, analysis and decision-making.

General

Facing the Past

56. Canada and the Province should apologize for the harm they have done to the Innu through the child protection system – in the way they have run it (the Province), the way they funded it (Canada), and the way that their actions have contributed to the inter-generational trauma that has driven so many towards it (both). It is important to acknowledge what has happened, and to take responsibility.
57. There are key missing links in acknowledging past harms, particularly the harms done to past generations of Innu children, that have contributed to inter-generational trauma that fuel the over-representation of Innu children, youth and families in the child protection system to this day. Denying these harms is compounding the original harm. It sends the message that survivors do not matter, or that their experiences were not real or were not significant. It makes healing more difficult for survivors and their descendants.

⁵⁹³ See evidence of Formal Hearing Testimony of Steve Joudry, August 6, 2025, p. 40-41; and Exhibit P-458, p. 43, *A Report for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences, and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System*, April 30, 2026, by Barbara Fallon & Tara Black.

- a. It is important for both Canada and the Province to acknowledge and apologize for their roles in the day schools that operated in the Innu communities, and to negotiate a fair settlement of the Innu Day Schools Class Action.⁵⁹⁴ Innu were not part of the compensation or healing funds that accompanied settlements of the national residential schools or national day schools cases. Survivors of Innu day schools have still, to this day, received no apology and no compensation. No truth has been acknowledged by the Crown, and there has been no reconciliation. This Inquiry heard how much this trauma has affected Innu communities; not only survivors, but further generations as well. The settlement should address both survivors and community healing.
- b. Resolving the Innu Day Schools matter opens the door to more meaningful reconciliation regarding other abuse inflicted on Innu children in institutional settings. This includes an apology on Labrador residential schools such as the Yale Schools (Northwest River “dormitory”), which Canada and NL were willing to make but which the Innu have previously been unwilling to officially accept, given that it deals with only a small portion of Innu experience. We also ask for an apology to the Innu for the children sent to the notorious Mount Cashel. These are important missing pieces in the work of reconciliation that should not be overlooked.

Staying Accountable As We Go Forward

- 58. The Parties should establish a process to monitor, track, publicly report on and ensure accountability for the implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations.

⁵⁹⁴ *Innu Nation et al. v Canada (Attorney General)*, Court file number 2024 01G CP 00654, Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Acronyms and Innu-Aimun Terms

- SIFN – Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation
- MIFN – Mushuau Innu First Nation
- IRTS – Innu Round Table Secretariat
- SIM - Shushepeshipan Ishpitentamun Mitshuap Inc., which operates staffed Innu placement facilities in Sheshatshiu
- MEGH – Mushuau EPH and Group Home Inc., which operates staffed Innu placement facilities in Natuashish and Goose Bay
- Canada – the Government of Canada
- Province or NL – the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador the provincial government
- ISC – Indigenous Services Canada, inclusive of all prior and future department names
- "child protection services" has generally been used here, but you may also see references to departmental acronyms CYFS, CSSD, FAMA, or SSWB
- Nutshimit - the country, being in nature in Nitassinan
- Nitassinan - Innu territory
- Innu-aimun – Innu language
- Innu-aitun – Innu culture / the Innu way of being and living

ALL OF WHICH IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED, July 10, 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith Rae', with a large loop at the end.

Judith Rae, Benjamin Brookwell, Jolene Ashini,
Victoria Wicks, Haritha Popuri, Chanel Carlson

Lawyers for the Innu Representative
Organizations to the Inquiry (Innu Nation,
Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, and Mushuau
Innu First Nation) and the Innu Round Table
Secretariat