



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

English Transcript

Volume 31

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

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COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [Inquiry in progress at start of recording] – to start the session again today, you invite the prayer – prayer first.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
Elizabeth's doing the prayer.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes, we'll have the prayer before we begin.

Thank you.

ELDER PENASHUE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And so before we begin this morning, just again a reminder regarding the healing support services that are available here in the building and I'll just give you the names once again.

So, today, it's Mary Sillett as the healing support service worker; Edward Nuna as the team lead; Sean Allen as our clinical support; and Louise Bradley as our healing support services consultant. And the tent is operating this morning; smoke coming out of the chimney at 8:30 so it should be nice and cozy, anybody wants to go out there.

Thank you.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

We're happy to have Helen back again this morning and I'll remind you that the oath that you took – made yesterday, rather – is still in effect.

Thank you.

H. ASTER: Yeah.

C. URQUHART: Good morning, Helen.

H. ASTER: Good morning.

C. URQUHART: I first wanted to ask you, yesterday, you spoke about your brother, and I wondered if you knew if there was a documentary about him?

H. ASTER: Yeah, there was a documentary called missing treasures. I had a copy of the disc, but I think someone loaned it and I haven't received it.

C. URQUHART: So, we'll make an effort to locate that for the Inquiry.

I'm going to ask you just a few more questions about your work.

Firstly, how many staff or employees are there within Social Health?

H. ASTER: There is 29 staff but that would also – another seven or eight with the Youth Services. So that's over 30 staff.

C. URQUHART: And as the director, are you responsible for budgets?

H. ASTER: Yes.

C. URQUHART: And what type of funding do you have? Is that, sort of, core funding or project base?

H. ASTER: Some of the budgets I look after are core funding and we have the ones that are project funded.

C. URQUHART: And so is funding a challenge ever for the – for Social Health?

H. ASTER: Yes, it is, because for the Youth Services, they are really lacking on funding. They don't have much funding for the youth. So, what we do right now, now we share funding from other programs for them to have programs. So, it's really a challenge. If you want to do programs and you don't have the money to do it, it's really hard.

C. URQUHART: And what are your primary sources for funding?

H. ASTER: That will be ISC and Health Canada.

C. URQUHART: Tshenashkumitin.

Those are all of my questions.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Not done yet.

I will now invite the Parties with Standing to step into the microphone, beginning with Canada.

Any questions to ask?

A. RANDALL: Canada has no questions.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

The province, please?

N. SHEAVES: The province has no questions.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

Innu Nation?

Thank you.

J. ASHINI: We have one quick question.

Helen, from your experience at Social Health, what are the main social health issues in Sheshatshiu?

H. ASTER: I can't say that there's one main issue; there are a lot.

From my experience, there's a lot of social issues dealing with addictions – really all kinds of problems. You can't focus on one topic; you have to focus the whole thing. If you're dealing with one person, you have to go through the trauma of grief, addictions, isolation. So, I can't say that there's only

one main problem. There's a whole lot. So, I can't measure what's the main problem.

J. ASHINI: Could you list some of those problems?

H. ASTER: There would be domestic violence – there's domestic violence, there's grief, there's relationship problems, there's addictions, there's isolation, there's also child abuse – you deal with a whole lot of things. If you're dealing with one person, you have to go through – back through the trauma – poverty, housing. You have to look at the whole – what the whole problem comes from so that's my main focus is, I don't – we don't usually deal with one problem; you have to deal with a whole lot of things before you can go forward with a person.

J. ASHINI: I have a couple of follow-ups, but I'll let Anne and Charlene translate.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

J. ASHINI: Yesterday you talked about the closure of Apenam's House. Was there an effect from the closure of this treatment centre on the social health of the Innu?

H. ASTER: Yes. Yes, there is effect because we don't have a residential program no more. And with that program being shut down now, we're getting more and more people wanting to – wanting a residential program and, due to that, we're getting people having more addictions in the community and there's no services for them.

With also – we had some funding for – during COVID, we did receive funding for private treatment, but now there is no COVID, there is no funding for them to go to private treatment. It is really hard when people want to go to a three-months program and there is nothing available for them. Which also affects the Apenam's House, because Apenam's House was a three-month program, and it was in the

community. But you don't have funding for that anymore and you get people relapsing, even though they did the day program. You get more people relapsing when there is no program – that's the program – because we only run 28-day program.

J. ASHINI: Yesterday you mentioned that Nutshimit is a healing place, along with a language. Would you say the decline in people speaking Innu-aimun in Sheshatshiu is a social health issue?

H. ASTER: Can you repeat that?

J. ASHINI: Yesterday you mentioned that Nutshimit was a healing place and people speaking Innu-aimun. Would you say that less people speaking Innu-aimun now, would you say that that is a social health issue?

H. ASTER: Yes, I – yeah, I could say that, because you see a lot of youth speaking English language and you don't see many people – many youth speaking Innu nowadays. Because in my home I have youth as well, I have grandchildren who are speaking English and it's affecting what – it's affecting the culture, because most of the kids, the youth, they don't know the language and where they coming from. They don't know who they are.

There's not much of a programming in cultural activities. It's starting now, but the language is really the main thing that they're losing. And I'm guilty of that, too, because I have grandchildren who are speaking English in my home. And I, too, speak to them in English.

So, it's affecting the language and the culture. The traditions are also gone, you don't see much. And it's a social issue for the community and if you don't know where you're coming from and that's affects your identity as well. So, it's also something that we should be moving forward to promote our language and culture and it's not happening. It's only a few people that are doing it. So, I think it's a social issue.

J. ASHINI: Helen, can you tell me about housing and any relationship to social health?

H. ASTER: What do you mean?

J. ASHINI: This – a shortage of housing, is it a social health issue for the Innu?

H. ASTER: Yeah, it is because you get so many young families now – you have so many families who are – who need of housing, because I can easily say there's housing shortage in the community because I'm going through it, too, because I have two – three families living besides me in my home, a two-bedroom house. I have grandchildren in there. So, housing issue is a big problem.

And I find that it's also a good thing if you have your whole family there. Even though I have a two-bedroom house, I still can say my family is in there. But it's really hard when you need an extra room for any family that comes in your house.

So, it's a social issue as well, and families are affected if they go door to door – house to house and they're affecting – they can't have a stable environment. That's also an issue for the families.

J. ASHINI: Coming back to young families that you just mentioned, could you tell me about young parents and its relationship to social health in Sheshatshiu?

H. ASTER: When I talk about young families, I'm talking about teenage moms. The challenges they have is that they don't have enough experience to parent because they're children themselves. I find that when I'm dealing with a young parent and – they don't have enough experience to be parenting their child, because themselves are children. Like, they're 16-year-olds, they're 15-year-olds, they haven't really learned how to parent and that's where the social issues come, because it's affecting the person. If you can't parent a child, as you are a child yourself, and it's really hard for them.

I've deal with a lot of parents in my years, young parents, when they're trying their best, but they can't parent their children themselves and they don't know where to turn to, and we don't have a programs like that in a long time. I – like, when I did my – when I was working as a family resource coordinator, I did parenting courses for them and some of the things – they didn't know how to care for a child as they didn't – they've never parent and they were youth themselves, which they didn't – they were not adults yet. So it's really hard to see this kind of social issues affecting our community.

Like, I have a – like, I'll mention my foster daughter. She had a child when she was 16, and she had two children now. She couldn't care for her child. If we weren't there teaching her how to be parent, I think, she would have let her children go. But now, that kind of behaviour is affecting her. She's never been a child herself. To be a child and to start being a parent is really hard. Now she's out there getting those – getting the – out there doing the social issues that are affecting the community, like addictions, and she have no home and you can't bring her in your home because of CSSD rules.

I try very hard to be there for her but I'm – if rules are set in your home by someone else, it's really hard. Or, if you don't follow them, you'll lose that little boy that's staying in my home. If I don't follow the rules, he'll be out there somewhere taken care of by somebody else. But I have to – the youth that are going through this, it's – it must be hard, because I didn't have a child when I was in my teens. I had a child when I was 24. I was old enough to know, so I can't imagine what they're going through.

J. ASHINI: In relation to child care, can you tell me about the lack of child care in Sheshatshiu and its relation, if any, to social health?

H. ASTER: Yes, I think also that's also a big problem in the community because there's no place, no – there is a place, but there's no space for child care for the community.

There's a lot of parents who wanna work, but they don't have child care.

In my department, in Social Health, we do get the issues like that, even with the workers. They don't have child care, so they miss work, so they don't – the financial part is really hard when you don't have child care. You can't work, you have to stay home, and the only income you could get is the income support or the child benefit.

And we also get a lot of people coming to food bank. We – they have ability to work but they don't have child care, and food bank is – we get a lot of people coming to the food bank because they don't have enough food in their home. So that's also the social issue for the community.

J. ASHINI: Tshenashkumitin. Those are my questions.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Before you leave, I forgot to ask you to state your name and who you're representing for the transcript record.

J. ASHINI: Jolene Ashini representing the Innu.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you so much.

I'll ask Commissioner Devine if he has any comments, response, questions, please.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes, thank you.

I just would like to ask a couple of questions about your funding. You said you apply for funding, seems like from different sources, so I'm just trying to get a sense of, for example, with your Family Services branch now, when you apply for funding under that umbrella, is it just one application or are there several different applications that you do?

H. ASTER: We get core funding for Family Resource Centre and the parent support. So that funding, we only have to do is – it's

been there for so long but the only thing we have to do is do reports and then we get a core funding. The amount is never changed, so –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay.

H. ASTER: – even though the incomes are going up and the prices are going up, and the funding is still the same. So, we don't apply for them.

The projects we have to apply, if we know that there is a project opening up with Health Canada, like, it might be a pilot project, so we applied for that. It's only there for a year with us to do the project what's been offered. So, we applied for those.

So, there's a core funding for different fundings.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Why don't you let Anne do –

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: – the translations.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So, overall would – how many different applications would you say that you have to complete as the director of Social Health?

H. ASTER: I have at least 30 budgets with Social Health. There's probably – we're in the renewal process right now. So when we say renewal, we don't have to fill out applications, only reports. So we're in the renewal process now with most of the core funding and other project funding would be at least, probably, 10 year – probably more than that because some we get, some we don't.

So, there's a criteria we have to follow what's been ask of us. We have to fill out different – this – and we can't use the money what we're – we were only supposed to use what we ask for. We can't use the money anywhere else where you really want to put the money there. Like, you have to follow the criteria.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: You had mentioned earlier too about staffing shortages. So, I'm assuming that when you apply, you apply for additional staff or for –?

H. ASTER: Yes – yes, we do.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And how does that go?

H. ASTER: Since I've been there – I've been there a year and a half now with my new role. Staffing has been – I'm having challenges right now with regards to child care. There's all kinds of – there's also vacancies where you don't have space for staff to put them there. There's also challenges with people not feeling really confident to apply for those jobs. You get people like that, too. They don't want to apply because they're afraid they don't have the confidence to do the job. So that's the other challenge we're facing.

There's also a challenge with – I'm trying – like the location of the job, it's also a problem. I have so many vacancies in my department, but you can't fill them if you don't have a space and you can't fill them if there's challenges with that family with child care. I know they're capable of doing that job but it's a challenge when you don't have those other social issues with them. So that's also a challenge.

You get so many challenges, even though you feel like you want to fill those positions. This summer I posted some job vacancies and you only get one applicant coming for the interview. So, it's really a challenge and the only way you can move forward with your programming, you have to hire casuals to do those jobs. And, eventually, you'll hire them permanently if they do good.

So that's what I'm doing right now. I'm applying – I'm taking casuals as I can because there's funding them and you have to follow the criteria if you wanna get the programs on the go, because that's big challenge for me at the office. Space is really also a big challenge.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Just one more question and then I'll have a few comments to end.

What would it mean for you, as director of Social Health and for the programs and services that you are responsible for, if today you had, let's say, five years of core funding for all of your programs and services? What would that mean for you?

H. ASTER: I think that would help me a lot in – because I – we don't have to do – if we don't have to do the reporting and the criteria we follow, I think it would mean a lot for Social Health to move forward. We're – you want programs to run, like there's a criteria you have to – if you're given a money, you have to follow the criteria. If we can't be flexible to do other things where you'll know that this program would benefit the community, if you want to put money elsewhere where you'll see benefit for the community, that would be something that would be good for Social Health.

Like let's say – I'm gonna look at one program that's – we have to follow everything that goes with it – treatment centre. Let's say we want to follow – we want to do treatment centre, but we wanna do it in the – in Nutshimit but we can't do that with this program. We have to follow the policies. All those different kinds of policies, we have to follow if we have a treatment. But if you do it in Nutshimit, you won't have any – you'll have different policies, but you won't follow by the book policies.

So, that would be something I would really want for my programming. You – if you don't have the criteria – there's some policies you have to follow, right?

So, let's say we also want to hire someone who is – you wanna put child care in your office. You could hire people there and that would be another thing for one of the fundings. If they say you can use it for child care, you can have child care in your office, and then that would solve some of the problems for the staffing.

So, if you can be flexible with the funding you get – some we are flexible; we are creative how we write. When we write, we have to be creative all the time. So that's something we – it would be good for us.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Finally, I'd just like to say a very special thank you for coming here today.

A. FITZGERALD: Commissioner Devine, if I may, Andrew Fitzgerald here, counsel for the Child Advocate.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes, go ahead.

A. FITZGERALD: I would like to ask this witness a couple of questions arising out of Commissioner Devine's questions to the witness, and it might be better if his thank yous and comments are made after those questions, just because I don't what he's going to say.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

P. RALPH: Yeah.

A. FITZGERALD: I won't be long.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: (Inaudible) response from counsel?

P. RALPH: Commissioners, perhaps we can take a short break and talk about that with counsel.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah, no problem.

So, nearly done and we'll come back in just a few minutes. It's a good time for a break

anyway and we'll take a break of 10 minutes.

Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [Inquiry in progress at start of recording] – welcome you back.

Mr. Fitzgerald has raised a point of order that he'd like the Commissioners to respond, and we'll ask our counsel to address the issue for us.

C. URQUHART: Thank you, Commissioners.

So, we've had an opportunity to speak with the counsel for Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and we think that the appropriate course of action will be to go and respond to the question or ask the question by interrogatory, so in writing. And, that way, Ms. Aster will have an opportunity to have her documents in front of her in order to properly respond to the question.

So, we won't require any further time for questioning, at this time, but we'll have some other questions for Ms. Aster in writing.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Fair enough, Sir?

A. FITZGERALD: Absolutely, thank you very much.

W. KENNEDY: Mr. Commissioner, William Kennedy, family representative. On the issue of these interrogatories, I would imagine we will get copies of these prior to.

C. URQUHART: One – I don't know if –

P. RALPH: (Inaudible.)

C. URQUHART: – prior to, but you will get copies, yes.

W. KENNEDY: Well, we'd like to have the questions prior to them being put to the witness.

P. RALPH: That's fine (inaudible).

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you once again, and we had simply just asked – we have simply to ask Commissioner Devine if you'd like to continue your questioning or comments?

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes, I wonder is it possible to turn the fan off first?

Thank you.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Anne.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay. Yeah, so finally I just wanted to say thank you for coming to the Inquiry and telling us about the programs and services in Social Health and your position. It's – you know, for the Inquiry, we – the focus is child protection, but we really need to understand in the context of the community and what's there, and this is a very valuable part for us to have some knowledge and understanding of.

H. ASTER: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And thank you so very much.

H. ASTER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And now, Commissioner Nastash, any questions, comments for the witness?

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: I'd just like to make a comment that I wanna thank Helen for coming, and her sister that sat with her during the time that she's been on the stand.

I'd like to thank her for sharing the – her own personal story about her family and I

think it gives us a context that as service providers in our own community as Innu people, we are not immune from the social issues as well. We're also faced in our lives, in our homes, the issues that the community faces. And it takes a lot of work and effort to be a service provider in our communities, and I wanna thank Helen for stepping up into that role as the director of health.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I'd just like to thank Helen, like I said, to – for coming forward and sharing her story about her brother, Peter. I remember that story as well and it was a big story to hear that and to see Peter come back into our community.

I – so again, it takes a lot of effort to come here and for people to recognize, outside of our communities, the effort it takes to have those experiences, to live the experiences but also to be a service provider. It takes a lot of courage and will every day to come and deal with the issues.

Tshenashkumitin. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

My questions have to do with your life in Nutshimit, your family's life in Nutshimit. The first question is: We know everybody uses alcohol. You indicated that in Nutshimit there was no use of alcohol. So I just want to ask you, was there any irresponsible use of homebrew that you saw in your family while you were in Nutshimit?

H. ASTER: No, there was none because my grandparents were sober when they went in the country. I remember one time we left from the community in September. We didn't come back until June, so we stayed there. My family stayed there, my grandparents, my mom and my other extended family. There was no drinking there. So, those last few months my family was sober and we did really good. So they only went home for a few days to pick up some stuff, so they came back again.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: My second question has to do, again, with Nutshimit. Did you, your parents or your grandparents, ever experience low-level jets flying over when you were in Nutshimit?

H. ASTER: Yes, we did – we did.

We were in one location one time and there were a lot of low-level flying. I remember that because they would fly over the lake where we were camping – we had our camp. There was a lot of little kids screaming when they heard that loud noise. I remember clearly that I was on the ice one time getting wood and the jet were so low that we had to find a shelter where we were running towards the land. So that was scary.

But also, the first time – that was the first time we heard about the low-level flying, like the first time we seen jets. But as time went by, we seen them almost every day flowing over our tents and some of us were used to the jets and some of the other kids were afraid of them. So that's the experience I had with low-level flying.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Finally, what was the effect on your grandparents when that happened and what did you hear from other Elders about that?

H. ASTER: My grandmother were – was afraid of them, so was my grandfather. I guess the – in the time we were there, they got to know what time they were coming so they made sure that we were in the tents that time, because they flew by every day, and I guess they were afraid for us so we couldn't – so we wouldn't be hurt. So, we were told to go inside at a certain time because that's the time they were flying by.

And my grandmother was a really strong woman, but to find your grandmother afraid of something, it's hard. Like, she was a really strong woman. I can really say that. And she is the one who made sure everyone do what they're supposed to do. And when she's afraid – when you see your grandmother, who's strong and afraid of somebody, you get scared, too. So that's

how my grandmother felt. She was afraid of them, the noise, and so was my grandfather.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

We really appreciate you coming here and the report you've given us.

H. ASTER: Yeah, thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Ralph.

P. RALPH: Yes. Thank you, Ms. Bellefleur.

The next witnesses are Janet Bellefleur – sorry, Ms. Aster – Janet Bellefleur and Nykesha Gregoire.

While they are coming up, Commissioners, just to address the counsel for the Advocate – Child and Youth Advocate's issue that we discussed just a few minutes ago. This is, I guess, a very challenging week in terms of the number of witnesses that we're trying to get through and the length of time that each witness takes.

So I think that, under different circumstances, I would suggest that we if we had ample time that it – the counsel's questions would be quite appropriate, but given that fact that we are so pressed for time and that we can get that information in a more efficient way and put it before the Commissioners, before yourselves, and then the Advocate can make submissions on that later on, that's the best route I would suggest in terms of dealing with some of those issues, so I know that's the – the double translation consecutive creates challenges and we are thinking of every possible solution to that but right now I think this is the best possible solution.

INTERPRETER NUNA: Can you repeat that? I don't (inaudible).

P. RALPH: Yeah.

I just – the – you know we are challenged for time this week because of the fact that we have to translate to two dialects, which is perfectly understandable and important.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: And I think under other circumstances where time wasn't an issue, we'd be happy enough to hear from counsel for the Child and Youth Advocate. But in terms of efficiency and getting through this week I think the best solution is to get that information outside of these hearings that the Child and Youth Advocate is interested in seeing and putting that before the Commissioners at another time and then the Advocate will have an opportunity to make submissions on that information at a later date.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: Can you repeat that last part?

P. RALPH: I don't remember it. Maybe Anne can help you out.

[Dialogue between Interpreter Nuna and Interpreter C. Rich in Innu-aimun.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And Mr. Fitzgerald, would you like to have any comment at this time?

A. FITZGERALD: No, I'd just like to thank the Commission and Commission counsel for their co-operation.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And likewise from our side.

W. KENNEDY: If I may, Commissioner, there is a comment that I would like to make?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes, go ahead.

W. KENNEDY: I – listening to Commission counsel talking about time restraints and things of that nature, and certainly that's appreciated, but as we advance into these hearings, I know right now that Mr. Fitzgerald is raising on behalf of his client, some issues. I know that there is limited cross-examination afforded to counsel for families, but that's not to say that there are not going to be a lot of issues that will be brought up on behalf of the – by the representatives of the families on behalf of their respective clients.

So consequently, I would like it on the record to say, that when it comes to time constraints, this is a hearing that has been many years in the making. Personally, I've been involved with this matter for about five years.

P. RALPH: Give the interpreters –

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

W. KENNEDY: As I say, my own personal involvement has been approximately five years. The family that I represent have been advocating for this hearing – these hearings and this Commission for probably longer than that.

The groups that have the General Standing, I understand, as well, their positions. But not all of their interests are going to be the same interests as our clients.

And I would think, and I – and this is – I guess, the point I want to make here is I don't want to really – or I certainly hope we are not going to be constrained in our efforts to represent our respective interests because it is too important. This matter has got to be fully fleshed out in these hearings. I know that there's been disclosure of a lot of documents, there has been disclosure of several world commission hearings, things

of that nature, much of those issues raised in those hearings.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Any comment before I respond?

P. RALPH: I totally agree with Mr. Kennedy, and that's the way – like, the Commissioners even drafted the Standing Orders.

Of course, Mr. Kennedy represents a family the Inquiry is investigating the death of their child, but you thought it was important that the families be here during parts of the Inquiry, though don't specifically deal with the life and death of this family's child, but nonetheless, they should be here. And where information comes up that directly addresses the life and death of that child, then they should have an opportunity to cross-examine and that's – I think you have in your orders, drafted it to be that way.

W. KENNEDY: Mr. Commissioner, I'm not going to belabour the point, but I do want it on the record, so to speak, that the amount of time we're going to take with respect to these hearings will be what is going to be required, as opposed to any kind of artificial limits, or at least from the family's perspectives, that's how we would see it.

Thank you, Mr. Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you all.

The Commissioners accept their responsibility to be open and fair throughout this process and when we drop the ball, I know that all counsel will step in fairly quickly. We also agree that for the point raised by Mr. Fitzgerald, that has been answered satisfactorily, and we also accept that Mr. Kennedy's point has been put to the Commission as well.

Introduce your witness.

P. RALPH: Just one final comment. It perhaps would have been quicker if we let the Youth Advocate ask his questions, but I

will – the next two witnesses are Janet Bellefleur and Nykesha Gregoire.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: One is being sworn and one's being affirmed.

P. RALPH: Yes, one is being sworn and one is being affirmed.

CLERK (Battcock): Okay, we'll start with the swearing. So please take the Bible in your right hand.

Do you swear that the evidence you shall give to this Inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes, I do.

CLERK: Please state your name for the record.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Janet Bellefleur.

CLERK: Do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this Inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

N. GREGOIRE: Yes, I do.

CLERK: Please state your name for the record.

N. GREGOIRE: Nykesha Gregoire.

CLERK: Thank you.

P. RALPH: Yes, Commissioners, so we have two witnesses right now, but in a way we have three. Ms. Bellefleur is the daughter of Rose Gregoire and Ms. Gregoire is the granddaughter. And – so we're gonna be asking questions of Ms. Bellefleur about her life and about the work that she's doing right now. We're going to be asking Ms. Gregoire to read a statement that her great-grandmother – her grandmother gave to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1992. And perhaps have a few questions about her work and her life.

But we're going to be also asking Ms. Bellefleur about the work that Rose Gregoire did this – did in this community. I think she contributed a great deal and I think she's someone that's still spoken about quite often and the contributions that she's made. So, we have two before us but, in many ways, we have three witnesses today.

Anne.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: So, Ms. Bellefleur, I'm gonna ask you a few questions about your mother and then I'll ask Ms. Gregoire to read the statement.

What was your mother's name; where was she from; when was she born? Can you tell the Commissioners about that?

J. BELLEFLEUR: My mother's name was Lucy Rose Gregoire. She was baptized Lucy Gregoire but she didn't know that until many years later. She had two birthdates, October 31 and October 14. She didn't know that until much later, either. She was born in 1949.

P. RALPH: And so, she was always called Rose; is that right?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: But, in fact, she learned later on that perhaps her name wasn't Rose in the baptismal certificate?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes. What happened was 20 years ago when we became Status Indians under the *Indian Act*, my mother went to get her status card and she was told that she was registered in Sept-Îles – Quebec, Sept-Îles. But when she went to Sept-Îles that following summer, she was told she wasn't in the system because she asked for Rose Gregoire. She later found out that the reason why she couldn't find her

status card is because she was registered as Lucy.

P. RALPH: And how did that happen? Do you know?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I have no idea how that happened.

P. RALPH: We spoke early – last week –

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: – and you told me that it was because the Innu name –

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: – Rose and Lucy are –

J. BELLEFLEUR: So Lucy in Innu is Nushi and Rose in Innu is Nush, and I think that for a short name that she probably was just called Nush and then ended up being called Rose, because that's what Nush means in Innu is Rose.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: And where was she born?

J. BELLEFLEUR: She was born in Nutshimit. From my understanding – I can't remember the name of the location, but she was born as my grandparents were on their way to Sheshatshiu. My aunt Mary Adele, actually Anastasia's mother, she was the second oldest aunt, she and my grandfather delivered her.

P. RALPH: Right.

And she was born in 1949 –

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: – and where were they living then?

J. BELLEFLEUR: They lived here –

P. RALPH: They lived in –

J. BELLEFLEUR: – in Sheshatshiu.

P. RALPH: Sheshatshiu. And so, I guess they would have lived in a tent in Sheshatshiu for a good part of their lives.?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: Do you know when they would have moved into a home – a house?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I can't remember an exact date, but I remember my mother telling me that they were excited to move into a home only to find out that it was very, very cold.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Like here.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Exactly.

P. RALPH: And growing up, do you know if your mother spent much time in Nutshimit?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I know that when she was younger, she spent time in Nutshimit but when I was a young girl, we only went to Nutshimit once.

P. RALPH: Anne, that's a lot. It's a lot. Sorry about – Ms. Rich, sorry about that.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'm just going to interrupt you for a second.

I asked Paula to ask the technicians if we had the heat turned on and that fan was going would the transcript be affected. And the answer is no, but if we turn that on people who are sitting in the back may not be able to hear what's going on. So, we're probably going to keep the heat off for a little bit longer. Put on your jacket.

So, you can explain that please, Anne.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, any idea where your grandparents – where your mother's parents are from?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Sorry, um, I know that my grandfather was from Schefferville and I think my grandmother was from Sept-Îles. And I'm not sure, I think, I'm pretty sure that that was an arranged marriage.

P. RALPH: And any idea when they would have settled in Sheshatshiu?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I think that they were kind of going back and forth, because my oldest aunt actually married in Sept-Îles. Her name was Mary Ann. So, at one point, they were in Sept-Îles and then they were in Sheshatshiu and kind of vice versa because my second oldest aunt was married here.

P. RALPH: And I think that your mother was one of the last children in her family born in Nutshimit?

J. BELLEFLEUR: She was the youngest daughter.

P. RALPH: And I know I'm asking questions now about your mother's life that I guess you would have learned from her, but she went to school and finished a certain grade here and then went to St. John's. Is that right?

J. BELLEFLEUR: My mother went to school, I'm not sure what year it was, it was before I was born. She went to school in St. John's to be an LPN with her niece, Germaine Andrew.

P. RALPH: And Germaine who got – passed away last summer is Anastasia's sister.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Sister.

P. RALPH: And can you – did she ever tell you about what that experience was like?

Maybe we should give Anne a chance now to translate.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: And did your mother talk to you about what that experience was like, going to school in St. John's?

J. BELLEFLEUR: She told me a few stories about how they were – when they did their placement, after they did, like, I guess a practicum?

P. RALPH: Yes.

J. BELLEFLEUR: That they were placed in the mental hospital in St. John's and she laughed when she told me the story. She said that Germaine was really quiet, her niece, Germaine. And she said that when they got to the mental hospital, there was, like, a door and there was a window in the door and she said that Germaine was on one side and she was on the other side. And she said Germaine was really scared and Germaine didn't want my mom to leave her. But they didn't have a choice, right? They were separated. It was their practicum. And she just said she remembers seeing Germaine through the window, like, really in a lot of fear. But she didn't mention anything, like, negative about that experience.

P. RALPH: Yes.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Later on, down the years, I guess after she did her LPN, she met my father and she had me. And when she went to Newfoundland for the very first time to meet my father's family –

P. RALPH: Where was he from?

J. BELLEFLEUR: He's from Norris Arm. Yeah, Norris Arm in Newfoundland.

When they went there, they got off the boat in Lewisporte and, you know, cultural differences, right? So, she – they got off the boat and they drove to Lewisporte and when she knocked on the door, one of the men that she did the course with, the LPN course, Ken Blackmoore, opened the door for her. Apparently he was married to my aunt, my father's sister.

P. RALPH: Really?

J. BELLEFLEUR: So, she was really, like, small world. And, yeah, she told me a few stories.

P. RALPH: Right.

Ms. Rich.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, I understand that your mother came back and she went to work at the hospital in Goose Bay?

J. BELLEFLEUR: She worked in the hospital in North West River.

P. RALPH: Oh, did she. Oh, I'm sorry.

And she talked to you about that experience; what that was like working there?

J. BELLEFLEUR: She said that she enjoyed working at the hospital because she got to meet a lot of people, especially people along the coast and, she said, the hard part was going back and forth, like on the cable car and having to work nightshift sometimes.

P. RALPH: Now, Ms. Bellefleur, after your mother worked at the hospital, where did she work then?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I wasn't alive when my mother worked at the hospital yet. I hadn't been born yet, but when – from my first memory, I remember my mother working with Julianna Hill, Charlie Andrew, Matthew Rich and Apenam Pone at the Innu Alcohol

Program. That's what it was called back then.

P. RALPH: Yes. What's it called now?

J. BELLEFLEUR: It's called Innu Uauitshitun.

P. RALPH: And I think eventually she went to work with – as a community service worker, is that correct?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yup.

I was quite young. I think I was maybe – I don't know. It was after – my grandparents died when I was nine; maybe it was around that time when my mother started working with Social Services as a community service worker.

P. RALPH: And what year would that have been?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I'm not good with math. I don't know.

P. RALPH: What year were you born?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I was born in '75.

P. RALPH: So in the '80s at some point?

J. BELLEFLEUR: In the '80s, yeah.

P. RALPH: Okay.

And –

J. BELLEFLEUR: She started off – I'm not sure if it was an actual community service worker or if she started off as what they call now Income Support, like welfare.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

It was basically all in one at that point in time.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: Ms. Rich?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: And that the work as a community service worker, what did that entail? Not the Income Support part, but the other aspect of that.

J. BELLEFLEUR: As a community service worker my mother basically – social workers in the community couldn't speak the language. They were not comfortable to go into homes on their own, so my mother would go with them if children were apprehended or if they needed to have conversations with families. My mother did the translating for them. Basically, all of the – kind of like the grunt work, I guess you could say.

P. RALPH: Ms. Rich.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: The – I guess the – did your mother talk to you or did you watch your mother do that work, when she was a community service worker? Maybe you can describe how she did her job.

J. BELLEFLEUR: My mother was very passionate about helping women and children, especially women that were in abusive relationships. She wasn't only an advocate for the women, there were times where my mother attended court and men would end up in jail. My mother would also go to the correctional centre to check on the men and make sure that they were okay.

My mother's role as a community service worker was not just what Social Services wanted her to do; it was an extension of who my mother was and how important it was to her to be able to provide service –

that kind of service for the people. It wasn't about Social Services; it was about what was best for the community.

P. RALPH: But she was actually employed –

J. BELLEFLEUR: She was employed.

P. RALPH: – by CSSD?

J. BELLEFLEUR: By Social Services.

P. RALPH: Social Services.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: But she did a lot more than just, I guess, do what they expected of her?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: And so how was that for her? Was that, I think, difficult for her and for you as a family?

J. BELLEFLEUR: It was difficult. I remember many times my mother coming home very frustrated and angry because she couldn't understand – the social workers couldn't understand Innu people and the policies were not something that she was really happy with.

I know that a few times, you know, she got into some really heated arguments with her managers, even made a few people cry when it came to, you know – because they didn't – her philosophy was people coming in – non-Innu people coming into the community and thinking that they can fix what's broken and basically, she would say that that's not people's responsibility. That's a responsibility for Innu people, that you can't have somebody that doesn't understand coming into the community trying to fix something that they don't really know anything about.

P. RALPH: Ms. Rich.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, in what ways did your mother think that the social workers were trying to fix things? What were they doing?

J. BELLEFLEUR: One of the big things I remember was when there were apprehensions, you know, of children. My mother was, like, really passionate about making sure that children always went back to their families, right? So, if there was an incident on a weekend and a family was drinking and children needed to be apprehended, she always would try to place children within the family and make sure that children went back home after that weekend.

And then she made it a point to go in and speak to families and explain to them. She was kinda like protection and prevention, trying to do both, and talk to families about the effects of their drinking and how there's only so much I can do. After a certain point, social services is gonna take your kids for longer period of time.

And I remember her feeling really frustrated about social workers not really understanding how Innu people would live all in one home, share one bathroom, 12 or 15 people, because non-Innu people didn't come from that. And so a social worker would look at that as a negative placement, you know? Placing a child with a grandparent that already had maybe four or five grandchildren living with them and – but that was part of being Innu, right?

It didn't matter how many times she said that, like that part of being Innu, they couldn't understand that. And for her, it was the safety of the child in that moment and CSSD looked at it as inappropriate placement. It's not appropriate. There is only two bedrooms and there's 15 kids, but that's not how my mother seen it. My mother seen it as safe.

It is appropriate because Innu people come from living in tents where they were all in

one room and everybody was sleeping and eating and sharing, and non-Innu social workers couldn't comprehend that because that's now where they came from.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, so I guess your mother was trying to educate social workers about life in the community.

J. BELLEFLEUR: My mother worked at Social Services between 12 to 14 years and, in that time that she worked at Social Services, I don't know how many social workers she worked with that just left. There was one particular social worker that she worked with for a very long time and her name was Annette Michelin. Annette recently passed away. She was really looking forward to me speaking at the Inquiry about my mother.

Annette was like a – somebody that came to our home and was very respectful to my mother. They had really good relationship, so I think that that social worker was probably the one that my mother worked with the longest.

But I remember Annette told me my mother said to her – they would get into heated arguments as well, and my mother said to her: Annette, you need me more than I need you 'cause without me, you wouldn't be able to do your job here. And Annette said she was right because there were times where she wouldn't have been able to enter homes out of fear and just, like, not knowing who people were and not really understanding the culture. And she felt that my mother really taught her a lot about that over the years.

I remember, too, like, even Annette made this comment, too. My mother made it many times, that, you know, she was doing all this work, would be doing overtime and working late at night and would be going into homes, sometimes by herself, without social workers. But yet, they were the ones that were making all the big bucks because they had degrees.

But she was the one that was doing the reports because she was the one that had

the information. She was the one that was speaking to the people and she would be writing out the reports and basically the social worker was just there for decoration.

P. RALPH: Commissioners, I'm not sure if you'd like to break for lunch now or continue. Break for lunch now?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes, hour and a half, so back at 1:30.

Thank you.

Recess

P. RALPH: Commissioners, are we ready to proceed?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

I'll ask that we come to order.

Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: And a reminder once again regarding healing services that are available, in case anybody should need them, and we have Mary Sillett is here this afternoon also; as well as Edward Nuna, team lead; Sean Allen, our clinical support; and, of course, Louise our HR consultant.

Thank you.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, we were talking this morning about your mother working as a community service worker for CSSD, and do you know approximately when that would have been?

J. BELLEFLEUR: As I said earlier, I was probably around nine or 10, around – I was nine years old when my grandparents passed away and it was around that time that I remember my mom working with Social Services.

P. RALPH: Yeah.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Social Services was only, like, a two- or three-minute walk from where we lived to cut cross the church, so I – in my mind, that's what I remember.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: So probably, like, early '80s, maybe '85, '86?

P. RALPH: Right. And she said 10 to 12 years, approximately?

J. BELLEFLEUR: She was about 12 to 14 years with Social Services. She took one year leave of absence when Nykesha was born and I found a job so she could babysit for me.

P. RALPH: Right.

Now, we're gonna ask Ms. Gregoire now to read a transcript of – I guess maybe Ms. Rich, perhaps give you a chance to translate that before I get to the next question.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Yes, I'm going to ask Ms. Gregoire right now to read a transcript of her grandmother's testimony before the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* in 1992. So, I'm assuming that she was still working with CSSD at the time. Is that right –

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: – Ms. Bellefleur?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: It's a lengthy transcript, but I think it's – there are a lot of things in there that are still very relevant to today, even though this community's changed quite a bit in the last 30 years, I think it's almost like an

opportunity for your mother to testify and your grandmother to testify before the Commission.

So, Ms. Gregoire, I'd ask you, as soon as Anne translates my introduction here, to start that.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: And this is – this starts on page 80 of exhibit P-010.

N. GREGOIRE: “I would just like to say a few things for myself. I guess I could tell you when I heard about the Royal Commission coming here in Sheshatshiu, it took me a long time to decide whether I should say anything or not. I was here, I guess yesterday, for a little while, and I've noticed there are some aboriginal people on the panel, and I think that's when I decided I should say what I wanted to say, even though I felt that even if I say anything, nothing will come out of it. There have been people here coming into the community to sort of listen to people when they talk about what's been happening with their lives, and I haven't seen very much change in the way government is dealing with the people here.

“And I guess I could say sometimes I am very, very frustrated, because in '89, I was very active when the people were protesting against the low-level flying here in Sheshatshiu and Goose Bay. I have gone to jail, and I just felt, sitting in Stephenville in Newfoundland, when I was in prison, I did a lot of thinking, and I felt that what am I doing here. Will the government ever change the way they treat the native people? Maybe it's just a waste of time for me to be sitting here in prison and being away from my kids, which I find it very hard, being away from my children.

“I have also spent time here in the lock-up in Goose Bay, and I guess a lot of Innu people here in the community feel that it's no good to do anything any more, because I feel that

way sometimes. I just feel there is nothing that I can do that would persuade the government to listen to the native people.”

P. RALPH: Ms. Andrew?

INTERPRETER C. RICH: Mm-hmm. Oh, I thought –

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: I was waiting for you.

[Dialogue between Interpreter Nuna and Interpreter C. Rich in Innu-aimun.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: All right, hold on.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

N. GREGOIRE: “It was down to the point when I was talking about when I was going to school myself. The way my parents used to dress and their ways, the culture, their way of life, because I have never seen other white people making fun of my parents and other people in the community, even the way they talk and the way they dress, and I'm ashamed to say I was really ashamed of my culture. I was very, very ashamed of it. And I still, as of today, I'm 43 years old, and when I go into the store, I will make sure that people are not going to make fun of my people anymore, because I will speak up.

“I have worked in a hospital for a long time, eight or nine years, and I've seen people coming from the north and people coming in from Sheshatshiu, and I have worked with white nurses, I have worked with doctors, for a very long time. And when I was working at the hospital, I was able to speak English, like I am now, but when I hear doctors saying dirty things about native people, like they wouldn't be here if they weren't drinking, they wouldn't be fighting if they weren't drinking, they wouldn't be here, and sometimes I could hear nurses saying the Innu people, the native people, are dirty. They didn't want to have anything to do with them. I always

wanted to be there when I knew a plane was coming from the north, or when I knew there was an Innu person being admitted. And I wanted to be there and deal with that myself, to avoid people from making fun of my people, and I still do that today.

"I have an older sister here. When I see her sometimes in church, if there are any white people around, I make sure nobody says or nobody laughs at her for the way she dresses, because she still dresses the way my parents used to dress.

"I quit working at the hospital because I was getting so fed up and tired with the doctors and nurses, the way they treated my people. I was there when one of the kids were taken from a home. The baby was admitted to the hospital and there was a doctor from Scotland, and when he saw the baby he said, this child is not going back home. Call a social worker. I didn't know what to do, whether to tell the mother, because she was a good friend of mine, and I couldn't, because I thought it was supposed to be confidential. I couldn't tell anybody. But I was really worried that they would never bring the child back, and they never did.

"It was only this year that a friend of mine found her son, and he's 19 or 20 years old. The doctor said this child is not being looked after, he's being neglected, he's dirty, he's starving, oh everything very negative about the mother. And I said to myself, I wish you could try to understand the people. I wish you would know where the problem is coming from. But I just couldn't do anything about it. I couldn't even talk about it.

"I want to talk a little bit about the justice system, what I have seen in the community. Ever since I started working with Social Services – and I'm not afraid to say this – I have seen women being beaten by their husbands or boyfriends, and they were really afraid. Sometimes you would call the RCMP and the RCMP doesn't show up until two or three days after. I must say, it has improved a little over the past year. I understand, as a woman myself, and I

support women who have been abused, both physically, sexually and emotionally. I just like to be there for women."

P. RALPH: You good?

N. GREGOIRE: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: Do you want your mother to take a turn?

N. GREGOIRE: I've got it.

P. RALPH: You're good?

N. GREGOIRE: "My hope and dream for the RCMP in the community is that I would like to see my people doing their own policing in the community and dealing with the problem itself, and not taking the man to jail and keeping him there for five or six months, and not getting any counselling in the correctional centres. If they were allowed to govern themselves here in the community, this is what I would like to see, people dealing with the problems themselves, and the same thing with the school and Social Services.

"I have worked with Social Services for the past eight years, and I guess to this time, I am very tired and frustrated with their system, Social Services system. I don't know how many different social workers I've worked with. I work as a family support worker with Social Services, and ... different social workers, and I'm tired and very frustrated in telling them about my culture and the people here. A year from that, another white social worker comes, and I have to do the same thing, tell them who lives here, and who's this and all this.

"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.

"I guess I can say I also sometimes feel very angry and very frustrated when I think I could work with this family and I could do the things with them, and I don't want a lot of white social workers to get involved with

me, but they have to, because I'm not a social worker, I don't have a degree in social work, so I don't have any authority to do anything.

"I have seen also children or young offenders many times admit to the crimes, even though they may not have committed those crimes, particular crimes, that they have come to trial for. Young offenders, by their own testimonies, have admitted to crimes that they did not commit, because they felt pressured by the RCMP, and that happens here a lot in the community. I have talked to mothers who are very concerned."

P. RALPH: Ms. Gregoire, I'm going to ask you now to skip the rest of that page and the rest of the next one and go to page 88 –

N. GREGOIRE: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: – where it says: "I also want to talk about the hospital a little bit ..." and ask you (inaudible).

N. GREGOIRE: Okay. Okay.

"I also want to talk about the hospital a little bit, the hospital over here at the Melville, the Melville Hospital in Goose Bay. I had a sister who was sick in the country. She was brought out in the country a few days ago. She was short of breath and she had chest pain, and she was brought out in the morning, so I went up to meet her. I went to the doctor with her at the Melville Hospital, and she sat there for hours waiting for a doctor to come in. And the doctor, a female doctor, came in and examined her, and I guess she had wanted another doctor's opinion about her, and she went over and got another doctor to come in. Another doctor came in and examined her, and I guess the doctor noticed some marks on her body, on her back, some marks, and they were healed, and he took off her bandana – she had her bandana on – and started to look in her head, and when I saw the doctor doing this, I said to the doctor, what are you doing, and he said I'm looking for some bugs in her head.

"I said she didn't come here to get her hair checked. She's not well, she's sick. And he goes back to the time to me she was very, very embarrassed, and she was very, very hurt. When I told the doctor, when I said something to the doctor, he looked in a couple of places, and then he stopped. This is what reminded me. It goes right back to me when I went to school, when I saw doctors doing this, when the teachers, the public health nurse, you would come to the school and get checked out heads and used to put some stuff in our heads.

"I talked to my sister after, because I was very angry and very upset about it, and she said to me, Rose, forget it, forget about it, try to forget about it. I told her I couldn't forget about it. She said because it happened to us, and it's going to continue to happen to us for a long time, and it's going to continue, and that's what she said. She wanted me to forget about it, because she just thinks it's hopeless to do anything about it. That's what she is trying to tell me.

"I just want to talk a little bit about what I'm hoping and dreaming about will happen in the community sometime in the future. I wish the government would give us control of ourselves. I wish the government would leave us alone so we can go on with our lives.

"I wanted to talk a little ... about housing. I remember when my parents moved into their ... house. I felt sorry for my mother and my father for thinking that they had a good deal, that they were being treated very good by the government. I feel sorry for them thinking that I must have been thinking that way too. We moved into the house with nothing in the house, a three-bedroom house, no toilet, not a thing, no furniture, or nothing. And my father didn't have money to buy furniture, a few mattresses on the floor. It seems like my parents were satisfied, and seems very happy that they have a house. Even though the government is giving money to band council for housing, the housing here in Sheshatshiu is very poorly done. The housing is not very good. I am sure anybody from outside or anybody from

Ottawa would never move in a house with no water or no nothing in the house.

"I think sometimes the government looks at people like we're just a bunch of animals, you know, as if we don't know the difference. Like I said, I feel sorry for my parents in thinking that they were being treated very good by the government.

"I hope you understand what I'm trying to say to you, because English is my second language, and I'm trying the best I can to put my message across to you. Even though I hear a lot of people sometimes saying, from Happy Valley-Goose Bay, saying the Innu don't realize how good they've got it. They've got housing given to them, they've got their children, and if they want to go to university, their school is paid for. I'm sure Francis or Peter Penashue know there's only so much money coming from the government every year, and that's not even enough. And if we don't spend the money right away they wanted us to spend, the money is going to be cut off, or we won't be given the money, and it is very hard trying to achieve, or an Innu nation president trying to work with people with no funding.

"I could continue talking for hours, but I don't want to take too much time, so I'll just stop here. Thank you."

J. BELLEFLEUR: Good job, babe.

P. RALPH: Couple minutes?

Perhaps a good time to take a break, Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

P. RALPH: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Ten minutes, please.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: [Inquiry in progress at start of recording] – everyone to take their places and call the session back into order.

P. RALPH: Ms. Gregoire, thank you very much for that. That was quite extraordinary experience, I think, for many of us here in the room to hear you speak your grandmother's words. I think there was a moment there where you were pretty emotional, or perhaps a few.

Can you explain what was happening?

N. GREGOIRE: So, I never experienced my grandmother in a working field. I'm a social worker and a lot of the same things that she was passionate about, I'm passionate about. Genetics are incredible.

When she spoke about women: This isn't a part of my role or anything I do with work, but that's something I do in my personal life. I want to help women whether I get paid for it or not, you know, because that's what – as a community of women, that's what we're here for, to support and love each other. And it just – it was so powerful to me.

P. RALPH: So where did you get your social work degree?

N. GREGOIRE: The University of Windsor, in Ontario.

P. RALPH: And so, what are you doing right now?

N. GREGOIRE: I work at MTIE, Innu Education, as student support manager.

P. RALPH: And so, your grandmother died young, in 2007?

N. GREGOIRE: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: And can you recall what she was like?

N. GREGOIRE: She was warm; she was funny; she smoked a lot.

This woman was the most determined woman I have ever met. I remember one morning me and my cousin Nigel needed a ride to school – this woman could not drive, okay, at all. It was the middle of winter, she gets in my grandfather's truck – again, cannot drive – two very small children get in the vehicle and immediately upon backing out of the driveway, backs into a ditch. Relentless, but we still got to school.

P. RALPH: Ms. Rich?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Gregoire, I'm gonna continue on now with your – the testimony of your mother, and then at the end, perhaps if there are some more things you'd like to share about your grandmother, I'll give you an opportunity to do that.

Ms. Bellefleur, as that transcript reveals, your mother was talking about some very difficult subjects –

J. BELLEFLEUR: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: – in the community at that time. And I guess you – can you recall – I guess there were times when that made things difficult for her and perhaps even for your family?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Because my mother was a community service worker with Social Services, she got kind of – what's the word? She got it from all places. So not only was she fighting with people that she worked with in – because of policy, community members were also fighting with her as well.

Sometimes people would be angry with her. They would be upset with her because their

children were apprehended. And a lot of times when my mother would help women or children that were being abused and trying to help them, people in the community, Elders – even Elders and community members would say things to her, negative things: Oh, you don't understand, Rose, because you're not married. You never got married. And my mother didn't marry my dad.

And that would kind of trickle down to us. Me, especially. Not so much my brothers because they were kind of homebodies. But people would say things to me. They would call me a bastard. Your mother's not married. Your mother doesn't respect marriage; therefore, that's why she's trying to break people up. Those are the kinds of comments that she, kind of, had to deal with.

But she didn't let that bother her. She would say to me: People are hurting, Janet. They don't mean that. That's their hurt coming out. They're frustrated. They don't understand. They don't know what to do. They don't know how to help themselves, so it comes out in a negative way. They don't – like, she didn't take things personally. And maybe she did sometimes, but she didn't show it. She was very – she really, really, really tried to understand the healing part of human people. And I know that there were times it was really hard for her, when people would speak to her like that or – but she didn't let that stop her from protecting and helping people.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Let me interrupt you for one second.

Garrett, are you not leaving, are you?

G. O'BRIEN: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I just want to say that the Commission would like to recognize Mr. Garrett O'Brien, who's been a lawyer representing people here and you – I know that you worked with the Legal Aid

Commission, also, you worked on your own representing the people.

Thank you for coming.

G. O'BRIEN: Well, thank you for those kind words.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Sorry about that.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, you spoke last week and you indicated there was times when she confronted men for some of the things that they were doing.

J. BELLEFLEUR: I know on a few occasions I was with her where if there was a man that ended up in jail because of domestic abuse or even sexual abuse, she confronted people, too, as part of her job and I guess as who she was.

I remember going to the Labrador Correctional Centre with her and she would go in there to meet with those men after they ended up in jail to see how they were doing, you know, make sure that they were doing – being treated okay and, you know, just try to help them, even though she played a part in having those men put in jail. The point was not to have them put in jail; the point was to get help for them. And that's what she truly wanted to see, was for those men to get help so they'd be able to come back out in society and not, kind of, end up back in jail again.

And I remember, as a young girl, going to the LCC multiple times for her to be able to do that. I remember her going in and I remember waiting in the porch area for her while she would go in and talk to these men after they ended up in jail. Sometimes they were her family, too. Sometimes they were her nephews and, you know, sometimes they were people she was related to. It's not a big community. But she always made an effort to do that. It wasn't all – like, her support was not one sided. It was always for everybody.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur –

INTERPRETER NUNA: Excuse me, she gotta translate.

P. RALPH: Oh, sorry.

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Your mother, I guess, showed concern for these men and what they were going through. I think one of the sentences that you spoke last week – what your mother said was: They aren't drinking themselves to death 'cause it's fun.

Do you remember your mother saying that to you?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Can you repeat that again? I didn't hear you.

P. RALPH: These men aren't drinking themselves to death because it's fun.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

One of the things that my mother spoke about – I guess, now it's called intergenerational trauma but back then that's not what she called it. That's, kind of, a new word in the past – since the things that have happened with the government.

But I remember her saying that, you know, the men that were in these situations where they were abusing their wives or their girlfriends or even sexually abusing children, that that was not happening for nothing. That there was reason behind those things. That, either, people hurting people because they, themselves, were hurting. And that – she said that the men that were out there drinking themselves to death, that that was pain. Like, they weren't doing that out to have a good time. That that was pain. That's how they were dealing with their pain.

And a lot of times – one of the things that she had said to me, and I think I told you this last week, was – this was around the time that Voisey Bay was coming into effect and all of these big, you know, IBA things, and she said to me, she said, Janet, she said, I feel scared. She said, I look at my grandchildren and, she said, I feel scared because, she said, things are bad now. She said, imagine what they're gonna be like in 20 years' time. She said, the drinking is gonna be worse; there's gonna be more drugs. She said, there's gonna be prostitution; there's gonna be homeless people.

And in my mind 20 years ago, I didn't – I couldn't foresee that. I couldn't foresee what she was saying and, she said, if things are not dealt with and we don't have control and we're not able to do things ourselves, this is what's going to happen, and I look at it now and everything that she said has come true.

All of those things that she talked about happening in the future, they've – [two seconds of audio recording lost due to technical issue] – right now.

P. RALPH: I'm going to ask you a few questions now about your career and –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You be the boss, Anne.

INTERPRETER NUNA: I wish.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, last week, we were speaking about some of the issues that men were dealing with and you indicated that your mother thought that some of those wounds were caused by their experiences in the church.

Do you know what she was referring to when she talked about that?

J. BELLEFLEUR: My mother spoke to me – my mother was a very religious person. She went to church; she believed in God. But she had a lot of trauma in the church as well. She was a very forgiving woman though.

She spoke about the abuse from the priests and brothers that came to the community and that a lot of the issues in the community with drinking alcohol and drugs, like all of those things were – kind of, stem a lot from that trauma.

For some people it can be – it can go one way and for others it can go another way, and for a lot of people, that trauma, kind of, went down to their children, right? And she spoke about that a lot, and that, you know, the importance of dealing with those kinds of memories.

But for her, her trauma with the church, I think was more like a driving force for her in her work. It's what made her passionate about helping people. Her pain is what made her very passionate about helping women, helping children, the – every single job that my mother took in her life was always helping people and in a lot of ways, because of that, myself and my siblings, we didn't have a mother.

I know that my mother loved me and I know she loved my siblings and I understand now that that was something that she had to do for her own spirit. And I guess in her mind, she thought that everything was okay, but she put so much effort and so much of her life into helping everybody else, that we kind of just, kind of, got left behind. And I know she didn't do it on purpose. I know that now. And I'm grateful now because I always – there's always somebody that's coming up to me and saying: Your mom did this for me. Your mom helped me. And that makes me really proud knowing that she helped so many people.

There was this one person that came up to me about a year after my mother died. He's

the same age as me and he said: I'll never forget growing up, we went into care quite a few times. And he said: It was always your mother that came to the house and would say, okay, come on guys. Let's pack up your stuff. You're only gonna go for the weekend, don't worry. I promise you're gonna come back home on Monday. I promise.

And he said that she would pack them up, and there was quite a few of them, siblings, and she would take them either to an uncle or a grandmother. And then on Monday, she would make sure – 'cause this would be on a Friday – she would make sure that they were brought home on Monday. And he said that he trusted her and he felt like if she said that they were gonna go home, he knew that they were gonna go home.

And I think that, for my mother, that was really important. The children went home to their families. She knew that the families, they were hurting because of other things. Not that they didn't love their children, they just needed that prevention part, you know, that not knowing, kind of, where to turn when it comes to having that pain, and she knew that.

I feel – when I think about growing up and having people knock on the door in the middle of the night with their children and my mom dragging a mattress out into the living room so they could sleep out there and, you know, just to make sure that they'd be okay. Making breakfast for them the next day; making sure that they were okay before they left, right?

She knew that you can't change what people do and how they feel, that's gotta come from them, but she did the best she could to support them.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, I'm going to turn now to your career and education –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'm just going to interrupt for a second now and – need a health break?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Me?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Need a health break?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm good.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You're good.

Thank you.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, so I understand you didn't finish high school. Is that correct?

J. BELLEFLEUR: No, I didn't finish high school. I only went as far as Grade 11.

P. RALPH: Right.

And what did you do after that?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I got pregnant. I – my first job – my first real job was with the education committee with the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation. That was when Nykesha was a year old, 26 years ago.

P. RALPH: Right.

I understand you did something – I think the abbreviation was T-E-P-L. Was it Teachers at Davis Inlet.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Oh yeah, TEPL. I did a TEPL program. Well, it was one month. I went to Davis Inlet and I did two courses with Memorial University and my – the committee that I was working for was very supportive in me taking part in that TEPL course, and I can't remember the actual meaning but it's an education course for Innu teachers that they used to have in Sheshatshiu.

P. RALPH: Right.

And did you go on your own or did Nykesha go with you?

J. BELLEFLEUR: No, Nykesha stayed with her grandma.

P. RALPH: Oh, did she? Yes.

And so, later on, when you went to work, was Nykesha being looked after by your mother at that point?

J. BELLEFLEUR: At that point, that was the year that my mom took a year off work to babysit for me – that year.

P. RALPH: So, you're, I guess, very fortunate in that instance to have your mother's support to be able to –

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes, I was very.

P. RALPH: – pursue a career.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, I'm gonna quickly go over your career. You've had – done a lot of work with Band Council, including you were executive assistant of the education committee and also EA to the Chief of the Band Council.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: I think it was –

J. BELLEFLEUR: I was the executive assistant to Chief Paul Rich.

P. RALPH: Also, you were an EA to a lawyer for a period of time.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah, her name was Maryanne. I can't remember what her last name. I also worked – yeah, I worked with her, too.

P. RALPH: Maryanne King.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: Right.

And then you had a job in Social Health. In fact, you worked with Lyla Andrew.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: Can you describe what was happening at that point?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Lyla and I worked with an inter-agency committee and we gathered people – we tried to gather people. This was during the time when a lot of Innu children were sniffing gas in the communities and the vision was to be able to have other organizations to work together to try to figure out how to deal with some of the things that were happening in the community.

P. RALPH: We had Mary Pia Benuen testify this week and one of the things she testified was this report, *Influences on the Health and Behaviour of Sheshatshiu Youth*. Do you recall participating in that, the creation of that report?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I recall when that report came out, because I remember Leila and Lorraine were the ones that did that. So, yeah, I feel like I do recall that.

P. RALPH: Leila Gillis?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: The – subsequently, I guess, you worked on benefits agreements. I think you administered benefits agreements for –

J. BELLEFLEUR: I worked at –

P. RALPH: – 10 years?

J. BELLEFLEUR: – I worked at Innu Nation for 10 years as the IBA coordinator.

P. RALPH: Maybe explain IBA for people that don't know.

J. BELLEFLEUR: The Impact Benefits Agreement was with Voisey's Bay at the time and it was basically everything that came with the agreement between the Innu and Voisey's Bay: environmental, businesses, jobs, land, protected animals, those kinds of things.

P. RALPH: Right. And so what kind of work would that involve?

Perhaps we should give Anne a chance to catch up here.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes, it's a good idea.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, perhaps, just briefly describe what that job was all about.

J. BELLEFLEUR: The IBA job?

P. RALPH: Yes. Yeah.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Basically, the IBA is an agreement that the Innu have with the companies – the IBA – and for me, what I used to do was I would travel to Voisey Bay to meet with staff. Sometimes we would meet with the companies to see what jobs would be available for Innu because there is a certain percentage of Innu that should be hired and there's also the environmental effects on the land, if there was a flood, those kinds of things. There's many different – and then it's also the funding, too, the funding of being able to use the land. And also, you know, a lot of times what I had to deal with was Innu people being mistreated while they were at work by non-Innu people and being told that they misunderstood.

P. RALPH: Right.

Now that – you had another job as a community health planner, which I'm not gonna ask questions about. We'll deal with that at another time with other witnesses,

but a very important position. And now what's your current position?

J. BELLEFLEUR: My current position is I am the executive director for a Level 4 placement home provider. The organization is called Shushepeshipan Ishpitentamun Mitshuap Incorporated.

P. RALPH: So, I'm going to use SIM for short.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

P. RALPH: Okay.

And so how long have you been in that position?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I started October 18, 2018.

P. RALPH: And were you the first executive director of that organization?

J. BELLEFLEUR: It was a brand new job, it was a brand new board; everything was new. So, yeah, I was the first executive director.

P. RALPH: So, describe what that organization is all about.

J. BELLEFLEUR: We are a Level 4 home provider that provides housing, care, love and attention to children that are in care with CSSD, children that are not able to find homes, foster care or long-term homes. We have one group home and we have two emergency placement homes.

Right now, one of our emergency placement homes is closed temporarily. We're planning to reopen in April. We had a few HR issues, so we decided that we would shut down and kind of, just, revamp.

P. RALPH: And – I'll let Anne – or Ms. Rich – translate that.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLORTE: Let me just interrupt at this stage and give you an opportunity to tell us how the rest of the day is gonna go. We are going to finish up at 4:30 but have a five-minute break.

You can tell us what's gonna happen.

P. RALPH: The – so we'll, I think, be finished with Ms. Bellefleur and Ms. Gregoire by 4:30, and then we'll take a break for supper and come back for 6 and go from 6 to 8.

So, we'll take a five-minute break now.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLORTE: Five minutes, please.

Thank you.

P. RALPH: Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLORTE: [Inquiry in progress at start of recording] – continue where we left off.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, you are – so you're basically in charge of this organization; is that right? You oversee the administration of these three facilities?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes, I'm the executive director. There's also three board members that I – they're my bosses.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

P. RALPH: And who do you report to?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I report to the board.

P. RALPH: And who do they report to? Is this SIFN –

J. BELLEFLEUR: No.

P. RALPH: – or is this Innu Nation?

J. BELLEFLEUR: No.

SIM is not directly affiliated with SIFN. SIFN is – it's kind of like SIFN is the umbrella of the IRT, SIM and MTIE but they're not directly linked.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: So, SIM is it's own entity.

P. RALPH: Yes.

And how many children can you accommodate in these facilities?

J. BELLEFLEUR: In total, in all three homes, we can accommodate up to a maximum, with a sibling group, 18 children and youth.

P. RALPH: And how many employees do you have working there?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Right now, currently I have 50 employees.

P. RALPH: But right now, it's only two facilities that are operating?

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yeah.

When both – when all three homes are operating, I can have up to 60, 75, 80, depending on casuals.

P. RALPH: Right.

And – with whom do you work? I mean, I assume you work with CSSD, IRT. Do you work closely with those organizations?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I work closely with CSSD, IRT and SIM now are just – well, starting because they're fairly new, too, with creating an agency, so we're starting a working relationship.

P. RALPH: Right.

And your sense of – it hasn't been around that long, but do you get a feeling that it's accomplishing the goals that were set out for it?

J. BELLEFLEUR: I see a difference, but I'm not gonna lie, like, the reality of it, too, is that we have children that have been in the homes, especially the emergency placement homes, much longer than they should have been there.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: An emergency placement home is only supposed to place children for maximum of 90 days.

P. RALPH: Yes.

J. BELLEFLEUR: But the children that we have there now have been there for much longer than 90 days.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: And it's because that we don't have enough foster homes in the community and a lot of times children that come into care have behaviours and behaviours that, you know, sometimes families can't bring that into their homes because of their children, right?

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: So there's a lot of different layers to Level 4.

P. RALPH: Right.

Ms. Rich.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, in – from what you've observed, what's the impact on Innu

children who are taken out of the community?

J. BELLEFLEUR: A lot of – there's two specific youth that I think about all the time, and I think it's because I knew them when they were both little, and I knew when they were taken away. When they were old enough, when children were still able to sign themselves out at 16 years old – which was a few years back; now it's 18. You have to be 18 to be able to sign yourself out of care now. But, previous to that, it was 16 years old.

And there was particular children that I know that signed themselves out at 16 years old, and because they had been in care from the time they were five years old up until they were 16, and CSSD, as far as I'm concerned, failed them because there was no effort put into making sure that they connected with the community.

It's kinda like – I don't know how – what that saying is called: If you don't see it, the problem, it kinda doesn't exist. There's a saying. And I feel like that's kind of what happened, because people were dealing with things on a crisis basis. So these children that were taken away and then signed themselves out, come back to a community where they have absolutely no connection.

They don't have a connection to their family. They don't have a connection to their siblings. They're couch surfing. They don't – they're just walking around without any real purpose. And then they're having children, and their children are ending up in care. So it's a vicious cycle, over and over again. And if – I believe – if connections had been continued with these children and they were brought home on a monthly basis to visit family, or a family was brought out there to visit them – maybe not even that, maybe they come here, and they get to know the community, they get to know their family, their siblings, grandparents, whoever.

Signing themselves out at such a young age without any connection and no real means of a place to live, I think, was a very, very

detrimental effect on them. Because they just don't wanna be in care, right? And they wanna come home. And they think that when they come home everything is gonna be wonderful. But they come home and there's no connection. There's no language. There's no, um – I'm not saying there's no love. I know that families, they love their children, but that bond, it's not there. And I dunno if it's possible to go back and to recreate that now, after children come back.

And I'm – myself, personally, I think that letting children sign themselves out at 16 years old is a positive, but also a negative, right? If there was connections with their family, I think it would have been positive return. But a lot of times – well, actually, every time, every child that has returned, there hasn't been anything positive that has come from it, not that I can see.

P. RALPH: Ms. Bellefleur, there's a lot of – some positives happening in the community in terms of the creation of these homes and also the development of the secretariat.

From your own perspective running SIM, what things would you like to see? What new programs would you like to see?

J. BELLEFLEUR: There's a program called – it's called the post-majority program and it's for any youth – young adult from the age of 18 to 26 years old that's been in care. It's kind of an in-between of Income Support and Jordan's Principle, but it's specifically for youth that have been in care. And it's a service to be able to provide support when it comes to, you know, finding a place to live or for food or for babysitting or even, like, to be able to attend college for those kids that kind of got lost in the system.

That's one program that I'm looking at taking over in the community. And it's not directly a SIM program, but it's something that I feel is really needed in the community and it's something that I'm really passionate about, because I see those young people and they are community members. They belong here, but they don't have the connections, and maybe we can help them make those connections. You know, maybe

we can set things up in a way where we do some kind of cultural programming with them. There's so many possibilities to be able to do those things.

Another program that I'm looking at starting with SIM, too, is a family engagement program. The main goal here is that we don't have children in care. That everybody's taking care of their own kids and everybody's healthy. Like, that's the goal, right, for every for community. But, obviously, that's not where we are right now and there's a lot of work that needs to be done.

So, instead of us just taking kids, maybe my staff can go into homes and help prevent that from happening. Maybe my staff can go into the homes and provide a support for families and be able to take a mom for a coffee or help take – you know, give her a break for a couple of hours to go to the gym while the worker watches her kids, or it could be just sitting down and having tea or helping her make bread or doing her laundry. It could be so simple. Something so simple that could make that mother wanna be better and work harder.

So, that's another program that SIM is looking at taking over but that's once we reopen.

P. RALPH: Right.

J. BELLEFLEUR: There's a lot of – I got a lot of dreams.

P. RALPH: Right.

Ms. Gregoire, is there anything you'd like to talk about in terms of your grandmother? After listening to your mother testify and, I guess – you're, I'm sure, reflecting upon your experience with your grandmother; is there anything you'd like to say?

N. GREGOIRE: I never worked with her and a lot of people that I currently work with have and I just – I'm so proud of where I come from. What a woman, and – what a woman, you know? I'm just very proud.

Thank you.

P. RALPH: Just one last question, it's a really – I'm going to ask you to tell a story that you told me last week about your mother taking children out of a home and taking them to someone who is living in a tent.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Oh.

So, Annette Michelin always would laugh when she would tell me this story, and it happened multiple times. So, you know, my mother would apprehend children, her and Annette would apprehend children and driving around trying to find a place in the community and, at that time, there was a lot of drinking happening in the community and sometimes people would be camped on the road, on the highway. A lot of people would go camping.

So, my mom and Annette would drive up on the highway and stop at the camps and say: Can you take these kids? And, they'd say: Yeah, sure, we'll take them for the weekend, whatever. And, my mom – Annette – my mom would tell Annette we'll call the office in St. John's and let's get, you know, some food for them for the weekend, clothing 'cause when you take children out of their homes, you don't really have time, a lot of times, to pick up their things.

So, Annette said she remembers calling the main office in St. John's and the main office would be saying: Is this a good foster home? How many bedrooms? Is there a bathroom? And she said she'd look in the tent and she'd say: Oh, there's three rooms. There's – yeah, yeah, there's quite a big bathroom. And a lot of times that's how my mother and Annette would keep kids from being taken to Goose Bay or taken to North West River is putting them on the road in a – with a family that was camping for a weekend.

So, you know, if my mother could have moved mountains to help people, she would've done it – hands down.

P. RALPH: Thank you very much, Ms. Bellefleur and Ms. Gregoire. That was fantastic.

Thank you very much.

I don't believe counsel have any questions on cross. Is that correct?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'll ask. I'll ask.

Counsel for Canada?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Counsel for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Is that it?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Counsel for Innu Nation.

Thank you all very much.

Commissioner Devine, please.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you. I'll try to be succinct.

First of all, thank you for a wonderful presentation. It was particularly moving to hear you speak your grandmother's words and I know she would be proud.

The other thing I wanted to say regarding your mother – grandmother is regarding her capacity for compassion, and it is really striking and amazing how much she had. You know, it's one thing to be compassionate when you're working with

people and there's – those behind you have your back and you're feeling a lot of support, but oftentimes she was getting the opposite of that from both ends and she still was able to see beyond what was happening and the behaviour and to understand the people. So I think that was just wonderful to hear.

My one question is – and I said I wanted to be succinct – this is like crystal-ball gazing maybe for you to answer this question, but, as I understand, it there are approximately, maybe, 150 kids who are out of the communities, in both Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, today. And in terms of the programs and services that you have, your Level 4 home and your emergency homes, what would you see in terms of trying to have an impact on some of that? And this is like I said, just a long view, a long vision.

J. BELLEFLEUR: This is one piece of SIM that I didn't mention. We are planning on opening two more homes in the community and those homes are ILAs. They're called Individual Living Arrangements and those homes are specifically for children that are not able to find placements.

One of the things that we talked about when we initially first started SIM was how we could help bring children home. And in our group home, we've brought three children back. And they're still living in the group home right now.

So, it is happening. It's just our capacity for staff is – it's not easy finding staff to work in the community with family, children that are their families, sometimes even grandchildren – staff. So, we're always looking for other possibilities. I'm even talking about opening a home in St. John's that would be specific to children that have special needs when it comes to medical, but it would be how CSSD does their work, when fly-in, fly-out. I would fly my staff into St. John's. So it would still be an Innu home and it would be Innu spoken and we would have Innu culture in the homes.

I don't know what's gonna happen in the future. All I know is, right now, there are so

many different things that we want to do and we have a really good opportunity because of the agency and because SIM is only five years in. We're still a very young organization, but I have a lot of hope 'cause I'm sitting here right now in an Inquiry that we've been waiting for to happen for so long.

So, I'm hopeful and I'm positive that things are slowly gonna change and that we will be able to bring more of those children home. You know, three children, to me that's a big number.

Thank you.

P. RALPH: Thank you.

J. BELLEFLEUR: I know we're almost done, but can I just say one more thing? I – right now, one of our homes is closed and, right now, we have 10 children in our homes – two homes. I just wanna say that, right now, we're taking the opportunity, because of the closure, to train up our staff.

We're doing a lot of training with our management team and I think it's important that people know that we're constantly working on capacity and we're constantly working on different trainings. We're doing training for autism, FASD, ADHD. We're doing training with TCI, the Innu Care Approach, ASETS, First Aid. We're doing a lot of things – positive things for – to prepare for our reopening.

P. RALPH: I guess, including working with the Gardner Institute.

J. BELLEFLEUR: Yes.

We're also doing a program that I've been working on for over a year with the Gardner Institute. It's a supervisory management training program and it's in three modules. And we just did two separate groups for our first module, last week and the week before. And I think we had almost 40 participants. And that's not just from SIM; that's from other Innu organizations as well: MTIE, IRT, SIFN, Social Health.

So, it's not – it wasn't something just for us; it was also for the community. 'Cause we're all kind of having the same issues and we're all here and we should all be connected in a way so we can provide support for each other. I just wanted to let everybody know that that is happening. That, you know, we are working on that.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Nastash.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: There's a lot to think about and a lot to say, but I'm not gonna say all of what I'm – I am thinking, because some of this is – what Rose had said, was about my mother.

And I'm thinking about Rose – Aunt Rose – and I'm thinking I feel like she's here, and Aunt Rose was a humble person. She wouldn't be proud. Like, she was not a proud woman. Meaning bragging or saying stuff about – to make herself look good. She was always on the level of the people that she was with, and I remember a lot of times her visits.

And I'm really glad that Janet and Nykesha are here, and I think that – and I feel like Aunt Rose is sitting here smiling. And I feel like she's proud in her own way of her daughters and granddaughter. Theresa is – also is in the same field of helping people as well. She's not here. And that's Janet's sister.

And so, it makes me feel good to sit here and listen and read of what Rose's hopes were and the challenges that she faced working for the community. And I'm very grateful to be here and I know another sister who is behind here, Elizabeth – Aunt Elizabeth – I know it must be feeling the same way too because she was close to Rose as well.

And, to Rose, I thank her for being a trailblazer, of showing people and fighting for families and not accepting the status quo, of always trying to do better, to improve things, to improve lives of the children here in our community. And you

can see it now, as Janet said, a year ago somebody came up to her and thanked her, and she probably saved that child's life.

And so, I thank Nykesha, Janet for the work that you guys do and for you to complete your education, and any support you need, I'm here as well.

Thank you.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Tshenashkumitin. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
Tshenashkumitin.

Three remarkable generations, three remarkable women – thank you to all of you for your attention, your patients and your respect for Innu people. We'll close and we'll be back at 6 o'clock-ish.

Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Charlene is gonna be a little bit late, but we can start and apply the same protocol for anything that she misses.

Go ahead please, counsel.

C. URQUHART: Thank you, Commissioners.

Before we begin, I'd like to enter Exhibits P-036 through P-052, please.

And our next witness is Jack Penashue and he wishes to be affirmed, please.

CLERK (Battcock): Do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this Inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

J. PENASHUE: Yes.

CLERK: Please state your name for the record.

J. PENASHUE: Jack –

CLERK: Turn on the – right here.

J. PENASHUE: Jack Penashue.

CLERK: Thank you.

C. URQUHART: So, Jack, can you state your parents' names, please?

J. PENASHUE: Francis and Elizabeth Penashue.

C. URQUHART: Okay.

And when and where were you born?

J. PENASHUE: I was born here in Sheshatshiu.

C. URQUHART: Okay.

What's your current role?

J. PENASHUE: I'm actually the superintendent for the national park, under Innu Nation.

C. URQUHART: We'll give the translators a chance.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: And prior to that role, what role did you have?

J. PENASHUE: I was working as the Social Health director for the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation.

C. URQUHART: So this may be a bit – going back a while, but how did you first become interested in Social Health.

J. PENASHUE: Oh my, where do I begin? I guess I have to tell the story, how I – how my interests became in working in the health field.

It was in 1992, on January 21st, that I attended a treatment program – an addictions treatment program in Windsor, Ontario. That was my last day of consuming and – in alcohol and drugs. I – obviously, I am an addict and a drug addict and it was at one point in my life that I decided to – if I had – I guess, I had a really – an awakening where I thought to myself waking up day after day from alcohol and drugs or abusing alcohol and drugs, I got to the point in my life that I couldn't function physically, I couldn't function as a person anymore. And I thought to myself, is this the life that I will always have or am I always going to be able to function the way I was or function the way I did, waking up day and night from drinking, God knows how long, I just drank and consumed, as long as I can remember.

And it was that point in my life that I said, I'm gonna have to ask help – ask for help, ask for somebody to help me. And it's kind of an interesting day that I remember, I was watching a show and I was – I know I was having convulsions and I was having DTs and I was in these moment of trembles and having all these anxieties. I was watching – I was at my mom's – my parent's house and I can't remember who was there or not, but I remember it was early in the morning. And, like I said, I was having these convulsions and I couldn't control my body. I tried to walk or even take a shower or even eat, I couldn't keep it down.

So – and I was – I turned on the TV for some odd reason and I was watching this show, this commercial. I'm not sure if it was a commercial. At that time, it was – I guess it would be called – it was a TBA or something like that, I can't remember what the show was, but I was watching John Bradshaw. And John Bradshaw was talking about family values. And I just remembered what he was talking about in regards to

addictions and that it affected everybody. It affected your whole being and affected your community. It affected your family and I just had this – and I knew exactly what he was talking about.

And it was that morning that I called my brother Peter and I told him. I called him, and he was Innu Nation president at that time. He was working at the old building where used to be Penote Ashini's old house. And I called him and I said: I'm only gonna ask you once, I'm not gonna ask you again, ever. I said: I need help and would you be able to do something for me? And I said: I'd like to go to Brentwood Recovery Home in Windsor, Ontario.

And he didn't say anything; he basically told me, don't go anywhere, stay where you are, I'll phone you in a few minutes. And I'm thinking maybe less than an hour – I was there at my parents' house – he called me back, and that's when he told me that I – that he got me a ticket – a one-way ticket to Windsor, Ontario.

And that was the – basically the turning point, I guess, in some ways, how I change or – change my life or try to change my life in reaching out.

Should I –?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thirty-one years, four days.

J. PENASHUE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Great.

J. PENASHUE: Should I continue or –?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: No, Anne's going to translate.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

I can't read my own writing, sorry.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

J. PENASHUE: I'm trying to reflect, actually, and I was listening to the conversation about translations, but I was looking at my years of recovery and I think it's actually 33 years, not 31.

COMMISSIONERS IGLOLIORTE: This is 2024.

J. PENASHUE: Yeah.

It's – I was also thinking about, as you were saying that, like, it's pretty odd that I'm actually sitting in front of Jim Igloliorte and used to be the judge. And I think he knows me pretty well from my history, that we were in a different capacity. I was a criminal and he was a judge, at one point, and facing a different room. So, see, it's kinda odd.

I'm trying to reflect about all the times since '92, and even before that; I'm also trying to share and tell a story about who I was and who I am and who I was then.

I grew up in a very dysfunctional family and my father, Francis, was well-known in the community and very well-known in different ways, but one of the things that he was well-known for was that he was a very violent man in the community. And I remember to this day that I come from nine siblings, including myself, and I'm the third born of that family. And I'm – I joke around a lot of my upbringing sometimes because I'm – I got to the point in my life, I've been sober, that I can openly talk about those kind of things with my siblings now. And sometimes it's hurtful and sometimes we can talk about it openly now and joke about it.

But I was raised as very strict individual and I grew up fast. I grew up – when I was seven, I was already a teenager or I became a parent. I raised majority of my other siblings on my own. Unfortunately, my parents were also alcoholics and very

dysfunctional. We didn't have a very good life in the community. And it was to this day, has been – at that time, I guess, it would be detrimental for a young person seven or even a child, at that age, to look after other siblings and be responsible.

I was trying – I'm trying not to be – I'm trying to be mindful of my parents. I don't want to put them in a position where they weren't loving parents, but I realize that they also were unhealthy and couldn't control their lifestyle, but I didn't realize that until I sobered up.

I didn't love my parents growing up. I hated my parents to the bone. I didn't once ever shared that I cared for them or loved them. I actually was overjoyed at one point in my life that – when somebody called us, actually it was priest who phoned us and we were in Sept-Îles, that they phoned us that they found my father frozen to death and I was overjoyed. I was overjoyed because I thought maybe now we can go home and try to be with our family in Sheshatshiu.

I'm trying to – also trying to share just a glimpse of our past as a family and it was – like I said, it wasn't a very good family and being raised that way. I experience so much hatred, so much evil, so much things that would – people can't imagine. Sexual abuse was common, family violence was common, hunger was pretty much every day.

Yeah, maybe I'll stop there and –

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

J. PENASHUE: I'm also trying to share about – I think I – maybe I – I'm trying to share a picture of where my background was and told a little story about past. And I know we were fortunate enough to return back to – at that time – I'm trying to remember what I said – we were fortunate

enough to return home once we found out that my father had frozen.

And we went back home and we overnighted in Wabush, stayed at the hotel. First time ever I actually stayed in a hotel, which was really nice. We didn't know anything about hotels, and food was excellent. I remember the food was excellent. I remember seeing – the first time ever seeing a shower, actually. And, yeah, it was a funny moment at the hotel in Wabush where my brother Max was – where we were – I guess I'm trying to figure out the shower and we didn't know what hot or cold was. And we turned the knobs and he was already in the shower and, well, two of them were in and shower already and we burnt Max in the shower because we the hot water. And I remember running down the hallway, all three of us, running down the hallway naked, all three of us and my mom was there and she was like trying to figure out what the hell is going on. And I remember that moment.

And then I remember the manager coming and all of a sudden, we – we were – we didn't get – we didn't go to the actual dining room where everybody ate, they took us to a kitchen and we ate in the kitchen with – you know for a kid who never seen any food like that, we were in – I felt I was in heaven, really, seeing all this colourful food everywhere and desserts and everything else that was there. I was overwhelmed seeing all this food.

And the next day, we flew back to Goose Bay and we landed in Goose Bay, I was so happy. I was energetic and I was happy to be home. And as soon as the door opened, and here's my father standing there and he was drunk. Of course, my mother was happy to see him and I know I wasn't 'cause I knew that day was – we were gonna lose our mom again and that she was gonna go with my father and then I had to take care of the other children again. That was the norm for the most of my life that I remember.

And, you know, just – I'm not sure if it's – how much I want to share. Do I want to share all of my personal life or – like I said, I'm trying to paint a picture of my parents.

In the community, they were these terrible people that I didn't know or didn't wanna know and when there was no alcohol and no – or no alcohol in the – in our home, it was a different story. They were the best parents that anybody could have. And we know – we had visitors, we had – there was laughter. There was safety. There was food. But as soon as alcohol came in the picture, it was chaos.

I tell this story one time how bad our life was sometimes and unmanageable. I remember growing up, doors were unsafe. Most people would say that what are you talking about, how are you – doors are very safe. But in my lifetime, at that age, life – doors were terrible, because people would come in and terrible things happened indoors.

I remember it was a cold, cold winter one time and how we survived, it's – if you ever remember these little square, little block heaters, I think they're called burn – I can't remember, they're called burners I think or just small ones.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hot plates.

J. PENASHUE: Hot plates. Hot plates. Those were our lifesaver, for us as a family. Most people would say: What are you talking about? They're a lifesaver because they gave us heat.

What we would do, in the coldest times, 'cause obviously we didn't have any running water and we didn't have any stoves. We did have stoves, but stoves need electricity and stoves need also firewood. But we had this little hot plate and what we would do is we'd go in and make a room, take one of the bedrooms and turn it into a safe room for all of my family, all of my siblings, Angela and Caroline – Kanani – were small then, but they wouldn't remember, but Bart and

Max and Gervais, they would remember very well.

But I was more the parent. Looking back at it now is like that was probably the most dangerous thing that we could ever done. You know, we could have burnt all of us. Because what we did was, we took one room and put all the blankets, covered the doors so there's no heat – or cold air would come in. So same thing for the windows, we would block it with everything that we could find and that burner would keep us alive for the next day, and that's where we would cook.

And as an older brother, I would always try to make everybody safe and happy. So I would – I was doing most of the parenting, I was doing most of the cooking. And I would make the bed into a much, much – a safe place so people can – my siblings would sleep together and be comfortable and be happy. I would make it as much comfortable as I could and that's what I did for everybody else. That was the winter lifestyle that we had as siblings.

The summers were the best for keeping everybody safe because we didn't need any heat. The one time we – obviously, there was fighting going on and we had – I had to take care of the siblings and I had to keep them safe. So I would never use the door; windows were the safe havens for us and my mom would coordinate and just try and say take your brothers out and I will distract your dad.

And she would do her thing and try to distract him and I would take my siblings out the back window and we would crawl. Our houses then were crawl spaces. They were just shacks really. So I would take them under the house, and there was garbage everywhere. And I would take the blankets and lay them in the flat.

And by that time, at that age, they knew when I said to be quiet because we're gonna play a game and I didn't want my –

our parents to see us or hear us. So I would make a bed under the garbage in the – underneath the house and I would try to make – entertain them and tell them stories and whisper them and try to do the best I could to protect them.

And, you know, every night I was, like – it was – sometimes it was – I laugh about it today because I love stray dogs. Stray dogs were a heaven to me because one time we were – as we were under the bed one time, the stray dogs would come underneath the house and sleep on top of us and keep us warm. So, that was a treat in some ways. But I knew I had to – like, I knew there was, you know, four or five of us underneath the house and I had to do that.

And we would hear everything upstairs because it was only a wooden floor and we would hear everything. We would hear the screaming and the yelling and the fighting and the pounding. I'm not sure who got hit but I'm assuming my father was doing most of the hitting, and we'd hear that all the time.

I was very happy, but they didn't stick around very much, we had our neighbours, sometimes Anne's parents, Kathleen and George, they would come. But they were also – they didn't stick around very long 'cause they knew my dad would – was, like, violent. I enjoyed older men who were coming to the house and so they would protect my mom from getting beaten.

That's the life I had as a young person. And talk about stories about social workers, that's another episode, I guess. I'm not sure.

But I'll let Anne translate.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

J. PENASHUE: I'm trying to remember where I –

C. URQUHART: You were talking about your love of stray dogs and then just that Kathleen and George would sometimes come to the house.

J. PENASHUE: I'm also going to share, that was part of my growing up, part of my life. We never – well, I never talked about it to anybody. It was basically kind of a secret where we didn't talk about what we saw or what we heard, what we went through.

And it's crazy because I remember as Anne is sitting here, I remember they had a really, really, a really nice home. And I remember they really had a really good food, especially the yeast bread – you could smell it from our house.

Sometimes, it's crazy that, as an individual, you know, things trigger, especially when it comes to food and sometimes I wonder if that's normal about the kind of life that I had growing up, things like that. Food triggers many, many things especially yeast bread, and I remember, like, Anne's parents, they used to make really, really good bread, yeah.

It was funny because I also think about my neighbours, Anne and her family and whatnot, I wished that my parents were – I was their child and I wished that I had been raised by them, instead of my own parents 'cause theirs seems – their house seemed and their home seemed really, really nice and peaceful and quiet and everybody seemed to – like George, George worked at the school and I saw a lot of things that – what he brought home.

I remember they had this Ski-Doo. I was just admiring it and had – I think it was one of those first times when they ever had the springs on Ski-Doos and I was just admiring it. And David and Philip were riding it and, you know, I was just envious watching other people and how they lived.

On the flipside, that's basically my community, and when we were in Nutshimit, it was a total different life; totally different lifestyle, totally different home. My father was my father and he was the best father that anybody could imagine.

I remember we were in Nutshimit and I don't know how it happened, who said what, but I remember Mani-Aten was there and I think Charlie Andrew was the Chief and we stayed home – we stayed in Nutshimit for the Christmas season. We didn't – I wasn't looking forward to going back to Sheshatshiu because I knew what it meant. And I remember Charlie Andrew getting up on a – getting out of a small plane, on a Cessna, and I dunno what lake we were on, but I remember the Andrew family and Matshiu Ben and whatnot and Patrick and Guy and Eric, we were basically, kind of, the same age.

Anyways, we stayed that winter in Nutshimit and my dad on Christmas day – well, I didn't really care about Christmas as long as we were a family in Nutshimit and we didn't – that they weren't drinking or abusive. But we woke up that morning, me, Max and Gervais, and we woke up and my dad, apparently, didn't sleep all night and he made bow and arrow for us all night.

So, that morning was quite special. And my mom woke us up and said: Don't wake your dad up. He was up all night. And we got our bows and arrows and, you know, we were so happy. That was the kind of father I had when he wasn't drinking, when he wasn't in Sheshatshiu. Those are my proudest moments of remembering my dad.

Sorry.

I just wanted to share that because my father was not – or my parents weren't, especially my father, were not terrible or bad people. They just had issues that stemmed from interference for being parents as the people.

I can remember my father, once we – when we were – we were both sober then, I think we were already in our 20 years of sobriety. And I asked my dad one time – I never told my mom about it – I asked my dad one time: What happened? Why did you become such an evil person when you were drinking? I know when I was drinking and drugging, I can't remember – I mean, I remember some of the times – but I can't remember for being evil like that to a person or to a human being. As crazy as I was, I can't remember doing terrible things to a person.

And I asked my dad that and I said: Why? And he said that something happened when he was a teenager and he was taken away from a priest and put in Mount Cashel, and that he didn't have a mother. He didn't have any parents. And he lived in Mount Cashel for – and he only was there – only there for a short time, but enough, he said, for me to know.

So he didn't go back the following year. He ran away and took off. When the priest came for him, he said, I hid in the woods for a long time until it was safe to come out. But when he told me that, and I was already in, you know, 20 years in sobriety or somewhat, I was pretty much we could have a – we could talk, but I could put two and two together that my father must have gone through hell as well and he never told anybody. He didn't tell me in detail, but I know how – the way he said it. I know what he meant.

I never told that to anybody, so that's weird – kinda weird how – but I'm trying to tell a story about my life and my parents and what had happened, how did we become the way we were, and how we'd survived that part of trauma.

So I – like I said, I didn't wanna tell the picture that my dad and my father was a terrible person, he just – something was done to him.

C. URQUHART: So, Jack, I'm just mindful of the time. Is there anything you're – we're inviting you back tomorrow morning if you're – if you'll return – at 9 a.m. But if there's anything else that you want to add now, today, just before we wrap up.

J. PENASHUE: I don't know, but it's – I guess it's in me now that I'm – I was just talking to my family, like, maybe I said too much or – I was trying to – I guess in some ways, I was mindful of others around me. Sometimes stories have an affect on people and sometimes not always a good thing. So I'm mindful about that and so I'm just trying to – yeah, I'm just being mindful about that.

So, hopefully, people don't go away in regards to not, you know, not being able to take care of themselves and whatnot. So I'm mindful about that. So, yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: How do you feel, Counsel, about where we are?

C. URQUHART: I would suggest that we adjourn for the evening and Mr. Penashue remain under oath and return tomorrow at 9 a.m.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much, Sir.

We just hope that you have unburdened some of the weight you've been carrying for a long time by speaking so truthfully as you have. We're very grateful that you would come here and speak to the Inquiry.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER C. RICH: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

Sorry, I – my mind is scrabbled right now.

[Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
(Inaudible.)

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
(Inaudible.)

ELDER PENASHUE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]