



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

English Transcript

Volume 33

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

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COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good morning, everyone. We're just about ready to begin the day's proceedings. I think Elizabeth is doing the prayer? Yeah.

I'll ask Elder Elizabeth Penashue, Tshaukuesh, to step forward for the prayer, please.

Thank you very much.

ELDER PENASHUE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Tshenashkumitin, now, Elizabeth. Thank you so much, Tshaukuesh.

Charlene is not feeling well today, but we'll continue with Anne doing the interpreting services. Thank you very much.

Welcome back, Sir. For the purpose of today, I'll simply remind you that just as you began, your testimony is sworn testimony, but Commissioner Devine has some opening remarks.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Just once again reminding people of the healing support services that are available here, and so this morning, we have Michel Nuna, healing support services worker; Edward Nuna, team lead; Sean Allen, clinical support; and Louise Bradley, healing support services consultant.

Also, the tent – I'll remind people of the tent that's available out there. And I'll also add that for any of the, I guess, the visitors who have been here this week, if they haven't already visited a tent, I'd strongly encourage you to go and experience it.

Thank you.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: Good morning, Mr. Penashue.

Thank you for coming back for your third day of testimony. I just have a few questions to clarify some of your evidence yesterday and then my colleagues may have some questions for you, and the Commissioners may as well.

When we spoke previously in December, you mentioned about social work caseloads and I wonder if you could speak to – from your time and your experience as manager and then your knowledge, any knowledge you had thereafter, of what social work caseloads were like and what the results of those caseloads were.

J. PENASHUE: I know when I'm getting old, I have to write what out – what been said or asked of me.

When I was the manager, I already knew some of the background information in regard to caseloads of children and families within the system. Normally, social workers, at the time, had roughly about between 40 to 60 caseloads per social worker and, normally, that is the norm in regards to – in terms of the social work working in the Innu communities of both Natuashish and Sheshatshiu.

And just to give you, kind of the – in my view, the snapshot of normally what regular social workers in the province or any other where else, could have or even have time to do, is roughly around 20 plus. And that's the norm in terms of the caseload that I'm aware of – for you can – so you can do the actual work that needs to be done.

So when you look at the demographics of caseloads, Sheshatshiu and Natuashish were really, really high and they weren't – you couldn't really do any social work work, only do, basically, more risk management and that's all I think we had time to do or in terms of doing the planning of each of those families and children.

So that's an overwhelming high numbers of caseloads for each social worker. And, like I

said, it's extremely – how should I say that? Extremely difficult to work in that numbers.

C. URQUHART: In your view, did that result in more removals?

J. PENASHUE: It resulted, I think, in some ways – all we were doing was, basically, in terms of – what's the word I'm looking for? There was more of a – what do you call it? [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken].

More reaction – that's the word I'm looking for. I'm lost for this morning. In terms of the – it was more pro – more of a reaction than anything else. You know, in terms of the work that we – our social workers were doing, there was more reacting to the situations at the time. You can't really do any good social work practice while you're having those extreme cases or even in caseloads when you have that frame of mind.

Oh, I just lost the train of thought.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: No, that's perfect.

J. PENASHUE: I think I'm coming down with something. Lyla's given me something.

C. URQUHART: Did you wanna let Anne translate and see if you – if it comes back to you?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: Did you have more that you wanted to add on that?

J. PENASHUE: Um, I think when I look back, some of those things that happened within the work that I did at the department, is that I think a lot of the times we're at fixated – not fixated, but more of we're at the crisis all the time mode – crisis mode. We were always seemed to be on the edge trying to figure out what to do in terms of crisis within the community.

Like I said, you know, I wanted to share something in regards to there was a story – a little story. I had the privilege and the honour to know a lot of these clientele and some of them have now – have passed on. But one of those individuals was a single father and he came to the office one time. I think it was a Friday afternoon. And obviously, you know, I knew his past and I knew his concerns and issues. And he came and he basically said: Here, take my son. I can't take him anymore. I am – I have started drinking and I can't – my family or my other relatives cannot take him because it's basically, you know, that they don't support him in that situation.

So I really, really was heartbroken when I seen this individual, this young man and this young boy come to the office and be dropped off at the office. And that's what he basically did. He just dropped his son at the office, and I'm left with this little guy. And now he's – I believe he's now 18 years old now, around that. I know he's a young man now and going through some challenges himself.

But his father passed away and I think about him all the time when I see young people and what had – that has done to him. And so I reflect on that a lot of the times, and so I'm thinking in that context about caseloads. He would have been able to – I believe this young man was also being transferred and moved to many, many homes, out of province. He's been to the system from, you know, professional placements to foster homes to coming back. And at this – and at the age of his legal age, he's basically just wandering around, wondering where to go and I don't even know where he lives anymore.

Those are the kind of things that come in mind when we talk about caseloads because, obviously, that individual, you know, it just doesn't do justice. When we talk about caseloads, I believe there might've been more than one social worker cases that this young man has had in his

life. He actually stayed with me, too. I think it was that time when he got dropped off, he stayed with me in my home because he – it was nowhere – I wasn't going to let this individual, this young man, go to Goose Bay or somewhere else on the Island and be cared for. So I think my wife and I decided to take him, which was not supported. I don't think it was, like, not acknowledged but it wasn't something that was supported by the system, but I had no choice that I felt that I – so we took him in and he stayed with us for a while until his mother was able to care for him again.

But those were the kinda things, though, the reality in terms of the communities of Sheshatshiu. And that happened and the caseloads were, obviously, so high at the time and a lot of the times, obviously, very challenging in regards to working in Innu communities, especially when you don't speak the language. And if you don't know the language and if you're also have a certain policy direction that you have to follow, it doesn't allow you to be a little – to be more human and ethical in terms of the work that you're trying to do as a social worker. So I just wanted to reflect that.

C. URQUHART: So I just want to clarify, so when you're speaking of caseloads, you're referring to the number of cases or files that one social worker would carry or be responsible for? And you said that those caseloads don't allow you to do good social work practice.

So, I wonder if you can speak to what is lost. What would you do differently if you had more manageable or more normal caseloads?

J. PENASHUE: Good question.

I think this is one of the things that the Innu has been asking in regards to what can we do to better the lives and help less create a trauma within the community, within the families and individuals, as well. I think that's one of the key messages that the Innu

are saying is that we definitely have concerns, we definitely have challenges and we definitely – in regards to the policy. It doesn't reflect and it doesn't support growth in terms of the Innu participation and decision-making.

So I think if Innu were more in control and more given direction to the lives of the Innu, I think we would be much, much more in a place where we can have a discussion and in terms of do more intervention, more positive intervention and more strategic planning and more case risk planning with the individuals. I think sometimes the reaction sometimes as a social worker in the system is that it's more pro-reaction is to remove the children.

That's the easy part, is removing the child to somewhere. Because we don't have the – the system doesn't have, or the province or communities don't – didn't have a system where you can place children. So it was only a benefit for individuals just to kind of remove the child somewhere else and be placed somewhere else. And it doesn't allow for individuals. And I'm pretty sure that at the time – and I don't know how this started, but at the time when I was in there, there were about five specialized foster homes. And I'm not sure if those five specialized homes are still in play or are still active. But I remember they were grandfathered in when the new legislation came out where specialized homes were not supported anymore.

So, in that case, a lot of the foster homes weren't beneficial or were not supported financially to the extent that they should've been supported. And if you had sent somebody else elsewhere on the Island or out of province, the services change. They were much, much better serviced. They were much, much better equipped to be supported in the services that they were given out of province. But if you were giving them in the community, the services were a little less.

It's almost – I don't want to say it, but it's almost like a discriminatory process where you can't take your own child or you can't take your own grandson or your grandchildren and be supported the same way as somebody else in Goose Bay. It's not the same.

So if Innu were given the opportunity, I think, to be supported and helped, I think we would be in a better position to have less children in care. I think we would be more beneficial if we supported the families.

And this is one of the things I've argued all the time when I was in the department. I said to a number of social workers that I've met, friends, colleagues, is that this department raises its slogan that we are there to prevent and support children, youth and family. You know, when – and that's what my whole thinking was when I was a social worker, that we need to support the family, not just focus on the child. Yes, the child is important. Yes, the youth are important. But it's much, much more beneficial if we focus on the family so that everybody is supported in the benefit of security and protection of that child.

So that's my I think, in regards to asking the question, what we could've done better or what can we do better to support Innu in the communities.

C. URQUHART: There was a lot in that answer, so I'm going to – oh.

INTERPRETER NUNA: Sorry.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: As evidenced by the extensive translation, I think we went a little bit long there, so I'll try to keep it a bit shorter going forward. But I wanted to focus on a few things that you said in that answer.

You mentioned five specialized foster homes and I believe that you told me, previously, that those homes received – and

that you said that they were not supported, financially, to the extent that they should have been. I believe that they received a flat rate. Is that correct?

J. PENASHUE: From what I understand from those five homes, they were, actually, more – they had more access and more support than any other foster homes within the communities. But it stopped because it was too much in terms of that – I can't remember exactly how many children could have been taken in from the family – I'm – why do I think eight? But normal recourse of a regular foster home wouldn't be able to handle that and they wouldn't be supported in terms of, financially, much more than a specialized foster home.

So – but it basically was – it ended and a lot of those five specialized homes were grandfathered in and they couldn't – well, I'm not sure if they continue for them, and I'm pretty sure two or three of them have passed away. But I'm pretty sure there's one or two that still is in the community that is running a specialized home.

C. URQUHART: You mentioned the lack of placements and services in the community. Did that result in more children being removed?

J. PENASHUE: Yes, I'm pretty sure that the – in terms of specialized cases, a lot of those children were removed and sent either to Newfoundland or out of province. There was also programs out there that were specialized in care of children, for example the Ranch Ehrlo in Saskatchewan and I believe there was another one in Ontario, I can't remember the name of it. It's been such a long time, but I do remember and recall that there were two that I remember that we utilized and used for children in care.

There was – like I said, there were homes that were foster homes that were given and it had the ability to look after Innu children in Ontario, but it's one of those things where I

find that sometimes we could have, probably, have been more – it would have been much, much more beneficial if the children were kept in the community. But, like I said, we didn't have the luxury and the support to do that.

C. URQUHART: When you say you didn't have the support, was that financial support or the policy support? What do you mean by that?

J. PENASHUE: All the above, because I think – and in terms of where we are at Labrador – that there aren't as much services supported to care for children. But I think in some ways we had – we didn't do the best ability to bring in individuals or even programs within the community to support that transition of children. I think we would have created a lot more security and more protection, I think, if we had done much, much more work in within the community at the time.

I also wanted to add, too, that it is also one of the things that I always try to figure out. And well, I know what it is, but the system itself, I always – like, when I was talking to the minister and the deputy minister at the time, I always had the – in terms of, I always said – not always said – but I think in some ways the children in care is a big business and looking after children was becoming much, much of a challenge because other people were benefiting more than what they were providing.

And then in one time we had this incident in Roddickton, some of the foster homes and the community members were basically saying that they were – these kids were mortgage payments. And that kind of a created an influx of questions in terms of what is it that we're trying to do and what is it that we're trying to say, and in terms of providing a service for the children.

And then I found out that the transactions, the Newfoundland – in terms of Newfoundland jurisdiction, Newfoundland

services, the funding doesn't come from Newfoundland, it comes from a different source. It comes from Canada, through INAC.

So those are the kind of thing that I found very interesting that when – how do I not – I'm trying to be – do it justice and I'm also trying to be democratic in a way that – about some of the things that I saw and went and seen and know about how the system works.

In terms of the transaction of children in care, especially Innu children, we were a different part of a system. We weren't a regular part of the system within the Newfoundland and Labrador jurisdiction. We followed the legislation and the jurisdiction in that context, but most of the funding didn't come from Newfoundland, it came from INAC.

So, imagine if those services were in turn turned to the communities, we would have been probably in a better position; I think the community would have been in a better position to be caring for their own children, if those services were provided directly to the Innu, not through a third party. But the third party made all those decisions where and how these children and how these sources of funding would be allocated to.

So that's the kind of things that was going on behind the scenes and I think, in some ways, I think we would have been in a better position if we had the opportunity – given to have children in care be provided in the communities.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I think it was Roddickton, was it? Roddickton.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: So, for the benefit of the Commissioners, I believe what Mr. Penashue is referring to is the funding formula under the agreements with Canada and the province, under Directive 21. And we anticipate that future witnesses will speak at length about that, but there – part of that formula is that when children are in care, those costs are fully covered by the federal government.

So, just to provide that bit of context.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Anne.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: You had said that it would be better if more work was done in the community. And I wanted to confirm my understanding that that would refer to early intervention services, prevention services, placements, treatment services, sort of, the wraparound services.

J. PENASHUE: That is correct.

Sorry, I didn't go into detail about it, yes, I'm talking about the prevention and I'm talking about treatment. I'm talking about planning a process where the Innu are more involved with their children within the communities. That's what it – is what I'm referring to.

In my thinking, I think there's a lot of times as well that, not only the children were – you have to basically more understand why the child in care; why are the children are in dire straits. The children aren't the ones that are troubled. It's usually they're a signal to the issue of what's it at hand and usually – and it's usually the parents. And I'm not talking about parents have parental issues; I'm talking about they have their own trauma. They have their own personal challenges within their homes.

And they being – you know, if you look at the history of the Innu culture and the Innu communities, I am – if you – for me, I am 56

years old, going to be 57, I am actually the first born in the community and everybody else under, I'm going to say 58 maybe, is probably the first generation of living in the community, that is both Natuashish and Sheshatshiu. The majority of our parents were nomadic. They lived on the land. They survived on the land and they continue to do that.

But a lot of the times is that we get to this point where if we had the opportunity, if we had the chance to identify, supported the children and understood the children much, much more and supported the families much, much more, I don't think we would be in a position where we are right now, if we had done that. If we had, basically, supported more the families than children. Children, yes, need support and whatnot, but normally it is the adults.

And that is the understanding that you have to understand that, when we talk about children in care, we have to – you know, you have to remove yourself in terms of your mindset about because of the child is in distress. Children don't become distressed because – they just don't become distressed. It's something that triggers that and it is usually within the home and it is usually within the family and it usually is the trauma within that home.

So people need to understand that we have to find ways and means to support families. How do we do that, support the communities? And that's through intervention and that's through prevention and that's through treatment of individuals and families.

C. URQUHART: And so without these supports in the community, your experience – your perspective is that that results in children being removed from the community. Do you wanna speak to that?

J. PENASHUE: Yes, I think we had the set, in terms of mindset, that when we – I'm gonna speak about the – as a manager

then, as a CYFS manager. I'm not speaking about – as a – at the time when I was working with the department.

I think in some ways, there was this idea that because we don't have the services within the communities or within the facility of looking after children or even protecting the children and safeguarding the children, that the intent was to remove them from the communities. And sometimes it became a norm, that because a child was at risk, it was – it seemed that it was the norm to just to say: Okay, where would you want to go? Where do you – where can we place the child? It almost seemed that the children felt, or it seemed anyways, that: Oh, I'm going to – away. I'm going away for a bit. And that was – I didn't – it didn't seem like normal, but it was a norm for children to think like that.

They – some were – didn't wanna go because then they knew because it was probably one or twice they'd been away from the community. But then some of them were anxious and sometimes that they were happy to leave their family home because they didn't – they felt in some way they didn't – they're not gonna hang around in an abusive home so they were happy to leave. And, you know, they were excited about movies, they were excited about going to the mall and shopping and all those kind of things that kids think about.

But in reality, once they were there, yes, they shopped; yes, they went to the movies; yes, they went to all the different restaurants and everything else, but the reality set in pretty fast. And, you know, sometimes I would get calls: When am I coming home? Those kinda calls. And it was difficult because we didn't have any placements then. We didn't have any children – where we can place the children.

I think there were times when we were left in a position to place children in hotels because we didn't have a place for them to be put in a foster home; we didn't have

enough places to put them in Sheshatshiu or anywhere else. So, some of the kids were put in hotels and whatnot and in Goose Bay.

So, that was more challenging to do that. But I think, like I said, if we had the opportunity to – at the time, if we had the opportunity to house and train, look after families, support the families, I think we would have been in a better position, not to have the high statistics of children being removed.

C. URQUHART: And I'd like to ask you about the – sort of the numbers, and though you don't have the numbers in front of you, just your general sense of, you know, children being removed. How did that change – like taken out of the community, how did that change over the course of your career?

J. PENASHUE: How did it change?

C. URQUHART: Yeah, did it go up or down or was there any particular points where, you know, you saw change?

J. PENASHUE: I think it did change. I think it changed that some of the children were returning home in somewhat. I can't remember if – in terms of the balance of demographics of children being returned, but I'm pretty sure that it, you know, kind of stabilized at certain point. I think because of the leadership at the time that were involved, they wanted to have much more proactive support, or proactive programs within the community, I think that helped much more than – so, yeah, so probably it more stabilized in terms of the context of children in care, of being removed of the children out of province.

C. URQUHART: When do you think that happened? When did it sort of stabilize?

J. PENASHUE: I'm going to move a little bit forward in regards to the work that I was doing. I was manager and then I moved into

the Social Health director. And one of the things that I decided to move from the department was because of those reasons. I felt that I would be in a better position to support the Innu and the leadership if I had the authority and the direction from the leadership to be much, much more proactive in regards to stabilizing some of those challenges within the context of the Innu communities.

So, as a health director, that was one of the things I was very keen on is in being proactive in supporting the leadership, that we needed to have these services much, much more provided, and that's when the placement of children came into play. And that's when the group home, at the time, changed into much more of a home for children, if they should wanna return, that it'll be a place for them to return and a place for them to stay, if they didn't want or were unable to go home to their actual parents. So there would be a place for them to go. So those – that's why I, in some ways, moved to another position to support that movement.

Yeah, so that's why I think, today, we have children in care, we have youth in placement, emergency placements in play, so that's – a lot had to do with that because our leadership gave us direction to do that.

C. URQUHART: You're saying those children were in the community?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: That's multiple questions, now, so maybe Anne should have a chance to translate.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: I want to confirm just the last sentence you said was that the reason that we have, you know, we now have children in care and in the group home. And I just want to confirm you mean that you have those children that are in the

community now because of the work that was done.

J. PENASHUE: That's correct.

C. URQUHART: Okay.

So I wonder if you can reflect on, you know, your perspective from when you were growing up and, sort of, the number of children who were in care – or who were taken out of the community then compared to in your, sort of, professional life. Do you get a sense of there being change over time?

J. PENASHUE: Good question.

In my growing up in the community, I don't recall children being removed and sent out of province. I, for one, was placed in the community. I don't remember if I was a child in care. I don't know if I was, but I do remember that I was removed and placed elsewhere for the protection from my father. I don't recall – 'cause we had smaller numbers then in terms of population of Innu. Roughly around 300 to 500 people, it's not very much.

But there were a handful of people that were in care, but I don't know if there was such a thing as children in care. I think most of the families, at the time, were more on child – not child welfare – on social assistance. So, I do remember that, that a majority of my family and friends – I do remember that social assistance was pretty predominant then. But I don't recall, in terms of children in care, ever being removed.

C. URQUHART: And in terms of that type of social assistance would – you were a child, so you may not know but were – are you thinking of the child welfare allowance, like that type of arrangement?

J. PENASHUE: Yes, child welfare allowance and – child allowance; I said child welfare, yeah. I don't even know if the child welfare allowance – there was – I don't

even know if there was actually child welfare allowance but it was social assistance that I – I remember social assistance but I do know of a child assistance under the – you know, we made jokes about it at the time growing up, \$20 a month of a child is what we got. But I've done – that's the – I'm not sure if they call it child tax benefit now. Is that what you're referring to?

C. URQUHART: The child welfare allowance was a program where there would be funding for a not – like of a – basically of a kinship placement type of arrangement.

J. PENASHUE: Oh, okay.

C. URQUHART: So when families took a child that wasn't their own, they would receive those funds. So I wondered if it was under that when you were saying under social assistance, if that was the program you were referring to?

J. PENASHUE: I'm pretty sure there was in terms of – 'cause I do recall that we had new jackets at one point, when we were placed in a home. So, I'm assuming that would be the child welfare services under the foster home or emergency home support.

C. URQUHART: And when you said you were placed, would that have been by Social Services?

J. PENASHUE: Correct.

C. URQUHART: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I recommend a break, unless you're – you'd like to naturally finish up your –

C. URQUHART: We can break, yeah.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Ten minutes, please.

Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
Gentlemen, we're going to continue now.

I just spoke with Mr. Ralph and the intention is to go on through until this witness is concluded with and cross-examination is done, as well.

Right? Was that the plan, Caitlin?

Yeah. He's the (inaudible).

C. URQUHART: You said earlier that you didn't recall children being removed and sent out of the community in your childhood. Do you remember when children being sent out became an issue?

J. PENASHUE: I think it became a much more of a concern for the community and the leadership when it became the children were asking for support to be returned. And that's became much – because it almost seemed like it was a norm for children to be removed in the community. It didn't seem people were saying anything or families weren't saying anything. It almost seemed like the children that were in care were asking to be returned home. That seemed, to me, the trigger point for that context.

C. URQUHART: And do you know approximately what time period that was?

J. PENASHUE: I'm going to say in the – probably in the late '90s, early '90s, maybe. I'm trying to figure that out. Let me try – I'm trying to figure out my years when I wasn't here. I was – I left the community in '93, '94. I was gone from '99 to 2004, so I'm thinking around the '90s – mid-'90s, people were starting to ask the questions about children in care and the – and I think they came – oh, no, I just reminded myself.

I think it came out – a lot of it came out from the '90s when there was a lot of gas sniffing

happening. That was the biggest one that I can recall, and I think that basically triggered from Davis Inlet to Sheshatshiu about the number of children that were in sniffing gas and that created much, much – a snowball effect from that point. So that's, I believe, that's the indication or the trigger in regard to – that I remember or recall, it's roughly around the '90s.

I can't remember exactly what year. I think I remember the kids binge sniffing and then that was in Davis Inlet. And then they were removed and they were placed in St. John's somewhere in a hospital. Some of them were in here in Goose Bay, and then they were sent to St. John's. And it was a big – it was on the news. So I just can't remember the exact year on that.

C. URQUHART: Yeah, that would've been in the early 2000s that they went to the Grace Hospital.

J. PENASHUE: Yeah, that's the one.

C. URQUHART: Yeah.

And so you – from your perspective, that was sort of what started further removals from the community?

J. PENASHUE: It seemed to be more and more noticeable, I think, and much more of an indicator that children – when children were in – out of control or in chaos or in trauma, the – it seemed the norm was to remove the child from the community or – yeah, remove them from the communities for the benefit of their own safety.

C. URQUHART: Over the past few days, you've spoken about the importance of Innu-led services, the Innu Care Approach, looking at the family and the trauma. I guess, I wonder if you can explain or help to – the Commissioners understand the difference between the Innu perspective and the system that is there now or the Innu values and what is there now.

J. PENASHUE: I believe that the question is kind of a complicated, but easy question to answer. It is complicated because in the view of the general public I think in some ways this is a much, much bigger question about people and especially when we comes to Innu people. And I would relate to the question to the history of where we came from and how we got here.

And I think a lot of times is that we're perceived and understood by others that we are small, we are insignificant, we are – we don't matter in the world, because we came from the wilderness, we came from the country. So, I think in that context, I think a lot of the governments and a lot of the bureaucrats and a lot of the people in itself, think about Innu people as insignificant because of those reasons. And we don't have an institution, we don't have a reading material that we can go to school, in the context of the world.

But as Innu, we have a wealth of information, a wealth of humanness in this world. Because we are in small numbers and we've travelled throughout the interior and we didn't build our homes in cement and stayed in one area, as others did, we basically were not – I don't think we were – and I'm kind of trying to be clear as I can be – I don't think we were given the opportunity to be understood, because we had a – there was wealth involved. There was resources involved. There were Innu people that were involved and Innu people were in the way of progress. And we were put in the position to be removed from our homes, and our home was our land, and we were in a position that we didn't really understand, we didn't really know what was going on. We had an idea that people were moving in; we had an idea that people wanted something from us, and progress was the number one significance in terms of what the Innu were – basically, Innu were in the way.

So, I'm trying to explain in the simplest way that I know about Innu and our perspectives in this world. And I think that because we're

so new and we're also trying to find out ourselves, as Innu people, the progress that we have made in the last 30, 40 years has been significant in regards to living in this world. And we're still finding out challenges and we're still – as one person said to me – or one person as a leader said that we're trying to – it's almost like a race, we're trying to get into the race but we're not really involved in the race. But we're trying to capture what is going on. And, basically, in this time of the world, I guess, it's – we're trying to catch up of the progress and in – within that, trying to catch the progress, there's going to be some challenges. And the challenges are now here and they're alive. They're here in this community in terms of the social challenges, the social dilemma and the social trauma that we face in terms of what has government has brought into our communities.

And that's, in my view, the underlining concern that we have is that we, as Innu people, have to find a way and means to explore, be involved, participate in the progress of what's happening and that only the Innu people can do that. And I look at my community now and I try to – in terms of define or even the demographics about the timelines, about the challenges and I see young people saying: Oh we're the most challenged. And I say: No.

The most challenging, for me anyways, is when we were young, that was the most challenging part because our parents didn't have anything in regards to progress. They didn't have any position to be involved, participate, decide on their life. They didn't have a choice. They were just given and told and that part of the – that life was not a – that transaction was not a positive one.

I see that in many times when Elders talk about the interference of churches, interference from governments, interference from the progress of trying to change the people.

I may not have answered your question, but I may have stretched in a way that it's to me complicated but easy for me to say when we talk about the Innu perspective. So, I'm thinking, hopefully, I answered it in a way that it's acceptable.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: I had asked you a question about Innu values and how those are different from the system as it was, and you said it was complicated and simple. And then you gave us all a history lesson, which tells me that the history is really important to Innu, that the trauma of the community as well as the strength of the families is an important part of Innu values.

And, I guess, I just wanted to open it up one more time if there's – I'm not sure if that was the complicated part or the simple part, so if you wanted to add anything else to that, I wanted to give you that opportunity.

J. PENASHUE: I don't know what's your question, really. What is it you wanted to know? Did you want me to elaborate more on the values of our culture or ...?

C. URQUHART: I guess if there's anything else you wanted to add in terms of the importance of Innu-led services and why – how that would be different from what's there today.

J. PENASHUE: Okay.

I'm trying to not tell a story, but share something that I experienced in regards to where I am. As I said before, I'm the first – like, there was many generations. I think Anne and I are probably in that generation, I think, probably the first born in the community. And what I think is important is that we need to discuss, share, understand what Innu went through in that time period.

I'm going to elaborate a little bit on my father's side, because my father was a very,

very religious man growing up – very religious. Sunday was not an exception. Sunday was basically more of a sabbath day for us, growing up. We had to go to church at 10 in the morning and then in the afternoon. That was the norm growing up as a kid.

And then, fast-forward to being adults, my father, in some ways I think, changed his thinking – not change his system, but change his thinking about people. He once shared with me about – he said, he had a lot of the friends that were priest. Some were good and some were bad. And out of all the oblates that friended him, only one stayed around. Only one became and continue to be his friend. And out of his friendship with him – and it wasn't the reason because of my father, it was the reason of his own personal choice, that he stepped away from priesthood. And my father was much, much more grateful, I think, and much more accepting of him as a human being, as a person.

Because at the time of young Innu, I believe, coming to this community and having one person dominate a culture, dominate people, and dominate and separate the distinction between our principles and our values, and separated them and making them change for the worse. Our women changed, in terms of their values, the men changed in their principles of men. They became much more dictators than anything. They changed.

And I think because Innu people at the time were – we were always, from what I understand and from what I know, Innu, we were always an accepting and helpful people. And we continue to do that. We were – we are human in that context. But things at the time of contact in the community of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, we were given a script. And the script was that we had to believe in God. We had to believe in the Bible. This is the true testament of the Creator. I don't know how or when people decided that this is it. This is

the one. This is what we will preach and kneel and accept as one. I don't know when that happened.

I can – you know, we can talk about the history and say it happened in the 1600s and the 1700s, but I don't know when the actual Innu people said: Okay, we're gonna take this on and we're gonna become Catholics and we're gonna become religious and we're – this is our – gonna be our Bible. And I don't mean it in a way that – and my father said that to me: The Bible is not the problem. It's the people behind the Bible that are an issue.

People have a tendency to have control of the environment the way they like it. And Innu people are very accepting and very – they're not going to say: Hang on, this is not how it is. This is not how we were taught. This is not how it is in terms of the values of what we know. But we were very accepting to learn from other cultures and, because of that, I think there was a lot of – like my father would say, you know, there was a confusion.

He was confused because my father was a very spiritual and religious man in terms of the Roman Catholic. But he also was very confused because the person that taught him was hitting him and abusing him physically, violently. So he was confused in a way: How was this Bible that is supposed to be very spiritual, very significant and also very defined in a way that it's supposed to help people, but then, at the same time, we are beaten to accept this way of life?

So, I think it is a – it was a very challenging and very trauma and confusing time for the Innu people. And to this day, I think it is as well. And my – like, my father is not exception to that. And I still believe in the idea. And most people will say that I don't believe in God, which is totally wrong. I do believe in God and I do believe in the Creator and I do believe in the awe of spirituality. But that doesn't mean I am

brutal and I'm not – I'm mean and I – it doesn't mean I try to force that on you.

Like I said about Innu people and the English. English wording is very, very confusing. It's confusing because it's – doesn't really say what you really want to say. There's always a hidden stories and there are hidden sentiments about what you're really trying to do and what you're trying to say. In the Innu language, it's quite different. It's very straightforward. It's very meaningful in a way when we translate our language.

And so maybe I am saying too much already, but that's the kind of things when we talk about principles and values. There's so much to learn about the Innu culture and there's so much for people to understand and just because it's not written, doesn't mean it's not true. It's there.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Counsel, I think you have to get the consent of your friends to continue or at least let the community know where we're going.

I'll give you a five-minute break and let us know what the plan is.

Five minutes, please.

Recess

[Audio recording loss due to technical issue.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'll just – yeah, because it's lunchtime we just wanna make sure that everybody was in agreement that we can continue and it looks like Caitlin has negotiated with counsel that they're still okay to continue.

C. URQUHART: And with, perhaps, the most important person, Ms. Rich. So, she's agreed and I'm just going to finish my final question to Mr. Penashue, which is just to open an opportunity if there was anything that you had hoped to share with the

Commissioners and the public that you didn't get a chance to say that you can add that now.

J. PENASHUE: There are many, many things that I would like to ask, but I think and I'm hoping that with this process of finding out the best interest and the best practice, the best format for Innu of what we're trying to do in terms of the Commission and Inquiry, that we find a place that is probably much, much more – I'm not going to say unique because Innu people already know what we require.

We already know that Innu children matter to us. Our families matter. Our culture matter. They all matter to – in terms of, that we, as a people, we need to – not amalgamate, but more support one another at the same time – [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken] – that we find a way – I remember one time when we were at the gymnasium and Innu people were very frustrated, very angry and as it was during the time of the low-level flying and we were very, you know, probably one of the first times that we ever voiced our concerns about our environment and our lands and our rights that were violated. That was the first time that the Innu people said: That is enough. We can't continue living – or what's been dished out to us, we cannot.

And I think in this context when we talk about children, we're now talking about children in care; we're talking about children in our homes, in our communities. And I cannot, in some ways, comprehend the anguish and the trauma that Innu face when it comes to their children being removed from their hands. I cannot comprehend how Innu people, Innu – especially the grandparents feel when their grandchildren are removed from their home. I cannot comprehend that.

I tell my mother every day – I try to – I do it every day, but she forces herself to continue raising children. We had – she has a great-grandchild right now and her name is little

Frances, and we keep telling my mom: No, you cannot do this. You cannot continue raising children. You're – that job is done for you. You shouldn't do it. But she continues doing it because of the love and the significance of that this child matters. She's not gonna give up and have other people raise her great-grandchild elsewhere, and she will – probably will protect that little guy forever.

And we joke about it today because we – she tells me sometimes and tells stories about her and little Frances that, what are you gonna do when I'm gone. What are you gonna do? And that's the question that we're here for: What are we gonna do? What is it that we're trying to do? What is it that the Innu need to become independent, become human again?

And those are the questions, and the bureaucrats and, I'm sorry to say, lawyers, that are sitting around us, are not gonna do it. You guys are the instrument of what the Innu are saying and I'm hoping, through the Commissioners, that the Innu will be listened to this time. I'm hoping that what the Innu have said and will continue to say that we can do this. These are our children. We love them. Even though we may have issues, challenges, just like anywhere else, we love these children. These are our children.

And because of what Canada, what government and other systems have done to the Innu, you are responsible. You have to take that responsibility that you were part of that dysfunction of what you did to the Innu. You have to take that responsibility.

When I was sexually abused by a priest, I did not say the Pope was responsible. I didn't say the Bible was responsible. I said to that person: Why did you do that? Why did you manipulate and confuse our time and take away our innocence? Why? And that's the question, I think, in some ways as we talk about these questions is that

question: Why? Like, why are we sitting here?

It should be very, very simple – very simple. The children at the time, parents at the time, the Innu at the time were manipulated, tortured, confused, brutalised, and to the extreme. We didn't ask for this. Innu children did not ask to be abused. The system should take that responsibility. And you as lawyers, Commissioners, have a responsibility to voice that – you have a responsibility.

We are Innu people – we're people, just like everywhere else, we're people. We have feelings, we have ambitions, and we are angry, too.

So, when I say that, I mean not to belittle or hurt you, but you have to take that responsibility, just like any other parent, they have to take that responsibility. You have a responsibility and I'm hoping that one – like I said, I'm hoping that one of these days, that I can see a child without barriers or without anguish, without anxiety when they see social workers.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

C. URQUHART: Thank you so much, Mr. Penashue, for all you've shared with us over the past three days now. Those are all of my questions, so I will turn it over to my friends.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

You're still on the stand, Sir, and we'll give the counsel for Canada a chance to cross-examine.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

H. MARSHALL: Mr. Penashue, thanks for being here.

My name is Heidi Marshall, and I must say I have enjoyed listening to your testimony so far. You have a way of explaining things that keeps them interesting right throughout.

I had a couple of brief questions, I guess, about some evidence you gave on what things were like before and after Turner came out, and I wanted to know, did you see that happening in non-Innu communities as well? I guess, in your role as a program supervisor, did you hear from non-Innu program supervisors that they were also seeing a shift from prevention to protection?

J. PENASHUE: I had the privilege to discuss other social workers as well. And I'm not just referring the Innu social workers – the department that I was working with, people in Goose Bay were also social workers and occasionally, as managers, we had meetings. We took to – we went to St. John's. We met other managers and other social workers and we basically shared and, obviously, briefed our work in our areas.

And, you know, discussions, obviously, were always about social workers and our practice, and how can we – how did we do and how can we do better in regards to our work. And then, occasionally, social workers were – would vent about some of the things that there were challenge in regards to the policies. They wish that they would – could go to homes, wish they could do a little bit more house visits, as they did before.

And, you know, the incident that happened in Turner – the Turner, in my opinion, it's an isolated situation. It's the circumstances that was very traumatic and terrible and should never have happened, but it happened. But it shouldn't stop the kind of good work that social workers are trying to do.

So that's the mentality and the idea that I heard through other colleagues that I talked to.

H. MARSHALL: So that impacted – sorry.

So that impacted people right across the board, across the province, would you say?

Okay.

I'll let Ms. Rich translate.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

H. MARSHALL: My second question for you, Mr. Penashue, is in the same vein, you had mentioned high file loads as being one of the issues that had prevented your team from working the prevention side of things as opposed to the post removal side of things.

In these meetings you had with your colleagues, were you ever informed that that was another province-wide issue – high file loads?

J. PENASHUE: From my understanding at the time, the – when we had those discussion in terms of high file loads it wasn't – I wasn't told or I didn't hear or understand any other – the other locations of files of their – but I do know that social worker were in need for work. That I know.

But in terms of a high caseload, I am not aware of any other in Newfoundland or any other place, other than Nunatsiavut Government and Goose Bay.

H. MARSHALL: Okay. Thank you.

I'll let Ms. Rich translate that.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

H. MARSHALL: And finally, in terms of what you have indicated to the

Commissioners that you would like to see happen around the child protection system in this community and in Innu communities, I suppose, in general, do you believe that one factor in that is having more Innu social workers?

J. PENASHUE: Are you asking me if the – more social workers would benefit or –?

H. MARSHALL: More – having more social workers, but, specifically, Innu social workers who are willing to stay and work in community?

J. PENASHUE: I think that increasing support for a community such as Natuashish and Sheshatshiu would definitely would help the communities. And if that's maybe the – if we have more social workers or if we had more Community Service Workers or we had more councillors or more support SIMs or more prevention systems, I think would be a benefit for the community.

H. MARSHALL: And just, I suppose, as a follow-up to that, given your experience in the child protection system, how do you think it could be accomplished to have increased numbers of Innu in these positions that you feel are necessary to provide that support? You know, how – said another way: How do you envision attracting young Innu people to be trained in counselling and social work and stuff like that?

I believe – you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe I remember hearing that last year was the highest of high school graduations in the Innu communities and I guess I'm just wondering: Do you see any movement towards those areas of study or experience, however that may be?

J. PENASHUE: I'm still not sure your question but I'm assuming you're asking if we had more educated – or educated Innu, would it benefit –?

H. MARSHALL: No, I'm wondering if you have any ideas on how to attract young Innu people into those areas of careers.

J. PENASHUE: Okay.

H. MARSHALL: Yeah.

J. PENASHUE: Okay, we're talking about the retention and recruitment.

H. MARSHALL: Yes.

J. PENASHUE: Yes, I agree, we can and I think we should and I think that we have the ability to keep people employed within the communities. I believe that Innu people are well, well knowledgeable and well, well equipped and – to offer the services within the communities, if given the opportunity.

H. MARSHALL: Those are all my questions.

I'll let Ms. Rich translate.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Ms. Marshall, you asked a question in respect to Turner. Question: It impacted people right across the board?

Did you get an answer for that question?

H. MARSHALL: Yes, I did.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

Counsel for Innu Nation, please.

B. BROOKWELL: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Benjamin Brookwell and I'm counsel here today for the Innu organizations, and I have a couple of questions to ask you.

And you spoke today about the need for Innu-run child and family services and what

I'd like to understand is how Innu providing services to Innu children and families makes a difference. So, I have a couple of questions about that and the first is: Why is being able to speak Innu-aimun important with Innu-led services?

J. PENASHUE: I think Anne has answered that question.

Communication is really important, I think, and also being comfortable in your own environment. I have always had the privilege of working with Innu organizations. I've worked with government agencies and whatnot and it's always been challenging because I'm always translating about what – the content of what I'm trying to say.

In working with the Innu communities, especially with the Band Council and now with Innu Nation, I don't have to do that. I don't even have to tell a story of what I do at Innu Nation. All I have to say is one word and people know what I'm talking about. And if I was working in government, I would have to explain myself all the time. What is it the intent. What is it what I'm trying to do in regard to the work that I'm doing.

So, yes, communication and speaking in your own language and speaking when working with your own people is a benefit and it makes life much, much more easier.

B. BROOKWELL: And related to that, how does knowledge of Innu history and Innu culture make a difference for somebody doing this kind of work with children and families?

J. PENASHUE: I'll tell you a little story.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Really?

J. PENASHUE: It's a good story.

When I was the manager of CYFS, I had the – obviously, the privilege and to work with great people and worked at both Natuashish and Sheshatshiu. Anyways, we were at a –

on a – going to Natuashish. I was flying with a friend of mine and I was trying to teach him about culture and Innu-aimun and being participating and being proactive in the culture of Innu people, and his name was (redacted) and he's from Singapore and studied at Memorial and came – out of all the social work students, he was one of the ones that reached out and said: I would really, really like to work in the Innu community. I want to learn. I want to understand. Because most of the social workers or at the time, weren't ready or were not strong enough to come to the communities.

Anyways, we hired him. He was going to work as a social worker in Natuashish and one of our trips to Natuashish, I – we were, obviously, travelling on a Twin Otter and it was a court circuit that week. It was a court circuit. So, obviously, there was police there, the judge, Crown and other lawyers, Legal Aid and whatnot were in the plane and it was full. And we were on the – what they call the milk run. You know, going along the coast and our destination was Natuashish.

Anyways, we stopped in Hopedale, which is another about 10,15 minutes before you get to Natuashish. So, Hopedale. Anyways, we were constrained with time, so one of the propellers didn't stop when we landed in Hopedale and then the passenger got off and then the pilot got off and opened the door, whatnot and he was standing by the door. And there was another Innu woman by the door and she had her baby in her hand and she was mumbling and couldn't understand exactly what she said. I heard her say: Can you hold my baby? I got that part.

So, I took the baby to hold the baby and I thought maybe, like, to help her come into the plane. Unfortunately, she didn't come in the plane. The door shut and I'm stuck with the plane – the baby in my hand with a nursing bag, and (redacted) was sitting beside me and, obviously, he was shocked

what just happened. But I had the general idea what was going on, but I didn't say anything.

So, I took the baby, had her in my hand, you know, and he was all wrapped in little blanket and it was all perfectly great condition and he was very happy. Anyways, we took off and I can't remember his name – (redacted) I think his name was – (redacted) maybe – (redacted), the other lawyer, the Crown. Anyways he turned around because he was sitting in front of me and he turned around and he said: Jack, what just happened? And, naturally, I knew what was going on, so we landed in Natuashish and then, you know, we got there safe and then the grandmother was there by the door when we landed.

So, what happened was it was a transaction between taking the baby from Hopedale to Natuashish because she knew me. She knew me as, not as a social worker or as a manager but she knew me and I was somewhat decent person, I guess. So that's why and I knew her from her past in her family because I was an addictions coordinator, counsellor with mobile – with Border Beacon. That's how I knew her. I recognized her and – but I didn't know her baby. So, she lived in Hopedale and gave the child to the grandmother in Natuashish.

So in that sense, that's the kind of acknowledgement and also, I think, in some ways knowingness about as a person, if you were working in that field or knowing somebody that you're – you know, it would be much, much more easy to have a conversation and are working in the field.

So, that's the story that I have and to just explain it, about her question.

B. BROOKWELL: Another question that's come to my mind is, you've spoken about the treatment programs that were on the land, and could you tell us why land-based treatment programs are important for Innu, from your perspective?

J. PENASHUE: I was just about to say.

As a person who's an addict and I come from a violent home and, also, come from a people of siblings of in recovery. And I feel very comfortable at home with my siblings. We share, we talk and we laugh about our present, future and past relations of our stories. If we didn't have the comfort and the environment that we have, I don't think we would be able to be healthy or in somewhat healed in the context of healing.

We enjoy our company very, very much, we – as I said, but it's not always good. We argue, we laugh, we cry, all those things. And when you have a group of Innu people in their environment that they're comfortable with, you will be able to do more work than being out in a residential treatment program in Canada.

When Innu people do not speak the language of treatment or do not speak the language of just having a conversation, voices English to Innu, and you have one language of Innu people, people will be more comfortable. They'll be more sharing. They'll be more growth and it'll be much, much more normal than trying to figure out what you're trying to say.

So when I talk about land-based treatment programming, that is the home of the Innu people. That's where they feel comfortable, that's where they feel safe and that's when they can share about their strength, about being Innu people. They can live there. You don't have to worry about them. But you're there to help share the challenges and how do we share those challenges as one. And it is much, much more – a nicer and much, much more positive environment than being somewhere else that you don't know all the people.

B. BROOKWELL: You've also spoken about the Innu Care Approach. I think you've described it as a holistic or a wraparound approach and I take it from

what you've said that social workers are part of that approach.

In your view, what other resources or staff are needed to allow an Innu Care Approach to succeed?

J. PENASHUE: I'll probably answer it in a way that it is much more clear in regards to – I would say that anybody or any organization that is involved in the best interests of that child, and that could be from other social workers, other agencies; that could mean from parental support to health care services, to other addiction services; anything that has to do – especially also I'm also talking about also maybe extended families. So anything or anybody that is involved with that child or that family is that extended services that I am referring to.

B. BROOKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Penashue, those are the questions that I have.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much, Sir.

We're about to clue up for the day, but I invited Mr. Ralph to let the community know generally where we are and where we might be in the next month or two, just to give a sense of the pace of the Commission.

P. RALPH: Commissioners, there's nothing for February. That's not to say there's not a lot of work happening.

In the next few weeks and months, the families whose – the children we're investigating their lives and their deaths, they are reviewing thousands of pages of documents coming from Child, Youth and Family – CSSD and all kinds of different other places that had contact with the child. And each family, during that process, is going to determine, in consultation with the Inquiry, exactly what they want their investigation to look like.

And once the families and the Inquiry have determined what each investigation will look like, people will be – social workers and other people will be interviewed and reports will be prepared for the Commissioner's consideration, and ultimately we anticipate that there will be hearings in relation to most, if not all of these investigations. And they should be taking course over the next year or so.

The – Anne, I'll let you do that part.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: The – we are scheduling a couple events in March. We're anticipating community hearings in Sheshatshiu. That's not final yet. And the Inquiry is going to be attending the Easter gathering in Natuashish. And when – while we're there, we're hoping to speak to people, have private meetings with people in a tent that the Inquiry will set up at that gathering.

Ongoing as well is research into – so the history of the relationship between the Innu, the provincial government and the federal government. And so, at some point during the Inquiry, we anticipate having hearings and hearing from federal officials and provincial officials and Innu leaders – current and former leaders – about that relationship, funding issues and other issues.

In terms of other research issues, we're looking at archives and documents and trying to document what happened to children that were taken out of the community in the '50s and '60s and '70s when it was largely the work of the Catholic church that were removing children as opposed to professional bureaucracies of government of the Province of Newfoundland.

We're also – of course, we've heard a lot of that information from people in the community who've told us about – there's

Peter Organ, for example, but we've also during community meetings heard people sharing them and themselves or their children being taken out of the community by the priest and sent either to St. John's, somewhere in the province, or even across the river here, to North West River.

So, that work is ongoing, and we're also looking at and trying to establish how the numbers have gone in terms of the number of children in care and out of the community over the last sort of 20 or 25 years. That's a bit more challenging because of the nature of the data that exist in relation to that.

And the final part that we're looking at, too, is in terms of looking at how policy has evolved. For example, the changes made in relation to the Turner report; how changes to legislation and policy have changed how child protection has been conducted in Innu communities. Sometimes resulting in more children being taken out; sometimes, as Mr. Penashue said today, sometimes children are brought back as a result of that but – so that's generally where we are, Commissioners, unless you have any questions about that.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much, Mr. Ralph.

We are happy to receive an overview of what the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada and the Innu Nation wanted the Inquiry to cover, as well as letting everyone know a sense of how close we are to getting that task done. Very much appreciated.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I'll ask my fellow Commissioners if they'd like to make a comment on what Mr. Penashue submitted or if they would like to ask him any questions.

Starting with Commissioner Devine.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Thank you.

So, Mr. Penashue, first, I'd like to just say thank you very much for appearing these past three days; really appreciate it. Some very interesting and certainly good information for us to have received.

Will I go on?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: The second thing that I want to say, I know that my words will be inadequate at best, but I wanted to acknowledge the – and thank you for telling the story of your life, very personal information about the many challenges and obstacles that you went through and said. I'm sorry to hear that you had to go through so much.

I also wanted to say that given your life story and your history, that you've certainly shown a tremendous amount of courage and strength in your life and certainly a lot of resilience, and your contributions that you've made to the community are certainly exemplary and admirable, in my opinion.

So, just two things I wanted to ask a couple of questions about. The first thing was sometime back now you mentioned about caseloads and 40 to 60 being, kind of, the range. And when you gave that number, did that include vacancies?

J. PENASHUE: No, I think what I was talking about in terms of the caseload, I was just talking about per social worker that were basically more – that were handling. Obviously, there was a lot of vacancies in social work within the – Sheshatshiu and also Natuashish.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So, when you – and you talked about, you know, kind of being in crisis management, more or less. So, for example, if a social worker went out and did an assessment and let's say it was high risk or medium risk, and in terms of case management and follow up, did you

think that was adequate or were there challenges with doing follow up in those cases?

J. PENASHUE: In terms of the crisis management, I was referring to the statement that I made that we were always – it always seemed like we were in a crisis mode all the time. We were always on an alert to do the work that we were doing and then not enough actual caseload information was analyzed or managed in the way that it's supposed to be.

I think we – at the time that I was there, we had this system called the CRMS, which is the client risk management system. Now, I'm not sure if they still use that, but that's the system at the time that the – that I am referring to. And it was a system that was a computer system that basically, you know, showed you in terms of high risk and low risk and what were your – some of your strategies and plans there that you were going to undertake in regards to that process.

But that's what I remember at the time, but I – like, I don't – I wasn't, like, the front-line worker in terms of the social worker. I was basically the manager and I would basically have the – analyze and would manage and discuss with other social workers if they were able to do the work.

But it's always been the – in my – at that time, it always seemed like it was more of a crisis and a reaction to the incidents of – and it didn't – obviously didn't have time to do all the actual work that needed to be done.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So, as a result of that and not being able to do all of the actual work, what would be some of the, I guess, negative outcomes that you would have seen?

J. PENASHUE: I think, personally, I think the negative outcomes were basically, obviously, you were missing the main

factors in terms of what could've been and what should've been in terms of the more strategic plan that needed to be done.

And at the same time, I think, you know, in terms of the staff and the employees, they didn't – you're more tired than anything else. It seems to be more focusing on doing the caseloads, doing the information sharing, doing the input of data into the system. If you didn't then, you know, you're at risk as well. In terms of your policy, you had to do it and you had to put the information in.

And even – if I remember correctly, that at the time I think, the CWF, which are the community services worker there, I don't think they were able to support, even able to access that system because they weren't registered social workers. But before that they were, from what I understand when I was talking to them at one point, they said they were – they could access the information and do what needed to be done, but since the new CRMS came, they weren't able to access it because they weren't registered.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Okay, that's all.

I'll let Anne go.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: So, this is my final question. This is a broader question and you have talked about it, touched upon it on different times and that's about prevention services and you talk about the Innu child care approach and how that's balanced, and it's a very good model, I think.

So, in prevention, there's – you know, right now, I think with preventions services there's – I think a lot of the energy is put into prevention of when the child is in imminent danger of coming into care and focusing on

that and making sure, where possible, that they don't come into care.

Then you have children who may be at higher risk but are not in care or not attached to the child protection system but who could be, so service to prevent them from coming into the system. And, of course, then is the, you know – I guess, the higher level where it's more about child well-being and child development and that.

From your perspective, how important are prevention services to your community?

J. PENASHUE: In terms of, I think, the community, we've always been reacting to the situations where – I tell these to my staff when I was the Social Health director. We have to stop this reaction of always in that mode of we react to crisis. We attend to those crises right away.

And I think, in some ways, that was the norm since we came in Sheshatshiu and lived all year round in Sheshatshiu, it always seems to be the – it seemed people react to situations and react in a way that it's trying to help or support one another. I think that creates confusion and it also creates inability to do positive work, good work, because we're always in crisis mode.

Prevention work, to me, is much more calmer. It's much, much more at ease. It's a program that is, to me – or a service, to me, much more – not a reactor – but more of a services that is much more – that you can invite people. They were much – people were more calmer, people who don't have to react to situations.

And that's the kind of services that are – we done – we require and that could mean from prenatal to, you know, parent support to addictions to mental health, treatment support, one-on-one counselling, anything to do with those kind of things, and then also utilizing the Innu content. Using the land that is much, much more comfortable.

I have seen people who are – don't have the capability or the inability to share and talk about themselves. I've seen that; I've heard that. But you put them in an environment where they are more comfortable going out and cutting wood, going out and hunting, you would experience more and more and more gratification of – and change – positive change of that individual that you've ever seen. I've seen that. I know that and I know utilizing and working with people on land, utilizing your own culture, your own positive things, you'll get more rewards, more positive in terms of when we talk about prevention.

That's the kind of services I think that are required to support and even help Innu people become better.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: That's all for me and, once again, thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Nastash.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: I think about sometimes, like, how do – what – how do I start off, in English or in Innu? That's – I think about that.

And I think about people that have talked to the Commission and talked about their experiences, their pain, their hope for our communities, and I – it's – and I think about Jack. Like, I think about when he said it's easy to do the things and easy to say the things and for people to talk and while they're busy and while they're doing things in Nutshimit, that's the way it is.

And here – being in Nutshimit I've never experienced somebody to tell me that, oh, we don't talk about that. We'll talk about it tomorrow. But here like when we're speaking in our language, everything – we talk about everything. We don't say we're gonna stay on this topic for now because everything is connected back to Nutshimit. I've never heard my mother, when we were talking, to say to me: No, Nastash, we won't

talk about that today. We'll talk about it at another day. And it's hard for people to just concentrate on one thing. Like I said, everything is connected.

And for Jack to talk about his experience growing up in the community; I travelled that journey with him and I can see that. And, also, being a Commissioner, to think about what the challenges we faced and being from Sheshatshiu and growing up here, too, I – it's easy for me to travel that journey with him and for the rest, too, in our generation. And when he spoke about, there's people still out there that haven't talked about and haven't come forward with the things that have happened in our community; there are people that are still out there.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I sat with a gentleman the same age as Jack, 56 years old, and he looked at me and we were talking and then he turned his chair and faced me and he said: Nastash, that teacher ruined my life. He ruined my life. He abused me, sexually abused me. And he said: Every day I think about killing myself. And I sat with him. And, like, these stories are still alive. People are still experiencing them, that these are still real for them. And even at 56 years old you can't sleep in the dark.

So, that's what this community is going through, that – to not – you won't be able to sleep in the dark. And I hope that one day, that people will, and will have the courage and will have that fight for our future, for our grandchildren, because I do believe that's what our parents want for us, that we should not be afraid.

So, I just can't speak about one thing and just say that this one person said it. I think he spoke for everybody in our community. So, I wanna thank Jack for that.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

I just wanted to mention the person that spoke to me about this has somebody that they're talking to and that they're close to.

So I was – and he said, I just want to tell you that Nastash.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

I certainly agree with the comments of both of my fellow Commissioners. Your passion and your dedication and your wisdom all come out in your experience and also in your stories. We're very happy that you would share them.

Thank you so much.

Yes, Anne I do want to give some thanks before we finish this week. I want to thank, on behalf of our Commissioners and our Inquiry team, the Innu people of Sheshatshiu who welcomed us again this week.

J. PENASHUE: Jim, can I say something else?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yup.

Go ahead, Sir.

J. PENASHUE: I was going to ask a question and then I said I'm gonna have to ask it because if I don't ask it I'm gonna regret it, and I won't be able to sleep.

I know there's numbers out there. There's numbers in terms of what it cost for Innu children, and my question is: What is the number? Has anybody done any calculations of a per-child cost of an Innu child in care?

And I think if there isn't, I think there should be. I think we need to find out what was the cost for a child to be removed from their home.

That's it.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, and the Commission would like to give its thanks, the Inquiry would like to give its

thanks to the people of Sheshatshiu for welcoming us.

We want to thank the Elders for offering prayers for us and being with us each day and for the support that they give to the Inquiry. We want to thank the health – mental health caregivers who've been with us the entire time and offer the people a chance for that service. We really appreciate it.

We want to thank the presenters, like Jack here, and the others who show their dedication and their passion for their fellow Innu people.

We wish to thank you, the interpreter, and the work you do for the Inquiry and how you mentored Charlene and we saw her confidence grow right away with your help.

INTERPRETER NUNA: Thank you.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We want to thank all the legal counsel for the families, counsel representing the various governments and organizations and the work that they do in assisting the findings of this Inquiry.

We wish to thank the Inquiry staff, administrators for the support that they give the Commission each time we go on the road.

We want to thank Nathan Penashue and his team, his crew, for the way that they take care of us when we come here as well and how they assist with the setting up of the building, the care of the building, taking care of the property, as well as putting up the tent for our services.

And finally, we want to thank Ms. Atter for her attention and spreading the work of the Inquiry to everyone.

And we will now close the week with a prayer.

Yeah, you can hear the guitar music. There's going to be some music after we finish, as well.

ELDER PENASHUE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

D. PENASHUE: (Inaudible) – but anyways, I just want to say thank you for the people that were sharing these past couple of weeks. And one of the songs I will sing today that was – I'll sing one song and hopefully that we will look at this as (inaudible).

This song was written by a good friend of mine from Quebec, his name was (inaudible), and this song was – he wrote this song, he was in lock-up but he wrote this song then – [12 seconds of audio recording lost due to technical issue.]

I'm gonna ask Anne to translate what I've said. And by the way, Anne is doing a very good job on, you know, her translating. Give a good hand applause.

[Applause.]

[Music performed.]

D. PENASHUE: Thank you.

Thank you.