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1 July 16, 2026 2 3 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 4 Welcome, everybody. Good morning. Thanks again 5 for joining us here in person and virtually as 6 well. This is our ninth and final formal hearing 7 for the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, 8 Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child 9 Protection System. 10 I'm joined here by Commissioners Devine and 11 Commissioner Qupee, and, as well, the Inquiry 12 officials and presenters. 13 We'd like to begin by asking you to stand as 14 we remember the memory of Elder Swashim Nui and 15 also Elder Tshaukuesh Penashue, who have been 16 part of this Inquiry since we started. 17 COMMISSIONER QUPEE: 18 Okay. I'd like to again acknowledge the Elders 19 that played such an integral role in this 20 Inquiry, and the knowledge that they've shared 21 and the wisdom and the leadership that they 22 provided in the Inquiry. So I'd like to say my 23 prayers in Innu and thinking about them. And I 24 know Tshaukuesh is travelling from Ottawa after	1 in the country. We investigated the treatment, 2 experiences and ultimately the deaths of six Innu 3 youth who experienced time in care of the child 4 protection system. 5 This will be our final formal hearing and 6 actually our final visit to the community, if you 7 like. And we expect to hear today from, or will 8 be hearing from the Child, Youth Advocate, from 9 the Government of Canada, Innu Representative 10 Organization and the Government of Newfoundland 11 and Labrador. 12 So we've set aside Friday morning also in case 13 we need it and so that there's no, I guess -- so 14 people can present as they wish and not feel the 15 time constraints in their important submissions. 16 Thank you. 17 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 18 I'll now hand it over to lead counsel, Caitlin, 19 Caitlin Urquhart, please, to speak to the 20 parties. 21 CAITLIN URQUHART: 22 Thank you. And good morning, Commissioners, 23 counsel and members of the public in -- present 24 and watching virtually.
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1 joining the leadership at the Assembly of First 2 Nations. So I wish them safe travels when 3 they're on their way home. 4 So I'll say the prayer in Innu. 5 (Speaking in Innu-aimun.) 6 Thank you. Tshinashkumitin. 7 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 8 Tshinashkumitin, Commissioner Qupee. 9 In that prayer, we also remember Elder Penote 10 Antuan, Elder Nympha Byrne for all the assistance 11 they've given us from Day 1 through these four 12 years. But I'll also now ask Commissioner Devine 13 to speak. 14 COMMISSIONER DEVINE: 15 Yes. Good morning, everybody. I just want to 16 kind of do a review, brief review of the hearings 17 that we've had since we started. In May of '22 18 and up to now, there have been eight formal 19 hearings to learn from Innu Elders, professionals 20 and experts, expert witnesses with knowledge of 21 the child protection system, as well as 22 researchers. 23 We heard from over 100 Innu about their 24 experiences in the communities and, importantly,	1 This morning, as the Commissioners have 2 mentioned, it is our final formal hearing. So 3 the first thing I'd like to do, a bit of 4 housekeeping and enter some exhibits. We're 5 going to be entering P-450 to 452, as well as 6 P-458 to 575. So we -- now, I'll pass it over to 7 the counsel for the Office of the Child and Youth 8 Advocate, Andrew Fitzgerald, who will be 9 presenting virtually this morning. And we'll 10 just get him online. One -- just one moment; we 11 can't hear you. Try one more time. 12 ANDREW FITZGERALD, K.C.: 13 Good morning. 14 CAITLIN URQUHART: 15 There, perfect. Go ahead. 16 ANDREW FITZGERALD, K.C.: 17 Okay. Good. I know we're running a little 18 behind this morning, and that's fine. But I do 19 have some comments to make and I don't want to go 20 on at length because we did provide a written 21 submission to the Inquiry from the Child and 22 Youth Advocate. 23 I guess at the outset my client importantly 24 wishes to emphasize that the loss of any child is

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1 a tragedy for parents, siblings, extended family
2 and community. And we certainly offer our
3 sincere condolences to all participants in this
4 Inquiry who have experienced such a loss.

5 Over the last four years, we've also heard
6 about the impacts, longstanding impacts of
7 colonialism, intergenerational trauma and racism
8 and the impact that this has had on the
9 communities and their children. The Child
10 Advocate acknowledges this history and the
11 difficulties and challenges it continues to
12 cause.

13 While it's important to the historical
14 context, we have focused our submission on
15 current day, present day and the future. And in
16 particular, you'll note in our submission our
17 concern about the rights of Innu children during
18 the transition of ultimate -- of the ultimate
19 Innu taking over jurisdiction of child
20 protection.

21 Just a couple of preliminary points. We do
22 accept, and we noted in our memorandum, the
23 rights -- the analysis of the Human Rights
24 Commission from a human rights perspective. They

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1 in the bigger picture, in the bigger bureaucracy,
2 in the bigger issues that are out there. Their
3 voices get lost because they're not as loud often
4 as the voices of adults and communities in
5 general. But the future leaders of the Innu
6 community are going to be its children and we
7 believe that any future system should have their
8 input, should have their consultation about what
9 they want their community to look like now and in
10 the future.

11 The Child Advocate is supportive of an
12 Innu-led child protection system. But we note,
13 and we did note in our submission, that -- and
14 the Innu Round Table Secretariat refers to this
15 as a big transition. It's going to take a lot of
16 work, a lot of work by everybody. And it's
17 during this transition period that the rights of
18 all Innu children and youth need to be recognized
19 and protected. The rights to live a safe and
20 happy life, a protected life, an enjoyable life
21 need to continue and improve as we move forward.

22 In our brief, we've highlighted some what we
23 believe are systemic issues that were relevant --
24 evident, I would say, throughout the Inquiry.

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1 certainly had expertise in that area, and it was
2 very helpful for us to read and review. And
3 then, upon reflection, we thought about our role
4 in this Inquiry and what our role really and
5 truly is. The role of the Child and Youth
6 Advocate is not only limited to investigations
7 and reviews. It's also an advocate. It's an
8 advocate for the rights of children and youth.
9 That should not be lost on this commission.

10 We recognize that we heard from a lot of
11 experts. We've heard from civil servants, public
12 servants. We've heard from the communities, and
13 we've heard from a lot of Elders, but we can't
14 ignore the voices of children and youth. And
15 from our perspective and our client's perspective
16 that needs to be kept at the forefront as the
17 communities move forward.

18 From a rights perspective, we've highlighted
19 the fact that Canada is a signatory to the United
20 Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
21 And in that convention, children's rights matter.
22 Children's voices should be heard. They should
23 be listened to. Pardon me. Oftentimes the
24 voices of children, not intentionally, get lost

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1 And when you look at those systemic failures or
2 gaps or limitations in the context of the
3 Convention on the Rights of the Child, there's an
4 obligation on the state to provide meaningful
5 supports and timely access to early intervention
6 and prevention services. By not doing so, this
7 would be a failure on the state.

8 There also needs to be timely access to mental
9 health supports and addiction services and legal
10 assistance in the community. The absence of
11 these services would also be denial of child's
12 rights.

13 It was also evident throughout the Inquiry
14 that the department, and it's changed its names
15 over the years, but ultimately, it's SSWB now,
16 was responsible for basically everything in these
17 communities. In order to improve the system,
18 there needs to be an approach, an
19 intergovernmental approach. More people need to
20 be involved. More people need to cooperate. By
21 doing it that way, instead of operating in silos,
22 we would suggest that it's going to improve the
23 lives of all children and youth in those
24 communities.

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1 The Child and Youth and Family Services Act is
 2 currently under review. Our client made a
 3 submission to government on that. It's at
 4 paragraph 22 of my submission, of our client's
 5 submission. I do not intend to read it out, but
 6 I do believe it provides significant guidance on
 7 the importance of early prevention and
 8 intervention services for communities.

9 In our submission, we've also addressed human
 10 rights, human resources issues that the province
 11 itself struggles with on a daily basis. But
 12 those struggles cannot negatively impact one
 13 group over another, and the rights of Innu
 14 children and youth are just as important as
 15 anybody else. They have a right to access social
 16 workers and community. They have a right to have
 17 these services in a timely fashion. And we would
 18 encourage improvement in recruitment and
 19 retention strategies to make this successful in
 20 the future.

21 The Child Advocate is concerned with the
 22 rotational model for staffing. We recognize that
 23 this was a best-efforts attempt by all to try and
 24 improve the situation in the communities.

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1 However, it's not a permanent solution.
 2 And I would point out that in 2025, the
 3 Advocate recommended to the Department of
 4 Families and Affordability that the fly-in and
 5 fly-out model undergo an evaluation to ensure it
 6 was meeting its mandate and its effectiveness.
 7 From what we know to date, this evaluation has
 8 not occurred, and it should.

9 We have also importantly addressed
 10 transitional supports in our memorandum, as we
 11 believe that it's fundamentally important that if
 12 children are coming out of care, that the planned
 13 transition back into community be prioritized, so
 14 children get the necessary supports they need in
 15 coming back into community. Without such
 16 planning, negative outcomes may continue.

17 Transitional supports should also not be
 18 limited to the children. We believe support
 19 should be available to the families, so that if
 20 there are issues that they can get support from,
 21 that they can be supported by, supported on, that
 22 this happens if children are in care or if
 23 children are out of community. Healthy families
 24 lead to healthy communities and lead to healthy

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1 children. And we believe support should happen
 2 in a holistic manner, as opposed to in silos or
 3 independently.

4 Finally, in our submission, we have included
 5 the independent review that the child advocate
 6 did of child protection services to the Innu
 7 children in the province. We recognize that
 8 every individual in every community is different,
 9 but there were themes identified in that that we
 10 believe that the Commission can build upon, and
 11 we believe it is a good resource, and we've
 12 included it in our submission. The report was
 13 referenced glowingly by Justice English in his
 14 evidence, and we do encourage the Commission to
 15 review the same.

16 We have also included a number of
 17 considerations for the Commission to consider in
 18 our submissions. I also do not intend to repeat
 19 those word by word or consideration by
 20 consideration.

21 Fundamentally, this is about the rights of
 22 children and youth from my client's perspective.
 23 My client is independent and certainly will
 24 continue to advocate and monitor the rights of

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1 all children in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in
 2 particular the rights of the Innu children and
 3 youth, and any recommendations flowing out of
 4 this Inquiry.

5 To sum up, I guess the last paragraph of my
 6 brief essentially states our position, and I will
 7 quote from that. "The UNCRC applies to Innu
 8 children and youth, and their voices must be
 9 heard as the Innu plan to assume jurisdiction
 10 over child protection."

11 To ensure successful transfer, there must be
 12 support and cooperation from all levels of
 13 government. It takes a village to raise a child,
 14 and the Innu were successful in doing this prior
 15 to the colonial policies and views being forced
 16 upon them. There is no reason to doubt, with the
 17 proper supports, cooperation, and hard work, that
 18 reconciliation can continue and Innu children and
 19 youth can thrive and prosper in their own
 20 communities consistent with their rights as set
 21 out in the United Nations Convention on the
 22 Rights of the Child.

23 Those are my submissions. And the Advocate
 24 would like to thank you for allowing us to

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1 provide these oral submissions today in addition 2 to our written submissions. Thank you very much. 3 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 4 Thank you very much, Mr. Fitzgerald. In thinking 5 of your comments on behalf of your clients, as 6 commissioners, we want to say that throughout the 7 term of the Inquiry, we've been positively 8 impacted by the insight and by the empathy 9 expressed from provincial government ministers, 10 deputy ministers, managers, and particularly 11 social workers, who thankfully, from our 12 perspective, gave apologies and sought 13 forgiveness as well. And to hear that from your 14 client, as well as the expression of hope for the 15 future, bodes well. And we ask that all the 16 parties involved continue in this vein of seeing 17 the Inquiry as the start of a process that will 18 lead to Innu self-determination, especially in 19 child protection. 20 Thank you once again. 21 ANDREW FITZGERALD, K.C.: 22 Thank you. 23 CAITLIN URQUHART: 24 If there's nothing further, Commissioners, we'll	1 Nation. 2 It is a bittersweet moment to reflect with 3 pride on the work we have all done together, but 4 also to honour the Innu children, families, and 5 communities whose negative experiences, pain, and 6 trauma have been so central to that work. Canada 7 has provided written final submissions to the 8 Inquiry, which outline Canada's role in this 9 Inquiry, the current federal role in the child 10 protection system with respect to Innu, and the 11 unique constitutional context of the federal 12 government's participation in a provincial public 13 inquiry. 14 Our oral submissions today will focus on some 15 lasting impressions which have arisen from 16 Canada's participation in this Inquiry, and a 17 reaffirmation of Canada's commitment to be a 18 partner with Innu and with the province to 19 support the safety of Innu families and the 20 dignity of Innu. 21 And I want to start with that notion of the 22 dignity of Innu. Canada has heard through the 23 stories and the evidence of Innu at this Inquiry 24 that too often being Innu and Innu ways are
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1 say thank you, Mr. Fitzgerald. You're welcome to 2 stay on the line, but we'll -- we won't have your 3 face on the screen here, so appreciate your 4 submissions, both in writing and orally. And 5 that's all for the Office of the Child and Youth 6 Advocate. 7 Our next speaker would be Victor Ryan on 8 behalf of Government of Canada, if you are ready 9 to proceed. 10 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 11 Thank you, Mr. Ryan. We invite you, and very 12 happy to hear your presentation. 13 VICTOR RYAN: 14 Thank you very much. Good morning, 15 Commissioners, and good morning, everybody. It 16 is a privilege to be here today, offering 17 Canada's closing submissions to the Inquiry 18 Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and 19 Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System. 20 This week has marked a new phase of the 21 important work of this Inquiry, as you transition 22 from collecting evidence and truth-seeking to 23 drafting a final report and giving your 24 recommendations to the Province and to the Innu	1 looked down on. Innu can be made to feel like 2 they don't belong and that their language and 3 culture is not important. This has happened in 4 the past, and unfortunately it can still happen 5 in the present. However, the truth-seeking that 6 this Inquiry has done has shown just the 7 opposite. Innu are strong people individually 8 and collectively. 9 Not only are Innu ways of being important for 10 Innu, but non-Innu can learn much from the Innu 11 philosophy and Innu culture. And nowhere has 12 this been more overwhelmingly clear than in the 13 stories and evidence of Innu when they discuss 14 nutshimit. 15 Canada has heard that nutshimit nourishes and 16 feeds Innu, and that, in turn, Innu nourish and 17 feed nutshimit. Canada has listened when Innu 18 say that the spirit lightens in nutshimit and 19 things feel more balanced. The healing power of 20 nutshimit has been an undeniable theme of the 21 experiences and the narratives brought out by 22 this Inquiry. 23 Canada has also heard over and over that Innu 24 children belong with their Innu families and

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1 communities, and there is wisdom in that idea.
 2 The wisdom has not always been understood by
 3 non-Innu, and unfortunately that's a phenomenon
 4 that is not unique to this area. It's been
 5 replicated in other parts of the country.
 6 However, the evidence heard by this Inquiry
 7 demonstrates that the wisdom and good sense of
 8 that idea that Innu children belong with their
 9 Innu community is more and more heard and
 10 understood by non-Innu.

11 When the Parliament of Canada passed Bill
 12 C-92, an Act respecting First Nations, Innu, and
 13 Métis children, youth, and families, they
 14 included a preamble in the text of the bill to
 15 explain the purpose of the law and the underlying
 16 way of thinking which led to its passage.

17 Among other things, the preamble stated,
 18 "Whereas Parliament recognizes the legacy of
 19 residential schools and the harm, including
 20 intergenerational trauma, caused to Indigenous
 21 peoples by colonial policies and practices;
 22 whereas Parliament recognizes the disruption that
 23 Indigenous women and girls have experienced in
 24 their lives in relation to child and family

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1 services systems and the importance of supporting
 2 Indigenous women and girls in overcoming their
 3 historical disadvantage; whereas Parliament
 4 recognizes the importance of reuniting Indigenous
 5 children with their families and communities from
 6 whom they were separated in the context of the
 7 provision of child and family services; and
 8 whereas Parliament affirms the need to eliminate
 9 the over-representation of Indigenous children in
 10 child and family services systems."

11 I emphasize those portions of the preamble of
 12 the new law passed in 2019 because, time and time
 13 again, Canada has heard the voices of Innu before
 14 this Inquiry, and they have said similar things.
 15 Canada has heard that the Innu want the legacy of
 16 colonial practices to be recognized, that Innu
 17 know firsthand that child and family services as
 18 a system can be disruptive to families, and that
 19 the over-representation of Innu in the system
 20 must be eliminated. Those principles and those
 21 ideas are reflected in Canada's new legislation,
 22 which establishes national standards and works
 23 towards Indigenous control over their children's
 24 welfare.

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1 I raise that point not as a demonstration of a
 2 positive outcome because, as this Inquiry has
 3 heard, we're not at the end of this process. We
 4 all know there's much more work to be done. I
 5 say this to highlight a positive beginning
 6 because I think this Inquiry can fairly say that
 7 right now Innu and non-Innu alike possess a
 8 shared purpose. Of course, there's more work to
 9 be done; there's more talking to be had between
 10 the Innu, between the Province, between Canada,
 11 but Canada is heartened that some of the
 12 principles set out in the new legislation have
 13 been reflected in the hopes and the aspirations
 14 that Innu have brought to this Inquiry.

15 Since this legislation passed, Canada has been
 16 and will continue to be a willing partner in
 17 building on that shared purpose with both the
 18 Innu and the Province. The Act provides clarity
 19 that Indigenous communities may give notice that
 20 they will exercise authority over child and
 21 family services, and Canada has set aside
 22 capacity funding to support Indigenous groups to
 23 explore and develop what their service delivery
 24 models may look like. It is a positive step that

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1 the Innu have signalled their intention to
 2 exercise authority in this area and that they
 3 have accessed federal capacity building funding.

4 Again, this is not to say that the work is
 5 over but to acknowledge that the Innu have made
 6 great progress towards their goals and Canada is
 7 committed to working with the Innu on that
 8 progress.

9 This Inquiry has been conducted at a time of
 10 great transition for the province, for the Innu,
 11 and for Canada and in some ways, this has
 12 undoubtedly made your work more difficult as you
 13 are tasked with understanding a system which is
 14 both complex and also undergoing significant
 15 change. However, this can also be a gift because
 16 you, as commissioners, stand with one eye
 17 assessing the things that have been done and with
 18 the other looking ahead to the way things are
 19 becoming and how they can be in the future.

20 It's a great privilege to bear witness to the
 21 hope and the cautious optimism of those who work
 22 in the system which is moving towards a fairer
 23 and safer world for Innu families. That hope is
 24 tempered by the memory that for too long Innu who

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1 interacted with the child and family services 2 system were not offered hope, and so Canada is 3 thinking and reflecting on all those Innu who 4 shared their stories with this Inquiry and those 5 families whose stories were individually 6 investigated by the Inquiry. 7 Canada is thinking today of Faith Rich, James 8 Poker, Kirby Mistenapeo, Jacob Collins, Wally 9 Rich, and Thunderheart Tshakapesh. Their losses 10 is a true sorrow not only for their families and 11 their communities but for us all. We are all 12 made worse off when our Innu neighbours and 13 friends don't have the opportunity to lead long 14 and healthy lives. 15 In closing, I want to thank the Inquiry for 16 giving us the space and time to reflect on some 17 self-evident truths, that Innu have unique 18 histories, culture, and experiences but that also 19 at the end of the day what Innu want for their 20 children is not so far off from what we all want 21 for our children and families: safety, 22 happiness, opportunities, the chance to pass on 23 culture. 24 The outcomes for Innu will improve when Innu	1 disadvantages, I reflect on that: yeah, Innu had 2 no control and no control of that when that 3 happened, and the colonial practices that they've 4 endured and that did not work. And so I 5 appreciate that the -- I appreciate that the 6 Inquiry came and that it did the work to listen 7 and bring the communities together because a lot 8 of times families have felt like it was just only 9 them that was happening when it was a collective. 10 And it was important for Elders to understand 11 that this is the door that was opening for 12 communities that people will hear your 13 experience. And to have acknowledged that is 14 really important. And that with our culture and 15 our language and with the colonial practices that 16 we experience, that didn't die and that's 17 something that they couldn't take away from us. 18 And I think about our culture and the people 19 supporting at the Inquiry, at the table, who sat 20 around the table; they now have a chance to build 21 the tent with us and to understand and experience 22 that what it's like for people. And so that is a 23 gift that the communities have given to the 24 people outside. And I know that they would
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1 lead in the design and delivery of child and 2 family services for Innu. Canada is committed to 3 continuing its collaboration with Innu leadership 4 on reform to this area and to supporting the 5 Innu's chosen path with respect to child and 6 family services. 7 We look forward, with interest, to your final 8 report, which will undoubtedly guide that work 9 for years to come. Canada thanks Innu Nation, 10 the Innu Round Table Secretariat, Sheshatshiu 11 Innu First Nation, Mushuau Innu First Nation for 12 their leadership in calling for this Inquiry and 13 before this Inquiry. Canada thanks the Province 14 for establishing this Inquiry and its continued 15 work and collaboration to improve outcomes for 16 Innu children and families. 17 Thank you very much. 18 COMMISSIONER QUPEE: 19 Thank you for your presentation, Victor, and to 20 Canada. It's hard not to reflect on some of the 21 things that we've heard. And I thank you for 22 your presence in this Inquiry, the importance of 23 listening and the importance of hearing. 24 And as you speak about the historical	1 welcome the people to come and build that tent 2 with us. 3 And I've heard so many years that when Elders 4 say, "When will this stop? When will this stop?" 5 And today's -- over the last four years, it's 6 been a hard break for them to come forward and 7 share their stories of those traumas and those 8 experiences. 9 So I again would like to thank you for your 10 oral presentation and the submissions that you've 11 made to the Inquiry. Thank you. 12 Tshinashkumitin. 13 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 14 I extend my thanks as well. And like 15 Commissioner Nastash, I will call you Victor, 16 simply because I knew you as a child and I work 17 with your mother. And you have the burden of 18 responsibility to carry the honour of the Crown, 19 and we hope that that relationship will continue 20 as the Inquiry concludes one aspect of its work, 21 but realize there's much to be done and much 22 cooperation required to make that work. 23 Continue in the footsteps your mother started. 24

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1 COMMISSIONER DEVINE:

2 Yes. Thank you very much. Appreciate the many
3 important points that you've brought up this
4 morning. I think the -- one of the things that
5 sticks with me is the -- that it's a bittersweet
6 moment when we think about and what I think about
7 and I'm sure everybody here, about some of the
8 stories that we've heard from the Innu speaking
9 their truths and some of the many different
10 tragedies, the deaths, of course, which are, you
11 know, quite sorrowful things to even think about
12 and talk about, but also the lives that have been
13 impacted.

14 And I -- you know, I'm going to repeat what
15 I've said now a number of times. When we -- one
16 of the death investigations, Faith Rich, that we
17 did, it really struck home to me that in that
18 room there were four generations. There was
19 Faith Rich's child, there was Faith Rich who had
20 passed, her mother, and the grandmother. And so
21 the grandmother's -- she experienced that. I
22 think it's a pivotal point in the forced
23 settlement where the severe trauma - and I say
24 severe trauma - happened. And like I will say

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1 that it never really was dealt with. You know,
2 systems were brought in, like the child
3 protection system. Intent, I would say, good.
4 Outcome, terrible.

5 And so the -- you know, we can't lose sight of
6 that as we look forward. We have to honour the
7 Innu and what they've been through and seek to
8 have some understanding. We'll never understand
9 it as non-Innu. Seek some understanding of what
10 actually they are dealing with on a day-to-day
11 basis.

12 The term "historical trauma" is often used. I
13 don't like it because it's not just history; it's
14 today. It continues. It's continued through
15 four generations. And so looking forward to many
16 things that you brought up. Points that you
17 brought up and acknowledged, I think, were very
18 important. And also to acknowledge that the, you
19 know, Government of Canada, Government of
20 Newfoundland and Labrador, the Innu themselves
21 and others who have information that we have from
22 many different sources and these final
23 submissions now that sort of highlight some of
24 the key points that we are -- have been putting

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1 our mind to, will help guide us in coming up with
2 something that will indeed provide some good
3 direction we hope for this new beginning. And so
4 just to end on that positive note of the
5 beginnings and continue to work.

6 People have been doing some good work,
7 certainly since, you know, this past 10 years or
8 so, and things are happening. I really hope and
9 -- that that momentum will continue well beyond
10 the Inquiry. The Inquiry has made these issues
11 public, and they've put them to the forefront.
12 And let's really hope, and I'll say pray, that
13 they don't get put on the back burner after this
14 Inquiry is done. And -- because there's been
15 some history of that that hasn't been great. So
16 hopefully that will continue.

17 Thank you very much.

18 CAITLIN URQUHART:

19 I'd ask that we take a break for at least 20
20 minutes. We have some clients who are hoping to
21 come in. They're going to join virtually now?
22 Okay. So I guess I'll leave it to the
23 commissioners, if you'd like to have a brief
24 break now before we -- yeah, we'll need to move

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1 the speakers. Fifteen minutes. Thank you. So
2 10:30.

3
4 (Off the Record)

6 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

7 Thank you, welcome back. I'll ask Ms. Urquhart,
8 please, to present our next presenters.

9 CAITLIN URQUHART:

10 Thank you, Commissioners. So up next we'll hear
11 from counsel for the Innu Representative
12 Organizations. And I believe we have three
13 counsel. The first will be virtual, I guess.
14 And I'll leave you to introduce yourselves. But
15 I believe Judith Rae will be on the screen there
16 momentarily.

17 JUDITH RAE:

18 Yes, I'm here online. Good morning.

19 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

20 Good morning. And please go right into it.

21 JUDITH RAE:

22 Okay. And can you hear me okay in the room?

23 CAITLIN URQUHART:

24 We can, yeah.

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1 JUDITH RAE:

2 Perfect. Wonderful. Good morning,
3 Commissioners, and good morning, Innu leadership,
4 community members, staff who are here observing
5 online and in person, and good morning to all the
6 other observers and counsel here this morning.

7 I just want to start by thanking the
8 Commissioners for your very hard work on this
9 Inquiry. It's been a big process and an
10 important process, and one that I know is not
11 only demanding on your time and all your bravery
12 and power, but also your heart. And it -- we
13 really appreciate the emotional work, as well as
14 all the other work that you've put into it.

15 I also want to acknowledge Innu Elder Joachim
16 Nui, who I've been thinking about this week, and
17 who we've all learned so much from, including at
18 this Inquiry.

19 My name is Judith Rae, and I'm a lawyer for
20 the Innu. And I have two colleagues in the room
21 today, Ben Brookwell and Jolene Ashini. They
22 will be doing most of our submissions. I will be
23 introducing things. And I'm sorry not to be able
24 to be there in person. I would have liked to be,

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1 but we all had to, you know, adjust to different
2 schedules and changes in schedules in the Inquiry
3 as we go with the needs. And I really appreciate
4 the Commissioners and the Inquiry team doing that
5 throughout the Inquiry, and appreciate being able
6 to join online with you this morning.

7 I've decided to start my submissions today
8 with what I think of as an Innu way, telling a
9 story. The story is about the roots of this
10 Inquiry, and how it came to be, and why we're
11 here today.

12 Thinking back over a decade, actually, I had
13 only been working with the Innu for a few years.
14 I was still a fairly new lawyer when Jack
15 Penashue reached out to me. He was the Director
16 of Social Health at Sheshatshiu First Nation at
17 the time. And he wanted to discuss the MOUs.
18 These were the 2012 MOUs, just signed not long
19 before he reached out to me. They were the first
20 generation of agreements on child and family
21 services that were signed between the Innu and
22 the Province. So I can't recall exactly, but I'm
23 guessing it was around 2012 or 2013, around that
24 time. We started working together, and it became

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1 clear that although the MOUs had come about based
2 on Innu requests and had good intentions, they
3 had been written without Innu input, and they
4 were not meeting Innu needs. Working with Jack,
5 we pushed for a replacement with real Innu input.

6 Jack had already built relationships well
7 before that, with provincial child protection
8 leaders, and despite their differences. With his
9 advocacy, they agreed to work on a new agreement,
10 and we started working together on what became
11 the Working Relationship Agreement, later signed
12 in 2015.

13 When those discussions were taking place, when
14 we worked on that agreement, Jack pushed for what
15 he called a reconciliation process in child
16 welfare. He was familiar with the Touchstones of
17 Hope, the principles of reconciliation in child
18 welfare, which later became principles of this
19 Inquiry. He called on the Province to commit to
20 that kind of process with the Innu, going through
21 the stages of truth-telling, acknowledging,
22 restoring, and relating in a new way.

23 At that time, it didn't happen. The province
24 would not agree to do it. And when Jack reached

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1 out federally, the federal government would not
2 agree to fund it. But that concept was not
3 forgotten, and for me, that's one of the places
4 where I trace the roots of this inquiry in my
5 understanding.

6 The next part of my story came a couple years
7 later, around 2016. At that time, in my work
8 with the Innu, we had been trying to get
9 prevention funding for a very long time, most of
10 that time without success, and a lot of
11 frustration. But in 2016, things were changing,
12 and prevention funding was finally about to
13 start. So we tried to have some discussions
14 internally about how the Innu wanted to plan
15 their services. I remember a large group getting
16 together in a hotel, mostly Innu, with a few
17 non-Innu advisors or support people like myself.

18 As the discussion got going, it shifted to
19 Innu-aimun, as it often does and should when an
20 Innu discussion really gets going.

21 Commissioner Qupee was the Grand Chief at the
22 time. The discussion kept going for a while, and
23 at some point, she asked the Akaneshaut, the
24 non-Innu like myself, to leave the room while the

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1 Innu kept talking. Great decision.
 2 Eventually, after quite a long time, we were
 3 asked to come back. She gave us a brief summary.
 4 And what I remember most about it was that she
 5 explained that it was hard to plan the future
 6 when there was so much to talk about how things
 7 were going now, when all the pain that the Innu
 8 have about child welfare has not yet been
 9 processed. This experience, too, was part of the
 10 root of this Inquiry in my experience.
 11 In those years, I recall also hearing about
 12 the deaths of James Poker and Kirby Mistenapeo in
 13 2015 and 2016, and seeing the tragedy that they
 14 created throughout the communities.
 15 Then came the death of Thunderheart Tshakapesh
 16 in 2017. And his parents, Simeon and Ruby
 17 Tshakapesh, called specifically for an inquiry.
 18 Simeon was the Deputy Grand Chief at that time.
 19 And when they called for a public inquiry, that
 20 call was supported by the other Innu leadership
 21 and led to a series of events in which the
 22 Premier at that time, Dwight Ball, agreed to an
 23 inquiry, and things got moving towards this
 24 Inquiry from there.

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1 To me, these stories help explain how we got
 2 here and why this Inquiry is happening. The
 3 Inquiry comes from the pain of loss, but also
 4 from the wisdom of Innu leaders and Innu staff in
 5 key roles who knew what was required to get
 6 through that pain and to move forward into
 7 something better.
 8 It took a long time for this Inquiry to
 9 actually begin. During that time, I recall
 10 learning of the deaths of Jacob Collins, Wally
 11 Rich and Faith Rich in 2020 and 2021.
 12 The pain has kept coming, and it has not yet
 13 stopped. But as the Inquiry has progressed over
 14 these last four years, since starting in the
 15 spring of 2022, it has already made a difference.
 16 It has made a difference in allowing for a
 17 meaningful process to learn from the tragic
 18 deaths of the young people I have mentioned, and
 19 it has made a difference in allowing for over 100
 20 Innu people to tell their own story, as well as
 21 in gathering all kinds of information from a
 22 variety of people to give us all a clearer
 23 picture.
 24 Those steps are important. Whether this

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1 Inquiry will truly complete its aims to make the
 2 difference it was set out to do remains to be
 3 seen. We should recall the principles of the
 4 Touchstones of Hope: truth-telling,
 5 acknowledging, restoring and relating.
 6 The success of this Inquiry depends on what
 7 the federal and provincial governments will do
 8 with the truths they have heard. Will they
 9 acknowledge those truths? Will they accept their
 10 own roles in the hurt caused? Will they reach
 11 new understanding? And if so, what will they do
 12 next? Will they implement this inquiry's
 13 recommendations together with the Innu to do
 14 their best to restore what has been hurt and to
 15 repair relationships with real change by going
 16 forward, relating in a new way?
 17 A lot has been answered in the information the
 18 Inquiry has gathered, but these are the crucial
 19 questions we are left with at this stage as the
 20 Inquiry begins to wrap up.
 21 This Inquiry is about Innu children. It
 22 includes children taken from their communities.
 23 It includes children who have passed away in care
 24 or after being in care. It is not about isolated

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1 failures. It is about a system shaped by
 2 history, governments, and institutions, and the
 3 conditions those systems and governments have
 4 created today. It's not about a few bad actors
 5 or isolated mistakes. It is about systemic
 6 issues that have led to the over-representation
 7 of Innu children in child welfare, including in
 8 care, and the harms they have experienced while
 9 in that system. Change requires a new
 10 relationship, a new system, and full recognition
 11 of the harm done.
 12 We've heard so much in this Inquiry. We heard
 13 that Innu families had strong systems of care
 14 before outside intervention in their lives. We
 15 heard those systems were disrupted, replaced, and
 16 undermined. And we've heard of a child welfare
 17 system imposed that focused mainly on removal,
 18 not prevention, that acts too late, and that
 19 disconnects children from identity, family, and
 20 community.
 21 We heard how that removal not only comes from
 22 intergenerational harm, but also causes
 23 intergenerational harm. The pattern has occurred
 24 over decades. And we've also heard of Innu

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1 strength and the improvements that come when Innu
2 lead their own services.

3 Where do things need to go? At its core, it's
4 about changing the relationship between Innu, the
5 Province, and Canada. That relationship must
6 move towards Innu control of Innu child and
7 family services, supporting a system grounded in
8 family, culture, community and prevention.
9 Important steps in that direction are already
10 underway. But the question is whether those
11 steps will be fully supported and sustained.

12 The Innu organizations are bringing forward a
13 number of recommendations. We have set those out
14 in our written submissions. And I'm sure you've
15 heard of recommendations in the round tables this
16 week.

17 As you will see in our submissions, the
18 recommendations are grouped to align with the
19 three things that Innu Prevention Services has
20 identified that each Innu child needs: number
21 one, to know where they will always belong; two,
22 to spend time in nutshimit; and three, to have a
23 consistent, healthy Innu adult playing a big role
24 in their life.

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1 Each recommendation that the Innu are bringing
2 forward is important. And we urge you as
3 commissioners to take it seriously. And we urge
4 all the parties to fully implement them. There
5 is a lot that needs to change.

6 Briefly here, can I summarize what needs to
7 change? I will try. The recommendations draw
8 mainly on a few things: number one, real
9 commitment; two, new levels of flexibility;
10 three, depth of support; and four, genuine
11 understanding.

12 I will go through those four with a few
13 comments and then turn it over to my colleagues.
14 Number one, a real commitment. Innu need
15 partners that stand by them through thick and
16 thin, who root for them and celebrate their
17 success, and who step up for them in hard times
18 with empathy and without turning to paternalism,
19 blame or stereotypes.

20 There are changes that need to happen right
21 away. But it also takes patience to see this
22 full transition through. The relationships
23 continue now, through that transition, and into
24 the future, beyond the transition itself.

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1 The Innu provincial and federal government
2 will all change their roles as that transition
3 continues, but will continue to be in a
4 government-to-government-to-government
5 relationship in new ways. The commitment needs
6 to be there for the long haul, with the necessary
7 attention it deserves.

8 Second, new levels of flexibility. Even while
9 some people within governments want to be
10 supportive, bureaucratic rules that are too
11 restrictive can create enormous barriers.
12 Flexibility does not come naturally within large
13 governments. But to support Innu governance,
14 especially in child and family services, new
15 levels of flexibility are necessary.

16 To give an example, right now, most of the
17 funding that Innu rely on for services, and not
18 just in child and family services, but in all of
19 the areas that contribute to the picture of child
20 and family services, meaning those related to
21 well-being, such as in health, mental health,
22 youth, and so on. It is often in very narrow
23 boxes. These little boxes each have their own
24 timelines and limitations. One is available for

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1 one year, for one purpose, then it disappears.
2 Another is available maybe for three years, for
3 another purpose, then it disappears. Making
4 funding more sustainable, long-term, and
5 consolidated is crucial.

6 In child and family services and in other
7 program areas that affect the drivers of child
8 and family services, funding must meet real Innu
9 needs, taking into account the depth of
10 unresolved intergenerational trauma, which still
11 remains. It needs to account for costs, such as
12 remoteness, realistic staffing needs, capital
13 infrastructure, and the growth of services that,
14 in many cases, and certainly in child and family
15 services, are still in very early stages of
16 development and growth. It needs fair processes
17 to allow for adjustment and flexibility to adapt
18 to Innu circumstances.

19 And that is an example, but I will just note
20 that funding is not the only context for
21 flexibility. Provincial rules, such as child
22 protection rules, can be too restrictive, and
23 they have created barriers. More flexibility is
24 needed in provincial rules, such as policies to

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1 adapt to Innu circumstances.
 2 Third, the depth of support. Support needs to
 3 dig deep. What is needed for real change is not
 4 easy. For both the federal and provincial
 5 governments, there are resource commitments that
 6 need to not only increase, but truly shift to a
 7 different level. One example of this is the way
 8 in which provincial services and child protection
 9 right now are not operating currently anywhere
 10 close to a reasonable range of functioning.
 11 Provincial child protection is staffed
 12 half-time. The caseload is covered half of the
 13 time. And barely that, considering vacancies and
 14 turnover. No one can expect that system to
 15 succeed. Turning that system over to the Innu
 16 will set them up to fail unless these significant
 17 resource gaps are brought up to achieve a
 18 reasonable standard of service. The province and
 19 federal government should together invest in
 20 significant improvements to close those gaps
 21 before the transition of child protection to an
 22 Innu system.
 23 The depth of resource gaps includes funding
 24 for child and family services specifically, but

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1 not only. We will never see real change in child
 2 welfare if we do not also address the root
 3 causes. In particular, intergenerational trauma,
 4 poverty, and unmet needs in child development.
 5 And the services that speak to those root causes,
 6 which means major improvements in healthcare,
 7 including mental health and addictions care.
 8 Major improvements in foundational areas for
 9 socioeconomic wellbeing, such as housing and
 10 education. And major improvements in the
 11 availability and coordination of services for
 12 children with specific needs.
 13 Both levels of government have important roles
 14 in these areas. If we keep underfunding and
 15 underserving these areas, we will keep seeing
 16 families disintegrate and an over-representation
 17 of Innu children in child welfare. That is not
 18 acceptable. Innu deserve the same chances at
 19 healthy, stable lives as other Canadians. Innu
 20 children deserve that chance. To get there means
 21 addressing the legacy of colonization and its
 22 impacts. It is indeed a big shift.
 23 Finally, the recommendations we're bringing
 24 forward involve the theme of genuine

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1 understanding. Partners need open minds and to
 2 take steps to learn. The people within various
 3 parts of the federal and provincial governments
 4 working with the Innu, or who have
 5 decision-making power that affect the Innu, and,
 6 I will add, within associated organizations and
 7 agencies and so on, they need to know and
 8 understand the Innu.
 9 Training, reading, and listening can all help,
 10 including participating in this Inquiry. And I
 11 commend all of those who did, including observing
 12 and listening, and also accessing its materials,
 13 which will remain an excellent resource. But at
 14 its core, reaching that understanding is about
 15 relationships.
 16 Amanda Rich, when she was Innu prevention
 17 director, spoke to this Inquiry about the central
 18 role of relationships. She said, in order for
 19 the Province to understand why the Innu are
 20 asking for what they're asking for, they need to
 21 understand. So I got with my group, and I was
 22 like, I think we need to invite the Province on
 23 Innu territory, not in offices, not in a formal
 24 meeting boardroom. Let's bring them on Innu

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1 territory and have some real, honest discussions.
 2 And she spoke about doing that with the federal
 3 government as well.
 4 I saw that same dedication to relationships
 5 from the Innu staff and leaders who I mentioned
 6 in the story I started with, from their work
 7 years ago.
 8 Innu have invested in relationship building
 9 with both provincial and federal officials, and
 10 they found, and they've told me, that the
 11 strength of those relationships has been
 12 foundational to the success of Innu programs and
 13 to the ability to keep growing those programs
 14 with trust and confidence. That's something that
 15 needs to keep building. It has challenges.
 16 I've noticed in my short time in this work
 17 that people in the federal and provincial
 18 governments tend to come and go, and sometimes
 19 somewhat more than the Innu do in their roles.
 20 Just to give a small example, I see Kathleen
 21 Benuen here. She's been in her role in Innu
 22 Health for so many years, but she's seen many
 23 people come and go in health positions in federal
 24 and provincial roles.

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1 And that type of thing is a challenge. It's a 2 challenge to relationship-building. Government 3 officials need to take up that challenge of 4 relationship-building and improve genuine 5 understanding. And that includes in personal 6 ways, but also in more integrated ways that go 7 deeper into their structures that won't just be 8 lost when a new person comes in. And that is 9 changing the relationship between not just 10 people, but the Crown governments and the Innu 11 governments. 12 CAITLIN URQUHART: 13 Just one moment, Judith. I'm sorry to interrupt, 14 but we have a fire alarm going off here. So 15 we're just going to check in on that quickly. 16 JUDITH RAE: 17 Okay. 18 CAITLIN URQUHART: 19 Okay. It sounds like the test is now complete. 20 So we'll hand it back to you, Judith. Thank you 21 for your patience. 22 JUDITH RAE: 23 No problem at all. I'm actually at the end, so 24 that's totally fine. I'll just finish the --	1 Ben will also comment on some submissions 2 Canada made on the scope of this Inquiry. And 3 Jolene will comment further on reconciliation. 4 So I will turn it over to them. And thank 5 you. 6 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 7 Thank you very much. Please continue, Counsel. 8 JOLENE ASHINI: 9 Thank you, Judith. Good morning, Commissioners. 10 My name is Jolene Ashini. I'm co-counsel for the 11 Innu Representative Organizations. I am also an 12 Innushkueu, which is the Innu-aimun word for 13 woman. I'm also a member of the Sheshatshiu Innu 14 First Nation. 15 And as Judith just briefly outlined, my 16 submissions focus on three connected themes, 17 which are: history; the impact of the removal of 18 Innu Auassit, which is the Innu-aimun word for 19 children; and reconciliation, which I'll address 20 after Mr. Brookwell's submissions. 21 These themes are inseparable. Generations of 22 colonial intervention disrupted Innu systems of 23 care and displaced Innu authority. That history 24 shapes the circumstances facing Innu children and
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1 just the last point I was making, which is that 2 it's important for understanding of the Innu to 3 occur, not just with specific individuals in the 4 Crown governments, but to build to a deeper 5 institutional level that changes the relationship 6 between those Crown governments as full 7 organizations and governments so they have a new 8 relationship with the Innu that's not just 9 personal and specific to one person, but 10 integrated, changing that relationship for the 11 better and with more respect for the Innu and 12 what they can do. 13 Those are the end of my portion of the 14 submissions. My role was to introduce our 15 submissions. And I'm going to turn things over 16 now to my colleagues, Jolene Ashini and Ben 17 Brookwell. 18 Jolene will speak a little bit about Innu 19 history and the impact that removal in particular 20 has had on Innu children and families. Ben will 21 speak a little bit more about some of the 22 specific issues this Inquiry has heard about 23 relating to the child protection system and our 24 recommendations.	1 families today and explains why removal cannot 2 automatically be treated as safety because the 3 effects of removal extend beyond the child to 4 families, communities, and future generations. 5 And finally, history also defines what 6 meaningful reconciliation looks like. Meaningful 7 reconciliation must therefore go beyond 8 acknowledging the past or adjusting the existing 9 system. It must involve healing, prevention, 10 stronger relationships, and the restoration of 11 Innu authority over child and family services. 12 Commissioners, as Ms. Rae explained at the 13 beginning of her submission, this Inquiry 14 concerns a system shaped by history, governments, 15 and institutions. I will turn to review that 16 history because this Inquiry cannot be understood 17 without it. 18 History is not simply background or context. 19 It explains how Innu children came to be involved 20 with child protection services and why so many 21 Innu families were already struggling before 22 social workers entered their lives. 23 History also explains why many provincial 24 responses have fallen short. Long before the

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1 provincial or federal governments assumed
 2 authority over the lives of Innu Auassit, the
 3 Innu had their own systems of care.
 4 Parents, extended families, and Tshenut raised
 5 Auassit together. Innu Auassit learned who they
 6 were through Innu-aimun, through Innu-aitun, and
 7 through life in nutshimit. They learned the
 8 skills necessary to live in relationship with the
 9 land.
 10 History also showed us that the responsibility
 11 for the well-being of Innu Auassit rested within
 12 the Innu community itself. Commissioners of that
 13 foundation did not disappear on its own.
 14 Evidence and witness testimony demonstrated that
 15 colonial institutions and policies deliberately
 16 interfered with it, beginning with early
 17 missionary attempts to prohibit the sharing of
 18 Innu legends and restrict the transmission of
 19 Innu spiritual knowledge. Missionaries believed
 20 that settling the Innu and separating their
 21 children from parents would make it easier to
 22 replace Innu knowledge and identity with European
 23 standards.
 24 Later, the influence of the Catholic priests

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1 extended into Innu communities, education, family
 2 life, and decisions concerning Innu children.
 3 Innu spiritual practices were condemned.
 4 Families were discouraged from travelling
 5 together in nutshimit. And formal education
 6 increasingly separated children from the
 7 environments in which they had been raised for
 8 thousands of years. The result was that healthy
 9 Innu ways of living were displaced by what an
 10 Innu witness described as a new and unknown
 11 culture of trauma.
 12 After Confederation, the federal and
 13 provincial governments failed to consult the Innu
 14 or recognize them in the same manner as other
 15 First Nations. Evidence before this Inquiry
 16 showed that for decades, the Innu were denied
 17 access to federal programs and services relating
 18 to education, health, family violence, children,
 19 and addictions. That exclusion impaired the
 20 ability of Innu communities to respond to
 21 mounting health, social, and economic challenges.
 22 And at the same time, governments forced the Innu
 23 into permanent settlements. They imposed
 24 mandatory non-Innu schooling. They restricted

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1 traditional hunting and provided housing without
 2 basic services.
 3 The Mushuau Innu experienced repeated forced
 4 relocations, including to places that were
 5 unsuitable for their land-based ways of life or
 6 places so inhospitable that they could not
 7 sustain life.
 8 Commissioners, although assimilation was
 9 attempted over and over again, it was actually
 10 within a single generation that governments
 11 forced the Innu from their nomadic way of life.
 12 Although it was a life that had sustained the
 13 Innu for thousands of years, they were forced
 14 into sedentary communities designed by
 15 Akaneshaut, which is the Innu-aimun word for
 16 settlers. It was then that schools and
 17 church-run institutions then became sites of
 18 physical and sexual abuse. Innu children were
 19 prohibited from speaking Innu-aimun. They were
 20 separated from their families and, in some cases,
 21 returned home unable to communicate with them.
 22 Priests and medical authorities also exercised
 23 substantial authority over the removal and
 24 placement of Innu children, including placements

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1 in the Northwest River Dormitory, the
 2 International Grenfell Association's infants'
 3 home, and also Mount Cashel.
 4 The evidence demonstrates that this abuse was
 5 extensive. At least 19 Innu witnesses described
 6 sexual abuse by priests, teachers, or staff in
 7 church-run institutional settings, and at least
 8 28 Innu witnesses described physical or other
 9 abuse in those contexts. These figures
 10 demonstrate the pervasive nature of the abuse
 11 experienced by the first generations of Innu
 12 children following settlement.
 13 But by the time provincial protection services
 14 had become established in Innu communities, the
 15 cumulative harm was already profound. Families
 16 had been separated from nutshimit. Traditional
 17 systems of care had been disrupted. Abuse had
 18 occurred across generations, and alcohol misuse
 19 and family violence had become widespread.
 20 An Innu witness explained this as the Innu
 21 were living with collective trauma even before
 22 they had the language to describe it.
 23 Commissioners, the provincial system does not
 24 recognize those circumstances as consequences of

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1 colonial policies forced onto the Innu by both
 2 the federal and provincial governments. It
 3 approaches families through laws and policies
 4 that had never been designed for the Innu. It
 5 had treated the effects of displacement, poverty,
 6 trauma, and institutional abuse as failures
 7 within individual families. This distinction is
 8 critical.

9 The evidence does not reveal a series of
 10 isolated family failures. The evidence reveals
 11 the cumulative consequences of decisions made by
 12 governments, churches, and institutions that
 13 disrupted Innu governance, family relationships,
 14 land-based life, languages, and Innu systems of
 15 care. History, therefore, changes how the
 16 commissioners must understand the evidence before
 17 this Inquiry.

18 Commissioners, if colonial decisions helped
 19 create the conditions that brought Innu children
 20 into the protection services, meaningful change
 21 cannot only focus on immediate circumstances of
 22 individual families; meaningful change must
 23 confront those conditions. It must address the
 24 root causes of Innu children being involved

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1 within the child protection services. And
 2 meaningful change must restore the authority,
 3 relationships, and systems that colonial
 4 intervention displaced.

5 Commissioners, the consequences of those
 6 conditions are reflected in the experiences
 7 shared throughout this Inquiry. And as Ms. Rae
 8 explained, the Inquiry has allowed people to tell
 9 their own stories.

10 Well, part of Innu history involves the
 11 removal of Innu Auassit. And one of the clearest
 12 and most consistent messages from Innu testimony
 13 was that Innu Auassit should not be removed from
 14 their communities. More than 30 witnesses spoke
 15 about the importance of keeping children within
 16 their families, communities, language and within
 17 Innu-aitun.

18 And that message came from people who had been
 19 removed as children, parents whose children were
 20 taken, siblings, and grandparents who witnessed
 21 those consequences. This message also came from
 22 community leaders who had worked within the child
 23 protection system. And those who had worked
 24 within the child protection system.

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1 Commissioners, their evidence demonstrated
 2 that removal was not simply a change in a
 3 residence. And as Ms. Rae introduced, removal
 4 separated children from the people, language,
 5 relationships and surroundings through which they
 6 understood who they were and where they belonged.

7 For an Innu child, removal can mean separation
 8 from parents, siblings, grandparents, extended
 9 family, community, Innu-aimun, Innu-aitun and
 10 Nitassinan.

11 Commissioners, these are not secondary
 12 considerations. They are central to a child's
 13 safety, identity and healthy development. The
 14 provincial child care system has historically
 15 looked narrowly for risk within the parental
 16 home. It has not adequately considered the risk
 17 created by its own intervention. Removal may
 18 appear to provide immediate physical safety while
 19 creating other serious risks for the loss of
 20 relationships, languages, place, and identity.

21 Commissioners, provincial child protection
 22 services did not consistently understand these
 23 losses as matters of safety.

24 This Inquiry also heard that removal often

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1 failed to protect Innu children from physical
 2 harm. Children experienced abuse in residential
 3 schools, dormitories, foster homes, group homes,
 4 and youth facilities. Separation made children
 5 particularly vulnerable when they were placed
 6 among people who did not share their language or
 7 cultural background and when they had no trusted
 8 adult to whom they could disclose to what was
 9 happening.

10 Commissioners, at least 32 witnesses described
 11 sexual abuse experienced by themselves or a close
 12 family member following separation from family or
 13 community. And at least 13 of those accounts
 14 involved foster homes, group homes, or youth
 15 facilities connected to provincial intervention.
 16 These numbers are not complete, but they
 17 demonstrate the seriousness and prevalence of
 18 harms described throughout this Inquiry. They
 19 also demonstrate why removal cannot automatically
 20 be equated as safety.

21 Removal also caused profound emotional harm,
 22 even where the placement itself may have been
 23 physically safe, because children struggled to
 24 understand why they had been taken. They also

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1 lost consistent caregivers and the relationships
 2 that gave them a sense of security, connection,
 3 self-worth, and belonging.
 4 The evidence linked these experiences to
 5 anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm,
 6 and suicide risk during or after care.
 7 Commissioners, the six death investigations
 8 provide the most tragic examples of these risks;
 9 each involved an Innu youth who had entered care
 10 and later died. Their experiences demonstrate
 11 why safety cannot be understood only as removal
 12 from the parental home. Safety must also include
 13 the child's emotional well-being, identity,
 14 relationships, special needs and continuing
 15 connection to family and community.
 16 The effects of removal frequently continued
 17 into adulthood. Former children in care
 18 described struggling with relationships,
 19 identity, self-worth and parenting. And in
 20 particular, one Innu witness described not
 21 believing that she could be a mother and feeling
 22 that she was a nobody.
 23 So, Commissioners, the consequences,
 24 therefore, did not end when a child returned home

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1 or aged out of care. Removal travelled with
 2 children into adulthood. It affected their
 3 relationships with their families, their
 4 confidence as parents, and in some cases, the
 5 experiences of their own children.
 6 Commissioners, the evidence and witness
 7 testimony also revealed that the removal of Innu
 8 Auassit did not only affect those children, it
 9 affected their parents, extended families, and
 10 the entire community. Removal caused pain to
 11 parents, siblings and extended families. Parents
 12 described grief, shame, helplessness and
 13 psychological harm, particularly when children
 14 were placed far away, and families received
 15 little to no information about them. And in some
 16 cases, parents did not know that their child had
 17 been even placed outside of the province.
 18 The Inquiry heard this message from
 19 grandparents, siblings, leaders, service
 20 providers, and former children in care, who
 21 witnessed how removals affected relationships
 22 throughout the community and weakened the
 23 connection through which children traditionally
 24 learned language, Innu-aitun, and family

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1 responsibilities.
 2 The impact on parents also affected the
 3 possibility of reunification because
 4 re-traumatizing a parent makes healing more
 5 difficult. And when the healing process becomes
 6 less likely, reunification may also become less
 7 likely. Therefore, when -- therefore, parent
 8 well-being and child well-being cannot be treated
 9 as entirely separate. They remain interconnected
 10 over the course of a child's life.
 11 Commissioners, removal became more than a
 12 response to family difficulties. It became
 13 another means through which separation, trauma,
 14 and loss were carried into the next generation.
 15 And when children are removed, opportunities to
 16 learn from parents, grandparents, and Tshenut are
 17 lost. The role of Tshenut as teachers is
 18 weakened, and the transmission of land-based
 19 knowledge, family responsibilities, and Innu
 20 history is interrupted.
 21 Commissioners, these harms accumulate. A
 22 child who grows up away from family may return
 23 without the language or relationships needed to
 24 fully participate in community life. And that

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1 child may later struggle to pass those
 2 connections on to their very own children. And
 3 over time, repeated removal can weaken the very
 4 family and community networks that child
 5 protection should be working to strengthen. The
 6 effects also extended into community confidence,
 7 because for generations, colonial institutions
 8 treated Innu ways of living and raising children
 9 as inferior.
 10 Missionaries, schools and governments
 11 displaced Innu authority and imposed outside
 12 systems in its place. This created divisions
 13 within communities regarding the value of Innu
 14 knowledge and undermined confidence in Innu
 15 systems of care. Repeated intervention also
 16 created deep distrust of government institutions.
 17 And by the time provincial protection services
 18 entered into communities, families had already
 19 experienced harmful interventions by priests,
 20 schools and governments.
 21 Families therefore learned to distrust
 22 non-Innu officials, including those who
 23 controlled access to financial support and had
 24 the authority to remove their children. This

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1 distrust was not evidence that families did not 2 care about their children or did not want help. 3 Commissioners, it reflected lived experience, 4 because for many Innu families, asking for help 5 carried the fear that an outside authority would 6 judge them, misunderstand their circumstances, or 7 even take their children away. 8 The community impact must also be understood 9 as collective and intergenerational trauma. The 10 written submissions describe how by the time 11 child protection services became established, 12 pain was already present across families and was 13 being passed on to their children. And later, 14 removals often re-traumatized parents who had 15 themselves experienced separation, institutional 16 abuse or loss. 17 Understanding Innu history and the causes and 18 effects of intergenerational trauma is essential, 19 not only for child protection workers, service 20 providers and governments, but also for community 21 members seeking to understand their own 22 experiences and pursue healing. 23 The broader lesson is that well-being is 24 interconnected. A child's well-being depends	1 As Ms. Rae noted this morning, I'll also speak 2 about what was covered in the written submissions 3 by Canada about the scope of the Inquiry. 4 Afterward, I'll turn things back over to 5 Ms. Ashini to close our submissions. 6 Many of the issues that have been identified 7 in this Inquiry, which you've heard today, are 8 not new. Underfunding of services, staff 9 shortages, rigid approaches to programs, and the 10 multifaceted impact of colonialism on the Innu 11 are all issues that Innu have raised on many 12 occasions. And you heard that through witnesses 13 and through reports. 14 What's unique in this Inquiry is there is an 15 opportunity to consider all of those factors and 16 then develop a plan of action to improve outcomes 17 for Innu children. 18 The Inquiry is not being asked to speculate 19 about what would work. The evidence that you've 20 heard shows you what has worked, and that's when 21 Innu-led prevention and placement services are 22 supported, outcomes improve. The numbers of Innu 23 children in care has declined, and there's fewer 24 children being placed outside Innu communities.
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1 upon the well-being of parents, family and 2 community. A system that separates the child 3 from the wider network without supporting its 4 healing may respond to an immediate concern while 5 making long-term safety and reunification more 6 difficult. 7 For this reason, repairing the harms examined 8 by this Inquiry requires more than improving 9 individual placements or case decisions. It 10 requires investment in families, housing, 11 healing, language, reconnection with Innu-aitun, 12 education, prevention, land-based programming and 13 community systems of care. 14 I am now going to turn things over to 15 Mr. Brookwell for his portion of the submissions. 16 BENJAMIN BROOKWELL: 17 Good morning, Commissioners. My submissions are 18 going to focus on some of the specific issues 19 identified in this Inquiry, as well as some of 20 the recommendations that we wish to highlight. 21 And I aim to highlight the key items rather than 22 go through all of our recommendations, as that 23 full list can be found at Part 5 of our 24 submissions.	1 Those are all great things. 2 As Ms. Rae and Ms. Ashini have said, the work 3 is now setting out how Canada, the Province, and 4 the Innu can sustain progress and continue to 5 improve, and that will be about building a strong 6 relationship. This is, of course, a provincial 7 inquiry into the provincial child welfare system, 8 but the reality is change for Innu child welfare 9 requires coordinated intergovernmental effort. 10 This is something that you've heard repeated this 11 morning, and it is also something reflected in 12 the Province's written submissions. 13 I want to move now to talk about some of the 14 systemic issues. And the first issue has already 15 been touched on by Ms. Rae, and that's closing 16 the funding gaps. There's catching up to do. 17 Until 2016, as you've heard, there wasn't 18 funding for prevention services or supports for 19 families to help avoid apprehension or promote 20 reunification. Instead, the funding was for 21 children when they were taken into care. And to 22 the extent that there may have been other 23 provincial services available, the results show 24 us that that didn't fill the gap of an absence of

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1 prevention funding. And that has a lasting
 2 impact. So there has been improvement, as I've
 3 said, with federal funding now coming for Innu
 4 Prevention Services, but there are still areas
 5 for improvement.

6 One of the biggest areas is capital
 7 infrastructure. We've spoken a lot about the
 8 need for more staff, which is very important, and
 9 services, but for staff to do their work and for
 10 services to function, you need space. And so
 11 investments in capital infrastructure is a key
 12 recommendation that we have in our submissions,
 13 and this is for program space, transitional
 14 housing for youth leaving care, staff
 15 accommodations, and adequate placement buildings
 16 in both communities. These pieces are essential.

17 And to build off of something that Ms. Rae
 18 described this morning, capital often ends up in
 19 a separate box. There will be a box for services
 20 and funding for maintenance, and capital ends up
 21 someplace else, and that means separate
 22 applications, separate sets of reporting. These
 23 need to be looked at together because they
 24 interrelate.

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1 The other piece about funding that I want to
 2 touch on is building a little bit on what
 3 Mr. Fitzgerald said this morning. There's going
 4 to be a transition, but there also will be
 5 growth, and there will be growth in prevention
 6 services being provided by Innu. That has to be
 7 planned for now, not when it happens.

8 There needs to be coordinated work between the
 9 Province, Canada, and the Innu to project those
 10 budgets on what needs will be one, two, three,
 11 and five years down the road because it's too
 12 late to do that when the needs have already
 13 arose.

14 The last point I want to talk about on funding
 15 is, we do know what doesn't work, and that is
 16 time-limited programs, as they undermine
 17 successes. So an example is both SIFN and MIFN
 18 spent time building up programs for youth,
 19 creating positive community programming for
 20 children. And that was noted in the
 21 investigations by Kenn Richard and Tara Petti as
 22 critical for youth well-being and important for
 23 reducing child protection service involvement for
 24 older children.

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1 Now, the funding for that came from one of
 2 these different boxes; in this case, youth crime
 3 prevention. But it was limited for five years,
 4 so as the program starts to take off, it now has
 5 to wind down.

6 This is just an example, but it's one that I
 7 highlight to help emphasize what Ms. Rae was
 8 saying about long-term funding, about funding
 9 that isn't limited to certain projects, certain
 10 programs.

11 I'll turn now to talk a little bit about
 12 programs and services and where there can be some
 13 improvements. And I like to frame these as
 14 opportunities. A lot of what we have looked at
 15 in this Inquiry is where things are not working,
 16 but the goal is to make them work. So the way we
 17 have set these out is to look at them as
 18 opportunities for improvement. And the first
 19 category that I'll talk about is immediate
 20 actions that we see as essential. And then I'll
 21 move to longer-term actions.

22 So in terms of immediate action, you've heard
 23 this mentioned a couple of times this morning
 24 already, but recruitment for more full-time

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1 staff. This is a recommendation that I don't
 2 think has escaped anyone. The rotational model
 3 has had severe challenges, and as Ms. Rae
 4 emphasized, it in effect amounts to part-time
 5 child protection.

6 So change means ensuring continuous file
 7 coverage, opening up more positions, recruiting
 8 full-time workers to live in or near the
 9 communities, and taking steps to make sure that
 10 protection files have staff on a full-time basis.

11 This is going to require investment in money and
 12 training, and it will take time, but the part
 13 that I want to emphasize is it should start right
 14 away.

15 The other immediate step is to expand services
 16 for youth leaving care. And here I'm talking
 17 about transition planning, reintegration support,
 18 transitional housing. These all need to be
 19 priorities because youth leaving care without
 20 these supports are being left vulnerable at a
 21 critical time.

22 And I want to build off of what Mr. Fitzgerald
 23 suggested, which is that they also include
 24 families, not just the youth. We agree with that

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1 approach. It does need to be a holistic effort.
 2 Further improvements that crosscut a lot of
 3 areas has to do with communication, and the issue
 4 that we have observed and the solution really
 5 comes down to having open, timely, and honest
 6 communication with parents and caregivers. When
 7 there are Innu children in care, there has to be
 8 emphasis on them being permitted to speak their
 9 language and encouraged to do so.

10 As you heard during the death investigations
 11 and in other parts of this Inquiry, this is an
 12 essential need, and it's something that may also
 13 take time and training, but the messaging can be
 14 conveyed to staff right away.

15 Another point or issue that we see as
 16 immediate has to do with support of Innu
 17 placements. And the message we want to convey is
 18 to strengthen family and community-based care and
 19 taking a more flexible look at standards and
 20 record checks so that community options can be
 21 fully explored before an out-of-community
 22 placement is considered.

23 The last immediate step that I want to
 24 identify is a role for an Innu zone manager. And

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1 a recommendation is to appoint a provincial
 2 director responsible for Innu child and family
 3 service coordination and administer Innu child
 4 care through an appropriate zone manager. This
 5 would reflect the specific needs for Innu
 6 communities and also require collaboration on
 7 plans of care.

8 I've started with these as they're steps that
 9 we submit need to happen as soon as possible to
 10 accompany the long-term changes which must
 11 follow, and I'll turn to those now.

12 We've heard in this Inquiry that the child
 13 welfare system can be reactive, risk-driven, and
 14 crisis-based, and this places at times undue
 15 blame on parents and can ignore the root causes
 16 that have led to child welfare issues. It also
 17 fosters an adversarial rather than collaborative
 18 relationship.

19 The other issue that needs to be considered
 20 for ongoing change has to do with the risk
 21 criteria considered in child protection. And our
 22 key point here is that the evidence we heard is
 23 it was developed without an Innu population in
 24 mind, but now it's being applied to them. And

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1 the mismatch comes because it doesn't consider
 2 any of the history and factors that were just
 3 described by Ms. Ashini.

4 A third issue that is systemic-wise, and I
 5 will turn to some of our suggestions on these in
 6 a moment, but I want to identify the issues that
 7 came up is disempowerment of Innu parents,
 8 caregivers, children and youth. And we heard
 9 throughout the Inquiry of examples of families
 10 being excluded from case planning, placement
 11 decisions, treatment decisions. And these can
 12 lead to serious consequences, including a
 13 situation where parents may be signing paperwork
 14 that they don't understand. Tied to this is
 15 services are primarily delivered in English to
 16 communicate with families whose first language is
 17 Innu-aimun. And that creates an additional
 18 barrier of inclusion, which I'll come to when we
 19 get to the longer-term recommendations.

20 The final issue I wanted to highlight of a
 21 systemic nature is the access to justice, which
 22 compounds many of these items that we've gone
 23 through. These were identified in former Judge
 24 Bill English's report. And the key items he

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1 flagged were access to legal aid, the shortages
 2 of counsel and interpretation services,
 3 ineffective timelines and the lack of
 4 community-based hearing spaces.

5 So I will now turn to some of the suggestions
 6 that we want to highlight to address some of
 7 these issues. And to revisit that, for any of
 8 this to work, intergovernmental action is
 9 required. It's not just a provincial problem.

10 So the first, which, again, I flag as an
 11 opportunity, is, as mentioned by my colleagues,
 12 funding for community-based, land-based services
 13 as a core service, not as something that's an
 14 extra. And this would include youth programming,
 15 parenting support, mental health and addiction
 16 services, and land-based programs. We've heard
 17 regularly how important all of these are for
 18 healing. And it has to be a central plank of a
 19 child welfare service for Innu.

20 The other large-scale project is support for
 21 the development of Innu law and the transition to
 22 Innu jurisdiction. And that, as you have heard,
 23 is long-term. It will take time. But we're
 24 highlighting it here as something that the

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1 federal government, the provincial government and
 2 the Innu will have to have ongoing engagement
 3 after this Inquiry is done to make a reality and
 4 to look at the supports and the transition, as
 5 Mr. Fitzgerald flagged.

6 Part of the long-term work is also about
 7 developing people. And an item that I've already
 8 touched on is the shortages of staff to provide
 9 some of these services. And one of our key
 10 recommendations is to support the development of
 11 an Innu workforce, which means creating
 12 opportunities to hire Innu for support roles,
 13 building networks for education and training,
 14 including counselling, social work, mental health
 15 and interpretive services. Ultimately, the
 16 system will work best when it's administered by
 17 the people who live in the communities and who
 18 know the Innu. And this is a step that Innu are
 19 ready for now. It's about setting up the
 20 success, and that is a question of coordination
 21 between different levels of government.

22 Another long-term item that I wish to flag is
 23 supporting Innu-led data collection and
 24 reporting. A persistent and ongoing challenge in

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1 advantage of building up translation staff who
 2 can support other activities outside of access to
 3 justice.

4 Again, the key here is coordination, making
 5 sure that the funding is in place, that there is
 6 engagement between the Province and the Innu on
 7 how to structure this program, and to make sure
 8 that there is a long enough runway in time to get
 9 the program off the ground. It will take a
 10 number of years to get trainers, to get people
 11 trained, to evaluate the program. So this is a
 12 pilot where a short, time-limited set of funds
 13 will be detrimental. It should be looking at
 14 multiple years.

15 The other pilot suggested by Judge English has
 16 to do with hearing spaces in Innu communities.
 17 And this is in an effort to bridge a very large
 18 access to justice gap, which is community members
 19 being unable to have their voices properly heard.
 20 This can be in technical terms of not being able
 21 to connect to a remote session or to be clearly
 22 heard, but also the difference of communicating
 23 your issues in person versus having to do it over
 24 a phone. And creating those spaces, again, in

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1 the Inquiry is getting access to complete and
 2 up-to-date information about children in care,
 3 available staff, incident reports and other key
 4 indicators. This is something that needs
 5 attention in the long term when we look to
 6 transitioning care and jurisdiction to Innu.

7 To take over a system with large information
 8 gaps is setting up a catastrophe down the road.
 9 We want to make sure that that information is
 10 available and that there is coordination between
 11 the different governments to have a comprehensive
 12 and secure database.

13 There's two further long-term projects that I
 14 will speak to before commenting on an overall
 15 approach. And the first of those is two pilot
 16 programs suggested by former Judge English. And
 17 the first was to train translators in Innu
 18 communities. Now, this is in the context of
 19 supporting the legal system. And our submission
 20 is such a program would go a very long way. The
 21 key would be to make sure that the pilot programs
 22 are taking place in both communities so that
 23 there are translators available in both locations
 24 and to service those members. This has the added

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1 both communities, is what we would recommend.
 2 And once again, coordination will be needed,
 3 support on setting it up and making it work with
 4 the provincial justice system is essential. And
 5 then making sure that there's long-term funding
 6 not only to put it in place, but to maintain the
 7 technology, the people involved, and the space.

8 The other sort of final specific
 9 recommendation from Judge English, he made a
 10 number of suggestions on how to improve access to
 11 counsel for Innu who need support during child
 12 welfare matters. And one of the most
 13 straightforward suggestions he had was to expand
 14 eligibility of legal aid.

15 We agree with this being a very practical
 16 approach, but his alternatives also merit some
 17 consideration as, at the minimum, options that
 18 the Province and Canada should consider as a
 19 backup if, over time, more issues arise.

20 So I'll turn to a sort of overall message
 21 before my comments about Canada's submissions.
 22 But what we have heard and what is captured in
 23 our written submissions is a need to prioritize
 24 connection, culture and family support. And

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1 Ms. Rae touched on this in her opening: how
 2 cultural support is not just extra. It's a
 3 protective factor. Language, family, community,
 4 culture, connection, those are all part of what
 5 keeps children safe. It isn't just having
 6 protection workers and social workers available.
 7 So we strongly encourage a default where Innu
 8 children remain in their community whenever
 9 possible, where there's placements outside of the
 10 community, remembering those important factors of
 11 language and family contact, and cultural
 12 grounding as essential components.
 13 And finally, on this, that families cannot be
 14 forgotten in our activity. Caregivers need to be
 15 supported as well, and they need to have the
 16 information they need to make decisions about
 17 children in care.
 18 The balance of our recommendations and many of
 19 the detail of what I've touched on are in our
 20 written submissions. So I will leave it there on
 21 that component.
 22 And I want to turn now to a part of Canada's
 23 written submission which addressed the scope of
 24 the Inquiry. In Canada's written submission at

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1 paragraphs 34 and 39, they note that this Inquiry
 2 cannot make findings or recommendations with
 3 respect to the administration and management of
 4 federal departments, and that the Inquiry cannot
 5 make findings on the adequacy or reasonableness
 6 of Canada's decisions with respect to funding or
 7 oversight of child welfare services. My response
 8 has three points.
 9 The first is the terms of reference define the
 10 Inquiry's mandate, and the commissioners should
 11 feel unencumbered in fulfilling that mandate.
 12 The terms of reference include investigation and
 13 assessment into the federal government's role in
 14 the history of child protection system as applied
 15 to the Innu, which is at 4(1)(b), and the
 16 implications for funding and resourcing
 17 arrangements, which is 4(1)(u).
 18 The investigations on these items have already
 19 taken place. We've heard from witnesses and
 20 examined numerous documents on matters that touch
 21 on federal funding practices and policies. To
 22 prohibit findings or to suggest there shouldn't
 23 be recommendations is to cut off things before we
 24 get to the important work, which is what should

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1 the action be.
 2 My second point is, there is nothing unfair
 3 about findings and recommendations that relate to
 4 Canada. This Inquiry is different from what
 5 Canada has cited in their submissions, which I'll
 6 go through briefly as there are a number of
 7 cases.
 8 So in Keable and O'Hara, the Inquiry's terms
 9 of reference were challenged in that from the
 10 outset.
 11 In the Milgaard Inquiry, lines of questions
 12 were challenged as exceeding the Inquiry's
 13 jurisdiction.
 14 In Putnam, the question was whether provincial
 15 legislation regarding the discipline of police
 16 officers could apply to RCMP members.
 17 In Canadian National Railway Co., the question
 18 was whether provincial legislation regarding
 19 occupational health and safety could apply to a
 20 federal railway undertaking.
 21 In Mackeigan, the focus was on the principle
 22 of immunity from being compelled to testify.
 23 In Bentley, it arose out of an inquiry issuing
 24 formal notices of misconduct to police officers.

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1 In this Inquiry, Canada has participated fully
 2 as a party. It's produced witnesses, as I've
 3 said, examined others. It has produced and
 4 reviewed thousands of documents. We're not
 5 dealing with notices of misconduct at this time.
 6 And Canada did not challenge the terms of
 7 reference which have been in place for many
 8 years. It's not objected to its witnesses being
 9 examined or certain lines of questioning.
 10 My point is, after a long participation in
 11 this project and having recognized in their
 12 submissions the importance of continued
 13 intergovernmental collaboration, I submit that we
 14 should welcome the insight that this Inquiry may
 15 provide about Canada and not be restrained in
 16 considering findings and recommendations.
 17 My final point about this is the reality for
 18 supporting Indigenous children and families in
 19 child welfare is that it engages the Province and
 20 it engages Canada. And this was acknowledged in
 21 the C-92 reference case, which is in Canada's
 22 submission starting at paragraph 19, but just for
 23 handiness, the reference is 2024 SCC 5. And I'm
 24 going to read out what was at paragraph 99.

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1 "Child welfare in the Indigenous context is not 2 only a field in which Parliament and the 3 provinces can act, but also one in which 4 concerted action by them is necessary. The 5 importance of cooperation in this area between 6 these two levels of government is illustrated, 7 for example, by Jordan's Principle, according to 8 which intergovernmental disputes may not 9 interfere with the right of Indigenous children 10 to access the same services as other children in 11 Canada. With regard to such disputes, the Truth 12 and Reconciliation Commission noted that the 13 federal government and the provincial governments 14 have historically tended to shift responsibility 15 for Indigenous child welfare services to one 16 another. However, today it is recognized that 17 providing such services is the responsibility of 18 both levels of government, which must act in a 19 concerted fashion." 20 We're here to help find ways to keep Innu 21 children safe and to support them so that they 22 can thrive. 23 My closing comment is that procedural or 24 highly technical jurisdictional arguments should	1 Commissioners, this Inquiry has created an 2 opportunity to confront the past, but 3 reconciliation requires more than recording what 4 happened. It begins with truth. The governments 5 of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador must 6 acknowledge the harm caused through the child 7 protection system, through the way -- through the 8 way the systems were operated and funded, and 9 also through the broader colonial actions that 10 contributed to the intergenerational trauma 11 underlying the involvement of so many Innu 12 families and children with that system. 13 Acknowledgement matters because the failure to 14 acknowledge past harms compounds them. 15 Commissioners, it sends a message that Innu 16 experiences were not believed, were not 17 considered significant, and not worthy of 18 response. It also makes healing more difficult 19 for families and later generations. 20 Reconciliation, therefore, requires Canada and 21 the Province to acknowledge and apologize for the 22 respective roles and harms experienced by Innu 23 Auassit, including the operation of Innu day 24 schools, the North West River Dormitory,
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1 not stand in the way of identifying the best way 2 to meet that goal. Cooperation and acting 3 together in a concerted fashion is the only way 4 forward. 5 So with that, I will turn things back to 6 Ms. Ashini to close out our submissions. 7 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 8 Thank you, sir. 9 JOLENE ASHINI: 10 Commissioners, we heard about the future of the 11 jurisdictional transfer of child and family 12 services to the Innu and the work needed to 13 prepare for it from Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Ryan 14 this morning. We also just heard Mr. Brookwell 15 and Ms. Rae address some of the recommendations 16 for this future. 17 But earlier, you also heard Ms. Rae introduce 18 reconciliation through the principles of the 19 Touchstones of Hope, which are truth-telling, 20 acknowledgement, restoration and relating in a 21 new way. 22 Our closing submissions address what those 23 principles require in light of Innu history and 24 the evidence before this Inquiry.	1 placements at Mount Cashel and the child 2 protection system more broadly. That response 3 must address not only individual survivors, but 4 also the need for community healing. 5 But, Commissioners, reconciliation cannot end 6 with an apology. It must also change the 7 relationship between governments and the Innu. 8 That relationship must move away from unilateral 9 direction toward partnership, mutual respect, 10 communication, and recognition of Innu 11 decision-making. 12 You've heard about the future transition to 13 Innu authority in all submissions this morning, 14 but I wish to emphasize that the future is not 15 one in which governments simply become better at 16 making decisions for Innu children. The future 17 is one in which Innu exercise their own authority 18 over child and family services. 19 That work is already underway. The Innu have 20 maintained their responsibility for children, 21 strengthened community-based prevention services, 22 developed Innu caregiving and placement programs, 23 and undertaken the work required to assume 24 jurisdiction under an Innu law. The transition

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1 to Innu jurisdiction is therefore not the 2 beginning of Innu responsibility. It is the 3 restoration and the continuation of 4 responsibilities that Innu have always carried. 5 Governments must therefore make the successful 6 transition to Innu jurisdiction a priority. They 7 must work in partnership with the Innu, provide 8 adequate and sustained resources, respect Innu 9 law and Innu decision-making. 10 They must also provide the institutional and 11 legislative support required for the transition 12 to succeed. 13 Commissioners, reconciliation also requires 14 governments to address the conditions that 15 contribute to child protection involvement. 16 Without adequate support, governments risk 17 transferring responsibility while withholding the 18 resources necessary to rebuild systems damaged 19 through generations of their own colonial 20 intervention. That would not be reconciliation. 21 It would be another form of abandonment. 22 Finally, Commissioners, reconciliation 23 requires accountability. Recommendations cannot 24 be allowed to remain on paper. The parties must	1 afterwards. Commissioners want to have a short 2 response. 3 Thank you. We'll begin with Commissioner 4 Devine. 5 COMMISSIONER DEVINE: 6 First of all, thank you to Mr. Brookwell, 7 Ms. Ashini and Ms. Rae for their submission 8 today. And just to acknowledge and thank 9 Ms. Ashini for the heartfelt closing that she 10 just made. It certainly has touched me, and I 11 think everybody in the room in terms of 12 ultimately what needs to happen. 13 We talk about systems and systemic issues and 14 that, but we, as was said I think already this 15 morning, never forget that these are the children 16 and the parents and the grandparents and families 17 and communities that we're talking about who have 18 had some extremely difficult life circumstances 19 to live with. So always keep that in mind. 20 The submission is very comprehensive and very 21 thoughtful. I think that just a couple of 22 comments - all of them are important - so by 23 picking out a couple, there's always a danger 24 that some others may not feel it's important to
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1 establish a process to monitor, track and 2 publicly report to their -- on their 3 implementation. 4 Commissioners, this Inquiry has documented 5 painful truths about the past, but it also 6 demonstrated that the future can be different. 7 The Innu have not come before this Inquiry 8 asking governments to rebuild their systems of 9 care for them. Commissioners, the Innu have 10 already begun that work. The success of this 11 Inquiry will not ultimately be measured by the 12 publication of its report or by the promises made 13 in response; it will be measured by whether Innu 14 children are safer, better supported, and more 15 connected to their families, to their 16 communities, to Innu-aimun, to Innu-aitun and to 17 Nitassinan. It will be measured by whether Innu 18 children grow up knowing who they are, where they 19 belong, and that they will always have a place 20 within their families, communities and nation. 21 Those are our submissions. Tshinashkumitin. 22 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 23 Tshinashkumitin. And we will make a short 24 response at this time and probably a break	1 some people. And I think the first part talking 2 about the history, you know, and it's about what 3 happened. 4 You know, what has happened is that systems 5 have responded or reacted to the issues. And I 6 don't know that we've really looked at where did 7 the problem come from. And certainly, that has 8 been highlighted this morning that -- and the 9 outcome of what happened is that we have 10 intergenerational trauma. 11 Again, I repeat -- I know I have repeated this 12 a number of times, you know. It's a term that we 13 throw around, I think, sometimes. But I'd like 14 to really understand that and for that to be 15 always part of, if not talked about up front, at 16 least in the back of the mind of those who, for 17 the Inquiry folks, as well as those who will be 18 working on these issues going forward. 19 I have to mention the communication because 20 you covered that too. Communication is a major 21 issue that we've heard about. And, you know, we 22 kind of think that, oh, it's, you know, a small 23 problem, but it's a major problem. And I think 24 that we really need to focus upon how we

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1 communicate with each other and how we do the
2 work.

3 And I think also the thing I wanted to mention
4 was land-based, is that, you know, it's kind
5 of -- I think, for those who might be non-Innu,
6 like they don't understand. I know I don't. I'm
7 a non-Innu, and I understand the importance of it
8 more than I ever did before, but I'll never truly
9 know and understand it the way that the Innu do
10 and have lived it. But just to appreciate it and
11 to give it value because they value it so highly.
12 And I think in programs and services, it's often
13 been, you know, something that's kind of, what is
14 that about? And kind of an add-on, if you're
15 lucky to get it, with the kind of boxes that you
16 have to be in in terms of getting funding and
17 that. And I think the -- so it's taking that not
18 -- I call it the not-knowing stance, that we
19 really don't know as non-Innu, and we have to be
20 mindful of that.

21 And when we talk about one of the challenges
22 that you highlighted this morning was that with
23 governments and others who come into the
24 community, there's such a changeover, you know,

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1 and social workers and all. So they get some
2 understanding of the community, and they're gone.
3 So that's certainly a significant issue that you
4 have identified.

5 So that's all I'll say for now, but thank you
6 very much. There are other comments we'll make,
7 I think, at the end, later on. So thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER QUPEE:
9 I'd like to say thank you, Ben and Jolene and
10 Judith Rae. It certainly brings me back to how
11 the Inquiry started and how important it was for
12 Innu to come together and speak. As Judith Rae
13 mentioned, like sometimes you need to give Innu
14 their own voice and respect that, and how Innu
15 really spoke up in our language when we told them
16 what was happening.

17 And I remember, like, how is it that we were
18 going to go forward when all we had to look back
19 to was pain? And you needed to give people the
20 opportunity in a forum to speak about that pain.

21 And I look back on my own upbringing and the
22 teachings I've learned, and in essence, I guess,
23 it's setting up a tent. You don't just set up a
24 tent anywhere. You look at the area where you're

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1 going to set up the tent, you clear the area, you
2 make it flat, and your family helps you with
3 that. And you make sure you have the right wood
4 to set up that tent so that tent can be held up
5 proper. And everybody knows or are given roles
6 to help. Some go, like we did, go and get
7 boughs. The guys would go get wood, and we'd
8 help with the wood as well, too, and they'd help
9 with the boughs. And you have a place; once it's
10 set up, you put your floor down, and you make
11 that comfortable and nice and warm. You have
12 your tent, and then you have your family in
13 there.

14 And your family feels safe. And in the
15 evening, there's -- when you're put to bed,
16 you're told stories. And there's food. And the
17 thing about it is that their kids are safe, the
18 families are safe. There's no threats. There's
19 no fear. And I think about that. And that was
20 the -- a healthy family, a healthy well-being of
21 yourself, and that you were strong, and that you
22 learned, you were respected early, at an early
23 age, and you respected your parents. And that's
24 what, that's what we learned.

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1 And this is a very -- and that's what I think
2 about, is that the many stories behind us, and
3 the many people -- Innu people behind us, and
4 what they've endured, and the healthiness that
5 they experienced before, before contact. And
6 now, here we are today, and we're going to build
7 that tent again.

8 And again, that everybody will know the size
9 of the tent, the area, how you're going to make
10 it flat, clean it, clean it up. And then when
11 you move on, you know what to do. So that area
12 is set, and you know what you're going to do at
13 your next tent setup.

14 So everybody now has an idea of the role that
15 they're going to play, and who's going to help
16 make that tent strong for our communities. And
17 who's going to make it safe for everyone, that
18 people don't live in fear anymore. And that, to
19 me, is what I think about in my culture, and in
20 our language. And that our language will be
21 heard for thousands of years. We have heard it,
22 and we have spoken it. And today we continue.
23 And that our children will continue, and our
24 grandchildren will continue to speak and honour

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1 that. And that everybody will honour and respect
2 it.

3 Thank you. Tshinashkumitin. Tshinashkumitin,
4 (inaudible) Jolene.

5 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

6 Tshinashkumitin, Nastash. I really should keep
7 quiet after that, but I'm too vain. I want to
8 respond to OKT, and not really to the content of
9 their submission; that will come later. We'll
10 have lots of time to comment on that, but more to
11 the presenters, and particularly to Jolene.

12 Just as I said that Mr. Ryan and I are
13 connected through his mother, Jolene and I are
14 connected through her dad. I was appointed in
15 1980 as a lay magistrate, and for me personally,
16 the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is clueless and
17 ignorant of the law. So it took me time to
18 appreciate the finer points.

19 But as 1985 rolled around and I had finished
20 law school, and the low-level flying protests
21 began, Daniel, Jolene's dad, was at the head,
22 along with Ben Michel and Lucy Rose, and quite a
23 few others. But at least I think he was one of
24 the ones arrested. Good, I thought it was gonna

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1 be a legal fiction, but I'm actually telling the
2 truth; I can see Jolene nodding her head.

3 And all up to that point where I had been
4 sending people on remand before their trials,
5 several times, and when they were presenting, and
6 Ben Michel said to me, "With the greatest
7 respect, Judge Igloliorte, you don't have a
8 jurisdiction over us." And of course, I had no
9 clue what he was talking about. Ben knew a lot
10 more about the law at that time than I did.

11 So I continued to say, "Well, yes, I do. I'm
12 going to hold you in custody." And please, I
13 screamed in my silent mind, get a lawyer. And
14 eventually, they did. And that law firm was OKT.

15 And I remember Mr. Olthuis making an argument.
16 And the concept was about the protesters
17 believing that they are doing the right thing to
18 protect the land. And he called the concept the
19 colour of right.

20 Now, if he had said that his precedent came
21 from Outer Mongolia, and it was called the Santa
22 Clause, the Protection Clause, I would have
23 accepted it anyway. I was that ready to say to
24 the justice system, I'm a low-level court. We

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1 need some way to make sure that it becomes an
2 issue for a higher court than this one.

3 And finally, thankfully, with Mr. Olthuis's
4 intervention on behalf of the -- of his clients,
5 I was able to say, now I got something to sink my
6 teeth into. I'll make a very short pronouncement
7 that the individuals are not guilty of mischief.

8 And it is from then till now that we have seen
9 the effects of the Innu carrying through their
10 belief in the protection of their land and their
11 rights to the land. And now we're moving in this
12 Inquiry to protection of their linguistic
13 heritage, their cultural heritage, and most
14 particularly their family heritage, continuation
15 of the family.

16 So yes, in your submissions, we do recognize
17 that that is being emphasized. But let me say
18 from a personal perspective, I am grateful of the
19 way that the history has allowed this very
20 fortunate juncture of a young Innu lawyer to be
21 presenting these arguments.

22 So we'll take a break for now. Afterwards,
23 we'll continue. And I'll just make sure that our
24 lead counsel has a say on what's happening right

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1 now.

2 CAITLIN URQUHART:

3 Thank you, Commissioners. I think it'd be timely
4 to take a break and return at 2 p.m.

5
6 (Off the Record)
7

8 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

9 Thank you all again. Appreciate the attendance
10 today. And I'll leave it Ms. Urquhart to let us
11 know what's happening.

12 CAITLIN URQUHART:

13 Thank you, Commissioner. Next we'll hear for --
14 hear from counsel for Government of Newfoundland
15 and Labrador, Philip Warren.

16 PHILIP WARREN:

17 Thank you, Counsel. Yes, my name is Philip
18 Warren. I'm the lawyer for the Province of
19 Newfoundland and Labrador. I have some comments
20 to make, and I'm not exactly sure how much I will
21 get into. You have my written submission, which,
22 of course, we will rely on in full. I don't have
23 a prepared -- unlike some of my colleagues, a
24 prepared path I'm going to take. I will

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1 highlight some things in my submissions; I have
2 some comments.

3 The presentations we've heard today have all
4 been excellent and relevant to the decisions and
5 recommendations and report you have to make:
6 Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Ryan and, of course, lastly,
7 OKT.

8 I would like to say, in many ways, they're a
9 hard act to follow, but, of course, "act" is the
10 wrong word for what they did. But what they said
11 was very meaningful, very thoughtful, concise and
12 well put. And I don't really think -- I'll have
13 a -- I might have a few comments as I talk, but
14 really everything they said was relevant and
15 important.

16 Commissioners, I'm going to start with a
17 little anecdote that I was thinking of. Almost
18 to the year was my first time going to Natuashish
19 for the death review that I attended. My
20 colleague Ms. Boyd attended the first one, I
21 attended the second one. And I know it was this
22 week because this week is my birthday week. So
23 my birthday this week was Tuesday, and last year
24 my birthday was on Monday. And I arrived in

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1 lot from seeing Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. How
2 close is Sheshatshiu to Goose Bay? What is that
3 road on the way in like? You know? How does it
4 work in conjunction with the river -- North West
5 River across the way? What is that big body of
6 water outside of the roadway there when you go
7 down to the beach? How close is it to the beach?
8 You learn a lot from seeing a place.

9 Natuashish, the same thing, you fly in on the
10 plane and you realize the vast -- right, they
11 call Labrador The Big Land. Well, you see that
12 when you fly into a place like Natuashish, how
13 isolated it is but all -- like the commissioner
14 has said, how important the land is, how
15 prevalent the land is. So I wish people could do
16 that.

17 The second thing is, when I was in Natuashish,
18 I was invited by David Penashue to go to a sweat
19 lodge, and the number of people who have said to
20 me, Mr. Warren, Phil, I can't believe you got in
21 the sweat lodge. What were you doing? You seem
22 like the last person who would do that. And
23 Sarah was there, Lynn Moore, Will Hiscock, Barb
24 Coffey attended when I was there. And also,

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1 Natuashish --

2 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

3 (Inaudible.)

4 PHILIP WARREN:

5 Absolutely. I do, yes. Happy birthday to the
6 commissioner. So that was my first time going to
7 Natuashish. And there was a couple of real
8 important little parts I wanted to talk about
9 having gone there.

10 Firstly, is that - and I think I said this at
11 the Faith Rich Circle - it's really important for
12 people to go to communities. I had a law
13 professor once say, he talked about how, you
14 know, if you've got a case of litigation, you go
15 out and see some -- it can help to go see the
16 place. Go see where the crime happened. See
17 what the construction building under dispute is
18 like. I wish a lot of decision makers, policy
19 makers at a higher level, certainly than what I
20 work or even the people in this room, could
21 actually go. Because I've said to a lot of
22 people, have you been to Sheshatshiu? No. You
23 know, and I don't mean -- I just mean people in
24 general, I've said that. And I think you learn a

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1 David, of course, ran it. And of course, but
2 there was Innu, Natuashish Innu who were there
3 and they attended. So we all got into the lodge.
4 And I had no idea what I was doing; I didn't know
5 what to expect. And we got in, and they closed
6 the door there. It's not really a door, but it's
7 covering. And I was struck, not by the heat in
8 the sweat lodge, but how dark it is. You would
9 expect there to be some light, but in fact, it
10 was dark. And I think that that's an important
11 metaphor for this Inquiry, right? Because we all
12 came into it a little bit dark. But while you're
13 in the sweat lodge, what you do is you listen and
14 learn, and you listen and learn to the Innu.

15 So I think that that was a really kind of
16 important little story that I just wanted to
17 tell. You know, you have to trust -- we all have
18 to get out of our comfort zone a little bit, and
19 I think the Inquiry has done that, especially for
20 the non-Innu people. And so -- yeah.

21 So the Province called the Inquiry, and it was
22 an important step. OKT has outlined some of that
23 history. But the Inquiry being called was an
24 important way for people to listen and learn.

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1 The Inquiry itself is a mechanism for people to
 2 listen and learn. It's a mechanism, hopefully,
 3 to start a path to reconciliation. That was one
 4 of the reasons why the Inquiry was called.
 5 And I can say to myself, I feel I have
 6 listened, and I have tried to learn. Mistakes
 7 were made by myself and others, no doubt about
 8 it, along the way, but hopefully we have all
 9 gained much knowledge from the Inquiry.
 10 I wanted to point out that the Province
 11 remains committed to the truth-seeking process.
 12 We participated fully in the Inquiry, including
 13 providing documents, statistical data, attended
 14 the hearings and offered what other support we
 15 could.
 16 We encouraged our witnesses to attend the
 17 Inquiry, including staff and executive. And I
 18 must say, I will talk about this probably a
 19 little more later, but most of them attended and
 20 took a lot out of it, attending these circle
 21 hearings and so on.
 22 Back to the comment I made on listening and
 23 learning, I also hope that -- the report you give
 24 when you go back to the communities, I hope that

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1 -- and I don't know if anybody has really touched
 2 on this, I hope that there is an education
 3 component to what we have done and what we will
 4 continue to do.
 5 And what I mean by education is not education
 6 of not so much CYS or SSWB staff or people
 7 involved in the system, I just hope the public at
 8 large gets a better understanding of the issues.
 9 I don't think I've actually heard many people
 10 talk about that, but, you know, there's a real
 11 lack of under -- like, we talked Innu history, we
 12 talked about Innu culture, importance of being on
 13 land, but I think there's a general lack of
 14 understanding of what somebody in -- growing up
 15 in St. John's understands about Labrador
 16 communities, these communities. And I hope in
 17 some -- because in small measure, the report, the
 18 process will help people have a better
 19 understanding. Because if people understand,
 20 they're more willing to help, they're more
 21 willing to listen, more willing to agree to
 22 funding, those sorts of things. So it's all part
 23 of a general public -- like there's a general
 24 public import that needs to happen as well.

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1 The purpose of our submission was not to -- we
 2 did go through the evidence, but it was really to
 3 highlight some of the things that we've seen and
 4 heard, made comments on. I think that what we've
 5 said, tried to highlight, is some of the more
 6 recent history, some of the changes in policy,
 7 some of the policy legislative changes, because
 8 every piece of information you have heard is, in
 9 a sense, a snapshot in time, but it's important
 10 that we capture the total picture.
 11 I stated in our submissions, and this is
 12 something OKT said as well, everybody, the
 13 conclusion of the Inquiry will not mark the end
 14 of the work. Child protection is involving, as
 15 are the understanding of the impacts of
 16 colonization, intergenerational trauma and
 17 systemic inequities.
 18 The approaches used to support Innu children,
 19 families and communities are important for the
 20 Province to remain committed to ongoing learning,
 21 reflection and adaptation to better meet these
 22 challenges.
 23 So if you think about what OKT said this
 24 morning, and the federal government, I think that

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1 the Commission can take some comfort that in many
 2 respects we are all on the same page.
 3 The spirit of reconciliation moving forward,
 4 collaboration, hopefully will take hold even more
 5 so after the Inquiry. I'm not going to highlight
 6 the legislative policy changes until -- I will
 7 get to the more recent Act. And most recent
 8 legislative changes in 2019, of course, included
 9 some direct acknowledgements of the special needs
 10 of Indigenous communities in the Province. They
 11 include the preserving of -- importance of
 12 preserving Indigenous child or Indigenous youth's
 13 unique cultural identity. It also talks about
 14 things that you've heard about, like having the
 15 Indigenous rep be notified if court proceedings
 16 are started, filing of a cultural connection
 17 plan. These are things that were absent in the
 18 past. They have started to be introduced. The
 19 legislation is being changed again as we speak,
 20 or being reviewed, and hopefully it will continue
 21 to consult with the IRT and make further changes,
 22 but I just wanted to point those out.
 23 Barb -- social workers have spoken to how some
 24 of these things have worked in practice at the

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1 circles. I recall specifically at the Faith Rich
 2 Circle, and you've heard that, and I ask you to
 3 consider somehow how that works in practice. So
 4 it might be a small step, but it is an important
 5 step, and a try -- and an attempt to change.
 6 So a lot of what you've heard is how things
 7 were, and I think what we're trying to say in our
 8 submissions is that things that we're trying to
 9 change. Not saying things are perfect; of course
 10 they're not. Not saying the Innu communities
 11 necessarily see the change as being positive
 12 right now, but we're trying.
 13 So I've highlighted those legislative changes,
 14 and the policy changes, as similar things. I'm
 15 not going to talk about them all. I will point
 16 out one, page 10 of my submissions. Because we
 17 actually talked about this yesterday when I met
 18 with Commissioner Devine. And I think it again
 19 comes into some of the funding comments made by
 20 OKT.
 21 Policy 3.41, Registration, Membership and
 22 Enrolment for Indigenous Children and Youth in
 23 Care. The two comments I have about that are
 24 that (a), you will note that the policy was

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1 amended as recently as March of 2026. So this
 2 shows that the policy, again, we're constantly
 3 trying to collaborate and make changes, including
 4 up to recently several months ago.
 5 But this change is one that we highlighted, or
 6 I wanted to highlight, because we talked about
 7 this yesterday in a meeting so not everybody in
 8 this room was at our meeting, our small group
 9 meeting. But this is a way that can help
 10 Indigenous people get funding, because the
 11 funding is based on a per capita -- what we were
 12 advised by IRT is based on per capita
 13 allocations. By having children who are born --
 14 because Innu have the highest birth rate, I
 15 believe, in the province, if not the country. As
 16 Sarah said yesterday, it's an inverted pyramid
 17 about Innu birth rates. So this helps the Innu
 18 be -- get registered, their youth get registered,
 19 and then the funding will hopefully be accurate.
 20 That's not to say things can't -- again, we
 21 can't do more to improve it, but it's one small
 22 example, however, of a policy change can
 23 hopefully help Innu on the ground. And we talked
 24 about that, like I said, yesterday in our

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1 meeting.
 2 The evidence at the Inquiry, community
 3 meetings, of course, Commissioners, I believe you
 4 stated at the outset this morning, this was the
 5 ninth formal hearing. I'm not sure how many
 6 community meetings we've had. I believe Ms.
 7 Ashini said there was over 100 spoke. I don't
 8 have a lot said in our submissions about
 9 community meetings, but that is not to say we
 10 don't recognize the importance of community
 11 meetings to your work. That's -- so I hope
 12 you're not left with that impression.
 13 I believe at one point, Commissioner Qupee
 14 stood up, and there was a whiteboard very similar
 15 to that one in front of us, and she gave an
 16 update on the Inquiry. I think at the point --
 17 that point, there was like eight or nine
 18 community meetings and two or three formal
 19 hearings. So I know how important this work has
 20 been to you. We know how important this work has
 21 been to you.
 22 You were committed to engaging with the
 23 communities in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. I
 24 know the individual Innu came in and spoke,

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1 individuals. They shared their experiences in
 2 formal, trauma-informed setting. They got to
 3 share their stories, sometimes in private,
 4 sometimes publicly. I know it was hard for them
 5 because I was in the room at times. Sometimes
 6 they wouldn't be able to finish. Sometimes they
 7 soldiered on, but nevertheless, you could hear
 8 the pain in their voice. So we know that you've
 9 heard that evidence and you're taking it under
 10 advisement. And we highly recommend you do so.
 11 Commissioners, there's also been a lot of
 12 people who have spoken that I know, because I was
 13 at -- for the last two and a half years, at a lot
 14 of these functions, who I know you've heard from,
 15 who may not have formally spoken at a community
 16 meeting, but also spoke to you. So I'm speaking
 17 about an Elder maybe giving a preamble before a
 18 prayer. Maybe it was somebody walking through
 19 the community centre on a coffee break. And I
 20 know you've spoken to those people, because I
 21 have and heard from them. And again, we
 22 encourage -- we're glad that that happened and
 23 encourage that. Encourage you to consider what
 24 they've said. Because each Innu who got to speak

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1 with the three of you, I think, is valuable.
 2 We heard from community leaders. I've listed
 3 some in my report. I hopefully haven't ignored
 4 any of them. If I did, it was certainly not
 5 intentional. We've listed them, but I wanted to
 6 say some are Mary Pia Benuen, Ben Andrew, Gregory
 7 Rich, George Gregoire, Penote Antuan, the late
 8 Joachim Nui, Elizabeth Penashue, Kathleen Benuen,
 9 Helen Aster, Janet Bellefleur, Nykesha Gregoire
 10 and Jack Penashue. We acknowledged their
 11 testimony and realized it was important to you
 12 doing your work.

13 You also heard the death investigations. I
 14 will speak to the report in a second, but we know
 15 that it was hard for the families to enter the
 16 circle hearings. And they also spoke truthfully,
 17 and we ask you to consider what they said. And I
 18 know you will.

19 In many respects, the community meetings and
 20 the death investigation circles are kind of part
 21 and parcel. They allowed Innu to speak in a
 22 non-formal setting and tell their story. And
 23 hopefully, they were able to find some comfort in
 24 that.

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1 Kenn and Tara -- Kenn Richard and Tara Petti
 2 gave you a report. I will speak to some of the
 3 topics. We recognized the six children who died
 4 and are sorry for their loss. We didn't speak to
 5 them specifically in our submissions, but that's
 6 not -- that was only done because we wanted to
 7 talk about the systemic issues. We recognized
 8 the hurt of those families. We heard it
 9 ourselves.

10 And the first thing Kenn and Tara talked about
 11 was colonial legacy of intergenerational trauma.
 12 I would say in many respects, this is probably
 13 the most important systemic issue that you've
 14 heard. I think that echoes the comments we've
 15 heard this morning. The investigators wrote that
 16 "The investigators -- the communities cannot be
 17 understood outside the legacy of colonialism and
 18 its ongoing structural effects." And that is --
 19 I would say to you that it's probably the most
 20 important systemic issue. I think we've already
 21 tapped on that. But I just wanted to say that.

22 The disempowerment of Innu youth and families:
 23 social workers have admitted at the circles, far
 24 too often, social work at that time, still today,

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1 is too far crisis-driven. And it neglects the
 2 engagement of the families. Hopefully, this is
 3 something with policy changes, legislative
 4 changes, we can continue to improve.
 5 We also talked about -- in our submissions
 6 about the disempowerment. OKT mentioned this
 7 morning, I will talk about it a bit more, but
 8 some of the issues in the English report might
 9 help with that.

10 Fly-in, fly-out social worker models was
 11 discussed under service gaps and crisis-driven
 12 interventions. It was also again talked about
 13 this morning, and talked about by Mr. Fitzgerald.
 14 I can tell the Commission that we -- the Province
 15 is aware the fly-in, fly-out is not ideal. And
 16 they're continuing to review what can be done to
 17 address it. It is a -- it is a difficult issue.
 18 Staffing and retention is a difficult issue
 19 across many sectors of government right now. But
 20 I can tell you that through my discussions, what
 21 we've heard at the circles is the Province is
 22 aware fly-in, fly-out does not work for the Innu,
 23 and we're trying to address it.

24 That is not to say that the ultimate solution

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1 would not be to have social workers working with
 2 the IRT as a way to hopefully address, long-term,
 3 some of those service gaps.

4 We learned yesterday that IRT has social
 5 workers on staff and they're continuing to try
 6 and recruit and grow as well. So that's a
 7 positive. We support that.

8 Over-reliance on out-of-province placements is
 9 something that we've tried to curb. And I think
 10 the statistical data shows that we are trying our
 11 best to not use those, not only for Indigenous
 12 children but all children.

13 The lack of needs of appropriateness and
 14 relevance of CSSD services to the needs of Innu
 15 families, absolutely 100 percent something that
 16 we are working towards trying to improve,
 17 education of social workers as a start. We are
 18 willing to work with IRT to make ongoing
 19 legislative policy and improvements where
 20 possible.

21 Mental health and clinical care efficiencies
 22 same -- similar. Many of these services are
 23 delivered through the health authority, but that
 24 is not to say that my client is not the Province,

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1 and we recognize that.
 2 So I'm just highlighting the difference
 3 between the Province and the department -- or the
 4 health authority and the department. But having
 5 said that, we need to improve and do better. One
 6 way we can do that is what we've all talked about
 7 yesterday as well, which was also discussed today
 8 as silos. We need to try and break down those
 9 silos and improve the communication to find out
 10 where those service gaps exist.
 11 Communication was also highlighted throughout,
 12 and we would agree that communication needs to be
 13 improved, as does governance, oversight and
 14 accountability failures. We -- I provided some
 15 policy examples where we have tried to address
 16 that.
 17 Reintegration, aging out and aftercare
 18 failures is another systemic issue that was
 19 addressed. Again, that's something we want to
 20 work with the IRT, work with the Innu in trying
 21 to help.
 22 Some changes have been made since one of the
 23 deaths occurred, which, you know, is increased
 24 the age of aging out, but that is not to say that

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1 -- it really is one of those examples of
 2 something that involves society in general,
 3 really, when you think about it. Because as Kenn
 4 said many times when he spoke, is, you know,
 5 whether it's 16 or 18, age is kind of arbitrary,
 6 isn't it? The needs of an individual, a youth or
 7 a young teen, young adult, doesn't change just
 8 because they hit a certain number. And so, you
 9 know, that really speaks to how everybody in
 10 general needs to recognize it and then we all
 11 need to work towards helping those people, those
 12 youth, children who become youth who become young
 13 adults.
 14 Cultural disconnection, absence of land-based
 15 healing, of course, that's something that was
 16 talked about in each of the death reviews, and
 17 the Province supports what we can do to help
 18 that.
 19 So in short, Commissioners, we would like to
 20 thank the investigators for the reports, the work
 21 they've done, the circle hearings. I can say
 22 from my own perspective, when I came in and
 23 started to work on the Inquiry, and I saw the
 24 terms of reference with the six death reviews, I

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1 said to myself, this will never get done. And we
 2 found commission counsel; you found a path
 3 forward. Not only did it find a path forward,
 4 but I think -- Kenn and Tara have echoed this
 5 sentiment, they think -- we think that it worked
 6 and it helped families have their voices heard
 7 and find some closure. So again, everyone is to
 8 be commended for that approach.
 9 I can only imagine if we chose a different
 10 path, we might still be working for two more
 11 years. But it certainly was effective, I think.
 12 You have the report from the IRT, report on
 13 Innu-led services. We've highlighted some of the
 14 -- some of the things that they've said about
 15 that. I think that's a very important report.
 16 We talked about that some yesterday in our
 17 small group as well, about some of the programs,
 18 most importantly prevention, of course. Taking
 19 over midwifery, they've offered. Some of those
 20 services are very highly regarded and to be
 21 commended.
 22 Similarly, the report of Drs. Fallon and
 23 Black, excellent work. We were very helpful. In
 24 fact, Mr. Griffin reached out to me almost right

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1 away and said, you know, can we start sharing
 2 some of that data with our staff for training
 3 purposes, educational purposes within the
 4 department. They've spoken to some of the data,
 5 some of the changes that have occurred.
 6 Paragraph 82, my submission, I want to echo
 7 something Mr. Blackwell mentioned. Findings
 8 underscore the critical importance of continued
 9 monitoring ongoing reform efforts in Innu
 10 jurisdiction over child and family services. (As
 11 read). Because Mr. Brookwell mentioned
 12 monitoring, so we agree with that conclusion.
 13 I'm not going to mention a lot about the
 14 report of Dr. Barter, other than to say we just
 15 wish he consulted with some of the people on the
 16 ground, be it IRT and provincial government
 17 employees, a little more. Drs. Nimon -- my
 18 goodness, Ninomiya and Ward talked, gave their
 19 report, and we agree with their findings as same
 20 with Dr. Bombay.
 21 Report of William English, he's given -- we've
 22 made a comment on most of his subheadings. This
 23 is -- one thing I just want to say: I disagree
 24 with Mr. Brookwell a little bit in the sense that

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1 he classified some of these, I think -- I don't
 2 want to misspeak for him, but I thought what I
 3 heard, he spoke to some of them as being
 4 long-term issues, the pilot projects and whatnot.
 5 I don't think they have to be long-term, much of
 6 what's in that report. I think that some of
 7 those are actionable pretty quick if the
 8 government, expanding court services,
 9 translation, special room for Innu to appear in
 10 court. I think -- I don't think they have to be
 11 long-term suggestions. And the Province agrees
 12 with them.

13 I will say the Province can also act to change
 14 the Legal Aid Act to waive financial eligibility
 15 for Indigenous people and Innu. What ends up
 16 happening is that an Innu can apply for legal aid
 17 on the first time the court goes through, but be
 18 told they have to give a number of proofs, bank
 19 statements, power bill, and it's a total
 20 non-consideration of how people in a place like
 21 Natuashish live, right? And that could be
 22 waived. Because I can speak to legal -- as you
 23 know, I can speak to legal aid a little bit
 24 easily. And if your children are being removed

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1 and you're in the court process, you're going to
 2 be approved for a lawyer if you meet the
 3 financial requirements. It's not an issue.
 4 There's a two-part test and removal of court is
 5 automatic. So it's really just an issue of
 6 getting financially approved.

7 And what ends up happening, if you don't get
 8 the financial documents in within a certain
 9 period of time, you get rejected but that can be
 10 an easy fix. That can be an easy fix as well.

11 There was a discussion about the child
 12 protection hearing timelines in his report, but
 13 when I attended on the call on Tuesday, I heard,
 14 on the small groups virtually, Ms. Moore
 15 mentioned expanding the timelines, taking them --
 16 Ms. Moss is shaking her head.

17 But so that's something I would ask you to
 18 examine closely about -- when you're talking
 19 about the timelines, what do you mean? Do you
 20 mean truncated or do you mean expansive? As
 21 counsel knows, there's court of appeal decisions
 22 that talk about shortening timelines and making
 23 sure they're followed.

24 The question that was posed to us on Tuesday

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1 was, would lengthening timelines help Innu? And
 2 I think that before we -- you know, I think the
 3 Province would have to look at that closely and
 4 consult IRT to see what they would think is best
 5 before that decision would be made. That's all I
 6 can say to it.

7 There was no real structure to how I presented
 8 most of this commentary in my submissions in
 9 terms of timeline. I just kind of -- so it might
 10 seem like I'm going back and forth, but the
 11 federal government witnesses testified. I took
 12 the takeaway from what their testimony to be --
 13 and it's in our submission and our conclusion, is
 14 that, too -- oftentimes, federal funding
 15 requirements are one-size-fits-all and do not
 16 meet the needs of Innu communities. We would
 17 like to see that changed where possible through
 18 collaboration, of course, to make it easier for
 19 people with the unique experiences of Innu to be
 20 able to obtain that funding.

21 The provincial government witnesses spoke at a
 22 panel. They were former provincial government
 23 witnesses: Wanda Lundrigan, Jennifer Barnes and
 24 Michelle Shallow. We thank them for their

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1 testimony. I think their testimony shows that,
 2 oftentimes, child protection, when the government
 3 instituted its own department, was often chaotic
 4 and crisis-driven, but over time, I think, up to
 5 the testimony of Jennifer Barnes, they showed how
 6 things gradually tried to improve.

7 Similarly, we had a number of witnesses attend
 8 the circles. Again, I mentioned them. I'm not
 9 going to mention them all by name, but you know
 10 who they were. Oftentimes they were the same
 11 witnesses, and that could not have been easy for
 12 them. But they spoke, and I think they spoke
 13 honestly. And they've learned from it
 14 themselves.

15 We provided the affidavits of Mark Griffin and
 16 Jennifer Sullivan, mostly just because we wanted
 17 to make sure -- of course, the Inquiry is a
 18 snapshot in time. We wanted to just give a
 19 little more commentary on some of the more
 20 up-to-date changes. We hope you can consider
 21 those as well.

22 There was a lot said in this inquiry about
 23 prevention. We tried to outline some of the
 24 government's rationale on prevention. I talked

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1 about that yesterday again with Commissioner
 2 Devine. The government's position is that it
 3 provides prevention through various departments.
 4 Tertiary prevention through the Department of
 5 SSWB, primary prevention through various
 6 government departments, health authority,
 7 education systems, so on and so forth.

8 I said this yesterday, and I think we need to
 9 consider that the prevention services provided by
 10 IRT are an example of something that works, and
 11 we need to be careful when we're talking about
 12 making changes to the existing prevention model,
 13 at least insofar as we talk about the IRT. I
 14 think that they need to be funded better and
 15 supported better and do what we can to help them.
 16 But I think that we've heard that their
 17 prevention model works and their prevention model
 18 sets an example of where we can go in the future.

19 So, Commissioners, we don't have
 20 recommendations. We didn't feel it was
 21 appropriate to give recommendations. Our role as
 22 the government, the people who call this Inquiry
 23 at the end of the day, is to listen and learn, be
 24 unbiased. But I can commit to this, and I wrote

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1 it out. Support and collaborate the Innu as they
 2 advance the assumption and jurisdiction of child
 3 protection matters in their communities. So that
 4 is to say we support devolution. To make no
 5 bones about it, that's not something we are
 6 opposed to. We continue to work with the IRTS in
 7 child protection matters until such time as
 8 jurisdiction is assumed by the Innu.

9 So that means the changes you've heard already
 10 will continue, and we will hopefully improve on
 11 based on your recommendation. Whether you've
 12 heard about the Indigenous representative in
 13 court or the Indigenous cultural protection plan,
 14 or you've heard about, you know, talking to
 15 members of the family before removal takes place,
 16 we're trying to improve. So I think our theme is
 17 collaboration and improvement.

18 We continue to advocate for appropriate levels
 19 of funding to support the implementation of
 20 programs that fall outside of the SSWB mandate.
 21 Consult with Innu leadership in the development
 22 of legislation and policies that affect Innu
 23 children, youth and families.

24 I'd like to thank the Commissioners

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1 individually for their work. Thank Inquiry
 2 staff: Ruth Steele, Paula Battcock and others.
 3 Witnesses, families, community members and all
 4 participants for their contributions to the
 5 Inquiry and for the commitment in advancing
 6 understanding, healing and reconciliation.

7 So I don't have a list of people to thank, but
 8 I mentioned a couple. Nympha Byrne, probably the
 9 hardest working person in the Inquiry.
 10 Commission counsel, excellent to deal with.
 11 Thank you to them.

12 So, Commissioners, that's really all we have
 13 to say. I'd ask you to consider again our final
 14 submissions more fully when the time comes. We
 15 listened. We're looking forward to the report.
 16 As I said at the outset, I hope that the report
 17 can somewhat be -- not only have recommendations
 18 and speak to Innu history and Innu culture, but
 19 also be an education piece and something that we
 20 all can learn from. Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
 22 Thank you very much, sir. And we're going to
 23 have each Commissioner respond to your
 24 presentation as well.

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1 COMMISSIONER DEVINE:
 2 Okay. Thank you, Mr. Warren. Just a few short
 3 comments. And I think -- I tend to start at the
 4 end and go backwards. I've become aware of that
 5 more on this Inquiry.

6 Anyway, the last point that you made was very
 7 encouraging: that commitment to continuous
 8 collaboration, and -- because that's what it's
 9 going to take.

10 And interestingly, when we started this
 11 Inquiry, we looked -- the kind of approach that
 12 we used in terms of community building, community
 13 capacity building and development was that we
 14 would work collaboratively. That's kind of what
 15 we had hoped we'd be able to do. And I think
 16 we've done a fair job of that at least. So it's
 17 interesting that the -- I think we're on par with
 18 that.

19 The other thing that I wanted to mention is
 20 with regard to the education of the public that
 21 you talked about at the beginning. And again,
 22 you know, I've said this in other places, other
 23 meetings, I guess, or hearings, is that one of
 24 the things that surprised me when I started with

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1 this Inquiry is some of the questions and
 2 comments that I got from people that I knew
 3 fairly well or not so well. And I have to say
 4 that I did react the first couple of times
 5 because it really annoyed me the way the
 6 questions that were asked and the comments that
 7 were made. Fairly quickly, I came to the
 8 realization that you've talked about is that
 9 people don't know. It's a true level of
 10 ignorance. They simply do not know about the
 11 Innu, about the history. And so we have this,
 12 you know, attitude as I see it from my experience
 13 living in a community that is based upon, you
 14 know, the need for public education. And so we
 15 have had discussions about that with the Inquiry
 16 team. I can't recall if we did talk about it
 17 publicly in the formal hearings or in community
 18 meetings, but it is something that we are going
 19 to be looking at in terms of how can we make
 20 recommendations so that there is kind of concise,
 21 if you like, information that people can actually
 22 look at and get an idea of what some of the
 23 issues are and understanding. Because, you know,
 24 I know from a community development perspective,

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1 if the community is not on side, i.e., the
 2 Province, and then -- that's the people in --
 3 people. Then it makes it more difficult for
 4 changes to be made.
 5 There's commitment we've heard from the
 6 parties, but we need the community to understand.
 7 And I think, you know, the given from my
 8 perspective is that there would be a change. So
 9 I'm hopeful for that. So thank you for that.
 10 I'll just stick with Mr. Warren's, and then
 11 we'll go to a closing.
 12 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
 13 Yeah. Whatever you wish, sir.
 14 COMMISSIONER DEVINE:
 15 So anyway, thanks, Phil, for that. We appreciate
 16 it. Thank you.
 17 COMMISSIONER QUPEE:
 18 Thank you, Mr. Warren. I think that what you
 19 said about education is really important, raising
 20 awareness also about who Innu people are. I
 21 think that's something that we need to do. And
 22 it reminds me of a friend of mine who does some
 23 work with homelessness down south. And he said,
 24 when I told him about what our struggles are, and

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1 challenges are, he said to me, "I didn't know you
 2 guys had these kinds of struggles of like what
 3 other people are going through. I didn't even
 4 know it was even happening in my province,
 5 Newfoundland and Labrador." So I think that it
 6 really -- that needs work. There's work to be
 7 done around that. So I thank you for that.
 8 Thanks.
 9 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
 10 Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Warren. There
 11 were two things specifically that you talked
 12 about that struck a chord in me. And one of them
 13 was to ensure that you visit the community and
 14 see the community. And we recognize that we were
 15 under an obligation to do no further harm when we
 16 did our work as an Inquiry. And we took pains to
 17 try and establish procedures for visiting the
 18 community and making the Inquiry a safe place and
 19 a welcoming place whenever we went to the
 20 communities. So we agree with you on the
 21 perspective you have about having to be in the
 22 community.
 23 Also, I agree with you on your point about
 24 interpreting the mandate that we have and the

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1 ability within the Act to be able to do that from
 2 a commissioner's perspective. We're grateful for
 3 the opportunity to have worked in the Inquiry.
 4 We're grateful that the nature of public
 5 inquiries in this province is one where
 6 commissioners do get, independently, to work out
 7 their interpretation of the terms of reference.
 8 And had we had any restrictions against us, it
 9 would have been impossible to reach the
 10 conclusions that you've pointed out and that
 11 others have pointed out that it's been a very
 12 successful process.
 13 I will make my conclusions as if this is the
 14 -- pretty well the last opportunity we'll have to
 15 speak with each other and simply say to all
 16 counsel, to the Inquiry staff, our own counsel as
 17 well within the Inquiry, remembering Peter Ralph,
 18 Q.C., as well who started off with the Inquiry,
 19 that you have really made us feel supported and
 20 proud as people who are working with the highest
 21 level of due diligence to achieve these ends.
 22 Everyone knows the amount of work that Ruth and
 23 Paula did, and I think even in the beginning,
 24 maybe Marcella, before that.

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1 We give our sincere thanks to Eastern Audio
2 for the way that they've been so accommodating,
3 and it's a big indication of what kind of people
4 they are if they can keep Ruth Steele happy. So
5 that has worked out well. Not everybody can do
6 that, but she sets a very high standard.

7 In interpreting our mandate, we have had some
8 internal run-ins with counsel, very professional.
9 They have challenged us on some of the
10 interpretations we have made about independence
11 of the Inquiry, but we've all come out of it
12 looking as if we are professionals and able to
13 stand back and view those issues as professional
14 issues. So we're grateful for that.

15 As well, our lead executive officer has
16 challenged the Commissioners for being too
17 independent and letting us know that we have
18 strictures, we have obligations under the statute
19 to abide by, and, of course, there's the law on
20 public inquiries specifically that he challenges
21 with.

22 But through all of this, we have gelled really
23 as an Inquiry team, and we feel that we've been
24 able to communicate with all of you in a truly

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1 professional manner. So we'll continue on with
2 our concluding remarks now. But first, I'll ask
3 counsel -- senior counsel Urquhart if there are
4 any issues that we have not covered or that you'd
5 like to cover?

6 CAITLIN URQUHART:

7 Thank you, Commissioners. You had suggested that
8 perhaps Mr. Ryan would have an opportunity to
9 make any remarks in response. Did you still want
10 to go ahead with that?

11 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

12 Yes, that'll be up to him, of course. But in
13 concluding then and reviewing our prepared
14 concluding remarks, I'm asking Commissioner Qupee
15 now: Is there anything more you'd like to add?
16 And, Commissioner Devine, is there anything more
17 you'd like to add from here?

18 COMMISSIONER DEVINE:

19 I don't think so. I think we've covered off
20 people who wanted to thank all of the parties and
21 all the people who have been involved in this
22 Inquiry, and certainly the Inquiry staff. And I
23 think for me, personally and professionally, it's
24 been quite a privilege to get to know the Innu

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1 people and to really appreciate their strength
2 and resilience as they've told their stories and
3 their truths to the Inquiry.

4 That's it for now. Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

6 All right. Then before Commissioner Qupee gives
7 concluding remarks, it is an opportunity now,
8 Mr. Ryan, whether Canada has any responses from
9 comments submitted or comments responded to at
10 this time.

11 VICTOR RYAN:

12 Thank you. I suppose I'll just say that I don't
13 -- I think I agree, and Canada agrees with much
14 of what my friend Mr. Brookwell said. There's
15 obviously a role for all three levels of
16 government to play in this subject matter, and
17 that's why Canada participated to the extent that
18 it did. That portion of Canada's written
19 submissions is aimed at assisting the
20 commissioners to navigate a delicate issue. It's
21 not to frustrate the purpose of the Inquiry or to
22 evade the federal part of the collaboration that
23 all parties have touched on. So the submissions
24 are there for your consideration.

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1 All I'll say is that, you know, I hear
2 Mr. Brookwell's point. I don't think we're
3 actually that far apart. But it is a -- it's a
4 nuanced argument that will, you know, require
5 your careful consideration. And I'm confident
6 that you'll give it that. Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:

8 Very much appreciated. I just see Edward, and he
9 reminded me that I have not really, on behalf of
10 the Commission, thanked the Innu people, Innu
11 practitioners, Innu professionals, ordinary Innu
12 people who make up the -- what is actually the
13 main part of this Inquiry. And to you, to other
14 Elders like you, to Innu people who respected the
15 authority of the Inquiry and presented so well
16 and in so many cases spoke in a heartfelt manner
17 which we immediately recognize as the truth.
18 We're entirely grateful to everyone from the Innu
19 community and, of course, both Innu communities
20 that spoke with us.

21 Nastash is going to conclude our day and our
22 formal hearings as well at this time.

23 COMMISSIONER DEVINE:

24 Thank you.

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1 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 2 I've been reminded that while I have thanked many 3 people, we are also quite happy to thank 4 individuals. Our lead executive officer, Brian 5 Harvey; Heather Hewitt, Janelle Wells; Kayla 6 Burry; Nathan Penashue; David Penashue; Nympha 7 Byrne; and Ivy, Ivy Pijogge, these are people who 8 contributed so much to the working of the 9 Inquiry. And we are eternally grateful to them. 10 Okay. 11 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: 12 (Unintelligible - no mic.) 13 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 14 And as an interpreter for us, is really a 15 consummate professional, and you're absolutely 16 right in remembering the work that she did. 17 Thank you so much. 18 COMMISSIONER DEVINE: 19 Thank you. As we conclude the part of the 20 Inquiry that is held in public, we think back on 21 the eight other formal hearings we have held. On 22 the six -- on the six circle hearings that we 23 held and on the countless private and community 24 meetings we held, we think back to the truth and	1 to give him a break and have Nastash say it in 2 Innu-aimun. Please stand. 3 COMMISSIONER DEVINE: 4 (Speaking in Innu-aimun.) 5 I'll just say a brief translation of that. It 6 says that our creator, today we ask you for 7 guidance and strength. I will accept that what 8 the day brings, and thank you for your guidance 9 today. I will show kindness to those I meet 10 today and when kindness is shown, it is spread to 11 others. I have faith that you will walk beside 12 me. Amen. 13 (Speaking in Innu-aimun.) 14 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 15 Thank you very much.
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1 the wisdoms and the stories that have been shared 2 with us by Innu from Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, 3 from Elders and leaders and from community 4 members. We hold those truths sacred and honour 5 them. Thank you for sharing them, for without 6 them we would -- we could not do our work. 7 We are humbled and honoured by the sacred 8 trust each of you has placed in us, and we will 9 carry that with us as we work towards our final 10 report and for all of the -- for all of our days. 11 That work will now ramp up into the highest gear 12 as we work towards this fall and the deadline to 13 complete our report. 14 We hope you will feel that the trust you have 15 placed in us is rewarded when you have the 16 opportunity to read our report, and consider the 17 recommendations which we deliver to the 18 governments. Recommendations which will come 19 from the stories that we have heard and the 20 experiences of the communities and of community 21 members. 22 COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: 23 Thank you. Ordinarily, I would ask Professor 24 Devine to say the closing prayer, but I'm going	1 2 3 4 <u>C E R T I F I C A T E</u> 5 6 7 8 I, Beverly Guest, of Elite Transcription, of 9 St. John's, in the Province of Newfoundland 10 and Labrador, do hereby certify that the 11 foregoing pages, numbered 1 to 135, dated 12 July 16, 2026, are a true and correct 13 transcript of the proceedings which have 14 been transcribed by me to the best of my 15 knowledge, skill and ability. 16 17 18 19 Certified By: 20 21 _____ 22 Beverly Guest 23 24

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