



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

English Transcript

Volume 35

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

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COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the second day of our formal sessions.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Anne, you can do that, too. Say good morning for me.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We are very happy to have two interpreters here this morning, although Kevin handled himself very well yesterday. We appreciate his work.

We want to recognize and welcome Ms. Randall and Ms. Ashini. Thank you for attending and we're very happy to have you both here.

Elder Penote Antuan will start our day with a prayer.

ELDER ANTUAN: Good morning, everybody.

I'd like to say good morning to everybody.

First of all, I want to say. I'd like to remember our Elders, especially who passed away last few years now. They have gone in their own destination. I also want to thank all our leaders who have passed away. And last and the least of all, the children that who never came back in their own home community, who didn't ever, ever come back to their own community and to tell their story about the incidents where they were in the school outside their community.

So I'd like to say the prayers for them and all the Elders and all the leaders.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Let us also remember today and the next day and day after day about the Elders who

passed away and the leaders and especially the children who haven't come in their home towns or in their communities. And I hope this meeting will be taking place in good way.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QUPEE: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Good morning, everyone. Just I said that I acknowledge the two Elders, Elder Penote Antuan and Elder Elizabeth Penashue, for always coming to the Inquiry and listening and offering support to people who have spoken. And so we'll continue on with Mary Pia's testimony this morning.

Thank you.

Tshinashkumitin.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much, Elder Penote, and also Commissioner.

We'll remind you, Mary Pia, that you're giving sworn testimony.
Your witness, Sir.

P. RALPH: I'm going to ask you some more questions about a document that we started looking at yesterday.

It's a document that was based on a visit by doctors working for Health Canada. They visited Labrador April 11th to the 15th in 1977.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

19 –

P. RALPH: '77.

INTERPRETER NUNA: 1977 [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: It's P-151. And I believe we finished on page 4. We might be repeating ourselves, but it might be worth reading the paragraph that's at the bottom of page 4: "Most houses were built around 1967..."

Do you want to –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Can you show Anne the document?

P. RALPH: Oh, I'm sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

P. RALPH: I thinking to put them in order, yeah.

I'm not sure, Mary Pia, if you read a paragraph here but can you see in the bottom of page 4 it says: "Most houses were built ...?"

M. BENUEN: I read that yesterday.

P. RALPH: Did you read that yesterday?

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: And can you recall where you would have finished reading?

M. BENUEN: I –

P. RALPH: We better let them translate.

M. BENUEN: Well –

P. RALPH: Mary Pia, I keep forgetting, we got to let them translate.

M. BENUEN: Oh.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: I stopped at where it says: It could be recreational.

P. RALPH: Right. Okay.

If you would, could you read the next three paragraphs. Just stop every sentence to let Anne and Kevin translate.

M. BENUEN: Every sentence, okay.

P. RALPH: Yeah.

M. BENUEN: "The type of soil at North West River should be satisfactory for installation of septic tanks and the lake only ½ mile away could be used to provide a good water system for the settlement, but nothing has been done to improve the situation at all. In fact this community is in much worse condition than when I visited it in 1971."

P. RALPH: Continue reading on.

M. BENUEN: "There is a Native Alcohol Program – housed in a converted warehouse from where Mr. Charles Andrews directs the program. He is assisted by Mr. Allan Pallet, social worker at International Grenfell Association, and a staff of counsellors.

"They feel –

P. RALPH: Can I just stop you there just for a second, Mary Pia?

So this seems perhaps one of the first, kind of, health-related organizations that was created by the Innu themselves, to care –

M. BENUEN: Yeah, it was. I remember when Charlie used to work over there. Even though Charlie started small, it got big with the community members working with him.

P. RALPH: So, Ms. Benuen, you say that it started small?

Ask that.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: Yes, it was started small.

P. RALPH: How so?

M. BENUEN: Small – there was only Charlie that worked there. And eventually, throughout his work he'd get people to come work with him. People from the community that were willing to help.

P. RALPH: And so who else?

M. BENUEN: I remember there was Apenam. I remember –

P. RALPH: Apenam?

M. BENUEN: Apenam Pone.

And I remember there was the late Matthew Rich that worked there. That's the only people that come to mind right now but later on there was people – women that worked there too, like Mary May and them.

P. RALPH: Mary May Osmond.

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: So, I guess at this point –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Let them –

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Did they do good work in the community?

Ask that.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: Yes, I see their work was – I mean, they were doing good work, and they were trying.

P. RALPH: And I guess that the work they started in the 1970 still exists in a way.

M. BENUEN: It does.

Yes, it does. Back in those days when there was a lot of drinking going on, the Catholic priest here, I guess, he kind of knew that drinking was going on a lot. So he got some people that he knew were drinking a lot, gave them a piece of – a little card that says: I'm going to be sober for 30 days.

And these people that get these cards were referred to the alcohol centre for help by – the priest told them you got to go there and get help. And that's how some – that's how Charlie Andrew got his workers, too.

When people finished the 30 days, they go back to the priest and have it extended another 30 days.

The people that I remember that went to the alcohol program stayed there for many years and became helpers for the community. And some three or four did retire from Innu Uauitshitun.

P. RALPH: The organization you just mentioned, I can't pronounce it, but it's Innu Helping Innu? Is that the program?

M. BENUEN: Yes.

P. RALPH: And so that was eventually renamed? Because originally it was called Native Alcohol Program?

M. BENUEN: Yes.

P. RALPH: And I guess there's also the Charles Andrew Treatment Centre?

M. BENUEN: Yes, it is.

It was named after Charlie because Charlie was the first person that took the initiative to help the Innu that was struggling with alcohol.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, perhaps you can keep reading from that document?

M. BENUEN: “They feel they are beginning to make some impact on the community, and are presently hoping to further remodel the building to provide craft work and other forms of occupational therapy.

“The program currently sponsored by the Non Medical Use of Drugs will terminate in three years unless other financial assistance can be secured.”

Go ahead?

P. RALPH: Yes, keep going.

M. BENUEN: “Our meeting with this group was revealing and certainly emphasized the cultural division between the residents of the two sides of the river.”

P. RALPH: Mary Pia, I’m going to get you to read that next paragraph and then I’ll have a few questions.

M. BENUEN: “We had occasion to meet with the town council which supposedly represents both sides of the river, but we noted only north side residents were at the meeting.

“They give lip service to trying to unite the two communities, but we get the impression that there is a reluctance – almost a fear– to cooperate with the south side.

“While suggestions of discrimination would be denied, it does exist functionally and attitudinally.”

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, so when this report was written you weren’t very far away from your 17th birthday, I think.

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: And would you have been working in North West River at that point?

M. BENUEN: Yes, I was working at the hospital.

P. RALPH: Let them –

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: And I think you said yesterday that you also had friends on that side?

M. BENUEN: Yeah, I had friends in North West River too.

P. RALPH: And when you were on that side of the river, North West River side, did you ever experience attitudes that perhaps you would consider racist or discriminatory?

M. BENUEN: Yes, I did experience discrimination and racism on the other side of the river whenever I’m over there, but I also had friends that stood up for me. And I had some friends over at the dormitories, the girls from up the coast.

P. RALPH: And, Ms. Benuen, if you’re not comfortable asking questions about that, then I certainly won’t ask any more questions.

M. BENUEN: I don’t mind the questions. I know it’s hurtful, but I also believe that it has to come out.

P. RALPH: So can you remember what people would say or do to you when you were a child and a young woman?

M. BENUEN: When we were over there with friends – not only myself, but I had friends with me when we used to go over to the store across the river. The people around our age at the time, used to fight us, threw rocks at us and called us dirty Indians.

When we would go to the stores, if we don’t have an adult with us – there was a Hudson Bay store across the river. When we went there as teenagers, the clerks would follow us around and kick us out if we don’t buy anything.

I had a real good friend at the dormitory across the river. She was from Nain. I used

to go and see her, and when we would be walking around – 'cause she wasn't allowed to come to my side of the river – we would get beaten up when I go and see her.

Sometimes I used to work on weekends at the hospital and I used to go see her when my shift at 4 o'clock finished. When I worked at the hospital, sometimes my shifts would end at midnight, and she used to walk me to the cable car so that I won't be ganged up on.

Even then, when I was working at the hospital, there was a lot of Innu women worked there too. The Innu women that worked at the hospital were given a small room for them to take a break and it wasn't with the other people – with the other nurses and the other white staff.

At the hospital where we worked there was a TB ward – a TB wing where all the TB patients, Inuit and the Innu were all on one wing. The Innu staff and the Inuit staff were asked to work on the TB ward most of the time. And a white nurse would work there 'cause there was no Innu nurses then.

P. RALPH: And so these memories are still painful.

M. BENUEN: Yes, it is still painful. And I don't talk about it much to anybody or – every now and then, if I meet an old friend, we talk about it.

P. RALPH: Sorry.

M. BENUEN: Back in those days, too, there was a lot of tuberculosis. My dad was in the hospital and my sister – she was 11 at the time – no, my older sister, was at the hospital during that time when she was younger. And sometimes I, or one of my siblings, would go with my mom to visit my dad.

The children were not allowed to do visiting at the hospital. And I would sit, and the other siblings would sit downstairs in the waiting area. Then some person from North West River comes to visit and takes somebody, like their child, upstairs to visit.

And they didn't say anything to them. It was then that I realized that Innu people were treated differently from the other culture.

I don't know what others thought, but I felt like we were being put down because we were Innu. We were always called Indians, dirty Indians.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: I'd like to take a break.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: You're thinking just like a Commissioner.

Yes, we're going to have a break for 10 minutes.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: Then I should take your position, eh? You come to interpret.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

Ten minutes please.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Welcome back, everybody.

Just one announcement from the Commissioners' table.

COMMISSIONER DEVINE: Yes, we just want to let people know that the exhibits that are [audio loss due to technical issue] this morning and the ones when Lyla is presenting – these are available online if anybody wants to access them. So just to make sure everybody knows that.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: The document was P-151.

Thank you, Sir.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, I'm just curious in terms of your own, sort of, journey, and I'll give an example. I was speaking to Gregory Rich a couple of weeks ago and he talked about the importance of being proud of

being Innu and it took him a while to get to that.

Anne and Kevin, do you want to –?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Mr. Rich felt that that was an important part of his healing journey. Do you have a similar experience?

M. BENUEN: (Inaudible.)

P. RALPH: Turn your mic on.

M. BENUEN: I have always been proud to be Innu. There was a point in my life when I was younger, after being put down by the white societies so many times in my lifetime, it only made me stronger and more prouder to be Innu.

Even though I had experienced many negative things about Innu, my Innu-ness and that I had been called names, it doesn't bother me now and it didn't back then.

I'm going to go back and talk about this friend that I had; she lived in the dormitory. She was a little bit older than me, and she kind of looked after me when I was being picked on when we went to North West River.

And then when the house mother of the dorm knew she was hanging around with me, was friends with me, she was told not to hang around with the Indians because they had lice and they will scalp her. But she never listened, she still came and see me, and we were still friends. We were friends up until 1982, when she just disappeared out of the face of the earth and never to be found.

And I'm going to say I've always been proud to be Innu and it helped me in my journey. And when people – when I hear the white, the other culture putting down Innu, I always

stand up and tell them what being Innu means.

I've heard comments from the dominant society that the Aboriginals will never be anything, but I always encourage the youth and the young people that you can be anything you want, as I am the prime example of that.

Although I grew up in a dysfunctional family, my parents were alcoholics and there were so many of us – there were 11 of us – and we were neglected as children when my parents were drinking. We, the older children, were left to look after our younger siblings during the times when my parents were out having a good time and drinking.

Even though my parents were drunks, before they go out the door, they always tell us don't open the door for anybody, no matter who they are. So we never opened the door for anybody, we just stayed home until they came home. I believe my parents were fearful that we would be taken away by the welfare.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, I'm going to take you further on in this document now. But before I get to that, I was speaking to Anastasia at the break and just trying to learn how old Charlie would've been –

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: – when he would've started that organization.

M. BENUEN: Do you mean how old he would have been now or –

P. RALPH: No.

M. BENUEN: – when he started?

P. RALPH: When he started that organization because I understand he was born in 1951.

M. BENUEN: He may have been in his early 20s.

P. RALPH: Yeah. I just wanted to recognize that he was a pretty young man when he started that.

M. BENUEN: Yeah, he must have been – Charlie worked at the hospital too, while I was working there in '77-'78. He was working with the dentist, helping him when he was seeing the patients.

P. RALPH: Oh, was he? Did he?

I'd like to go now to page 13 of P-151 and perhaps just read that first paragraph, sentence by sentence, and then we'll stop and have a few questions.

M. BENUEN: "It would appear to me that secondary care –"

P. RALPH: I'm sorry; the next one down.

M. BENUEN: Oh.

P. RALPH: Sorry.

M. BENUEN: First – "A major reason for our visit was to meet with the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association at North West River. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Tony Penashue, chairman of the association; Mr. Anthony Jenkinson, the executive director of the Association and Mr. Bart Jack (the Chief from North West River) were the main spokesmen, but through translation two elders were kept informed, and advised us that this was the first time any doctors had taken the trouble to meet with them."

The next one?

P. RALPH: I understand that the organization mentioned there, Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association, eventually became the Innu Nation, is that right?

M. BENUEN: Yes, it is.

P. RALPH: And I believe that this organization was started in 1976, so

perhaps just a year before the doctors visited in 1977?

M. BENUEN: I believe it is.

P. RALPH: And do you know where the words Naskapi and Montagnais came from, as opposed to Innu?

M. BENUEN: The Naskapi came from the people of Davis Inlet. And they were called the Naskapi people before Mushuau Innu. And the Montagnais were like the Sheshatshiu people. And they were called Montagnais when – I don't know who called them. I guess the white people came up with these names because my parents came from old Davis Inlet, and in the community we were called the Naskapi. And later on, as the word has gone up to Mushuau Innu, then we were called Mushuau Innu.

P. RALPH: And the names of the people mentioned there, are you familiar with those people? It would be Tony Penashue, Anthony Jenkinson and Bart Jack.

M. BENUEN: Yes, I do recognize those names and I do know the people.

P. RALPH: Can you talk briefly about them? Who they were?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Just a minute for them to interpret.

P. RALPH: Okay.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: I personally know Tony, Anthony Penashue. He used to be – I believe he was, at the time that I can remember, the president of the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association, but we used to use the acronyms, like NMIA, which was even easier. And he passed away not very long ago in a terrible accident.

He was the first person, I believe, who was wanting to fight for the land for the Innu people. And I do know Bart Jack. Bart Jack was a spokesperson for the Innu people, I think. I do know Bart has been a spokesperson for the community all my life. That's how I knew him. He was very well spoken and can represent the Innu really good.

And Tony Jenkinson, Anthony Jenkinson is from England, and when I first met Anthony Jenkinson, I was working at the hospital. He used to work at the hospital as a radio operator or RT they called them. And eventually he got a job with Innu Nation – I mean, Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, I'm going to ask you just to read the next sentence. I think it's "The Association"

M. BENUEN: "The Association presented a brief outlining their concerns for the Native communities of Labrador." This brief is –

P. RALPH: You can stop there. Can we go to Exhibit P-147? Do you have that in front of you?

M. BENUEN: P-147. Do I have it?

P. RALPH: I think. I'm not sure.

Can you describe that document, what you're looking at?

M. BENUEN: I'm looking at a letter written to doctors, from the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association. And the address is to Dr. Brett, Dr. Rath, Dr. Hirtle, and Dr. Waldron. And it came from the board of directors of the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association.

P. RALPH: And can you describe – so this letterhead here, there's something on the left-hand side right there.

M. BENUEN: Yeah.

P. RALPH: Can you see that? Can you describe what that is?

M. BENUEN: A snowshoe.

P. RALPH: Yes. And what are the words around it?

M. BENUEN: Innu being together both from Sheshatshiu and Utshimassit. Both Innu being together from Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet.

P. RALPH: So the word on top there, that – sorry.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: It translates into Innu gathering. Innu gathering from Sheshatshiu and Utshimassit.

P. RALPH: So the word that starts with an M?

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm, mamuituat. It's a gathering, like gathering together.

P. RALPH: So people that aren't familiar with the word that starts with a U, Utshimassit.

M. BENUEN: Utshimassit.

P. RALPH: Utshimassit. What does that mean?

M. BENUEN: I don't know. It sounds like boss of something. Boss of a community or boss of a small land or something.

P. RALPH: Yes.

And could you start reading the document?

M. BENUEN: The whole document?

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: "The NMIA has been informed of your visit in a recent letter from the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It is assumed that the visit by NHW senior

advisors is in response to the recently submitted Northern Labrador Health Survey.”

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Sorry, did I cut you off? Sorry.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Now I understand, Ms. Benuen, that the survey that’s being referenced there was conducted by Dr. Peter Sarsfield? That was referenced in an earlier letter.

M. BENUEN: Yes, I recall that letter yesterday, or the document.

P. RALPH: Yes.

And I understand that he had done that work on behalf of the NMIA.

M. BENUEN: Yeah, I do believe he was asked to do a survey by the NMIA.

P. RALPH: Okay. If you would keep reading from the document.

M. BENUEN: Okay.

“Several areas of specific concern are felt to be essential and we would be grateful for clarification on these points from your Government:

“1. When registration of the Labrador Naskapi Montagnais occurs who will provide the health services for Indian/Inuit?”

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, I think when they’re talking about registration there, they’re talking about registration under the *Indian Act*.

M. BENUEN: Yeah, it is.

P. RALPH: And can you recall what year most people in this community, in Sheshatshiu, would have been registered under the *Indian Act*?

M. BENUEN: 2004.

P. RALPH: Keep reading, please.

M. BENUEN: “2. If it is to be Medical Services Branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare, will provision of these services be delayed until registration actually occurs, or will they be provided on the ‘entitled to be registered’ status of Labrador Naskapi Montagnais before that time?”

P. RALPH: Do you have any comment on that sentence, Ms. Benuen, in terms of the timing of, perhaps, getting funding from Health Canada?

M. BENUEN: Does Kevin need to translate that part?

P. RALPH: Oh, I’m sorry, Kevin. Sorry.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Any thoughts about that second sentence?

M. BENUEN: I’m going to say that I don’t remember or don’t know any organization that helped the Innu people under medical health services, because I’m kind of lost in that statement there. I’m not sure when we were assisted with any medical services.

P. RALPH: That’s fine.

M. BENUEN: But I believe the IGA used to – kind of, stepped in when we were not registered.

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: I believe the reason being is it was around that time, 1977, ’78 and ’79, I was away from the community. I was going to school outside in St. John’s, and I kind of

lost touch, I guess, in my community because I was only home two months out of the year for the first – up until 1979.

P. RALPH: Okay, continue reading.

M. BENUEN: “3. Does the Federal Government support the idea of regional and local health councils having executive function? We understand there is precedent for this elsewhere in Canada.”

P. RALPH: Keep going.

M. BENUEN: Read again or –?

P. RALPH: Keep going – yes, read please, yeah.

M. BENUEN: Okay.

“4. Will the Federal Government encourage and aid, financially and administratively, the following....”

P. RALPH: Read the next one, then we’ll stop.

M. BENUEN: (a) “International Grenfell Association withdrawal from the role of provider of medical services and Federal Government input.”

P. RALPH: If we could go back to P-151, page 13.

Yeah, go back up a bit. So - yeah, right there. The last paragraph, if you could put that in the middle of the page, that would be good. Okay, that’s good.

So this is the report that you were reading earlier. They’re describing what the leaders of the NMIA were telling them.

M. BENUEN: Yes, it is.

P. RALPH: Could you read that?

M. BENUEN: The last paragraph?

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: “The International Grenfell Association was severely criticized for their lack of communication with the Native people and particularly for allegedly ‘blackening’ the name of Dr. Peter Sarsfield who wrote the report on health services for the Association.”

P. RALPH: You can keep going, just another –

M. BENUEN: “There was also a critical comment concerning the charges made by International Grenfell Association for glasses, drugs, and dental treatment.”

P. RALPH: Want to stop there and let them translate?”

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, do you have any thoughts about the relationship between International Grenfell Association and the Innu at that time?

M. BENUEN: I’m not sure if there was any medical services provided for the Innu by the government at that time. But there had to be some kind of a working relationship between the Innu and Grenfell International – IGA – because I do honestly believe every individual in the world has the right to medical services.

And somehow at the time when people needed like glasses and dental work, around that time, there was a lot of people on welfare and I’m almost certain that the welfare people paid for their glasses or their dental services. I don’t know how it worked but somehow there must – got to be something worked out between them.

P. RALPH: Yes. Anne?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Perhaps you can return now to P-147 and keep reading that report from the NMIA. So, I think it would be (b), is that right?

M. BENUEN: Yeah.

“b) Indian and Inuit translators/interpreters and health workers.”

P. RALPH: Keep going.

M. BENUEN: Keep reading?

P. RALPH: Yes. Yeah.

M. BENUEN: “c) C.H.R. program to be held in Labrador.”

P. RALPH: You’d already spoken about the C.H.R., I think –

M. BENUEN: I already did and the Indian and Inuit translators. When I came back from school in 1990 and I started work at the hospital, there was already translators and interpreters.

P. RALPH: There?

M. BENUEN: So it had come while I was away.

P. RALPH: Right.

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: Sorry, and when were you away?

M. BENUEN: When I was away in nursing school. I was away for three years, but there was no interpreters there when I left. But when I came back when I finished school in 1990 and I worked at the hospital, that’s when I noticed the interpreters there.

P. RALPH: Right.

It is approaching 12 o’clock, Commissioner, are we ...?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yes, if you can finish off the last line of questioning, it would be great.

P. RALPH: Okay. Just one – perhaps you can read the next few sentences.

M. BENUEN: “d) A health clinic in the Indian village of Sheshatshit on the south side of North West River.

“e) Nursing stations for Rigolet and Postville.

“f) Increased consultant services for Labrador.”

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

Thanks to Caitlin for answering the gentleman’s questions. He was wondering what this gathering was, so she handled that very well and respectfully for us.

And we’ll break now until 1:30.

Recess

[Inquiry in progress at start of recording.]

M. BENUEN: The last sentences I did were the last three: The C.H.R. program to be held; a health clinic for the Indian village of Sheshatshiu on the south side; nursing stations for Rigolet and Postville; increased consultant services for Labrador.

P. RALPH: Okay. So can we start on the next page.

Good afternoon, Commissioners.

We’re going to continue on with the testimony of Ms. Benuen; however, I spoke to her just a few minutes ago, and she is tired, and I propose that we ask her questions until the end of the day and bring her back at another time, if that is okay with the Commission. I know it may be of some inconvenience to the lawyers.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We have no issue.

P. RALPH: We will certainly make sure that other counsel have sufficient time to ask questions that they want to ask at a later date.

I wonder if counsel have any comment on that. No?

Ms. Benuen, perhaps we can go to page 2 now of P-147?

Anne, do you want to translate that?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: “g) Improved facilities, e.g. X-Ray machines, Lab. facilities, incubators, at present nursing stations.

“h) Increased staff complement – Registered nurses.

“5. Will the Federal Government aid construction of airstrips, water and sewerage systems, adequate housing, and a garbage disposal system?

“6. If the Federal Government will, when can we expect action on these matters?

“7. Again presuming a willingness on the part of Federal Government to assist, would such assistance also take the form of providing resource people, such as sanitation engineers, nutritionists, etcetera.”

“8. Will the Federal Government aid free medically authorized transportation to any provincial centre?

“9. Will the Federal Government provide the ‘Outpost Camps Program’ and ‘Family Packs’ to Labrador Inuit and Labrador Indians?

“10. Will funding and resources be provided by the Federal Government for Alcohol Rehabilitation Programs of Indians and Inuit in Labrador?

“11. Will the Federal Government encourage apt reorganization of a secondary care center in Northern Labrador?

“12. If North West River is to remain the secondary care centre and acute care referral center for the Northern Labrador coast will the Federal Government undertake to bring the hospital up to the standards of its other Medical Services Branch hospitals at Inuvik, Frobisher Bay and Moose Factory: with the construction of a proper strip with IFR/ILS facilities, a proper O.R. with necessary staff to include and anesthetist and the other improvements necessary to provide adequate secondary care services?

“We look forward to your answers to our enquiries, Yours sincerely, Antuan Penashue, Vice-President NMIA.”

P. RALPH: Thank you.

We’re going to go now back to P-151. Go to page 14.

So the author of this report, it appears as though he had received those recommendations from Anthony Penashue and from Bart Jack. And can you start reading at the top of page 14.

M. BENUEN: “Chief Jack recommended that a committee be funded to study the Sarsfield Report and to implement it. We, however, related that the Inuit Association felt it would be months before their people could be informed of the contents (after translation) and provide their recommendations.

“We left, promising to associate in a Tri-partite meeting (Federal, Provincial, Native) once the Sarsfield Report had been translated and the people had an opportunity to study it.”

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

I’m kind of lost.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen.

M. BENUEN: Oh, I almost fell asleep.

“It is quite obvious, however, that prior to such a meeting, we shall have to consult with the Newfoundland Department of Health, to prevent any misunderstanding.”

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, perhaps you can skip the next paragraph and go to: My recommendations.

Anne?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: “My recommendations at this time are as follows:

“1. Meet with the Department of Health and discuss the concerns of the Native people – and the implications of the Sarsfield Report.

“2. Meet in Tri-partite Committee when the Native people have had opportunity to study the translated version of the Sarsfield Report.

“3. Prepare with Provincial authorities (and with Native input) a new Agreement concerning Federal participation in the Health Services.

“The brief presented by the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association will have to be answered – but since it involves many policy decisions, it should perhaps be answered by the Minister or Deputy Minister. Federal/Provincial relationships will have to be carefully considered.

“One could suggest many ways to bring the delivery of health services up to Medical Services Standards. Certainly vast sums of money will be required and the question of priorities arise.

“We certainly believe that the greatest health benefits would arise if massive support of housing programs, water and sewage facilities were provided, together with the building of all-weather air strips with navigational aids – to facilitate medical evacuations throughout the year.”

P. RALPH: So that ends that report. And in subsequent hearings we will call evidence about the response to those recommendations.

There is a second report that came out of that visit that was written by one of the four doctors that visited in 1977. It covers a lot of the same ground, but I think there is some additional information that’s important for the Commissioners to hear.

And the document is P-150. Ms. Benuen, can you read the cover page, the first page, on P-150?

M. BENUEN: *Observations on Health Services Delivery in Northern Labrador* by O.J. Rath, M.D., Senior Consultant, Indian Health, Medical Services Branch Department of National Health and Welfare.

P. RALPH: Commissioners, I’m not sure the exact date that it was written, but on page 3 it indicates that the report is based on the visit that took place April 11th to 15th in 1977.

Ms. Benuen, perhaps we can go to – sorry, page 26.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: It’s the red numbers.

M. BENUEN: This one here.

Start off with –

P. RALPH: Actually, I’ll tell you what. You can start. See in the middle there, it says “in the Province of Quebec” in the middle of that first paragraph? See the sentence that say –

M. BENUEN: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Are they supposed to –

P. RALPH: It's okay. I'll get you to start right there.

M. BENUEN: Okay.

P. RALPH: So, I'll get you to read the very top and then go to that sentence I pointed out.

M. BENUEN: The very top?

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: "Population:"

"The population of the Indian community is 537. The community is situated at the end of the road to Goose Bay and is connected by cable car to the non-Indian community across the river. The Indian people here are Naskapi and Montagnais. Both these groups speak the same Indian language and these people are related to the Naskapi and Montagnais in the Province of Quebec.

"The people here are not Registered Indians, but Indian Affairs has employed an Indian person from this community to obtain information on each Indian family, with a view to registering the Indian population so that they will come under the terms of the *Indian Act*. The Indian name for this community is Sheshatshit.

"Health Facilities and Services:

"There are no health facilities within the community itself, but they are available across the river at the North West River Hospital. A Public Health Nurse, employed by the IGA, visits the community to provide some services. No out-patient clinics are held in the Indian village. There is poor communication between the health facility across the river and the Indian community."

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, the next section is called: Community Facilities and Services, and I'm going to ask you to start reading

four or five lines down, where it says, "The Indian association...."

Anne?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: "The Indian Association includes Davis Inlet and the Indian community at North West River. It would appear that both the Council and the Association are becoming more aware of their problems and are beginning to make specific demands.

"The group from Medical Services Branch met with the Association and Band members and I will be reporting on this meeting in another section."

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mr. Ralph, you can start clueing up your questioning before we have a short break.

P. RALPH: Okay.

I don't think you need to read the "Air Services." Perhaps you can read the "Roads" section and then we'll take a break.

M. BENUEN: "Air Services – There is an airstrip across the river, as mentioned previously.

"Roads – There is a road to Goose Bay from the Indian community. The Indian community has very few vehicles, including snowmobiles, in view of the fact that they do not have sufficient funds to purchase vehicles."

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you very much.

We'll have a 10-minute health break.

Recess

P. RALPH: I guess we're ready to continue?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, can you, I guess, start at "Store."

M. BENUEN: Okay.

"There is a small store in the Indian community and they also utilize the Hudson's Bay store across the river.

"School – There is a school which teaches the primary grades. If the children wish to proceed to high school they can go across the river or be sent to a more Southern location where high schools are available.

"Church – Roman Catholic. The whole community, apparently, is Roman Catholic.

"Liquor Outlet – There is no liquor outlet within the community, or across the river, but they have ready access to alcohol from Goose Bay.

"Recreation – Some hockey and football are played in appropriate seasons, but this is not too well organized. There is a small community 'centre,' which is a rundown old building and filthy inside, where movies are shown on a regular basis. This 'centre' also has a dilapidated pool table. It should be mentioned that the school in the Indian village has a large gymnasium, but the school board (which has no Indian representation on it) has refused the use of the gymnasium after school hours, despite frequent requests."

M. BENUEN: "Alcohol Abuse" –

P. RALPH: Sorry, Ms. Benuen, can I just interrupt you there.

Do you remember spending time at that centre?

M. BENUEN: Yes, I remember it was called the community hall.

And I also remember when my grandparents used to live there. And that's where we all lived, me and my aunties and,

like, my grandparent's children. It was home first for me –

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: – until we moved to the tents.

P. RALPH: Yes, you mentioned that yesterday, I think.

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

And I remember there was a lot of dances there; there used to be dances there and movies and bingos and merchandise bingos that the priest ran.

P. RALPH: Anne?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: And where was it?

M. BENUEN: It's down the hill near the church. It's by the cemetery there.

P. RALPH: Is it still there?

M. BENUEN: No, it's not there anymore.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I think it was the courthouse, too.

P. RALPH: Was it?

Oh. [Audio loss due to technical issue.]

The next section is called "Alcohol Abuse Centre," and we've already learned a lot about –

M. BENUEN: Mmm.

P. RALPH: – that in the previous report. And I'll ask you just to read the last sentence in that paragraph.

Anne. Just a second, now.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: See that sentence, it starts “Alcoholism....”

M. BENUEN: “Alcoholism is a very major problem and it is recognized as such by the Indian people.”

P. RALPH: Then I would ask you to go on to the next section called “Housing.”

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: And just to read the next few paragraphs at the beginning of that page and the entire next page.

M. BENUEN: The last paragraph?

P. RALPH: Just read the last – yeah, start at “Housing” and then go down.

Do you want to translate, Anne, what I just said?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: Do I start where it says: Mr. Tony –

P. RALPH: Yes. Yes, please.

M. BENUEN: “Mr. Tony Penashue, Mr. Anthony Jenkinson and two other members of the Indian community escorted the Medical Services Branch team through the community, to show the sad state of affairs that exists at this location.

“The original houses in this community were constructed in 1965 and houses have been added in subsequent years. The original houses are mainly dilapidated, inadequate, filthy hovels, in which no human being should be asked to live.

“We were taken inside some of the houses, which were very small for the size of the family, filthy, due to the lack of water, overcrowded, one small stove was expected to heat the whole house. None of the houses had a water supply or sewage disposal, even of the most primitive type. Most of the houses are deteriorating rapidly due to lack of maintenance.”

P. RALPH: So, Ms. Benuen, the report says – and I’ll just to repeat it one more time – “The original houses are mainly dilapidated, inadequate, filthy hovels, in which no human being should be asked to live.”

When you think about, I guess, the choices your parents made in terms of living in a house, how much choice do you think there was?

Anne?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: They didn’t have very much choice.

When they stayed there, they were, like, almost new but later on, after couple years, the houses start to break down and started to get really cold and weren’t fit to live. That’s why my parents, I believe, abandoned their house to move back to the tent where they were more comfortable.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, can you remember what year they would have moved back to a tent?

M. BENUEN: Probably in, maybe, ’73–’74.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: So, Ms. Benuen, I guess your –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Peter, you missed someone.

P. RALPH: Sorry.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, I guess your family would have had a sense of, they're being forced to live in the community, because of the church and government?

M. BENUEN: Yes, I honestly feel that they were – my parents, my family was kind of forced to stay in the community, because if they didn't stay in the community there'd be consequences; maybe take us away or stop their welfare or Family Allowance.

When September used to come my father – my parents, they took off to the country, to Nutshimit, where they spent four months. They come back for Christmas and if allowed, they go back in January and stay until spring or summer.

P. RALPH: So, Ms. Benuen, when you read that, when you read that a doctor concluded that the houses that the Innu were given “no human being should be asked to live in” them, how does that make you feel?

Anne?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

M. BENUEN: Right now, I feel sad.

And back then I wasn't happy living in that house because it just wasn't – it just didn't feel like a house at all, even though it had four walls. Because in the wintertime it got – it was so cold in the wintertime, we had a tent stove put in the bedroom where we all slept. It was that bad. That's why I think, they weren't liveable. And my dad only put the tent stove in the bedroom so that we would all be kept warm.

P. RALPH: Could you go on now and read the next section?

M. BENUEN: The “Water Supply” section?

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: “There is only one potable water source for this community of 537 people and this is centrally located at the Mission. The Mission developed the well and has permitted the Indian people to use it. The water has to be hauled by bucket or small barrel to the various houses. There is a pond behind the village, approximately a half mile distant, from which contaminated water is taken for washing purposes. Here again, there is no means of transporting the water except by bucket.”

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, the mission, is that the Roman Catholic mission?

M. BENUEN: Yes, it was the RC mission.

P. RALPH: And was the well down by where the church is now? Where was the well?

M. BENUEN: Yeah, by where the church is now.

P. RALPH: I guess when you lived in a house, how far away would your house have been from that well?

M. BENUEN: Yes, it was maybe 15-20 minutes.

My house was way down there by where David Nuke used to live. And the mission is down the hill. But there is a pond just behind here, which is closer. Probably about 10 minutes. And the pond is where we got our drinking water, but we had to strain it so that we don't swallow the insects.

P. RALPH: And who would have been responsible? Did you get water yourself or the whole family take turns?

M. BENUEN: We children had to haul the water from either the pond or from the mission. Parents never used to get water, just us. It was a hard work. The buckets were big, like that, and we used to take four or five of them. There'd be three or four of

us getting water. And it was harder in the wintertime cause you had to make a hole through the thick ice to get water.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Allow me to interrupt.

Before we get to our last hour then, let's have a 10-minute break for health purposes.

Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, and welcome back everybody.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, I think we ended at the end of the water supply paragraph. And I'd ask you to start the "Sewage and Waste Disposal" section.

M. BENUEN: "Sewage and Waste Disposal. – Raw sewage and solid wastes are dumped behind the houses since there is no place to put the sewage or garbage. No garbage containers were visible, so that not even the solid, burnable garbage was burned. It was stated that in the Spring there was an attempt at cleaning up the community, but, as you can imagine, this would be a very difficult process."

P. RALPH: Keep going.

M. BENUEN: "Health and Social Problems – The majority of Indian people are unemployed and are on Provincial welfare. Alcoholism and its associated ills is the major problem in this community. Some steps are being taken to try and improve the situation through the Alcohol Abuse Counselling Service.

"The other health conditions are those which are usually associated with dreadful environmental conditions."

P. RALPH: Keep going, next section.

M. BENUEN: "General – This is an Indian community, which is just becoming aware of its major health and social problems and are endeavouring, through various means, to

improve the situation. Since there is no economic base for this community, they require considerable assistance in improving the basic requirements for life.

"This community receives little or no support from the non-Indian community across the river; in fact there is antagonism between the two, as mentioned previously. Although there is a school board, there is no Indian representation on the board of the school which teaches Native children exclusively. I think this in itself indicates in what regard Indian people are held by the non-Indian people of the area."

P. RALPH: Any thoughts or feelings about those paragraphs when you read those, Ms. Benuen?

M. BENUEN: You mean the whole document or just this last paragraph?

P. RALPH: The last few paragraphs, yeah.

M. BENUEN: Okay.

P. RALPH: Especially – I mean, he talks about antagonism between both sides of the river.

M. BENUEN: Yes, it brings a lot of memories about what has been going around in my community. Although the leadership back in the '70s had requested help from the government at the time, at which I was not aware of 'cause I believe I was too young to have any input or have any – heard of anything. And it really saddens me that this document was in existence before I knew today about it.

A lot of the people on the outside world does not believe we've went through this, almost like we were in the third-world countries. And that even in the '70s, 1977 when I first went to school in St. John's, there was no running water when I left here, when I went to school. And I was gone from 1977 to 1980, but I only came home in the summertime.

And I had seen a little bit of change when I came back in 1980 for a little bit. I did see

people trying to work towards the betterment of our community and our community members. Even though there was no big change, I did see the workers trying to work for our community to be healthy.

P. RALPH: Any other comments?

If not, I'm going to direct you to page 37 of P-150.

M. BENUEN: I'm just going to say that during the period of 1997 [sic] and 1990, [sic] there was – I wasn't in the community. I was away at school so some of the stuff is like, kind of new to me. Like, some of the documents were kind of new and I wasn't around or was involved in any of the community happenings and stuff that happened in between that time.

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: I was away most of it.

P. RALPH: Right.

M. BENUEN: I only came home in the summertimes.

P. RALPH: Yes.

We will put those pieces together in future hearings.

M. BENUEN: So I just wanted to put it out there so that –

P. RALPH: Yes.

M. BENUEN: – it's not that I forget but if I can't comment on stuff during that time, then it's just that I wasn't around to know it.

P. RALPH: I'll ask you now to read from page 37.

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: "General Comments," down. I won't get you to read the whole page, but I'll get you to read most of it.

Go ahead.

M. BENUEN: Go ahead?

P. RALPH: Yeah.

M. BENUEN: Do I start at the last paragraph or –?

P. RALPH: Start at just the first paragraph.

M. BENUEN: Okay.

"The International Grenfell Association is a voluntary agency and is the agent of the Government of Newfoundland, to provide health services in Northern Newfoundland and certain sections of Labrador. The health delivery service this organization has provided is primarily treatment oriented and there is evidence that very little has been done by this organization in the public health.

"There is a Director of Public Health Programs, based at St. Anthony, who is supposed to head up the public health program for the area.

"The conduct of the public health program seems to be almost completely divorced from the treatment services. Where there are public health nurses, they are not expected to be involved in any aspect of treatment services, whereas ideally the public health staff and the treatment staff should work hand in glove and interchangeably on a continuous basis."

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, you can skip the next paragraph and go to the last paragraph on that page. It starts, "It was difficult..."

M. BENUEN: "It was difficult to assess the health status of the various communities since there were no health statistics available. We have to be guided by general observations and comments by the various people that were interviewed. Although our observations, of necessity, were rather superficial in scope, the evidence of our eyes was sufficient to indicate the great need for improved public health services, as

well as social and environmental needs of the Native people.”

P. RALPH: Thank you.

There’s a document here, P-148 – I won’t get you to put that up, Madam Clerk – it contains recommendations by Dr. Peter Sarsfield, and it’s dated September 1977. We won’t read that today, but I just ask the Commissioners to keep that in mind and perhaps I’ll revisit that with Ms. Benuen next week.

[Audio loss due to technical issue.]

P. RALPH: I’m sorry, that was P-148.

The next document I’m going to ask you to consider is P-146.

Can you translate, Anne, what I just said.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

Can you read the title and the names of the authors, Ms. Benuen?

M. BENUEN: *Local Control of Health Care Amongst Indigenous Peoples.* Peter Sarsfield, Ben Andrew, R. P. Rawlyk.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, you’ve already indicated earlier that you knew Dr. Peter Sarsfield. And do you know Ben Andrew?

M. BENUEN: Yes, I know and recognize Peter Sarsfield. When I worked at the hospital I knew Peter – Dr. Sarsfield then.

And I do know Ben Andrew. He was, I think, one of the health directors back in the day when the Health Commission was first established. I know Ben, personally, as a community member and also as a friend.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, this was a paper, I think, cowritten by Ben Andrew, Dr. Sarsfield and this gentleman, Rawlyk. And the paper was presented at the 74th Annual

Conference of the Canadian Public Health Association, St. John’s, Newfoundland, June 1983.

And I’m going to read just a few parts of this; I’ll ask you what your opinion is about the opinions that are expressed here. I’m not expecting you to agree with it, I’m just curious to see what your opinion would be.

I will point out that we are anticipating that Ben Andrew will testify before the Commissioners at some point.

First one is right at the bottom of the first page, Ms. Benuen, and I’ll read it.

“All the aboriginal nationalities of the world have shared this experience of colonialism, although in varying measures of impact and periods of time. The experience has manifested itself in epidemic levels of social pathology and generalized ill-health, for example, through T.B. and ... infectious illnesses –”

Go ahead, Anne.

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

P. RALPH: “– violence, suicides, alcohol abuse and related accidents, and malnutrition. Among the indigenous nationalities presently under Canadian administration, still-births, perinatal death rates and deaths of children under one year of age are all over twice the national average. Death from violent causes, including accidents, suicides and murders, are ten times higher in individuals under age 25 than for Euro-Canadians. The life expectancy of a newborn is 20 years less than that of Euro-Canadians.”

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE:
(Inaudible) ask counsel to finish up this day’s work with this document and this witness.

P. RALPH: Okay.

Do you have thoughts on that section?

M. BENUEN: The last?

P. RALPH: Yes, that I just read.

M. BENUEN: My thoughts on that piece of document, is that I'm in 100 per cent in agreement for what is being documented and what's being found. I believe the more dominant society has imposed too much on the native people in so little time and I believe it's the reason why us, the Native people, are so prone to being used or seen as an experiment to the wrongdoings of any individual.

P. RALPH: I'm going to read you another paragraph. It's kind of long, but I think it's important to –

M. BENUEN: (Inaudible.)

P. RALPH: It's the bottom of page 2.

It starts with "We are faced." I'm sorry, same document, 146.

M. BENUEN: I told you I (inaudible). Okay.

P. RALPH: Bottom of page 2.

M. BENUEN: Mm-hmm.

P. RALPH: Do you want to read it, or do you want me to read it?

M. BENUEN: You read it.

P. RALPH: Okay.

"We are faced with a self-evident failure to properly understand the destructive forces at work amongst the indigenous nationalities of North America. The question of the degree to which this failure flows from honest ignorance or from a refusal to accept discomforting realities lies at the core of the whole issue.

"Even if we were to accept that the etiology" – or the cause – "of these epidemics of

social and physical ill-health is not understood by the implementers, the effects are manifestly apparent in a pattern which should be familiar. Social conditions parallel the grim health statistics: people are living in cold, crowded, poorly built housing, more often than not without proper provision for sewage and garbage disposal, and often with only contaminated water to drink, with their economies and cultures destroyed or undermined, and their languages and land under assault. A sense of defeat prevails. The humiliation of dependence is accompanied by confusion, alienation, violence and despair, and any form of escape is welcomed."

Anne?

INTERPRETER NUNA: [Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: Excuse me, Commissioner.

I don't think I can interpret all of that because I have to use the restroom.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Yeah, you want a break?

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: A short break, yes. And I will conclude this after short break, two or three minutes.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Five minutes and then we'll clue it up.

Thank you.

Recess

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay, we're over to Mr. Pastiwet.

P. RALPH: Ms. Benuen, any comment on that paragraph I just read?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: No, he never got to finish.

P. RALPH: Oh, I'm sorry. Right.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: I just want to say, Commissioners, that my ride is leaving soon to go to Goose Bay. I live in Goose Bay. I don't live here.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: When are you leaving?

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: He just text me and said if I was done here.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Is he here now?

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: He works at Mary May but he just text me. He said he was –

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Why don't we just finish the last little part and then you go.

INTERPRETER PASTIWET: [Mushuau-aimun spoken.]

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Mr. Pastiwet, thank you for your service and dedication, come back tomorrow.

You're excused because we're only talking about procedural matters from here on in.

Thank you very much. Tshinashkumitin.

P. RALPH: Commissioner, we were going to get Ms. Benuen to respond to that paragraph before we end.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: I think he has to go.

P. RALPH: No, but we can just go with Anne translating.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Of course.

P. RALPH: Okay.

Any thoughts on that paragraph?

M. BENUEN: Yes, and I will make it short and sweet.

That paragraph is very strong and also very true. We, the Native people across the nation, are so prone to accept what is thrown at us. Because we have no choice at all, what is imposed on us in the beginning is what we accept because we have no comparison as to compare what will happen or what has happened.

When it was first introduced, whatever is introduced when colonialism first came into our lives, there was nothing to compare it with and that's why we, the Native people across the country, accepted what the government has offered us.

And I personally think the Native people back in the day thought it was for the best of their lives and they would benefit from it. But it's also a known factor that we did not benefit from it. It has made the Native people the most vulnerable people on Earth to accept it, and now they are suffering from it today.

P. RALPH: One last question. Next time we'll bring you back, we'll talk about Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy and also the Innu Healing Strategy. And can you recall what year the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy was created?

M. BENUEN: I think, it was maybe early 2000?

P. RALPH: Fine.

Thank you.

No further questions, Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: As we're moving on to Ms. Andrew tomorrow, please tell us what your intentions are with this witness and the next day.

P. RALPH: We will have to figure out a time to bring her back. I suspect that she'll be probably one more day of testimony. Half a day for me and then half a day for cross-examination.

Now if my colleagues tell me they'll need more time, then we'll find more time.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Okay, Mary Pia, you've beat us all out. So we're going to excuse you for a little while and we'll get back to you later on in our missed sessions.

M. BENUEN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Anything else counsel?

P. RALPH: No.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: We're closing with a prayer.

ELDER ANTUAN: I want to thank Mary Pia
—

P. RALPH: Penote, turn your mic
(inaudible.)

ELDER ANTUAN: — the situation in Labrador. And I also want to thank all the lawyers here with us, federal lawyers and I also know the Newfoundland people are here too.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And the lawyers for the families.

ELDER ANTUAN: Ah?

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: And the lawyers for the families, too. Yeah.

ELDER ANTUAN: And also, I want to thank everybody like, Elizabeth, myself and the people who are going to speak on the behalf of the community of Sheshatshiu, what's been happening.

[Sheshatshiu-aimun spoken.]

Thank you.

P. RALPH: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER IGLOLIORTE: Thank you, Sir.