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Statement by Anonymous collected by Joan Uraneck on November 3, 2014

Anonymous

General Information

Private or Public Statement? - Private

Statement Provider: Anonymous

Date: November 3, 2014

Location: Bangor, Maine

Previous Statement? No

Statement Gatherer: Joan Uraneck

Support Person: N/A

Additional Individuals Present: N/A

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Transcriber's Note:
This is an anonymous statement. Any redactions in the text and video alternations have been done at the request and with the approval of the statement provider in an effort to protect his/her identity.

Recording

JU: Okay. My name is Joan Uraneck, I'm the statement gatherer for the TRC. I'm in Bangor. And the statement provider's name—

A: [NAME REDACTED]

JU: And the file number is 00119-002. And the date is November 3, 2013, and the location of the recording is Bangor, Maine. After a major snowstorm (*laughing*). So [NAME REDACTED] have you been informed, understood, and signed the consent form?

A: Yes I have.

JU: Okay. The only thing I have to advise is that if any information is disclosed that indicates a child is in need of protection or there's imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury to an

identifiable person or group, including yourself, that may not be protected as confidential. All the rest of the material is completely confidential. Does that make sense to you?

A: Yes.

JU: Okay! So. Why don't you begin by telling what you just—introducing yourself and why you're here and then I have these questions and we can use them or return to them. And I won't do a lot of—I'm just here to run this and I can't really probably answer any of your questions or fix anything for you (*laughing*), okay?

A: Alright. Well I'm here to share a little bit of the story of my sons. But I have some reservations because I really feel it is their story. And so I also feel like whatever I say will be somewhat guarded because it is their story. And they are quite secretive, maybe, about this story. And we adopted them fourteen and a half years ago, and they are starting to tell pieces of that story, but it's usually done as a sidebar. We learn things. It's very seldom done with a deliberate conversational mode of talking where they are telling me information because they choose to. It tends to fall out. So it is their story.

JU: So you adopted them around 2000, that would be like four thous—fourteen years ago?

A: Yes. In August of 2000.

JU: Okay.

A: I was a foster parent with the Maine state Department of Health and Human Services. I had received a phone call about ten o'clock one night that they had these two little Native boys at the Bangor office, and asked me if I would drive to Bangor. At the time we lived more than an hour away. And so we did. We went and picked them up and brought them home. And it was love at first sight for my husband and I both. And we kind of determined—we had talked at times about having four children, but had kind of stopped at two because we had one of each. But when we met these boys, we felt so strongly about them after only a week or so that we began to talk about the possibility—if they should become available for adoption—that we would adopt.

JU: How old were they?

A: One was four and the other one was like seventeen months old.

JU: Oh wow.

A: And the baby—the seventeen month old cried all the way home until he saw the massive Christmas tree. We had twelve-foot ceilings in our home and so we had a ten-foot tree, and

when we brought him in through the door he saw that tree and it just changed everything. He was so mesmerized. And we still talk about it to this day. So we began to really desire to adopt. But we only had them about fifteen months when we received an order through the mail, the court—that their mom was fighting to get them back. The only reason they came to our home anyways was because she had moved off the reservation and was living on Ohio Street in Bangor, and had been in and out of rehab for her addictions. And the police had gone to her house and found a situation that was unsafe. And so because she was off the reservation, she did not have the protection, uh, for the children to be placed in a reserve home. So we were called. But after fifteen months, she had decided that even though she couldn't retain guardianship of the children, that she wanted them in a Native home on the reserve. We were heartbroken. But we had no choice but to let them go. They moved into a home on the reserve... of a felon, drug dealer. They were there for quite some time. They know a lot of information. They can tell you how to put cocaine on a mirror with a razor blade and divide it up and how to sell it. They have a lot of information that I believe could be very convicting. They went through hell in that home. A lot of secrets. Things that they were not allowed to share. And we've been fourteen years unraveling the pieces. In the meantime after they left, we—my husband and I had a very strong gut instinct about the family that they had moved in with. We began to petition the tribal court and the tribal caseworkers to get the children back. And it was a very, very long year and a half. But eventually the therapist that the boys was seeing called my home one day and said that both of the boys were considered in jeopardy. That they were in a failure to thrive situation, and they both had been so established in the school system when they were with us and doing very well in school. Now they were failing.

So anyway, the therapist had asked my husband and I if we would come over to the reserve and visit with the boys in her office in a very safe supported kind of way and talk with them. I came home very disheartened. Their whole demeanor was that of sadness. Shuffling their feet. They wouldn't look us in the face. They felt... like we had let them down by sending them back to the reserve. So from that day on I began a very conscious effort to get them back. And began to write letters one to Sonya Dana on the reserve, and she ultimately was the one who was invested enough in the boys to help us do what she could to get them back. She hand carried a letter that I had written to the Indian Bureau of Affairs in Boston where they talked about the situation with my boys. Because of the changing times and the Natives wanting children to stay in Native homes and not in white families. So there was a lot to talk about. But after a course of several months, when the family that they were living with was exposed and they made front page headlines for drug dealing, we were called, and they were placed back in our home with the help of Sonya Dana and an aunt and uncle to the boys who realized that the boys needed to be with us. So from the day they moved back into our home the second time, it was only ten months later when we were allowed to adopt.

JU: So how old were the boys at this point?

A: Both were in school. The youngest one was I believe entering Kindergarten. There was like a three-year process in between. Yeah. He was enter—youngest one was entering Kindergarten. I have to think about their ages when they came into care, what year they were born and what year we adopted. I need to keep it a little bit loose just in case...I'm trying to protect them. They went through some horrific abuse in the home that they were place in when they left our home. I have been told by some people on the reserve—people in office that the whole thing was like a kangaroo court when they left our home. That those in higher offices who were removing the children from our home and placing them in a Native home knew that the Native home that they were going to was drug dealers. There was a definite trade-off between the mother and the man whose home they moved into. She needed his... drugs that he could provide for her. And his wife wanted children, which had never happened. And their... so their lives were bartered. Strict, strict, strict, discipline in that home. I can't even... they were abused in that home. Physical, physical discipline, emotional discipline, and other abuses. There was a sort transition from our home into this convicted drug offenders home. And the boys hated even the transition. They would come home and on Fridays they would have to go over and spend the weekend while they were being transitioned from my home bag onto the reserve. On Fridays when I would say, "We have to leave in thirty minutes to go to the reserve." The oldest one would just cry. The youngest one would literally start throwing up. And he would ride in his car seat in the back seat of my car and would throw up a couple of times on the way to the reserve. They knew when they arrived at that home that it was going to be seventy-two hours of hard, hard things.

And then when I would go back to pick them up, I knew that something horrible had happened, but had no idea what, because they would be so sad and not looking us in the face. And it has taken several years for some of it to come out. My oldest son who was twenty-two did make a trip over there a couple of years ago, and he frequented a place where he knew that that drug dealer often came into. And the man did come in, and my son pummeled him. Ended up in jail for three days. He had no regrets because he says revenge is sweet. The youngest son of ours only wishes that those people were dead. Neither boy has any respect for their birth mother right now because they—she pulled them—in their own estimation, their own thoughts is that she pulled them out of our home, took them over there where they had to endure a couple of years of abuse before they were allowed to come back to our home.

Both boys have major trust issues to this day because the courts who were supposed to protect them didn't. Their birth mother did not protect them. The adoptive drug offender's home that they made into had made rash promises and didn't keep them. And then there are times that they are very... almost angry with my husband and I. That we failed them. That we allowed them to leave our home and go back to the reserve. Both boys suffer depression. The oldest one says that when they were in the drug offenders home that he was the favorite. That did not give him any peace because he had to watch his baby brother endure hard, hard things. And he couldn't protect his baby brother. My oldest son has been in a psychiatric hospital three times, has attempted suicide (*pauses, tears*). All because... the tribe felt that those boys needed to be

out of a white home and back on the reservation. Apparently that was more important than their well-being.

I would love to talk about the abuse that they endured, but that is their story. It's horrific. And I can't imagine why the courts allowed my boys to live in that home. I think sometimes my only regret is that when my son pummeled the man is that he didn't... do it more. I don't believe in committing murder or anything, but I certainly have a deeper understanding now of how and why those things can happen when you've been to the dark side and trying to help your sons work their way back into the light. I can see where—I have a much greater compassion now for people who suffer deep depression and things. I always used to think, "Oh just pull yourself up by your bootstraps, shape-up and move on, get a life." But now I fully understand why you don't ever look at someone and say, "Get a life," until you've walked in their shoes and have seen the hardships that they have gone through. I have never withheld Christmas gifts or anything like that from their birth mom for several years even after the horrible thing that she did by pulling them out of our home. I—the boys came back with some- I would still set up Christmas and birthdays and send Mother's Day cards and every years I sent her a package of school pictures. Always bought her her own package. Because I didn't ever want my boys to grow up and say that they had to choose between me or the tribe or between me and their birth mom. And I took them to several Native American functions over in Bar Harbor, you know when they do the Wabanaki days, trying to keep an open mind, heart, and ears to their Native culture. I've allowed my oldest son to go over there—against my better judgment, but still he wanted to know his family. I've allowed him to do that. But each time he comes home, he comes home with such feelings of loss and grief.

He has decided that now that he will not go back. Even to visit. Our youngest son has anger issues. Very, very angry at his birth family. Angry at the family who did horrible things to him. Angry at the court system. He has suffered academically because of the massive amounts of alcohol that his mother consumed when she was pregnant. She had many, many miscarriages and at times he tells me that he wishes he had been a miscarriage. And to look at my two sons, they are extremely handsome. They are beautiful sons. And people who don't know them and even people who do will congratulate me and say, "You have the most handsome boys on the face of the earth." But they have no idea the turmoil that those boys live with. What they present in public—they have learned very well how to present, and how to look like they have it together. But then there are times when they just crash and burn. And they are so low. After fourteen years, holidays are still hard, Christmas is hard. I don't know how much more I want to say.

I don' t know if you have questions, but there are things that I just can't say. I hope at some point that my sons will be able to say it themselves. I think it would be a part of the healing for them. It's difficult for them to hold and maintain jobs. Their sense of continuity and longevity when it comes to work—they tend to be disorganized. Accountability is hard for them because it's hard for them to figure out why they should be accountable when at other times in their

lives when they were growing up, they were accountable but it didn't get them anywhere. So all of that... they have been in and out of therapy. Both boys feel that therapy has been a waste of their time. I'm not sure I believe that. I think it's good for them to talk a little, but the oldest one says, "Why talk about it. It doesn't resolve anything, all it does is bring more garbage to the surface, and I'm sick of that, and I just want to move on." So at their ages, nineteen and twenty-two, we give them space. They—to make their own decisions when it comes to those kinds of things. I would love for them to go on to school (*sighs*). They have a free education as long as they would go to a University of Maine system, but both of them struggled in school, and right now they're just so glad to be graduated that they can't think beyond today for now. They are both working. The oldest one has never held a job though more than four months. It seems like every four months that seems to be, like, the line where—and then he'll move on to something else. Doesn't do well with long-term commitment. Both boys tell me that they will never marry. The oldest one is very emphatic that he doesn't ever want to have a child. He's afraid that he cannot love and do for that child what needs to be done because of the way that his own life was. And he doesn't want to carry on what he calls the Native tradition. So he has some anger issues there and some deep sadness and turmoil. In a nutshell—that's our story.

JU: Yeah. I—I... I thank you for sharing it first of all cause I think it's an important story. But I also can hear the trauma that everyone has gone through in this. You and your husband and these two kids. And I guess my hope for the TRC—
for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is that they take this information, your story, and other people's, and that they will make recommendations to the state for what they see is... to… let's see—what they think will help. So I don't know what those will be. They won't know till they gather all these statements and listen or read them. And then they'll make their recommendations. And I think we're all hoping that in some ways, this will help heal the suffering that so many people have gone through.

A: Right (*nodding*). It's been even hard on our marriage.

JU: I bet. I bet. It's a complex situation.

A: Very. Because even today we—for one thing my boys measure themselves against my two birth children. And they feel that they can never measure up, which is so untrue. I constantly tell them not to believe the lie. My birth son and birth daughter are very successful, have great careers, they're happy in their relationships. We have beautiful grandchildren. But these two sons feel that they can never compare. They feel that there is a huge dividing line. They were shocked one day when I mentioned about our will and there are so many pieces that have to be talked about because they have all these untruthful thoughts about our love and understanding and you know you always hear that the first five years of a child's life is so important, and I couldn't agree more because they missed some huge pieces when they were little. And as I was saying to them one day, no you are very much a part of our lives and our will. Everyone

receives equally. But they both feel that if I don't do this and this and this then there's no reward from mom and dad.

When they were living in the offender's home, they had to perform in order to be rewarded for things, and that mentality is still there even though we have spent years trying to tear down those ideas. Things that they were raised with. They don't still seem to get it that we couldn't possibly love them more. That success and love is two different things. Yeah, we would love to see you succeed, we want you to do great, we want you to get married, have children, have great careers, but if that never happens you are still anchored very deeply in our hearts and that we can't—love isn't measured against success. But I feel like I have said that a million times in a million ways, and that they still don't get it. They do not see themselves as successful. And that makes me sad because you are only as successful as you see yourself. And we want them to think well of themselves. We have spent so many years, fourteen and a half, building them up, building them up, building them up. And on the hard days it feel like you've gotten... not very far. But we choose to remember the good times. Vacations have been healing for us as a family. Whether it's a Red Sox game where you sit in Fenway Park and then you get to look at the pictures afterward. I want them—I do lots and lots and lots pictures because I want them to remember this is what we did as a family. You know that other part of your life; yes it existed, but only for short periods of time. This is the real life. So we've worked very hard to do—even some things we didn't do as much with our birth children because it's like the mother defending her den. You go overboard. And they're wonderful boys.

JU: I bet they are.

A: They are.

JU: The tragedy is the situation and the history that they were born into. The whole history. And that they're victims of it. And you have been really a gift to them the way... you know I mean... I can't imagine what would have happened if you hadn't you know-

A: The oldest one is very quick to admit that he wouldn't be alive today if we hadn't... because when he sinks into one of those lows, he has to work very hard to pull himself up. And he will always say, "Mom, it's your love and that you believe in me when I can't believe in myself (*tears*)." The oldest one is easier at... showing his love. The youngest one always... other people wouldn't notice that there's like that little bit of a wall that he keeps up all the time. Because for outsiders looking on, we have it all together (*laughs*). Whatever that means (*laughter*). And we do when we're on vacation. I wish we could vacation our entire lives. Because I see the best part of them like if we're on vacation because they're allowed to get way and just have a ton of fun. And yeah.

JU: Wonderful. Yeah. Yeah...

A: We still do foster care. We have a fifteen-year-old girl that lives with us and a twelve year old boy. And it has been really good to see my oldest son bring them under the family wing. And it's been really healing I think for him. Usually I tend to do little ones but I see where having these two who are with us now, and one has been with us for two years, and another has been with us for eighteen months, it's been really neat to see these giftings come out in my oldest son. How he nurtures them and accepts them. And just very recently I have to say, "See, you would make an awesome father." And I do believe that.

JU: Yeah maybe he'll come to know that.

A: Yeah.

JU: Wow. What an incredible dynamic... yeah. Wow.

A: (Laughing) Some days it doesn't feel wow.

JU: I'm sure. I can—I know. But wow, what you have done.

A: But it's nice to see the benefits of- of the empathy and compassion and determinedness and persistence can... that it actually does have payoffs in the long—it's sticking with it, you know, for that long haul. It's like running a marathon you know (*laughter*). How many more miles till we get to twenty-six? Twenty-two years thus far so we'll see. I fully intend to win the race at twenty-six (*laughing*). In more than one way.

JU: Well I can only, I don't know, hope and pray and—that these boys will be okay. You know?

A: Me, too. And I think they will. We're a faith-based family, and...

JU: That hel- I bet that helps.

A: And lots of days that's my strength. And I think it is there's even though they question. You know we—we can dwell in that place, why did this happen to me? Or we can just say okay, we have this experience, what can we learn from it in order to help others? And that's where I tend to go with it with them is that you've lived through some horrors and along the way you're going to be able to help other people. If nothing else than to be a good listener. I don't think sometimes people necessarily want your help, they just need to know that somebody cares and understands.

JU: Yeah well. And to be heard.

A: Yes. Right. Exactly. Yeah.

JU: I mean they don't necessarily have to be given advice. They just need—just to be heard is like a tremendous gift.

A: Exactly. Uh-huh.

JU: Of healing for people. Yep.

A: You have those moments of truth and moments of... joy when you least expect it. My youngest son and then my foster daughter who's fifteen, she has never flown before, never had a real vacation before. So we're taking them to Florida over Thanksgiving, and my oldest son—adopted son—is not able to go because of his job. And we have this tradition at our home on Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Easter and Christmas, those four holidays I make this recipe called sausage bread that they're just in love with, and so he said to me, "Mom I'm so going to miss having sausage bread over Thanksgiving 'cause you'll be out of town." And so I didn't say anything but you know yesterday afternoon it was dreary and snowy and I had all the ingredients, so I made him this great three loves of sausage bread. And he came home from work yesterday and he was just like I'm always amazed—like, why wouldn't I do that. But he was so excited. "Mom, I can't believe you made me sausage bread." And it's because we're not going to be home over Thanksgiving, and I had even said to him when he mentioned it a couple of times, Mom I'm so going to miss having sausage bread over Thanksgiving, and I said, "Well I can make you some sausage bread before we go." But see, even after all these years, really his expectancy wasn't there. He didn't think I would really do that for him. And then he was so excited when I did and it—my eyes are continually being opened to their need, and they're still like these little boys sometimes in a man's body. And—

JU: Yeah the degree of wounding.

A: Yes. Exactly. Yeah.

JU: Well what—yay for sausage bread.

A: No kidding (*laughing*).

JU: Alright. Let me see about these questions, okay?

A: Okay.

JU: Could you please tell me about your experiences of—you have—as a foster adoptive parent? You've done that, right? Could you describe a time in which you felt very positive?

A: Certainly on adoption day. August 11, 2000, we celebrate it every year. It's bigger than birthdays.

JU: Oh that's great. What a great idea!

A: That's right.

JU: That's wonderful. What did or do you feel most positive about?

A: That we were able to pull off the adoption. That hard work persevering, endurance pays off. You know, write another letter, make another phone call, write another letter, make another phone call. And it took a long time, but... not giving up was crucial.

JU: There's another teaching for them... All right. Could you describe a time in which you felt less positive?

A: The day we lost them. We still quietly between ourselves call kangaroo court. When they were taken out of our home, and placed in the other home. I think that would be the low point almost of my whole foster care career. Although there have been several other children that we were not able to adopt where you do have those low moments when they go back into either the place they came from without not a lot of change, or they go into a situation that doesn't feel any better that they came out of. Those are definitely the low points.

JU: Yeah, I bet. Could you describe your working relationship with the state DHHS or tribal child welfare as this contributes to a positive experience or less positive?

A: Our relationship with the tribal government was crucial to their well-being. And I felt- even on those days when I was really angry and felt that my boys' lives were in danger, I had to take deep breaths before I would call the phone number over there because I knew if I called with an attitude, that they would just fling the paperwork aside. So I had to be very gracious each and every time I called no matter what I was feeling on the inside. I think that kindness takes you a long ways. Our mothers taught us that and it works. As far as my relationship with DHHS from the Bangor, Skowhegan, Rockland, I've always had good working relationships. Worked at it to make sure. You know it's like a marriage. You do you work at it. If you see weaknesses or a breech then you work to repair that breech. I've had nothing but good to say about our relationships. Things can be worked on. If you don't like it, change it. But it's all about our attitude I think.

JU: Do you know about Maine's Indian Child Welfare policies and Indian Child Welfare Act? If so, when did you first learn about Maine's Indian Child Welfare policies and the Act?

A: That would have been back in '97, '98 that I was most familiar (*laughing*). And for a couple of years after that. Probably through 2002. Now I don't really pay much attention to it one way or the other.

JU: Okay (*laughing*). As you think back over your experience as a foster parent, were you provided any instructions regarding any special responsibility in taking care of a Native American child?

A: I went to a couple of trainings at the Black Bear Inn up in Orono that was specifically geared toward Native American children and their cultures. Actually really enjoyed them.

JU: Were they helpful or...?

A: Yes.

JU: All right. Did the placing agency encourage you or help you to link to services and resources that would help the child with his or her traditional tribal events, spiritual customs, and social activities?

A: Once they were officially adopted—I did do that during the placement time, the transition time. Once they were adopted, I was encouraged to just find things on my own and just do it with them. And we did. And that's when I would take them, you know, to the Wabanaki days in Bar Harbor and things like that.

JU: Yeah. Did you or do you experience any challenges in carrying for a child who comes under the Indian Child Welfare Act guidelines? Challenges might include working with agencies, the legal system, other service providers, or meeting the needs of the child?

A: I have had to work with those agencies. My oldest son has applied and been accepted at college two different times. Both times he ended up dropping out. It was very overwhelming because he has organizational difficulties. But yes I did have to work with those agencies just to even get his grants and things like that. Get him into school.

JU: Yep. Yep. Are you still in contact with the Native American children who were in your care? Yeah.

A: Mmhmm.

JU: How old are they and what is their connection with their tribe?

A: They don't have a lot of connection with their tribe right now. The oldest one did make a trip over to the reserve. He came home around June 1st or 2nd. He says he's not going back. They're old enough to make their own decisions now about that. And I will not stand in the way either way.

JU: Did you have contact with the tribal child welfare staff? If so, what were the strengths of those contacts? What were the challenges?

A: That would have been quite a few years ago that I did have those contacts. I found it beneficial to have some family connections. The boys had one aunt and one uncle and both those two people felt strongly that the boys should be in our home. And they were great advocates on the tribal end of it to help us adopt.

JU: So they were very supportive.

A: Yes.

JU: Did you have contact with the tribal court systems? What were the strengths of those contacts or what were the challenges?

A: We did do the actual adoption over there. So we did have- were affiliated with the courts for a brief period of time. The name change and some of that.

JU: Challenges?

A: I will say it felt one-sided. Like the Native... side... we never really got to have our say as far as a testimony. A caseworker spoke for us. But we were not invited to speak ourselves. I would've liked to have had that opportunity. But I wasn't going to make waves. The main thing for me was to get custody of the boys, and that happened so I'm grateful (*smiling*).

JU: Were there ways that the DHHS staff provided support for your work with Native American children? Did you wish you had something more or different from the staff?

A: I did feel... alone. That would be the one time in my twenty-two years of working with DHHS that I felt that I was pretty much on my own. And they didn't try to come across that way. It's just they felt their hands were tied. They would just say to me there's not a lot of communication between ICWA and DHHS. They like to do things their way. We have certain protocols. Things that we do. And it was pretty much at the time never the twain shall meet. And I felt like I was right in the middle. So that would be the most difficult time. But I wasn't angry at or against any one person or anything. It just seemed like there was some huge gaps between the tribe and the state. Hopefully some of that has changed over the years since 2000.

JU: Yeah. Yeah... yeah that would be hard. Okay.... Was there support from the sources such as the foster or adoptive parent association or online resources?

A: Back then I wasn't online much (*laughter*). I really rebelled against being computer literate for a long time. Now I'm on it all the time for work purposes and personal purposes. But I can't say that... that it was the fault of anyone. It just—it was what it was. I felt like we were plowing our way through and not always sure where the road was (*laughing*).

JU: Or the—probably there weren't too many signs along the way (*laughing*).

A: Exactly.

JU: All right. Was there support from other sources? Sources such as the foster or adoptive—or did we just—no we just did that one. All right. Closing question, what else do you want the Maine Wabanaki TRC to know about your experience as a foster or adoptive parent?

A: At the time, I would love to have said, we're not the enemy. White people are not the enemy. It just seemed at the time that we were considered the enemy. Perhaps because of things that happened eons and eons ago between Natives and whites. It felt to me at times like... not that they were the victim, that they... I have to be careful. Maybe that they liked—that that was their answer sometimes. But it to me it felt like more like an excuse. I don't really want to go down that road. I only wish them well. But you can't stay stuck. You have to move on. We need to build more bridges. We can't hold on to grudges.

JU: Yeah. Yeah. Hopefully we'll find bridges.

A: I had no problem even after we adopted the children, for a whole year I travelled those dark, lonely country roads because it was mandated by the Native court that they continue to have therapy on the reservation. I can't even begin to tell you how much the boys hated that. I would pick them up at school at three o'clock. They had to be on the reserve at five for therapy. Two hour ride over there. Two hour ride back. It was horrible. It lasted about a year. I think maybe I had agreed to do it for two years. But even the therapist said, this is horrible, this isn't working. She said, "Why don't I make some phone calls?" Maybe it—I think we might have gone with Community Health and Counseling Services in Lincoln, Maine. And the boys started to go to therapy there. But that's just some of the bridges kinds of things that... you know, I felt like I was appeasing a caseworker instead of benefiting my boys by being forced to haul them all the way over there for therapy. It was dangerous. We would see moose. Anything could have happened. Breakdowns. So what was the benefit of that? To me it was none. None whatsoever.

It just felt like somebody using their power. Yeah, if you want to adopt, this is what you're going to do. And so we did it because we would do anything to—for our boys. Even if it meant tramping through the woods every Thursday night for four hours to get them to therapy. But to

me these are some of the things that—can we just put this behind us and can we just love our kids and do what's best for our kids. Let's not hold on to traditions at the cost of our children. At the time that's what I was feeling. Today, I don't really have... anything to say one way or the other because I just have been out of touch with them. And I'm sure they're working very hard or trying to just maintain who they are, their cultures, and it's got to be hard you know when the kids growing up on the reserves just want to be Americanized and they probably feel like they're losing their traditional holds. So I get it all. Each case is different I think and we have to view each and every case as its own entity.

JU: Yeah. Yes. That's really why I think this is being done. And that I thank you for telling your story.

A: Well thank you.

JU: Really.

A: I kept flipping and I wasn't sure that I was going to come do this.

JU: Well, I really want to thank you for it cause I can hear the history of pain and suffering. But also some of the joys that—

A: Oh there's always hope.

JU: Yes. And I hope that his will bring some kind of healing. Somewhere along the line here. And your piece is a part of it. So I thank you very much for—

A: Well thank you.

JU: Coming in. So anything else?

A: No. I think that's good.

JU: We're done.

A: Okay.

JU: Okay, we're done. I'll stop it.

[END OF RECORDING]