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Statement by Molly Socoby collected by Rachel George on March 5, 2014

Molly Socoby

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General Information

Private or Public Statement? Private

Statement Provider: Molly Socoby

Date: March 5, 2014

Location: Motahkomikuk, Maine

Previous Statement? No

Statement Gatherer: Rachel George

Support Person: Anne Sopiell and Janet Lola

Additional Individuals Present: Adam Mazo and Ben Pender-Cudlip

Format: Video

Length: 00:40:52

Recording

RG: Alright. My name is Rachel George and I'm here with—would you mind stating your name?

MS: Molly Socoby.

RG: And your support person is—

AS: Anne Sopiell.

RG: Perfect. And I'm also here with Janet Lola is hovering in the back with Adam Mazo and Ben Pendercudlip (*laughter*). His name is so complicated. It's not, but I overthink it. So today is March 5, 2014. The file number is M-201402-00020. We are here in Motahkomikuk, Maine. Mary—Molly, have you been informed, understood, and signed the consent form?

MS: Yes.

RG: Okay. And I have to let you know that if at any point in this statement you indicate that there is a child or elder in need of protection, or if there is an identifiable person or group,

including yourself, that is at risk of serious bodily harm or death, that that information may not be protected as confidential. Is that okay?

MS: Yes.

RG: Um, so you can feel free to start wherever you feel most comfortable. If you'd like me to ask questions, if there's a lull, I suppose then, um, just let me know and I will, I will ask whatever might help you.

MS: Yeah, please (*laughs*).

RG: Okay, um, do you want me to start by asking you questions?

MS: Yeah, please.

RG: Sure. Can you tell me a little bit about what your experiences have been with the child welfare system?

MS: Oh, my goodness.

RG: A big question.

MS: Yeah, um, with child welfare it was horrible. Um, when my kids got taken away, when they were younger, um, (*big exhale*), oh, my God, um, it was devastating. Um, (*big exhale*) They were, um, I guess, ah, my family thought I was neglecting my kids. Um, (*shaking her head "no"*) which I never did! Oh, my God, my kids were my life. Um, and then, my grandmother (*big exhale*) ah, she told Child Welfare—she got Child Welfare involved, and she was telling them that I left my kids, that I was starving my kids, um, 'cause I was with, um, another—a boyfriend that she didn't like. And ... then when Child Welfare got involved, um, they were doing all kinds of, like, drug testing and meeting with me everywhere, and I did everything they wanted me to do. Everything. And they couldn't find nothing—no drug, no alcohol, nothing. And they still wouldn't give me back my kids.

And, at that time, I was working at WalMart and enrolled in college. And, after they took my kids, everything just went down hill. I lost my job. Um, I didn't go to college. Um. And it took me about seven years to fight for my kids back, because they gave their kids to their fathers – which they didn't even want the kids. And I couldn't believe—and even the court said that they had nothing against me. And I couldn't understand why I couldn't get my kids back. But (*shaking head*) ... it took so, ah, forever. It took, um, 'til my youngest son, his father finally realized that he didn't want to be with, uh, his f–, his dad, 'cause he'd call me up (*big shaky inhale, voice breaking, starting to cry*) crying, wondering when I'm going to come pick him up. (*sound of tissues being moved and pulled from the box*) And to have that (*exhale*) call every night, hearing your son crying, (*voice breaking, crying, wiping away tears*) it killed me. It really did (*sniffs*).



And then finally, (*big exhale, sniffs*) his father gave him back to me (*sniffs*) without involving Child Welfare, because they know what Child Welfare did. And, um, and that's how it's been since, ah, my kids were younger. Now they're over 18 and they'll never forget what Child Welfare did to them, 'cause, um, my oldest one still has nightmares about it, um. He's afraid, um, somebody's going to take him away from me. Um, it really did a lot to him – and he won't leave the house. I mean, he's got so much problems now, thanks to Child Welfare. So.

RG: Were they involved with Tribal Child Welfare or State Child Welfare?

MS: Tribal.

RG: And it was the Tribal Child Welfare here?

MS: Yes (*nodding*).

RG: Um, can you tell you me a little bit more about that process that, um, Tribal Child Welfare did with you when they were removing your kids? Was there any kind of conversation that they had with your kids before? Did they do site visits at all?

MS: Um, I don't know, (*wipes face*) because I–, um, they didn't me much what they were going to do. I mean, they wrote out – I guess – statements. But, my–what my kids told me is that they didn't want to write that (*gestures writing*). But they had to write it. And (*wipes nose, clears throat*) I don't understand how that can happen. I mean, how can ... Child Welfare get away with that. I tried everything to fight 'em, I mean, to find out what I can do to either get 'em changed or fired – whatever. Because it wasn't right what they did. At all. (*sniffs*)

RG: And, were you kids' parents, or your kids' fathers-s, um, were they all Tribal members as well–

MS: (*Overlapping*) Yes.

RG: –from here?

MS: Yes – well, except for my youngest son. He wasn't.

RG: Okay. Um, and while they were in the care of their fathers, what was the relationship that you had with them? Were you able to see them at all?

MS: Ah, I had to be supervised when I went to see my kids. And every time I went to see my kids, they didn't want to go back. At all. And they had no choice. (*Exhale*) But that's how it was. I had to be supervised every time I went to see my kids.

RG: Was your youngest son the only, um, your only child that was put back into your care?

MS: Ah, no, my oldest one was staying with my grandmother. 'Cause his father – ah, God – he never had any, um, contact or whatever, you know, never wanted him at all. So, he just gave, ah, my oldest son to my grandmother. And then, after a while, my grandmother knew what she did to me, and she started, you know, trying to help me get my kids back, 'cause she knew that what she did was wrong. And we couldn't even do that (*looks down, sniffs*). But.

RG: Um, I noticed that when you had filled out the registration form that you were also, um, involved in Child Welfare personally?

MS: Yes.

RG: Would you willing to tell me about that? I mean, obviously, personally you were involved with your kids but, I mean, would you be willing to tell me about what your experience were like, um, when you were a kid?

MS: Oh, yeah, um. Well, I (*big exhale*) I was (*clears throat*) adopted out, I guess, when I was five. And I remember leaving, but I never really, um, I never m–, I don't remember meeting with Child Welfare, when I was younger (shaking head "no").

RG: Mm-hm.

MS: Um, it was always my foster father. Um, back then, um, I didn't understand what was going on. Um. ... I remember my foster dad kept saying, "We have to be careful about—" He was going to bring me up here, to make sure I know my family, my background. You know. So every vacation, school vacation, we'd come up for about two weeks and, then, we'd go back to where we lived in Connecticut. And, that's when I was f–, ah, God, I– that went on 'til I was about 14. We kept coming up. And then – I can't even remember who was Child Welfare back then – but I remember it was in Calais. We always had to– my dad always had to meet someone in Calais. So I don't know if it was here or the State. I'm not sure which one it was, but I rarely– I barely remember that one, when I was younger. Just my kids. That's it.

RG: Can you tell me about what your relationship was like with your foster family? (*In response to tears*) If there's anything that you don't want to talk about, that's okay. You don't have to say anything you don't want to.

MS: (*Nodding*) It was rough. Really rough, um. Well, my foster father was, um, bad alcoholic. And ... very abusive. Um. He used to beat up my foster mother a lot. And then, once I got a little older, he started with me (*big inhale, crying, patting tears*). Um. I'd end up going in, um, like foster– not foster home, but like (*sniffs, wiping tears*) like Salvation Army. Um, they put me, they placed me there before. Um. Um, so other places that were so bad (*shaking her head "no"*) Oh, my God. And, ah ... and then, when I was about nine, and I came back to live with my foster parents that's when, um, my foster dad started, um, (*looking to the side, taking deep abrupt breaths*) sexually mol– molesting me and stuff (*crying*). And then, um, I made sure he wouldn't do nothing to my brother, because we had my brother with me, too (*sniffs, shaky inhale*). That went on until I was–till I ran away from home. I ran away from home when I was

14 and moved here. And I've been here ever since. But I never said anything. I never said anything – what happened to me – at all. Nobody knew. But then, when I tried with my real mother, nobody believed me, (*shaking head*) so. That was the only person I told and ... I never said anything again (*sniffs, looking down, softly crying—long pause*) I think you guys are the first ones that I told.

AS: I think she needs a break.

RG: Yeah. We can take a break.

[Beginning of Part 2]

RG: Okay, so this is file number M-201402-00020. So, we just took a quick break.

MS: Mm-hm (*nodding, smiling*).

RG: Um, I don't want to ... focus on anything that you don't want to talk about. Um, but I do have a couple of questions to ask you, not specifically about that (*loud humming noise begins*) but about—um, about your experience. We'll wait for the earthquake to stop.

AS: (*muffled over the noise*) I don't even know what that is (*loud humming noise stops*).

RG: Okay. Um, so while you were in foster care, um, do you remember ever having a caseworker that came to visit you and ask you about your experiences?

MS: (*Shaking her head*) Never. Not once.

RG: Oh, this might be a—a bit of a difficult question for you to answer but, um, when you were first placed with this family, were you placed within the state, and they they moved out of state? Or is—

MS: (*Shaking her head*) No, just—he lived in Connecticut (*reaches out to receive a mug*). Thank you. Um, he lived in Connecticut. They lived in Connecticut. And that's where ... I moved, from five, when he first took me.

RG: Yep. (*loud humming noise restarts*)

MS: That's where we lived. That's where I was brought up. Connecticut.

RG: What a noisy machine (*humming noise stops*).

MS: Yeah (*smiling*).

RG: Um, and that was—was that your only placement within Child Welfare?

MS: Yes.

RG: Okay. Um, and do you just have one sibling, your brother?

MS: Ah, no, I got— Well, that was adopted.

RG: Okay.

MS: You know what I'm saying? But, all together, I got, what, six brothers and one sister.

RG: Okay. So what I wanted to get to is, was he the only sibling that you were placed with?

MS: Yes. Yes.

RG: Okay. Um, could you tell me a bit about what your experiences were like, when you came back to visit your home community?

MS: Here?

RG: Yes.

MS: Ahhh ... it was, well, the two weeks that I stayed here, it was fun (*laughs*).

RG: Mm-hm.

MS: Um, went swimming – being the summertime – went swimming. Matter of fact, the house used to be right here – my Aunt ["Delia's"] house.

RG: Oh, wow.

MS: Yeah. And, um, we used to go out in boats and stuff, right here, and, um, I'd go see like, um, go meet my, ah, my real father. (*Loud humming sound restarts*) I met my real mother. I knew my grandmother. And so my cousins and aunts and all that so, (*nodding*) we stayed in touch (*loud humming sound ends*). That was about it. And, it was fun. Nice 'cause— I didn't want to leave but, at that time, I kept going back, you know, going back and then, every year we'd come up here, and I'd have a hard time leaving—so. I'd go back to school and, because of my brother, 'cause I know he'd have to go back, and that's the only reason why I'd go back, so I could protect my brother.

RG: Um, what were— what was it like, when you moved back here?



MS: Um, at first, it was scary though, 'cause I felt like I was on my own. Um, but my grandmother, she helped me (*exhale*) go back to school. Um, but I was afraid. They—they had to take me back, 'cause I was only 14 when I ran away from home. And, I told her, I told my grandmother I did not want to go back at all. And she'd ask me, "Why?" And I just her, "I just don't want to go back." And, um (pause) so, so I stayed here. Um, Gram made me go to school, and I did. And, um— Oh, yeah, my foster dad, he'd come back up here, try to get me to go back home. And he used my brother, to come, to see if I'd go back. And, I did the first time, 'cause I thought about him. I asked him if he was hitting him or abusing him at all, and he said, "No."

But, um ... but then, when I, when I moved back, when I was 15, (*exhale*) I noticed my brother was starting to drink. I mean, and high— you know, um, he'd be on his own, ah, while my father ... would go and, ah, he'd be working overnight. And he'd be home all alone. And my brother would have, like, some friends over and start drinking and stuff. I noticed he was starting to do that. And I, from this day, I think my father did do something to him. I don't if he would beat him up or what. I don't know. 'Cause he still won't tell me (*looks down, big exhale*).

But, that's how it was, 'cause, um. Now he lives here in Maine. He's doing really good, um, since our foster dad died. He's been doing really good. I remember when, um, my foster dad went in a home here in Maine. He did not go see him once – not at all. So I know something happened. He just didn't want to tell me or say anything. But, he's doing good anyway (*sad smile*). And we're close, me and my brother.

RG: How old were you when you moved back here again?

MS: When my brother moved back here? Or—

RG: When you moved back here.

MS: —when I moved— Um, 16.

RG: (*Sound of papers*) Is there anything else that you want to tell me about, um, your childhood.

MS: Um (*long pause*). I think that's all. I mean, right there is the, all it took for me, all the— (*exhale*) 'cause I try to block it out, I—I block so much out, um. I can only remember bits and pieces of it, but—but now in counseling, they're trying to help me (*sniffs*) remember, um, (*shaking head, smiling*) which I don't know if I want to. I've been in counseling since I moved back here, 'cause of that. And then when they took my kids, that was even worse, so (*sniffs, shakes head "no"*).

RG: I'd like to ask you a couple more questions about your kids. Um, but before I do, what would you have needed or wanted, um, that would've helped you in some way, when you were a kid?

MS: *(Big exhale and inhale, begins rubbing forehead and crying, struggling to talk)* Somebody to talk to. Somebody who would believe or check up on us – I mean, my God. Some of us that have to live the horror of being abused. *(Crying, looking to the side, big exhale)* And to live with that, not knowing anybody who'd believe you. And to seem like ... they don't care. It was horrifying. That's all I wanted was to, somebody to talk to... and to help me *(big exhale, sniffs)* with a situation that – you know, like that. How to get out of it. Instead of being placed home– you know *(blows nose)*, home to home or, I mean, Salvation Army? Um, *(shakes head, sniffs)* it was really bad. I don't want to even remember it. I don't. But that's all I wanted was, you know, somebody who actually cared. *(Crying)* Hmm.

RG: I think you're really strong for saying that. For having the courage to, ah, sit with not only myself and – representing the TRC – but to have these two here as well.

MS: *(Nodding, struggling to talk)* Thank you.

RG: You are incredibly strong. And I believe you. I know I'm not the same as a child welfare worker that could've done something for you as a kid, but I believe you. And what you're telling me now is going to make a difference–

MS: I hope so. *(crying, struggling to talk)*

RG: –for other kids who are in a position like this.

MS: I really do. I hope so. 'Cause it's so wrong to have a kid go through this. *(crying, shaky breathing, struggling to talk)* And have to live with it! *(sniffs, crying, shaky breathing)* I'm glad that I got to do this. It's all I thought about is other kids that are out there, that might be going through this. I even thought about counseling, I mean, I really do. I love kids. I can't have any more but *(laughs)* I do. If I can help in any way, I will.

RG: You are.

MS: *(Laughs through tears, crying)* Thank you.

RG: And I know this is incredibly hard. And you are very brave.

MS: Tha– *(sniffs, crying)* thanks.

RG: So, if you are still feeling up to it, I would love to ask you a couple more questions about your kids?

MS: Okay. Yeah *(wiping eyes)*.



RG: Um, you've answered most of my questions. Um, but I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about, um, what you know about, um, the home environment that your kids were in, once they were removed. If there were, um, other kids in the home, um, like any other foster placements? If there were any, ah, site visits or caseworker involvement for your kids.

MS: (*Wiping eyes*) For my kids, no, I don't— (*exhales, shaking head*) they were just too busy trying to get me, I mean, I don't know for why. I never did anything to them. For drug use or whatever, um. But every time I'd find out something about my kids, I'd go to Child Welfare and ask them, "Can you find out?" I'd have to actually beg them to find out if that was true, if they were going through— 'Cause my kids would call me up and tell me, um, stuff that might be going on. Uh, especially ["R.J.,"] my oldest, son, um. ["Reynard,"] at that time, I can't remember if, um, remember ["Brian"] and all them, if they were up there that time. I don't know if they were under Child Welfare either.

AS: Or "Brian" or [them]—

MS: ["Brian,"] ["Devon"] and, um—

AS: I think they were 'cause their mother was drinking a lot.

MS: Yeah. And ["Reynard"] ... (*exhale*) ["Reynard"] and ["Laura,"] oh, my God, I don't know. That's who, um ... My oldest son, his dad's ["Reynard"] and his girlfriend was ["Laura."] And, I have no clue how them guys were, but I know that—I know at the time, when I used to go pick up my son or, if I wanted to go see my son, my, um, ah, ["Reynard,"] my, ah, ["R.J.'s"] dad, (*exhale*) she'd get so mad. I couldn't even— she didn't want me near the house. I, I don't know why, but I used to have a hard time trying to get my son, to go see him, so. 'Cause they had, yeah, they had child welfare kids there, too, but I have no clue how they were—uh, if they were checked on, or whatever. But, from what my son told me, they weren't.

Uh, nobody'd go over there but if, um, like my son, if he had a problem, he'd tell me, and then I'd have to ask Child Welfare, "Can you go check?" or "Can you please find out?" And it took 'em a while before they'd actually go find out. And my son would be calling me up, almost all the time, "Did you find out?" or "Can you do this? Do that?" And, I said, "I'm trying, I'm trying to find out." And Child Welfare was just—I don't know what they were afraid of or whatever. Why didn't they check? But, half the time, I'd get in trouble because I, I'd try to find out myself. So, it's— I didn't like the Child Welfare at all (*shaking head "no"*) So, it, it—just thinking about them gets me so mad. And, on top of that, they're my family. So. And that's what hurt, too. They were my family. And they still went against me, making up stories and – which weren't even true, especially when we went to court! Oh, my God! That was the hardest! They'd stay stuff, or they'd tell me, "You gotta say this in court." And I'd ask them, "Why?" And they said, "Well, we've got to do this and do that." And I said, "It's not true!" And, I never listened to

them, and that's why they fought me, even more, after, when I wouldn't say what they wanted me to say in court. So, it's— I, I kept fighting them until I actually, um. When their dads actually gave them back to me themselves. So that was like seven years later.

RG: How many kids do you have?

MS: I have two boys.

RG: Oh, okay. That makes a lot more sense. I'm trying to figure out the math in my head. I'm like, okay, wait. And I just wanted to clarify, um, when you say they were you family, are you talking about the people who made the complaints to Child Welfare or the actual Child Welfare workers?

MS: Child Welfare workers.

RG: (*Softly*) That is ... I'm sure was incredibly difficult.

MS: Yes, it was. Your own family.

RG: Did either of your boys – uh, well, you just said that your oldest one didn't let you know – but, um, did your youngest son ever tell you if there were any, um, site visits by a caseworker for him?

MS: There was never— no. 'Cause he lived far away, but no.

RG: (*Pause, sound of papers*) This form looks really daunting. I assure you it is just, um, a form to kind of track information. Um, is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences, um, as the mother of kids who were taken into Child Welfare.

MS: Mmm. Um. I think I told you everything that was—it's horrible about Child Welfare here. Um. It's all I can really think of right now.

RG: Okay. I have two more questions for you.

MS: Okay (*clears throat*).

RG: Um, this one's very similar to what I'd asked you earlier. What would have needed or wanted as a parent to a child in Child Welfare to make this situation better for you, and for your kids?

MS: Um. I could've gave you a list (*laughs*).

RG: Yeah (*laughs*). Let me hear it.

MS: (*Laughs*) Um, I don't know how Child Welfare's supposed to be like, but to actually, um, check up on the kids, um – if they're okay, if they're safe, um. Holy cow. Um. Or to hear like, um, geez, mainly, especially, if they're safe. Um. (*Shaky exhale, pause*) And if they're like, off

the reservation, which I can't believe they did, um, to actually have 'em meet, you know, come here, instead of having my son always crying on the phone, "Are you coming to get me? Are you coming to see me?" or "What's going on?" You know, to actually, talk, I don't know, to the parents or the kids. Um. God, I had so much before, when the— when I first started going through this and trying to remember, um, what I would've done or asked. Um.

RG: I should let you know that is not a one-time-only kind of deal. You know, if you think of something that you want to add later, that's possible.

MS: Oh, good! Okay, 'cause I probably will (*laughs*).

RG: It's not now-or-never. You do not have to worry.

MS: All right. Okay (*wipes tears*).

RG: Um, I would encourage you, if, if that happens, to just make a list, um, to write it down, and we can set up another time to talk.

MS: Okay, that sounds great.

RG: Okay? Um, so, my last question for you is: What does reconciliation mean to you or why do you think it's important to be involved in this process?

MS: Um. ... Hmm. ... You mean this interview and all of this right here (*gesturing around the room*). Oh, wow. I just want to be able reach out there and ... to make sure the kids that are out there, being under Child Welfare, to be safe, that they're not alone. Um. That there's people that actually do care. And that there is help. Now. Um. (*Pauses, shaking head "no"*) Just thinking about it, um, just makes me want to reach out to all of 'em, (*wiping eyes*). Um. So no one will have to, um, go through what I went through. But, ah, (*wiping eyes, sniffs*) ah, that's it. Um, that's all I can think of right now.

RG: All right. I want to thank you again for taking the time to be here. For the tremendous amount of courage that it took, and that it is still taking.

MS: Mm-hm (*nodding, smiling*).

RG: I think that you are incredibly strong. And everything you're feeling right now is completely normal. And that, again, I believe you. And that this is making a difference.

MS: Good. Good (*sniffs, nodding, wiping eyes, crying*).

RG: I'm going to stop the recording.

MS: Okay. Thank you.

[END OF RECORDING]