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Statement by Stephanie Bailey collected by Rachel George on March 5, 2014

Stephanie Bailey

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General Information

Private or Public Statement? - Private

Statement Provider: Stephanie Bailey

Date: March 5, 2014

Location: Motahkomikuk, Maine

Previous Statement? No

Statement Gatherer: Rachel George

Support Person: Marie Tomah

Additional Individuals Present: Adam Mazo, Ben Pender-Cudlip

Recording Format: Video

Length of Recording:

Recording

RG: Alright. So my name is Rachel George. I am here today with, um, Marie Tomah, Adam Mazo and Ben Pender-Cudlip. Would you mind saying your name for me please?

SB: Stephanie Bailey.

RG: Perfect. And today is March 5, 2014. We are here in Motahkomikuk, Maine, and the file number is M-201403-00021.

SB: That's right, I saw that number. *(Laughs.)* Alright, I'm just-- 'cause I had messaged Esther earlier to do a different time for our meeting later, and um, Janet, also for later. Alright, so the next one's gonna be at Tianna's house, the one where I pointed to? Yeah, alright. So that where it will be.

RG: Alright. So, Stephanie, have been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

SB: Yes, I have.

RG: Perfect.

SB: Yeah.

RG: And I have to let you know that if at any point during the statement, you indicate that a child or an elder is in need of protection, or that there is an identifiable person or group, that's in imminent risk of serious bodily harm, including death, including yourself, that that information may not be protected as confidential.

SB: Ok.

RG: Do you understand?

SB: Yes, I do.

RG: Perfect. You can start wherever you feel the most comfortable, you can take as long as you want, and again we can take any breaks, if at any point just let me know.

SB: Ok, um, so I just wanted to start off with my first child-- cause I'd been affiliated with the child welfare system because I was a foster parent. I haven't fostered any children in the past, mmm, probably almost three years now. The first foster child that I got is the little boy that I have right now that I'm working towards adoption with. And he'd come into my care first as a-- I was his childcare provider. The grandmother had approached me and said, "Stephanie will you watch my grandbaby. I'm older and I can't life him and he's a really chubby baby and he's heavy," um, and I said, um, "No! I'm all done with little kids." Cause I have, you know, my own kids. I have four kids that I was raising already at the time that were bigger, you know, in their adolescent years. And she was like, please, you know I don' t trust anybody. Usually I'm the one that watches my grandchildren and you know I like-- cause I had written a newsletter in the past, *Keq Ktotoli Oluhk*, you know, "what are you doing?" And, um, she liked to read it a lot so she- plus we're related but she really got to know me through those newsletters.

And so she, you know, was asking me. And I'm the kind of person, I'm a-- I do, I like to do for people and help people. So I was like oh my god, thinking of having a baby again. So I said, "Alright." I said, "I'll do it." And it was for her grandchild. The mother lived with her. And she said "Alright well we'll drop him off on Monday," and it was like a Friday. And I said, "No!" You know, she told me he was five months old. I said, "Don't just drop him off. He doesn't even know me yet. You know, let's-- have the mother come over and visit me," whatever. So she did. She brought him over and the mother is a real quiet person, she-- she doesn't engage much. So, but while she brought the baby over I fell right in love with him. So cute. So chubby. And I also recognized right off he was an unresponsive baby. He, he didn't engage. He didn't speak when I talked to him or touched him. He was unresponsive in, in a lot of ways. So I was like holy cow. I took the baby from her and loved him up. And then I was glad that I decided to be his, his childcare provider.

So that's how that started. We started taking him in. My husband fell in love with him too, and as we were going along for months we, um, started realizing the mother has a drinking problem-- a heavy drinking problem cause we started-- we'd have him through the week, and then on the weekends-- we started having him thurgh the weekends too. She'd show up at our



door sometimes early in the morning with the baby hanging off her arm, and she would be really drunk. And can you— can you take my baby? Of course, yes. So, child welfare eventually stepped in because of the grandmother had made reports on the daughter. So child welfare stepped in and they removed the baby. And I, I knew that they were involved because the grandmother told me, “I made complaints on her.” And they took the baby. And they brought him over here, but, “I can't take care of him,” she’s like, “he's like too heavy, and I just can't do it.” So we put him in my home even before child welfare placed him. Child welfare— I contacted them and I said you know, “Please you need to place this child in my home. He's unresponsive. There's something different about him.” And I worried about if Charlene said she couldn't take him -- that’s the grandmother -- then where would he end up?

And I just couldn't imagine him being in anybody else’s home because I've already had him for over a year. And so anyway I, I had to go down, and I filled out all the paperwork to become a foster parent. And we did. We ended up getting the baby. We took him in, um, and right after I got him in our care I, of course, then had to engage as his caretaker-- as his guardian, even though child welfare was his guardian, there was a woman who was the acting director, maybe she was the director at the time. She's actually in there now. She's a case-- the caseworker. Her name is Ann Bergen. And she, um, never come to any meetings. Like I had to-- of course get him— I knew something was wrong, so I contacted child development services right up cause they— right off they helped me with a couple of my other children that I realized had some developmental delays, and he had major developmental delays. So, um, I, you know, I notified them but they never engaged. We had meetings. They never came. She never came, Ann Bergen. And then when he was in my home, like as months and months went by, I realized, like, they don't even contact us, they don't come and check in. So I would call her sporadically, and say, I'm just calling to let you know how the baby is doing. And tell her how he was developing and what we were doing, and what therapies that we had to get him into. So they started him in speech therapy and physical therapy and occupational therapy from right when he was small, they put him in everything that they could, you know, working with him.

And, um... anyway the child welfare, they didn't engage with us at all. And so I, I was like, oh my god, like, I was telling my husband, I was like, what if I was a child abuser? This is what I was thinking back then. Like this child is so unresponsive, he can't talk, he still to this day because now we know he has autism, um, and he's also a fetal alcohol syndrome baby, FAS— he has the affects of it, the low ears and the, the smoother top lip. Um, but he had no way to communicate how anything was going on. They also-- he also had been neglected, when he was in the home there, the times when he wasn't with us. So we had to wait for his autism diagnosis because of the neglect.

So anyway, I was like anything could have, you know— what if this kid didn't end up in our home? Like, what, what could be happening to this baby? Nobody checked in on him, the parents didn't check in on him. Nobody did. It was like all loosey goosey. And I just didn't feel

comfortable with that because this was my first experience being a foster parent. And, you know, I was-- I am an engaged parent. When my other children were young-- I had my first child when I was nineteen so I had to make choices. You know, I could be young and be that party chick or I could try to do things different and take care of my children. So I did. I, um, I try to do things different, and take care of my children, and be an engaged parent.

So I recognized right off that even though I was just a party to *[NAME REDACTED]* care, that something was severely broken there. And it made me feel a little-- you know I was like ugh, I kind of didn't-- cause then I started thinking about all the other kids that were in child welfare. And if, if this woman-- she's a non-tribal woman, she's running the whole child welfare department, isn't checking in with somebody who's a special needs- high special needs child, then what's going on with every other kid that's in our system, you know, right now? So it bothered me -- even back then, like in two thousand and... probably seven and eight.

So then while I had him in my care, we ended up getting a child welfare director who is the child welfare director now. When she come into the office-- she's a licensed, Maine child welfare worker, whatever-- she's licensed through the state of Maine. And so I told her right off, when she come in. I said, "I'm going to tell you right off." I said: "This woman, the case management" -- she ended up taking case management after that. I said, "She never checked in with me, she never made sure that the baby was doing ok." I said: "I would have to call her." I said: "So I'm going to let you know right now, you need to watch her because she doesn't care about our kids." That's how I felt, I kind of had a little bit of a chip of my shoulder because I was sickened by the whole lack of interest for our children in our community by her.

So I warned the child welfare director of her. I tried to give her a heads up like, pay attention to her. And I really thought that with this director she would have recognized, cause I mean I can tell you right now, her work hasn't improved. She's a slacker -- this non-tribal woman that works in this department. And so I really thought when this other woman come in-- she's a tribal woman-- I was like, yes! She's probably gonna get fired and they're going to hire a tribal person in there, somebody who cares. Cause I thought that the director would care. Um, and so, you know, I ended up, um... she-- oh, ah, actually, the director who come in, she never engaged with me either. I've had, I've had this little boy since he was um-- just before he was two -- two years old, I-- maybe he was eighteen months I think when I got him officially in my home as my foster. And um, the director come in a little while after that.

So... anyway, I gave her the warning, and then I ended up getting a job down at the social services department. I was the, the GA, the state GA coordinator, so people come in and they ask for sta-- it's the safety net program when people can't get their needs met, you know food and, and personals, the state will give you vouchers, either emergency or on a monthly basis. So, um, I actually got to be in the department where these people worked. You know my office was off to the side and every time they had a child welfare case, they would shut my door, and we had those little "shhh"-- you know, those little noisemakers to block out the noise. So I knew they were having meetings once a week. You know, um, I kinda had an idea of who was coming in and out-- you know, what kids were involved and stuff. But I don't talk about people's business and stuff like that. So, um, ah... Anyway, so I got to see how they worked. And so while I was in there I was like, oh well they're having meetings and they're talking so



they're doing something. And that was all well and-- also during this time I had be-- I went to be trained to become a CASA volunteer, which is a Court Appointed Special Advocate. A child advocate. Like a, it's a lay guardian ad litem. Um, so I was also allowed to go out and do that work to act as a guardian ad litem for-- not tribal kids. This program is offered in the state or national, but not in our communities-- our tribal communities. Which I want to bring into our communities. I try to advocate for it. So I got to learn more about the state system and learn more about child advocacy. You know, it helped me grow as a person by becoming a child advocate.

So, um, you know, I really thought that they were working and doing whatever. I didn't know specifically what they were doing. And I, as I was working there-- it's really weird, I really believe in an energy that's greater than ourselves. I believe in a creator or creation-- mother earth is our mother. And so I usually never heard any of their meetings or anything. One day I'm sitting at my desk, and I'm doing some paperwork. And the door is shut and they're having a meeting in there. And we have on those noise machines -- one on my side, one on their side. And I hear them. I could hear them clear as day. It as the weirdest thing ever cause I could never hear them, and they were talking about this other girl that needed a home, and they didn't know what they were gonna do, nobody wanted her, they couldn't find a placement for her and that they were going to try to have to find a girls home for her. And so I was like, why am I hearing this story? You know, I thought it was the weirdest thing ever because I never hear anything they say. So I sat there and I kept trying to just do my work and ignore it. But I was baffled that I could hear their conversation really good. So, um, as I sat there more and I kept hearing more of what they were talking about, I felt-- I, I stopped and I was like, you know, I must be hearing this for a reason. So I said I must-- this child must need me, and like, there's something greater than myself that's telling me you need to help this child.

So I um, I stood up and I went out and I opened the door and I said: I'm going to tell you, I don't know why, but I can hear your conversation, and I know that you need placement for this teenage girl. And I don't want you to put her in a home. I'm willing to take her if you want to place her in my home. And, she was like, you heard what we were saying? I don't know why I heard what you were saying, but yes I did. I heard what you were saying. And I told them, you know, some of the stuff that I heard. And she was like, you don't usually hear anything. And I was like, I usually don't hear anything. And um, so they were even surprised that I could hear their conversation. And she said, well what about your husband, is he gonna be alright? And I said, I'm the boss, you know. The woman is the neck. The man is the head, the woman is the neck. And we make, um, you know. So I said, I'll talk to him, but I know that he will be on board. And um, so she was like alright, do that. So we did that and in the meantime they went and contacted the teenager, and the teenager was glad. She knew my older kid. She happened to be around the same age as my other kids. My teenage kids. And, so it worked out. She ended up coming into my home.

She was um, she had a lot of behavior problems. Let's see-- what do they call it? The...oppositional defiant disorder. She was ODD. So I never had a child like that ever either. But it was interesting. I'm also a really patient person and I'm a big communicator and I'm a strength-based parent. So I always, you know, work from that. So I get this child in my home and nobody really checks in with us still. But which wasn't uncommon. I, I kind of knew it. I still had the other little boy in my home who was my foster and, um, nobody checked in with him -- still -- even after the director come in with a new foster. No sometimes they would-- I worked in the office, so sometimes she just is a chatterbox. And so she would come in and sit and talk to me then. But it was always during work. She would pop in. She'd never come here to see her or talk to the child. Sometimes she'd check in on facebook. Like she's really inappropriate about the way she engages with children. She-- I don't know, I mean I speak inappropriately, but I'm a parent. Like, I'm not the professional. I can say naughty all I want. Anyway...no I'm just kidding. But I'm not. So um... anyway, you know I had this one in and she, um-- it was alright. I mean the, that ended in a way-- I was all good with it, but this girl wanted her family to want her so bad. And they couldn't get her family, her biological family, her older brother, and stuff on board to help her, to take her in. So I was really glad to help, you know, teach her and fill those shoes and give her love and nurture her and stuff like that.

But the way that it ended, like um-- something that I noticed when, when we're in is like I'm-- I've always been a low-income person, I do volunteer work, I like to help people. I've never made a whole lot of money, and I'm ok with that. I don't, I don't like capitalism. I don't believe in that system. I'm not all about monetary gain; it doesn't matter to me. Like everything I'm wearing is second hand except for my drawers and my bra. I can't go there. Anyway, so you know as- when you get the foster care payments and everything, what I'd do is, um, whatever the kids need, like my kids, so -- and I had four kids in my home. My own kids. And so of course we-- with our work and stuff we save money, and there's certain times a year we go and get summer clothes. There's certain times a year we go and get um, school clothes. You know stuff like that, and then in between whatever they need, you know, we get that-- oh you need makeup? Alright I'm gonna get you some makeup.

So the child welfare-- I have a teenager. She was a teenager, the second foster that I took in, and teenager's needs are, they're, they're spread out and they're not all at one time. Sometimes a bra breaks and they need a bra at a different time. So anyway, at certain times of the year, the child welfare department will give you a school-- I mean a check for, for like school clothes. So this relationship with this child, her family -- I'm so glad, I was really glad the family -- her brother and sister-in-law, had decided that they were ready to take her; that she could move in with them. Cause I always encourage family-- you know connect with your family. Go and visit and spend time with them. And she was; she had been spending a lot of time with her brother. And, and it worked out. And so they agreed that they were going to take her. Well in the meantime they had just given me some school clothes money, and what I had been doing before that was already purchasing because I'm the kind that if I take my kids, I'm gonna buy for everybody. So from my own budget I had already-- you know, I gave the girl herself, I'd given her spending money. You know, and um, to go get her makeup and get all of the stuff that she needed. And, you know, I bought her some understuff. And then when it come time for her to leave, the child welfare system came to me and said, we want you to pay back that school clothes money. And I was like what? And they're like you need to pay that money back.



And I said, you're gonna have to wait. I said, why do you want me to pay that money back? She's like, cause she said that you didn't buy her all her school clothes. I was like, I might not have gotten a bunch of school clothes, but I had been buying her clothes right along. You know, and so-- but they didn't want to accept that. It was, you have to give me one receipt for all of these clothes, and I had spent this money on this kid, but not from that check, like I'd spent it from my own budget on this child because what they give you doesn't cut-- I mean she's a teenager. It doesn't cover -- I'm sorry -- what teenager's needs are. *[00:21:05.10]*

And so I was really baffled that they come after me that way, when I know for a fact because I was told by the woman in there, that I was the only foster parent that was giving my receipts for the school clothes. Every other foster wasn't even showing how they were spending money on the kids, but yet the one person that was, they come after me that way. Cause I had stopped working there too. I was no longer an employee there, and I was on the outside. And I think also part of it-- no it wasn't this, this hot one didn't cause the next foster child I took in ended up being really a hot case. So I was baffled by it, um, that I had been sought after to pay this money back when they knew that I tried really hard to provide the needs for all the kids in my home. That if I go to Bangor at certain times of the year and I spend money, you know, t was like- it just didn't make sense to me. So I was a little “mmmm,” I was like, I'll do it though. So I went and I had to borrow money, and I went and paid that back, and I had to sign something and saying I paid it back, and I, I left and I told them. I said, you know I had given my money too for this and I let them know that I didn't like it. You know, that I was a little upset cause that's just how I roll. So I left but I was really glad for the girl cause I wanted her to be in home. So we-- she still, she sees me as a mother figure, and she'll-- if she sees someone being nasty to me, she's a fighter. You know I'm glad I got her to calm-- but I'm like, holy calm down. It's alright. It's alright.

So anyway that worked out really well, and then, as she was transitioning out, that foster, I had another foster transitioning in. And so this one come to me. I had done-- part of the volunteer work that I've done in the past is I moderated a youth group in our community called the Youth of the Dawn. And we called ourselves YOTD, Youth of the Dawn, cause our people are called the people of the dawn. So, um, I did this youth group for three years, and in this youth group I ended up-- you know, I had about twelve kids so I knew a lot of teenage kids. They'd come to my house, cause I have teenagers. So part of me doing the work-- all of this volunteer work that I did was because I want to be a role model to my kids. And I wanted to have them engaged in something other than what's just here, cause the Boys and Girls Club here just sucks. I mean I even think the Boys and Girls Club, the big entity themselves, have pulled and said, you're no longer affiliated with this. Because they, they just didn't do anything. They don't have-- even still they have something downtown. It's not really-- it's kind of defunct. They don't have really good organizers. And so our kids don't ever have anything that's available to them, and, and, you know, I know Marie can attest to that. There's, um, no programming.

So I tried to create something. I'm affiliated with the CCLC, the Cobscook Community Learning Center. And the ED said, you can use our bus. So I actually had the blue bus. It was like the Scooby Doo color-- like a metallic-ey teal. And it was this blue bus. And that's what I would transport my kids around in. And we would go to functions like, they would go drum and we would dance, and I'd give them incentives, if they used language in my house. And the, the group itself was focused on local and global issues. So we all would talk about something that was going on globally and then locally. [00:24:42.27] And then the week after we would be-- crafts. So we-- of-- the kids decided-- and the kids named our group. I didn't name it. You know we sat and we tried to have some sort of system so that people were, you know, in charge of whatever, and that could alternate. So they named themselves the Youth of the Dawn. And um, the kids decided we would be talking heads one week and then the next week we would be doing crafts and fun stuff. So that's what we'd do. I taught the kids how to bead, whatever, make different crafts.

So during that time when I was doing that volunteer work, I had got to know a girl who actually happens to be the sister of the little boy that I'm adopting now. And of course because he ended up in the system, the sisters also ended up in the system, but lived with the grandparent-- the maternal grandparent. And, you know, the maternal grand-- the grandparents, she's really hard. She's, she's a hard person. She can say inappropriate stuff and stuff like that. So the child was already having struggles at home, plus the, the mother who is an alcoholic was always in and out of the home. Because the grandmother-- even though she's the one that called child welfare and had the kids removed, the grandmother is an- an enabler. And so the mother goes in and she'll be trashed, you know, around the kids that are there. And she'll nurture her back to health and actually even let her drink in the house when the other kids were there. So it's just an odd thing. But this girl-- she had a hard time. And they- it ended up being it didn't work out over here.

So she got transferred to a place in Holden with another family member. And that ended up being a hard placement for her. And she ended up with suicidal ideation and was placed in a home and I got a call from child welfare-- the caseworker, Ann. And she said, hey Stephanie, we got his sister who we, we can't get a placement for. You know, nobody else in her family can take her right now, and we know you have her brother and she has relationship with you. Because throughout the years that I had volunteered as her youth group moderator, she would sit and share things with me that were-- that had happened to her in the past. And of course what I would do is I'd take that information and I would tell Ann. I would tell her what was going on, what had been happening to the child so that they could build their file, you know, their case and have more knowledge about these kids.

And so I knew a lot about this kid that I had told them about-- you know, what had been going on. So anyway she's like, could you take this child, and I was like, I think I can, yeah. Let me talk to my husband and we'll see. And so sure enough, you know, my husband was like, yeah alright. Cause I'm the care-- I'm the main caretaker. I'm the child person. So in the house like, I'm the one that does the punishing-- not that I'm a big punisher, but I'm a big talker. So um, it was all good, we got the agreement and he said yes. So we pulled her in the house. Now one of my own children who happens to be like a couple years younger than the child we were taking in. She-- my own daughter has learning-- severe learning disabilities, and she has-- they think



she has damage to her frontal lobe, which we're still-- I'm still in the process of figuring out what's going on with my daughter. So anyway, I had been dealing with my, my daughter-- my youngest biological child who started displaying odd behaviors as she hit puberty. You know all through her life I had to manage her schooling, and then once she hit puberty it was like holy crap. We had to put her in special ed for the first time in her whole educational career cause I could no longer modify her program enough to keep her out of special ed.

So anyway, just wanted to give you that background cause my daughter-- I was already in and out of hospitals and everything trying to figure out what was going on. Because she would have severe meltdowns like at school. Intense meltdowns. So anyway, I take in this other girl, and my daughter who's troubled, and of course this, this sister -- older sister -- she's troubled, you know. She's had a hard life. So they're here together. And as, as they're together, you know, it starts creating this very unhealthy dynamic with them. They group up together those two. And so while I was trying to be a parent and, you know, do what I thought was working, they're wor--they're, they started working and dealing together. Like I drink alcohol sporadically. My husband does too, but we're not like heavy drinkers. We'll have a few drinks or whatever. So like there sometimes would be a few beers in the fridge. But not all the time. Like even that is a rare occasion. And so come to find out, like, a beer would be missing. And I was like, what the hell. Um, so, you know, I had to do investigating. And I was like, we didn't drink it. You know, it's-- has to be one of you kids. And so they would sit and lie and so I would make them sit. And then finally they would give it up. So I started having trouble with my daughter and this other foster-- my little boy's sister. And it got to be to a point where they started-- cause the foster that I just took in, this, the older sister, she um, was a cutter. And so she had started cutting. In the years that she hadn't seen me-- the couple of years being her youth group person-- she started cutting herself. I mean bleeding-- you know what cutting is. All over. Which my daughter latched right on to. So my daughter started becoming a cutter. And I was like, oh my god, it was really intense.

And so I would sit with them, and I was like you guys, you know, I can't trust you to do this. I was notifying child welfare. Nobody helped me. Nobody got involved. I was doing the best that I could. Like, um but I-- I knew things were starting to melt down already. It was getting too heavy for me. I couldn't manage my own daughter's behaviors and then the behaviors of the sister that had come in, which had gotten worse throughout the years-- her acting out, so to speak. And so I was trying to-- you know I'd get them up in the morning. I was like, you're gonna have to be on a very strict schedule. And I'd try to keep them apart, and you know we'd sit, and we'd read and every day I made them sit. Like I trying to run like a little group home, like a therapy, a foster, therapeutic home. We'd sit, they'd get up early, I'd cook them breakfast, we'd sit and talk about how are they feeling this morning, and you know what are they looking forward to in the day. And that we'd read-- I like to read. So I'd say we're going to do a group reading. And you guys listen and you give me feedback on the book that we're reading. So I really tried to engage them. But it wasn't working. It got really heavy to the point that the foster

that had come in-- cause I couldn't manage it alone. I wasn't getting any support from the child welfare department. And I, I didn't have any support here for my own, for my own child who was having a lot of meltdowns. So um, I-- she ended up in the hospital, having to be put into a safe home cause she was having suicidal ideation. Ah, the-- ah... this house in Bangor. So, um, and that was a thing like child welfare, rather than notifying me the night that the girl had these troubles. She had contacted Ann Bergen, the case management worker. Instead of coming to me, she went to her and said I feel like killing myself.

And so nobody called me. Nobody said anything. She shows up at my house one day about eight o'clock at night. She just pops in and she's like, um, hi what's going on? And I was like, nothing. She's like, how's everything going? I'm like, alright, good. I'm like, come in come in. So I invite her in, and she's like, we're actually here to take [NAME REDACTED] to a safe home because she messaged us that she feels like killing herself. And um, I was like why didn't, why didn't you call me and tell me this? That you were coming. I just-- I don't know, I-- I felt a little off balance by it. Like thrown off. Like I'd like to be kept in the know-- they have nothing to do with the child until one night they pop in. And so to be out of the loop where I was the only one in the loop, I was a little bit-- but I didn't say anything because I just wanted-- you know, if she needs the help, let's get the help. But in my head I was like what the hell.

So she ended up leaving. She went to this home. And I said, you know I'm gonna let you know, it's too hard. I didn't know she had reached out to you. You know I wish that she could have-- and I told the child this-- I wish you could have said it to me too. And she realized like she could have, but she likes to create a storm. She's one of those kids that, you know, would create a storm. Because that's what kids get used to sometimes. So that's what they'll do. So, you know, she ended up apologizing and everything. Which I-- I wasn't looking for an apology. I just wanted her to her to know that I don't care what it is. You can come to me. So anyway, I-- I, we worked it out. No, she didn't go to a safe home, she went to Acadia. And I got her back in the home. And then when I got her back in the home, I, I had to let child welfare know, you need to find a different placement for her. I can't do this. You know, I have the little boy who has autism, and he has a lot of special needs. And then my other child who is just now because of new experiences and a new world of cutting and everything, I was in a whirlwind of these-- I didn't even know how to deal with them, let me tell you, I, I was sad a lot. I mean I still even-- cause it was hard. (*Speaking through tears.*) It's still hard. Cause my, my daughter's still going through stuff.

So...so they did. They said, alright, we're going to find another placement. In the meantime, me and the girl, you know, we were talking, we had a good relationship. I said, I'll always be here for you. You're always welcome in my home. You know, I have your brother, and I want you guys to keep that relationship. I want you guys to, you know, always have each other. And so she was-- she understood. She completely understood why I couldn't commit anymore. And um, during the first time when I picked her up, I ended up meeting a woman that she knew from her last placement, which was in the Holden area. She had met this woman, and her-- she knew the woman, and her husband and the son and the other child. She knew them really well. So I had met this woman, through her, when I first picked her up in-- at this other home. That's where I got her actually was from this safe home. And so this non-tribal woman was lovely,



and [NAME REDACTED] loved her. That's how I met her. So it was really good. And the whole time that the girl was in my home -- the teenager -- she, um... she talked to this non-tribal woman all the time. This woman, she lived away -- her name was Jody -- she lived out. And she called all the time and she checked in with her and they chatted. And, you know, the girl really loved her. And this was the only person that called. And nobody did. Nobody in her family called her, child welfare didn't call her. Just me and this other woman were engaged. I mean they even came here to visit her -- the family. Because that's how tied in-- they really loved her. And I saw that so, you know and I was talking to this woman all the time when she lived with me.

And so they couldn't find a placement. Ann called me and she's like we're having a hard time finding a placement for her. You know, I'm sorry it's taking so long. And I was like that's alright as long as you're working on it. I'm gonna do the best that I can cause I'm not the kind that's like no, you take 'em now. I'm gonna do what a can. So I-- [NAME REDACTED] -- yeah maybe in the time too, just block out her name too, if we can, just that name. I'll call her A. But while A-- we were talking and she said, um, maybe I could stay with Jody. And I was like maybe you can. I said you know they do place kids outside of the reservation. And so I, I talked to Ann and I said hey, you know why don't we look at this woman as a placement. I mean, she's always engaged with the child, she knows her really well. She lives up in the area where she, where, where, you know, the girl that I have in my home now, that's where she was living before. So she has a whole bunch of friends there she has experiences. And so she's like yeah we, we can look into it. So I talked to the woman, I called her up. I was like hey you know, we need a different placement for her because it's just not working here. My own daughter-- and you know, my own family, I have to make sure is ok, and that we can function and we're not functioning because she has so many needs-- high needs. And they said, ah, yes of course we'll take her. Yes of course, we would be happy to take her. So it was all good. The child was very pleased. She was going to a family she knew that already loved her and cared for her. And this child was sixteen. So it's not like she was a little kid and just being, you know, just taken off the reservation. She knew this family; she'd engaged with them, she'd stayed with them in the past. And they were always involved with her while she lived with me.

So she left my home, and she went to go live with this family. And it was all good. You know I, I checked in every now and again just to see how she was doing. The woman, Jody, would call and say, you know, I just want to let you know she's doing good. They actually brought her here a few times to visit with her brother. So they were very-- they brought her down to community functions cause they wanted her involved in her, in her culture. So I was really glad. I was like yes I helped them find a placement, you know, that wasn't a tribal family, but was encouraging the tribal connections. So I felt really good about all of it.

And then you know we're going on and life is going along. And then probably... a year or so into the placement with her, I get a, I get a message from the child, A. And she um, she says

um, I don't want to live, I want to die. And I was like, why what's going on? And she's like, they took me out of-- Ann came and picked me up in the middle of the night from, from this house. And nobody said anything, they just took me out. And they put me into my aunt's home. Who-- her aunt is a wonderful, wonderful woman. I'm gonna tell you right now, I love this woman. To this day I love her. She's such a good woman. She's dedicated. She's a good family person. And that was the one I had hoped a long time ago would have taken her in-- her, her aunt. But it didn't work out at the time. And that's where the brother, the other brother, the little brother-- my baby's other brother has-- was placed was with that aunt. So she had a full-- her hands full too.

So, they placed her with her aunt and I was like, but she's-- she's really good. But she didn't want to be there because she was saying, my aunt's husband is-- I don't like him. I don't like how he is, and all of this stuff. And I was like, well I don't know what's going on, but I'll try to find out what's going on. And, cause she wanted me to help her. She's like can you help me. I don't want to be here. I want to go back to Jody's. So I was like, I'll see what I can do. So I, I called up-- I messaged-- well first I got ahold of, ah, Jody. And I was like what is going on? And she was like they just showed up here in the middle of the night. It was eight o'clock. They had another foster child in their home-- no it was like ten o'clock, I think. Nine or ten o'clock at night. They had just been placed with a new placement cause they're a regular foster family in the state of Maine. They had a new placement. And Ann Bergen shows up with the cops and everybody to her house. And so their new placement had already been traumatized by authorities. So here they're coming -- the tribe -- coming in with the cops, state cops and everybody. And, um, don't say what's going on. They just tell-- come on you gotta go. They removed her from the house in a very dramatic way. So they take her from this house and, you know, Jody is crying. She's like, we don't know what's going on. We don't understand. Nobody would talk to us. We kept asking, what's going on? What's wrong? You know, and they wanted to just try to make it better cause they didn't know that [NAME REDACTED] was crying, freaking out leaving this home. So, I was like, I don't know. I'll try to find out what's going on. I was like, she contacted me. She doesn't want to be where she's at right now. I said even though the home is a really good home. I said I know the woman. It's a really good placement. And she's like, but I don't understand. What did we do? What's wrong? Why did they take her that way? Why wouldn't nobody-- why wouldn't anybody talk to us?

So anyway, I, I get ahold of Ann and I was like what is going on? Why did you do this? I'm getting contacted from the child and the, the foster and you know there's a lot of people are in turmoil right now. And [NAME REDACTED] don't want to live and she's threatening to kill herself. And, you know, alright we're going to check in on that. And she was like, well you don't know what's going on and, you know, we had to do what we had to do. And you, ah-- (knocking sound). Yeah go tell-- whoever it is just tell them, they gonna have to come back later or something.

RG: Do you want me to pause the recording?

SB: Yeah go ahead and pause it just for a second.

[VIDEO ORIGINALLY IN TWO PARTS. PART 2 BEGINS HERE.]



RG: Ok, so this is part two of file number M-2014-00021. M-2014103-2, zero-- I can't even do this! M-201403-00021. There we go.

SB: Ok.

RG: Slow morning.

SB: So, um, me and Ann ended up having several discussions. I kept the conversations and everything. I think I still even have them to this day them on a pin drive somewhere. But, um, you know she's like-- she wouldn't tell me anything. And I'm like you're whole case on this child is a lot of what I had told you, what she had shared with me. You know, and even though I had been out of the picture, I've always been involved in this girl's life. Like I was always involved in her life. Actually we've kind of lost contact over this whole thing cause it was such a mess.

Anyway, um, it ended up ending badly. You know, um, the woman-- the child welfare worker-- and I was pissed because I kept getting messages from the child. She was sneaking-- she was leaving school. So she was placed with the aunt. She was leaving the school and sneaking to a friend's house to go call the other foster to talk to them cause she wanted to be back there. She wanted to go back. And she was messaging me and telling me, "I don't want to be here. Can you help me? Can you please help fight-- please help me fight this?" And she's sixteen. I mean this isn't a toddler. You know, and that's what I was telling child welfare. Like I went to attachment disruption training with you. You disrupted this family. You disrupted this attachment with this child. And so I was, I was pissed because they went about it all wrong. They stopped talking to me all together-- child welfare-- cause we went at it hard. I was pissed. And, um, so they-- of course, they developed a chip on their shoulder for me. Just as bad as my chip was for them. Cause we're, we're at different times of the information now. Ok? And they didn't want to hear my side because I was also bringing out good points about their attachment disruption. This isn't a toddler. You know, you, you come in in the middle of the night like there is an extreme emergency. And they've done that here. And they created like-- every-- what's going on, what's going on? There are better ways to approach things. That wasn't a good way here, and it wasn't a good way there because that other little child that they'd had in their care, had been traumatized, which ended up being traumatized after the cops, and Ann Bergen, and their little posse-- when they come in-- left, that that family had to deal with that child.

So, you know, that was the sta-- that's the state, but here our child welfare system went in like that way -- inappropriately. So, and they didn't want to hear my points. They didn't want to discuss anything with me because then, like I said it's confidential, and I totally get that. But the thing was is, I was being shared information from the teenager and from the ex-foster, and, and child welfare was kind of dabbling at first, telling me a little bit-- they told me, um,

something happened and they and-- she wouldn't tell me what specifically, but she was like we had to go in. We had to take her out that way. And I kept thinking, like what could it have been? And I-- so I was asking the foster like, what happened? Did you hit her? I was like, if I find out you guys did something to this kid, I'm going to be fucking mad. Like I'm going to come and hunt you down too, cause I love this kid. She's like, Stephanie, we didn't hurt this child. I don't know what's going on.

And so it was a really big mess so I was like, you know what? I started writing to the judge. I said I need-- I want to be, um-- I'm a CA-- I do CASA work for the state and I know the tribe doesn't call in guardian ad litem, but I'm willing to be. And I knew that they kind of wouldn't because I'm-- I'm involved in an intense way. But still I had to try. I had to do something. I said-- so I asked to be, um, a party to the whole case so that I could help give some perspective and everything. Because they were shutting me-- just shutting me right out. And, um, I said or get her a guardian ad litem. I said just get her a guardian ad litem. Get somebody involved at whatever.

So I wrote to the judge cause child welfare wasn't listening to me. So I wrote to the judge. Personally sent out the mail. I went to the chief and council, and I said these fucking slackers in the child welfare department did this. And I had all of their conversations. And, so I showed how Ann has violated confidentiality. Even though she wouldn't tell me what was going on then, she had violated confidentiality in the past, and I had proof of it. You know, her sharing discussions with me. Um, and I could have pushed to had her fired, but that was-- I don't know when people start bringing something up about me, I kind of want to prove them wrong. Cause they were like, oh sh-- this is just a headhunt. She just wants to get Ann fired. This is a big head hunt. And, yeah in a way, I do want her fired. I'm s--, I'm sorry that I feel that way, but I see how she works. And she's a slacker, and she doesn't care about our tribal kids, and I've known this since I've had my little one, when he was a baby. I've seen her work, and she's-- I worked in the same depart-- I would walk to her office, and she'd be playing on facebook or playing pogo games. That's what she does during her work hours. Rather than calling her, her kids and checking in on the kids that she's overseeing, she plays games, and she fucks off.

So they were saying it's a head hunt. And I didn't want it to make it a head hunt then because it was about the child. So I backed off on-- alright I'm not gonna get this bitch fired right now. Maybe her own slacker ass will get her fired still in the future, cause she is a slacker. But I did. I showed all the information. I told the chief, you need to have an assessment done. Not the director, because the director is clearly not doing her job as well, or these kids would have better oversight. There wouldn't be att-- I mean, I said they attended attachment disruption. They wouldn't have gone in and been so dramatic about, you know, going in and taking a child if they were doing their job, if they were really learning what they should be learning. I said, so the director should have an assessment done as well. Why don't you go ask your people, ask your community, how are these people-- how is the social service department servicing you? What-- do you understand what they provide? Have you engaged with them? I said, do an assessment on them. You know that way I'm not the one head hunting. Everybody else will give their own two-cents and then maybe they'll get fired by their own, you know, doing. But nothing happened cause we-- that's the other thing is, you know, we don't have good



supervision in the top spots. You know, I know they get caught up with the business or whatever part of tribal government, but the community part, the social services should be the hub of our communities, and it's failing. Social services and child welfare should not be connected in my opinion because those-- both departments are failing.

So, it ended up-- the child ended up staying-- because I, I-- me and the aunt even talked, and I let her know the background of what was going on. And she understood, and she's really nice like I said she's a loving woman. I let her know what the child didn't like about the home so maybe they could work on that too. And we thought we were going to keep in touch, but as I-- you know, as we were progressing through and the whole thing, um, she started even saying things like that I was brain washing the child. And so I started getting upset because, like I, I-- and then it was making me question everything I'm doing. I was like I'm looking like a fucking mad woman here because I'm fighting a system, for one, where there's no good supervision. If they cared, then they would be, then they would be assessing that department, and they don't. So right now, because nobody cares, the director, the case manager, our governor and council, I look like the madwoman. And maybe I do look like I'm, I'm brainwashing this child, but I was only going off of the messages she was sending me-- the child was sending me.

So the good thing that come out of it, is I had to go to court and stand up alone, and I had to tell the judge because-- they pulled me all in, I pulled them in. But I got to look at them and I got to point at them, and I got to tell them right in front of the judge, you made the child discontent with their life, with their living situation, her suicidal ideation come back because of what you had done, the way you swooped in and just took 'em in the night. And I, and I got to tell 'em, you, you know-- attachment disruption. I don't care what happened in that home-- because I couldn't care, I didn't know. But you could have approached it better. You could have gone about it differently. You could have sat her down. She's not a three year old or a five year old. She's sixteen. You could have sat her down and said, you know, let's talk about this. Let's sit and talk, like explain to the foster what's going on. Something. I don't know, but do something, other than the way it was done. It was too dramatic. You know I found out later, it was information that the child had-- that the child had shared. So I don't know, I don't know what that, that was. I don't know what happened. I don't know what was said. But I also know that the child was known for telling sometimes stories. So I don't know what sort of investigation was done. You know, I don't know how in-depth these-- cause they don't care. They don't engage resources to help the child. A bunch of things. You know, at child welfare they wait till there's a crisis and then swoop in and do something rather than checking in, seeing what sort of resources, you know keeping regular contact or something with the kids. There's no oversight. They suck. And that's what pissed me off. So that ended really badly. You know, she ended up with the-- and I, I stopped trying to reach out to her because, for one I knew the aunt was going to meet her needs. She's a smart, intelligent woman, she's involved in mental health and wellbeing of a lot of people. So I knew she was going to get her needs met, and I, I know that she was going to provide her with a loving home. And I didn't want to interfere. So I, I let that

go, so that she could just stay calm. Because the more she was engaging with me, it was getting me worked up, and it was keeping her in a state as well. So I knew that I had to, to step back and let the aunt just-- to care for her. Cause I knew she was going to do it. So we-- you know, we don't have much contact now. When we see-- she does see me. She's come over here I think a couple of times. But it's not like it used to be, because she's progressing which is good. You know, that's what I want. We're still facebook friends. And we communicate that way. That's about it.

So those were the three fosters that I had, and those were the experiences with child welfare that I directly had. So the last child that I've taken in was my niece, um, who lives with me now. My, my own family, um... my sister-- I have a sister. She's a, a drug addict, and she's an alcoholic. She abuses prescription pills. And, so my niece for a long-- I mean since, since the kids were little, we knew my sister had an alcohol-- even before she got-- had kids, we knew she had an alcohol problem. And so we were glad she ended up getting married, she went to the Navy, she got married, she settled down, and started having babies, and we were really glad, cause it was like holy cow. Cause she was a, she was a wild ticket when we were young. Holy crap she was wild. I used to want to kick her ass all the time cause she was making really bad choices.

So anyway, she has these kids and then the father was also in the Navy. And he started being shipped out to sea, going away for his trips, and while he was being gone, my sister started drinking when they were babies. Again. You know, her teenage years were really bad. So, um, he's gone away and she's drinking and she's being really naughty on the computer and stuff, and, and trouble in paradise, the husband is-- her husband is a brilliant man, he's really smart. He's actually a Navy seal now. But, he knew how to go into a computer to see what she'd been doing and found all kinds of naughty stuff. And was pissed and so the relationship soured. And they ended up divorcing, and my sister ended up coming back home. So, well-- she come back home without the kids, cause he had found-- you know, knew she was drinking heavily, being drunk while the kids were there with her. And he wasn't home. He had to be out on, for his duty or whatever. And um, he kept the kids with him and his mother.

So my sister, Kim, you know I love her to death. She's a year younger than me. I have a lot of siblings. And her and I were always the closest growing up. So I fought for her. You know, she would cry to me, I'm nothing without my kids, and I need my kids, and...So I went out to Connecticut, and you know, I told them, these kids fall under the Indian Child Welfare Act-- like I-- at this time, when my, when my niece was little they were god like. He was a baby and she was just a toddler. I didn't know anything about child welfare system, you know, I only had my own kids. I wasn't involved in any advocacy work or anything like that. So I went and read the ICWA, and I went and read these pamphlets on child family court for Connecticut, just so that I could try to help go represent her because she had nobody to go support her. And she wanted her kids. And I'm a mother and I was like, oh I can't imagine being without my kids. So went and I fought hard. I brought up ICWA. I, I went and said you had her sign all this paperwork under duress, because she was under duress when they had her do it. And come, come the end, she ends up getting her kids back. Get's 'em, moves-- she moves down to, down to Pleasant Point, where I was living at the time.



And, um, she doesn't do the right thing. You know, she comes up here -- I ended up moving up here -- and she stayed with me, and that's when I realized, like, oh shit what did I do? You know, I went and took my niece and my nephew from a home that I knew they were being well taken care of to my sister's here staying with me, and all she is is drunk in my basement every day. And I have to take care of her two kids. And I was feeding them and I was, and I was like you need to-- I was even hiding her beers and she would go and get mad and try to physically fight me. And I was like, oh fuck what did I do? You know? This isn't good. So she ended up-- because we started banging heads here, she left. She went down Pleasant Point. She ended up getting her own home. And the kids were living with her and she drank. And my other sister-- our older sister-- her and my older sister went, and was living with her. And was taking care of the kids-- was enabling her. That's what we ended up doing. Even when I was here, I enabled her because I didn't know what else to do. So my other sister was telling the father, you know, your kids are not being taken care of. I'm the one taking care of your kids.

So we all knew there's been trouble a long time. And for a lot of years we try to get my sister like, Kim, you know, we will take your kids and we will take care of them. You go get help, and when you come back -- you know, not get child welfare involved. Just be family and say we're gonna help you. And we're gonna take care of your kids. And then when you're all set and you're on your feet and you're balanced, you can go and have your kids back. Like none of us want to keep your kids from you forever. Nope. I don't have a problem. I mean, you know, that's what addiction is, it's about denying that you even have a problem. So that's where we were at. She didn't want to do it. She rejected all of our help. My other older -- we have another older sister -- had called child welfare. I mean throughout the years, people have made child welfare complaints on my sister, and there's never been any-- like I don't even know if they investigated. Because we had no choice then. She didn't want to help her kids have a stable home, and allow us to help her. So we had to get child welfare involved, thinking that maybe they'll just come in and put 'em into kinship care. You know, I didn't know at the time what that was called. But put the kids into our care until she got well and then work on reunification, cause that's what we all want. That's what our family is like anyway. You know, help each other get the kids back in the home.

But nobody even followed back up. Like they didn't call my other sister back and say, you know, this is what's going on. We do have an investigation. No follow up. So as the years went on, the kids started getting older and child welfare was called by the school. I'm pretty positive cause I know... my other's family was telling me -- cause I live up here -- from Pleasant Point, and they were telling me, yeah the school is recognizing that something is not right with these kids. And the little one, and they're having outbursts, and you know they're not complying and you know, they're oppositional. So people have known. And so throughout the years, counselors have made reports, school has made report, my sisters made reports, and this is down to Pleasant Point to Molly. And we never got any, any feedback. We didn't hear anything. We didn't even know if there was an investigation. And so for a lot of years, I've

known my niece has been in turmoil. So she's seventeen now. She turned seventeen November 13th, and on-- she's been in and out of Acadia because she tried to kill herself a few times. So just in the past three years, or actually, not even -- in the past year and a half, she's been in and out of the hospital three times, and in a safe home once. So she-- one day she-- cause I, I, sh-- not only is she my niece, but she's my godchild. So-- and when she was a baby, I actually saved her life. When she was born, she stopped breathing, and I had to give her CPR and, and stuff like that and she was hospitalized for I think a month or so after that.

But, so her and I-- I've always been really close to her. And the a-- I've been telling her for years, you know, *[NAME REDACTED]* when you go to counseling whoever you see, you need to tell everybody what's going on. I said, cause we've all made the complaints to child welfare and nobody's doing anything. So a lot of times they'll listen to the child if you state what you need, what's going on. So she was, she did. You know, she went to Acadia and I know she was telling them her story, and she also sees this counselor in Calais, Annie Beckham for AMHC, who happens to work in the same place as my sister. My sister actually does meta management for AMHC. And she buys suboxone off the street. She abuses her-- I mean I have video of her smashed on benzos. Cause in the night that's what she does, she gets all pillled up and then she's all buggered up and you know dangling.

So anyway um, she-- my sister hires this, the counselor that works with her at AMHC to be my niece's counselor. So in the meantime, my niece is telling her counselor everything that's going on. That, you know, my mother's boyfriend's selling marijuana, my mother's abusing pills; she's found plates and straws in her mother's room. She know-- she saw her mother selling her prescription drugs to my um, my older sister's ex-husband. And other people coming in. She's been on the phone and listened to my-- her mother do drug exchanges on the phone with her pills. And so, she ended up telling Annie Beckham all of this stuff, and told Annie Beckham that her mother physically beats her, cause her mother was physically hitting her. And my niece has a little, a little brother also that lives-- still lives in the household.

So you know I, I told *[NAME REDACTED]*, make sure you're telling everybody what's going on. And she did. So Annie goes and she says, you know I have to make child welfare report on this *[NAME REDACTED]*. And *[NAME REDACTED]* said, ok, go ahead. You know, cause she's at the point now, she's a teenager and she's tired of it. And she wants her mother to be found. She wants her mother to be caught. Because, you know, the mother's real good at pointing out everything she does wrong. And so it's always the child doing something wrong, rather than, you know, that the child is acting out because of the environment. So, you know, *[NAME REDACTED]* didn't-- doesn't say that, doesn't-- I'm just saying that as an adult on the outside who recognizes that.

And so Annie Beckham, instead of just making the re-- I don't even know if the report was made to the state, but this was back in maybe September, October. Sh-- Annie Beckham calls my sister and says, I have to report you to child welfare, because your niece-- your daughter has said this, this, and this about you. So of course what does a mother do? She goes and she lashes out at her child. Tries to physically harm her. Even though the daughter had made complaints that the, that the mother has physically harmed her, the counselor went—and *[NAME REDACTED]* believes she violated her confidentiality by telling her what she reported



or what she said that she needed to report. So she told-- Annie told Kim, I have to report you. And so it sent my sister into a rage. So she went. Her and [NAME REDACTED] had it out. [NAME REDACTED] contacted me in the morning on November 4th, and she said, Auntie, I didn't go to school today. My mom is doing this and that. You know she's lashing out, she, um, has been yelling. And I don't feel safe. I just want to die. I don't want to live. My counselor told my mom what I'd said in counseling, and, and me and my mom were fighting all last night. And I was like, [NAME REDACTED], I said, let me call your counselor. I said, I'm gonna-- cause I wanted to call the counselor -- I wanted to bitch her the fuck out for one, I didn't tell [NAME REDACTED] that. But I was like, yeah, I don't think she should-- and I was like-- I said, who's your counselor and where is she? And she said AMHC. I said AMHC? That's where your mother works. So I thought that was a conflict of interest having the mother work with the-- in the same building as the counselor that's there. Cause they, they obviously know each other. So I ah-- I said, let me call your counselor, cause I can't have her being unsafe. You know, maybe somebody can call and help de-escalate her and make her understand what was said. Or, you know, maybe it could be cleared up, I thought, in an easier way.

So I call-- ah, called and I talked to the secretary and I said I, I really need to speak with Annie Beckham. My name is Stephanie Bailey, and I, I um, I said I'm not seeking information-- cause I'm a CASA volunteer. So now I understand about advocacy and everything. I said, I'm not seeking information. I'm calling to give information to Annie Beckham. It's an emergency. Can I speak with her? And she said right now-- she's busy right now, I can give her voicemail. She said, but if it's an emergency, she said, and you don't get ahold of her then call this-- she gave me the crisis number. I said alright. So, I leave a message on Annie Beckham's machine. Annie, this is Stephanie Bailey, this child's maternal aunt, and she messaged me because of this. And I, I just gave her a quick-- I said I'm not seeking information, I just want to discuss this with you, because I was fucking mad about sharing the information. And I needed her to understand specifically what had happened so that she could help engage. Can you call her? Whatever. She doesn't call me back. I-- in the meantime call the crisis unit, and while I'm calling crisis and crisis makes me call DHHS, DHHS in Machias child protective services says, you're a tribal member? Yes I am. Well we don't handle your cases. You have to call your child welfare. I said, well, we've already called child welfare. There's already been reports made to child welfare, and they haven't done anything. We don't know what's going on. And she's like, well the best I can do is I can take your statement here. Are you willing to-- I said, yes I'm gonna make a statement. Yes I will make a statement. And she said we can send it to their child welfare department. And I said alright, maybe that will put a fire under their ass because the state's involved.

So I make a report. I'm on the phone with them. In the meantime while I'm doing all this, Annie Beckham calls my sister Kim, tells my sister Kim that I called her and what I said in the voicemail. Tells her what I said. So this sent my sister in to a rage. She's at work at AMHC. My sister leaves work and goes right to her house cause that's where [NAME REDACTED] is.

She's not in school that day. And [NAME REDACTED] messages me, Auntie, she said, my mother's home and she's flipping out. Her, her and her boyfriend are flipping out. And she's threatening me. And I said, go in your room and lock the door. Cause she has Internet. We were, we were communicating through. She had her iPod, and I was on facebook. I said, go in your room and lock the door and just don't let her in. So she did. And my sister ripped the phone out of the wall so she couldn't talk to me on the phone anymore. And she's like, she's threatening me, Auntie, and I was like call the cops, [NAME REDACTED]. You need to call the cops. I said, I'm gonna call the cops too, but call the cops. And I said, I'm going to have them come pick you up, and I'm going to have them to take you to grandmama's and then I'm gonna come and get you. Cause she's like I don't want to be here. I'm not safe, and I don't want to live.

And so I, after I do the DHS thing, cause I was like, I'm on, I'm on with her right now. And, you know, I said there's trouble and I told them I was notifying the police. So I made that statement to them, hang up and I call the police department down Pleasant Point. Of course, they don't have an automatic pickup. So I have to go through this whole fucked up process to just even get ahold of an officer. You have to leave a message and then hope they call you back. [00:26:58.05] So unless you call 911, which I think I ended up doing, because I couldn't wait for them to see if they got a message. And I said, I need you to go pick up my niece. And I told them what was going on. I just made a statement to the depart-- CPS in Machais. And my sister is at her house now. And my niece has her bags because she's-- I'm going to be coming down to pick her up. She doesn't want to be there and she's, she wants to take all her stuff and leave. Of course, she couldn't take all her stuff at the time, but she packed a big hearty bag.

And she goes out um, and goes-- the cops ended up showing up. And, and [NAME REDACTED] -- and the mother is upset of course. I don't know what exchange happened then. But she had to let her daughter go. She's, she's sixteen -- she was just about seventeen. Takes her down to my mother. My mother was really worried about being involved, because of course she loves all her kids. And I was like, Mom, this is me. I'm the one that's doing this. I'm gonna be down. You're just a holding place. You're just a place for her to be safe. So my mother was ok with it. She also knows-- my mother's made complaints too. She knows my sister's an addict and she knows that she's an alcoholic, and she knows that she struggles. Mind you I love my sister, and I want her to be well. I do want her to be well. But until she recognizes it for herself, there's nothing I can do. My focus is for her kids' well being and she is an adult and she can handle herself.

So I go and pick my niece up on November 4, and she's been with me since then. She's had one hospitalization, cause of course when I picked her up, she wasn't-- she forgot all her medications and I am anti-med. I'm anti-prescription drugs big time. I can't even tell you how much. I mean all my kids throughout their troubles; even my daughter who they believe has frontal lobe. They thought she was schizophrenic at one point-- the one that cuts and does all of that. They wanted her-- they even wanted to put my little autistic boy on medication. So none of my kids have been medicated because I'm big on, if you can create an environment, and you can communicate then there's better ways to deal with things than just medicating somebody. Cause medication is always a two-step system when it comes to mental health.



So anyway she'd been without her meds. And I was like, well let's try because you know, you're gonna be in a new environment. So this is my first time with, you know, my niece, and she's troubled and I know she's troubled because of my sister. And I know she has all these learned behaviors because my sister is emotionally overreactive. So I-- I mean we grew up in that environment. So I knew that, um, that-- where [NAME REDACTED] was getting that emotionally overreactive.

And um, so we go along without any medications. And um, and it was alright. You know, we were functioning. And all of this and that. But she still was-- cause she was so used to an environment where someone was either downgrading her every day or yelling -- like it was just never a normal conversation. It was always-- it had to be escalated you know something, like a whining. For example, one time we were in Wal-Mart and I heard-- I happened to be in another aisle and I, over the next aisle, I could hear somebody going, *(in a loud voice)* "Why are you always asking me for money? I don't have money. I don't know why you can't understand." And I looked at my husband and I go, *(in a whisper)* that's my fuckin' sister. Whining. Trying to parent her child and whining like a little kid. And I was like, fuck! I go, let's get the fuck out of here. I was like, I don't want to be around that right now. So, you know, I, I wanted to get out cause I'm embarrassed by bad behavior. Public bad behavior. So that's the kind of parenting she does. She's whiny-- it's either whiny and poor me or it's rur rur rur. Growling like a bear.

So um, anyway, we're going along without the medications, and then um, it it comes-- my, my daughter who doesn't live with me now, the one who has potential damage to her frontal lobe, is living with her father, and that's a whole nother story, trouble in paradise. I've tried to get child welfare involved in that case. She's a teenager. No. I'll go into her story a little bit after but.... so anyway, um, my daughter is-- it's Christmas time. She stays through a few days, and then it's almost New Year'ss. And her father is a hardcore alcoholic. My daughter's father. And so my niece wanted to go down and stay with her. She'd already tried to go down and stay with her before, but cause my niece had been in the habit, when she was living with her mother, she was drinking three to four times a week, when she was living with her mother. Cause, you know, she would take off, go spend time somewhere else, and my niece was drinking.

And um, so I didn't-- I told [NAME REDACTED], I don't even want my own child in that house. I'm not gonna let you go visit. And I told the father, you know, on the phone, I said listen, I want you to help discourage this cause I'm not going to allow it. I don't want her to go there. And so come New Year's, they were planning on having a big party down there. And the father-- I knew my kid's father was going to be gone, drunk. And I-- she come downstairs: Auntie, can I go stay down at, you know, with [NAME REDACTED]'s dad. And I said, no I'm sorry. I said, you know that I don't even want my own child living there. And so, she had one of my baby's toys, my little boy's toys, and she threw it. And I-- I don't tolerate-- and, plus he don't see that, my little boy. You know he's really used to a calm, consistent environment. And so I cha-- I went after her upstairs. What's going on? Why are you acting that way? I said, just

cause you're not getting your way, you're gonna have a tantrum? You know, and um. Yep. And she's like, I don't want to live here no more. And I was like, where are you gonna go? And she said, I'm gonna go back to my mother. I was like for real, [NAME REDACTED]? I go, because you're not getting your way, you want to go live back with your mother. I said, if that's what you want. I said, don't think that that's a threat to me. I said, that's not a threat. This is your life. This is your choice. So if that's what you want, then that's what you can do. It's not a threat.

And so I, I leave-- and I told her, I said, I love you. I said, [NAME REDACTED], but I said I just can't let you go stay there. And I'm sorry that you can't understand that and that you want to have a tantrum rather than, than to really hear me. So I come downstairs, and we have to get ready cause my daughter's father is gonna meet us in Calais. And I figured while we're going that I was going to take [NAME REDACTED] out, and you know we-- I was gonna take them out to have a lunch or whatever. McDonalds lunch. You know, I don't have a whole lot of money, so, and we don't do that all the time. We don't go out to eat hardly ever cause, you know, we're, we're-- we don't have a lot of money, like I said.

So um, she-- I went upstairs before we leave, and was like an hour later, after she had her little tantrum. I went upstairs to go check on her cause we were gonna head out, and I was gonna see if she wanted to go, and I go in the room, and she's packing a bag. And I was like, so you're leaving. And she's like yep. And I go, [NAME REDACTED], I'm not giving you a ride down to meet them. I'm sorry. Unless your mother or your father contact me to tell me what's going on, I'm not bringing you to Calais to drop you off to my kid's father. I'm not doing it. Because I know I'm not putting you in a safe environment. And she's like, my mother's coming to pick me up. And I said, ok. I said, if that's what you want. I said, I did my best kiddo and I love you, and I gotta go take [NAME REDACTED] down.

And so we left, and she was a little huffy and puffy, and as we left, I messaged her dad, and I said she's going back to her mother's house. You know, she had a tantrum that I wouldn't let her go stay down at Darren's. And so she's gonna go back. And he's like, Kim's really going to take her back? And I said I guess so. That's what she said to me. And so in the meantime, he had contacted Kim and everybody, and come to find out my sister didn't want her no more. And the father was messaging her and they were going at it. And it triggered her into a different state. Before I left I put all her medications -- cause she has prescription meds, we ended up getting her back on prescription meds cause she was-- she was a storm, always creating these little storms. Cause that's what she was used to. So I gave the meds to my son. My son happened to be here. And I said, don't give these to [NAME REDACTED] until her mother picks her up. Then take them to the mother and give them to her aunt. And he said ok. So [NAME REDACTED] in the meantime got triggered by her father, and then it turned into suicidal talk. I'm gonna kill myself. And so, she was messaging her dad back. And he was saying things like, oh-- cause she-- he messaged me. She's like, she's got wine there. I was like, there's no freakin'-- no, he's like, she's got alcohol there. I was like, no she doesn't, there's no alcohol in my house. So we don't do that anymore. We learned our lesson from the other ones taking from... So um, he said, she just sent me a picture of a bottle of wine. I was like oh my god, she's got my cooking wine. I was like, she took my cooking wine. And he said to her-- he was saying stuff to her like, oh are those your flintstone vitamins? Cause she took pictures of



her pills. That she actually took my acetaminophen, cause that's all she had access to. And took a picture of my bottle of wine. He's like, oh you're going to go out with class then. Saying stuff like that. You know he, he diminishes a lot of what she does, which makes it mo-- intensifies it I guess. She don't like that. It's not that he wants her to kill herself. I know, I know her father loves her, but he, he's in the military. He's a Navy seal. He's very militant and, you know, he doesn't believe that people-- mental illness really exists. He thinks it's a lack of self-control and stuff like that. So he just has a different perspective.

And so she ended up back in the hospital. When we were in the hospital, she realized her dad wasn't going to take her. Her granny couldn't take her. Nobody in my family was gonna take her, and her mother wasn't going to take her back. And she had cut herself so bad-- cause while I was on route to Calais, she created a storm here. Cut herself. There was blood everywhere. On my doors, cause she cut herself so bad. She's another cutter. She was hanging out with my daughter. My daughter left here. She was hanging out. And then another cutter we got. It's like this-- it catches on for some reason with these teenagers. So there was blood everywhere. When I come in my house-- cause I had to-- I had to drop my daughter off at a different location, and I said, call your father and tell him he's gonna have to come to Woodland and get you cause I have to go right back home. I had to call the ambulance. I had to call everybody cause it turned into suicide talk. And so I don't know if even Acadia had made whatever then.

So let me tell you the most difficult thing is-- the mother and the father, will not give me guardianship of the child because they're both controlling people. They have control issues. And because child welfare isn't involved, and won't engage, I cannot get guardianship of this child unless I petition the court, which I have done once. But the judge turned it down because she said we need three people to petition the court. Three tribal members to petition the court. And I don't just go telling my story to anybody. So it was gonna be me, it was gonna be my husband, and [NAME REDACTED] was willing to give them her own statement. But then I started thinking like her parents are gonna read this. Her parents and her father and everybody's gonna read her statement. And what sort of dynamic am I creating by pushing this guardianship?

You know, cause they want to go and give specific allowances. So if sh-- there was medical emergency right now, I couldn't even sign for her. I couldn't do anything for her because I'm not her legal guardian. And Acadia-- I talked to them about it. And they tried to get the mother to understand. You know, the daughter even wishes-- maybe you could just think, the guardianship doesn't sever your parental ties. It just allows the aunt to make the decisions that she needs to for the child. And of course, I'm not just gonna go make some-- but then the father's like you're going to be making unilateral decisions for my child, and I'm like, I want her to-- I want to be-- the school won't talk to me because I'm not her guardian. They could be held liable if they talk to somebody who's not her guardian. I can't make decisions with her

school. You know, I want her to graduate. I said, what sort of decision don't you want me to make? I said, how about you tell me that? And neither one of them want to talk.

And neither one of them were helping me find-- I can't add her to my food stamps, cause the mother is still collecting food stamps for her. Of course I don't get any financial help from them because they're not under child welfare-- I mean my niece isn't under child welfare. And, um, the parents-- I don't know, we're in a fucking weird world. But the father real-- cause I just had my phone and Internet disconnected because I can't keep up with my bills, cause of course, she's a teenager. Teenager has different needs. Makeup, you know, feminine products, and shampoos and whatever those balls are that they want. And you know, different body washes and stuff. So, like they're not getting it, you know. They just don't get it.

So I haven't been able to meet my bills cause it's been since November. But the father and the grandmother was like, how are supposed to get ahold of her now. And, I don't know. You know, I'm going to get it on-- I had to borrow money to get all of it back on cause I do my work through the computer and the phone. So I need those as well. And the, the dad just finally sent me some money in the mail. Just last week I got a check for her. So finally after-- since November till now, he sent me some money. You know, it's something anyway.

So I don't get any help. So I feel let down by also, the child welfare system cause I've made reports, the father has made reports, family members have made reports. And I mean they don't even answer their phone. I--I've called, tried to make, you know, reports in the past, and Molly don't call back. I've left my number. And I'm really pleasant when I call. I'm like, hey Molly, this is Stephanie. I don't know why they don't do callbacks. I don't know why they don't do any sort of follow up. Like something to let us know-- are you doing an investigation?

You know, I have a daughter right now. And so this is the last child. That's my, my niece. You know, I have no guardianship of her. I don't know if I want to create that dynamic by pushing the courts to have her father and her mother be able to read the document she wants to write in order for me to get the allowances I need. I just don't know if it's worth it. Cause she's already in turmoil. She's already in a state of chaos. And to have her be-- her relationship more strained with her parents? I don't think it's worth it. I think that I'm just gonna have to suffer and, and fight any way I can to get her needs met. (*Tearing up.*)

And so my last one of my child, [NAME REDACTED], who lives with her dad. He's an alcoholic and she gets social security income. And that's the only reason why he lets her stay there. He was letting her live with her boyfriend. I had reported that to Molly. She never calls me back. I had to leave a voicemail, actually of the things I was discouraged about, cause she wouldn't call me back. And um, you know, my-- I said she's being neglected. I just made another report to them just last week on my daughter [NAME REDACTED] because she's stealing. Cause nobody's buying her pads. (*Speaking through tears.*) She hasn't seen a mental health professional in over a year. I had to hire a case management worker to try to get her needs met. But she can only do so much as a case management worker. Like she can make appointments and do stuff like that, but she can't-- the father has to help get the child there. The father has to participate in some way. And he doesn't. I had her all set up to get her braces done more than a couple years ago now. And nothing's been done for her. So she's being neglected.



And I've made two child welfare reports on him and they don't do anything and they don't get back to me.

So that's another thing, and then I think about, you know right now I'm petit-- I actually just made an appointment with social security because I've taken on part-time work down there as a community organizer at Pleasant Point. So I'm able to go there once a week. And that's where my daughter lives. And so I figure if I try to be her payee again, then at least I can buy her groceries once a week, because she gets no food there. She contacts me and says, mom I'm hungry. Dad doesn't buy no food. There's no food in the house. You know, or when she's upset, the school calls me cause they can never get ahold of their father. So I'm the one that has to do all this travelling anyway.

So um, I feel let down by child welfare cause I don't know what's going on. And every day I have to wonder, is, you know-- is my child going to be ok down there? Cause she's lying now. She's highly influenced by the people that she's around. That's part of her disability. And so her father is a liar. A big time liar. And he's a drunk. And he's a womanizer. And so you know, she is not on birth control, he's not meeting her needs in any way. Nothing's being done for her. She hasn't had a physical since I last had her. And it just bothers me. It makes me sick to know that I can't even get child welfare-- you know, are you calling the clinic to see if she's had appointments? Cause this is what I'm telling them. She's being neglected. She has mental health issues. And them knowing that Molly-- like are you checking in? Has the father had her seen by a doctor? Has she had her dental appointment? Has she seen a mental health professional? Does she need to be on medications? Are her medications being filled? Like what sort of investigation is fucking Molly doing? Is it being followed up with? I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't like the way Molly works either. A lot of people don't. I mean I like Molly as a person. And I think she's a wonderful woman, but I just-- it's the process. It's the system or whatever it is that she's doing. It's just not working. And I feel let down as a parent in our communities because I have to hear my child. I'm the one that has to know there's nothing I can do. There's nothing I can do because of her age. And no court is gonna force her back in my home.

But I think that if I become her payee, her father's gonna kick her out. And then she's gonna come back into my home, which in a way kind of scares me because I have one with mental health issues, and she has mental health issues. And so having that dynamic again with two children with mental health issues is a scary thought for me. But I'm gonna do what I need to do, you know? I'm gonna do the best that I can and, and just hope that I can get the resources that I need to be able to do that.

You know if I had the guardianship, that would be a lot less because I have to keep dealing with her fucking parents. And they trigger her-- my niece -- every time. My niece gets triggered. Just the other day, we went down, I went to go listen to Oren Lyons speak, and her

mother-- she wanted to go see her brother, cause her brother is still in that environment, and her brother had told [NAME REDACTED] that um, her mom-- their mom and her boyfriend have been-- like they'll buy pizza at night and then they'll leave him alone. And he's twelve or thirteen. Twelve or thirteen now. And leave him alone. But he's, he's special. Like you gotta see this child. My sister has created an unhealthy parent child attachment. You know she used to say stuff like him, if anybody takes you away from me, I'm going to die. Or I'm gonna kill myself. So those are the kind of thoughts that are in this little boy's head. When you think about child welfare getting involved, how many times has that been said to him? And he's a protector of his mother. She doesn't physically abuse him like she does this one. So um, I don't know what's going to happen with that. And I hope to get some sort of follow-up, you know, on that-- on maybe you heard something different cause I know you all are mandated reporters too. And I got her into counseling -- [NAME REDACTED] -- here at the clinic cause the mother had signed allowances. Didn't want me to put her into this other-- see this other woman, but I did because I think that Annie Beckham violated her confidentiality. And I think [NAME REDACTED] needs an unbiased third party to help me even, cause I-- we sit in counsel every day, me and my niece, but I'm also her aunt. You know, and I'm somebody trying to help her to be well, and I'm trying to advocate for her. So me playing all these roles could also hinder [NAME REDACTED] from feeling like she wants to share something. Cause she knew I was losing the phone and the internet, and she knew that her being here was part of my financial burden as well. And sh-- I know she takes that on. So I try to keep as much you know. And so her being in the counseling-- because my sister had signed the paperwork that I couldn't make appointments for her, I just did it anyway. So she's in counseling now. And she had al-- she's already told her counseling some, some of the things that have gone on, and I know-- they just told us yesterday that they were mandated to report what she had said, so they've also made a report. So now I know a bunch of people are making reports. Is anybody telling the father? Has anybody called her father to notify him? So he can look out for his son's best interest? Maybe he could step in right now and take that little boy. You know? So, that's it. I'm done.

RG: I have a couple questions I'd love to ask you.

SB: Sure. Yep.

RG: Which is why I was writing notes so that I wouldn't forget. First of all, thank you for all of that and for the courage that it took to share all of that. You have a tremendous amount of experience and incredible frustration with the child welfare system, and I know that that's a lot to handle. And so I want to thank you for that, for sharing with us. Cause it's important information for us to know.

SB: I agree.

RG: So my first question for you is, when you were taking on foster children with the tribal child welfare, were you receiving any information about the child's needs from the department? So information about mental health, information about developmental--

SB: Nothing. They didn't tell me anything. I didn't even know that the, the older sister of the little boy that I have now, I had no idea that she had been talking suicidal ideation before. I had



no mental health background really on her-- what had happened since she had been talking to me, you know, as her youth group moderator and sharing information.

RG: Ok. That's also very important for us to know. When you had foster children in your care, what was the relationship like with the bio-family? Biological family? Siblings as well as parents?

SB: Ok so. With the little boy that I have that has autism, it was pretty good at first. But because um, because he has autism and has social anxieties and sensory issues, the grandmother who had entrusted me at first to take him on in care, had turned against me because, you know, I was allowing-- I encouraged family connections and to visit and be involved. As long as it's healthy. You know what I mean? If it's unhealthy then you don't have to go over and visit. You don't have to do-- that's what I always said to the older sister, you know, cause she would come over, and my gram said this. And she says things very unhealthy and inappropriate. You know threats and, and stuff like that.

So um, but the little boy that has autism he, ah-- it started to, to get-- when I would go drop him off, he would start having a tantrum and digging my legs and screaming. And he doesn't talk and doesn't communicate. And I was like, why is he doing this? And she-- the grandmother's very eccentric. So she wouldn't even let me in her house. She don't let nobody in her house. And the little boy-- my baby-- was holding me. And I was like, they would have to grab him and pull him and he'd be screaming trying to grab at me. You know I was like, fuck! Like, you really want me to let this kid, like, go? And it was bothering me so I would leave and then an hour later they would bring him back and he'd be all excited to come back. And then every time he started seeing his sisters or the grandmother, he'd start getting anxiety and start crying and freaking out. So I told Charlene, I was like this is too much for him. Like, he's anxious and then he comes home and he's real emotional after a while. And, you know, and ah-- and I said why don't you start coming to my house to pick him up and take him out. And so they started doing that, but it got to be where he wouldn't leave. He'd go hide. And I couldn't-- what am I going to do? Throw this kid out the door to force him to go?

And so the grandmother started saying that I was keeping him from them. That I wasn't encouraging a family relationship. That I was just trying to keep him to myself. But that wasn't it at all. And so-- I mean, she even wrote to the Calais advertiser downgrading me, saying whatever, and downgrading, you know, the system and stuff. And she was complaining to the chief about me up at the church. She was calling me a devil, whore woman to people in the community, talking terrible about me like I didn't want her to be involved, and that wasn't it. Like I would like anybody to be in my shoes to see how it is with a child with special needs that's freaking out and digging you and don't know how to talk and they're crying and screaming. Like what are you going to do? You going to throw them off you? That's going to traumatize them. You know, so I always tried to explain that, but she didn't get it. So the

grandmother doesn't like me to this day. And the older daughter come in to live with me, she was pissed. And that's why I thought they um--- I don't know, she was doing anything in her power to get her just out of my home. She didn't want to older daughter here. She wanted her anywhere else but here. And I was the only one that they could place her with at the time that was willing to take her.

So it was terrible and that was the only one involved. The bio mother who is the real one that should have been involved. She's a severe alcoholic. The only reason why there was ever any engagement was because the grandmother was like making, making the mother -- the alcoholic mother -- be involved. And the mother really didn't want to-- she's still not involved to this day. All these kids are still in foster care. I'm actually the little boy's court ordered legal guardian. I'm his court ordered legal guardian, and I'm pushing for adoption right now. I won't-- me and my husband want to be his adoptive parents, and um, and we have to go through child welfare for that. And they're not very good at communicating, so let me tell you. It's a process. Cause I have to engage with them again.

I actually still do advocacy work. Oh I actually do advocacy work too, and I'm dealing with a family who has kids that were taken away from them and are involved because the child don't hit Indian child welfare-- they don't-- ICWA doesn't-- the parents, the mother is tribal, the husband is not, and the kids don't make the census, so they're not. And so let me tell you that's a whole nother dynamic that I'm seeing, with the state feeling like they can come in and the tribe was trying to keep-- like, don't file this jeopardy position-- like, let's work on this together here. Cause the mother was doing everything she needs to, to keep engaged with her kids. The ki-- the child that they took out of her care has high, high-- I mean intense medical needs. Has a really intense diabetic condition. And so the mother has, um, some limitations, ah... intellectual limitations. And there a-- and extended family, the grandparents and everybody, have always been involved in the care of these children. And so because she had failed to meet the child's needs. She has two kids, the little-- the baby, that had the diabetic needs. The state went in and um, put him into their custody -- well the tribe did. And they put him into a tribal foster home, and the little girl stayed with the mother because the mother is able to parent. It's just that the medical needs that they were so intense, so many amount of fluid, so much amount of food, so much of this and that. Like very-- I mean, even me as a regular parent, having to care for a child like that would be intense. So he was out.

They never involved the little girl, and so we were all working at the child welfare department, and I was advocating because they wanted to put the baby into the grandmother's home-- kinship care, rather than in this foster home because there was tension. And the tribe was fighting against it to put him in kinship care rather than try to create an environment or create the supports that they could help the child to be in the grandparents home so that the mother and everybody could engage comfortably-- cause like I said there's some intellectual and there's some awkwardness with the parent and the grandparents. They didn't. They would rather keep him in the foster home so that there's tension between the foster and the tribal parents. Like intense, cause this is a tribal foster home.

And so the little girl is still in the home and the state now-- they avoided the jeopardy petition being filed with the state department, and I was really glad to hear that the child welfare



director was fighting the jeopardy. She's like, no let's not fight jeopardy. Let's work on this, and get this-- cause the mother is wonderful. She's doing everything she needs to. She's engaging. I mean, they were keeping logs and everything. You should see how many people are involved in this case. A lot of support. And so I mean even one, this woman-- her name is Nancy, was in and, because initially they didn't put the boy in with the grandmother, cause the grandmother and the daughter had been quarreling. Something had come up. And so, you know, she brought in, you know, and I was advocating for the child to be put with the grandparents cause that's what the family wants. I'm not acting as a CASA person for the child. I'm not advocating for the child, I'm advocating for the tribal family. Independently. Cause I do that for, for whatever-- domestic violence victims or anybody that asks me to go to court for 'em.

And so I brought up how, you know, that's what we do, families fight, but we need to forgive and we get back in together. And that's what they'd done-- the daughter and the mother had made up. And so that-- the nurse was like, oh and just cause it's a love fest and people get back in don't mean we should be trusting them. And I was like, what? I turned around and I bitched that woman right out. I was like our whole lives are built on relationships. And that's what you do. You fight and you make that repair. You do whatever it is you need to do and you make it better and you work on keeping that family- I was fucking mad that that woman said that. You know, diminishing their growth and their progress as a family unit.

So I see how these state people are-- would rather find a way to keep them unconnected than connected. So the tribe fought against the jeopardy petition and then they brought in the big head honcho... I know her name cause I've done a lot of different work with her. Anyway, um, she was sitting there and listened and she said-- the mother had been making progress the whole time. And even though she had been making progress, I mean she had slipped a couple of times and didn't give enough fluid intakes at one point, but rather than recognizing that the mother wasn't a drinker, you know, and she was visiting every day. They were focusing on well the father isn't visiting. Why isn't he visiting? And because he has um, quiriness, he's awkward and he doesn't feel comfortable in other people's homes. But he would stay back with the little girl, the other child. And so they would rather make issue with him not being there and you're not complying. You're not doing what you need to. They'd rather keep the family separated.

And so because of the father not visiting, and the mother not quite get-- and let me tell you, I know the importance of the fluid intake. Like it's life or death, the amount of intake of the fluid of this child. So I understood that. But I also think it's about support and about if somebody was there and noticed, then say, you need to make sure they're getting that bottle. Isn't that what those support people come in the house to do? That's what I, I'm given the impression. And so rather than doing that, they're writing down, she didn't do this.

So it pisses me off seeing this, this dealing. The way they work. So the woman was sitting there and she said, we're going to file the jeopardy petition at the last one in January-- last meeting in January. So they file the jeopardy petition. We ended up in tribal court. They kicked me, everybody out. And I was like I'm the advocate. I have to go and tell the lawyer I'm the advocate. And he's like the judge wants you to leave. You gotta leave. And I was like, she has mental limitations -- the people I'm advocating for -- like intellectual limitations. And so I was like you-- and I was pointing at him-- you need to tell them I am your advocate, cause I need to know what's going on. And so they did. I was able to be brought back into the court. But um, in the meantime while I was out, I read their jeopardy petition. And in their petition they included the other little girl. They included the other child who there has been-- and they're tr-- they like, little things that the father has said, they've escalated into something. You know, cause he said, ah-- somebody one day, oh, something about a snack. And he was like, oh I don't want her to be overweight. So they made it-- he didn't-- instead of just saying, you know, he was just making a point, you know, a silly point at a random time, they're making it out to be that he's neglecting to feed her, because he doesn't want her to be fat. And that's not his point. That's not what he was saying. That's not what he does. They feed-- I mean I check in and visit, and they feed the child. So now they've included this other child in this jeopardy petition. And this court- this case is still, right now this is the one I'm advocating for.

And I see it-- and they're pushing it back. They've got a guardian ad litem and he's trying to get the judge out of the case because the judge used to be a tribal judge. Even though he's never worked on this case and everybody, all of the parties involved are ok with him because we know him and we actually trust him. The guardian ad litem is saying, he needs to recuse himself because it's a conflict of interest. But yet all of us involved don't see that. We, we, we don't have a problem with him serving because we think he understands Indian Child Welfare Act, because he's been involved in our community for a lot of years. He was our DA or whatever-- the, the state-- he represented the tribes, DA, whatever, whatever. I don't know.

So anyway I just wanted to make sure I brought that up to cause that is part of the child welfare system. And I see how the Indian Child Welfare Act isn't protecting this family-- you know, these kids because they don't fall under it. I think we need to find a way that if the mother is, is a tribal member, and these kids-- because they're on a time clock now. Where in the tribe they don't sever parental ties after eighteen months. They have so many months and because the guardian ad litem is trying to get the judge to recuse himself, and they're having continuations because they want the parents to have some evaluations, and the doctors can't see them for like six months, their clock is being wound down because of the state's lack of ability to meet these par-- the requests of the court for these parents. So these parents could lose their kids because these people can't get on their time clock. Can't get doctors and everybody to act in, in the right period of time frame. So I wonder to see how this is going to happen when this ticks down. Cause it's already been-- this, this coming summer will be a year. So we'll see. Alright so go ahead with those-- I just-- you--your question reminded me about this other case.

RG: Can you tell me a little bit about the process of becoming a foster parent within-- with tribal child welfare?



SB: I had to go down and pick up an application, and in the application it, it just asked all my basic information. It asked about guns and all of this stuff and my health and my mental health. It was pretty thorough asking information. And so then I handed that in. Didn't ask me to see a doctor or anything or anything like that. Didn't ask for any of my mental health records either. I don't even-- I can't remember now if it asked for release of any of that information -- if I did.

And then once they received my application, they came up here and they walked through my house to see how it was. And then, we were good to go. I had already had the baby, though. I'd had-- we just had to hide him while she was in, in case they were going to take him. What are doing ahhh! Yeah. So it was, it was alright. It was decent enough.

RG: Ok. So then I have two last questions for you. The first one is-- let's see which one I want to start with. What would you have needed in dealing with the child welfare system? What would you have needed or what would you have wanted to have made the situation better?

SB: So I think that in the case of my little boy, where he had special needs. I think if they are par-- if they have custody or they share custody and I'm just-- they need to be more... I can handle stuff. I'm a pretty engaged parent, and I can-- I know how to meet a child's needs. I just go in and I get it done. But if I wasn't-- like they need to show up to their school meetings. They should be showing up to -- because like I said, I know he got lucky being with me because he was unresponsive, he didn't talk. But what if this child was in a home where there was a, a child molester. He wouldn't have been able to speak for himself. And he could have been hurt. And like the thought of that makes me sick. Like how many kids have some sort of disability that could be going through something like that? [01:06:49.22] Cause we know there are cases where kids are being abused right now and nothing's being done. You know people have made reports and things aren't being done.

So they need to check in. I mean, I would have been welcoming to it. Maybe some other families wouldn't, but I would have been alright with them coming in on a school meeting with me and my little boy, or me and the other two adult children, you know, checking in. Com-- maybe coming in once a month or once every other month and sitting with me and the adult -- you know I had teenagers, the other two were teenagers. And sitting and just checking in rather than coming in here at night and removing her from my home. Cause they did that twice to this girl.

You know, talking. Having situations where maybe they should even be making sure that all of these foster children have some sort of in-home counseling or outside counseling where they can come and sit in with us at one point, so that everybody's always on the same page. Cause sometimes kids create a storm. Sometimes kids will tell stories, especially when they've experienced family trauma. Like making sure their needs are being met. Child welfare never once made sure that I was meeting any of these kids needs. They didn't care if they were in

counseling, they didn't care if they had behavior issues, they didn't care if this one's oppositional defiant disorder had been affecting me. Letting me know if there were any resources. Like I'm lucky that I'm smart enough to go seek out resources. But if I wasn't, I wouldn't know that I could have a case manager to go and help me to find um, like physical therapy or occupational therapy, or child development services. You know, I could have been somebody that didn't do anything. The baby-- like when I said, he come in, he was unresponsive and the mother, I was like, you know your-- I said, your son has not hit any developmental milestones, I said you really should take him in to see somebody. And she's like, oh that's how kids are. They all develop different. And I said yes I agree, but this is really major. And nothing to do with it. So that's the same case. Child welfare is neglecting these kids by not making sure they understand their needs, and then when they're being placed-- like if they gave me some-- I already knew this middle child's-- his, the, the daughter-- the sister of the one that I have now? I knew some of her background and I knew she was troubled, but I didn't know what she had gone through recently. You know, maybe have me sign something about the confidentiality and that if they share her background with me. And then where, where she was involving me after she'd been removed from my home and she was with the other foster home where I had been her foster and I had always been an engaged person in her life, I'd been somebody that'd shared her abuse with the child welfare system. Like they should have some sort of form or something where somebody like me who they know cares and has followed the rules every time before, that could sign a confidentiality thing to be able to help. Rather than shut me out and make me look like a fucking mess, you know, trying to get this child's needs met because she's writing to me saying, I don't want to live. I just cut myself last night. I just did this. I don't want to be here. And it's stressing me the fuck out. I gotta sit here and worry about another child not even in my home? And then they want to play-- pussy foot around with me, you know, the child welfare department. You know, like dabbling little bits of information, but nothing. And I've always been engaged with her. You know, maybe there's some way that they can help keep somebody like me engaged. Not all foster parents are gonna be that way, mind you I get that. But there are some people who have been the sharer of the information. I help share her abuse. I help make them aware of what was going on. And then when they removed her I was involved step by step. When she was in the non-tribal home and even after. And then they shut me out and I have to go to court and look like a fucking ass. Well I made sure they looked like an ass too.

So yeah. They, they need to be more involved. And, and with the ones that they don't get back on-- my niece and my daughter. They need to have some sort of follow up. Like they need to call back-- they need to return calls the same day. The same fucking day. I call you-- when I call child welfare, I'll say, it's Monday, February twenty-something and it's almost two o'clock. I always leave the date and the time and everything when I'm calling. Cause that's how I am. I'm thorough. They need to call me back that same day. You need to call your people back making a complaint the same day, cause our kids matter. And we don't want to know what you have to say four fucking days later. I want to know you getting back to me now cause right now I'm stressing out cause of this child. And maybe not in a bad way, but worrying about them. It could be worry and maybe it isn't about something intense. But get back to me. Let me know. I'm taking the time to reach out to you to tell you private information. You get back to me and tell me something about this case. It pisses me off.



I still don't know nothing with my daughter and my niece. Just pisses me off. So they need to care more and act like they care more. Do something. That's why people have so many bad things to say about Dolly and about Molly because they don't do follow-up and they don't do outreach and there's no really good community things coming out of social services. That's what a social services department should be for. They should be the hub. (*Drying tears.*)

Sorry about all my swearing. But I am so fed up and tired of this system. I'm tired of kids hurting. I'm tired of people like me who care and I have to hurt. And I have to be a strong person too. I mean I am a strong person, but I-- I'm also emotional, you know, because I care sometimes too much I think...that I make myself look crazy. You know going to court with this other girl. I really think I did make myself look a little crazy but at least they know I care and I'll fight. You know? Cause I will.

RG: I have one last question.

SB: Ok.

RG: It's a easier one. What does reconciliation mean to you?

SB: Um, for me it's just-- we need to come, come to terms and understanding where we're at with whatever situation. Like with all these kids that I've dealt with, reconciliation for me would mean that I'm at least content and we have agreements and everybody-- I've come to terms-- we've come to terms with whatever it is, and that I can let it go. That there's some repair, if there needs to be a repair made, that there can be a repair made on behalf of the child welfare system or whoever it is. For them to reach out and to let people know maybe what their struggles were. You know, maybe one day Dolly and Molly will be able to express to our community why they failed us. What was it that you were doing that, that you couldn't reach out-- back to us? That you couldn't let us know what was going on? Why these kid's cases weren't being looked into after years and years and years of complaints or reports? So reconciliation for me would be understanding and coming to terms with whatever it is.

RG: Thank you so much.

SB: Mmhmm. Thanks for listening to me for so long.

RG: No. You could keep me here all day. Is there anything else you want to say before I stop?

SB: No I think I'm good.

RG: Ok.

[END OF RECORDING.]