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11-22-2013

Statement by Molly Newell and Mary Lou Barnes collected by Margo Milliken on November 22, 2013

Molly Newell

Mary Lou Barnes

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General Information

Private or Public Statement? - Private

Statement Provider: Molly Newell and Mary Lou Barnes

Date: 11/ 22/ 2013

Location: Sipayik, Maine

Previous Statement? Yes – S-201311-00006

Statement Gatherer: Margo Milliken

Support Person:

Additional Individuals Present: Gail Werrbach, Ben Pendercudlip, Adam Mazo

Recording Format: Video

Length of Recording: 55:36

Recording

MM: My name is Margot Milken and I am Statement Gatherer for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Um, would each of you, who are providing statements, please say your name.

MLB: My name is Mary Lou Barnes.

MN: I'm Molly Newell.

MM: Thank you. And we also have with us in the room, um one of the Commissioners from the TRC...

GW: Gail Werrbach

MM: The file numbers are S-201311-00012 and S-201311-00016. Today is November 22, 2013, we are in Sipayik, Maine. Molly and Mary, have you been informed, do you understand and have you signed the informed consent form?

MLB: Yes.

MN: Yes.

MM: I need to tell you that any information disclosed in your statement that indicates that a child is in need of protection or if there is imminent risk of death or serious bodily harm to an

identifiable person or group, included yourself, that information may not be protected as confidential.

AM: So, we are just going to turn on our camera, just to have you, just to have everybody in the room confirm that we all understand that we are...that we are recording everybody in the room for a documentary film that will be screened publicly.

If we can, if everybody could just ...

MN: Yes

MM: Yes

GB: Yes

MLB: Yes

AM: And then, last thing I'll say is I no longer have to be here for our technical needs so I can leave the room if that's what folks prefer. Or um, I can sit quietly?

MLB: Whichever you prefer.

MN: Whichever you prefer, it doesn't matter to us.

MLB: *(hand motion gesturing towards speaker)*. Yea.

AM: Okay, Thank you. Actually I'll be used technically then.

BP: So what that means, is Adam will be sitting on the floor with a microphone in the center of the circle.

MN: Sure

BP: If that's okay with everybody?

MM: Here, or?

MN: Yea.

BP: He'll be sitting right here.

MM: Okay.

MN: Okay, then that's fine. *[00:02:29.28]*

GW: He should have a strong back for this floor, geez.

MM: I know, I couldn't sit there for an hour.

GW: I was going to say, I can't either.

AM: Let the legs fall asleep.

GW: Okay, feel free to stretch.

MM: So are you done with what you needed to do?

BP: We are done. Thank you.

MM: So, I am just going to check in one more time to see if there is anything else that you need or are you ready to begin?

MLB: All set.

MN: I am, yup.

MM: Okay, alright then, let's begin.

GW: Well, when, when I was listening to Mary Lou's statement yesterday and you have, um, what'd you tell us, thirty-two years of experiences here at Sipayik in social services and a variety of responsibilities. And, I was trying to think, Molly, you've had, is it over ten years?

MN: I've been here fifteen.

GW: Fifteen, Holy Cow! Um and um the question that I had at the end and I had asked Mary Lou that I think Molly then wanted to answer was that um, in our listening circles that we had heard from, um, some folks who had been involved with child welfare, the state, sometimes here, sometimes both, um for themselves, for their grandchildren, um different situations, but I knew that there were a lot of voices that we hadn't heard from. And so, what I asked Mary Lou at the end was, " If the families that you've worked with, over all these years, and I knew it was somewhat of a hard question, if the families, if you could speak for those, if you could be the voice for those families and kids and grandparents that you've worked with over all these years, what would, what would you want to tell the commission? What would, what do you think those voices, those folks um, would say? And, that was, that was sort of the general, you know, the general question. Um, but if it's easier to start with another one and maybe it is um, and this is somewhat the social worker in me, because you know it was killing me not to ask questions. Um, just you have such a long history, both of you. You know, Mary Lou, you go from 78' when the ICWA Act started. Um, and we know there had been changes in the state, changes

here. Um, but, I feel like there's a lot of wisdom that you both have about doing this work in Indian child welfare and that was kind of why this came about. That, that I wanted to, I know snippets of it from different other hats I've worn, but I wanted to get that. So, I don't know, is it easier to maybe just give us your impressions in terms of that evolution of, of Indian child welfare and um, the work here at Sipayik and the relationship with the state and sort of what that's, what that's been like for both of you? Is that too hard to...?

MN: *(Laughs)*

MLB: *(Laughs)*

GW: I guess wherever you wanted to start, um, cause you've got too much history to not and the history is important.

MN: I can go.

GW: Okay.

[00:06:25.21] MN: Um, I think that when I first started in um, the Child Welfare Department, um, the relationship we had with the state was non-existent, I would say. Um, it wasn't until what '99 that we started um, working with um, the state through Sandi Hodge and Penthea Burns and um, over the years, I think that, um, it has gotten easier. Um, the ICWA liaison that we now have is really through, um, building that relationship. Um, like Mary Lou mentioned yesterday, you know, she can pick the phone and call Martha Proulx. And um, Martha will do whatever she can to help Mary Lou. Um, and that's only been a couple of years since we've been able to do that, a few years, maybe. Um, that would have been unheard of back in the day when Mary Lou, you know 78' and I am talking you 98', 99'. That's twenty years later. Um, so I think that that relationship now, we're on the right path. I think that we've come a long way. Um, I think that, um, there's more that we're still able to work on, should we choose to do that. And, I hope that we keep continually, keep going forward. Um, because when we take a step backward, that step is not just one step. That step is many steps. Um and it's so hard to, to regain to go forward again. Um, I think that each of the tribes are different. Um, there are three tribes in Maine that have a court, that have a court system. And, I think that has a major impact on how the tribes are treated. Um, I was reminded on Monday, I do believe, um, Wednesday, I'm sorry, on Wednesday when one of the girls from Micmac came and gave me a hug. And, I thought she was giving me a hug because I thought she saw through me and I just given my statement. And, um, I thought that's why she was giving me a hug. In actuality, she was looking for a hug from me. **[00:09:17.14]**

GW: umhm.

MN: Um, and um, one of the statements that she made was that, "I am so tired of fighting." And that really made me think. I don't think we fight. *(hand motion gesturing between Mary Lou Barnes and herself)* I think that yes we may, we go in, we present our opinion on a case, when we go and do an assessment, I mean we are right there from the assessment, when DHHS calls. I think it's different for um, Maliseet and um Micmac. Because they don't have and I'm

thinking that's what it is, because they don't have a tribal court system. They don't have um, the Maliseets are so spread out. So are the Micmacs. You know. And I think that plays a major role, um, for them.

You know, you had one of the questions that you asked yesterday was, "Is it because of their age?" You know when social workers are coming into the DHHS field, is it their age that, um, is that what we're up against? I think that may have, I think that may be apart of it, but I think that's only a small part of it. Um, like I had mentioned yesterday, I think that DHS is so, they have so much more area that they have to cover. We have this little community. You know? So the dynamics are definitely different. They have policies and procedures for the entire state. We have keeping children and families together, and, whatever we need to do so that can happen. So, our mentality or the way we do business is totally different. Um, I think that, um, because they have to follow those policies and procedures... they have a timeline. We don't have a timeline. We'll keep children in custody until they're eighteen years old, if that is what we need to do. The state doesn't do that. You know, fifteen out of the past eighteen months, they're looking for permanency. And, and, um, that's just a major difference. That's one of the major differences. *(Cough) Excuse Me. [00:12:20.01]*

I think that's it has helped that we have been able to go down and to be apart of the training that DHHS has to become a DHHS caseworker. We're able to go in and do a piece on ICWA. You know, um, giving them history about our tribes. Um, I think that that helps those caseworkers have a better understanding. Um, because I'll get phone calls from people down in Portland, DHHS case workers from down in Portland and they'll say, you know, "I really don't know what I'm doing. So, please walk me through this." You know what? I'd much rather them do that. Call me. Talk to me. You know, um, rather than thinking that, "Okay, this is what I need to be doing," and they haven't a clue. But if you call me, I'll walk you through it. I'll be more, I'll be more than wanting to help. Um, and that has happened quite a bit. Um, I mean there are some caseworkers that don't even know that the, the five tribes in Maine, you know? Um, or the four tribes in Maine. The five reservations I should say. Um, so, let me just stop there, in case, I know you want to ask a question, Gail. And, I don't know if I've answered your question.

GW: Yea.

MN: I think, in a round-about way, I may have. And, I don't know if there's anything you want to add. *(Hand motion to Mary Lou Barnes) [00:14:02.23]*

MLB: Um, well, I think I said that yesterday. You know. Um, we are better together, um, sometimes that, um, changes a little bit and we have to back up and see where we're at. But, um, I think, I think we do have an advantage because we have tribal court. In most cases,

because, usually, um, if it's a tribal member and they're tribal children, um, we can, um transfer jurisdiction, once the state takes custody, which is a lot easier.

MN: (*nods*)

MLB: So, with the Maliseets and the Micmacs that can't happen. So, I think that's sometimes where the difficulty is.

GW: So the case...

MLB: And, I would say...

GW: Sorry.

MB: I would say from doing the trainings in the five place in the state, um, Aroostook County was the hardest. Yup. They really bucked the system. They really gave us a run for our money. And, when we left there, we thought, "You know, is this gonna work?" You know, but when we get down to Machias and into Bangor, um, we've worked with them more, so, um, they were more understanding as to where we were trying to go. So, um, I do think that Aroostook county has it the hardest. But....

GB: So, the state worker who calls you from Portland, is calling you because there's a child in the Portland area or in that DHS office that they have determined may be a Passamaquoddy child from Sipayik. (*MN nods*) And, um, and then how is that work, in terms of the conversation or the negotiations, that go then between you and the, you and the state?

[00:16:23.24] MN: Umhm. Um, If, indeed, that child is a Passamaquoddy Tribal member and is either eligible or is on our census, um, then we would coordinate a time where we could go out and do an assessment together. Um, sometimes that's harder to do based on schedules, based on distance. But, the way that we see it is, if that is a Passamaquoddy child, um, we are going to make the effort to go down there and be a part of that assessment.

Um, if it is not a child on the Passamaquoddy census, um, I will help, however I can, to direct them, um, to other reservations that they may, um, that the child, may be apart of.

Um, with the assessment, once we've completed the assessment, um, DHS really takes the role. Um, although, it's not supposed to be like that, that's one of the glitches that we haven't found a way to really work that out yet. I mean, they say that we are partners, but, ultimately, um, I think that surface-wise, we are partners on the surface. You know.

GW: For that child whose down in Portland?

[00:17:54.14] MN: Correct. Yes, we will go down and do the assessment. Um, if there is a family team meeting, we are definitely apart of that. Um, if that child has to be placed, we will be the first ones asked if there are family where that child can be placed. Um, as far as, if there's no family, then, then they take that initiative and they look for a foster home. Um, I



think that, um, doing a plan, I don't see us doing a plan together. Um, although, that too is apart of it. Um, usually when we go to court, um, we are on the same page as the state, in most cases. Um, not that that's one hundred percent. There are times when I've fought that system. Um, and I have to. I don't do it to be mean or anything like that, but I have to do it because I have to look out for what is in the best interest of that child. There are times when we are unable to transfer jurisdiction, unfortunately. And, I wish that wasn't the case. You know, um, due to lack of resources, um, if the child is in extreme need of things that I cannot provide that child. It is better for that child to stay in the state system.

[00:19:35.29] Um, a number of children have been born addicted to drugs and their needs are so...um, the level of their need is so high. I don't have the resources. You know, that's one of the hardest things that I find, um, not having those resources. Why does it come down to a dollar? And.. that just.. that pisses me off. I am sorry, but it does. Um, I don't have title IV-E monies like the state does. I don't have the ability to go and, or Mary Lou doesn't have the ability to go and find a foster home that, um, has medical background for that child. Or, um...I just don't have that. You know? I mean I think that Mary Lou does well making those phone calls, confirming with the state, confirming with Martha Proulx. You know, as to, "Do you have any homes out there? What type of homes do you have?" You know? It seems like ours is a stumbling block, we stumble upon information. Whereas, DHS has that information. You know? So, I think that that is a major difference with us. Um, licensing, I mean there's just a whole bunch I think that we have stumbled upon through the years. Um, but look at where it's gotten us. I think, I think were so much better even though we've stumbled upon that information.

[00:21:37.25] GW: So, for an example, you must work, then, with, um, the PEDS Unit, um, down in Eastern Maine. I mean, that whole program that they are doing, in terms of, say, drug-affected infants. I mean that those moms and the kids are automatically, um, they're automatic referral to DHS.

MN: Mhm.

GB: Um, but then assessing where, but you are involved if that is a Passamaquoddy, Sipayik mom, then you're involved with that assessment?

MN: Yes.

GW: Right? You're involved with, or are you?

MLB: Well, no. They, um, they send the referral to DHS and DHS sends the referral to us once they know they live on reservation.

GW: Yeah.

MLB: So, then it's our responsibility from that point. Right? *(Directed at MN)*

MN: *(Nods)*

MLB: They don't get involved?

MN: Um, we've had a couple that have gotten involved, remember? Um, we had, well, we had a Passamaquoddy mom, recently, that, um, has an apartment on reservation, um, but lives, was living in Eastport with her boyfriend. Um, they had a baby that was born drug-affected. Um, whose call is that?

GB: Yeah.

MN: Where is the jurisdiction line? You know? So, um, we went together. That was the best solution that, you know, um, that we could possibly see. And it ended up that the state was the one that, um, took jurisdiction, at the onset. Um, but then when we went to court we transferred it because we felt that after doing the assessment, after speaking to mom and dad and everything, that that was the better place for the, for the child to be. It doesn't always work that way, though. You know? Jurisdiction is such a hard, um, or it can be, um, a fine line. Um, but yeah, we go and do the assessment together. *[00:24:09.18]*

GW: Mhm. So, my original question about what the...

MN: Thank you.

GW: What do you think the voices we haven't heard so far, what do you think some of the families over the years that you've worked with or some of the kids that you've worked with over the years, would want to tell the, tell the commission? I know it's probably so different for different families but...

MN: I think that is a really hard question. Um, I think what they would say is that, even though we don't have the resources, we need to find ways to bring those kids home. Um, sometimes we don't have family members that are able to take those children on. Um, Mary Lou has to scramble and try to find other potential foster homes. Um, we don't have a list of, of foster homes readily available to us. Um, we rely heavily on family taking those children.

So, I think that they would want us to bring them home, irregardless, no matter what. You know? I've had the opportunity to see a few of the young adults that have been in care that I wasn't able to bring home because of resources or because of extenuating circumstances beyond my control or our control and um, I wonder. You know? I wonder. So, I think that those families would just say that, 'You know what, there's a Passamaquoddy child out there, you need to go get him.' And, I've done it before. I've gone to Georgia. I've gone and taken a child from Georgia and then brought him home. Um.. I don't know. What do you think? *(Looking towards MLB)*..... That's a really hard question, Gail.



[00:26:58.17] MLB: When you ask that question, um, and it was just recently, that I had a young girl come to me while I was at a tribal function or at some kind of function that she was at, that her siblings and her were in and out of foster care. Um, she went with an uncle and I was trying to haul up where the other kids went. But, she went with an uncle and aunt that was really stable. They treated her really well. And, she said, "I don't know what I would do, if you hadn't had placed me there. Um, because that's the best thing that ever happened to me." I've never had kids tell me that.

MN: Mm.

MLB: You know, in general. Um, so it just, I don't know. Families, families probably, would say we had no reason and, "Why didn't you keep them all together?" And, sometimes, you can't do that. You know, when I was talking yesterday, we have a, um, three children and one of them is separated from the other two. The other two were twins. And, um that has an effect on them. But, we had set up visitation so she could go and visit. And, even the foster mom that had her, sometimes, took her to the other foster mom, where the twins were. And, um, where the twins were the foster mom would babysit for the other foster parent when she was going somewhere. So, It kinda keeps them connected. You know and um, sometimes that's difficult, you know, keeping them connected. If they were in this area, it's a lot easier than if they're spread out. We have another family that two kids are in Dedham, two kids are here, but they don't live together. They live in two separate places. And, they don't have a real big connection, for foster parents, or grandparents or whatever the reason, um, and because the other two kids live in Dedham with their foster family. So, it all depends on the situation and the minds between. So.. and the finances. I have called the Department of Human Services and asked them if they had any therapeutic foster homes, you know, that I might be able to, um, hook up with because we don't have any. We actually don't have any foster homes. We have kinship care mostly. And, I, we do have a couple of foster homes...

MN: Mhmm.

MB: ...that have taken different kids at different times. Um, but, like if you are gonna place a child on an emergency, um, we are all in the office banging our heads trying to figure out who we can call that might do that. And, um, I guess from old experience with the state, you know, when they have kids, they have placements. I don't think they have to worry about placing a child like we have to worry about placing a child. And, so that makes it difficult for us all, so, you know, cause what, the one child I was talking about yesterday was in three or four different placements before he ended up in residential. And it seemed like the state could just take him there. Like, they have some beds or whatever. Um, we don't have that. You know, so we can't just do that. Um, and that's where it's difficult for us. And, I mean, today, um, Martha is forthwith, if I call her and ask her a question, but, um, if I call anybody else, it's just, "Well, you'll have to call this one, you'll have to call that one." Sometimes, you spend a lot of time on

the phone trying to figure it out and come up short. You know, t's totally frustrating, but, we keep em' here. [00:32:07.28]

MN: We try.

MB: And the two children that are in Dedham was placed by the state. And, we tried to put them in a native home. That didn't work. Um, so we placed them back with the people they were with originally, and um, they're good. Um, they are involved with Wabanaki Mental Health in Bangor. Um, so they do activities around that with the kids and um, the oldest little boy is... I'll tell you when I come and visit him monthly, he wants to know when I'm going to sign the papers and I think his foster dad kinda put that in his little head.

GW: Sign the papers for?

MN: Permanency.

GW: Oh.

MLB: And, usually, when I'm talking, after, when I get done talking to him and after the questions about school or whatever, what he's been doing lately, I'll say, " Do you have a question for me?" And, he'll say, "Yeah! When are you going to sign the papers?"

GW: *(Laugh)*

MLB: And, I laugh at him and I say, "We're getting there." Because were working on, um, a new code that has permanency guardianship in it where we don't do, um, termination, but, we will be able to do permanency.

GW: So, that he can stay there? Without going through...

MLB: Yeah..

GW: multiple terminations....

MB: He doesn't want to go anywhere. He wants to stay there. He's been there forever.

GW: Yeah.

MLB: He was there as an infant and um, he wants to stay there. And, most of the time, the foster dad isn't there but when he comes through the door, that's his first question, "How far have you gotten, yet?" You know and we've gotten quite a ways. It's just little glitch and we're gonna try to work on that.

[00:34:07.02] **GW:** Is that because legally that's going through the state system?

MLB: No.



GW: No.

MLB: No. No, it's because the Passamaquoddy Tribe is two reservations, you have two different child welfare departments...you have two different chiefs, you have two different everything.

GW: Two different courts, right? Or no?

MLB: Yea.

[00:34:24.10] **MN:** It's just, it's basically the same judge.

GW: Yea, that travels.

MN: Yea.

MLB: Yea. But, when we were doing, um, the policies and procedures and the code, we had invited them to participate and that didn't happen. So, um, when it was presented to the joint council, both councils, they wanted to know why they didn't know anything about that. Well, Molly was out of town, (*ahh*) I'd a gone the meeting if I thought that I needed to be there, I would have told them why. You know? So, now we have a little other process we have to do. But there's always, there's always, it seems like there's always roadblocks. You know, like, Molly said earlier, there's, there's, the state does this, this, this and this and we do this and then we might have to go that way or we might have to go this way. Um, so, it can get really frustrating. Yeah, so.

GW: And hard to explain to kids

MLB: Yeah.

MN: (*Nodding*)

GW: That's, I mean..

MN: Mhm.

MLB: Yeah.

(Pause)

GW: One of the things that struck me though, when we talked yesterday was the number of kids, the numbers of kids in care, has gone down a lot.

MN: Mhm.

MLB: *(Nodding)*

GW: Is the impress-- I forget the actual numbers, but the number of kids in care over the time that, at least, that you've, well, since ICWA, '78. I don't know how many kids were in care pre-ICWA. Probably a lot, um, but it seems that it's gone down, is that, is that pretty accurate?

[00:36:09.20] **MN:** Mhm.

GW: Yeah.

MN: Yeah. I think, when I came on, in what '98,? You had how many kids? Forty-four kids? Thirty-four kids? [**MLB:** Something like that.] It was an outrageous number of how many children were in tribal custody.

MLB: Yeah.

GW: And, that didn't include native kids that the state...

MN: That's right.

MLB: No.

MN: That did not include those people.

MLB: It was here.

MN: None of those kids. Did not include them.

GW: So how do account for the change? What do you think has happened that that those numbers aren't the same now?

MN: I think that having a native director, um, made a total difference.

GW: Were you the first native director?

MN: Yes. *(Laughter)*

MLB: *(Laughter)*

MN: I think so. I think I..

MLB: I think so too.

MN: I think, I think I am the first native director.

MLB: In child welfare, when you started to do child welfare, yes.

MN: Yeah, Yea, I think I am the first native director. Um, prior to me, there was a non-native, um, director in there with a native investigator. Um, I think their mentality was much like the state. You know, just go in, take those children, ask questions later. Well, that's not our mentality. Um, we go in, ask questions, um, try to find a resolution, if we can. Um, I don't like removing children from their homes, um, unless, I absolutely have to. Um, but, I think the mentality was different. Um, I think that we're more, since I've come on, we're more of a intervention/prevention, um, agency. "What can we do to help you? What can we do so that you can keep your children in your home?" Um, and I think just, um, I have an awesome team, you know? Um, I think that that helps. Um, Mary Lou, of course, is non-native, but she has lived on this reservation for forty plus years. I think?

MLB: *(Nods)*

MN: And, *(laugh)*, um, I mean, she's one of us. You know. So, she knows. She's, she has seen these children be born. She has seen them as they're, as they're um, gettin' older, you know? So she's well aware of what goes on in our community. Um, so I think it's, it's the team that I have and our mentality. Um, I say it is, it's a team because I don't think that, ultimately, I am the director of it and I have to make those hard choices or decisions when it comes time, but I think we work better as a team. Um.

[00:39:20.01] MLB: And, like I said yesterday, Gail, we don't think from here *(hand motion to head)*, we think from here *(hand motion to heart)*.

MN: Yea.

MLB: That to me, is it and and, and I mean I wasn't taking those kids into foster care, I was taking care of them after they took them in, um, but I think that's something that Molly brought, that everybody is good, you just have to, um, try to help em' out. You know? And, so, when she was in there and said it, you know, "What can I do for you, to keep your children in your home?" Um, and I don't think we're looked at in the same light as we used to be, years ago. You know, like, "Oh, here comes social services! They're gonna take my kids." And, um, I think sometimes, Molly goes above and beyond, um, to make sure they stay there, which is a good thing for me, but... *(laugh)*

MN: *(Laugh)*

MLB: I mean we all try to work, you know, when you sit down and you're looking at a family, you know, I can list most people in their family, who their siblings are and etc., but, sometimes I'd get stuck and Molly would just start throwing a few names out there. "Oh, yea, that's right." So, that helps out a lot. And, sometimes, most of those families, um, can't take foster children, they can't meet the criteria to take the foster children. You know, so that's where we have a two or three people in the community that I can beg em' to take em'. *(Laugh)* And, and generally, they will. Sometimes, they can't, but ...yup. [00:41:27.24]

GW: What else, is there anything else that you think would be good for the commission to know...or to think about.

MN: It's always a hard thing when you have to deal with bureaucracy. You know, I mean how do you, how do you go around that so that that's not an issue. You know? I mean, if we could just, I think that if we could just look at 'em as those are, no matter if they are native or non-native, DHS or non- DH, you know what I mean, tribal DHS versus non tribal, - regular DHS, you just took a look at that, I think that we all try to do what's in the best interest of those kids. I think that's what our intent is. Um, and that difference being the bureaucracy. Um, I think that that makes all the difference. I, I don't know how to go around that, Gail. I really don't. Um, I mean, ultimately, it's an agency. Agencies have policies and procedures. Um, I think having a better understanding, maybe? I don't know, um, a better understanding of history, a better understanding of where we come from, you know. Um, I don't know if that's something the social work field could, um, implement in their, in their curriculum, when, when teaching social workers. Um, I don't know.

MLB: Yea.

[00:43:49.19] **GW:** The other question I had was um, I don't know if this is just me, or the commission, but, um, thinking of some of the other conversations that we've been having, but um, there, my understanding, there has been a change when the law first came into being, the directors of most of the child welfare departments for the four tribes were white. And, that was the case for quite awhile, I believe, through the mid-eighties, early-nineties, maybe. Maybe Erlene, may have been one of the first, when she first started working for the Penobscots. You, probably, know better than I do. Um, but, um, I wondered what your experiences, in terms of living within, both, for both of you, native or not native, living in your community and doing the work that you do within your community and how, um, how you, this is me, personally, speaking, but how you both deserve incredible credit for, um, your being able to do that. Because I am guessing it's not always really easy to be in those positions, to live in your community, your friendships, family and to do the work that you do. Um, and how you have made that successful cause, you've, and, again, this is me, and maybe me and not being madam commissioner, um, and been successful in doing that, at least, my outsider's eyes tell me that you've been successful in doing what you do in the important work that you do while at the same time, living, living within your communities.

[00:45:57.05] **MN:** Go ahead.



MLB: There is advantages and disadvantages. But, the big advantage that I see is that we know everybody here. I said that yesterday, you know when Molly takes a shower because there's smoke coming out of her chimney.

MM, GW: *(Laughter)*

MLB, MN: *(Laughter)*

MLB: At six-thirty in the morning.

MLB, MN: *(Laughter)*

MB: But, I mean we know everybody, and um, I know with the, one of the latest situations that we have, the state had custody of the children and well, they probably still do. But, I think the mother was feeding them a line. They didn't know any better. They didn't know any different. They were believing what she was saying and it wasn't the truth. You know, and we'd have to tell 'em that she's not living where she says she living, you know. So, I think that's where the big advantage is for us.

MN: *(Nods)*

MLB: ...is we know everything around here. You know? ...And it's also a disadvantage because sometimes when I go out, um, I run across some of my clients, it's, they can be angry with me and um and can be rude or whatever, but I just, I let that go. That's where they're at. I think we have a big advantage than the state.

[00:47:43.14] MN: I think that when I was younger, I mean, fifteen years in this position has been a long time.

GW: Yes, it has.

MN: Um, so, when I was younger, it was easier. Um, yes, I live in this community. Yes, we know everybody in this community. Um, but it was definitely easier. Now that I am getting older, um, I'm finding it more difficult, definitely more difficult. And, I don't, I still know the people in this community, um but I am finding it harder these days. Um, and I am not sure what that is. I can't put my finger on it and say it's this, you know? But that's been happening over the past little while, couple of years, maybe. Um, it's definitely been harder. I don't know if it's a new generation. I don't know if it's, you know, what it is. So, I guess for me, in the beginning, living in this community and being the director, I didn't have an issue with that. Whereas, today, I'm having issues. *(Laughter)* You know?

GW: Mhm

MN: Yea.

GW: Well you're have fifteen years of knowledge and stories too.

MN: Yea, absolutely.

GW: And, thirty-two for Mary Lou.

MN: Mhm.

GW: And that, that's a lot.

MN: Yea.

[00:49:39.02] **GW:** So, I am trying to stay aware of lunch and time and...

MM: Let me just check in with the two of you. Um, How are you doing?

MN: Doing good.

MLB: *(Nod)*

MM: Um...

MB: *(Nod)* I am mhmm.

MM: Not feeling so well? *(directed towards MLB)*

MB: I'm doing okay. Ah, it's just that ah I am not feeling good.

MM: Alright.

GW: Do you want some water?

MLB: I got water here.

GW: I mean, I am okay at my end, unless there is anything else that you both...

MN: No.

GW: But, I really appreciate, um, you letting me ask all my questions. *(Laughter)*

MLB: *(Laughter)*

MN: Well, I mean, I think in the end, your going to have quite the job at the end. You know. And, if there is anything that we can do to help you try to, um, find answers for that, then I am all for that. You know. Because, ultimately, you're gonna be making a recommendation and if our experience can help you in anyway to make that decision for all of you, um, which is why I agreed, um, to be taped and everything on camera and all that stuff. I am good with that.

[00:51:12.17] **GW:** Well, Thank you. You're both very generous.

MM: I had one question about something you said. If you feel like you're done, that's fine. But, when you talked about that it's harder now for you, um, I was wondering, is it harder because things are different in the community? Is something happening, like, outside, or is it just harder in you because you've been doing it a long time and it's just getting harder to keep doing it?

MN: I think it's, it's what's in me.

MM: Uh huh.

MN: Yeah. Yeah. I just, I'm just finding it harder.

MM: Yup.

MN: You know... I find that when we have children born in Eastern Maine Medical Center, you know what, what bring 'em home. We'll worry about it later. But, I am a grandmother so it's easier, just bring 'em home. We'll figure it out. You know. I don't know. I really don't know... I know that I would not want my grandson to be out there somewhere. You know. Although, personally, I have a grand-daughter that's out there, in a non-native home. That was a struggle, you know. That was a real struggle, a personal struggle. I mean, I'm already, I'm bringing up my grandson, I'm bringing up my nephew and then I had a grand-daughter too. Holy God! I've already raised my children and you know, I mean my partner, we've already raised our kids. It's like we've, we've dealt with one family already and now we're dealing with another one. I had to let her be where she was at.

MM: Umhm.

MN: I mean, she's just fifty miles up the road. I can see her everyday if I wanted. You know, I can call her on the phone. They are, they're non-native but like Mary Lou, you wouldn't know that. *[00:53:47.07]* If that makes sense?

GW: Yea.

MN: You know? I think that, um, being non-native is the color of skin. I think, it, it has to do with what you have in here (*hand gesturing toward heart*). And, um, they have guardianship of her now. And, I pushed it. Me! I pushed it! You know. Cause I knew that they loved this little girl. I know they will take care of her, and I know that they will always allow us to be apart of her life and if I didn't know those things, I wouldn't have pushed.

MM: Umhm.

MN: You know?

MM: Umhm

MN: Yea.

MM: So what I'd like to, um, is there something...

MLB: I am all set.

MM: Okay, so I would just like to say in closing how much, um, how much I feel your love for the children and how much I feel your love for your, um, community, and for your people. And, just how that's so much of who you are. It's beautiful. Thank you.

MN: Thank you.

GW: The end.

MN: The end.

[END OF RECORDING]