



Focus Groups – General Information

Community: Motahkomikuk – Indian Township

Date: November 12, 2014

Moderator: Rachel George

Commissioner: Carol Wishcamper (CW)

Topic: Native Foster and Adoptive Parents

Participants

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| 1. Karen Sabattis (KS) | 5. Molly Socoby (MS) |
| 2. Anonymous (A) | 6. Selina Mitchell-Lola (SML) |
| 3. Stephanie Bailey (SB) | 7. Katherine Newell (KN) |
| 4. Jeanie Grant (JG) | |

Recording

MS. GEORGE (RG): All right, it is November 12, 2014. We are here at Indian Township, ME. My name is Rachel George and I am here today with?

MS. WISHCAMPER (CW): Carol Wishcamper, I'm a TRC Commissioner and I'm from Southern Maine.

MS. NEWELL (KN): Katherine Newell, I'm a resident and community member at Indian Township.

MS. SOCOBY (MS): Mary Socoby, same thing.

MS. BAILEY (SB): Stephanie Bailey, community member and a REACH organizer.

MS. MITCHELL (SML): Selina Mitchell, I live here.

MS. SABATTIS (KS): My name is Karen Sabattis, I'm a Passamaquoddy tribal member and I live here at Indian Township.

MS. GRANT (JG): Jeanie Grant, Carla officially, and Passamaquoddy tribal member and parent and soon to be god- um, grandparent.

ANONYMOUS: [REDACTED]

RG: Excellent. The file number is FG-M-201411-0009. Katherine, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

KN: Yes, I have.

RG: Molly, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

MS: Yes, I have.

RG: Stephanie, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

SB: Yes.

RG: Selina, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

SML: Yep.

RG: Okay. Karen, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

KS: Yes.

RG: Jeanie, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

JG: Yes.

RG: Okay. [NAME REDACTED] have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

A: Yes.

RG: Okay, and I have to let each of you know that if at any point during this recording you indicate that there's a child or an elder currently in need of protection or that there is imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death to an identifiable person or group including yourselves that that information may not be protected as confidential. Does anyone have any questions before we get started or anything they'd like to start off by saying?

Okay, so just for the purpose of this recording, our topic today is foster, is a group focused on foster and adoptive parents and those providing kinship care or taking care other children in the community. So, the first question is what are the most notable moments of your time as a foster or adoptive parent or someone caring for a family member or another child?



SB: Most notable?

RG: Mhmm.

SB: For me, it's been being, having the opportunity to, to connect and bond with you know another child because that's, that's a real gift to have a connection with a child because their love is so unconditional and so pure. It's different than other types of love, so for me that was always a notable thing. A little anxious at first because you don't know the child, but then you know once you get in there and, it, it's awesome.

RG: Does anyone want to add to that question or do you want me to move to the next one?

A: I'd like to add to it. I, I think one of the notable things for me when I've provided kinship care is having the kids know that they are with family and that they're safe and they feel comfortable. You can, you know, really see that the kid's been you know bounced around here and there a lot when they come, you know come home and then they can just be a kid and feel, feel safe and wanted where they are.

SB: When, it just took the question, clarifying the question, when you say notable too, like I tend to think of like the positive things, but you're thinking like is it just could be anything?

RG: Mhmm.

SB: Okay, because like for another example is one thing that I want to note is when, when I receive children into foster care, not being told like a diagnoses of a child or that the child is special needs, you know like no prepping when you receive a child that might have significant trouble, you know. That was something that I, you know, found out late.

RG: Uh huh, is that something that happened through Tribal Child Welfare or through the State?

SB: I've never done it through the State, just Tribal, yes through Tribal Child Welfare.

CW: How many children have you had with you Stephanie?

SB: I've had three with me.

KS: I guess lots of children would be different because they were never in custody, so 'course they're trying to get them to be comfortable, but they're my relative anyway, but I think what was so, I don't, I, it was stressful actually because I got them and they didn't even have a pair of socks, you know, so I guess I spent a lot of my time in the beginning trying to get their basic needs and clothes and you know to just get them on a schedule and get them to bed on time, so

that just took a lot of -- in the beginning it's a lot, it's, it's enjoyable, but it's also stressful because, you know, they're, they're trying to adapt to you know your home and so on.

KN: Well I probably should add a few things because the first thing that came to my mind was when Stephanie in-boxed me and, and told me about the meeting and invited me, was years ago when I took some children in, while one in particular and they were a teenager and it was, it was a situation where they needed somebody right off and they didn't provide me with information about the child.

It's kind of funny now, but it wasn't then. When they put the child in the home and I had him for the weekend and it was going to be longer than that, but it didn't, because I don't things were quite organized as well and this was quite a long time ago and the child, the, the lady that was working for the child welfare came over into the house. I said oh, just in, you know, just to let you know, she said you really should keep your knives put away and your matches because he has a tendency, you know, like this, and so that was you know quite not appropriate I felt, which probably wouldn't happen today, but back then, so you know we all stayed in the bedroom in our room. We had one child of our own at the time so all three of us kind of like slept in the same room that, all night and I'm thinking, oh my goodness, you know this is a scary situation and that that should've been provided to us and you know we told them after like we'd had the child there for a couple days, you know this is not going to be a suitable situation for this child because we certainly can't provide what this child needs and I don't want to put our family in harm's way. So, those kinds of things you know, and it was a quick situation where they needed somebody, but they, that would, that wasn't really the optimum way to do that for, for a child and over the years I've had children off and on and I've had step-children and I adopted my two granddaughters, six and half years ago and for five and a half years I've been raising them on my own and they, I've had them most of the time, anyway.

And it's really difficult when they come from a family that's you know has drug abuse in it and they're very dysfunctional and it's family members, it's, it can be a very high stressful situation and it takes a lot of effort and energy sometimes to protect the children, which I've had, I had to do numerous times, which people probably aren't really aware of and to provide children with what they need and you know to have them in counseling and to have them you know have a safe home because it's difficult, especially if you have a child that has special needs like if you have a child that has autism or something like that, which I didn't. But they still had to have you know, they still you know had emotional behavioral things that they had to deal with and so you know, it, it takes a lot for a person to do that. And you know, it's good to do that and when it's a family member you put a, you know it's a different situation and because you really love them because they're your children or grandchildren or whatever. So, it you know takes a lot to do something like that, but it's very rewarding. I'm not going to get emotional, to see them grow and nurture them and give them opportunities that you know would've never happened in the environment that they were living in, but above all, keep them safe and give them love that they need. Thank you.

RG: Building off of that question, what kind of, for those of you who have had kids in your home, what kind of support did you receive or wish you had received?



SB: I wish I had received, in thinking back to, well a couple of the kids actually, like to understand what sort of needs that they had that they, that they might have already known about the children, specifically like if they've already been seeing a doctor and they needed to continue to see a certain doctor, like not having any of that information is, is very difficult or -- say the question again because I lost the thought.

RG: What support did you receive?

SB: Oh.

RG: And what support do you wish you had received?

SB: I know I got clothing help with the kids and --

CW: But that's all you got was clothing help?

SB: Yeah, you get your, the monthly to help with you know whatever, but they would go so, during school time they would give school clothes. You know, well they'd give a little bit of money to help with school clothes, yep, and you just have to show your receipts (*inaudible 11:44.3*).

JG: See it?

KS: Oh yeah, yeah.

SB: But like that was-

SML: Is that a spider?

MS: Yes

SML: Where?

(*Laughter*)

KS: Right there.

KN: Oh those ones are probably not a good one to bite you.

SML: No, but step on it.

KN: So somebody needs to kill it.

KS: They're little.

KN: Those are the ones that –

(a lot of talking over each other about the spider)

KS: No you don't want to get bit by one of those.

KN: Not that one, that's not a daddy long legs, that's those other ones, they're toxic. You won't probably die from it, but you'll wish to god they never bit you.

(a lot of talking over each other about the spider)

A: I threw it outside.

JG: I knew something was crawling out of your purse that's why I looked.

KN: Out of my purse?

(laughter)

SML: Yes.

KN: It could not have been in my purse, it must have... been near it.

SB: Yeah there are spiders that come out of this couch every now and again.

KN: Oh, that's not good news!

SB: Well, I don't know, I mean it's not, it hasn't been rampant or anything but that's the second time I've seen a spider come from this.

KS: It does get sprayed, we have this---

CW: Do you want to sit over here? *(laughs)*

KN: I probably will, yes.

(SB laughs)

KN: You don't want to get bit by them, and I don't care for spiders at all.

(ongoing talking over each other about the spider)

A: I was just saying that I don't have any kids in foster care, but me and my mom and my sisters are help raising my nephew...



(someone enters the room – side dialogue)

So basically, my mother is 73 years old and she, right now she's taking care of my nephew and, I'm going to cry because it really hurts me, they took him from his dad because his dad's a bad alcoholic right. And they gave him to his mother, my sister, which she ended up raising him like four years anyways. She kind of gave him up to his dad. Well child welfare went over to Princeton and took him out of his father's house and gave him to his mother and her, his mother, lives with two chronic alcoholics in a two bedroom apartment with three people and he's, he's only twelve years old, but he looks like a man and he was there maybe four or five days and he told my mom, can I live with you and she said of course, what's going on? And you know, was living in, they put him in that house with these people that are drunk 24/7 and he told my mother that he had been sleeping on the kitchen floor, you know with no mattress between the garbage can and the door and I got so fucking mad I went over to child welfare. You guys got to do something for my nephew, put him, take him from his dad, put him with my sister, [NAMES REDACTED], you know and they're always drunk and the kid is sleeping on the floor. I mean he's almost a teenager, between the back door and a garbage can. The child welfare here, I went, they never investigated it. They never followed up on it. It's been six months and my mother still has the kid and we keep trying to get support from child welfare. You know, come over. Talk to my mother. Talk to my sister. Figure out why you know this you know, why hasn't anybody intervened to keep this kid safe, you know besides me and my family, but none of us have money. The kid's 14 size, you know size 14 shoe. We can't buy his shoes, so I, I just see the kid as being not only neglected by his parents, but also by our child welfare system over here who decided that he's not important enough to, to, to protect. So now it's been six or seven months my mother's had him. You know, my mother has issues with memory. You know she can't remember stuff. She forgets all the time. So technically she you know can't be raising a child, so it's a good thing that we live on a reservation where I live next door to my mother and my sister, [NAMES REDACTED], we all help take care of the kid, but there's been no protection for that kid through this child welfare department, and it just really makes me angry. And it hurts me because I see him going without. I mean you know you can't even buy size 14 shoes. You got to go, you know order them online and he's a big kid. I mean, he's like 6'4", 300 pounds. He's only 13 years old and we have a hard time feeding him, you know. Not just feeding him, but just to add you know another person in the household and it's been a real, real, it's been really hard for my mom and my sister, but I just feel really angry because you know we have a system in place to protect children and they don't even care enough to check on my nephew. I mean I work right next door and I, you know I've complained about it several times. No one's even had the courtesy to come over and tell my mother, [NAME REDACTED] is there anything I can do. Can I you know give you a clothing voucher or you know my mother doesn't know, she said oh we make do, I don't need money, but you know what we, we need money to help take care of this kid because we're all poor and we can't do it on our own. I just don't see any protection for that kid.

KS: That fucking pisses me off.

A: It does me too, Karen, it breaks my heart.

KS: Is there anything, your organization could recommend or to put a bug in their ear to say hey, you know this family needs help?

CW: For the purpose of the Commission, is first to be able to intervene, but in a case by case basis, that's not what we're set up to do, but the whole idea of this is to create mechanisms --

KS: Right.

CW: That will get the attention of the tribal government and of the state government to prevent these situations from happening.

KS: You know what's pretty sad, I used to work in child welfare. I was Assistant Director of Social Services in Child Welfare. It was in, underneath Social Services. I had been on, on social services for years and I had to talk to one of their employees there and I said 'you don't even go by your mission, I mean do, if, if I was working there I would hold you know everything I had to, to your mission statement. You're not even, you don't even go by your mission statement. You, you know you should believe in your mission statement and have compassion and I said you, you don't even,' she said 'mission statement, what's that?'

SML: Wynette?

KS: I don't want to say names, but they still work there today.

CW: When you say people --

KS: They're still there and she said -- so I explained to her what the mission statement was and when it was first enacted, the year and she said well where, where could I find that? I said, well if you look in the files because we kept a file of everything, you go in that, you're going to find, it's going to say, mission statement and you know, that should be the first thing. I know my, my supervisor, that's the first thing they taught us. You know, the mission statement and you know that's what we go by. So, anyway, but there's got to be something. There has to be something because that's sad. I am so sorry, you know because I know what that feels like, you know. I went through it with my niece and my nephew, and it got to the point where they had gone back and forth, back and forth to their mother to my house to the point where she would let me keep them long enough to where she was going to lose her benefits and then she'd take them. So, just when I was going to help for them she'd pull them out so that stopped everything. So, I would never get any help. And because they weren't officially tribal members here, they were on the Penobscot census, I didn't get any help from them. So, I had to do it myself and, I mean it, I was blessed to have been working at the time, but you know I don't know what I would have done the last three, four years because I've been dealing with my own, my own issues and I haven't been working, so I don't even think I would've been able to take of anybody. But, you know so I understand what you're going through, I mean



that's, that's hard to see you know you, especially your family and they come home and they don't have anything.

A: Especially kids.

KS: You know and one of the times when Carly did come back to me, and it was always when they wanted a break, they didn't like to come get them, but they could drop them off at the drop of a hat. You know, so they dropped him off, basically wouldn't have any clothes again. I always did their school clothes. Christmas, they didn't get Christmas. I always bought their Christmas. They didn't buy many things for, for years they didn't do that, so and then their dad was a chronic alcoholic for years, so he didn't get her, so I was trying to play, you know my brother's role and, and you know it was hard. And, and plus my own demons, you know I had my own stuff I'm dealing with and I, I did hide it for a long time. But, so my niece come that summer and I noticed her walking funny. She was like hobbling, I'm like what's wrong? I said your leg keeps going to the side and she said oh I keep going to the doctors and they said that, that it's my ankle. And I was like oh, so, so I, I told her, I was like so what did they do? They said there's nothing they could do and they didn't find anything. So I kept watching her walk and her leg, you know your legs go like this, well this one was like that. Literally it was like that. I was like that don't look right and I said it's, I don't think it's your, I don't think it's your ankle. I think it's your leg, somewhere in your leg. Well, she had been, I had to go buy ibuprofen because she, that's what she, she took it for a, almost a year. It was during the school year from December when she took them. Again, after Christmas she took them. So from December, after Christmas we were in January to June she brought them back, brought her back and she had been eating ibuprofen all that time and she just kept popping them on her own and no one told her how to take them. She was just taking them all on her own. It got to the point she still has stomach problems right to this day because of that medicine. I took her to the doctor's. I said I'm getting you checked. I made an appointment, not even ten minutes, he said you need to take her to the hospital today. We went to Bangor, well they went and the x-ray in Dental, you know those little, they do the x-rays on your mouth, they did it on her hip. They sent us to Bangor immediately that day and she had surgery that morning. She had driven and she, the only thing she could think of was when she was in gym, you know when you step off, there's like the sidewalk and you're running. It had driven her femur bone into her hip and cracked it. And so it was like lodged in there and stuck, so and it had turned to the side so her leg was that way. So she stayed that way all that time and in pain and her bone was cracked and so she had surgery and they, they put a pin in it and stuff and, and she was there trying to be mother of the year and she ended up taking them again and, so that was three, four times a year. They kept going back and forth until probably when they were twelve years old they never went back and I kept them until they graduated high school. I saw two of them graduate, so, but yeah I know how you feel [NAME REDACTED] and I almost want to go out and just, there's got to be somebody we can talk to, you know not just you, but maybe somebody else here, you know like if we just go in numbers and you know, you know something's got to be done.

A: Well you know, when he was over in Princeton we called the State Child Welfare because we figured he'd get better treatment, better care through the State Child Welfare than these guys because they were, they, they became involved. My sister, what she did, she went to Indian Child Welfare and got those women. Took her over there, they took him out, without a court order or anything from his dad and gave him to the mom and like --

CW: The tribal people.

A: Yeah, the Tribal Child Welfare, and the reason that we are afraid to work with these guys is because the last time when [NAME REDACTED] did this again, she, she couldn't get no benefits anymore, so I don't know if that precipitated them coming back, but she came back with two child welfare workers and a police officer to my mother to say [NAME REDACTED] doesn't think that you treat her kid the same as you guys treat the other kids, so she wants him out of there so they took him and it broke my mother's heart and it broke his heart. So now we don't even want to work with them because there's no trust. I mean they can just come and take him and put him wherever. You know and he needs to be with his family, his you know, the people that love him and that know him. So, I don't have any faith in them. I can't go to them and ask for help because they're not going to help us.

KN: I got to say a couple of things.

KS: Oh, it makes me so angry.

KN: I know that there's been a change in child welfare structure, and maybe this will be an opportunity for you and your mother to meet with them and even though they still have people that work there that you've had this go on. Maybe they can do something different. Maybe the change will help because I've had a hard time with the Child Welfare over the years even when, before I adopted my two granddaughters. They went through hell and they were taken away and then put back and taken away and put back and what you're talking about, when you take a child and you put them in a safe environment with love and nurturing and then they take them back, the emotional part of it, you can't even phantom what's going on with that child in their mind because they, they depend on you and then they're taken from you.

A: And you can't even protect them.

KN: And I got to talk about something else too. I wasn't going to, but I have to. I tried to get a grandson years ago and I couldn't and I see the affect that it has, but I recently had another situation happen to me and it was a grandson that was born and the parents were using and he, the baby was born in the hospital, well not actually. The baby was born, I won't even say, won't go there, because everybody knows, but the baby was a week old and I had to bring him home from the hospital. He weighed 5 pounds 1 ounce and I had to go get him. Child Welfare was very supportive and helped me by you know letting me, you know by, I'm the one that had to make all the calls, so I was checking to see how the baby was because the baby had to be transported to the intensive care unit, the neonatal intensive care unit from Calais to Bangor and the parents got arrested, put in jail, all kinds of stuff happened. A lot of people know about it, and Child Welfare said you're going to be the foster parent. So, you know the girls were



really happy because it was their little brother and there's a whole bunch of stuff I could tell you, but I won't go into too much detail. Anyway, I had the baby for a week and they told me that I had to, that they were going to go to court to try to get custody back, and my son want, didn't want the director to be in charge of this one because there was, he felt nepotism or, so he wanted the child welfare director of Pleasant Point to intervene on this case.

KS: Conflict.

KN: Huh?

KS: Too much conflict of interest.

KN: So, what I couldn't believe happened, happened. They did what they called a safety plan and they put the baby back with the parents. Now you've got to understand, the parents had a drug addiction. They had an alcohol problem. They were on medications. They were on marijuana and they, so they, they weren't stable, but they decided to put this baby back into the home and monitor them for three months, but they wanted them to go to counseling. They wanted them to get their medical help that they needed. They wanted to make sure that they had a license, they could drive and they put the baby back into this environment. What the hell? Why would somebody do that? It's an infant. He's 5, he weighed 6 pounds. In a week he gained a pound, but he weighed 6 pounds and they put him back into this environment and say oh you guys got to get better. You got to do this and this and this and this. So, if they did try to get better, which I'm highly skeptical of, they're going to go through withdrawals. They're going to have all these emotional things and all this stuff that's going to happen to them and you have a child that is an infant and with complaints afterwards. They survived the three months. The child was given back, even though Child Welfare was supposed to monitor. There were complaints and I complained and I saw stuff happening and I knew stuff happened. Nothing was done, and I can't bear to have that child in my house...(*crying*) So, because I wouldn't let him go back and they'd have to fight me to get him away from me. So Child Welfare needs to change. They need to do what they need to do. They need to meet with people. They need to help the children because what happens to these children is going to happen to them when they grow up and they have children. And if I had brought him back into the house, I don't watch him, I haven't seen him for months and I spent, I had money at the time and I spent so much money to help them. I did everything I possibly could. I thought, I've got to be optimistic, I got to think they're really trying, they're really going to do it this time and that this isn't going to happen again to another grandchild of mine. By... maybe they don't have enough, I don't think they have enough people working there. I don't think they have people that they need to connect with. They need to have people that sit down and say this is what the community needs. This is what the children need. This is what we need you to do to help our children, whether it's your child, your grandchild or your neighbor's child. I mean I live next door to stuff that I, terrible things happen. I don't know all of it, but my granddaughters don't, couldn't even really go outside to play because of where we live and we should be safe and they should be able to play in the yard, but in order for Child Welfare to do

something that they should be doing, and they don't have the time. They don't have the energy. They don't have the manpower. They don't have the, they have resources, but maybe not enough. So something should be done in different ways, but you really need to go and sit down with them and approach them and say you know, I know you have a new director. I know that you know we need your help because they should be helping your mother and you.

A: They should.

KN: There's no reason not to.

A: I mean I'm willing to give it a shot and reach out for help, but.

KS: And you should not have to fear or even have --

A: I know.

KS: Your sister's saying well I'm going to go and pull him back.

A: That's why we all been standing there because that's what she threatened and that's what Child Welfare let's her do.

KS: You shouldn't have to fear that, no, you know. To begin with when we, when I worked in Child Welfare it would be wrong for the case workers and the director to make all these decisions on their own. That, to me that's not an objective, that's not being objective. I don't believe you can, you can be effective and provide good quality care having somebody, two people to make all those decisions, that's wrong. It's unethical to begin with. We had a team and we used to have a child welfare team.

A: We don't have that anymore.

KS: And you would have meetings and the team made the decisions because you have a lot of ideas and then you come to a consensus and that's the way it should be done, and that was in the policies. That's how we ran it. I don't know what they do now. We had the police department involved. We had, we had a councilmember involved. We had a variety of people who provide services, who would understand. When we went for training we had them trained, police officers, EMTs, we all would go get trained because it's not just the caseworkers that deal with these kids. It's the community.

A: Yep.

KS: So you need to educate the community, the, the departments that, that provide these services. So, I think Child Welfare needs a major overhaul. Something, you're right, something's got to be done. I have to say something. I really do. There's got to be something done. We do have, I believe they're going to be good changes, but you've only changed one thing in that department and that's the director, that's it.



KN: I know, and it's good to have people that have experience, but I have experienced not good things.

KS: A lot of people have.

KN: And you, it's the welfare and the wellbeing of our children and you need to, I do know that the school now, if there's a situation with the child at school and if the principal cannot reach the parents, she's contacting Child Welfare now. So, that's, that's a start.

KS: If they miss too many days they do that now.

KN: Well yeah, that's a start. If you're going to start having, because I was just, I mean I didn't know this except somebody told me there's no flyer going out. There's no notification going out because they have policies in the school where the kid needs to, the child needs to come to school dressed appropriately, have good hygiene, be clean and wear something that's decent and if that's not done then they're supposed to contact, I'm guessing Child Welfare. So, if the school, and that's where they are a third of the day, you know, eight hours a day, nine hours a day they're in school. If the school is starting to do that and notify Child Welfare, that's a start to try to help the kids.

KS: Or have the guidance counselor, which I know every school has one. Have the guidance counselor or the school counselor work with the parents and say you know is there a problem? Do you need help? Instead of doing the drastic Child Welfare thing. I, I have an issue with that because you're going to call the Child Welfare it's all or nothing. You know like, try to work with them first you know.

KN: Well that's when they won't call them or won't come in and they're trying first to reach the parent and there's no, nothing from the parent. So they've done that, but, but we have in this community, so many people are close. So many people are related. We're, we're fortunate to have that intimacy in our community and that closeness, but we need to build on it. We need to have like meetings. You need to have like the police and Child Welfare in the school and other community members like there before, like a councilmember and other people that sit down and say we need to work out a plan and not to know a mission statement, I won't even go there. I did, but I won't, but to not know that because it's, it's to protect our children, and it's to help parents. It's not to hinder them to be with their, their you know maternal and paternal parents, it's to help them because whatever happened to them they need to get fixed in order to take care of their children. Because when you take them away it's just awful. I've tried for years with the maternal and paternal parents to have them have healthy, scheduled interaction and visitations and spend time, and it doesn't work. It hasn't for years, and it's like I can't keep doing this because they've got to do what they need to do in order for me to know that they're going to be safe and they're not going to be dysfunctional or doing drugs and I've already had a couple things happen that were awful. Thankfully, there's, the girls have not really been in jeopardy, but it's so hard for them. They don't understand why they can't be

with their parents and then their parents want to see them. Then they can't see them and it's like you know they won't stay on schedule. They won't stay structured because they're not healthy. If they were healthy then they would do it, and we enable them. We, we do because we love them, but you come to a point and time where you have to say no. I'm going to protect the child. You have to get better and that sucks. It's really hard, especially if it's your own child, and you've done everything for them that you could possibly do. But they have to do it themselves, and it's not always going to be a good thing. It's not always going to work. There's a small percentage right now, but maybe if more people got together as a community and worked towards it together and to go and say it and have an advocate. Have somebody else other than a family member go with you, like a witness, like --

KS: That's what, that's what (*inaudible 42:48.1*). We used to have a parent advocate. I used to be one at the health center and it just, I don't, don't, I think the funding ran out.

KN: Well there's monies out there. There's got to be ways to do that.

KS: Oh yeah, just got to apply for them.

KN: We just need somebody to do that, that kind of thing, to, to help.

SB: Or even if they had a volunteer because like I do advocacy work. I, I help go to court and I help with Child Welfare cases and stuff like that and it just takes somebody coming up to me and asking me. And it is hard for me, like that's part of my financial stress is because I go to team meetings. I go to case management and I do it all on a volunteer basis and it's really hard. But, if they had better organization to organize these people, you know it would probably work out a lot better. An advocate I think is, is really important, especially if you get that third party unbiased, you know, person. And, and I think a team would be so helpful because you have more than those two minds. You know because we don't want to, a lot of people are afraid to hear Child Welfare and it's these two people and usually they're going in and it's, they're going in hard. They've got cops there. You know and, and a lot of times the families get upset and they get involved, you know like in, for me, if they had these, this team of people that worked to say you know we know that there's trouble in the house and we want, we need to understand what your needs are so that we can help work this out. You know and have a group of people and then maybe separating a family, the last resort or something. Go ahead, Jeanie.

JG: Well, I was thinking about my situation, which was on the other end of the whole spectrum here is, I was a parent that had a child, two children taken away and it was drastic. I mean I'm in recovery and I've been in recovery for years and I don't drink and drug and, but I grabbed my child and after this whole spiel, I kind of talked about this once, you know, and it was, you know I scratched my child back here. He went running to the neighbors and got the cops involved like several hours later. But this was something that, that had escalated and the cops came and I was arrested that night. It was like supertime when this all happened, around supertime, and my child had locked us out, took a bag after awhile and went to the friend's house and I thought well he's going to cool off. Ten o'clock that night a cop came and I thought he was going to do jail and bail. I was thinking, you're here for jail and bail. I couldn't



believe that I was arrested that night and they woke up my daughter and had her walk by the cruiser and I was cuffed in the cruiser with the light on and that's drastic for my children. I mean that's just going overboard. You know, my other cases like that or different situations that we know go on in the community, you know what I mean?

KN: It's very traumatizing.

JG: You know what, yeah, not just for them, but for me too.

SB: Yeah, yes, that's right.

KS: What that all boils down to is, it is really not their fault because they're not trained obviously. You don't have policy and procedures because every job I've ever worked in, first thing you do is you develop your, we've done it at the health center, you have to do a policy and procedure manual so if someone came in, they'd know exactly what to do. In that situation if you would've took that to court you would've won because you can discipline your kids. It's not against the law, it's not. Abuse is against the law. That's not abuse.

JG: I never intended to hurt him.

KS: Even if you, even if you spanked him, even if you spanked him, that's not against the law. You can discipline your kids.

JG: Nobody from Child Welfare called to say this was going to happen several hours later. You know, a cop shows up at 10 o'clock and then the two Child Welfare women came and woke up my child at 10 o'clock at night on a school night and then I was shipped to Machias overnight. It's like what the heck kind of, you know I could understand to a point on Cameron's side. I could understand it and I've accepted what I did wrong, but that's going like way overboard, way, way, and I hope nobody else go through it.

CW: So what happened the next day? Were your children taken for a while?

JG: The children were taken, yeah.

CW: For how long were they away from you?

JG: Cameron was like three years, but Christy was like seven months.

KS: Oh my god.

KN: Yeah.

JG: All because of a misunderstanding Cameron and I had had and things started escalating with Cameron. I don't know if it was right around the time he was diagnosed, you know it was right around that time, but things started with that, his diagnosis. I don't know why, I don't really know.

A: It's just hard when you love a child and you can't even go to Child Welfare to get backup to help you. You feel so powerless. You're like--

JG: especially--

A: Yeah.

KS: So the realization here is that our Child Welfare Department is causing more harm than good.

A: They've caused a lot of harm to my family.

KS: And it really, really something really needs to --

JG: It's one of the things why I gave up drinking and drugging. I didn't want my kids to grow up in foster homes like I did as a child and look what happened. I mean I made a stupid mistake, scratched my son behind the ear or somewhere nearby and that's what happened.

A: And you can't even trust Child Welfare to make a referral to them because they'll tell the parent you called on them.

SB: Yeah.

A: I made referrals on my brother and they've told him *[NAME REDACTED]* called and then he cuts me off from my nephew.

SB: Yeah.

KS: That's not supposed to be.

A: I can't even see him anymore.

KN: Confidential.

KS: Not only that, it should be. That's, when you, when someone reaches Child Welfare you should automatically think of protection.

SB: Yeah.

KS: In, in the most loving way. Not in the most harshest.



A: Right.

KS: All or nothing, abusive way. We, our own Child Welfare Department is basically doing the same thing what was done to our people a long time ago. We're doing it to ourselves now in all aspects, in all kinds of abuse. It's not just Child Welfare. It's, it's, it's just the dysfunction that we keep causing all this harm and this, and all this pain amongst ourselves. We do it. We do it to each other. Our own people, we do it to each other.

KN: I think politics gets involved.

KS: Yeah.

KN: And we're not saying that, but it is.

KS: It is.

KN: And that's why something like that happens to you and then there's an infant child that's put with children, with you know the, the child's a week old and they put him back and they still get complaints, complaints, complaints. And they --

KS: Because the mother's related to the governor at the time.

KN: And so, you know it's, you just, for me it's just been very, very hard and I give my life to my grandchildren. I protect them, which I've been in situations that would scare you if you knew the things that happened to me and the things that I try to protect them from and it's really difficult and I hate to say this, but I had a sitter until like 6 o'clock, 6:15 I already texted 'em and told 'em I'd be coming and I wish I could stay longer, but something really needs to be done. A group of people need to get together because it has to work for us not against us. For the children and not against the children and --

KS: And preserving families, that's the number one thing.

KN: And to see this happen, you know, I mean I should be spending time with my grand, grandson and right now I have a granddaughter that I really haven't hardly seen and you think about these things because I really need to spend time with my grandson because I have a granddaughter that has an incurable terminal disease. She's not going to live to be more than four, but she's, it's Tay-Sachs and she's having real serious health issues right now and I'm trying to go see her this weekend because she's been in the hospital for a couple weeks and she may not live much longer, and she's 16 months old.

So, you know taking, you can't take anything for granted because you don't know and we do. I, I fight a lot of the time to protect the kids and to give them what they need and now they're going to lose a sibling that they, they've already met. We already know them and everything

and it's just really hard. It's really hard. It's a little girl. She's beautiful and she's not going to be with us much longer, so it's a really hard thing.

KS: I know how you feel, I lost a granddaughter a couple years ago too.

KN: So it's just, you know we don't want to lose anymore unnecessarily. And I, I want to help my son and whoever's he with. It's the mother to my grandchildren. They need help. They need strong intervention, but the only way they're going to get it is if we have something that they think that they, if they want to have their children with them then they need to do certain things. And it's not happening right now. They have the child and god knows what goes on and what happens.

CW: And who has the granddaughter? Is she with the same parents or?

KN: This granddaughter is with the mother and she lives in Portland and she has Tay-Sachs and she's just not doing well at all. She's been in the hospital for like two weeks and usually they live until like they're four and they haven't found a cure for it and she's only 16 months old so I'm planning to go see her this weekend.

KS: When was she --

KN: It's going to be really hard.

KS: When was she diagnosed with that?

KN: June, so we didn't know until June and it's, and my son who's the father hasn't even seen the baby. He doesn't even acknowledge the baby and it is his child, for not wanting to support the baby or because he's in a different relationship, because he's not healthy.

KS: I'm sorry, Kathy.

KN: It's very hard.

KS: I'm sorry.

KN: And I think she just texted me. I don't want to get in trouble. I don't hardly to go anywhere.

SB: I'm so glad that you were able to come.

A: I know, I'm glad you came, Kathy. Thank you.

KN: She said okay, you are really over, so I got to go.

SB: Thank you.



KN: You're welcome

CW: Kathy, I just want to say as the Commissioner that we hold these stories as sacred and important and that the telling of the story is important, not only as part of the record that we can build a report from, but hopefully just give you some support from people who know and love you.

KN: It's a hard situation.

SB: And every Sunday we have circle here, talking circle, so if you want to join us, Sundays at 6:00. I'll, I'll message you to remind you, just to give you, drop you a note if you can make it or not.

KN: All right.

KS: You've got to have time for yourself too, Kathy.

KN: I really haven't. I don't have anybody that really watches the girls.

KS: Keep your pitcher filled, you can't keep it empty.

SB: Yep.

KS: You've got to keep your pitcher filled, you can't keep it empty.

A: You can bring the girls to the circle because we can close this halfway and they can play on this side. You can bring their crayons and stuff, Kathy. You can...

KN: Yes, I'll just bring their tablets.

A: Oh yeah, that's true. Nobody has crayons anymore.

CW: Oh, Molly it seemed like you had a story to tell too?

MS: Yeah, well I was in almost the, same situation as her. My kids got taken away from me for no reason at all. My grandmother, my own family I should say, took my boys away from me saying I abandoned them and here I was working and enrolled in college and trying to make a better life for us and my grandma or my family didn't like who I was seeing at the time. So she ended up saying that I abandoned them and Child Welfare believed it even though I had no clue. I said where's my kids? I went to my family's house and the cop's radar followed me right to her house and saying you can't be here. You can't be here. I said why, what happened, and they wouldn't tell me. Said you just can't be here, so they took me to the station and saying if you go to your grandmother's house we'll arrest you. I said why, what

did I do? Knowing, just getting out of work, not knowing what, what did I do and they said well you abandoned your children. I said no I didn't, my grandmother was supposed to pick them up after school and take them to her place until I got out of work. And they said well your grandmother and your aunt are saying you abandoned them and for six years I fought to get my kids back. They gave them to their fathers, which one of them didn't want nothing to do with their, his son and they tried, they took a bunch of my hair. They kept taking tests, you know blood tests to see if I had drugs or alcohol. There was nothing. We went to court and they lied. They actually lied and said they found something in one of the tests they did and I had all the paperwork saying it was all negative and they wouldn't believe me. And to have you know to, younger son call you up and say mom I want to come home, almost every night for six years and now he's afraid to even, even to leave my side. Now he has problems and trying to deal with that now. It's, it's, I don't know, it's just, I can't stand Child- and Child Welfare one of them was my relatives. And I was just, they went right against me and they were telling me, oh we're going to help you try to get them back and right in court they lied. They gave them right to their fathers and it just messed my kids up bad. It did.

SB: I remember that always being a threat too when I was younger, you know that come up, 'oh call Child Welfare on her' because they knew that kids could be taken away real easy.

MS: And the way they lied, oh my god.

SB: I do, I took my niece in too and I didn't get any help. I couldn't get support just like, she wasn't through the Child Welfare, so I've had four kids that I've taken care of and this one I couldn't get any help and even though she had talked to Child Welfare herself and I talked to Child Welfare, like we couldn't get any support, like even to get the mother to sit in the room and maybe my mother, you know a family, like say let's get the family together to decide what this child needs or something. It didn't happen. It might've prevented her from you know living so long in an unhealthy situation. She could've had more support, more care you know with kinship care, you know, by saying like Karen was available for her, nieces and nephews and I was too that say we're going to keep them here until you can you know get in a nice, smooth functioning way and still be involved in the children's life because you know now that you've got the child who's an adult and things can be chaotic you know. I mean, or you get lucky and, and you're able to help them and you know it's just, it's a flip of a coin though. You know once a child ends up in an unhealthy situation too and, and then you hear how some parents, because I know, you know I think that's old school, my mother, god I love my mother so much, but back in the day when Child Welfare come in that was one of the big things I used to hear my mother say is call Child Welfare and let's do this and my mother used to threaten me when I was young and it was like for nothing you know. It, well what we think it's nothing, but like sit down and talk to me and teach me, don't threaten to remove my kids forever from me.

MS: That's big.

SB: It's big, yeah and I, I think that's part of the stigma too hearing that word Child Welfare, people like they're --



JG: Powerful.

SB: Yeah.

KS: And you know I've been guilty of doing that when my kids were smaller because everyone, Child Welfare has been feared so much that I, I used that against them to keep them in line.

CW: Uh huh.

KS: So, you know and that wasn't cool because you know it worked, you know. Because they did not want to get put in Child Welfare, but I know a lot of people have done that in the past, have used Child Welfare as a, as a discipline.

JG: Yeah, I have.

KS: Yep.

JG: When Molly was in there, I'd say I'm going to call Molly and she even came over before.

KS: I had Marjorie Withers --

JG: (*Inaudible 1:01:47.8*) --

KS: Yep, I had Marjorie Withers come to my house too.

JG: She was the Director of Child Welfare at one time...

A: Marjorie or Molly?

JG: Molly.

A: Molly.

RG: What's her last name?

JG: Parker.

A: Molly Parker.

KS: She was here --

SB: But like that's support, you know to, when as a parent sometimes something isn't working out, I think that could be so useful if that was a resource like our Child Welfare offered, you know. Do you need, you know like --

KS: If it was in fact true --

SB: There's another tribe that has this positive parenting manual and I've tried to, you know when I started doing my advocacy work, I tried to push it over there, even with the past Child Welfare Director, like there's another tribe that has it and, and it help teaches people how, in a traditional way because it's this positive parenting manual, I can't remember what nation it's from, but maybe you could find out, but they, this has really made a big change in, in tribal communities because it helps to be that support for parents, to help as a guide for parents and I guess the, the people that help support the families. But that's a nice support.

CW: (*Inaudible 1:02:58.3*).

SB: No, it's a different first nation's tribe that, that developed this plan. It wasn't a Wabanaki tribe, but I remember it's called the positive parenting manual.

CW: We can find it.

KS: I bet you could Google that.

CW: So this is very complex in that, you know hearing you talk about different roles for Child Welfare and I'm not sure that one organization can be both a supportive and positive sort of counseling, social service and the protective at the same time and I'm hearing what you need [NAME REDACTED] is social service support.

SB: Yeah.

CW: Because it can go, it can go to the --

A: Well we actually... we needed Child Welfare support because my nephew, who's been neglected for so long, it's always --

SML: We need more different workers, that's what we need.

A: It's always gone under the radar and it's like he's not important to them.

SB: To me, I felt like that was a conflict to, because they have social services and Child Welfare hand and hand over there and so to me I, even when I started working over there, I used to think there was a conflict before, but while I was in there, I really feel like that is such a conflict because you have people who need support and resources and then they're also supposed to be taking kids away, so people don't --



CW: So how honest can you be without going there and asking for help with a problem and the threat is that they can take my kids away.

SB: That's right.

CW: So for you and your family that's why they'll take your nephew and put him back someplace else versus giving you the help you need. It's like a push me-pull you situation.

SB: Yeah.

CW: And there's only two people there and you're not trained.

SB: Yeah.

CW: It's like, that's --

SB: And it seems more that they focus on the child welfare type of aspect than on social services. Like I don't see community services in our community. Maybe it'll change now, but our social services department isn't really providing services to our community.

A: We need family support services.

SB: Yeah.

A: That's what we need.

CW: Yeah, that's what I'm hearing.

A: Building and strengthening families and helping them to keep the kids safe.

CW: And also a better way of when they do get a referral to really understand so instead of coming in, in the middle of the night and scooping your kids and scooping your kid, it doesn't sound like they have the capacity to really do a thorough case examination.

SB: Right.

CW: So it's, it's astounding to me that on the other hand, they then don't look at certain cases.

A: Yep.

CW: So --

A: I think a lot of it is reacting on the whims. The neglect cases they don't really bother with. It's more if it's real physical abuse. Even the sexual abuse cases, they don't get handled here.

KS: No.

A: No.

KS: Because if you're going to do that, you have to get a lot of other people involved and it's a lot of work.

CW: You've got to get a lot of support. It's a lot of support.

KS: So, to me, I don't know.

CW: A lot of specialized --

KS: I just look at it in a totally different way. You know like I would want to have all that you know for, for our people and to, I don't know, I just, I just don't understand, maybe they're burned out, I don't know. Like lack of education. Ignorance is bliss.

SB: Yeah.

KS: I don't know.

A: They damage the relationship with the people. Like with my mother, she's 73, she says Anne and Diane will never set foot in my house again. Then they brought the cop the first time and took my nephew out. My mother was so angry. They never even said tell us what's going on [NAME REDACTED]. You know they never even, they just brought the cops, took the kid and my mother was so hurt and so angry

CW: It sounds like it happened (inaudible 1:06:42.1).

A: We never did anything to hurt him. My mother's always protected him, but the mother can say, you know they don't treat him the same as the other kids. So she has the power to come and take that kid out of the house when she never had him for four years anyways. It doesn't make any sense. And like she can go get the tribe, tribal caseworkers, to Princeton to kick the State caseworkers out and have the tribe take jurisdiction to get the outcome she wants, you know. It doesn't make any sense. And in the meantime, our kids are the ones that suffer from it. These are our kids that are going to have emotional problems when they grow up because you know they didn't get what they needed when they were kids.

KS: Well obviously she's, she's acting through her disease.

A: That's when we need someone to protect the children.



KS: So she's not going to think, right, she's not thinking of his wellbeing. She's only, she's only acting you know on her disease and you know we don't see anything.

A: But every time I see these kids falling through the crack it hurts me and it makes me so angry.

KS: It does.

A: I mean I got another nephew, you know, she had a baby three months old that was removed by the State because she's not a tribal person. The kid had narcotics in their system. The baby was three months old, had heavy duty drugs in the bloodstream and then they let her bring another baby home and now my nephew is seven and he's practically nonverbal. He's got severe emotional and behavior problems. It's because of his parents. You know, I can see that looking in, you know. You have a kid that's not talking at 7, 8 years old. Tell me why that kid hasn't been, there's no intervention. You know, so while they're in their bliss ignoring everything we are dealing with the realities of these kids that are being raised with severe neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, now they have emotional problems, behavioral problems they're perpin' on other children. I mean Jesus, somebody's got to step up to the plate and say enough is enough. You're fired, get. Let's get some people in here that want to help our people.

MS: Yeah.

KS: I think we should take this to counsel. I really do.

CW: Can you say a little bit about, someone said there's a new Child Welfare Director.

A: Yeah, we have a new Child Welfare Director.

CW: And, and who doesn't have any --

KS: Bea (phonetic).

A: Oh Bea. She come from Forestry as a Forestry Secretary and now she's a Child Welfare Director.

SML: Oh so Dolly's finally gone?

SB: Yeah.

A: She's a secretary.

SML: When's Anne going to leave?

SB: She doesn't have any knowledge.

A: She has no training in child protective services or social, social work.

SB: Yeah, in social work at all.

A: And the other one is hired as the Assistant Director that has an accounting degree.

KS: Who's that?

A: Anne.. uh Desiree, Desiree (inaudible 1:09:40.7).

KS: At Child Welfare?

CW: And how many people are on staff, two, is that what it is?

A: Yeah, they have an investigator. They have a foster placement recruiter, which is Diane.

SB: She's family advocate, I thought.

A: She told me she does foster care licensing.

SB: Wow.

A: I work as part of that department. They have child welfare, central services and the food pantry. We all got hauled to the Chief's office. I was flabbergasted because those women couldn't even answer how many kids do you have in tribal custody? How many kids do you --

SML: Because they don't pay attention to them.

A: And I always --

KS: (*gasp*) What about their reports?!

A: I almost crapped myself, I'm like you're a child welfare, you're a protective casework, services caseworker, you don't know how many kids you have in care. You don't know how many kids the tribe has in care.

KS: They're not doing their BIA reports or State reports.

A: And I was hoping, you know I could see the Chief sitting across from me and I was hoping the light bulb would come on and he'd say, holy, this is not right. It didn't register. It didn't seem to register. No, so it, it makes my heart --

SML: No offense, but it's not going to register into that brain because we've had issues with him when I was in Child Welfare.



SB: It's just things can come up. If, if somebody, and that's the thing like, the problem here --

SML: That's been the problem.

SB: A tribal chief has a problem with you, they can go in and order the children be removed.

CW: Sure.

SB: That was what happened to us with one of the chiefs that was in office. They came in and that was traumatizing, you know for her, for me, you know for my other kids because we, you think that you're safe and you're providing a resource and then because you are on the bad side of that person or that chief then you become a target for them, and that's scary.

A: We're a close enough community to know when kids are in trouble. I mean we could all point out in our neighborhood the kids that we think are being sexually abused, the kids that are being physically abused, the kids that are being neglected and it's just such a weight on your shoulders when it seems like there's nothing that we can do to help. We can't, I can't make referrals to them knowing they're going to go to the parents, *[NAME REDACTED]* called me.

SB: Yeah.

A: *[NAME REDACTED]* told me this about you. I mean, and then people will come after me because I did child welfare before. I know my stuff and when I moved home I tried to keep that role as an advocate for kids and every time I would make a referral they would tell the parent you know so then I had all these people coming after me and I'm like what the hell do I do?

SB: Yeah.

A: Not if they're going to give so and so my name. You know, I can't, I can't put myself out there all the time like that. I mean I, I tell myself that I can for kids, but even when I do make reports, I never see anything happen. We have kids that are hermits on this reservation, you know. They don't leave their house. And we have kids that are nonverbal at 7, 8 years old, come on that's no need for that in this day and age.

CW: When you say kids are hermits, do they not go to school --?

A: We have one child in our community that was not going to school from 6th, 2nd grade until the 8th grade. So six years she never --

SB: And other kids before that.

KS: There was another boy that just started going to school.

A: Yep.

KS: And he's what, ten? And hasn't, had never gone to school. But you know what, that's to me, that's the school's fault too.

CW: Of course.

KS: You know, can anybody --

CW: There's a lot of people who are co-creating the situation because it's a community thing.

KS: It's a community thing.

A: I just don't understand that.

KS: It takes the community to raise a child.

CW: Right.

KS: It truly does, it truly does.

A: And that's why there's women like us that will step up to the plate and take care of people's kids that we held in our, you know, taking care of them.

KS: And we continue to be broke. Because we're blackballed, because we're trying to stand up for what's right.

A: And when we do take in kids we can't afford it because we can't even (*inaudible*)(*KS laughs*) the child. And when we have to choose between you know food and winter clothes, I mean what do you choose? It's hard. But we keep doing it and I'll always open my house up to kids. I'll always take care of kids, but sometimes I'm like it's not my responsibility. I know I'm a tribal person and we all look out for each other, but sometimes we need formal systems in place to step in and say you know there needs to be some intervention. There needs to be some help.

KS: If everyone just did their jobs then we wouldn't have, there wouldn't be this, we wouldn't be in this situation.

SB: Or at least we could problem solve as to you know people in their position --

KS: Or we could just be more of a support person instead of trying to advocate for what's right instead of you know --



A: I mean like you hit it right on the head when you said we got two women that are not even native women making huge, important, life-changing decisions for a child when they, either they, they've never, they don't look into stuff enough, you know.

KS: They're not trained. That's the bottom line.

SB: And they're quick to go in, and I mean like I sat in a training -- With the case, with these, when I worked over here, I sat in training for attachment disruption and another one, I can't remember the other one, but the attachment disruption is big because that's what we talked about. You go in, you get attached to these kids and then they come in and then they take them right out. I mean I sat with them and they know about attachment disruption, just like I did and yet they come and they go in and they'll even do it at night and they'll rip them right away without saying a word, without saying a word. That's --

A: Which is exactly what they did to my nephew and that --

SB: It's just mind boggling that they think that they could do that and it's not going to impact the child, I mean as an adult we have to learn to cope to get over that, but a child, I mean --

A: Especially taking a kid out of his grandmother's house and putting him in a cruiser. The kid's going to think they did something wrong.

SB: Yeah.

A: I mean that's terrifying, just makes me so mad.

KS: So, in essence what they're doing is they're monopolizing, abusing their power, something's got to be done.

CW: Because it's totally arbitrary the way they behave. So you--

KS: Knowing something, being, not, like she just said they're, they're training and because I, I'm taking it just because of their actions that they're ignorant to their jobs, but they're not obviously and they're still, they're still doing this.

CW: So you had mentioned before something about the Council, so do these people report to the Council or to the Chief or what's the system of--?

SB: They don't have anybody. There's no formal --

CW: There's no formal nothing --

KS: You have a chain of command, which is they have, their supervisor is the Director. The Director's supervisor is the Chief and then Council is, they're the ones that you can go, they oversee everything.

CW: The operations.

KS: Right.

SB: I can't think of the word, but you know when you go and you, you the supervisor oversees and checks the department to make sure that it's running, like a, I can't even think of it, and I sit on a board and we have to do ours every year.

JG: A performance evaluation.

SB: A performance and evaluation, yes. And so they don't have any formal evaluations here like they have no way, there's no real supervision. It's always based on complaints. Who's complaining and then they're like oh we got complaints she's not doing something right.

KS: No, but I think something is going to be done because one of the things that, that I stressed to all candidates that came to my home campaigning. That was one of the things that I stressed was that if I were to oversee the Director I would have them do a two-year goal plan. What would you like to see happen? I'll have them meet with our grant writers. We'll bring more money in. If you need more money and then in two months I'm going to evaluate how you're doing. If it's not working we'll try to change it. I'll evaluate you in two more months, if it's not working, you're done.

CW: Exactly.

KS: And that's exactly how I would do it because we have to start doing something because it's not working that way that it's working because it's insanity. Doing the same thing over and over and over expecting the same results, right?

SB: Yep.

KS: It's obviously not working, but I did mention that, and we used to have Director's meetings, all the department heads would have meetings with, with the Chief. They used to have them and it, for years, I mean years we have not had any, and now they're implementing them again. So, I think it's going to change.

JG: I think it would seem like it was just individual. (*Inaudible*) health center?

KS: Yep.

JG: I don't know if they actually come in as a big group or --



KS: Nope, they do, they have, they have like, they had a director's meeting last, was it last Wednesday and they've been having regular director's meeting and they're actually doing pretty well. So, they, they are having them with all the department heads, all get together on their own, but they meet.

JG: I like the idea, thought you said you guys used to have a committee under Child Welfare.

KS: We did, we did.

JG: There needs to be something like that.

KS: I wasn't just the director making the decisions or the caseworker. It was the team. You had a team.

CW: Do you remember what year that was happening?

KS: '89, wait a minute, yeah, (*CW: Who was the Director then?*) '98, '99, with Sonya Dana '98, '99, 2000.

A: I got to go meet with the Chief a couple weeks ago when he brought us all over there I mentioned that to him. I said you need a child protective team for your Child Welfare Department. I even tried to get him to hire me to audit his files. I said if they don't know what kids they have in care then they don't know probably have any files. I said I could expertly get the files all in place. They'll pass an audit. They never called me back. But the longer you know this sitting back and not having any supervision or, or authority over their Child Welfare Department, the longer the kids in our community will pay for it. The more we pay for it, you know? Through our pain and because nothing hurts more than not being able to protect a kid that you love. You know that's like nothing you can do and that's a bad feeling. They're lucky, it's not my kid because those women they would be, I'd be calling every frigging director at BIA, Social Services. I would be on the horn with anybody and everybody.

KS: That's why I told her she had (inaudible 1:21:20.).

A: The newspapers, everything.

KS: She had rights that she could've beat them, that what they did was wrong. That was so wrong. You don't just go pulling kids out.

A: I know some parents even haven't been to court for their Child Welfare cases. Never even been to court and that's a huge violation of parents' rights. I mean like when they took the children they didn't, they should've gave you a court order. They didn't give you anything. Your rights were violated and I've heard it through a lot of women here.

SML: Did you get a court order?

MS: Not right off, it took a while.

CW: And then it, it went in the wrong way for you.

MS: Yeah.

CW: Was it tribal court or --?

MS: Yeah, right here.

JG: But I've had (*inaudible*) with foster kids and I think they need more like caseworkers and keeping people, you know up on everything. It's just so important.

CW: It sounds like once the child is placed then that's sort of it, you might get a little clothing money, but there's no case services or anything.

JG: Or if someone, of if a child has a disorder, they need extra care, extra case management.

CW: Exactly.

SB: I had to call case management because I had a couple kids with special needs, so I went and sought out case management on my own to help me make sure that I was able to meet those children's needs, but Child Welfare didn't do that for me.

CW: So where did you get that stuff?

SB: I, I talked to Catholic Charities Mission and then WCCC, no, WHC, whatever.

A: Washington Hancock Community Agency?

SB: Yeah, one of them.

CW: So you went, you got (*inaudible*) --

SB: No, no, no, WHCA, no, something like that. It's in Machias, their office. Yep, they had case manage-- so I had them and I had Catholic Charities Missions, two different places doing case management.

CW: You had to initiate getting (*inaudible*)?

SB: Yep, I sought them out myself.

JG: I wish they had WINGS, like back when Marjorie was here and the big programs they used to have. They just ran out of money or what happened with those.



KS: The grant ran out.

JG: They were so supportive to single parents, you know I was a young single parent you know raising three on my own. You know, especially starting off and I don't know, just seemed like I got a lot of help through that program.

KS: And it did, it, the program didn't just help people who needed it. It helped other community members with employment, so you know the community flourished you know.

CW: Well there's a part of it.

KS: Yeah.

CW: the community (*inaudible*) --

JG: there if somebody needing an AA meeting at night, now you hear of you know mother's that can't go, they don't have childcare or, I don't know. Some good programs were lost.

KS: This is a good meeting. I really enjoyed this time, really.

SML: You should come on Sundays.

KS: Oh, I'm going to, yeah.

CW: So I know you said you wanted to come and listen, do you have anything you want to add having sat and listened?

SML: Not today.

CW: Type of request Stephanie and [NAME REDACTED] and this is like coming from the outside, but I'm thinking about this baby being born in the world tomorrow and I'm wondering if we can smudge off Selina so that she doesn't carry the pain that's here in this circle as she brings her child into this world.

SML: Even though I'll be in physical pain --

CW: Pardon?

SML: Even though I'll be in physical pain --

SB: Tomorrow, yeah.

CW: Just in terms of carrying the energy, the weight --

KS: But you had a lot of energy going on and that's why it's good to keep a window open so it could just go out.

SB: Yeah, go out.

CW: I also think it might be good smudge all of us off. Bring that positive energy for the future. So I just want to say as a Commissioner that I feel really thankful that you are brave enough to come and tell us about what's going on, especially what's going on in the present. We've had a lot of people tell us about what's gone on in the past and the past is done, but what's going on in the present really needs to be taken care of. That's what the intention of the Commission is about is that hopefully through this process we can get some attention from the Chiefs, from the State in terms of saying "We got a problem here folks. This is the mirror, we've already, X number of people and this is a mirror and have some choices here."

RG: I want to thank you guys all as well for participating and for sharing. It can be hard especially when people aren't from here to share that kind of stuff, with somebody that you don't know and I'm very, very grateful to all of you for being here.

CW: We can't have a good report if we don't have good information about the kinds of abuses that are going on right now.

[END OF RECORDING]