

EMILY'S CHOICE

A CHILD PROTECTION STORY



Legal Aid BC



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EMILY'S CHOICE

Brandon Mitchell

Writer

Tara Audibert

Illustrator & Focus Group Short

Cornelia Hoogland

Editor

Christian Ryan

Editor

Sean Muir

Project Lead & Editor

Katrina Harry

Legal Reviewer

Jay Istvanffy

Editor

Patricia Lim

Development Coordinator

**Legal Aid BC &
Indigenous Story Studio**

Publishers

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Emily's Choice deals with child protection law in BC. It's not based on real people or events. It may upset you, particularly if you have experiences with child protection. The book explains the law in general. It only introduces you to the legal issues. Child protection is a complicated legal process and each case is different. You may need to get legal help. For more information and who can help, see:

aboriginal.legalaid.bc.ca/child-family-rights/emilys-choice

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HEY, THAT'S NOT YOUR BUSINESS!




WELL, WHOSE BUSINESS IS IT THEN? EMILY, I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE MY SISTER, BUT YOUR ADDICTIONS AND LIFESTYLE ARE PUTTING GREG IN DANGER. LET ME TAKE HIM HOME WITH ME, AT LEAST UNTIL YOU GET CLEANED UP.




YOU'RE NOT TAKING GREG ANYWHERE!




WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO? LEAVE HIM WITH YOU? LOOK AT THE SHAPE YOU'RE IN. YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?



JUST GO AND LEAVE US ALONE!




I CAN'T DO THAT. GREG ISN'T SAFE HERE WHEN YOU'RE HIGH, YOU'RE NOT GIVING ME MUCH CHOICE, EM. I'M GONNA CALL YOUR SOCIAL WORKER.



NO! DON'T DO THAT!



THEN LET ME TAKE GREG HOME, JUST UNTIL YOU'RE FEELING BETTER.



NO, HE'S MY SON!



AND MY NEPHEW! I DON'T WANT TO LOSE HIM TO THE MINISTRY JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN'T PUT HIS NEEDS BEFORE YOURS.

SHUT UP! I HATE YOU! GET OUT!



SLAM!



GREG! COME ON! HE'S GONNA BE SO MAD AT ME FOR THAT!



LATER...

LOOK MOMMY, I'M HELPING!

THANKS BABY.

HEY, WHAT'S THIS?



SWEETIE, I NEED YOU TO GO TO YOUR ROOM. MOMMY'S GOT A VISITOR.

KNOCK KNOCK



HI MEGAN.

HELLO EMILY, MAY I COME IN?

I GUESS.



IS GREG HOME? OR ANYBODY ELSE?

GREG IS. NOBODY ELSE.

OKAY, HOW'S HE DOING? ENJOYING KINDERGARTEN?

OH YEAH, FOR SURE! ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY PAINT. YOU SHOULD SEE HIS CLOTHES AT THE END OF THE DAY!

THAT'S SO FUN! GOOD TO HEAR, AND HOW ARE YOU DOING?



COULD BE BETTER. THE PLACE IS KIND OF A MESS.

MUST HAVE BEEN SOME PARTY. HOW IS YOUR DRUG AND ALCOHOL GROUP COMING ALONG?

WELL, I KIND OF STOPPED GOING. I DON'T LIKE TALKING ABOUT MYSELF IN FRONT OF STRANGERS.

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, EMILY. YOU REMEMBER THAT IN OUR PREVIOUS VISITS, THAT WAS ONE OF THE CONDITIONS YOU AGREED TO, RIGHT? ATTEND YOUR MEETINGS AND NO DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE WHILE GREG'S AROUND.


YEAH, I REMEMBER.

SO IS THERE SOMEONE WHO CAN LOOK AFTER GREG FOR AWHILE? HIS DAD, MAYBE?

NO. HE'S NOT IN THE PICTURE.

HOW ABOUT DWAYNE?

NO WAY! THE ONLY REASON YOU'RE HERE IS BECAUSE OF HIM.




WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I KNOW HE CALLED YOU THIS MORNING ABOUT ME BEING HIGH AROUND GREG.

WE AREN'T ALLOWED TO SAY WHO REPORTED YOU, EMILY. THAT INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL. BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO MAKE A BAD DECISION BECAUSE YOU THINK A FAMILY MEMBER REPORTED YOU.

WELL, I STILL DON'T WANT GREG GOING TO MY BROTHER'S.


YOU KNOW, I'VE SPOKEN TO DWAYNE SEVERAL TIMES OVER THE YEARS. HE LOVES YOU BOTH BUT IT TEARS HIM UP TO SEE GREG HURT. HE REALLY DOES HAVE YOUR LITTLE GUY'S BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.



GREG'S STAYING HERE WITH ME!

THAT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA, EMILY. THERE ARE BRUISES ON YOUR ARM, I SMELL MARIJUANA, YOU APPEAR TO BE INTOXICATED, AND THERE'S NOT A SOBER CAREGIVER IN THE HOUSE. YOU'RE NOT GIVING ME ANY CHOICE.

WHY DOES EVERYONE KEEP SAYING THAT?! JUST LEAVE US ALONE!



I'M SORRY, EMILY. I'M AFRAID WE'RE OUT OF OPTIONS. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO...

YOU CAN'T TAKE HIM! HE'S ALL I HAVE!

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO CALL A LAWYER. DO YOU WANT THE NUMBER FOR LEGAL AID?

NO! YOU'RE NOT TAKING HIM AWAY FROM ME!

I'M SORRY, EMILY. PLEASE GATHER UP GREG'S THINGS - CLOTHES, TOYS, WHATEVER WILL HELP HIM BE MORE COMFORTABLE. I HAVE TO TAKE HIM INTO CARE. RIGHT NOW.

PLEASE DON'T DO THIS! WHERE'S HE GOING? DON'T TAKE HIM FAR AWAY!

WE HAVE AN IMMEDIATE PLACEMENT FOR HIM CLOSE BY.

CAN I SEE HIM?

WE CAN TALK ABOUT SETTING UP A VISIT AFTER HE'S IN HIS FOSTER HOME.

CAN HE BE PLACED WITH SOMEONE WE KNOW? HE'S NOT USED TO STRANGERS.





HEY KIDDO, YOU FORGOT YOUR BLANKIE.

WHAT'S HAPPENING, MOMMY?



THEY'RE TAKING YOU AWAY FOR A LITTLE BIT. DON'T WORRY. MOMMY'S GONNA FIX EVERYTHING. JUST REMEMBER I LOVE YOU.

MOMMY, I DON'T WANNA GO! I DON'T WANNA GO!

IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, MY LOVE!



legalaid.bc.ca

CONTACT US
1-866-577-2525

IT'S GONNA BE OKAY...

HELLO? LEGAL AID?
THE MINISTRY TOOK MY SON. I NEED HELP.



GOOD MORNING,
MAY I HELP YOU?

LEGAL AID TOLD ME MY LAWYER'S
OFFICE IS HERE. I MADE AN APPOINTMENT.
MY NAME IS EMILY.

THANK YOU, EMILY. SAMANTHA
IS EXPECTING YOU. SHE'LL
BE RIGHT OUT.

HELLO EMILY,
PLEASE COME IN.

SORRY YOU HAD TO COME SO FAR
TO SPEAK TO ME TODAY. DID YOU HAVE
ANY TROUBLE FINDING THE OFFICE?

NO, IT WAS OKAY. MY
NATION HELPED ME OUT
WITH THE BUS TICKET
AND TAXI.

OH GOOD. PLEASE HAVE A SEAT.
I'M GLAD WE'RE ABLE TO TALK BEFORE
THE PRESENTATION HEARING.

PRESENTATION HEARING? WHAT'S THAT?

OH, SORRY. I'M GOING TO USE LEGAL TERMS THAT YOU'LL HEAR AT COURT, SO YOU GET FAMILIAR WITH THEM. IF I DON'T EXPLAIN THEM, STOP ME AND I WILL.

OKAY, THANKS.

MY PLEASURE. LET'S GET STARTED. I'VE READ THE SOCIAL WORKER'S REPORT. IT DESCRIBES WHY THE MINISTRY FELT IT WAS NECESSARY TO REMOVE GREG FROM YOUR CARE.

THE ALLEGATIONS ARE AROUND DRUG USE, VIOLENCE IN THE HOME, LACK OF HEALTHY FOOD IN THE HOUSE, IRREGULAR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, AND WHEN HE DOES SHOW UP, HE'S HUNGRY. THE SOCIAL WORKER'S CONCERNED ABOUT NEGLECT AND THE RISK OF PHYSICAL HARM.

THAT'S NOT TRUE! I LOVE MY BOY!

I DON'T DOUBT THAT FOR A SECOND, EMILY. I'M JUST TELLING YOU WHAT THE REPORT SAYS. I'M ON YOUR SIDE.

I KNOW. I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON.

HAVE A LOOK AT THIS LEGAL PROCESS MAP. IF YOU FOLLOW ALONG, YOU CAN SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR: THE MINISTRY DECIDED THAT PROTECTION WAS NEEDED FOR GREG, SO THEY REMOVED HIM FROM YOUR HOME. THIS MEANS THAT NOW THERE'LL BE A PRESENTATION HEARING WHERE THE MINISTRY EXPLAINS TO A JUDGE WHY THAT WAS NECESSARY. THE HEARING HAS TO HAPPEN WITHIN SEVEN DAYS OF THE REMOVAL.

THAT MAKES MORE SENSE. THANKS.

FOR SURE. HOLD ON TO THE MAP. IT SHOWS THE PATH YOU WANT TO FOLLOW, AND THE PATH YOU WANT TO AVOID.

YEAH, I SEE THAT. I NEED TO MAKE GOOD CHOICES...

THE ABORIGINAL CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

CONTACTED BY MINISTRY OR DELEGATED ABORIGINAL AGENCY

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO GET A LAWYER. CALL LEGAL AID IMMEDIATELY TO FIND OUT IF YOU QUALIFY FOR A FREE LAWYER.

PROTECTION NOT REQUIRED

PROTECTION REQUIRED

YOUR CHILD STAYS WITH YOU

YOUR CHILD IS REMOVED FROM YOUR HOME*

AGREEMENT WITH MINISTRY/ DELEGATED AGENCY

MINISTRY/ DELEGATED AGENCY REQUIRES SUPERVISION ORDER*

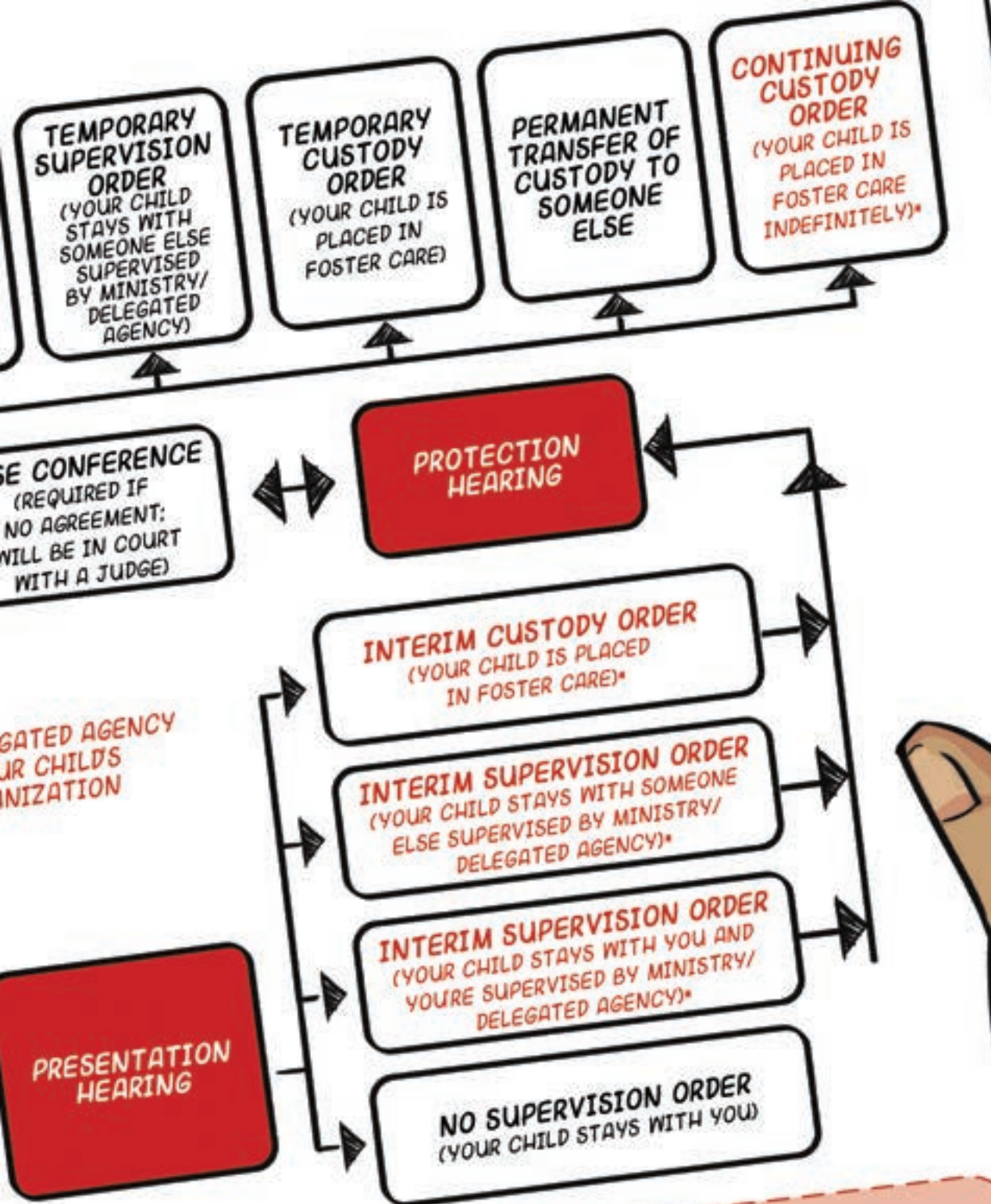
TEMPORARY SUPERVISION ORDER (YOUR CHILD STAYS WITH YOU AND YOU'RE SUPERVISED BY MINISTRY/ DELEGATED AGENCY)

CAS

*MINISTRY / DELEGATED AGENCY MUST NOTIFY YOUR ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATION




CASE CONFIDENTIAL




IF A CHILD IS UNDER A CONTINUING CUSTODY ORDER, GET LEGAL ADVICE TO APPLY TO:


<p>APPEAL COURT DECISIONS</p>	<p>PERMANENT TRANSFER OF CUSTODY TO SOMEONE ELSE</p>
<p>ACCESS CHILD UNDER CONTINUING CUSTODY ORDER</p>	<p>ADOPT CHILD UNDER CONTINUING CUSTODY ORDER (PROVINCIAL OR CUSTOMARY INDIGENOUS ADOPTION)</p>
<p>CANCEL CONTINUING CUSTODY ORDER</p>	



EXCELLENT. HAVE YOU MET THE FOSTER FAMILY YET?



YEAH, THEY'RE NICE AND ALL, BUT THEY'RE NOT INDIGENOUS.



THE MINISTRY IS SUPPOSED TO CONSIDER CULTURAL CONTINUITY WHEN MAKING PLACEMENTS, BUT IT DEPENDS ON WHETHER INDIGENOUS FOSTER FAMILIES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE AREA. ALSO, YOUR SOCIAL WORKER SHOULD REACH OUT TO YOUR FAMILY TO SEE IF THERE'S SOMEONE WHO CAN LOOK AFTER GREG. DO YOU HAVE ANY FAMILY WHO COULD CARE FOR HIM?

WELL, MY BROTHER, I WAS AGAINST THE IDEA AT FIRST, BUT NOW I THINK IT WOULD BE THE BEST HOME FOR GREG. IF DWAYNE'S NOT TOO MAD AT ME, THAT IS.

HAVING YOUR FAMILY LOOK AFTER GREG WOULD BE AN 'OUT OF CARE' OPTION, WHICH MIGHT BE A LOT BETTER FOR HIM. WE SHOULD LET YOUR SOCIAL WORKER KNOW RIGHT AWAY BECAUSE SEVERAL RECORD CHECKS ARE REQUIRED AND THAT USUALLY TAKES A FEW WEEKS. WE'LL TRY TO SET UP ACCESS WITH GREG AS SOON AS WE CAN.



ACCESS?

VISITS
WITH GREG.

OKAY. GOOD. AND
WHAT'S GOING TO
HAPPEN AT THE
HEARING?




ON THE LEGAL PROCESS MAP
YOU CAN SEE THAT THERE ARE A FEW
POSSIBLE OUTCOMES. BUT THE MINISTRY'S
LAWYER IS LIKELY GOING TO ASK THE JUDGE
TO KEEP GREG IN THE MINISTRY'S CARE.



WHAT? CAN WE FIGHT IT?


AT THE FIRST COURT APPEARANCE, THE JUDGE WON'T HEAR EVIDENCE FROM OUR SIDE OR THEIRS. SO IF YOU DON'T AGREE WITH WHAT THE MINISTRY SAYS, WE CAN TELL THE JUDGE YOU WANT TO SET A TRIAL DATE, WHICH WILL BE QUITE A FEW WEEKS DOWN THE ROAD, MAYBE LONGER. SO YOU'D HAVE TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THAT.



DO I HAVE ANOTHER CHOICE?

WELL, IF YOU AGREE, THE JUDGE CAN MAKE AN INTERIM CUSTODY ORDER TO THE DIRECTOR. THIS MEANS THAT GREG WILL STAY IN CARE, BUT AT LEAST THERE WON'T BE A BIG SURPRISE AT THE PRESENTATION HEARING. WE'LL ALREADY HAVE AN ARRANGEMENT WITH THE MINISTRY.

AH, MAN! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.



GOOD THING YOU CAME IN TODAY. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE COURT DOCUMENT ALLEGATIONS IN DETAIL, SO YOU CAN DECIDE WHETHER TO CONSENT TO THE SOCIAL WORKER'S APPLICATION FOR CUSTODY OR GO TO TRIAL.



PRESENTATION HEARING...

I'VE REVIEWED THE REPORT TO COURT AND HEARD FROM THE MINISTRY AND THE MOTHER'S LAWYER.

THE PARTIES ARE AGREEING TO AN INTERIM CUSTODY ORDER TO THE DIRECTOR AND AN ACCESS ORDER.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT JUST HAPPENED.

YEAH, MORE LEGAL JARGON. I KNOW, THE JUDGE JUST SAID THAT YOU AGREED TO GREG LIVING IN CARE WITH A FOSTER FAMILY, RATHER THAN FIGHTING THE MINISTRY'S REPORT IN COURT. THIS DOESN'T MEAN YOU ADMITTED THAT THE ALLEGATIONS ARE TRUE; YOU DIDN'T. GREG WILL NOW BE PLACED IN FOSTER CARE UNTIL THE PROTECTION HEARING IN ABOUT SIX WEEKS.

GOT IT, AND ACCESS ORDER MEANS VISITS, RIGHT?

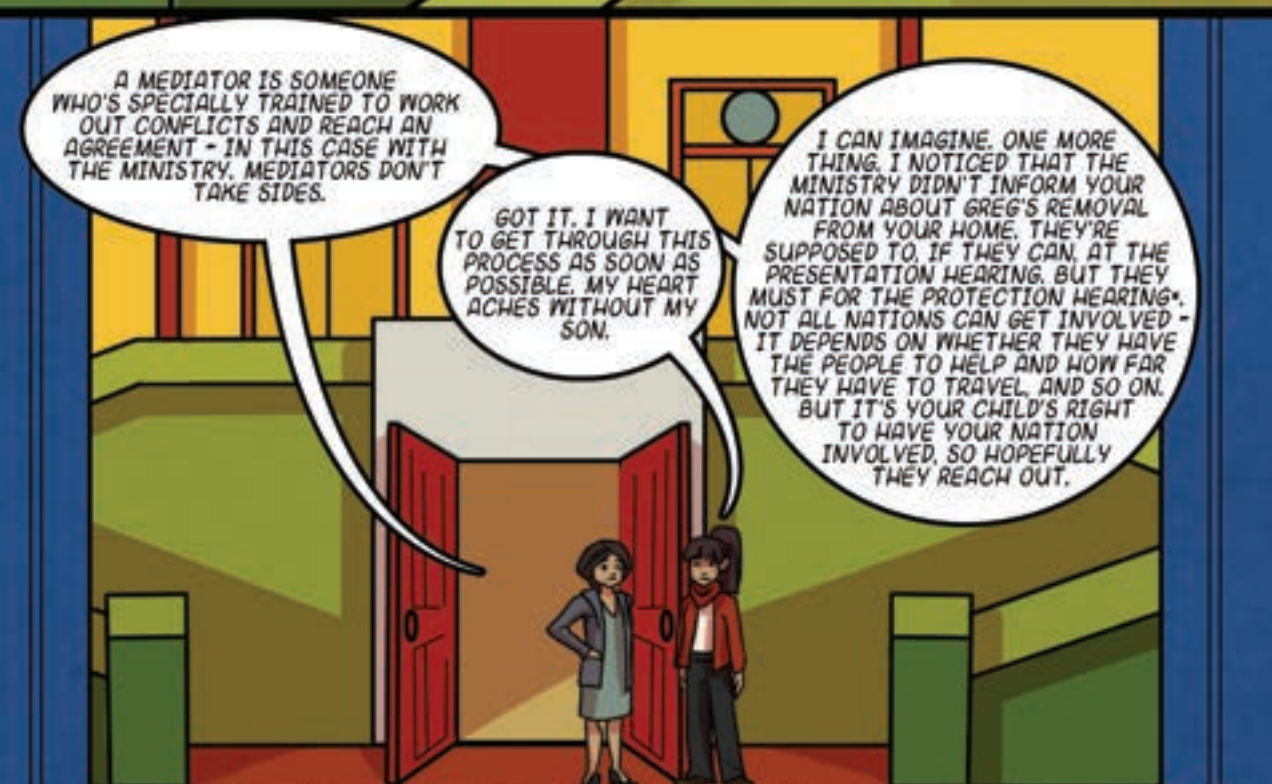
IT DOES. GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE GETTING USED TO THE LANGUAGE. THE VISITS ARE GOING TO BE SUPERVISED AT THE MINISTRY OFFICE AT FIRST. BUT THEN WE HOPE THEY'LL BE UNSUPERVISED AND FOR LONGER PERIODS ONCE THINGS GO WELL FOR A WHILE.



ALL I REALLY CARE ABOUT IS GETTING MY BABY BACK. I'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES.

THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR, EMILY. I'D LIKE TO SET UP A HALF DAY WITH A MEDIATOR SOON. THEY CAN HELP GO OVER THE MINISTRY'S CONCERNS AND START DISCUSSING A POSSIBLE RETURN PLAN.

OKAY. WHAT'S A MEDIATOR?



A MEDIATOR IS SOMEONE WHO'S SPECIALLY TRAINED TO WORK OUT CONFLICTS AND REACH AN AGREEMENT - IN THIS CASE WITH THE MINISTRY. MEDIATORS DON'T TAKE SIDES.

GOT IT. I WANT TO GET THROUGH THIS PROCESS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. MY HEART ACHES WITHOUT MY SON.

I CAN IMAGINE. ONE MORE THING. I NOTICED THAT THE MINISTRY DIDN'T INFORM YOUR NATION ABOUT GREG'S REMOVAL FROM YOUR HOME. THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO, IF THEY CAN, AT THE PRESENTATION HEARING, BUT THEY MUST FOR THE PROTECTION HEARING*. NOT ALL NATIONS CAN GET INVOLVED - IT DEPENDS ON WHETHER THEY HAVE THE PEOPLE TO HELP AND HOW FAR THEY HAVE TO TRAVEL, AND SO ON. BUT IT'S YOUR CHILD'S RIGHT TO HAVE YOUR NATION INVOLVED, SO HOPEFULLY THEY REACH OUT.

*IF MÉTIS, THE MINISTRY MUST INFORM THE MÉTIS COMMISSION. IF NON-STATUS, AN ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATION YOU'RE AFFILIATED WITH, LIKE A FRIENDSHIP CENTRE.

A FEW WEEKS LATER...

I WANT TO GO HOME, MOMMY.

I'M WORKING HARD TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN, BABY. HOPEFULLY YOU'LL BE COMING HOME SOON.

YOU'VE REALLY TURNED THINGS AROUND, SIS. I'M PROUD OF YOU.

THANKS, CAN I TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING?

OF COURSE, ANYTHING.

I SLIPPED UP LAST WEEKEND AND HAD A FEW OF EVERYTHING. THE STRESS WAS JUST TOO MUCH FOR ME.

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, SIS. ARE YOU OKAY?

BETTER NOW. I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. SHOULD I KEEP QUIET OR SAY SOMETHING TO MY COUNSELLOR OR SOCIAL WORKER?

IN MY OPINION, IT'S BETTER IF YOU TELL THEM YOURSELF. THEY ALWAYS SEEM TO FIND OUT AND IT JUST LOOKS BAD WHEN THEY DO.


BUT WHAT IF THEY PUSH BACK MY COURT DATE?

THAT'S A RISK, FOR SURE, BUT YOU HAVE TO BE CLEAN AND SOBER BEFORE GETTING GREG BACK ANYWAY. IF YOU'RE BENDING, WHAT'S TO STOP YOU FROM LOSING GREG AGAIN? I DON'T WANT THAT, DO YOU?

NO. GOTTA STRAIGHTEN UP, GET MY BOY BACK.

I LOVE IT! LET ME KNOW IF YOU NEED ME TO COME WITH YOU. IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SOME SUPPORT WHEN MEETING WITH YOUR SOCIAL WORKER.

LATER AT THE APARTMENT...



YOU KNOW WHAT? I'VE HEARD THAT BEFORE. YOU ALWAYS SAY IT'LL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN, AND THEN IT DOES. WELL, THAT'S THE LAST TIME. I'M DONE WITH THIS LIFE, AND I'M DONE WITH YOU!

LATER WITH HER SOCIAL WORKER...



HI EMILY. THIS IS A SURPRISE VISIT. EVERYTHING OKAY?

SORT OF. I HAVE GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS. WHICH DO YOU WANT TO HEAR FIRST?

I COULD USE SOME GOOD NEWS RIGHT ABOUT NOW...

I LEFT THAT GUY I WAS LIVING WITH. I DIDN'T GET ALL MY STUFF, BUT I DON'T CARE. I JUST NEEDED TO GET OUTTA THERE.

THAT'S TERRIFIC NEWS, EMILY. GOOD FOR YOU. I KNOW YOU'VE WANTED THAT FOR A WHILE.

YEAH, I'M TRYING TO GET RID OF ALL THE BAD INFLUENCES IN MY LIFE. READY FOR THE NOT-SO-GOOD NEWS?

SHOOT.

I HAD A RELAPSE LAST WEEK. BUT I'M BACK IN GROUP. AND I'M TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT. I JUST WANTED TO COME CLEAN.

I'M GLAD IT CAME FROM YOU, EMILY. I CAN'T SAY THIS ISN'T GOING TO PUSH BACK YOUR COURT DATE A LITTLE, BUT IT GOES A LONG WAY TOWARDS TRUSTING YOU.

I UNDERSTAND.

OKAY, LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME ADDITIONAL COUNSELLING AND HOW THAT PARENTING PROGRAM IS WORKING OUT FOR YOU. DO YOU HAVE AN ELDER YOU CAN SPEAK TO?

NO, NOT REALLY.

WE CAN INTRODUCE YOU TO SOMEONE IF YOU WISH. JUST LET ME KNOW. I ALSO WANT TO SET YOU UP WITH A FAMILY PRESERVATION WORKER, AND BEFORE I FORGET, HAVE YOU GOT A BED TO SLEEP IN TONIGHT?

NO, NOT YET.

WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TO CHANGE THAT.

SEVERAL MONTHS LATER AT THE PROTECTION HEARING...

HI EMILY, HOW ARE YOU DOING?

I KNOW WE'VE ALREADY AGREED TO AN ORDER TODAY, BUT I'M STILL NERVOUS THAT SOMETHING COULD GO WRONG.


DON'T WORRY, THE RELATIONSHIP YOU BUILT WITH YOUR SOCIAL WORKER, THE VISITS WITH GREG, ENDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND AND GETTING YOUR OWN PLACE: THAT'S ALL BEEN NOTICED AND REALLY WORKS IN YOUR FAVOUR.



I CAN'T WAIT TO TUCK GREG INTO BED TONIGHT AND KNOW HE'LL BE HOME FOR GOOD.


YOU'VE REALLY PULLED IT TOGETHER, EMILY. CONGRATULATIONS.

THANKS, OKAY, I'M READY.



I WANT TO APPLAUD THE PROGRESS I'VE SEEN HERE TODAY. THE MINISTRY'S LAWYER TOLD ME YOU'VE BEEN ATTENDING COUNSELLING AND WORKING HARD ON IMPROVING YOUR SITUATION.

I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS AN AGREEMENT WITH THE MINISTRY FOR GREG'S CARE. THEREFORE, I AM GRANTING A TEMPORARY SUPERVISION ORDER; GREG IS ALLOWED TO RETURN HOME. YOU WILL HAVE TO FOLLOW THE TERMS SET OUT IN THE COURT ORDER.



THE MINISTRY WILL MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS AND MAKE SURE YOUR HOME REMAINS SAFE FOR GREG FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS.



EMILY'S NEW APARTMENT...

WELL, THIS IS IT EMILY. YOUR PLACE LOOKS GREAT AND GREG'S IN THE CAR WITH MY PARTNER, WAITING TO COME IN.

CAN I SEE HIM NOW? I'M READY TO BURST!

FOR SURE. I JUST WANTED TO SAY THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS WAS A CHALLENGING PROCESS, I'M IMPRESSED BY THE STRENGTH YOU SHOWED, ESPECIALLY WHEN ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF AND GREG. LOTS OF FAMILIES STRUGGLE WITH HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND DON'T GET THEIR CHILDREN BACK FOR YEARS, OR AT ALL.

THANK YOU FOR SAYING THAT, MEGAN. I APPRECIATE IT. NOW CAN YOU GO GET GREG, PLEASE? I'M DYIN' HERE!

OF COURSE, MOM.



If a social worker contacts you about your children, call Legal Aid BC.

If a social worker from the Ministry of Children and Family Development or a delegated Aboriginal agency contacts you or visits your home to ask you questions about your family, this means that they think your child might be at risk and are looking into it. **You have the right to get legal advice.** Call **Legal Aid BC** immediately to find out if you qualify for a free lawyer:

604-408-2172 (Greater Vancouver)

1-866-577-2525 (elsewhere in BC)

Ask for a mediator

A mediator can help you work with the ministry. A mediator is specially trained to not take sides. They help people work out conflicts and reach an agreement. Mediators can travel to remote communities.

Mediation is free for families who are involved with the ministry. You can ask for a mediator as soon as a social worker contacts you, or at any time during the child protection process.

Ask your lawyer or social worker for more information. Also see **aboriginal.legalaid.bc.ca/child-family-rights/mediation**.

Parents Legal Centres

Parents Legal Centres (PLC) is a free service in select locations to help parents who qualify address child protection issues early on. PLCs are located in Campbell River, Duncan, Kamloops, Prince George, Smithers, Surrey, Terrace, Vancouver, Victoria, and Williams Lake. For more information, see **aboriginal.legalaid.bc.ca/child-family-rights/PLC**.

You, your family, and your community have rights. The law says the ministry should respect your child's family ties and Indigenous identity. For more information, see **aboriginal.legalaid.bc.ca/child-family-rights/child-protection**.

FIND OUT MORE

To learn more about child protection and where to get help, go to aboriginal.legalaid.bc.ca/child-family-rights/emilys-choice

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