

John Nohotima: Hello.

Rebekah: Hi, John. It's Rebekah calling about the interview.

John: Yeah.

Rebekah: Thank you. I just need you to say that you give consent for this interview that your lawyers organized. So, you give consent for this?

John: Yeah. Well, if this is going to help me.

Rebekah: Yeah. Well, people often find that it definitely gives the judge a good idea of your background. That's how it's been described to me. It definitely doesn't hurt, is how I describe it.

I have to ask a lot of questions, and some of them will be personal, but only the judge and your lawyer will see it. If there's anything that you tell me that you don't want the judge to read out at court during sentencing, you can tell me, and I can write that into the report and request that.

John: Well, okay. Yes.

Rebekah: Now, I can't control whether the judge does or does not read it out. But it's unusual for a judge to read out something if you've asked them not to, if it's sensitive.

John: Oh, okay.

Rebekah: Okay?

John: So, this will be read out in court if it pleases the judge, is it?

Rebekah: Some of it might be, but we can ask if there are things that you have concerns about, if people in the family don't know things, we can ask for certain things not to be read out, and that's normally okay. Alright?

John: Okay.

Rebekah: But the whole report itself isn't read out. It's just for the judge to read, to get an idea of your background. I will kick off, and we'll get started.

John: I'm wondering, when does this all have to be handed into the judge?

Rebekah: I have about a week to write this to get it into the research office that I work for, and then they do some more writing and they give it to your lawyer. I'm not sure of the exact date that your lawyer gives it to the judge, but it'll be pre-sentencing, alright?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: I only really have the one opportunity to speak to you today. I'll kick off. How old are you? I think I've got, John, that you've probably early 60s.

John: Yes, I'm 60. Am I? Yes, early 60s. I turned 60 last year, I think.

Rebekah: Yeah. I am guessing with a name like Nohotima, that you're Maori.

John: Is correct.

Rebekah: Do you know your Iwi?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: What is it?

John: [00:3:51 inaudible] Sorry?

Rebekah: What's the Iwi, John? I'm sorry, I missed that.

John: Tuhoe Mahaki [00:04:01 inaudible]

Rebekah: Sounds like mum and dad came from Rakirua in South Island.

John: No.

Rebekah: No?

John: No. My mother's [00:04:26 inaudible] in Coromandel.

Rebekah: Okay. Alright.

John: It's [00:04:33 inaudible]

Rebekah: Okay. Have you got a strong connection with the Maori side on the family?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: How would you describe it?

John: When called upon, yes, I'm thankful to family and the Iwi and the Hapus and what have you called upon to help within the cultural aspects of it like food gathering, fire protocols, and helping with our young Rangatahi.

Rebekah: Is your local marae in Wairoa, John?

John: No, I'm from the Bay of Plenty.

Rebekah: Okay. Do you get back to the marae often, or is it just for special occasions?

John: As much as I can, but I'd like to go more. But over the years raising a young family thing, held me back in Wairoa here. So I adapted myself to the Mahia and if I could hear all local areas around here concerning on helping and offering them in the day rolls on [00:06:07 inaudible].

Rebekah: Do you have a long-term partner?

John: No, we separated about 7 years ago.

Rebekah: Is that the mum of the kids?

John: Yes, that's correct.

Rebekah: How many kids, John?

John: Two boys and two girls.

Rebekah: How old are they now?

John: They range from... Oh, sorry, three boys, two girls, 35, I think, the oldest, and down to 18, which is my youngest daughter.

Rebekah: Where does she live?

John: She lives with both sides of her parents. We have shared custody with her. She has a week over at her mum's and a week over at her dad's.

Rebekah: That's nice that you've got that shared custody, isn't it?

John: Yes, it's great. She's a bit of a handful as teenagers are.

Rebekah: Yes, I don't think you'd be alone in that.

John: They seem to grow up a bit faster than us adults. Mind thinking, of course.

Rebekah: The other kids, are they living locally? Have you got them around?

John: Yes, they're here. I've got the two girls here and a son. The other two sons, one is in Napier and one is in the South Island.

Rebekah: What's your relationship like with the kids on the whole? Are they in touch with you? Supportive?

John: Yes, we're always in touch. Thank goodness for this technology that's in front of us, which has cell phones in it. Video chats are common every day, and things arise. Well, I'm still getting used to it, so cool. But it's great. Like back in the old days, you had to guess what was going on back in my days. Yes, I know, yeah.

Rebekah: Are your parents still alive?

John: No, they both passed on.

Rebekah: Because you're separated from the mum of the kids, John, I'm just wondering what support you've got around you? Because that's one of the questions we have about if they need support, what support they do have? Have you got close-

John: Like, in myself, do I have support?

Rebekah: Close fano, either...

John: Yes, I do. I have my kids. I have my ex-partner. Because we've separated doesn't mean we distanced ourselves. We're quite close. Not to the point where I would like to go back to a relationship with her, but we are quite close. Say, she's always here, we're catching up on things. Actually, is nearly every day. Of course, she's working. And then I have my kids, and then I have relatives here in this township of Wairoa. Then I have the lake, who are my people, Tuho. As a structure, didn't Molly, Molly didn't we, as a Hapu and Iwi, we keep together as best as we could.

Rebekah: Yeah. And do you... Because I think in my notes, it says you've been a sickness beneficiary.

John: Yes, this is just recently.

Rebekah: Yes. How's your health?

John: Managing. Yes, managing. Before, I had arising issues with my health.

Rebekah: What kind of thing, John?

John: As for my heart, it's okay. Yes, I've just had heart surgery in [00:10:43 inaudible] I just go up and keep an eye-- maybe something irregular happens, I just got to my local hospital, and they keep an eye on things for me which I have... Just recently, I've just been diagnosed with some other illnesses.

Rebekah: Can you tell me what kind of heart surgery?

John: I've got COPD which is, I guess, damaged lungs. Being a smoker back in the day did damage lungs. On top of that, I'm in the process of on trial now, trying a machine for sleep apnea.

Rebekah: The CPAP machine?

John: Yes. Bit of a handful when you go to bed, but I'm getting through it.

Rebekah: You may need to be using that all the time.

John: Yes. It has come down to that gear because I fall ill, I suppose.

Rebekah: Yes, I understand.

John: Halfway through the day. But at the moment, I've seen slight changes. I've been on it for a month now, but we're still trawling a mask, the airflow. On top of it, with my COPD, my lung issues, I'm on Ventolins and God knows what...

Rebekah: Multiple medications.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Tell me about the heart operation. When was that?

John: This was, I would say about 2019, 18. It was actually scary, but it wasn't. They convinced me that it was a normal operation. But yeah, got through that. It was atrial fibrillation, but I've got it all documented on my notes to take to the lawyer and all that. It's atrial fibrillation. I heard the operation is called... Sorry, I [crosstalk]

Rebekah: That's all right, John. That's all right. You had heart surgery. That's all I need to know. You still have to be monitored, is that right?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Okay. Your regular care of your local hospital?

John: Yes, hospital. So, if a flu comes up or a cold like this one I've had Friday last week, that's straight to the hospital. They just looked into things and they said, "You're fine." They put me on medications and they sent me home.

Rebekah: Okay, I'm going to start asking some questions about your childhood now.

John: Sure.

Rebekah: Where did you grow up?

John: Bay of Plenty, Tuhoe in Ruatoki. There, it was totally Maori orientated. My first language spoken was Te Reo. And it was a close community with my parents and our elderly [00:14:43 inaudible] Nene. It was a farming valley. We're doing farming.

Rebekah: And what was it like in your household?

John: It was full on... we had a full household. There were seven of us.

Rebekah: That's a lot. Seven kids, or?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And plus-- was mum and dad both at home, or?

John: Yes. And then, as a young age, we were dairy farming. And in dairy farming, we would work milk, do our chores. And then, of course, there was a school, which was immersed in Te Reo Maori and Maori culture and everything was Maori culture... Yes, the home was a busy place, like all our homes in the valley. Everybody had something to do. Yes.

Rebekah: And what would you describe the home? Like, were the episodes of violence? Because I know there are things that we would describe as maybe a bit rough, you know?

John: Oh, it was. Yes, it was rough. Dad was a hard worker, but he was also... he had a firm and hard hand in the upbringing of us, kids, children.

Rebekah: So you would-- was it kind of like you get a smack or was a bit more?

John: Oh, no, you got a hiding if you stepped out of line. You got a hiding. And then we got hidings. But growing up, you just got on with it and got on with the work that was put in front of you, or what was told of you to do.

Rebekah: And were you able to get to school regularly, John? Or did that kind of end a bit early, maybe to work?

John: I had regular school. Yes, regular school, I had primary... well, I don't know what it was called then.

Rebekah: Primary school.

John: But then primary was... it was fine. It was okay. It was fully immersed in Te Reo Maori. And we had a high school there, but then the high school got taken away and then we had to merge with or go to Pakatani high school which is half an hour away, and had schooling there, which was the big cultural change and shock.

Rebekah: Tell me about that. Was it...

John: Of course, we've never been outside of our valley and totally immersed in Te Reo Maori and the cultural side of things to be taken into... Well, call it a foreign school. To us, it was a Pakeha-driven school, and they were harsh. Those white teachers were harsh. The cane was still there. So a lot of us had the cane. We were caned because we didn't understand the white system. We didn't understand any of that. We were brought up in our Maori culture of giving and understanding Maori culture. We didn't know anything-- understand much about the white side of things.

Rebekah: So, would you say that that was really a real confrontation with racism at that age?

John: Oh, big time. It was. When you're bullied into this is how it's going to be... Well, for me, it was a cultural shock. There was only one way, and that was the white way. We would go home and our folks would get upset because of us. We were kicked behind at school, and then our parents would have to travel those kilometres to come to the school, and there'd be a big confrontation with the teachers, with the headteacher because of this. Of course, we had our Maori teacher there, and he was also trying to get the... Yes, he tried his best to get the system that he was in the Water College there or was high school. Then it [00:20:19 inaudible] we found that it is totally different, but a white troll is a white troll. Yes. So, a lot of us tried to... actually tried not to go to that school. And we didn't want to stay home. So, you had to put up with it and go to school.

Rebekah: Yes. And did you... I know that in that kind of, around that time, it wasn't like there was a lot of encouragement to speak Maori at school.

John: No, you weren't allowed to speak Maori. I tell you, when we started, that was about 76, of course, it was only a new school. And when we got there, we were just degraded.

Rebekah: Yes. So you would have come from a school where you were around, completely surrounded by Maori students and friends and teachers.

John: Yes, and the culture of our Maori society and valley.

Rebekah: Yes. And then you get to 12, 13, and you were put in this white-dominated system?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And you really experience explicit racism.

John: Oh, big time. Right down to the students of our age. They were a white system. And I tell you, we'd have huge confrontations. This little valley, we would just say we had enough and we would take it all out on the rugby field, and there'd be one big fight, one big confrontation. Not saying it was because we got the shit knocked out of us, but we didn't give up.

Rebekah: Yes. So it was very... But it was confrontational all the time.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And did you feel...

John: Sorry.

Rebekah: That's all right, John. Did you finish high school? Because I imagined that made it... if you don't want to be there, that's really hard to put up with.

John: Oh, I tried everything. My brother did go on to back in the day, I think it was trade training called. It was called trade training. And he managed to get an apprenticeship thing going at one of our local garages in town. And for me, I chased after butcheries. Fucking, and I also meet fucking racism in there.

Rebekah: Yes. So, did you go to freezing works or butcher's stores?

John: No, I wanted to do a butcher's course. I got a trade training program, which was run by the school. I don't know what it was called then, but you did it two hours after midday and you would go downtown to this butcher's thing. And the guy there, I remember them, well, Yardley, he was a great guy. And he pushed for me. Actually, yeah, for a white fellow, he loved that I smiled. So, he pushed-- they pushed me into learning maths. And then, that was a big help for me and I went back to school. And then I think did a whole year of it, and then it came to a point when this thing came up for scholarships for trade training, whatever it was called. So, I jumped on the water and I went to the butcher's shop that I was working with, I was doing some skilling, and I told them about it, and they signed all the papers and they were right behind me. So, there were about 12 of us in this trade training program. We were all sent up to Auckland, and there it was, again, it was that country bull in the big smoke. And I was just totally in awe. So we get to these interviews, and there's a panel there. And there must have been about 12 of them doing this interview for us, and then we're all white.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: And all of us go, "Oh, fuck." So, they fired all of us, and they just laughed because, at the same time coming from a country school, we had broken English. And they just pissed themselves laughing it up at the interview. They were interviewing me, and some other questions, words even about the industry, and I had enough, and I just got up and kicked the chair and I just told them fuck you too.

Rebekah: How old were you, John?

John: I think I was about 13,14.

Rebekah: Oh, that's young. That's young for that kind of thing. So, you might have been 15, at the very most.

John: I might have been older. Yes, 14, 15, or somewhere up there, 14,16? Oh, 15 or 16.

Rebekah: How many years of high school did you get in?

John: I think I got a second year, fifth form. I think it's three or four years.

Rebekah: So, did you do school cert?

John: No, the closest one I could come to was arts because, like I said, we came from our multi-cultural area and came into a white society where all this pop quiz was thrown at us. So we were virtually like infants again.

Rebekah: Yes, I understand.

John: To learn this system again. And we were just lost. So we would just sit at the back of the classroom and just... Well, and then, of course, daylight saving came into it. And us being all farmers, we would all go to sleep at the back.

Rebekah: Yes. So you were disadvantaged with where you were with your reading and writing of English.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And then the racism in the school. And then the fact that you were working those out early hours on the dairy farm.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: Fatigue and whatever. Yes. Well, we didn't know about fatigue. We were just tired.

Rebekah: Yes, that's right. And do you-

John: Sorry.

Rebekah: And did you feel... And it was rough in terms of there was fighting.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And that was expressed in rugby, but I'm sure it was expressed in other ways, too.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: In terms of drugs and alcohol, was there much of that around as a teenager at home or at school?

John: Yes, my dad was a drinker. He came over drunk a lot and he is used to crack... Well, I seemed to get more of the cracking than anything else. I don't know whether he didn't like my name or the fact of the matter was, didn't have any ears or something. I don't know. But I seem to be getting all the cracks.

Rebekah: And when you say that, you mean like a whack around the head?

John: No, no, no, a beating.

Rebekah: A beating. Yes. So, it was quite hard. It was hardcore, John, when dad...

John: Yes. Here's an example. My father, I didn't want to go watch him, but my brother forced me once we were warriors. And my father was a fit guy then.

Rebekah: You mean jacked?

John: He was better than him. He beat his kids. But I got the beatings.

Rebekah: So, you felt isolated amongst your siblings. You were the one that took the beatings from dad?

John: Yes, they say because I had no ears. As I was growing older, I really dug deep and I wanted to know why my father did all this. And I still wonder about it today.

Rebekah: And when you say no ears, do you mean not listening? Or do you mean...

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Yes. Where were you...

John: I tried my damndest, but I could never please him.

Rebekah: Yes. Where were you in the birth order? Were you in the middle or you're the baby?

John: I was in the middle.

Rebekah: And was there anything else going on at home that... I imagine there wasn't a lot of money.

John: No, there wasn't a lot of money. But if there was one thing that my father was good at, he made sure we were fed and the cupboards were full.

Rebekah: Okay. And there is a lot of you. Did you have your own bed? I don't think you would have had your own bedroom with seven of you.

John: No. Well, there were two boys in a bed, a single bed. And then [00:30:08 inaudible] Kpop matrices, and there was top and tail. And cold houses. Not like they got today. These castles were cold. And the fireplace, that was useless.

Rebekah: Yes. Are you close with your siblings?

John: Yes, I believe so. I'd like to be closer, but me being in this, I have too much heartache to go home. So, that's why I'm here in 300 old cases in another direction. Home is over there.

Rebekah: Yes. And you say heartache.

John: Too much bad memories of my upbringing.

Rebekah: Yes. And is it the dad stuff mostly, or are there other things?

John: Yes, the dad stuff.

Rebekah: Yes. So, dad was a drinker. Any drugs around? And did you dabble in drugs at all?

John: Was this during my upbringing?

Rebekah: Yes. Like your teenage years.

John: Are we talking outside of it? Outside of when I left home?

Rebekah: Yes. Or, just-- I always have to ask about drugs and alcohol.

John: No, I didn't... Well, alcohol was around so I knew about alcohol, but I never touched alcohol. And drugs, I guess it was around, but I never took any notice. I was too busy with other things like making sure everything was right at home. When I left, that's when I saw drugs and alcohol. I started to live my own life and then I started drinking.

Rebekah: Yes. How old were you by then? About 16?

John: No, I was a late starter, I think. Well, late in being, I guess, 18, 19.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: When I was in forestry, I was enjoying my freedom.

Rebekah: Being away from dad.

John: Yes. That was a big...

Rebekah: So what was your job?

John: Sorry?

Rebekah: What was your job? Did you say forestry?

John: Yes, I was a chainsaw foreman. And then our uncle wanted me to come down to Wellington. I should not went, but I went. Fucking racism was fucking down there, was everywhere. I ran into the law there. So, yeah.

Rebekah: So, it got a bit complicated? Did you get some charges around that time?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And what kind of thing, John? Did it make life complicated?

John: No. Because I don't know how I got through it, but I just switched everything off around me and concentrated on the bad thing. But I did my best to get it sorted and moved on, like you said.

Rebekah: So, it was something you could get past?

John: It was hard. It wasn't easy. But yeah, eventually, I got through it. And then I decided that the city wasn't for me.

Rebekah: And when you say got treated, do you mean... can you tell me a bit more? Was it a... Do you have a problem with alcohol or something like that?

John: No, I didn't have a problem with alcohol. I just befriend the wrong people.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: Yes. And I guess I was taking advantage of a leader, just followed the leader, and... yes.

Rebekah: So, would you say this is when, you know, was a first offense and you got mixed up with the wrong people? Can you tell me a bit more about it?

John: What was the first offense...? Oh, yes, it was a random burglary. At the time, I thought it was the guys that were doing-- I thought it

was a blast thing. It was blasting my head off under the influence of alcohol. And before you knew it, I knew there was... I was approached by police officers and got held in the cell and I was taken for questioning and I was even fucking saying this is racism.

Rebekah: And wait, how old do you think you were? Were you late teens or early 20s when this happened?

John: Late teens, 19, 20.

Rebekah: Yes, and this is Wellington?

John: Yep.

Rebekah: And there's a burglary?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Was there anything-- and you say, you know, you felt like you've got involved with some people that weren't good. Was there any gang stuff?

John: No. I mean, there was gang stuff, but no, I was not involved with them.

Rebekah: No. And did you ever get involved with any of the gangs?

John: Well, that's a hard question. Right this very moment, I'm involved with other gangs because of the Maori culture and the ties we have within some of those gang members, like family members.

Rebekah: Yes. I understand what you mean. What we ask about is whether you got involved with gangs in terms of more like an associate rather than them being extended family, extended family.

John: I wouldn't say...

Rebekah: You know, like, doing crime with them.

John: Oh, no.

Rebekah: Yes. You know what I mean, like, actually in the gang, as opposed to, I know people in gangs.

John: Yes, I know people in gangs, that's me.

Rebekah: Yes. And that's pretty ordinary. I'm trying to explain what I mean so you can answer it properly.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Yes. So those first-- the things around burglary, that wasn't anything to do with gangs?

John: No, no.

Rebekah: But you have kind of extended friends and family who are involved with gangs but you haven't been a member of a gang?

John: I think everybody has involvement with the gang. This is something you can't get away from. And once you're approached, then what do you do? They're my relation. I need to hang in with this, or have you got some food? We're short of this. Yeah, what was one do? Your multicultural kicks in, and then I step up and go, "Sorry, I'll take care of your kite. I'll get your kite".

Rebekah: Yes.

John: Yes, and that extends to all my old people. And more of that, we, as Maori, are who we are. We try our best to make sure our people are comfortable. Societies just come and hindered our... well, our people, our Maori people, and the white people, they are struggling because of what's going on right this very moment. And they're reaching out to people too if they could have a little bit of help here and there.

Rebekah: Was there any crime around in the family when you were growing up? I mean, Dad was violent, but was there anything else that you can think of?

John: No.

Rebekah: Any of your siblings have serious problems with the police?

John: Oh, just ordinary traffic offenses, like these.

Rebekah: Yes. All right.



John: Yes.

Rebekah: And so, when you did that, you know, the first crime like teens in Wellington, did that kick off anything else for you to the things after that, or did you kind of get yourself sorted out? What happened next?

John: Well, like I say, you get yourself sorted out and then there are a few years of goodness and you're on the right track and you're doing what you love doing, and then I guess something crooks up, and then... yeah. I don't know, I just do what's in front of me at the time.

Rebekah: So, there have been a few other ups and downs?

John: Oh, yes.

Rebekah: And was that about, you know, talk about that, you know, what struggles you've had that perhaps been involved in those up and down times? Because they're gonna look at you, the judge will look at your background, John. And we want to say, well, there were times when you're providing for the kids. Tell me about that.

John: Me, being a provider for the family.

Rebekah: Yes. How old were you when you had your first son, were you in your 20s?

John: No. I don't just settle down into a relationship until I was 30, I guess.

Rebekah: Okay.

John: And I think we had our first-- the kids to my mother, we had our first child. I can't tell you what year he was born.

Rebekah: You said he's 35, so I was just going off with that.

John: '90... what year? 95?

Rebekah: Okay.

John: 1999.

Rebekah: So he might be [crosstalk] 29 or so.

John: When I arrive in Wairoa and I fell in love with the place because the [00:41:50 inaudible] my culture was all around me and they even want us to step off the road, 30-40 minutes off the road. And while I had everything going for me as a young man, and I could immerse myself in the culture that was put in front of me and provide for my partner and our newborn son. Of course, I would go out looking for work, which I found. I found work in forestry because I had a hand in forestry, so I would cutting for a couple of years there. Then, it was on and off, still my spare time, I would go to work on my farm just out of town here. Which I'm still doing today. Even being sick, I just go out there and volunteer and do some-- help the farmer and do some light work. I immersed myself into focusing on-- yeah, how I was brought up, not so much the violent side, but focused on making sure that my partner at the time and my son had all the needs they needed, which I didn't have as a young fella.

Rebekah: Yes. So you want it to be different?

John: I wanted to make a difference.

Rebekah: Yeah. And you wanted to be a different kind of dad?

John: Yes. I think I did a top job.

Rebekah: And you said there was a bit of alcohol involved in that burglary early on, but were there any more problems with alcohol after that?

John: I had my drinks, especially every Friday or Saturday. I would go out and drink after a week, a four weeks work.

Rebekah: And did that ever lead to any problems, John, or was that just social?

John: Yes, social drinking.

Rebekah: Okay. So, no addiction issues?

John: Addiction?

Rebekah: Yes, like no problem for you being an alcoholic or anything?

John: Oh, no.

Rebekah: No, you can imagine [crosstalk]

John: Always regret it the next morning when you wake up.

Rebekah: Yes. How's your mental health?

John: Good, I think so. I mean, the struggle was real back in the early days. You know, what would the father and then meeting racism, I didn't know what the hell racism was but...You run into it, and it's an eye-opener.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: Yes. And brought up to this stage and I immerse myself in helping my old people. There might have a way they need help and my nannies, right up to this day, I still help them. I don't know where the system is to help them but they're doing it hard.

Rebekah: Have you had any diagnosis for mental health issues or learning disabilities, John?

John: I have never been diagnosed with anything and I've never even stood to take in anything, but I do know that I have a problem remembering things.

Rebekah: Can you tell me about that? Is it short-term memory?

John: What's short-term? What is this?

Rebekah: So, you're saying to me you have a problem remembering things, you tell me what you understand about it.

John: Well, it's okay. I have trouble understanding written words, like a chart sheet, and that.

Rebekah: Okay. So, like in English, and?

John: Not in English.

Rebekah: Yes, can you read written Maori?

John: I can, but I can't understand it.

Rebekah: Yes, okay. So, would you say it's a reading and writing problem?

John: I can write things to hell, I think it can be written.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: To write. Yes, what I think is how it should be written. I can't write Maori.

Rebekah: No.

John: And I try my best with the English thing, the English language.

Rebekah: How do you go filling out forms and things, John?

John: I go to my kids or my ex-partner.

Rebekah: Someone at your church helps you?

John: I'm sorry. I'm not a church person, because I've had a bit of bad running with churches.

Rebekah: So, you said someone helps you at [crosstalk]

John: [00:47:40 inaudible] I go see my children or my children's mother.

Rebekah: Yes. So, they help you fill in any paperwork you need.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Good. Okay, that's what I needed to know.

John: Because I have a problem understanding the littlest of sentences like this.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: You can understand, I came from a total-- no, I'm not dumb.

Rebekah: No, I know.

John: I'm not dumb. I came from a Maori school and got checked into the white society thingy.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: I tried my damndest, but yeah.

Rebekah: Now, tell me, have you ever had any head injuries? Like, you've had any knock on the head when you were working in forestry or anything like that?

John: Yes. We'll go back to my father. He's knocked me out a few times.

Rebekah: So, you lost consciousness?

John: Yes, I've been in one place and then I've woken up on a bed or something.

Rebekah: Yes. That was very violent, John.

John: Well, I was bashed, I was from a really young age.

Rebekah: How young? Do you remember?

John: I was always pulling the fire alarm because I-, well, I would jump into it to see to stop my father.

Rebekah: From hurting the other kids?

John: From hitting my mother.

Rebekah: So he would hit Mum too?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And do you remember when you were just a little fella? Like...

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Yes. You got an age that you can tell me, you remember?

John: The car was a Chevrolet so I must have been old... Six or seven?

Rebekah: Yes. In that violence, John, do you remember how that made you feel?

John: Oh, I was terrified. I was so so terrified. If you could peel back the hair off my head, I would say you could still find all the scars...

Rebekah: So-

John: ...right up till I was a student at this white school.

Rebekah: Yes. And so, if you [crosstalk]

John: So I never had to continue with it, I never have to continue with racism.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: Fuck you, didn't know where the fuck you were.

Rebekah: No, you were pretty young. It was rough at home and it was rough at school.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: And then it was rough trying to find a job?

John: No, I had the skill set. I would just tell the person that was going to hire me. Didn't give me their time. So, I spent two years for telecoms in Wellington, digging drains. Did hard labor. Fuck, it was hard labor.

Rebekah: So, you were able to, once you left school, you sound like you had fairly regular work?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Yes. And...

John: There was plenty of work around at that time. Labor.

Rebekah: Yes. And you're in your 60s now and you're on the, you know, sickness beneficiary because of health things?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Do you hope that you'll be able to work again or is this now your, you know, you probably...

John: No, this is not going to be my new thing or staying home. No, I still stay, I still go around doing some work for some elderly on the farm just outside of town.

Rebekah: Yes. So, you help out the ones [crosstalk] how about some of the elders?

John: But I doubt it very much if I'll get full-time employed due to my illnesses. But I'm not the one to say that. I wanted to go somewhere with [00:52:17 inaudible] my need, I remembered that I had you.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: So, here we are.

Rebekah: That makes sense.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Now, because we talked about this background of violence with Dad and how rough it was at school. Have you ever had any counselling?

John: No.

Rebekah: Any therapy?

John: No. That's some... I guess, I would've still come out of this.

Rebekah: Well, sometimes, people have but I know it's-

John: Some people reach out.

Rebekah: Yes, some people do reach out. I'm asking if you had ever thought about that because you had that violence from very early, and whether that would be useful.

John: I had to go through a process of, I'm going to tell you something, religion.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: I did was, all the people back home, when we were young fellas, we had a service every Sunday, serving the two service, it was on the marae. So, I would watch all these old people. Go to the service, my father included, and they would all stay in there doing the prayers, which was really about identity services, really about Christ and all or whatever his name is. And I would watch them. And then we would go home as kids. And then, all of a sudden, these were standing up between the church, they get through the gate on the property, and they did-- these are totally different people, from the time people they were at the service to these fucking assholes, fucking ordering you around like you were a piece of fucking rubbish.

I saw that, and I grew up in that, which of these church services and then these people would go home, and all of a sudden, these demons again. They're there. And then, in my walk of life, I watched the white church renege on some of the things, some of the ministers going to prison and all that, and I'm going... And then I would look at this, that people called Jesus Christ, then I go, "Do you just created some fucking thing that turns people into false people, head underneath your cloak, and they do this to people?"

Rebekah: So you felt angry at Dad, but some of them were adults, because you just felt like they were full of shit, really?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Because they weren't walking the talk.

John: I wasn't kidding. They were full of shit.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: Yes, they go to church, and all of a sudden, then oh, goody-two-shoes preacher this, they sit down to have a meal after the service, and then, they're all laughing away. I'm sitting there, watching. And next, we're all hauled off and we'll jump on the back of the check of the blackboard and were all driving home, and then I just hold my breath thing. I was so used to that. I just hold my breath. I would jump off the tractor and yell out to the old man that I'll go start the thing. And then, he would just go, "Mmm" He would just grind then.

Rebekah: Did you mean, for the milking?

John: Yes. And even today, I still talk about it with what a lot of relationships come back. We've moved back here to Wairoa but he's from back home. I talked to him because he'd seen it all too.

Rebekah: Yes. That's good that you've got someone to talk to.

John: Just like yourself was telling me, you need to forgive. I looked at it and I see too. I think we've talked enough so he just apologized, this was just a couple of days ago. He apologized to me, but he said, "You need to see someone." So, you saying that counselling and the process of getting hold of one of my relatives whose cousin, his mother was a sister to my father. And if there's anybody that I can turn to... but he doesn't know this, but he draws me in because... I don't know if you believe in it but, I watched him grow up beside us and need to talk to the ministry, you know, the church in it. He grasped it.

Over the years when he does services, I would sit back, nobody would see me but I would sit back and watch him and listen to him. And I could feel he was real, he was genuine, he was a genuine person over the years. I could feel it, I could see it, could feel it. And then, I got the courage to sit in one of his, the group. And I just watched him.

He's come of age. He's nearly 70, so thinking of a great way to catch up with him and talk about this thing with him and if he can help me. And even my ex-partner told me that I need to see somebody [00:58:50 inaudible] so you're talking about mental health, I guess there is a little bit of mental thing locked up inside of me.

Rebekah: Yes. When you've had those experiences, John, it's very common to get with that. Early violence, of course.

John: Yes. I'm glad I didn't close my fists to my children and then [00:59:16 inaudible] my hand to my children. I was boisterous, but I never brutalized my children like how I was.

Rebekah: Yes, that's very good. Do you think that the kids and your ex-partner will support you going forward? Because we have to ask about whether you feel like you're at risk of doing, committing any more crimes. So, do you feel like you've got the support around you?

John: Yes, I believe so. They're all jumping forward, they're all skipping forward, they all want to come to the courthouse but I've told them no. First, just stay home and look after yourselves. I said I'll have somebody there. And my ex-partner, she wants to come to the court.

Rebekah: Okay. Do you think you've got any community support through Iwi?

John: I believe so, yeah.

Rebekah: Good.

John: Especially [00:60:30 inaudible] Yes. And I've got a written note from them that I want to hand into the lawyer.

Rebekah: Okay. And would you take part in any restorative justice program, John?

John: What's that?

Rebekah: Well, it's where, you know, if the judge says he, you know-- and I never know whether this will happen or not, but we just have to ask. Restorative justice is when someone who's done an offense says, you know, if the judge decides not to send me to prison, you indicate that you would do community work, or pay back some money, or you know, things like that. And have meetings with people and apologize, all of those kinds of things.

John: Yeah. Yeah, totally.

Rebekah: All right. So I say that you are open to that?

John: Yes.

Rebekah: All right. And it sounds to me like you do because you're very involved in your local community. So, you have plans for the future.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: These hands were given, my hands were given to me by my father was no bloody, good. But he had some good deeds in the way

of he taught me how to gather food, take care of our elderly people, and when someone goes to the marae, or be summoned by the elderly, go beside them and do the [00:62:22 inaudible] I do that today.

Rebekah: Yes. And that's important for you, isn't it? It's one of your...

John: Yes, totally. I'm really sad, some of the elderly did help around here in Maori. They should be enjoying their retirement. But now, they are stuck with their own children's [00:62:44 inaudible] because of this pandemic of-- an epidemic of pee and shortage of food and all that because, you know, the elderly, they tear on the benefits, the little benefit that they're not there to provide to raise someone else's family that being their own children's kids. Because they didn't get to that age to raise the children. Children, they're [00:63:27 inaudible] but they have no choice. So, I would go out and do my piece and it's really heartbreaking. Because this study has so much one can do.

Rebekah: Yes, I understand. I'm gonna wrap up things a little bit here, John. I'm gonna ask you, because of the crimes you've been charged with, do you feel like you want to, you know, going forward, you want to be staying away from crime? Do you feel-

John: I'll stay away from crime.

Rebekah: Yes. And you got some ideas on how to do that?

John: Yes. With the support of my, the Maori and then in the notes that they have written out for [00:64:24 inaudible] hand down to the lawyer.

Rebekah: Okay. Good. Am I able to speak to your ex-partner or someone? We have to verify stuff you've said [crosstalk] or someone else? What's her name?

John: Ooh, a very busy lady too. But I'll go get you a phone number.

Rebekah: Yes, please.

John: And her name is Lynda Rirere. And it's Lynda with a Y. She's very particular about the Y.

Rebekah: Spell it out for me, L-Y?

John: L-Y, then Rirere.

Rebekah: R-I-R-E-R-E?

John: E-R-E, yeah.

Rebekah: Great. You give me Lynda's cell phone.

John: Yes, I'll do that now, for a moment. I had this phone for a couple of years and I'm still trying to get my head around it. One moment. This one. There it is. Are you still there?

Rebekah: Yes, I am, John.

John: All right. I don't know, I push the button and I think I've cut the person off.

Rebekah: That's all right. I can always call back too.

John: Where are we? You're there? Here we go, 022-100-9172.

Rebekah: Im gonna read it back.

John: Sure.

Rebekah: 022...

John: Yes.

Rebekah: 100-9172

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Great. I got a couple more questions.

John: Sure.

Rebekah: What's your living situation? Where have you been living for the last few years? How's your housing situation?

John: Oh, it's great now. I'm still in the same house we raised our kids and that we've-- I wish I'd have bought a house back in the day. All these years, I've lived and I could have paid this house. But anyway, yeah, I'm at a...

Rebekah: You're renting?

John: Yes, I am.

Rebekah: But it's a good rental and you feel like you can stay there?

John: Yes. Yes, it's great. It's just had an upgrade. A new fresh lick of paint in, the plaster. It looks quite dandy on 25 years.

Rebekah: Good. All right. So you're renting the same place for 25 years?

John: Yeah, well, when me and my partner separated, I had to change the...

Rebekah: Lease?

John: Lease over to me. But yeah, 25 years with her and with her gone.

Rebekah: Yes. I'll be all right to call Lynda and get her to... because all I'll ask her is just [crosstalk]

John: Yes. Do your talk. Now, you just do your talk on... Where do you catch her? That's the thing.

Rebekah: That's all right, I can check with her and it will only be 15 minutes. It won't be long.

John: Yes.

Rebekah: Is there anything else that you can think of that's come up, while we've been talking, John, where you've thought, "Oh, I should tell Rebekah that"?

John: No. Sorry, Rebekah.

Rebekah: That's all right. That's all right. I always like to ask and check in case.

John: Anything's just rushing me at the moment, so [crosstalk]

Rebekah: You did a very good job telling me. Yes, but you did a very good, it's a long conversation and you did a very-- and you've said you have memory problems, but you did a very good job telling me about things that are stressful.

John: Oh, okay. Okay.

Rebekah: Yes. So, thank you for that.

John: Yes, all right. Thanks.

Rebekah: And good luck with the sentencing, John. I hope everything goes well and good luck [crosstalk] for your health.

John: Yes. I just worry about my old people, that's all.

Rebekah: Yes. You worry about who's going to look after them.

John: Exactly.

Rebekah: Yes.

John: Yes. All right. I'm gonna finish this interview. I still can go and see one of them very shortly.

Rebekah: All right. I'll let you go and do that.

John: Yes, great.

Rebekah: Thank you, John.

John: All right.

Rebekah: Thank you.

John: All right. Bye.

Rebekah: Bye-bye.

John: Bye.

[END]