APCFNC ELDERS PROJECT:
HONOURING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE
2009 – 2011
The APCFNC Elders Project: Honouring Traditional Knowledge is one of nine new research reports on Aboriginal economic development released by Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Program, (AAEDIRP) in 2010/2011.

The AAEDIRP is a unique research program formed through partnerships between the 38 member communities of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC), plus the Inuit, 12 Atlantic universities and 4 government funders, both federal and provincial. AAEDIRP funders include Indian and North Affairs Canada, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Aboriginal Affairs, Nova Scotia. The AAEDIRP conducts research on Aboriginal economic development that is relevant to communities, builds Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research capacity, conducts workshops on Aboriginal economic development and is developing a database on this topic. **The main purpose of the AAEDIRP is to improve the knowledge base concerning Atlantic Aboriginal economic development in order to improve the lives of the Aboriginal people in the region.**

The APCFNC is a policy research organization that analyzes and develops culturally relevant alternatives to federal policies that impact on the Mi’kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy and Innu Aboriginal communities and peoples.

*Maliseet Artist Arlene Christmas (Dozay) created the AAEDIRP logo*

**AAEDIRP UNIVERSITY PARTNERS**

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APCFNC ELDERS PROJECT: HONOURING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

BACKGROUND

The Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC) brings together 38 First Nations in the Atlantic region of Canada as well as the Inuit in Labrador. Through its Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP), a group of Atlantic Region Elders were involved in a project called “Honouring Traditional Knowledge”. This project was initiated because of the critical importance of consulting with Elders and having their perspectives included in community economic development projects and in research on Aboriginal economic development.

The project began in 2009 with a regional workshop, and was followed by many months of consultation with Elders. Elders determined the process and outcomes for the project. The project was supported by APCFNC staff and Aboriginal community members. As a foundation for the work on economic development research, APCFNC sought guidance from Atlantic region Elders on how they would like to be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge and Aboriginal worldviews.

The project is only a starting point for Elder-guided research in the Atlantic region. One of the challenges was the identification of “Elders” who are Traditional Knowledge holders. There is no established regional process in place that identifies who is an Elder and documents their areas of knowledge. There are a large number of Elders who did not participate in this project. The hope is that this initial project with Elders will build the groundwork for APCFNC Chiefs and communities to do more work with Elders in the future.

Project Components:

A. **Elders Mawio’mi August 2010** - An Elders Mawio’mi (which means gathering in Mi’kmaq) brought together Elders from four Aboriginal cultures of the Atlantic Region – the Mi’kmaq, the Wolastoqiyik, the Innu, and the Inuit. From August 12 -14, 2010, Elders gathered in Millbrook First Nation at the Glooscap Heritage Centre. The Mawio’mi was a chance for Elders from the region to get know each other and begin initial discussions on how they would like to be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge. The Elders asked for the meeting to be videotaped. They have directed that a transcription of the Ma’wiomi be released for educational purposes.

B. **Video – Honouring Traditional Knowledge** – This video highlights the roles of Elders and Traditional Knowledge. Under the Elders’ guidance the video was made from footage taken at the Elders Ma’wiomi. It can be viewed by going to: [http://blip.tv/play/AYKxzVUA](http://blip.tv/play/AYKxzVUA)

C. **Elder Recommendations**. The Elders made 8 recommendations concerning Traditional Knowledge. The recommendations are based on discussions from the Elders Mawio’mi.
D. **List of Resources** - This is an initial list of protocols and/or ethics and best practices for the sharing of Traditional Knowledge and for working alongside Atlantic region Elders in research. It contains community-based and university materials. It is a living document that will be added to on an ongoing basis. [http://apcfnceldersproject.wikispaces.com](http://apcfnceldersproject.wikispaces.com)

Grandmother’s Panel at the Let’s All Help Each Other Conference, March 2011
Elizabeth Penashue, Murdena Marshall, Josie Augustine, Gwen Bear, Christine Gabriel and Jean Crane
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many, many people assisted in making the APCFNC Elder Project possible. Support came from people around the Atlantic region. Recognition and sincere thanks goes to the following people:

The Elders who guided the project -

Josie and Frank Augustine, Elsipogtog First Nation
Gwen Bear, Tobique First Nation
Jean Crane, Nunatsiavut, Labrador
Christine Gabriel, St. Mary’s First Nation
John Henry Isaac, Listuguj First Nation
Doug Knockwood, Indian Brook First Nation
Mary Ann & Jeffery Levi, Elsipogtog First Nation
Albert & Murdena Marshall, Eskasoni First Nation
Madeline Martin, Millbrook First Nation
Isaac Metallic, Listuguj First Nation
Sam Nui, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation
Elizabeth and Francis Penashue, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation
Larry & Loretta Perley, Tobique First Nation
Richard Rich, Nunatsiavut, Labrador
John Joe Sark, Keptin of the Mi’kmaq Grand Council for the District of Epekwitk (PEI)
Alex Saunders, Nunatsiavut, Labrador
Gilbert Sewell, Pabineau First Nation
Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy, Waycobah First Nation

APCFCNC staff - John Sylliboy, Darcy Pirie, and Holly McLean who all worked so hard to coordinate the Mawio’mi logistics, transcription and video

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Research Facilitators - Fred Andersen, Western Community-Based Research Facilitator, Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, Makkovik, Labrador; Ken Paul, MES Candidate, Dalhousie University, Tobique First Nation/Wolastoqiyyik Nekotkuk; and Heather Castleden, Assistant Professor, School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University
Research Assistants - Reg Parsons, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service and doctoral candidate in Forestry, University of New Brunswick as well as Darryl MacKenzie, MREM Candidate, Dalhousie University

ELDERS MAWIO’MI, MILLBROOK FIRST NATION, AUGUST 12 -14, 2010

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Producer/Co-Director
Catherine Martin/Matues Productions

Switcher/Editor
Bud Delaney – ABD
Frank Clifford/FClifford Productions

Co-Director/Writer
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Glooscap Heritage Centre
Millbrook Powwow Committee

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Darcy Pirie, Tobique First Nation

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Heather Castleden
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Jean Martin and Family

Millbrook Community Volunteers
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Shante Blackmore, Millbrook First Nation
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Jonathan Marshall, Millbrook First Nation
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Thanks to Natural Resources Canada for supporting the project with the in-kind time of Reg Parsons.

On behalf of the AAEDIRP/APCFNC, March 2011 -
Gillian Austin, AAEDIRP Research Coordinator
ELDER RECOMMENDATIONS

PREFACE

The following is a list of recommendations from the APCFNC Elders Project: Honouring Traditional Knowledge. It is an initial list concerning how Elders would like to be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge. It originated from a session held in August 2010 with a small group of 22 Atlantic region Elders. Reading and acknowledging this list of recommendations should not be considered a form of consultation with Atlantic Aboriginal communities.

1. It needs to be recognized that Atlantic Aboriginal communities are losing their Elders, their languages and their cultural knowledge very rapidly. Therefore, Aboriginal communities and leadership need to recognize the urgency and importance of working alongside Elders and learning from their Traditional Knowledge immediately.

2. It is imperative that Elders be involved in all aspects of the territorial, cultural, linguistic, ecological, economic development and social affairs of Atlantic Aboriginal communities. Elders are in a position to help prioritize what is most important because of their collective cultural knowledge.

3. Traditional Knowledge should be woven into all aspects of Aboriginal community life, including economic development, fisheries, health, social, law, environment and education etc.

4. Elders should be consulted in meaningful ways and have advisory roles for all Aboriginal community planning, development, implementation and evaluation taking place. Meaningful involvement would include being members of steering committees and advisory committees so that Elders have input into decision making.

5. Traditional Knowledge must be shared and passed on before it is lost. The ways in which Traditional Knowledge is passed on, needs to be directed by the Elders from each territory.

6. An Elders Council, appointed by Elders, that would advise on matters related to the sharing of Traditional Knowledge, should be formed for the Atlantic region. The Council would advise on matters related to protocols and/or ethics and the best practices for the sharing of
Traditional Knowledge as well as the best practices for working alongside Elders. This would include working alongside Elders in all areas of community life and development including research.

The Elders Council, once formed, would engage in a process of co-learning with the Atlantic region universities to create a template for how the process of this knowledge transfer could occur.

7. Elders should be involved in developing and approving educational curriculum related to Traditional Knowledge for Aboriginal community schools, provincial and post-secondary institutions in the Atlantic region.

Traditional Knowledge should be woven into the social studies, science and language curriculum for primary and secondary schools in Atlantic Aboriginal communities. This would ensure proper and meaningful education for Aboriginal learners, enable the communities to develop a balance between western and Aboriginal learning methods and better prepare Aboriginal children for their future paths.

Post-secondary institutions should be compelled to seek guidance from the Elders Council (described above in # 6) to develop appropriate curriculum related to Traditional Knowledge for relevant post-secondary programming.

8. Each Aboriginal community needs to encourage the use of traditional practices, which are products of Traditional Knowledge. This would encourage younger generations to learn about and respect traditional practices, such as traditional laws, cultural and spiritual practices, language learning and practices related to hunting and fishing, food gathering, medicine, ecology, science, arts and education.
MORNING SESSION
INTRODUCTORY CIRCLE LED BY GWEN BEAR

My name is Gwen Bear. And I have been honoured with opening the circle this morning. In the center we have everything of creation, everything that the creator has made. We have in the east we have sweet grass, in the south – tobacco, and in the west – sage, and in the north – the cedar. Those are our sacred medicines, the sacred medicines that we use in our ceremonies. We also have earth (which is represented by the rock), we have water, we have air, and we have fire. Those are the four elements. Out of those four elements the creator made everything that exists. And I put those on the altar because for me it represents creativity and that is something that we are going to be doing today. We are creating something for the future. We are creating something because we are ancestors today of the ones that are coming so we are creating something for them so that’s why those are there.

We have the animals. I have the turtle to represent the east. I have one of those northern animals, but I don’t know what it is though – for water – and the beaver. In the west I have an eagle feather and I have a bumblebee. In the north I have the mother of all the animals and bugs that are in the earth that represent the fire. So we have all of creation here. And that is basically all that we need – it is sitting on a blanket that was made for me and this blanket is the grandmother’s blanket. There is a man at the Saint John museum; he made it for me by hand.

Everything is hand-stitched. And it’s patterned after another quilt that was there. But when he decided to make it for me he wanted the four directions and he wanted the feathers there. So the blanket is very special because of that. And he is non-Native man, but his heart was in the right place. I’m glad he made it and I was so honoured by it when he gave it to me. And this is
something I made – some people know the Maliseets as the people of the muskrat – this is a muskrat rattle. I brought that today to represent the Maliseet.

And I just wanted to remind you today about how we are going to share. I have an eagle feather, which I will pass around. They call the bigger ones teachers and that’s what I am going to pass around. We are all going to be teachers this morning – we are going to share medicine stories. Many of us have overcome things in life – addictions, pain, health issues, family issues; we have overcome a lot in our lives. And what we would like to have this morning is to have a picture of all that from each of the directions.

For those of you who are from up north, I know that you have gone through the same things that we have. The ones who are to the west and to the east we all have those stories that will help others and this is what needs to be shared. We need all of us – the bigger picture of what exists in all of our communities. There is still pain there, but there is also joy now because our ceremonies are coming back. I was at one this weekend – we did a star lodge; this is an ancient ceremony that used to exist quite a while ago. I’m not sure when it started coming back, but in Tobique we started two years ago. So we had our third one this past weekend and we are just about at the stage where we are going to take over. We are going to be tested next year to see if we do things right because, when you do a ceremony, one of the things about it is that things have to be done – you have to do that first, this second, third – however many steps there are to the ceremony in order to make contact with the star people (which is what we did), or to make contact with our ancestors, or to make contact with the ones that are coming. We all have that capability when we have ceremony – they are there to help and that is what ceremony is about.

This morning is about sharing. This is just a reminder of what we have in the center here. And we are all connected to it this way. We are all connected to it. We are connected to the creator and we are connected to the ancestors that it calls forth, and we have to share our stories because if we pass away tomorrow – you know it is a possibility – if we pass away tomorrow what have we left for the children, the grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? I am at the age where I have three great-grandchildren, and one of them their birthday is next week; she is turning two years old. And you just love them, you know, you just love the grandchildren and you want to leave something behind for them. And we want to – we want them to know when they are our age what we did. You know we are going to be gone, but they are going to say this was my great-grandmother, that’s her – she’s there, she’s talking, she’s teaching, she believed in that. You know I grew up listening to my mother and my aunt and I was always dragged along – my mother didn’t want to walk home alone. And I would just lay there like this – I would just
listen and I didn’t make a sound and they would talk about spirits, they would talk gossip, they
would talk about anything and it is just a beautiful memory that I have inside.

And all of us have that as well. We all have that beauty that we are carrying and we need to see
that beauty from all of our communities – we want you to share that. You don’t have to share
what you don’t want to. That is not what this is about. It is about what you want to leave
behind. And we are fortunate to have Cathy, who is very understanding of the type of research
that us Elders need. I’m at university right now going through my masters and I know what
happens to most research – it stays on the shelves at the libraries and our children have to go
searching for it. But times are different now. We are about to have our own people that are
saving this research, but it goes back to where we come from – it doesn’t just stay in the
libraries hidden away from us. We are fortunate in that way.

So I don’t want to talk too long because I need to start passing this along. It will go to my left, to
your left. Some of you have already shared stories with me and I hope that you share those
with the other people that are here. We’d like to know which direction you are from and the
things that you have been doing and the things you’d like to do for your communities. We can’t
hold back anymore. You know the time is coming – that was one of the reasons I went to the
star lodge because I knew 2012 is coming. I’m not afraid of 2012. Unlike that movie, its prepare
yourself for it, you know, and that’s what the star lodge was about. It was about preparing and
using those ancient ceremonies because our people knew.

We were so good, so very good at communication. We communicated with animals, we
communicated with trees, flowers, all of that. I know when I used to make water for my fasts, I
would have to picture everyone who was fasting and send them prayers, you know, so you
need to have vision also as you are preparing. And you talk to the medicines and you say if this
particular person needs that medicine then the spirit of that medicine should go to that person.
So our communication skills are really, really good. And we just need to discover that out about
ourselves again. So I am going to start to my east here. You can begin the circle.

ISAAC METALLIC

Hi everybody. I would like to thank everyone who is here. I’d like to thank the Atlantic Policy
Congress for inviting us Elders over here, and I appreciate that. I’m from Listuguj Mi’kmaq First
Nation. I will tell you a little bit of the story of my life. My father was a fisherman, a very good
hunter. I remember crying my eyes out to my father when I was only nine years old, but before
he died he taught me. I was only a little thing, maybe four or five years old, and he used to drive
me around everywhere he went. We fished, we went everywhere, he showed me all the good places there was to fish, and at that time I did not know what the right was but he taught me. I knew we had a right too.

So when I grew up, I said, my father had died when I was nine years old and my brother took over. My brother taught me, and kept on teaching me where to fish, how to hunt, and he taught me. He took me trapping – he did trapping for beaver, muskrat. We did – we fished a lot for every kind of different species of fish. We fished suckers, we fished eels, everything that was available to us in the river we ate. We were a poor family; most of the people were poor on the reserve. All that they had on the reservation was that people sometimes had work on the river as guides and they worked in the woods.

And most of the people made their livelihoods through fishing and hunting. . . . After my father had died, my brother had taken over with my life and he taught me all about trapping and all that. Later on when I was 13-14 years old he would be up in the woods to hunt deer in the wintertime. We had to use snowshoes in the wintertime – there was enough snow to go hunting. And we would track deer and that was our source of food.

So I grew up like that and over the years after that I kept on fishing and I kept on hunting and I kept practicing what I think was my right. I went everywhere. Later on, we started fishing salmon with the nets. They used to call us poachers at that time, and even at the time I thought I was a poacher. So I thought of myself as a poacher; I wish that wasn’t so, but at that time I thought I was a poacher. So at night – late at night – I would throw a 50-foot net and fish for salmon. So I kept on going like that. There was only a few people at that time that was fishing salmon like that. There was like four or five people at that time. We fished at night because we were scared that the wardens would come and take our nets, but we kept on going like that. I often thought people were telling me I had a right – I had a right to fish – but I didn’t know what that right was. You know what I mean? I couldn’t understand it.

So anyway, I said “If I have a right to then I am going to keep on fishing.” So I kept on fishing for salmon and a few more people got in there and more people got in there, and I said to myself “You know, the wardens are not coming up. They must know something that I don’t know.” So I just kept on like that, and I fished. Now it was daylight, and I was still out there fishing and I kept fishing in daylight and nothing happened – no wardens. So more people got into the river, more and more people got into the river. Eventually they [the wardens] started having hold on the river; they were watching us fish. But nothing happened. There was nobody arrested or assaulted. They just looked at us and, if you were not around your net, then they would pick it up. But nothing happened. Nobody was dragged to court or anything like that.
I kept on going like that for another few years and more people got into it. More people – the white people – got more aware of it. There were more and more fishermen out there and sports fishermen up the river were concerned about the conservation of the salmon because they were starting to make a fuss. They put it in the papers that we were taking all of the salmon and there wasn’t enough salmon up there for them for recreational fishing. And I didn’t think that was right. Why should we be worried about what they’re doing up there? After all, we have a right to fish over here without them harassing us.

But it kept on like that until 1979 – 1979 they started to put the agreements in place. And they reached, at that time...they would give the band council – Chief and Council – so much money for people to work so if we didn’t fish for certain days a week – like say we were allowed to fish five days a week if we signed the agreement. Previous to that we were fishing seven days a week. So they wanted us out of the river for two days of the week.

That went fine, you know, but still I didn’t go for that agreement. I didn’t agree. I didn’t like the agreements so I still kept on fishing. I had a lot of fights with the game wardens. But they didn’t arrest me – they harassed me. Sometimes I had to pull the net and they were pulling the other side. So in 1989 they start charging us for illegal fishing. They were charging us for illegal sale of salmon, illegal pushes on taxed salmon. So at the time in 1989 – they charged me. They started giving us charges, and the fines that they send us in the mail – we got the fines in the mail – $100,000 dollar fines, and some of them were even $200,000 fines. In the meantime, if you were caught poaching on the other side of the river – if the white people were poaching on the other side of the river – they were being charged $50.00 fines. I said “There is something wrong with this picture.”
So in 1989 to 1990 they charged 27 people from Listuguj reserve for illegal fishing of salmon. So we went to court and I pleaded not guilty and I went in front of the judge and I told him that I want to base my case on the constitutional issue. The judge says, “Fine, how long will it take you to find a lawyer for it?” I said “Maybe six months.” He says “No, I will give you 30 days.” Now you try to find a constitutional lawyer in 30 days with no money. A constitutional lawyer would cost me about maybe $250-300 dollars an hour. And at that time the agreement was in place with the band, and so now I had two fights, I had two governments to fight with – that was my own government plus the Quebec government.

So I had to go around and search for people for answers and advice and, you know, try to find ways to get the money for the lawyer. So eventually I talked to a lawyer at that time, in Montreal. His name was Peter Hutchins – Peter Hutchin’s firm. And I told him about my case: I got stopped on the road and they took my salmon – they seized my salmon – and they charged me for illegal sale of salmon and illegal possession of untagged salmon. . . . When I talked to the lawyer Peter Hutchins . . . I explained to him what happened, and he says “You do have a good case, but you have to have the community behind you.” So right at that time I didn’t have the community behind me because the Chief and Council at that time had signed an agreement. So they said the best next thing that we could do was to postpone the court dates – you know, keep on postponing – till we find a way to raise funds. Finally the administration changed – the people who were the administration at that time decided to back me up because the lawyers made a point that they did have a case but the only thing was the money.

So finally we went to court. There were 27 people being charged under the fisheries act. So we had a lawyer, Peter Hutchins. They took me and Donald Caplin – had set aside our cases. They took them 27 people first under technicalities – they said “You have to wait until they get rid of the first 27 there because only two of you can go under the constitutional issue.” So that went fine for a while. Then we hired Isabelle Sherman. She was a criminal lawyer from Montreal. Anyway, she took on the case and went and the case dragged out for two or three years.
Finally, they got rid of all the technical cases and then they decided that they are going to start on their constitutional case/constitutional issue . . . with the presiding judge (also from Montreal). And he seemed to be a fair judge . . . but after about five or six years the judge died. And the prosecutor for Quebec City – by the name of Levesque – he couldn’t prosecute any of the previous cases for the 27 people who were charged under the fisheries law. So what happened . . . I don’t know if they fired him or they put him somewhere else anyway. Then the case went on for six years and after six years another prosecutor got on there, but the judge already died and our lawyers told him that we could not proceed. We cannot go back six years because the preceding judge died and a lot of people and the witnesses were dead and people from six years back would not remember what they said. And also our band ran out of money. So what they did was the cases died out. Nothing happened.

After that I went to the band council and I told them that it’s fine to drop the case but what is going to happen in your future is it will surface again and come up and the case was not done. And it will come back to haunt us. So that case went dead – as it is now. Here stuff is still up in the air, but after that they were not bothering us anymore and they were not watching us anymore. They were taking pictures of the houses that were selling salmon before that, and they had binoculars up in the mountains watching us like we were selling drugs and stuff like that. They had blockades all over the roads.

So the agreement was in 1989. And after that we formed – in 1991 – we formed the tribal council consisting of seven people (the public voted for us). And we had a hereditary Chief, Gary Metallic, and tribal council formed our own rangers. We decided we are going to take over our salmon fishery and we would have our own monitoring system and we would do our own conservation and that was what we did. And even today, we still have our rangers out there and agreements that we made not among ourselves – it was among the people. We made a conservation plan that still stays today and all the people respect the laws we made at that time.

So, it is working out very well and we have no problems with our salmon fishery. Also now, we started on something else . . . I started fishing lobster and crab in 2000 after the salmon issue. We have DFO monitoring the lobster and crab. We didn’t have no problems at that time, and it seems to be the way it is right now – we have problems with the DFO. And we don’t want the DFO to monitor us and we tell them we can take care of our own affairs and we can take care of our own fisheries, but they are still pushing that they are the boss, they are the leaders, and that they should be taking care of the resources. But now we are working on a system. Recently we had . . . last year John was involved in the Gespe’gewag Mi’gmaq Resource Council (with leaders). We are trying to take over our fisheries, we’re trying to expand our fisheries,
we’re trying to make our own laws – Mi’kmaq laws – and we should take care of our own fishery and our own resources. Right now, as it is now, we’re pushing more towards our own laws. We started fishing rock crab three weeks or four weeks ago, and at the last minute we were supposed to go out they told us we were supposed to have quota and we never had a quota before for rock crab and between four people – there was four people fishing – and they are saying they are only allowing us 400,000 pounds of crab and when the quota is done the fisheries is done. We resented that . . . we told them “No, we don’t want it. We are not accepting your quotas. We are going to fish. We are going to fish even if we don’t have a license we are going out fishing.” And that’s exactly what I’m doing right now. I am out there fishing raw crab for the last three weeks, going on four weeks, and we were fishing there with no license.

So far they have not done anything, and the band and Chief and the DFO are still sitting on the negotiating table trying to figure out what they are going to do with us. So we are telling the people – our Native people – that we are wanting to expand our fishery and want to take over our fishery, and if we do not start they are going to take everything away from us. They gave us the fishery when the fishery was almost all extinct. They gave us back the fisheries and what they have given us right now they would like to take back by setting quotas and regulations and their regulations and quotas are getting tighter, and tighter, and tighter. Really, what they are doing – they are going to push us out. It is up to us as Mi’kmaq people to assert our Aboriginal and treaty rights. If they want to push, we have to be able to push back. I have done this all my life. I have said no to them, and I alone can’t do it. But with all of us together we can do a lot of things. We can be a powerful nation – Mi’kmaq is a powerful nation and don’t you forget it. I strongly believe and firmly believe we can do anything if we all get together – if we talk more about it openly like we are sitting here we can do it. We must not let them do what they have been doing all these years. They have been taking, taking, taking. We must not let them do that.

There is one thing I have to say to you because when I talk English I cannot really express myself the way I would like if I was to talk in Mi’kmaq. My language is strong and it comes from my heart. When I talk Mi’kmaq I can talk better and I can really, really express myself. When I talk in English I think someone else is talking for me. That’s the way I believe it. I don’t know if I’m right or wrong, but that’s my belief. When I pray I pray in Mi’kmaq, I pray my spirituality comes from Mi’kmaq – from the heart. So I don’t know any more what I can say, but I wish all of us people will stick together and takeover our policies. We don’t need the government to take care of us. They have been giving us handouts all our lives – all our lives they have been giving us handouts. I will tell you something I will never forget. In 1991 or 1990 we had a conference of Chiefs and people from other reserves in Campbellton, NB. Chief Simon Lucas – I don’t know
if any of you have met him or any of you know him. He is from British Columbia and he looks like Chief Dan George with white hair, ponytail back. And I will not forget what he said. He said when he was young he lived along the Fraser River in BC, and at that time (he was telling us a story of when he was 15 years old) his father and himself were working out in the garden and they had planted carrots, peas, and potatoes: “They had everything in the garden, and he said “That is the river.” And when he said “That is the river,” I understood what he meant.” He said one day he was working in the garden and he heard a noise up in the air and saw the helicopter – strange plane – and the helicopter came down and two people jumped out of the helicopter. They were in suits. They looked at us working in the garden and said “Poor Indians.” They went back on the plane and took off, and he said about a month later he and his father were still working on the garden and he heard the noise again and it came back down. “And these two people jumped out of the helicopter, ran over and gave a box to my father” he says. “I look in the box and took out a box of spaghetti, a can of beans, a can of Prem.” He said “That’s the day I was introduced to welfare.” When he accepted that box that was the time the government said “From now on I will take care of you.” That’s when he knew what welfare was because they took his rights . . . he couldn’t fish anymore. To finish it off, he said, “Later on, I was introduced to McDonalds.” That’s all I have to say. I would like to thank you. I have lots to say, but it is hard for me. Like I said, when I speak in English I cannot speak as good as I can talk in my own language. I appreciate you listening to me. Thank you very much.

FRANK AUGUSTINE

My name is Frank Augustine. I’m from Elsipogtog. I am one of the Elders in the community and we came here yesterday and, you know, I knew there was going to be quite a few people here. I was sure glad to see a lot here that I’ve known, in the past, and I’m so glad to see them. This morning, when I got up, I said “It’s going to be a long day.” You know, I didn’t know what to talk about when I came in here this morning. All I know is that I have a lot of knowledge in medicines and been working with a lot of medicines, many forms of medicines. In the past I’ve worked with my good friend David Gehue, and he’s been active in these ways for a number of years. He introduced me to a lot of ceremonies and a lot of other things. I came from the residential school myself and been in there eight years myself. I know the hardships, what we went through over the years. When I was a little boy, I was sent there when I was 7 years old. I didn’t know too much. I just knew that there were a lot of tall people. Being in there for eight years, you get to know a lot of things that happened in the reserve, at the residential school. You know, a lot of times you start to pray for something that you want. You know, you want to get out of there; that’s what you pray for really. In those eight years that I’d been there it
seemed like your prayers would never be answered, because you are in there eight years and you pray there for eight years hoping to get out of there the next day.

So that didn’t work, but when I did get out of there finally I didn’t want to go back. At that time, when you didn’t want to go back . . . they’d still pick you up in school if you went to school. So, at the time when I left residential school – when I was quite young still, you know, 14 or 15 at the time – so when I didn’t want to go there, you know, I ran off to Maine at fall time (during the harvest season). I picked potatoes while I was there and just didn’t go back because if I did go back they’d probably just send me there for another year. So I just thought it was a good idea for me to stay up in Maine and join the elderly people that were there at that time. They looked after me, you know. They told me how to spend my money – what to buy and what not to buy. Finally I guess they put it into my head that my food comes first and whatever else I have to buy with that money I make.

So you know, by going back to my reserve two or three years later, now I was at an age where now I have to decide what to do with my life. In my travels, when you lose touch of your religion – that was the Catholic religion that I was following – I didn’t go to church anymore. Being in the residential school, I was told that one mortal sin would get you in hell. Now that’s what I was told, but, you know, if you don’t go to church in so many years then where the hell are you going? So I looked at it that way – “Well, I’m going to hell anyways so what the hell.” So I didn’t bother going back to church. But, you know, I was getting older I guess and meeting up with my wife. She was young and I was young, a lot of things I was invited to – weddings and baptisms and whatnot, even funerals. I felt uncomfortable, you know. I would just walk in there and I’d see everybody with new clothes and suits and stuff like that. I just got to watch their clothes, you know, never mind those statues up there. I didn’t bother with the statues or anything. I didn’t have any feeling in going to church, no feeling at all.

As years went by I felt lost that I couldn’t . . . it seems I couldn’t get on with my life because something was holding me back. Something was telling me I was missing out on something. I know because I kept thinking back, you know, “Jesus, I know I’m lacking something, but I don’t know what the hell it is.” So one day my wife and I were sitting there, tired of looking at one another, so she says “Why don’t we go someplace and have some tea with these couples?” And I just thought “Well, yeah, maybe she’s right cause I’m not going out to see all my friends cause now I wasn’t drinking and not drugging or nothing, you know, and it was boring.” You know, I’m not able to do all that. So I say “Well, why not? Maybe I could see a few of my friends and maybe get to drink coffee or tea or whatever.”

So we went down and we talked to these couples, and when I got down there one of my friends was doing a sweat lodge ceremony. I didn’t know it was a sweat lodge because I had never
gone into a sweat lodge and I’d never even been near one. But I seen it from a distance – when I seen this sweat lodge from a distance – I knew the feeling that’s in there that’s drawing me there. But, you know, with my filth, you know my drinking days and my drugging days and everything else, I felt that I wasn’t worthy of going near that place – until that day when Josie and I went to that place and I seen that sweat lodge and I came close enough, maybe about 30 feet, then I have that feeling. And when I went there, I was even invited to go there and I was even invited to be a doorman. I didn’t know what the doorman was – I thought if anybody got sick you drag them out. Or . . . whatever, you know. You’re a doorman, do what you can. So that’s what I thought. When I went there, I was told you’ll be an inside doorman. So I was inside, but when the ceremony was done then I had to go outside and bring in the grandfathers and bring in the water and whatever else they need.

So I was doing that, but while I was doing that, you know, the whole thing sort of changed my life and I don’t know – I couldn’t explain that. Anyway, while that was happening, it made me feel that I needed to go back and to keep going back. And finally, I just, over the years, I got a pipe for myself and whatever else I needed I got it. When I was told about other ceremonies, it just came into my head – these ceremonies are not just for me, they are for other people, too, that came in the same path I did. So I took up this pipe and I started praying like you wouldn’t believe. And everything just fit like a puzzle: you get to do this and you get to do that. You talk to this one and you talk to that one, and finally it just became that I was a healer all of a sudden.

And as years went by, I’ve done a lot of healing with the group of Elders we use on our reserve. There are nine of us that work together – we do ceremonies together, a lot of healing work together, and picking medicines and doing all sorts of stuff. People come around when they’re sick and we always try to help people with whatever sickness that they are carrying. We do our best to say that we have medicines for you. Even when the doctors say “No, no more medicines,” they come to us, you know, and all these medicines that we carry. We give to that person and with the ceremonies that we do for that person. You know, when they are diagnosed with cancer and they only have a week to live – two weeks to live – and they bring in their tobacco, and you can’t just tell them “Well, goodbye,” you know. We have to do something, and we pray like you wouldn’t believe over that person. When they are gone, you know, just trying to keep tabs with them – when they want to die. But you know with the ceremonies that we do, this person happened to live four years later, and died four years later and not of cancer but a heart attack. So the creator, I guess, listens to us somehow and with the ceremonies we do for the people and the medicines that we give I guess that told quite a story. And right now what Josie and I are doing – my wife – we’re going to communities. We get calls from the communities needing our help – communities where they are broken in half by our
elections, you know. There’s two groups of people that are separated, and that’s what happens to the reserve when there’s an election going on. And with that, I guess, people are bickering at one another, you know, and people don’t like it, but how do you get rid of it? That’s when Josie and I are called and hoping that we can fix these communities when they are broken in half. And people are crying on both parties, you know, and their brothers and their sons or whatever. It’s on the other side of that party you know, and it’s hard to communicate because of that.

And you know I don’t guarantee my work because I’m working for the creator and I couldn’t say what he’s saying, you know. So anyway we got the call from this community and I do what we call a shaking tent ceremony. I do the pipe and I use the rattles of the shaking tent, and I use the items of the shaking tent but still it’s a pipe ceremony. But I combine that all together and you know it takes us two days or three days. And by the time we get out of there most of the people have come back. Well, the next thing you know when we’re gone people call up the house and they’re telling us these stories that gradually the reserve is coming back. And that’s what we’ve been doing in the past – the past five or six years now.

And it’s helping the people. The medicines are helping a lot of people and you know some of them – young people who are heavy drinkers or heavy druggers – they come for us for help. At first, I really hesitated, you know, . . . because I didn’t have the right tools. And then a couple of years ago when we did this ceremony, this shaking tent ceremony, there was 1500 people that showed up in that ceremony. And we had a great big field and it was just packed. And we had five shakers in there at that time and when I asked for the medicines that these people need, then it was given to me right there, and it was shown to me how to pick it and where to pick it. It’s for the people using drugs, high on drugs and even alcohol, you know. And I feel now that I did have the tool and so when I’m called into these places where people need my help I always manage to get something to move to that community. And I don’t have to pick the medicines myself, but I take enough to show them what it is and how it’s made and how you prepare it – for the people to use it and that’s basically how we do it now.

And, well, I’ve never heard any complaints so something must be right, you know. We’re doing something right. And right now, I guess we’re idling right now but we have another week and we’ve got something else coming. So we’ll be doing that and, you know, I know we’re here to talk about medicines for other people and that’s all the medicines I can be talking about I guess right now until further notice that we’re talking directly on one specific medicine. Then I’m sure I can talk about that, too. But right now that’s all I’ve got to say. Thank you very much. Wela’lioq.
CLARENCE GOULD

I usually visit an Elder in Millbrook, which I did yesterday and this is how I found out about this gathering. So I never heard about it, but I decided to come up and see what was going on. And now I’m here and I’m glad to be here. I was born in Truro and adopted to Sydney. I was raised in Sydney . . . all my life until I remarried several years ago and then I moved back to Truro, living with my wife. But about a little over 20 years ago I decided to join the red path or right path – whatever they call it.

It was in Indian Brook. I was living over there and certain people used to come down from New Brunswick, doing ceremonies. They were at the starting age I guess and I used to attend them quite a bit. Then they started having gatherings at different communities, mostly in New Brunswick. I used to attend them and see what was going on and I liked them very much and I’m sorry that when I was growing up they didn’t have that kind of stuff where I come from. But anyway, I was telling one of my friends it’s a good thing what they’re doing in New Brunswick – bringing back traditional ways, bringing back teachings, and so on. I hope we could do that in Nova Scotia and sure enough, not too long after, they started doing that in Nova Scotia. Now it seems everybody has a gathering. Mostly all the communities have powwow gatherings. They also have other gatherings, and myself I respect whatever Native gathering is going on. I don’t have any grudges or I’m not saying this one is better or that one is better, but I notice that lately there is quite an animosity because . . . he’s doing that, she’s doing that, he’s better, she’s better, or whatever. I don’t think that’s the way it should be. I think we should all respect whatever Native gatherings are going on.

The biggest thing – the youths are having problems. Everybody knows the biggest problem. But the second biggest problem is for them to travel to different communities. They seem to have a hard time. They’d like to go to Indian Brook; they can’t seem to get there because there’s no transportation for them. So somebody has to do something so that they can get transportation arranged, or start funding for that purpose. Because I know a lot of youths – they’d like to go to the gatherings and they can’t make it. I’ll take a few myself, but I can only take maybe two maybe three, but . . . a lot of them can’t make it.

So when I was adopted to Sydney, a family in Sydney, I don’t know why they adopted me and I still don’t know why. Both of my foster parents are dead, and my real mother is dead, and I kind of suspect my real father must be dead also, but I don’t understand why they adopted me. Now I’m beginning to understand – about a month or so – because of what happened and I won’t be able to find out for sure until maybe another two or three months. I took sick there not too long ago and I guess a lot of people were giving me help – praying, people doing sweat lodges,
people doing all kinds of ceremonies to help me out and I want to thank them for that. There were some people that came to the hospital to visit me, but I don’t remember them. My wife and my children keep telling me “He was here,” “She was here,” “They were here,” or whatever, and I am proud of them and I’ll thank them when I see them.

There are a lot of organizations being set up the last couple years – Native organizations – for speaking the language. Younger generation looking for help . . . and it seems that they’ll go to an Elder and . . . see if they can get help from an Elder. That’s been going on lately quite a bit. To me, I don’t know too much even though I’m an Elder – I don’t really know too much about Native traditions because I was brought up in the Catholic way. I attended Indian day school until grade six, and I was at home one night laying down thinking about the time I went to school and not once did a Native person come in to say a Native prayer in the Native language. Not one person came to show us how to make baskets or axe handles, and I don’t understand why. There were people – I use to help this old man making splints for the baskets and when you’re attending school, looking out the window, you could see him making splints for his baskets. I don’t even know why they didn’t invite him to talk to the students about it. It was all religion – the teacher used to march us down maybe three miles just to go to church, say a prayer, and then we’d walk back home again three miles, and it didn’t matter if it was storming or not.

There was a person from away after the wartime. He was an Ojibway, he practiced his culture, he married a Native woman from home, a Mi’kmaq woman, but he settled down in a community. And it seems that he was the only one that used to chant, and he used to sing in his own language. And he started a dance group with these little children. They were the only ones in Sydney that did that. And sometimes, during Mission in Chapel Island, they used to go there and dance. There was another group of people that tried to imitate; I think there was a family from Waycobah. But anyway, it’s kind of sad this man didn’t see all these Native gatherings that are coming back. He would have been very, very happy. But he himself never tried. I don’t know why – because he was from a different tribe? I don’t know. He was even a Band Councillor at the time. And I don’t know why he didn’t bring it back. But anyway, I’ll talk the culture, and it’s here to stay, and I hope our younger generation will keep it to stay forever. Wela’liioq msit No’kamaq.

GRAND CHIEF BEN SYLLIBOY

My name is Ben Sylliboy. I am the Grand Chief of the Mi’kmaq Nation and, you name it, I’ve been through it. Residential school for four years in the rough time – in ’47 until ’51. And as
Clarence said, we were all under the influence and, well, I am devoted to my father and my parents – I’m a strong Catholic. Just here in June we celebrated the 400th anniversary of Grand Chief Membertou becoming a Catholic – Catholicism. We celebrated that with a big crown because he was baptized in Port Royal and, on June 24th, we had a big anniversary, and I’d like to thank all the people that showed up down there – the Elders and the people from different religions, different beliefs. They all came down and celebrated our anniversary.

But the way I was brought up – I was brought up as a strong Catholic by my parents, although I went to the residential school for four years with the nuns and the priests telling us what to do. But I just happened to glance at one of the registries after I got out of there, and on the registry it said “Be sure not to let the Native children speak their language or do their culture – avoid that from happening while they’re in your hands.” I seen that and my late friend, Frank Nevin, he showed me the inscription on the registry that was written. So I can’t blame really, in a way, the Catholic Church because they were paid to look after the children and you know your paymaster – you have to obey his rules and that’s the way the residential school happened. It was the government that caused all that for our Natives.

Just imagine a young child – six, five years old. Even my sister, when she was four years old, was put in the residential school. And this is what we were taught: the whites were superior, Indians had nothing, and they will end up with nothing. But you’ve got to overcome that when you grow up. Although I was only in grade six when I left residential school, coming out of there and working in my communities – working with our Native people – I learned a lot, self-taught. I remember when my father died in 1960. That’s the last person I’ve seen that dies and their body was not embalmed. We had to take him out in the middle of the night to cool his body down. I was only 17 or 18, and I thought to myself “Well, hopefully this will be the last person this will happen to. That was even before the Chief and Council was getting strong, so the community where I’m from met with Indian Affairs and told them what happened. So further on down the road, when someone died, they made it a point to have the bodies embalmed and taken to the undertaker. Before that we would just wrap them up in blankets and buy a coffin from somewhere else and just put them in there. But that changed, and I made it a point that will never happen to our community again. And at the age of 17 or 18 – what I was – I helped a lot of people, and still today, when someone somebody dies, I work at their salute to raise money for our people. You have to live the life, go through your life to understand it better. Just like in the ’80’s, when the Chiefs of Nova Scotia took over their education – thank the people here, like Murdena and Albert, and all the people that knew education; where I only got grade six I need people that knew more about the education, and this helped us to form Mi’kmaq Kina’matnewey – learning our people the language of the Mi’kmaq.
In 1980, I think, the Chiefs of Nova Scotia passed a motion that we would take over our education system because the federal education system wasn’t working for some communities. So we took it over, and before that we used to have one aklasiew [white] teacher teaching the whole class, the whole school. But now we are fortunate enough to have Native teachers teaching in our schools since 1980. There are more teachers that graduate – as a matter of fact my daughter graduated last year from St. FX. And there’s more people waiting to go and get their degrees in education to help our people. My daughter is fluent in Mi’kmaq and she teaches students in grade six down home learn about Mi’kmaq and she knows quite a bit about Mi’kmaq and history with the help of Sister Dorothy Moore and other people. I’m really impressed as to what’s going on in our education system, where there’s more people graduating in the last few years from universities.

See, our system changed and I’m really inspired by what’s going on in our communities – in Nova Scotia, anyway – I don’t know about New Brunswick. We try, and although there are two bands that didn’t join us because they didn’t have no schools in their communities, most of us have our own schools. Last year we just built an $8,000,000 school in our community and it’s from kindergarten to grade 12. And then there are jobs available . . . Native teachers got jobs waiting for them in the schools. It inspires them to return to school and get a degree and education.
We’re doing fairly good with education and the problem now is, as you know, the government has a way of dividing their communities. Every two years they have this . . . what you call “election” – election for the band. And you see families split up – even brothers and sisters spit up – on politics. I was in politics for 18 years. Eventually I got so fed up; I can’t even visit my own sister without getting into politics. So the first time I got knocked out in the elections I never reoffered, and that was the best choice I ever had. Now I can visit anywhere without politics getting in the way of our life, but as the Grand Chief I still get into quite a bit of politics with the other Chiefs. Even with the Donald Marshall case – Junior’s and Senior’s case (when he was charged with moose hunting) – we were all there. We backed him up and we got quite a ways. I guess this is all I can say for now. If you have any questions come to me and talk to me. I will be here for the next couple of days. Wela’lioq.

MAURICE SACOBIE

Hello, my name is Maurice Sacobie. I’m an Elder from Saint Mary’s reserve and I’m glad to be here to learn. I don’t know too much about our culture because I was never brought up on the reserve; I was brought up in the country amongst whites, on a farm. That was, well, . . . when I was born that’s where I lived. In 1940, ’41, ’42, and ‘48. I lived on the farm with my father and mother; they lived there 40 some years. As I got older I started getting around meeting people. I didn’t really know too much about our culture, our people. Maybe once every two weeks or a month we would go to a reserve. We’d paddle with a canoe, you know, up the river to go see our people. That’s how I got around for 10 years – eight, nine years I guess . . . until I was old enough to get away from there.

Anyway, I went to the reserve and I started meeting people and I got to know people and see what they were doing. As a young fella, seven or eight years old, I used to watch my grandparents or uncles making baskets and that’s how I got to know what they were doing. I started asking questions. Sometimes they’d get tired of me and they’d say “Well, get the heck out of here – I don’t want to hear you.”

So I would go and I went around meeting people – see what they were doing. Well I’d stay there for a couple, maybe three, days until I got ready to go home again and we’d paddle down the river. It would take us an hour, maybe half an hour, to get to where we lived. Sometimes there would be people camping along the river and I’d say “Dad, let’s go in.” He didn’t want to go in, but I was so curious to see what they were doing – seeing other people. And it went on for quite a while. We’d get home and . . . you know, I’m shaking cause I can’t talk too good
[laughter] – getting away from my story due to my talking. I had a couple of strokes there and I have a hard time concentrating on things. Anyway, getting back to my story, we’d get down to where we’d dock our canoe and walk up the road to the house. We didn’t live in a great big house; it was small maybe a two-room house, maybe three rooms. Just enough for mother, father, sister and me; there was only two children in the family. There was nobody to play with around there except maybe the dog and stuff, and go to the farm. I had a good time. But I kind of miss. As I get older, I kind of think back at what I was missing and what we done in the past. My father used to tell me things about what our people used to do. I didn’t pay no attention to him. It’s how they lived and he’d keep telling me stuff and I would kind of listen, but it didn’t stay with me for a while . . . what he said to me. So when I got a little older I started thinking back about what they done and what they done for a living and I didn’t know anything about how they lived on the reserve. So I just kept thinking, thinking . . .

I’d kind of watch my father – what he’d say and do – learn about farming and planting stuff and that’s how we survived. In the wintertime or the fall of the year, my father, he’d get a couple of deer or something and we’d have that all winter in the shed, cutting meat up and stuff. He’d put that away and then he’d dig a hole in the ground and put the potatoes in for all our preserves and all winter we had . . . well, not a good time. I’d like to have the stuff we have today, but back then we didn’t. We had no candy or nothing . . . My mother would make cakes and right out of the blue. She couldn’t read or write, but she could make a cake or anything you wanted. Eat and cook . . . I was happy there until I got a little older. I had to get out of there. One day, I said “Mom, I’ve got to go – just like a dog or something – got to go.” She started taking us to town maybe once a month to go to the reserve – Saint Mary’s reserve.

Finally, that’s where I ended – at Saint Mary’s reserve. Well, I moved about three times. I guess I moved to Tobique, stayed there for about ten years – eight, nine years – then I moved back again. I was just like a gypsy, I guess. But anyway, our traditional ways I didn’t really get into it. I didn’t know what they were doing or what until someone told me. I got onto it. A lot of them were doing traditional things. I didn’t know, but I participated in it. I like to watch, listen – still listening . . . try to learn. And there were things I didn’t really understand – what they done, you know – but as I got a little wiser and older, you know, I kind of started thinking about it – still thinking about it, I guess. Now I participate a little more. I don’t get up and dance or anything, but I watch what they do, you know. When there’s a circle I sit and talk, listen, maybe say a few words – not too much. But I learn. I didn’t have the hardship like some of the boys here talking, you know, when they were growing up. Oh, we had our hard times. I guess there was a couple times I didn’t eat, a few times . . . But I enjoy everything about it. I learned and I’m still learning, I guess. But I’m glad to be here. I guess that’s about all I’ve got to say. Thank you everybody.
CHRISTINE GABRIEL

My name is Christine Gabriel. I’m from Saint Mary’s and I was born on the old reserve. I remember we used wood to heat our houses, used lamps, outside toilet. And then I think, when I was about 12, we moved up to the newer part and that’s when they brought in the bathrooms and the TVs, fridges and stoves and stuff like that. So I know all about hardship myself. I married a non-Indian for 47 years, lost my status for 24 years, and the government said I wasn’t an Indian anymore, which I didn’t believe. And I joined with the Native women, fought it, and we got our status back. How dare them tell us I’m not Native, you know. I am Native. I was involved with Native women for about 25 years. Finally, one day I was working and I thought “I’m going back to school.” So I went back to school and I graduated when I was 50 years old with my BA. And when I accomplished that, I thought “What am I going to do now?” So I went back and lived in my community – Saint Mary’s – and there I did volunteer work – helped the women. I fitted right in because I didn’t live too far from there.

So a couple of years ago, I lost my husband, couple months later I lost my daughter, and I was really, really down until I met Morris. And I’ve known him all my life, but I went with him 60 years ago and I thought “Well, maybe I’ll try again,” you know. So we did – we got together and ever since then . . . If it wasn’t for him, I probably wouldn’t be here. I’d probably be locked up somewhere because I just didn’t want to live anymore. Anyway, so now we volunteer. We go places together and we enjoy each other’s company, and other than that I’m involved in APC [Atlantic Policy Congress] and I sit with them, and I sit with the Union [of NB Indians]. And I don’t know what else to say. Everybody behind me already said it all – like, you know, the hardships and everything. I know all about it, too. But, anyway, that’s all I have to say.

JOHN JOE SARK

My name is John Joe Sark and I’m from Prince Edward Island. My father was a Chief, so I grew up in the Chief’s family. So, before school in the morning, we had to get up and get wood for the Elders and take it to their houses. One day, this old lady – I took the wood to her and I started to saw the wood and she came out really mad. She said “Leave that alone. Leave that alone – that’s my pastime.” So I went home and I told my father. I said “What’s wrong with the old lady?” He said “Look, we hurt her pride by having to take her the wood because she couldn’t get it and all you done was rub it in.” You know, that’s exactly what Indian Affairs has done to us by making us dependent on them. I always remember what my father had said; he said “If people can do things themselves, let them do it.”
We had a farm and we worked hard. But when he died I went to Boston and I worked there for seven years. I had about a grade eight and then I came back home and I went to university and got a degree, and from there I got into politics and worked with Graydon Nicholas in Ottawa, lobbying. And I also worked at United Nations and I also worked at the Vatican a little bit. I think that the greatest thing that were going to face now, and I think we’re facing it, it’s that a lot of our young people have no commitment. A lot of our young people don’t have the work ethic that they are going to need to survive. We had a work ethic, but we didn’t know we had it. If we didn’t do the work, none of our farming would have got done. So I got to the point that if I have something I’ve got to do I wouldn’t stop until I’m finished, and that cost me a heart attack a couple of times.

I think that today we have to be really, really careful in how we look at our treaties, how we look at the agreements that we sign with Indian Affairs, and with the provinces because what they are saying to us is “We’ll do this agreement with you, but they will not be rights-based agreements.” And we have to start thinking now “What the hell are we giving away?” They’re not rights-based agreements – they’re just short-term things, you know, to keep us quiet for a little while. We have to really get back to our traditions and look at the things we had before in our treaties – the right to hunt and fish and harvest – because if we don’t do it nobody is going to do it for us. And if we don’t do it, we’re going to be judged by the next seven generations. Thank you very much.
CHERYL BARTLETT

Good morning everyone. My name is Cheryl. My Elders are Murdena and Albert. I am white. I’m from southern Alberta from the land of the Siksika Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy. I am a teacher and I work at the university in Sydney. Gwen has visited the classroom, Ken has visited our classroom, and Murdena and Albert have visited our classroom many times. We are trying to work to bring your knowledge, your Traditional Knowledge, into the university – particularly into the science classroom – because it’s my firm belief that the understandings that you have are scientific. You’ve lived here for thousands and thousands of years with the water, the plants, the air, the rocks, the birds, and the fishes. And that is science information and I think it belongs in the science classroom.

That’s a very difficult journey because the mainstream has very closed ideas as to what science should be, and it’s been a painful journey. But I’ve learned an awful lot. I think many of the lessons that I can think back to that have helped me with this journey with the university were taught to me as a child and were taught to me by the earth. I’m just going to share one of them with you. When I was a little kid, I spent a lot of time outdoors. I didn’t have anybody to teach me about the plants or the rocks or the birds or anything, so they taught me and in southern Alberta – which is the land of the buffalo and the short grass prairies, no trees – there’s a bird there called a magpie. It’s a cousin of the crow. The people who had cattle used to think that the magpies, when they sat on the backs of the cows and picked at them, were creating sores on the backs of those cows and so the government put a bounty on the magpies – that if you brought magpie legs into the hardware store in town they would give you 25 cents for a pair of magpie legs. I was a kid, and I needed a little bit of money, so, uh, this is not a story that I’m particularly proud of now. So I set up a trap line and I trapped magpies and those magpies taught me a lot. I know because they were certainly a lot smarter than I was and I certainly never got rich trapping magpies. But of the magpies that I did get, . . . I would kill them and I would cut their legs off and then I had to take those legs, as I said, into town to the hardware store to get the bounty. But I lived in a little place, and the store where I had to go was ten miles away. So I would put the magpie legs in a little plastic bag and put them in my lunchbox, take them to school with me and then my mother would come and pick me up to take me into this town ten miles away for my music lesson and I would take those magpie legs with me so I could walk down to the hardware store and turn them in for 25 cents for a pair. Well, one day the boys in my class – they found all these magpie legs in my lunchbox and, of course, they teased me. They sent them all around the classroom and of course, they teased me, and they teased me, and, of course, I felt very much like an outcast. But the magpies forgave me and that learning lesson of being teased, and teased, and teased has stayed with me all my life.
and I think it’s made me stronger. And it’s lessons like that, and the help of people like Murdena and Albert and Gwen and Ken, that have helped me with this journey at the university of trying to bring the Traditional Knowledge into the classroom.

I think that my job is to ask how can I help Murdena? How can I help Albert? How can I help Gwen? How can I help Ken? How can I help all of you to make sure that your young people can hear your stories and learn your knowledge and keep the language, and keep it for all the future? I’d really like to thank APC and AAEDIRP for calling together this gathering because the greatest challenge, I think, is to find ways – meaningful ways – to bring your voices, your knowledge into economic development, into education. That really, really is the greatest challenge being faced I think today. Thank you. Wela’lioq.
Yeah, my name is Albert Marshall. I’m from Moose Clan. I reside in Eskasoni, a place called Eskasoni, but I’m really from the Mi’kmaq territory – Mi’kma’ki. The only part of my life that I would like to share with you of course is . . . I have been blessed to have this lady next to me that lived with me for the last 50 years, which I am very grateful of because I’m sure it took a lot of patience and a lot of understanding. We have been blessed in a lot of ways, and that is we have been associated with people with higher education.

Let us enter the path in which we begin to look at everything from another perspective. What is knowledge? Knowledge, now, means to me – knowledge is not static but rather it’s alive. It not only transforms us, but we also have a responsibility with that knowledge . . . to share it with everyone. This gathering here, to me, I believe is very meaningful now from where it was a few days ago. I’m beginning to see now why it is necessary for us to come together because the stories will continuously circulate amongst ourselves, . . . as it was in the past. To us we don’t look at tradition and knowledge as something of the past, but rather of the present. It’s a combination of what our ancestors have left with us and we also have a responsibility with the knowledge that was brought to us by the foreigners and that responsibility, of course, leads into how.

What must we do to integrate or put two knowledges together for the benefit of all? Because it’s quite obvious, in my humble opinion, that the young people today have not had the same opportunities that we’ve had to be well-grounded into the culture – well-grounded into the natural world – and I think it is safe to assume that the knowledge that they currently possess is not exclusively from their First Nations teachings. So that then puts a lot of burden upon us and when we look into our history – our past. We know we’re now on a seventh generation, and we know we have a big, big responsibility as to how and what we must do to prepare this generation here so that they will be just as well equipped to carry on the teachings of our ancestors. In our case, we have been very successful and very blessed working with the university, and we were very fortunate to find a person that developed and had the ability to weave back and forth between the two worldviews because this is something that our young people I feel need very much today. We have to help them validate who they are as First Nations people. We have to help them see that it is perfectly alright to be a First Nations person in 2010.
The next question I believe that we have to ask ourselves is what must we do to help them in that transition? What must we do to help them see that the knowledge that our ancestors have left with us is just as relevant today as it was in the past? We have to be very, very adamant in helping them to see that the knowledge that their ancestors have left with them is just as much applicable today as it was in the past, so the step that we have to show them is to integrate the knowledge, the lessons that our forefathers have left with them, and try to show them how to apply them in our modern-day societies. One of the tools that we have been using, of course, is we have to look at everything from another perspective. We call that “Two-Eye Seeing.” You can see that unless you look at everything from another perspective, you’re not really living. Most importantly, if you look at everything from another perspective you can see, then, how one must become a student of life. And once you become a student of life, then the sense of appreciation really sets in because through this way here you will know your sense of place – your responsibilities – that yes, we have a freedom of choice, a freedom of speech, but we are not a superior being. We are small but yet vital, and we have a big, big responsibility to ensure that the gift that the creator has given us – to apply those tools to help Mother Nature. We don’t have to look too far behind to see how sick she is. There’s bottled water that we have to buy now, clean air is not there anymore, fertile soil is not there, and our source of life – which is the forest – has been desecrated and derogated beyond her capacity to heal herself and rejuvenate herself. So the gifts that I believe we have to now employ and demonstrate to our young children (to our young kids, our young people) is to show them the way – how to live according to the responsibility that was given to them, and that is . . . take care of Mother Earth. Because if she is healthy we, in turn, will benefit from that. We, too, will be healthy.

We have to look at everything from another perspective. For example, pharmaceutical companies do not have a magic pill for us; we are the magic because the magic comes from the nature in which we live in. We have to look at economic development. Yes, we have to sustain ourselves. That’s the foremost, but in doing so we have to be very, very careful that we do not compromise the ecological integrity of our area – we do not compromise our present and our
future generations as to how they should and how they could sustain themselves or even just to appreciate the beauty that the creator has given us.

So these are, I believe, the steps that have to be taken to help these young people to validate within themselves that you can be who you are and be able to excel in anything – in any discipline that you may choose – because once your spirit is intact then the challenges do not become as challenging as they would be if you didn’t know who you were. The overarching objective here has to be – we have to be very, very adamant in convincing our leadership – that our language will be there for the future generations. We have to be very, very adamant in convincing our leadership that unless they create our languages as mandatory, just like any other language, that we have to learn English or French . . . only then our kids will be able to reconnect of who they are and most importantly they will create a sense of appreciation towards Mother Earth as opposed to what our sciences are teaching us today – that the natural world is an object. But the Mi’kmaq or the Aboriginal sciences teach that she’s the subject. Therefore she has to be nurtured, loved, appreciated, and respected.

So this kind of thinking, I believe, has to be shared. These are the kinds of stories our young people have to hear. They have to help them see . . . that they no longer have to abandon who they are – their ways of knowing – to be able to excel in the modern world. I believe through this way here, if you maintain the spirit of Two-Eyed Seeing, then you look at everything from another perspective. How this came about, of course, was, when one begins to reflect, you look into the past and see of all your actions and your inactions, and you try to draw lessons with those . . . actions and inactions. Bring those lessons to the moment so as you are moving forward on a co-learning journey. No matter what happens in the future, you will never make that mistake again. Of course, the other good aspect I see about this, too, is we try to tell the young people that the newcomers that came here brought a lot of good things; but the onus is on us today to take those two best ways of knowing and put them together. I believe Mrs. Bear has demonstrated here today, this morning, that we need to create our middle road which is the sweet grass road, and the only way we’re going to be able to do that is if we maintain that spirit or the essence of who we are and use those lessons so that we will have a better and clearer understanding of what the mainstream is trying to share with us. I’ve got to be very mindful of the clock, so with that I’ll pass on. Wela’liioq.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Gosh, how could I match that? [laughter]. My name is Murdena Marshall. I’m a retired associate professor, and before my retirement I worked with Cheryl for about 20 years on the science program (which is hard). But anyway, we’re still working on it. We’re still trying to make
headway – convince children that your knowledge in finding medicines and all you know about habitat for fish and everything is just as valid as what the biologists do in the aquatic schools. So we try very hard. These people keep me on my toes. I don’t generally get up before ten, so this is a new world for me. I’m not a morning person [laughter]. But I do all I can to help the young people come to consensus with themselves. You don’t have to abandon your culture to become educated – you can carry the two of them into any institution and come out proud as you went in. But children believe in order for you to be smart you have to speak English, which is not right and not true. All my children and myself speak the language, and we made it through. So, it’s the wrong idea given to us by the Department of Indian Affairs – another form of abuse, another form of centralization and colonization.

So it’s been a great battle, but I enjoyed every minute of it. I have spent my entire life finding out who I was. I don’t have a problem with Catholicism, and I don’t have a problem with Native Spirituality. I see the difference between them and I see the good in each one, and I use the good in each one of them to become me. It took me 30 years to find my own spirituality, so it’s a long journey before you can be happy with yourself. Na tlaj, tahoe.
WAYNE ABRAM

Hi, my name is Wayne Abram. I’m a retired development officer with Ulnooweg Development, and I’m here primarily to listen. Thank you very much.

MARY ANN LEVI

Good morning. My name is Mary Ann Levi. I’m from Metapenagiag First Nation and I just want to say how happy I am to be here to learn from you people and I don’t speak very good English. I only speak Mi’kmaq. Thank you.

JEFFERY LEVI

Hi, I’m Jeffery Levi and I’m residing in Red Bank – Metapenagiag – with my wife and I’m interested in medicine – Indian medicine. I got sick there 17 years ago. I had a rare disease, a lung disease, and my wife here helped me out with the sickness I had. We used Indian medicine to beat that disease, and that’s a strong disease. There were three cases around New Brunswick and Nova Scotia what I had; it’s called the bronchiolitis obliterans disease. So those two ladies died and I survived from it. I used Indian medicine to survive from this, and it’s very, very good medicine. And I believe in that medicine and these Elders, her mother [points to Mary Ann]. I’d say “Lillian,” and she brought this medicine . . . to me and I took that medicine and it helped me out pretty good, and I’m still living now. But these doctors told me I was going to disabled the rest of my life and look at me now. I work with construction and I fish snow crab and I go out there and I work my jobs, what I do, and I’m proud with the Indian medicine I took. It helped me out real good. I thank you.

JOHN HENRY ISAAC

My name is John Isaac. I come from Listuguj. I’d like to thank Chief Lawrence Paul, John Sylliboy, John G. Paul for inviting me to this conference. I’m very honoured and I’m happy to be here. I’ll give you a little bit of my background. I was born in Listuguj in 1930, when there was no electricity, there was no running water, there was no . . . really, we lived in the woods, pretty much. Water was very scarce in the winter months. We had wells, but they’d all run dry in the winter months and we had to lug water from a long ways.

I grew up with very loving, caring parents. They taught us a lot. They taught us how to take care of each other. There were 15 of us in our family so we done a lot of sharing and more or less
taught us about culture, about sharing apo’qanmatultinen — to help each other. We had to help each other to survive. We all helped each other. We all worked to gather our wood for the winter, and I never spoke a word of English. I spoke all Mi’kmaq and everybody in the house — our parents — spoke Mi’kmaq. I went to school. I don’t know just how far I went in the grades, but when I was 13 years old there was a truck going around picking up — recruiting — potato pickers for Maine and I asked my parents if I could go. “Well,” they said, “you’re not old enough. You can’t really — we can’t let you go.” So I followed that truck around all day picking up people. They were climbing on the back of that truck. By the end of the day, it got a little darker and darker, and I went home crying because I couldn’t get on that truck and they wouldn’t let me on it. One of my sisters must have been watching me; she packed a small little bag, a little duffel bag. I don’t know what it had in it — there were some clothes in there. She reached and she gave me two dollars, money that she had saved for something. She said “Wait until it’s good and dark and jump into the back of the truck,” and I did. And when I jumped into the back of that truck there were several people in the truck that I knew and they hid me and they kept me in the back of that truck and we left the reserve.

We went to Maine . . . I don’t know just exactly what town it was. I think it was named Robersonville — somewhere around Maine. Well, we got out of that truck and they herded us all into this building. You could see right through outdoors in the damn thing, but it kept the rain off us. Well, the next day, or Monday morning, came around and I recognized one of my cousins. He’d already been potato picking, so I hooked right onto him, stayed with him, and, well, he gave me a potato basket and we went out in the field and you got a little section. I wasn’t very good at picking potatoes. I was too young, and Saturday night we got paid and I think I made eight dollars for all week. We loaded us into the truck and everybody said “We’re going into town. We’re going to the movies and to buy some clothes” or whatever and we drove to Presque Isle, Maine. And when we got into Presque Isle, I was still hooking on with my cousin and somehow I had that little satchel bag of my clothing. That’s all I had in the world, and he said “No, we’re not going back to that place. I found another farm. It’s got bigger potatoes and we’ll make more money.” “So alright, good, I’ll go with you.”

So we went and he found us a room to stay that night, and the next morning we went to this new farm. Well, we were supposed to have gone to that new farm, but during that evening, we went up to our room and picked up my clothes and he says “The guy’s waiting for us downstairs.” He says “You go down stairs and jump in the back of that car and I’ll be right behind you.” So I went in there, got down inside the car, and being 13 years old, I figured . . . now they must have been hard up for labor because my cousin came down behind me and he says “I changed my mind. I ain’t going.” Now I’m sitting in the back of this car with my little bag and . . . I really, really was lost, so I started to get out of the car. And the guy said, tapped me on
the shoulder and he’s talking to me and says, “No, no don’t go – stay.” He says, “You know, I’ll take care of you. We’ll go over to my place,” he says, “I’ve got sisters about your age. You can stay on the farm.” I was never so depressed and lost. Now I’m all alone, hundreds of miles away from home. When we got to that farm he says, “Bring your little bag with you.” He took me to this garage and there was a French family; all one family staying in the garage. And there was loft up overhead where everybody slept in one big loft. He talked to the lady. He said “Do you have a place for this young fella to sleep?” She says “Yes, he can sleep upstairs with the rest of the family.”

So I was brought up . . . we never got along too well with the French on the reserve. We had the French – what we called the flats. The priest brought in a bunch of French people there, so when he walked out of the garage I walked out right behind him. Now we’re eight miles out of town from Presque Isle and, well, I said to him “Sir, which way is town?” He says that direction right there. So I started walking out the driveway and I was going to head for . . . you could see the lights of Presque Isle, Maine, up on the horizon. And he stopped me and he says “Don’t,” he says. “Where you going?” I said “I’m not staying with them Frenchmen.” So he says “Well, come on in the farm house.” We went and for some reason I stayed there. I lived there for the next four years. They tried to send me to school; I kept refusing. I said “If you force me to go to school I’ll run away, I’ll go back to Canada.” They used me like part of the family; I stayed with them. They did my laundry, they fed me, I worked out in the fields, I worked in the potato house in the winter – shipping potatoes, loading box carts – and all along they never gave up trying to send me to school. Even the principal from Presque Isle would come over and talk to me. I’d tell him the same thing – “And if you force me I’ll run away.” But they never really forced me, and I stayed there.

They were religious people. They never drank; they were dead against alcohol. They were dead against smoking, and I grew up in that kind of environment. So I never was tempted for alcohol or smoking, and I grew up there pretty near until I got 17 or 17-and-half-years old. One supper time he says “I’ve got good news for you, John. I just bought the adjacent farm . . . it’s yours.” He says “We have enough equipment to run both farms and whatever money you make out of that farm is yours to pay off the farm. And when you pay it all off it will be completely yours.” “Well,” I said (his name was Richard Osgood), I said “Dick, I got bad news for you. I hate the farm [laughter]. It’s hard work, my god. I never worked so hard in my life.” And I said “When I get to be old enough so that I can get a job in a factory or something so that somebody will hire me . . . I’m gone. No, I’ll never be a farmer.” I was a good one at the time, though, because I knew how to plant potatoes, how much fertilizer to use, how far apart to plant the seed . . . . I learnt about life through them.
When I left there I went to [inaudible], Maine, and I went to work for a paper company. When I turned 17-and-a-half I went to work there, and while I was there I lived there for four years and I worked for that company and I grew up working. I got married and I had four kids, four daughters from my wife. She was a nice woman. I was blessed with four kids. I am a grandfather, I am a great-grandfather, and I was married. On my job, the company had a policy that you couldn’t advance – you couldn’t get promoted. You had to be a high school graduate. So the wife had gone to school – had graduated out of school – and she said “You should go to school. I’ll go – you enlist in night school and I’ll go with you. I’ll join also.” So I did. I went and took a course – went to school in the nights and worked in the mill. Finally, I got my GED, which is a high school equivalency. Now, I could work harder to get a better-paid position in the company. I worked 40 years, and I advanced right along up until I had a very decent job with decent pay to bring up my family.

And so, like I say, I have four daughters. I’ve got great-grandchildren – grandchildren and great-grandchildren – and I am very happy. I always missed my home . . . I wanted to . . . I wanted to come home. After 40 years my kids were grown up, and my wife died, and I moved back home. I never forgot my language. A few words I had to . . . It was back, and it wasn’t very long before it all came back to me. It is hard to completely lose your language if you’re proud of who you are. I’d like to go back as a young . . . as a child growing up to be a young man. I learned a lot of traditional ways from my parents, especially from my mother. She was born in the late 1880s, so she grew up living off the land – hunting – as did my father. They still had the traditional ways of sharing because whatever my father – when he was hunting – what he couldn’t bring home with him on his dogsled, he’d leave messages in the neighborhood and notify different families that if they followed his trail . . . there will be a moose or half a moose or even a whole moose and part of another one. Several men would get on a trail and go and retrieve all the meat and bring it home and distribute it, share it. So the value of the traditional ways – the Mi’kmaq ways – just like a song we had this morning about being proud of who you are and in (that song is Apo’qnmatultinej). They share and help each other and it was instilled in me as a child, and it was though my mother, mostly my mother. My mother was a midwife and my wife helped give birth to a lot of Indian ladies, women. Dozens and dozens of kids she brought into this world. And a lot of her ways was passed on to us and I always believed in that. I want to apologize for being emotional. I have good memories; there’s nothing that I regret – even in the hard and harsh times that I went through in my life. But I’ve been rewarded. And it took me a while after I moved back to my reserve – pretty near 50 years I was gone – to get back some of the values that I had lost. But I never lost they were there; buried a little bit in me, but they were revived.
I would like to share a little bit about what my parents taught me about the traditional ways. I passed them when we were young, how did we survive that you know mom, dad. Most of my knowledge of Micmac ways came from my mother. I used to ask my mother when dad was going (Mi’lemaq) into the woods to hunt. He was a good provider. He’d go, be gone in the middle of the winter with him and his dog, with a little bit of food . . . He’d be gone a week hunting – sometimes four or five days – and sometimes he’s be back in three days and sometimes he’d be gone as much as seven or eight days. When he came home he brought enough food for us to survive and the neighborhood – the neighbors that he’d share with. And I asked how can he live that long in the woods? And he said . . . like when he’d get into the woods he’d take his snowshoes and dig right down right to the dirt and he’d build a fire. After the fire got going and was in good shape, he’d kind of put it out and he’d cut some boughs and throw them right on top of the coals and whatever – cool them off. And then, he’d probably take his deer hides or moose hides and he’d lay one down and he’d put one on top of him and his dog. Well, my father said they would sleep just like, you know, nice and warm. They would have the heat from the rocks and whatever – the boughs – and at night they’d do that and, you know, when he’d get a moose or a deer or whatever finally he’d get back home. . . .

It was handed down to us from one generation to another. We lived by nature. What I mean by nature – we watched the animals. How did the animals behave before a storm? Even the trees, even the leaves on the trees would turn a certain way so that you could tell if there was a storm coming. The birds would act a different way; they could read nature. They would read the leaves, the fish – how they react – how the birds acted to a coming storm. So we as people, like my mother and my father would explain to me, we would get ready. We knew there was bad weather coming; they could almost tell how long it would last and they would be prepared for it. Even today, you know, seven years ago, we had that great . . . uhh . . . in Louisiana – that great big hurricane and it destroyed the whole city. When they went looking for wild animals, even the birds, it didn’t kill too many birds because somehow the birds and the animals knew there was something really bad coming – “Let’s get out of the way or get ready.”

That’s a little bit of knowledge – the things I learned from my parents, from my mother, mostly my mother. So we as people have survived for all these thousands of years by just accepting nature and using nature, and loving nature and taking care of nature for us to survive. We’ve survived for all these years and I think we teach our children the old ways from our great grandparents about what little bit of knowledge we have kept and try to pass it on. I think we have a good future ahead of us. We have to adopt the white ways – we have to adopt the education systems. We need it so that we can advance. And I know we’re going to make it and we’re going to make it big time and we’re going to succeed. Thank you very much.
SAM NUI

Hello, my name is Sam Nui. I am from Sheshatshiu, Labrador. Anyway, there were supposed to be five of us coming here. When I got to the airport I was the only one who showed at the airport. I don’t speak too well in English to express about myself. Today, to give you information, we used to live in a tent long time ago, but my father is from Fort Chimo and I was born in Davis Inlet, the new name which is a reserve – Natuashish. So we moved to Sheshatshiu in 1959, but before moving I was attending school at North West River. I was eight or nine then. Now people called it a residential school, but the government didn’t recognize that. I’d been there for a year at North West River when I was eight years old. So I must say I was not aware that I was abused – if there was any. So after the one year I moved back to where I came from. My father moved to Sheshatshiu in 1959. They used to call it North West River, but then called it Sheshatshiu. It is reserve about two years ago now. We’re registered in the Indian Act rights. I am hunter. My father taught me to hunt. When I was 21 I quit school and start working. When I was working, I was drinking. I lost my life there to drinking, breaking the laws, spending lot of times in jail doing times. That is how I met Donald Marshall in Springhill in Nova Scotia. I spent five years in jail there. I last saw Donald Marshall three years ago in Membertou. I was in the bar, sitting there in the lobby of the hotel. He passed through and he came to me and said, “Where you come from?” I said “I am from Labrador” and he said “You know Sam Nui?” And I said “That’s me” [laughter]. He said, “I am Donald Marshall.” And I said “Yeah, I know.” That was two years ago. I couldn’t make it to attend the funeral and that – he passed away last year. I am glad I am here so I don’t much else to say. So, thank you anyway now.

ALEX SAUNDERS

Ullakut, kanueven, silak kisuak [Inuiktut]. What I said was “Good morning and how are you? And it’s a nice day out there, nice and sunny, and my name is Alex Saunders.” I am from the same community as Sam Nui, old Davis Inlet, which is in northern Labrador, although I am of Inuit descent. My mother was from a community north of the last community in Labrador now, which is Nain. My mother was from Okak, which is in the far North where there is no trees. She was one of 58 people out of 365 that survived the Spanish influenza in 1916. So she’s a very tough lady.
I was retired for about a year. I was in the navy when I was a young man and I fished in offshore vessels in Greenland, Iceland, and few other islands out of Newfoundland and all over the place. I had my own boats, ranging from a 14-foot fiberglass plywood boat to a $65 million and-a-half dollar boat when I finished fishing. I retired for a year-and-a-half, but got sick of that. And now I’m executive director of a community – an Inuit community corporation that provides services to our members. We provide country food to seniors – for people over 60 years old – and people with special needs. And it’s very well received within our community.

Like a lot of other Native people, I had a lot of difficulty in my younger days with alcohol and done a lot of drinking. Then I quit. I’ve been sober almost 35 years now. But I didn’t go to AA. I didn’t go to anything, actually. It was kind of a lonely life until our government, which is Nunatsiavut, hosted an honouring abstinence conference almost five years ago now. And I made some really good connections there and met people like me, with my background, my bloodline, my heritage. I got involved with a group called Honouring Abstinence and we meet like this . . . once in a while, and we have a feast and a talking circle and then we drum and we sing, too. It’s a very good thing for Native people to do because it belongs to our own culture, and it’s very meaningful for me. It’s something I’m hoping will grow in Labrador and in other regions, too – reaching out to Native people – because Native people can really connect to something that they are familiar with. I’d like to say that for the last four years I’ve been involved with hosting Elders conferences and we have one coming up now in Goose Bay, which is where I live the first week of October, and we’ve had two prior: one in Nain, which is in the northernmost community in Labrador, and one in Redland last year. I’d like to point out that the one in Nain was the first Elders conference they held in Labrador for the Inuit in 26 years.

So I listen to people talk here today and I’m learning that things are happening all over. So I listen to people talk here today and I’m learning that things are happening all over. It’s happening all across Canada, I think, and I did hear a woman say that the drum is coming back
all over the world. So people are reclaiming identity and traditions and lifestyles. I think it’s a good thing, because when you reach out and embrace your own culture then I don’t think there’s anything much better than that, you know – when, you know, who you are, and you know who your people are, and you know who you can connect with. I’m glad to be here at this conference – especially the focus as Elders and economic development. We’re being, uh, in Labrador and Goose Bay right now, we’re being faced with a very big development. It’s the Lower Churchill. It’s a major – it’s something like an 8 or 9 billion dollar project that’s going to change the face of central Labrador for sure. It’s going to bring a lot of change to the communities that are going to be surrounded in that area that the development is going to take place.

So I’m hoping as a result of the conference . . . that I can learn and bring back to my people ways and means of having Traditional Knowledge and culture integrated into a major development project that’s going to affect or impact a lot of people. So I’m really glad to be here and I want to thank the organizers for bringing us down from Labrador. I’ve heard some good things here today, some very good things. I think a lot of us Native people that grew up with Native families, grandparents, traditional ways, got away from it, but you know we’re getting back again . . . we’re coming back again. I think that’s very positive. A stone cannot be polished without friction nor a person perfected without trials. So I think all our life experiences are very good. I wouldn’t try to change anything that happened to me because everything that happened to me brought me to where I am today, and I feel that I am in a very good place. I’m very glad to be here and thank you very much.

RICHARD RICH

Good morning, my name is Richard Rich. I’m from Rigolet. I grew up there all my life and I had a talk with some of my buddies that are from Rigolet and Nain who like the [inaudible] or the seniors. I’m glad to be here, and I’m glad to get this invitation to come. The north coast of Labrador is a lot different. We pay the highest prices in gas, plane tickets much closer, closer in November-December for isolation. If you only have a small income of unemployment or old age pension, it’s a pretty hard travel. From Rigolet to Goose Bay, for a half-hour ride, it cost me $280 bucks – almost $500 return. And if you leave Nain, for that price, it’s almost $1000 dollars one-way. We all know what this past year was like; there wasn’t much snow – much ice – couldn’t get around good.

I have a few things to bring up for some people from the north coast that they asked me; that’s why they elect me. I guess everyone here with the schools, the dormitories. We were taken out of our communities, some of us at six years old. You’d leave your community in August and you
wouldn’t get home again until next spring in June. Right from Rigolet to Nain this was happening. The only way we had to get home was called a mission plane. I think we’re the only community or probably the only place in Newfoundland, Labrador, or even in Canada that never got any money for being taken away from our communities. A lot of people lost their languages. I went to school when I was six, but I had people take care of me. I have seen people, Inuit people, who have learned me to write. I was took and thrown in the closet – “Give up this Eskimo language, it’s no good.” And there’s a lot of stuff that went on and on and on. And another thing I was asked to bring up by a lot of my Inuit fishermen – what we call a cod moratorium in Newfoundland and Labrador and all across everywhere else. The communities from Nain, Makkovik – fishermen . . . never got one cent of the moratorium.

In Rigolet and Nain and all along the coast we have a healing program in place. We’ve had it for six years and it’s working real good. Last year, our money got slashed. See, it seems like if something is working it gets taken away from us. A lot of the communities have drum dances. And in Rigolet, we have square dancing; we learnt that ever since I grew up and we’d get taken to other communities say if they’re having a time for some big occasion. We’ll get a call and some will go out by boat or plane for the time.

Another thing that we’ve been trying to bring back on the north coast is the dog teams. There are a few dog teams and every year we have a heritage race. You probably have teams right from Nain to Rigolet. They come from Goose Bay and some parts of the south coast and this is the first year in over 30 years that we could not have a race because there was not enough ice to get there.

And there are a couple of more things I’d like to say. When I got this invitation last year, I went to the national government to try and get a couple more Elders probably that would have liked to have been here. They could have brought a lot of good stuff about medicines and different things because I sit up and listen to these Elders very much and you know . . . there was no funding. I think we have to make sure if we’re invited next time – our government or someone – all the communities together got to get the Elders out to a time like this because I’ve learned a lot here since I’ve been here this morning and I love this kind of stuff . . . medicine and one thing or another. So I won’t have much more to say here now. I’m going to talk to people individually later on. Thank you.

**JOSIE AUGUSTINE**

Ni’n teluisi Josie. My name is Josie Augustine and I carry another name. The name I carry is Eagle Woman, Kitpu-ui’iskw aq paqtsismewakutm. I’m from a Wolf Clan. I heard about this
workshop, “Gathering Mawio’mi” . . . way back when, I guess when it started, and I was asked “Did you get invited?” “No,” I said. “Ella, if I get invited, I get invited. But I’m not going to, you know, . . . If the spirits want me here, I’ll be here. If it’s meant to be I’ll be there.” So that’s how it was. When I got contacted, I said “Yeah, I would be honoured.”

When it comes to medicines, healing, this is part of me. My husband is sitting right there, Frank, and we’ve been married 45 years. We met very young at a very young age. We have six children and one adopted – that’s seven – but we also adopted another traditionally into our ceremony. She lives in PEI. So there are many children out there that are in need of guidance – whether spiritually, traditionally – there’s many. When you do this kind of work, you know, as I sit, I don’t choose color because in the eyes of the creator we’re all one color.

When I was growing up very young, my father was a fisherman all his life. So we knew what kind of fish we were going to have for the different seasons. Walking with my grandmother, which Mary Ann and I share, I would go with her in the bush and she would teach me many medicines. But you know, at that very young age being a young girl, it didn’t matter too much. But you learned because those tools were given to you at a very young age. And those tools you don’t get to pick up until later on in life: “Oh, this is what she meant. This is what she meant.” You know, I would go with her and at this time of the year in August she would take us to the gravesites, the graveyard, and she would say in her language “Naji nmitulwalanej kniskamijinaq.” We would go and visit our ancestors, our grandfathers that walked before us.
And we would get there and those graveyards were just loaded with blueberries, clusters of them. And you know, as a little girl, you would want to sit down and nibble on them. There were blueberries almost the same size as grapes. Today they are so small. A handful would almost be like a rake full. But, see, she would tell us “No, not, T’us. Don’t touch those” – “Mutt lukwaqna’tmuna.” And I would say “Koqoy wjit – why?” And she would tell us “That’s their food, this is our food for our ancestors – kniskamijina wilu’wow – you are not allowed to touch any, because if you touch any you would be stealing from them.” And right after that walk and visiting the gravesites she would take us to the bush this time and we would go pick blueberries and we would do something with them, have a munch out.
But these are the teachings, you know, the teachings of our ancestors. You know, today I understand a lot of those things like blueberries. I was talked into teaching my sister and she just started walking these ways of life, learning and healing herself, and I am really grateful for that. I said “This is the time of year, if you want to go to the gravesites, because if you go into the graveyards . . . there’s no blueberries there now because they’re all mowed down. So what I’ve been doing right now is I take a wooden bowl full of blueberries and I go offer that to my mother and I would go offer it to my dad because he just passed away recently (85 years old). With dad, you know, learning about medicines – the first medicines you learn is inside of yourself – inside is your own medicines. You heal you first and then you heal your family, then heal your community, then heal the nation, and you would heal the universe. This is how it is with our tradition.

I have met many people – many Elders – in my walks. One of the best teachers I have is the creator – kisu’lkw kina’masutimk – because whenever I want to learn new things I ask and pray. . . . If I can’t learn physically what I’ve learned physically, they would teach me spiritually through my dreams. And when there is medicine given to me spiritually, I would take and acknowledge those medicines. Today, the way things are in communities – not just communities, but in non-Native communities – we are going through a big struggle with drugs and that is killing our future generation. And it’s sad and it hurts – it hurts me. So again, with that, I ask if there are medicines out there to be able to overcome those kind of addictions, which are the drugs that are being prescribed by doctors . . . methadone or other things, and I was given that medicine. But one has to be ready and commit themselves to heal their own spirit.

A couple of years ago, two years ago actually, after the gathering I was carrying so much pain. But this is one of the things I was told – I’ll be carrying pain for other people, but it will be up to me as to how I want to eliminate that pain, understanding it. So . . . when I went to the doctor, I went to the doctor because I was carrying so much pain I could hardly walk. I could hardly make it from my community to go do my grocery shopping. I was carrying so much pain, and the
doctor right away said “You, this and this, and that.” Right away he took out his medicine pad and started to write me a prescription. I said “No, no, no, no. I don’t need that.” I got him so mad that I think if he could take me by the neck and kick me out of his office, I think he would have. But he took his pad and crumbled it and threw it in the garbage can. I said “This is not what I came in here for. I just wanted to know so I’ll be able to know how to work with it.” With that, I went in a different direction and here I am still walking. And still, you know, I have a little pain, but nothing to complain about.

But I am really grateful for many things, which is our culture – our ceremonies. Like Frank said, I work with other Elders and we educate because one of my sisters asked me – she said “Jose, how do we educate our brothers and sisters out there for them to understand our own people, like the justice system, the doctors, lawyers, all of them?” And I said, you know, I said “Sister, you know what education takes . . . I said let’s teach them.” I said “No, no, no, no – let’s put it a different way. Teaching takes a lifetime because it took us a lifetime to get where we are.” I said “Why don’t we just educate them for them to understand about our people, so they’ll be able to know what we go through – who we are – especially the young people.” Right now, our young people sometimes get locked up in jails for crimes that they never committed. You see that a lot. Frank and I have been going to Westmorland in Springhill, and Dorchester. We’ve been going there and educating the system, and a couple of years ago was the first time we were able to go with a lot of Elders and do a ceremony with our brothers that are incarcerated. In that case, there was one man that was there. We did a lot of healing work, so in his turn we started working with this man, and this man I couldn’t get him. I couldn’t get him where he was supposed to be, because I tried to work with his spirit and I couldn’t get him where – for his healing to begin. So finally I asked him “Where in the heck are you from anyways?” And he laughed and he says “I’m from Scotland.” Holy, that’s easy. So I said “There is something that must have happened to you when you were up there, something I don’t know what it is. The only one that would know is you. You’ve got to retrieve on your spirit, call on your spirit, and bring him in.” He said “How do I do that?” So I told him and I gave him directions on what to do, and, at the same moment, when he did that . . . his face changed from the colors to a color that I don’t know – I just couldn’t see, I couldn’t describe it. And you know today he’s out there and he’s healing himself and he’s doing really, really good because sometimes we disconnect ourselves – like the spirit of this Eagle. It’s our tools – these are our tools that were given to us – tools that are sitting on the floor, our medicines. And that’s a ten-dollar fine, Gwen [laughter].

Anyways, with that we work with many medicines. Doctors would call it miracles, we call it . . . this is our way of life – we heal and we let it be. We give it back to the creator and let the creator decide how our life is going to be. It’s the same thing as this Eagle feather. This is our
road – wtawtinu elmitqitek – see that how straight it is [runs her hand up the middle of the feather] and that could be in etched in every one of us. Some of us went into different temptations, temptations in many things, temptations in many ways, and, you know, this is us and we can fix that. See how we can fix that [stroking feather] and it’s up to you how we’re going to help our brothers or sisters. Like one Elder said: “Your whole hand is the whole family. This is your whole family [holds up her hand and counts on her fingers]: your grandfather, grandmother, dad, mother and children. If there is no Elders to pass on our knowledge – what we carry – who is going to teach our children? If there are no children, where is this Elder going to pass their knowledge? You know this is how it is and, like they say with the beaver, it carries much knowledge and the wisdom. If you don’t share your knowledge or your wisdom, do you know what’s going to happen to that beaver? His teeth will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow and that wisdom or knowledge is not going to be no more wisdom or knowledge. So what we’re doing here is we’re working just like the beaver does. We’re going to share our knowledge.

We called it a couple of years ago “Sharing the knowledge” workshop, and it took us one week sharing the knowledge. We called it kekkinua’tatultimk. It is what we share – we share with our brother, our sisters. There are many sisters out there that are carrying many, many gifts because all our brothers and sisters don’t carry the same knowledge – don’t carry the same wisdom . . . . Wela’lioq msit no’kmaq.

There’s certainly a lot of information and knowledge to grasp this morning to help to build if you’re in the building stages. Another step further in gaining further knowledge in helping our people in whatever area they are having difficulty in. Um, you know, I’m not going to give you a blow-by-blow description of my background because there’s not enough time in the day – because I’ve been working in the field of alcohol and drugs for a great number of years and prior to that I was a chef, which I hated with a passion.
So they sent me to Halifax and I went down there and he said “Unfortunately your education standard is not high enough to enter into the operation of trades and professions.” So I said “What’s available for me?” He said “A barber or a cook.” I said “Great, I wanted to be a barber all my life. When do I start?” He thumbs through the pages and he says “Probably about a year and a half.” “Christ,” I said. “I’ll probably starve to death by then.” I said “What about cooking?” He said “You start this afternoon.” So that’s where I went. I hated cooking with a passion, but knew I had to make a living. I had to start all over again, and so I took a course in cooking and it’s a six-month course. Now, you know, I was really bright in those days because it was a six-month course and it took me three years to complete it [laughter]. I was a pretty smart cookie. But I finally completed it after I found a new way of life.

And I found that in that area of employment, it’s a very discriminatory field of work or profession or whatever you want to call it. So I didn’t make much headway in Nova Scotia so I moved and went to New Brunswick. Same crisis there, so I ended up in Boston, Massachusetts. And for 13 years in Boston I excelled at cooking. I only had a level of education that would classify me as a second cook or cook first class, but I worked for this company for 13 years and I was one of the leading chefs in the industrial area. And I was, you know, I was looking at cooking all my life because I didn’t realize that I could do anything else, and I was able to get the custody of my children back. And I brought them over to Boston with me for a while and they came back home and they finished their education.

I was working and volunteering in the alcohol and drug area for probably five or six years in Boston, and I use to get the Micmac News. And the Micmac News used to advertise this fieldworkers for alcohol and drug programs and it was in the Micmac News constantly for about six months. And, you know, I said “I’d like to go back and do that but I don’t have the education.” This had always been in the back of my head. This friend of mine – he had been a real good friend – he said “I’ll tell you what. You go to Sydney and apply for that job and if you don’t get it I will pay for your gas down and back.” So you know, it made me feel very good that someone would have that confidence in me to do that and knew that I was capable of doing the job.

So I came home and they were just starting out – Lawrence Paul was just starting to recruit people and having great difficulty and I talked to him and he hired me, and I guess I was one of the first workers to be signed on. It wasn’t an easy job, I’ll tell you, because at that time the alcohol and drugs were just starting to move forward and we started out in a field that was really rugged. They didn’t want it on the reserve and, as a result, we suffered a bit of damage. You know, the first year that I worked I bought about four sets of new tires and I couldn’t really afford that, but I did. We started to make some headway; we started to get some programs
going in the small reserves and we kept building on it, and after two years of slugging around in the communities we were able to put the program in all of Cape Breton and then we started working on the mainland. In three years, we had pretty well all the reserves covered. There wasn’t too much grass growing under our feet, I’ll tell ya. And I was . . . you know, but there were a lot of volunteers in those early days. One of the ladies here – I remember her so vividly, every time we had a function – she was always there pitching in and helping us to build our program. And there’s not enough thanks that the early workers of the alcohol and drug program can bestow on Murdena because she was a wonderful lady. She was there for us and when there had to be any cooking or anything done like that she was always there to supervise and make sure everything went over. We talked about that quite a bit, and the guys that were appreciative of that – they are all gone now to the other level of alcohol education.

And, you know, we had people like that in Wagmatcook. Because I lacked speaking my own language fluently I had difficulty communicating and they got me an interpreter . . . young Jimmy. And him and I – he was a real go-getter, he was a wonderful young man, and he spoke fluently in both languages. It was something that we needed and we use to stop in Wagmatcook every Tuesday morning and we went to visit a lady there that used to have luskinikn and tea ready for us. That was every Tuesday. She always talked about the alcohol and drugs in her community. One morning she said “My god, I wish I could help you guys.” And I said “You are helping, you are helping, you know.” “Yeah,” she said, “but I’m only giving you a cup of tea and a piece of luskinikn.” I said “Yes, it is because we come in here and tell you the latest and what do you do? You talk to your friends about the program. You talk to your friends about the program, right, and this is what we wanted to do.” And that program was working.

It was things like that that happened to build our program. And I moved further on in my education. I went to George Brown College in Toronto and, of course, things happened along the way. There were so many crises in our Aboriginal countries that they were calling for help everywhere. And they started a new college outside of Montreal where a lot of our Mi’kmaq students ended up there, with the CEGEP program. And the first payday, they had a riot and it was all because of alcohol and drugs. So they called on me and I was finishing my first year of counseling in George Brown College, and it was so bad that I said “Well, I better go up.” And when I went back, things just kept going and turning over for me. And I worked in the Northwest Territories for 12 years building programs up there. And I was able to complete the circle and come back and start the first rehab program in eastern Canada in Eskasoni.

You know, these were just some of the things that happened in my life in the later years and I retired about 20 years ago. But I still do a fair amount of work – wherever they really need
some help I go. I still go because I can’t forget the people that helped me to do the things that I wanted to do for a community. And these people were so generous and helpful and, you know, anything that I can do to help alleviate any project or anything at all that they feel I’m capable of I’m only too willing to do that. And that goes for your communities, too. I’m still able to do three or four hours a day, and I will probably do that until whenever the end of the line comes up for me. I want to thank each and every one of you because I enjoyed every comment that was made, and I learn each time that I attend a conference or a workshop. I learn something new and I’m so appreciative of being called as an Elder for one of these occasions. I thank each and every one of you and I wish you good luck in your endeavors. Thank you.

GILBERT SEWELL

Wela’lieq. I may suggest that it is time, because some of our Elders have diabetes and you know how important it is to have your lunch on time. The other thing is – I kind of mentioned this to my colleague next to me – that he said “Maybe we shouldn’t break this circle.” But I think what happens is that I can reserve my comments until we rejoin in the circle, because I have quite a bit to say. And I imagine they have something to say also – they’ve been around for a long time – and because of that I think I will just pass for now and continue not to break the circle and we can reconvene after dinner. So, I ask guidance from this circle. What do you think? Do I get a consensus? Thanks everyone [in Mi’kmaq].

LARRY PERLEY

My name is Larry Perley [speaks in Maliseet – laughter]. I knew this was going to happen, but . . . .I’m a Vietnam veteran, you know, I did two tours. I put that in there because we came from a warrior society as you know. We were in the first army, the American army, the greatest fighting force in the world. In 1776 we signed a treaty to join the revolution and, on July the 4th, the Americans declared their independence because they had the Wolastoqiyik and the Mi’kmaq fighting with them now. And our weapon of choice was the tomahawk, and the tomahawk is still the weapon of choice with the American military now – the Tomahawk cruise missile. So it’s always been the weapon of choice.

I ask a lot of questions. For example, where does the power come from? Where does the federal government get their powers? You know, I ask a lot of people that and, you know, you’d be surprised at the blank look I get sometimes. And it’s really simple – the power comes from the constitution, you know. And for the federal government and the provinces, they get it from section 27 and 28. We’re under the federal wing – we’re under their wing yet we signed a deal with Canada. Our powers are in section 35. For a long time it was, yes, just an empty box. There
was nothing there, you know, but didn’t we win our rights for our treaties to be recognized, right? Our treaties are now in section 35 and I’m just wondering why? Why aren’t we embracing that? Why aren’t we embracing our rightful place in the constitution? I just came to a conclusion that the reason why . . . it’s too lucrative for the Chiefs, our leaders, our organizations to abandon the Indian Act because some make more money than Barack Obama. And it’s hard to give that up. We’re in mini-kingdoms called nations now. They don’t call us reservations anymore; they call us nations, which is almost ridiculous. Like in the Atlantic there should only be two – the Wolastoqiyik and the Mi’kmaq – instead of having 60 nations. It’s unmanageable.

These are some of the things I want everyone to think about. How we’re going to organize ourselves? Because the way we are now it’s not working, you know what I mean. And we have a lot of problems with suicides – you name it, man – drugs, unemployment. The headway we made in our fishing rights, we’re right back to square one now. We can no longer put our nets on the river without being molested by the DFO, RCMP and whatever, and we fought hard. I was in the Restigouche war also. You know, because when we seen the people in Restigouche getting molested we immediately started to organize ourselves, . . . our medicines, and we headed for Restigouche. If those guys want to fight, we’ll fight then. And all of a sudden it stopped, you know. The government calmed everybody down by giving them money, and said “Look, we always took care of you and we want to do so in the future.” But it’s frustrating when I see my sons going on the river and they’re being chased by DFO because they signed these agreements without our permission. Tobique had a referendum on the fishery deal they made. We had a referendum and 70% of the people voted against signing that fishery deal. Besides, they had no authority to do so. The Band Council had a meeting and signed the deal anyway, working actually against us. And where is our fishery today? It’s gone to shit – really, it has. Nobody knows what’s going on – all the money. There’s never been accountability as far as I’m concerned, and Grand Manan? And I suspect most of our First Nations are in the same boat. You know, it took us 240 years to get there and the stroke of a pen to give it up. I couldn’t believe it, you know. The forestry went the same way. We had a right to go in there and cut, you know, and it seems once the bands took it over that went to shit. I hate to use that word, but I couldn’t use another adjective right now. I know this is way off the topic; I also do other things like medicines, I make birch bark canoes and I make baskets and all that stuff. But still, we’ve got to do more. It’s ok to have all this, but we were always a warrior society. You know, that’s why we were so strong. That’s why the Americans learned so much from us, you know, tactics and everything. They organize themselves the same way, and because nobody else had spoken about this I just decided . . . I was going to say something else, but I decided to go in that direction, you know, because that’s my reality. You know, with that I’m just going to pass it on to my wife here, Loretta. Thank you. It’s an honour to be here.
LORETTA PERLEY

I’m Loretta Barlow Perley. I’m originally from Indian Island. I’m married in Tobique for the last seven years to this guy here [laughter]. I’m going to pass my turn to speak so that everybody could eat. All my relations.

LUNCH BREAK

GILBERT SEWELL

I’m able to pick up other languages because I used to run a medicine walk tour on the reserve. And what I would do is I would take out different people to visit the medicines. Now I found it good to communicate with people by saying like, Maliseet – “Tan gag.” You know, if it was Cree I’d say “Tan se’.” If it was Blackfoot I’d say “Oggi napi.” You know what I mean? And if it was Spanish – “Buenos días. ¿Cómo esta?” You know what I mean? If it was Arab, I would say “Salam wa aleikum.” And it’s good, too. It sort of breaks the ice.

Now, I took a course in Mi’kmaq language at Saint Thomas University in Fredericton in my spare time when I was working with the Union of New Brunswick Indians. And there, the class, I wanted to learn to speak the language and to read and write it. So, I went to an Elder and I asked him “Look, you don’t greet ladies and gentlemen.” And he said “No, because if you say that to a Mi’kmaq, he’ll say “E’pit aq Jinn, Wenjitia’m aq Kulkwi’s” – you know what I mean? He said, “They will make fun of you.” So I said “What words do I use?” And he said to me “Nogmatut ge ji’gsutui getu tlimu log nat gogwei.” It means “My relatives, listen to me. I want to say something.” And that’s proper Micmac. But he said “This ladies and gentlemen stuff – that’s more the non-Native society – they use this type.”

My spirit name is Nemi’tegei, which means “I see.” The other thing is my father’s name was Peter Sole, but it was Pierre Soul . . . SOUL. And my grandfather was Lemmie Soul. My great grandfather was Chief Peter Soul of Listuguj, and his father was Lemmie Soul and his mother Anastasia Young. So, I have a lot of relatives up in Listuguj. And my mother comes from Metepenagiag, which is Red Bank, which means “high bank.” My grandmother comes from Winpegi ju ig, which is Bathurst. She comes from the Prisque family. The Prisque family goes back to the name “wi’us,” which means “flesh,” and it’s like the flesh pouch. She was a medicine woman. My great grandmother delivered me at home and they come from a long line of traditional medicine. Prisques were known for that in our area and, as a matter of fact, they were criticized at one time by [New Brunswick commissioner of Indian affairs Moses] Perley in
1848, somewhere around there. These are a wretched bunch of Indians that won’t take the pledge because my family wouldn’t move to Listuguj, or Metepenagiag, or the Miramichi because they were content where they were. Perley, in his report, said that they’re a stubborn bunch, but he said that there is one guy by the name of Alec Prisque – he made a garden, but it’s very poorly tended and he said he don’t expect very much crop.

But the river I’m from is called “Winpegi ju ig,” roughly “flowing water.” Winpegi ju ig could also mean winninu et gisn winga mig sit – this was translated as an evil river. So what you had to do is you had to go and make an offering to the river – ask him not to take your life. You had to ask “M’ntu – don’t take my life,” and you respect the river by doing this. So, in 1665 when Jesuit Le Clerc came there, he said “You people don’t have to do that anymore, we’ll bless the river.” So they used to hold a mass there in a place called the Church, and . . . in the front of Nipisiguit Falls. There’s a big opening there and it is known as the Church, and that is where we used to carry out our ceremonies. Not only would you find the place where we carried out the ceremonies, but you would also find sweet grass that grows inland. It’s shorter, but it’s used as a medicine. It’s not like the stuff that grows by the sea – it grows long and you use it for smudging. A long time ago, we smudged sweet grass in order to invite in the good. Today, we burn sage, which is western, and that’s to take away evil. But what we burnt a long time ago, and the ones from BC, was cedar. The cedar bark on the outside there, that’s what you burn, and some people in Esgen wo’ petij – they use a sage that’s very strong. So, I looked it up and one of the Elders there told me negwtugwalugwet (for “he’s alone”). That’s what the sage is
called. But then I further did an investigation and I found out it comes from the Dusty Miller, which came in on the Sable Island when the ships wrecked; it’s European. So it’s not basically some of our medicine, but even so, some of the medicines that came over – we adopted them, we used them.

I started off when I was young in Maine. In 1939 my father joined the army, but he couldn’t get in there because he had flat feet. So anyway, my father and grandfather, we went to Maine and we went to Sherman, and this is where we stayed. We made baskets, we worked in the woods, and I worked with my grandfather. I can still remember when I was seven years old. My grandfather didn’t come back because he had a little too much to drink one night and it got kind of scary in the camp by myself, especially when the leaves . . . and tree branches started rubbing the top of the camp. So what happens is, I just took the lantern, lit it, and started making my way out. Then my brothers and sisters started seeing this light coming from a long ways – well, one mile; for us at that time, at seven years old, was a long ways. They could see that little lantern coming all the way along; it was me coming out of the woods. So I didn’t have much fear for the woods because my grandfather told me that there is nothing in the woods that can harm you and I always believed that. “If you respect your surroundings and know what’s around you and watch the prints and the tracks,” he said, “you can always tell what the danger is.” My biggest danger was porcupine. I’d hear them gnawing at the door or underneath the camp, that was kind of scary when you’re seven years old.

Anyway, what happened after that was I pretty well followed the Catholic religion, and the reason for this was that my parents and grandparents were very religious. But the only time I’d hear stories of the past was when I used to go up in the woods making baskets or axe handles. When we came to Canada in 1948 I didn’t go to school for two years, and what happens is I used to make baskets with my grandfather in the woods and disappear in the woods. We used to take the pillowcase and put flour in it and we used to take tea with us and just a few items like salt pork and beans – dried beans – and we used to head for the woods. And we used to just stay there for two or three months at a time and this was a way of life. And I used to catch the small partridge, I used to catch rabbit, this was sort of my job . . . to get the small game. My grandfather used to shoot deer, and whatnot, just to keep our camp. He used to trap beaver – you know what I mean. I ate beaver meat until I was in my teens. I ate porcupine. It’s all good meat and, like I tell everybody, it’s a matter of how you cook it. So this was basically the life I had.

Then later on – I remember when I was I think 12 or 13 – one day I decided to cut across the woods to go to church. So my mother washed up a nice jacket for me and everything else, but it had a little rip in the side. And I went to church with it, and my sisters were embarrassed: “How
come you wore that jacket? It’s got a tear in it?” You know what I mean. But you see, what
never bothered me is what people had to say because my grandfather told me “You’re Mi’kmaq –
“Nn’uin aqq nnu gelu lultes” (meaning “You’re Mi’kmaq and I will speak to you in Mi’kmaq”).
“Never be shy if someone wants you to talk Mi’kmaq, nnuisi. If they want you to dance, show
them how you dance,” he said. “You have nothing to be afraid of.” So, when I was 16, I went to
Maine picking potatoes. He gave me a crooked knife and he said “Look, if you run into trouble –
you’ve got no money – make an axe handle or a basket because farmers will always buy that
from you.”

So these are some of the things I remember when I was young. My grandfather had a lot of
influence on me and we came, like I said, in 1948 to Canada. And then I graduated in 1956. At
that time they said if you had grade eight you had the world by the tail – you had everything
you need to go out there, you know what I mean. My father was educated in Listuguj in
Mi’gmaq and English. My mother was educated in Metepenagiag in English and Mi’gmaq. And
my great-grandfather Peter Soul – who was a Chief from 1907 to 1910 – he was educated first
in hieroglyphics – gomgwejuigasigl – that means sucker writing. That fish goes along the bottom
of the river and he’ll leave a trail behind him. So when they seen the hieroglyphics the priest
was marking down, what they said right away was that they liked to make fun of it. Mi’kmaq
like to make fun of it, to laugh, and said “gomgwejuigasigl.” In fact, I have books at home and it
is written right in there, and I think I just bought one in the store here by Murdena who worked
on that one that says the same thing.

But like I said, when I was young my grandfather showed me how to make a bow. Well, he
made a bow himself first out of cedar. He just took a cedar sapling and just cut it with a draw
knife, and he would use his crooked knife and in no time he had a bow. Then, he bent it on his
knees and put a string on it and then he made the arrows. The arrows he made me were of
cedar. He split the cedar, but it had blunt ends just like your thumb. He said “Now you can hunt
with that.” So I used to hunt; I used to shoot a partridge – you had to hit him in the backside,
and I had to run like hell to catch up to him and wring his neck, you know what I mean. To snare
a rabbit, you know who taught me how to snare a rabbit when we came to Canada? My
mother. She said “Just go out by the line there about a hundred yards from the house, and you
set snares.” And then she told me how to set them. She said “You make the snare big enough
for your hand to go through, but, before you do that, rub it on the tree, so it will take your
scent away.” And then, later on, my grandfather told me: “If you set a trap snare for a fox, what
you do is walk and set the snare in behind you because a fox is very smart. If you go around
something he’ll go around too.” And then he said “If you set it for a bobcat, just put a little red
thing in the tree,” he said. “A piece of yarn. That’s a very curious animal, and he’ll jump up for
that and you’ll catch him in your trap.” Another one he said: “If you want to catch a coyote” –
back then there wasn’t many coyote only in Maine – he said “What you have to do is you get a skunk, a dead skunk, and out him in a brush pile, and what will happen is you set your traps way around the outside in a big circle. He’ll circle around there and that’s where he’ll get caught.”

So these were things that we were taught when we were young. I’d go out in the morning and I’d come back at night, and my grandfather would question me. He would say “What did you see today?” “Well,” I said, “I saw a red tail hawk.” “How big was he?” I said “He was huge.” He said “Now tell me, how high was he flying?” “Well,” I said, “he was just in the trees and then he’s flying up to a tree.” He said “How do you know it was a red tail?” I said “Because when he spread his feathers out like that when he flew down you could see the red fan.” You know what I mean? So what he would do after I told him everything I saw during the day – he questioned me: “Well, what kind of a day was it? How long did it take you to get there?”

So after he did all that, then he would sit down and tell me a story. He’d tell me a story about the hawk. The next time I would go out, he would tell me a story about the bear. I said to him one time – we were getting bear in the spring – he used to go in the den and get them small bear. And what happens is, it’s about the size of a woodchuck, but the thing is a bear when it’s born is in February, and they’re only about the size of a squirrel. They crawl up on the mother and they nurture off the mother, and they get bigger. But when they come out, they’re about the size of a groundhog. But he said “She always chases the old bear away because the old bear will eat the little one.” And he said “The reason they eat the little one is because it’s rivalry.” He didn’t say it that way because he spoke to me in Mi’kmag. “They would challenge him when he gets older so he would eat them. So she would chase him away.” So I asked him one time – I said “Did you ever get caught by a bear?” “Oh, he said, “yeah, one time I did.” Of course, he liked to be funny too, hey, you know what I mean. He said “One time, one grabbed me and I went like this.” I said “Well, what did you do?” “Well,” he said, “I reached in the back, like that, and I tickled her and she let me go” [laughter]. “So,” he said, “I run like hell. I went way up the hill and when I turned around, she wasn’t chasing me.” I said “She didn’t chase you?” He said “No, when I looked back she was going like this” [waves his hand as if to say come back – laughter].

So that’s where I learned storytelling – from my grandfather. Then he’d tell me stories . . . . I said “Today, I saw a robin.” I said “He was awful red, with just red in the front.” Well, I told him all about the robin and how the robin came here, and I told him all kinds of what I saw that day. He said “I’ll tell you a story a long time ago. The robin was watching seven hunters chasing the bear.” I said “Who’s that?” He said “It’s the dipper – the great dipper. They were chasing the bear.” And he said “When he caught up to the bear it was in the fall, Toqwa’q. He caught up to the bear and the seven hunters slayed the bear and the blood went everywhere. It went on the
robin and the robin shook his feathers, like that. All the blood went down to the earth and that’s why all your trees are turning color – yellow and blood color. That’s when you know it’s the fall – that’s when you know it’s time to prepare for the winter.”

And he said “When you travel when you’re young, you travel through the woods. A good time to do it is in the fall and in the spring.” He said that what it does is repair the soul – jijaqmij. You help your spirit and in the spring when everything is blossoming that’s another time that you’re going to go into the woods when everything is coming out of the ground. You will feel like you’re renewed. “If you don’t do that,” he said, “you will be depressed, you won’t feel good.” Today they call it vacation, you know what I mean [laughter]. But he said “You have to take time and do these things.” So these are some of the teachings I heard a long time ago.

Another thing that he said is the porcupine. “There is this guy,” he said. “You never kill a porcupine or you never kill anything that you can’t eat.” He said “This guy was all over the neighborhood – he was killing the robins and he was killing the little birds and stuff like that and he said look don’t ever do that. And he said the thing is there was a boy one time in the community that was doing that and then he went deep into the woods and he saw a deer. He shot the deer and chased the deer but while he was doing that he broke his leg and he flipped over. He laid there a while, a couple of days, and he was trying to mend it by tying something around it and the easiest animal to kill in the woods is a porcupine. All you have to do is pray to the spirit of the animal, if you go. That’s the way I hunt in the fall. Like moose, I go and look for the tracks and I pray to the spirit of the animal. And I ask the animal for meat for the winter and I promise the animal that I will use the meat for food, and I would give it to the Elders, and also I would use the hide for clothing and to make a drum, and save the horns for a handle for my knife. And I would save different parts for making beads and jewelry and that. So he said that boy didn’t do that and what happens is when the porcupine came by he started to chase the porcupine. But he said he was in fever and he kept chasing the porcupine. After he got close to the porcupine the porcupine went up the tree and he said he couldn’t get him out of the tree. So the village missed the boy. They didn’t know where he was, so they started to track him and they found him – he was under the tree, he was dead. You see the moral of the story is that if he had of asked the porcupine for food he would have got it, but because of what he was doing – not respecting the animal – he lost his life.

So this is some of the morals of the stories they told us when we were young – what to do and not to waste food. Today I’m carrying around a little stomach, and I see a lot of my brothers here are doing the same thing. But what happens is it just goes to show you our diet has changed. Everything’s changed and we don’t travel as much as we use to, like when I was young we didn’t have an ounce of fat. I went to a diabetes clinic down in Phoenix, Arizona. The people there – they have a big casino where they ride around in these little carts, they cut the lawn,
they do all kinds of stuff, they take you on a tour, they drive you around in boats. They are all overweight, but their cousins across the border are all in good shape. Now the ones in Phoenix, the ones on that reserve, I think the majority of them all have diabetes. And their brothers across the border do not have it. So what does that tell you? What you eat, and you know what I mean, is important.

The exercise is most important. Like when I used to go out there in the morning. One morning I went out there and I caught a salmon, and my mother said “Woo, you did a good job.” But you know how I caught the salmon – a 15 lb salmon? I made a big circle with rocks like that and the salmon was coming up and couldn’t get its speed up to get out of it. So once I got the rocks in place, my chum and I, he would chase them towards me and I would jump on the salmon. Now a 15lb salmon for a 13 year old is pretty big. So, of course, when I got home my mother was all proud of me. And then later on, when I got older, my father said to me – he says “I’m going to show you how you’re going to get salmon for the winter.” So he took a spike and bent the spike in the hot coals and then we went down and he tied it to a pole. Then he took poplar and he rolled up a bag real small, put a spike in the end and he took kerosene in an old wine bottle and he just dumped it in like that. He started a fire, and he’d say “Ok, come on son, come in the river with me.” So I walked in the river like this and he just took that hook and he’d catch the salmon. After we were finished, he took the hook and hung it in the tree. He said “We’ll put it there so nobody will find it so next time we come down we can get salmon.” So we prepared some of it, we smoked some of it, some of it what we did with it is we bottled it. So that’s how we prepared for the winter.

My father, he was always cutting firewood. One thing I remember about him is the big pile of firewood – huge pile – and we had just enough to carry us over. We use to burn poplar, and after you get the fire going you could burn green poplar, you know what I mean. Anyway, what I did after that, when I was 15 I went to the states. I asked my mom “Can I go to the states?” She said “Yeah.” I went there picking potatoes and then, when I turned 16, I went down to Worcester. I called her up and said “Can I go down the states?” and she said “Yes.” So I went to Worchester, Massachusetts. And while I was down there my family called me home; they said “Mom is sick, come back.” I was only 17 years old – well, I had turned 16 but I was pushing more towards 17. I come home and my mother had cancer and she died of cancer at 42 years old.

So when I came home that time I asked my father “Would you sign this document for me?” He said “What is it?” I said “I’m joining the army,” so I joined the army. Before that, we would talk Mi’kmaq in the family. After I came back, my sisters and brothers weren’t talking Mi’kmaq anymore; my father was talking English. I guess the educators told him “Look, your children will
be better off if they just learn English.” And prior to that, when my mother was living in Canada, from 1948 to 1950, my father worked at Eagle Lake. And what happened is an Indian agent came in and he says “Look Catherine,” he said. “You’re living by yourself. You should send your kids to Shubenacadie.” My mother grabbed the broom and she chased him out. She said “You get the hell out of here! I’ll look after my own children!” I guess that I’m thankful for that because we didn’t go to Shubenacadie. But the thing is, in the spring she’d make mayflowers and we’d pick them. She made baskets and she’d say “Son, see all them Christmas trees there, I’m going to buy you a saw and an axe. You’re going to cut them Christmas trees for firewood – for dry wood.” And after that I’ve got a sled . . . My job was to look after the stove.

Luckily, my father built a house that was two stories back in 1923, when he got married. You see, in them days the men came from another reserve and came to live on the reserve and to prove his worthiness after a year. Then he would marry. My grandfather came from Red Bank. He had to prove his worthiness, and then moved in with the Prisque family – my mother, because she moved up with my grandfather. My father came from Listuguj, and then he met my mom and that’s how it started. Anyway the first-born was in 1931. It was my brother Lawrence. During the pandemic flu up in Listuguj, he died at Indian Lake. When you’re talking about pandemic flu, that’s nothing new to the Natives. My grandfather in Metepenagiag, he used to go up to the gardens . . . they went up to the gardens in the wintertime; and “Let’s get away from here because,” he said, “what will happen is we will catch that flu that the white people catch.” And sure enough, John Tenass – his two sons died from that flu. They went to the priest and they said to the priest “Can you bury my sons?” He said “No.” He opened the door a little bit and he says “You go bury them yourself.” And what happens is they were all black, you know what I mean.

They used to go way back in the gardens. So in the spring of the year they would come out. There is a place up there and it’s called “The old woman’s tea” – she used to make Labrador tea and everything and have it for the people in the spring. Then when they’d have lunch and some Labrador tea – that’s after Maple syrup – and they would all head back to the community in Red Bank. By that time all the flu was gone and what not. So that’s how they handled pandemic flu. They lived in the woods; they lived off of the land. My father in Listuguj, he used to go in the woods and used to get arrowroot or duck potatoes. He said “When you walk in the mud like that you can feel them, like little potatoes in the mud. The arrowroot is the shape of the leaf. We’d eat them in the woods.” Of course, Labrador tea we’d use that for tea. You don’t have to put any sugar or nothing in it – it’s natural. And when I was up there my father also showed me pagosi – that’s the yellow cow lily that we would go and get the root. Sometimes when the beaver pond is out you see this great big root. It’s pretty near as big as this here [holds up water bottle] and it goes along like that, hey [zigzags his horns]. Well, that’s what it is. The moose and
the fawn digs at that with his horns and he pulls that out of the ground and the female chews on that – they chew it, both of them.

So see how they recognize the different plants. Yarrow plant is another plant – you take the blossoms, you take the stem, and the root and everything. It’s all good for the flu; it makes a nice green tea. Another one is chicory. You dry chicory roots – it’s good for coffee. You even see them, some say, their blue buttons – you see them growing along the road. That’s another good medicine. . . . I was fortunate to learn of tupsi. What we do is we cut it like an arrow, like one of the parts of the eight-pointed star. We cut it on the north side, we cut a slit in the tree and after we slice it up. But then we take the dirt from the ground and we rub it on the bark so the tree will heal back up. We split that and we boil it as a tea and it’s good for bronchitis. For a headache we use the Pitcher plant – it’s a big plant like this [holds palms together and fans out fingers] and what happens is you get the root. You can’t get the seeds because they are about six feet down in the mud. But you get that seed and in the wintertime – sometime in January – the plant, all around the plant [forms a circular motion with hands] is melted because of the heat of that plant. It dries like a walnut – not quite a walnut – more like them black nuts there. I don’t know if they are called Brazilian nuts or whatever they’re called. It dries like that and when you have to use it you scrape it and it turns white like that and then you sniff it in and your migraine headache goes away.

So you see? Like I had a guy in the woods one time and he got stung by a bee. He said “What can I do about that?” I said “What you can do is take the jewelweed – the spotted jewelweed – and just crush the plant like that and put it on like that [rubs arm]. Within a few minutes, it’s gone.” You see, poisonous plants grow next to healing plants. If you touch poison ivy, go to that jewelweed right away – put it on your skin. It’s even good for fly bites. I don’t know if you remember when you were young. We used to make a little can of smudge and put sweet fern on top and that would take the flies away. Before we’d go in the camp we use to burn it at night and then we’d go in the camp with the smudge pot and then come back out of the camp with the smudge pot, shut the door and everybody would go to bed. You didn’t have to worry about the flies. I don’t know if some of your Elders did that. You’d remember that, eh? This is what we did.

I wrote down a bunch of stuff here, but I guess I was just going on and it kept reminding me of things. And after what I said, I’m going to do with my notes – I think I’m going to sit down and write some kind of a story to pass on this information to my children. First of all, who they’re related to. And the other thing is I worked with young people and Elders and here’s my reason: because anybody in between – they’re sort of negative – they carry too much baggage. I won’t let them touch my drum or anything, but the young people and the old. The young people come from the spirit world. Whenever they come, everybody says “Oh, what a beautiful baby.
Look at the eyes – look at the hair.” It comes from the spirit world. That child is perfect and then what happens is, after, it gets its stamps. But a long time ago what they did is, my uncle said, “This baby, I’m going to show him how to be a great hunter.” If a little girl was born – “I’m going to show you how to be a medicine woman.” You see, everybody committed to that child. But after the child went into the community, “Oh,” they said, “he’s poor, he’s Micmac, he’s this, he’s that” – got all the stamps, ok.

Elders, when they go back to the spirit world, they are closer to the spirit world. This is why when you work with children you get along so well, and if you’ve ever seen that motif – it’s made like a canoe. You’re born in the fetus position and your medicines are any symbol in between. And when you return to the spirit world you are back in the fetus position – apajimują’ji’juen – you heard that today. They called that dementia back as a child, but the Natives knew that already.

My medicine is the three crosses. An ancient, long story before the coming of the white man . . . what happened is people were at a bad time in life. There was no animals, the forest was in bad shape – it was burning, people were starving. So this old man had a dream and in that dream he dreamt of three crosses: one is for deliberation and council, the second one is perils of travel, and the third one is for calamity. He told my grandparents you paint that on your canoes and on your shirt. He said you put them crosses on there – these are a symbol for you to remember that from now on you’ll have better luck. And so the people from Miramichi now are known as the cross-bearers. The old name for the Miramichi is Listugij. My mother comes from the south-west, which means that they are from the Beaver Clan. My father comes from Listuguj – from the Bear Paw Clan, but also his mother. But because we’re from Gespe’g, which is the last one of the seven districts, we are the people of the salmon. From Kouchibouguac to Cape Tormentine – they’re the people of the moose, and PEI . . . the people of the snake. If you go over into Maliseet territory there’s the Saulis – they’re the people of the frog and, of course, there’s the bear, and so on. If you go down to Cape Breton, Tuma Young is from the squirrel – atu’tuej.

But this was never taught in history in school. When I was a young feller sitting in school, they said “The savages lived up the river.” So the other students would look at me and I would put my head down. I would get home and tell my grandfather “How come we have no history?” "Oh no, son," he said. “I’m going to tell you all about your history. I’m going to tell you who you’re related to. Don’t hang around with them people – they are not good people. That one there is your cousin – Peter Paul’s there your cousin. They’re from the Beaver Clan.” He said “Peter Paul’s – they come from a long time ago on the Shubenacadie River,” he said. “There was a war between us and the Iroquois. This woman was going to have a baby. She went up the
river and she had the baby in the canoe. And they said when they came back after the war what happened is,” he said, “that family was known as “Pemiet.” The French couldn’t say that so they called them ‘Primerot’ and they said later on the French priest called them ‘Pierre Paul’ eh and ‘Piel Pol’ and today the English call them Peter Paul. That’s where that name comes from.” He said “Your name comes from on your grandmothers side – it’s “wi’us.”

And another thing he said I should tell my children is my great grandfather was the Chief of Listuguj, my great, great, grandfather on the mother’s side was Barnaby Julian from the Julian tribe – King Barnaby Julian. His father was Francis Julian, who lived in Beresford. He wouldn’t let the French build there because he said “The beach belongs to me.” You see, so that would be my four-time great-grandfather. But what I am trying to say here today is the importance of learning your language – not only learning your language – in your language you will find a lot of information and clues. Do you know I asked my father “Why do they call a ball game alje’ma’timg?” He said “Because it’s soccer – you hit it with your head and you hit it with your arms, your knee, alje’ma’timg,” you know what I mean. I said, “What about the ball tu’agn?” He said “Tu at’img – something that you take out. “That’s lacrosse – we used to play with the Mohawks when they lived on the other side of the river.” I said “How come you don’t live there today?” “Well,” he said, “because the French and the English [inaudible writing] didn’t get along and we were tired of them fighting so we went and moved back across there.” But there was a dispute between the Mohawks and the Mi’kmaq when they had a game. One young feller got killed, and what happens is there was an animosity after that. And finally it caused a lot of disruption, so the Mi’kmaq chased them north. And, according to the history, they were pretty vicious fighters, you know what I mean – the Mi’kmaq.

So this is some of the history and where I’m coming from, some about the medicines. And another thing you’ve got to remember is I’m a story teller, so I’m glad that you’re letting me know [turns head and nods to someone]. And you know I like to talk, but I also like to pass on this information. Every year I work with Fort Folly. And the first year I taught them pictures: pa’tau ti (table), putai (bottle), samuqun (water). The next year, I wrote it on the board and showed them how it’s spelt. And this year, now, one of the kids said to me, which is the greatest compliment I ever had: “Gilbert, why don’t you move down here with us.” And this is coming from a 13 year old. So with that, Wela’lieq.

GWEN BEAR

Gilbert, if you want to share more, Cathy has taken the time to put it on video. Right? [laughter]
LORETTA PERLEY

Well, how do you follow an act like that, huh? [laughter]. Well, as I said this morning, my name is Loretta Barlow Perley. I was born in Indian Island. I felt we lived a charmed life until I was about seven and had to go to school. And I guess we were poor, but we didn’t know that, eh, ’cause, uh, we got a lot of stuff from the ocean and from the woods. And our parents knew how to make really meager meals sound really good [laughter].

I wasn’t a very healthy child, so I didn’t start school until I was seven. So I got to experience a lot of medicine at an early age because I had heart trouble. My grandmother was a medicine woman and a midwife, and she use to doctor me – take me to find the medicines. She always said that, uh, . . . I used to tell her “kiju.” I said we called her “kiju.” It means “mother,” but we heard the grownups calling her kiju so we called her kiju. I should have called her “mi kiju.” I’d say “Why don’t we take anything with us?” And she’d say “We will find whatever we need to dig when we get there.” Sure enough, we would find a stick or a rock sharp enough to dig up whatever we wanted. She would have marked it earlier in the season so she could find it when it was ready to be picked. She delivered a lot of babies and she made baskets, she pounded ash, she made a lot of things like . . . she made cedar brooms. And she’d sell them to the farmers across the water. We used to go selling baskets with her, and she spoke French, English, and Indian. Of course she spoke Mi’kmaq the best. But she could really barter in French, too. My mother’s grandmother was a Passamaquoddy woman from Saint Andrews. She married a Mi’kmaq man from Red Bank, and they moved to Burnt Church. She was a medicine woman, midwife, and form changer; she was a very powerful woman. Of course, they called her a witch because of her power, but she wasn’t. She was just a medicine woman, but she had powerful medicine. So I only had one grandmother growing up – that was kiju – and no grandfathers, but it’s not like they weren’t there because we heard so many stories about them from my father and my mother. And they’d tell you, like “You take after this one this way” and “You take after that one that way,” and so we kind of got to know them. Over the years they’d say you’re doing that just like your grandmother – “Oh, you’re doing that just like this one.” It’s funny, kind of uncanny, how I got into the medicines, because I did lose my way for quite a time there.

But we went to public school from grade one because my father was a veteran. He wouldn’t let us go to Shubenacadie, thank god. But we still boarded in town and we experienced a lot of animosity and stuff like that. One thing my father always taught us was to always be proud of what we were. We fought all over Richibucto [laughs] small as we were. Nobody could say anything to us about Native people that was bad – it was like a fight. We didn’t care if we had to take on five or six people at a time. They were kids, of course, but my sister and I would take them on, and argue with them.
So I was never ashamed, ever in my whole life, and I’m really proud of that. I was never ashamed to be an Indian. I was always proud. One of my little friends in town told me once “The real Indians live ten miles away.” That was Big Cove, hey [laughter]. And I said “Well, I live ten miles away.” And she said “No, but the real ones.” And I said “Well, you’re looking at a real Indian.” And she said “Oh, no, no, these ones are real Indians.” So I went to school and we had this class in grade three or grade four and there was a description of a Indian in the book [laughs]. You know dark hair, dark eyes, high cheek bones – and I told the teacher that I had to go to the washroom. She said “OK,” so I went to the washroom and I looked in the mirror and I said “Yeah, that’s me. I fit the description of a real Indian” [laughs]. So I told my friend, I said “See, that’s me in that book. It describes me to a tee.” So I would never give up and say “Poor me – I’m an Indian. Poor me – I don’t have enough food. Poor me – anything.” I was just always proud of what I am. Since we don’t have a lot of time, I would just like you to know that I’m a medicine person. I have been for quite a while, and my husband is my helper and we do quite a bit. Maybe another time when we have more time, I could share more. All my relations.

MADELINE MARTIN

Hello everybody. My name is Madeline Martin and I’m representing the Millbrook reserve. I live here and I haven’t much to tell or stories, but my father was a Chief here at one time. He was Joseph Julian. And he married about the fifth time – my mother was the fifth wife so [laughs] anyway he was a cop and a Chief at one time in Membertou, in Sydney, until they moved here to Truro and then he was a Chief here for many years. I couldn’t remember the years, but I knew when. First of all, I married a guy from Restigouche and his name was Fred Martin. His parents were Lucy and Philip Martin of Restigouche, but we didn’t reside there. I made him stay here at Millbrook [laughs]. I had six, seven children, five boys and two girls and um . . . . First of all, I want to welcome you all here. I have learned a lot and heard a lot of good stories from you. When we have a powwow here you’re all welcome to attend and I haven’t got very much to tell. I’m not a very good speaker [laughs]. But just to welcome you all and have a good day. We all had a good day, I guess. This is all I can say. Thank you.

GWEN BEAR

I think we’ve all had a beautiful story that we’ve shared. I loved the stories; it brought back a lot of memories for me, especially the potato-picking one. The purpose of it was to give us an idea from North, East, South, and West – all the people that are here – and I think we got that picture. And for those of you who are remembering stories, Cathy has offered to video tape
that for you if you want. I think Gilbert has more to share. Some of you may also and you should take advantage of that because this is going to be shared. I am closing up because I don’t want to take any more time from Murdena [laughs]. So I’m going to close this up because I know she has a presentation to do. So you’re on – I’m packing [clapping].

AFTERNOON SESSION

MURDENA MARSHALL – REMEMBERING ALL TRADITIONS

I’m Murdena Marshall. I’m from the East, from Cape Breton, and I’m from the Bear Clan, and I’ve been studying myself for about 50 years. It took a long, long time to figure out who I was. But we’re from Mi’kma’ki – that’s shown part of it is not shown, like Labrador. We don’t have any Mi’kmaq in Labrador [someone says “We do”]. We’n? [someone answers “Albert’s mother was from Conne River”]. . . . Every First Nations person is welcome in any reserve. It doesn’t matter what tribe they are in. And today I haven’t got much to say. I just want to show you just where our locations are. One of the questions that was asked of me last week, or two weeks ago, was that I explain . . . what constitutes an Elder. We’re very free with the word “Elder” – as soon as you have some gray hair . . . “Oh, here comes an Elder.” Or your face is wrinkled – “Oh my god.” Or you get your first old age pension check. Now it takes far more than that to be an Elder. And not every one of us is an Elder. And maybe none of us are. Anyway, I will show you some of the things I’ve learned over the years I’ve been teaching and learning about myself.

One of the first things I learned is that the Mi’kmaq circle goes this way . . . to the right. And I remember this from the dances during Mission (Chapel Island) time or let everything all hang out about your Mi’kmaqism. And I learned that dances go this way, and when the Grand Chief came out of the wigwam he would start shaking hands on this side around the circle. . . . As a matter of fact I can’t dance going this way. I feel that I’m betraying somebody – I don’t know who I’m betraying. But anyway, I do dance this way (counterclockwise), which leaves me out of all powwows because everybody goes the other way. And, um, but I don’t mind that.

We know that knowledge is spirit, knowledge is transferrable, all knowledge is. Math, English, and everything is transferrable. If you’re successful in one subject, it is very likely that you will be successful in another topic. And so I learned over the years that it has to be passed – it’s a gift. It’s a gift from our ancestors this thing called knowledge. Some institutions call it “Traditional Knowledge,” others call it “Aboriginal Knowledge” – they put many labels on it. But we must pass it on – we must pass it on or it will be all gone. There’ll be none. So we teach our
children and we listen to our people and we must try to pass it on – through stories, through hunting, fishing – whatever you do in your daily activities.

The same with being at powwows. You meet a lot of friends and you learn something new each time you meet a person. There are seven sacred loves of life . . . all of us have these gifts, such as love, honesty, humility, respect, truth and wisdom. We all have them – every one of us have them. The only main point that you have to understand is that these gifts have to be visible; these seven gifts have to be visible to you. You can’t say “Oh, I love the Mi’kmaq Nation” and then say “Those bastards.” You just . . . you have to mean what you say. You have to have humility. You have to have respect. You have to have truth, patience, wisdom, and all of that. Wisdom is the most sought out. Everyone wants to be wise, but that’s the last gift you’ll receive – the last gift that will show itself. Everything else will show . . . love, honesty, humility, respect, truth, and patience, but the last thing that will show up is wisdom.

From zero to seven the first gift that we will receive from the creator is love. And since we cannot touch the creator, since we don’t see him, since we are not able to sit on his lap or her lap, the creator invented mothers. The love that the creator has for us and the love that our parents have for us are both unconditional. You can do anything in your life and your mother will still be behind you. I worked in prisons for five years and I noticed the visitors that came to visit men or even women . . . are women. They either come to see their boyfriend or father or their son or somebody, but it’s the women that are not afraid to go into prisons because their love is unconditional. It’s unconditional. The whole community will turn their backs on you, but your mother never will; she’ll stand up before you, because she has unconditional love. From zero to seven of your lifetime are the most times that you receive love and you give love, and it’s the greatest weapon that kids use on us . . . like if kids want to go out and you say “No, it’s dangerous on that side of the road. No you can’t go there” – and the first thing they do they have a tantrum and they say “You don’t love me, you don’t love me.” So then the parent tries desperately to show that they do love this child and in the end the kid got what they wanted in the first place. All they had to do is use the weapon of love on them and everything turns around. My Elders also told me that zero to seven is a great age and that sometimes they’ll go back to it. I was so thrilled when I heard that, but I wasn’t so thrilled when I found out what it was.

Then comes honesty. Honesty is something that our parents try to teach us. Our guardians, our teachers, our bus drivers, our Councillors – anybody that you meet up with – your aunt and uncle – try desperately to instill the gift of honesty to you. But sometimes, as human beings, we decide to be 99 percent – “No, I don’t want to be honest. I want to use my fingers and lift everything they can lift.” We allow people to do that – constantly thinking about and talking
about honesty. Because you cannot pound it into anybody – you cannot pound honesty into anybody. They have to see for themselves the benefits of honesty.

The next gift that we receive is the gift of humility. And sometimes when a person comes up to the podium and clears their throat and says “I’m an Elder,” what happened to humility? It ran away before you got to the podium or what? [laughter] And it makes people uncomfortable. When you hear someone say “Oh, I’m an Elder,” you just squirm or you just want to jump up and do something terrible, like curse [laughter].

The next thing that we receive – these are age spots to when we tend to get these gifts – when you about 13 or 14 humility steps up, then respect. And that always begins with you. You have to respect yourself before anyone can respect you. And so if you have respect for yourself it’s very much easy to gain respect from everybody else.

Then comes truth – the gift. At 21 the gift of truth shows its head. And this is what our First Nations kids need the most – the truth. The truth of who they are, the truth about their history, the truth about their language. If they’re unable to speak their language at least show them some tools to help that child defend himself in terms of confrontations. . . . Our own people need that the most. They need their own history, they need to know about their families and getting to know everything about themselves through others because, again, knowledge is the spirit and it must be passed through many people.

Then comes patience . . . . Now some of us, as parents, we do have patience. We have to have patience, and if we don’t have patience then social services will be down your throat every day [laughter]. I was principal for years and holy shamolie, there were many RCMP and social workers I saw over the word “patience.” Somebody called on the parents – they’re not feeding their kids or they’re not clothing them or taking care of them [spoken in Mi’kmaq: Murdina asks John “Where have you been? We missed you.”]. And so it’s a very much sought-after gift but very hard to acquire. And once you become patient and have the gift of patience, then you automatically and surely become a healer. Patience, you have to have patience to become a healer. And to be a healer doesn’t mean to be picking medicines. It’s part of it, but sometimes a person who is addicted to alcoholism or addicted to drugs or addicted to violence – there is something bothering them and if you have the time and the patience to sit down with that person and counsel them without saying one word – that’s the part that man heals or that girl heals by letting all of their troubles out to you. And you don’t have to say anything. Just agree with them. The non-Native counsel work can’t understand it. How could you counsel without saying anything? After all, here’s the book with all the rules.
It doesn’t work in First Nations. We’re not linear. Everything goes around in a circle – everything: time, cycles, life, everything. And so when you have patience, then you surely can become a healer: healer of souls, healer of bodies, and healer of anything that you want to be. And it’s very important that you have patience. From 28 to 35 our spiritual door is ajar and what I mean by that . . . if you have been a good Christian, you will remain a good Christian. You have little doubts and if you see something better you fly to it. Our parents hate it when we decide to join another thing, but we all have an opportunity just to satisfy ourselves by investigating others. Sometimes you fly into a Native spiritual world and you enjoy yourself and you say “This is the life for me.” But sometimes you look back and calculate the reasons as to why you are a Christian and all those things. But they are livable – both are livable. You can be into Native spirituality all you want and be a Catholic, or Christian, or whoever you are if you want to. Because all religions, all organized religions are institutions that are organized and it’s your personal choice to be part of them – all religions of the world except for Sikhs. With Sikhs you have to be born into the culture, or whatever. It is religion. But the rest are absolutely free, everything in the world protects you – the constitution protects you, the police protect you, everyone protects you when you try to leave this organization and go to another one. The journey’s protected. But they’re all personal choices; they are all personal choices that you make yourself. In whatever church you’re happy, it’s your personal choice if you want to stay or not.

But being a First Nations person it’s not a personal choice. Somebody made the choice for you and that was the creator. And you can never, never abandon it – never. I’m sorry I’m going to talk about you, brother, can I? I had a brother that lived in Boston for 40 years, 50 years, and when we go visit him you cannot display any part of you as being Indian. You can speak English, you can’t speak Mi’kmaq. You can’t . . . you would not know that this house belongs to a First Nations person. He actually denied the fact that he was a First Nations person until he got drunk on Friday night. And then, all night long, we tolerate uhha ha ha uhuh ha ha ha and him dancing on the coffee table. He doesn’t have control over his [sub]conscious, something else just took over, and he just won’t stop being an Indian until he falls asleep. The next morning you can’t even say “Good morning” to him in Mi’kmaq. But when he doesn’t have control over his own motives or his own thinking then he reverts back to being a First Nations person and he completely denies it. I often told Albert “I wish I could take a video of him dancing and show it to him tomorrow morning.” But we had some respect for him so you couldn’t do that to him, and it was his house. So there was a lot of restraints [laughter]. . . .

Then wisdom steps in. When you have all of those gifts, and you have managed to hang on to them and displayed them within yourself, then wisdom will show up. And once wisdom shows up, you not only become a counselor. You become a healer – you become everything that you
want to be when you have wisdom because you have all of these life experiences behind you to motivate you to make decisions based on experience. No, you cannot be an Elder with ten easy lessons. Those gifts have to show up in you – you must be able to display them. You cannot be patient and be disrespectful; you cannot have honesty and then steal everything in front of you. You have to display these gifts; they have to be seen in you.

When all of these gifts are seen in you, you don’t have to go to the podium and tell us “I am an Elder.” People will tell you that you’re an Elder. And so I have some handouts, but I don’t think I have enough. I guess we can share them. Can I have one? I have a very short memory [laughs]. So when you go back in life to be seven again, I was so thrilled. I was elated that you can do that again. I said “How good is the creator that gives you a second chance in time?” But after looking at Alzheimer’s disease – in the beginning of it – when Alzheimer’s disease first hits you you’re not totally incapacitated. You’re like a seven-year-old regressing. Instead of progressing you regress, and this is the only time that the circle reverses – the only time it goes back. And each time that Alzheimer’s hits you’re probably like a three-year-old now – you hide everything and you take away toys from kids and grandchildren and all that. Finally you go back to bed, then you refuse to eat and are unable to use the washroom or get up – just like the way you were when you were two or three months old. Wela’lin. And finally it goes to zero – like you were when you were zero or a brand new baby. But the reason why I want you to have this piece of paper is the word apaji-mijuaji’j’juen, which means returning to being a baby. It is a pre-verb, which means apaji, a pre-verb that’s attached to another verb, which is called pre-verb. Mijuaji’j is the root word. Of course, everybody knows what mijuaji’j is . . . child under seven. We don’t call anyone beyond seven mijuaji’j. Then it turns nu’kweg (young-youth) something and then the inflection ’juen is telling you who’s doing what to whom. And so that’s the reason why I wanted you to have this piece of paper. That’s why I bothered Albert to go out to look for them. So he found them and here they are. Do you have any questions? I will answer one [laughter].

**ALEX SAUNDERS**

I do know that it’s very difficult to put into words how you define an Elder. And I’m very enthused to see what you’ve done here. I’m going to take that home with me [Murdena says “Of course!”]. I’ve done a bunch of research on the interpretation of an Elder and what an Elder is. And it’s not an easy thing to define and I’m glad that you’ve done as much as you have done. [Murdena says “If you just start showing that to young children they won’t loosely use the world Elder”]. I think up north Elders are very discrete, you know what I mean, but nobody is a self-confessed Elder [Murdena: “Well, you see some around here”]. Pardon? [Murdena: “You see some around this area”]. Oh, you do but they are mostly just dismissed outright – the self-
confessed [Murdena: “You can’t do that if you have respect – you can’t dismiss them”]. No, if you go around calling yourself an Elder – that’s what I’m saying [Murdena: “But people know”]. Yeah, that’s right [“People know if . . . they put that into the newspapers and put it anywhere, and still it’s not going to help you much”].

GILBERT SEWELL

My interpretation of an Elder . . .

MURDENA MARSHALL

Yes, Gilbert?

GILBERT SEWELL

. . . gisi’gu’en – that’s just your old netuwe’n – the ancient ones – netuwewtijik. And the other thing is when you’re an Elder nothing should surprise you – all this you have intact. What I’m talking about is a young boy that came in the community when I parked my car, and he says “You shouldn’t have parked your car there.” And right away what I thought is “What gives him the authority to take over the right of way here anyway?” “Well,” I said, “Are you having a problem? I guess I could move the car.” You know what I mean. What I’m saying is – to be an Elder nobody should surprise you because if they surprise you, you weren’t prepared, you see. Now what happens is . . . I knew that something was bothering him. Later on he said “You’re not an Elder. You’re not this and that. I don’t respect you.” “Well, right now,” I said, “I don’t have too much respect for you either.” But I said “The other thing is if you need a hand, I will give you a hand.” He said “No, no, no.” That’s the worst thing you could have . . . you cannot show a person that is attacking you compassion because compassion fights evil. As soon as you show them compassion – bang – that cuts everything right out. Later on, I found out – I said “Boy, he was pretty hostile.” What happened is his wife told him he better quit smoking and drinking otherwise she was going to leave him. He attacked me, but that wasn’t the problem – the problem was at home, you see what I mean. So later on I told him “Borrow my sled. You’re hauling wood out of the woods with a car cover – you know, like the hood off of one of the cars. But he was doing everything the hard way. He was punishing himself.

So to be an Elder, you shouldn’t be surprised. So if you’ve got . . . like Murdena said, all these things together, there’s no reason why you can’t keep patience or compassion, your truth, your honesty, respect, humility, and honesty today in business, etiquette. Different countries teach
etiquette. You know if I give you my word and say “Tomorrow I’m going to bring you a load of wood – if I don’t bring you that wood, you say “Well, that’s not very much of a guy.” See that all ties in. Between the age of 0 and 30 people – the Mi’kmaq – don’t believe you’re a man. And if you look back, until you were 30 you thought you knew everything. But somewhere, in there, you have to meet your tormentor, and a lot of people don’t know what their tormentor is . . . Are you afraid of the dark? Are you afraid of snakes? You know, that’s your tormentor. So there’s where you’ve got to get your handle, and then from 30 to 60 you live it and from 60 to 90 you teach it. And that’s where I am – I’m going on 71. I’m back teaching at the front.

MURDENA MARSHALL

So this circle – it continues around until it reaches the other arrow. That’s when you have become an Elder and that’s your color. Chew on this for a few seconds [laughter and Murdena leaves the room].

GILBERT SEWELL

Gilbert had a side conversation with Loretta about medicines.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Did everybody have a rest? What are you talking about? [Gilbert: “How you introduce yourself to plants.”]. Oh yeah, this is something that I’ve learned from experience. See the woman that raised me. My aunt was a medicine woman. I’ve spent days and early evenings talking to her . . . and then I’d spend time with my grandfather. But she was a medicine woman – she delivered a lot of babies, she helped a lot of people. And this woman from Inverness County (Iona or something) used to come. She had leukemia; she use to come and when she’s come she would be looking for her medicine. And my mother would ask us then to go get the medicines, and we’d go pick them and bring them into the house. And . . . [they break to try and fix audio] . . . and my mother would make it and take it home to Mrs. Matheson. She never paid her, and what she did was bring pillowcases and a set of towels or something to get that medicine from her. And I took the medicine until I went away to school.

Then after we had married, around the time I got married . . . I guess a long time ago – was married for 50 years. And my mother died in March very suddenly. And around April, who shows up at my doorstep but this Mrs. Matheson. And I lived about five miles away from my mother and how she found me I don’t know. Anyway, she came in and said “Murdena, I have
such a great favor to ask of you.” I said “What can I do for you?” I recognized it was Mrs. Matheson. She said “I want you to make the medicine – the same that your mother had for me. She kept me alive – she kept me alive for ten years with that medicine. I have leukemia and she kept me alive and my doctor doesn’t know why my cancer is in recession for so long. I have to have that medicine.” So I called up my sister.

She said “Please make me that medicine. It was Sunday afternoon that she came. I said “Mrs. Matheson, really I don’t know.” She said “Yes you do. I remember you for about five or six years picking that medicine for me.” She said “I remember – I remember you.” I said “I remember you too.” So she begged me, and so I called up my sister, Diane, and I said “Are you ready to make medicines for Mrs. Matheson?” She said “Yes. Tell her we’ll have the medicine ready tomorrow.” So I told Mrs. Matheson “If you come back tomorrow we will have the medicine ready.” So, Mrs. Matheson left and she came over and we picked the medicine and washed the medicine and we did exactly how we remembered it. I even threw Holy water on it to be extra guaranteed. And when we gave it to her she was oh so grateful. She wanted to pay us for it and I said “No, no pay. I just hope this medicine works for you.” And off she went and I never thought of her again until about June, when Diana calls and says “Look at the paper – the obituary list.” So I opened the paper and there she was – Mrs. Matheson. She had died and I run back to the phone and I tell her “Nep’aq – she’s dead.” “Yes, she said, “You killed her” [LAUGHTER]. “If the family comes to sue us, you’re the main plaintiff,” she said. I say “Oh Diane, we didn’t do anything that bad.”

But that medicine didn’t work for her. She started falling the moment she got it. And finally, in about six weeks, she died. So I looked at that medicine and how my mother handled that woman. I looked at it and said “She has to have some knowledge of that medicine, the physical knowledge of it – amujpa’nenk. She has to know what it looks like. Then my mother looking after this medicine for Mrs. Matheson had to have some personal connection to her. So Mrs. Matheson would come and they would talk for the whole afternoon and whatever. She had very much respect for that medicine [Mi’kmaq spoken – she believed and respected] – “Oh my god, you can’t curse around the house with this medicine in the house.” And I said she has the nucleus or the sacred. She must have realized that this medicine has a spirit and that spirit has to be sacred. I looked at it and I tried . . . I worked on it for about ten years trying to figure it out and finally I came up with this.

And it’s Indigenous Knowledge. And so all Indigenous Knowledge – all Aboriginal Knowledge and all Traditional Knowledge is like that. You have to know it personally, you have to physically know it, you have to have some physical experience with it, and you have to have personal connection to that knowledge. You have to have a lot of respect for it and, most sacredly, you
have to know that it is sacred – that it has a spirit and must be protected and taken care of. And that’s what we teach with Indigenous signs – how to make the connection from recognizing it to honouring it – and we did. So it’s been a journey – a very, very rough journey.

But this plant that grows outside houses – plantm musclioptjj, teluisik. You put it on sores and you put it on . . . . And when she made that medicine she extracted the juice to make that medicine and I didn’t do that. I just threw it in and boiled it and that . . . I missed a step – a big step – and besides, I didn’t even care about this Mrs. Matheson. And so I realized that there has to be steps – there has to be processes that we must follow to be happy with ourselves. Ever since then I have not touched medicine because I don’t want to kill another person [laughter]. It’s just something that I decided to keep away from, although I know a lot of medicine. But my bad experience has sort of shied me away. And I see it that way.

I’m not trying to push any thoughts in your head, any philosophies, or any teachings. It’s just that this is my teaching. If you think it’s worth repeating, go ahead; if you don’t think it’s worth repeating, forget it. I’m not forcing anything down anyone’s throat. And I will now settle for questions, real questions. Gee, you’re good. If I had you in my class we’d all graduate by February or maybe January [laughter]. I’ve been doing this in my spare time. I write a lot and publish. So these are my own writings . . . . I’ve been retired since 2006 or 2007 – something around there – and ever since then I’ve been writing.

**GILBERT SEWELL**

I retired when I was 65 and then I went and asked an Elder “How do you say ‘retired’ in Mi’kmaq?” “Ka’q lu’kwe.” So I told him I better go back to work [laughter]. No, it’s just something that you have accomplished – ka’q lu’kwen. But we didn’t have the same meaning, so I told him after eight months I went back.

**MURDENA MARSHALL**

Oh, you’re lucky.

**GILBERT SEWELL**

Once you retire nobody calls you [laughter].
MURDENA MARSHALL

I never retired – just on paper. But, I’m not as busy as I was. I spend most of my time with my grandchildren. I love spending time with them.

GILBERT SEWELL

There’s another plant’s name that’s called goose-tongue – it grows along the beach.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Apaqtajikl.

GILBERT SEWELL

Yeah, that’s a plantain.

LORETTA PERLEY

Goose-tongue greens?

GILBERT SEWELL

Goose-tongue plantain.

LORETTA PERLEY

Oh, is it? There’s goose-tongue greens, too.

GILBERT SEWELL

Oh yeah, it’s the same thing.
LORETTA PERLEY

No, not plantain.

GILBERT SEWELL

I thought it was plantain.

LORETTA PERLEY

No, it’s different from that.

GILBERT SEWELL

Yeah.

LORETTA PERLEY

Those are greens you eat. They grow on the beach.

LORETTA PERLEY [to Josie Augustine]

Did you ever have those?

JOSIE AUGUSTINE

Yeah, [something spoken in Mi’kmaq].

LORETTA PERLEY

It’s shaped like a goose’s tongue.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Are there any more questions? I’ll gladly leave.
LORETTA PERLEY

I have a book here you wrote.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Yes, I did.

LORETTA PERLEY

I would like you to autograph it for me.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Why, thank you.

LORETTA PERLEY

And my name is Loretta.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Big on the date – Friday the 13th.

ALBERT MARSHALL

For your information, Mi’kmaq’s our writing system as we know it and what we know today from Gnostics, pictographs, hieroglyphics and eventually the Roman alphabet . . . . Now years ago I cannot read nor write in my language because there was no need for me. But I can today. We seem to be using various orthographies, and I think as we progress there’s going to be a time in which we come together and agree on one system. But that’s somewhere down the road. This knowledge has to be now documented, so our young people will have some point of reference because pronunciation as we know it – the root word – can be made king by changing it as many as 250 times. So it is critical that we know the language structure before it’s spelled out. That’s where my reluctance is because I have the vocabulary but I can’t write it because if I put the wrong sound in the wrong place . . . . I’ll give you an example. “Love” KESALUL – kesalul.
That’s “I love you.” If you want to say kesa’lul – “I put you in fire” – I would write it the same way. And if I wanted to say ke’salul – “I hurt you” – you would write it the same way. It depends on where you put your sound. So these are some of the critical points that I think need to be considered.

GILBERT SEWELL

Well, there’s something’s that you have to understand – like in English the word “bear.” There’s three different kinds of “bear.” So you have to know which one you’re using. And the other thing you can’t write – there are three two’s in the English language because which two would be used, know what I mean? Now if you ask a Chinese person “What kind of pie do you have?” he’ll say “Apple.” And he’s right because the A should have an E in it to get that word, eh? We don’t say that in Mi’kmaq. We don’t have that word. So there are things you will pick up in English and also Mi’kmaq.

But what I find the best and I tell my students I’d learn to write first of all any style because it’s only a couple of letters that changes it. And, of course the rules and regulations are like the schwa and this and that. But I never teach students how to A, B, C, D, E and I don’t teach them how to count because they negwtai’g – that’s three. [Spoken in Mi’kmaq for three] is three also, you see, but the thing is the Mi’kmaq always used the language and they said what it was. You know what I mean? Tapu aigl – they say two dollars – nesigal – there’s three of them, but you say nesigal. See the thing is when I teach the students like from Fort Folly to Pabineau, and sometimes I teach up in Dalhousie, I use the type of spelling that they are used to in that area and I find it works better. But a W and an O are no different because I notice in Nova Scotia they use a schwa. But if you teach the students all about the regulations, you run out of time in the ten weeks because they won’t speak a word of English because you taught them all the rules. This is what I found anyway – this is my personal experience. So what I do now is I tell them pataw ti, m’saq’taq, getapeteg, temsaqiqn – for table, floor, ceiling, wall, etc. I teach them these words and then the next time I say “Ok, I’m going to write it. Weliegsitpug – good morning – now break it down: egsitpug is morning, weli is good, weli egsitupugewei is breakfast.” Hey, you know what I mean. Then next year what I’m going to try to teach them is trying to write it – what you hear try to write it. What I find is that they seem to retain more from the short time that we have.

The other thing that I find also is that the only one that learns the language on an Indian reserve is when a non-Indian comes in – he’s a linguist and he’s teaching the language. He’ll walk away knowing all about the language and the students wouldn’t have a clue. I went to
school in Fredericton and the first thing the professor taught me he said “Lentuk wigit nipugtug – Ok, the deer lives in the woods.” So after the week was finished I headed for home and the first Elder I see I say, “Lentuk wigit nipugtug.” You know what he said – “Gejitu” [I know] [laughter]. I was stuck – what am I going to tell him next?

But these are some of the problems I run into. So the problems that I run into I try to alter them and correct them, and what I do in Fort Folly, the morning – the first morning – you learn the language and in the afternoon I’m going to take you in the woods. “Wli majgl” – sweet grass. I’m going to show you sweet grass, and the way you look at sweet grass. You’re standing up and you look at it from the top. You offer your tobacco, you look at it from the top. Now I see that light-colored one with the different color underneath. You grab that, you follow it down, and you pull it. Ok, the reason I teach them that is because if I don’t do that, by the time I get to the bottom they’ve got another load and I’ll say “Is it hard to haul out? Then it’s not sweet grass. If it cuts your finger it’s not sweet grass. You take that sweet grass and crumple it up; you crumple it up and smell it, if it smells like sweet grass then it’s sweet grass.” See then I take them home and after, in the afternoon, I say “What we’re going to do now is we’re going to separate it and the center one goes to the Elders – the long blade and the other ones you use for yourself. Now I say “There are two types of sweet grass – there’s ones that grow by the sea and there’s ones that grow upriver. The stuff upriver grows that high (waist height) – this one you can use to stop smoking – you can use it but, like Murdena said, the spiritual part you have to remember also. You have to explain that to him also, you have to smudge it – you have to follow the procedures of knowing that plant and not only that you have to have a commitment from that person – have a commitment in their mind that they will quit smoking.

I did one for the Discovery Channel – “The Spiritual Side of Medicine” – and Health Canada picked it up and if you look on gilbertsewell.com . . . But the boy I told to stop smoking – that was seven years ago – he’s completely free now. He doesn’t smoke. And he’s so proud of it. He went onto the gum after, hey, so I said “Ok, let’s trick the mind. You take regular gum.” So he started buying Juicy Fruit and that. Now today he just chews gum, just like I chewed Juicy Fruit when I was young, see what I mean. But you see the method? You have to find out from that community. Like home we speak a certain way, like in Nova Scotia they say “Me’ ta’lein?” You know what I mean? They say “We’le?” or “Me ta’ we’lein?” – “How are you?” Up home, they say “Me’ ta’lein? Mwsgajewei” – I am well. A fella, Tom Young, said one time he came home and he said “Mwsajewei.” Oh, that’s a nice word, I should write that down [laughter]. In our area you say “Galipus’itan” – “You’re jealous.” So I went down to Cape Breton that time when I was going to school with Albert and I said “Galipus’it.” “What’s that?” I said, “That’s you’re jealous.” “Oh,” he said, “here Mi’jani mat [laughter]. It’s just a difference in the dialogue where you are.
MURDENA MARSHALL

I just have one thing more to say and that’s . . . my mother died at seven, and since we’re a matriarchal society, I went back to my mother’s family. I went back to her father and mother and I was raised with both of them until my grandmother died. And then my aunts and uncles took over. And they felt that each one of them, since I don’t have a mother, was to teach me something that they are good at. So it was a really rich life – everything from baskets, to medicines, to hieroglyphics, to diplomacy – whatever one needs to go on as a Mi’kmaq in this world. I don’t say I am blessed because my mother died, but because my family did such a tremendous job in trying to keep me straight. I’m like a worm – wet’i nik’e – give me some air and I’ll get out [laughter]. So it’s wel tasi, jiksituwioq – I’m glad that everybody listened. You didn’t have to, but wela’lioq.

ELDERS MAWIO’MI – AUGUST 14, 2010

The second day of the Mawio’mi got started with an appeal to the Elders to come up with recommendations as to how they should be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge.

JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

How can your knowledge or Elder knowledge – Traditional Knowledge – be incorporated into various things? For example, incorporated is not the right word. How can we use it, basically let’s say, in research? Some of the questions we will be looking at are these over here. We are going to have a quick go-around. Please keep it to five minutes per person, answering this question.

Please do not feel obligated to answer the question because I know the question sometimes needs a bit of reflection. But if you want to share some thoughts on what we are asking, that would be great. We want you to feel comfortable in answering the question. The last two days has been an incredible journey for us – and I think for all of us. I can’t speak for everybody, but for APC folks, me and Gillian and Darcy – who couldn’t be here – she is here in spirit. I know she has been working very hard to get everyone here today. The other part is we are going to try to, hopefully, get pictures so we have a group picture with Glooscap. This APC journey that we are on – it’s one of the only projects with Elders. APC, being such a large organization representing the regional Chiefs – Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Innu, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot – there is all kinds of
representation throughout the region. We have 38 member nations and I think it will continue to grow as we go along. I know our Chiefs are happy about this process. We’ve had updates with them, we’ve kept them in the loop, and somewhere along the way we also have to go back to try and remind them of the project.

This research piece we are trying to work on, being led by the Elders, is an important piece to establish some sort of guidance, protocol – ethics if you will – of where we want to go and how are we going to use this Traditional Knowledge in research or in any other process – for example, that the leadership can use and consult with.

The role of the Elders traditionally, I think, was one of the most important roles in community vitality, survival, and development. And that was important all along. It was the Elders that counseled us on how to make decisions, where to go with planning, where to go with hunting and fishing, where to go with everything. And this whole process of Elder incorporation into the daily life – somewhere along the way – it has been replaced or has been put aside or has been forgotten or has been just . . . not respected one way or other. And without going into too much political process here – I certainly don’t want to sit down and tell the Chiefs the Elders are saying you have to do this – that wouldn’t be productive either. So we want to make sure that we are very proactive with our approach. We are only middle people here. We have to make sure that the message we take from this meeting is only a very small element of the potential and possibilities – that other projects can come from within APC on a regional level . . . . That is important to look at as well – and how the role of the Elders will guide us again in future planning or decision-making or any conscious awareness that we need to bring back into our communities for youth, for children, for women, for everybody, for healing, for community development, for economic development, for everything – for research as well. That is what our focus is on – research and economic development. But it goes more than that. We’ve seen what you all shared in the last day and a half, two days. I don’t even know where to begin – so much information to be sorted out. It is everywhere and it is so compact. Thankfully the crew that is working here has a recoding for us. We are going to go back to that resource so much and look into it. What did Gwen say? What did Murdena say? What did Gilbert say? What did everybody say?

Everybody shared something, so it’s only the beginning for our journey with the AAEDIRP. We are hoping it’s not the end by any means. And hopefully by the end of this morning, we will have to look at some sort of mechanism or some sort of process – some sort of outcome – where we go back and we can take this back to our Chiefs and say “Okay, this is what we have gathered so far. This is what we’ve seen. This is the process we’ve looked at.” And we want to share with our Chiefs, hence later on our communities, and we’d like to come from this table –
this circle, this Mawio’mi – and hopefully have a few recommendations – even one recommendation. But the point is it is a start to something further. Now the question that I have, which is in the agenda and we have extra copies here if anyone needs one – the main question as to why we are all here – the question is embedded in this opening statement that we have for the Mawio’mi is “How would you like to be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge and Aboriginal worldviews”? Okay, so that is the main question we are looking at. This is the reason we are all here. This is the reason why your expertise, your experience, and your education – everything that you carry with you from your communities and experiences with your families, your mothers, and fathers – that’s why we are here. And how are we going to share this?

I will repeat the question again – “How would you like to be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge and Aboriginal worldviews?” Now the suggestion was that we go around with the microphone and, I will remind you, no more than 5 minutes. And then we can go back to your thoughts again if we need to expand on those.

We can start anywhere if anyone wants. We will first go around, and if anyone wants to further discuss this after the first go around then we will expand on that discussion a little bit later. But that’s the main point of our discussion.

**ALBERT MARSHALL**

When you say that you are not in a position to go back to the leadership and say “This is what the Elders want” – as far as APC is concerned, as far as Chiefs are concerned – Traditional Knowledge is not more than something that is very philosophical. It has no practical application. Or are you going to put it the other way? It is a paradoxical rhythm with no solution. What I am going to tell you is unless APC makes a very concerted effort to try to integrate Traditional Knowledge in everything the Chiefs or APC does then I don’t want no part – unless there is a direct integration with Traditional Knowledge with all of our programs, economic development, social justice, education, and so on. That’s my position.

**JOHN R. SYLLIBOY**

Thanks Albert. It is very important that you said that. That is something that we have to take back to the Chiefs by all means. That is a great suggestion.
I am originally from Indian Island and I’ve been living in Tobique for a number of years. What I wanted to talk about is that I just wanted people to know because I have been gathering medicine for over 18 years now and I’ve actually have been participating in gatherings since I was a child. There are certain respects that you have to pay to medicine. There are certain lifestyles one should lead and those lifestyles are a sober lifestyle, free of alcohol and drugs. You should live a clean lifestyle because you are handling things that are scared to our people from a long time past and we have to keep that sanctity in the medicine. It’s not necessary for whoever is receiving it, maybe, if you are going to cure them, but they even have to pay certain respect to the medicine. Like, for instance, when you go out to gather the medicine, a person should smudge with either cedar, fern, spruce gum, sweet grass, or sage. Offer tobacco because you are going to be taking something from the Earth, and when you take something from the Earth you have to give something back in return. When you disturb the earth you are disturbing organisms that already live there, so you dig as unobtrusively as possible and when you are done getting your medicine you try to fix up the area that you just dug from. You don’t leave a mess because there is little bugs and things that live there that are necessary. Maybe they bug us, but that’s their place.

Also, if you are going to go into the woods to gather medicine, before you go in you are going into the territory of the animal kingdom, and you ask them permission for you to be in the woods and for you to share their space and to be unobtrusive. And then you will gather more freely. Most times you will not be bothered by anything except maybe a curious animal, and they usually don’t bother humans. They usually stay clear of them.

It is good to go in with somebody else. It is good to let people know where you are going in case you get lost. I get turned around fairly easily. It’s good to have socks and shoes and long pants and gloves in case you rub up against something that could be toxic. When you get home it’s good to peel your stuff off and put it in the wash because if you rub against poison ivy, and you touch that, you can get very poison ivy. So you have to be very careful.

If you go into a bog you have to smudge before you go into the bog, and you have to smudge after because you will be followed out of the bog by spirit people. There are so many things you have to go through in order to just gather. And once you gather your medicine you have to respect it to the extent that you bring it home and you treat it properly. You clean it right away, you hang it to dry, you cut it up and you put it away properly. You don’t throw it in the corner.
and leave it there. I’ve seen people who organize groups like this and they go out on field trip and they gather medicine and they just throw it in the corner and a couple of months later they ask “Is it still good?” How do you answer that, you know? Because the more respect you pay to your medicine the stronger it will be.

If you have people who want medicine, there is a protocol for that. You go up to the medicine person and you offer them something. It could be tobacco, because we have to make tobacco offerings. It could be money, although I do not always accept it. It could be something from your heart, like something that you made – a craft or food or a service. Whatever the medicine person wants, the stronger the medicine will be. And once you get the medicine, if they give it to you – and that is not always the case, because I wouldn’t give medicine to someone who needed help to sleep if they are abusing drugs because they could hurt themselves. I wouldn’t give a pregnant women medicine that could hurt the fetus. I wouldn’t give someone medicine that would leave it around where a child could get it and the child could hurt them or something, because there are a lot of different medicines and some of them are very powerful.

These are some of the protocols, and when the person gets the medicine they have to direct it. Now I’ve gone through all the processes making sure the medicine is proper – now you have to direct it and tell the medicine what it is you want it to do for you, and usually you can’t be taking any other medicine. Then you have to give it a chance to work, and if you don’t believe in it then there is no use in taking it because it’s not going to work. You have to believe this medicine is going to help you. You have to make sure you take it properly.

As for the question here, how we should be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge, that’s like a hot topic right now. Our ancestors hid stuff, and the only way we were supposed to pass it down was by word of mouth. It lasted for 500 years, that way, since the coming of the Europeans – even before then – and it’s still going on that way. To write it down you are setting it up for abuse from pharmaceuticals – the way I see it, anyway – and for it to be plagiarized and patented and stuff like that. There are those people who think that it’s that time to be written down and for it to be out there. I don’t believe that, but there are those who do and I’m conflicted with that thought. You can stop me anytime you want. I’m conflicted with that thought, but I don’t want to make the decision. I want other people’s input, but I’m very uncomfortable with doing that.
JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

I think that is something we are going to have to look at. I think, with Elders guidance, that will be some of the things that will be brought to the discussion. And it is a hard decision, by all means. It’s not only up to one person, I guess, but it is something that is within us – that we all have to decide sometime.

LORETTA PERLEY

With that I will pass it on for now.

LARRY PERLEY

My name is Larry Perley from Tobique First Nation. My biggest concern is the way we conduct ourselves during elections. I would like to see a way where we can have fair elections – at least somebody getting at least 60% of a vote. We shouldn’t accept elections when only 25% of the people elected are leading. That should be unacceptable anywhere in the world and especially among our people. We overlook that. As a result, we don’t get our leadership really – we don’t have our people following the leader because not enough of them have supported a leader and that is a big problem because it causes a lot of heartache and we feel like “What a waste of time. What is the use of participating in this process?” It is ending up killing us; we are living in a violent world to be honest. And the proof is in the pudding. Look at all the suicides we have, and that is a direct result of our leaders – how our leaders conduct themselves. Ninety per cent of our people in our communities are very poor, you know what I mean, and we have some that have everything and that affects everyone.

You got to remember, at one time, for example, in Tobique, we had two vehicles. We all depended upon on another. When an Indian person was being hurt, we all felt it and we did something about it. Now we all look the other way and hope for a better result next time, and it never happens. It gets worse. Maybe I’m off the topic here, but these are some of the things that are bothering me. The other one is the way we hunt. Some of our hunters go out there and kill 10, 20, 30 moose and they don’t even eat it. And they don’t take care of the animal after they kill it; they throw away the hide and totally disrespect the animal. These ethics have to be taught. We call an eagle sacred, but so is the moose. The moose sustains us. This should be looked at – the way we conduct ourselves in our hunting endeavors. I’m getting lost or a bit off track.
JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

Do you think we should be – do you think that Traditional Knowledge of the hunting, for example, should be guided by Elders or some sort of protocol?

LARRY PERLEY

There should be a protocol. You know, when you take an animal you should really take care of it – take care of your meat. Make sure you do something with the hide so we don’t have to buy it, and go all the way with it or to a point where you can make your clothes or whatever. That way, you’re not so ready to go back out into your truck, go out in the forest, and shoot another one and take it to the butcher. After you take it to the butcher, you go back out for another one. That can’t be right.

And learn to share . . . . You know that’s gone because of freezers and a lot of times it is sold. A lot of time the animal that is killed is sold. It is too easy for the hunters. This is something that we should think about. Once we start doing it the right way, then everyone will be wearing moccasins again. I mean we are not that far removed. If you look at places like Afghanistan, you see the people in their traditional dress. Well, Christ wore the same clothes thousands of years ago – exactly the same outfits. Here we are two or three hundred years from our culture and we can’t even make our own footwear anymore – just something to think about. I know Gilbert here is anxious so I will pass it along.

GILBERT SEWELL

I know I am a storyteller and I can tell stories, and I can go on for two hours at a time. But I am going to respect some of the requests here that we only take probably five minutes. But some of this can’t be answered in five minutes. Especially a question like how do you consult and what do you do with it. First of all, there is a protocol. If you go to an Elder you should offer tobacco. If the Elder can help you, he’ll accept it. If he can’t help you, he may use the tobacco and ask someone else. But if he decides not to, then he can give the tobacco back to you and say “I’m sorry, but you have to go see someone else.”

What is it used for? Is it the mining companies that want to exploit what you have? You see, I work on Traditional Knowledge for the windmills, the blueberry farms, and for the cranberry and what not. What happens is they come to us and we ask them to accommodate. If there is a burial ground, to go around it. Or if it is a campsite, put your tower somewhere else. But if it is a
mining company, you are involved in a bigger area and much disruption. And you know yourself today, with mining companies, there is pollution – your drinking water, your animals are affected, the birds, the fly-aways, and what not. In fact, before we even go in there, they usually put up towers and check the migration to see whether or not the towers are going to affect the birds flying over or bats for that reason. And they send in people from – people who study the birds. Sometimes we take some of our members, and one of the things we were asking for is employment because they come into an area and they, sometimes in the village, they’ll say “We hear that it is $250,000 dollars. We are going to work in your area.” And where is the Native share of this? Who are the stewards of the land? This is what we are asking. And the companies are saying “Well, we just deal with the province.” And the federal government says “No, you deal with Indian Affairs. They’re our Indians.” And I remind them that we are not their Indians.

In our area, we have a lot of copper mines. I happen to know where it is. This is the first thing they want to know – is where it is. The archeologists, they’re not interested in campsites. They want to know where the bones are. So we can’t reveal that and how our mounds are constructed and what not. We don’t tell them that, or where we buried our dead a long time ago, because right away along within a couple of years they will be digging. So what are they doing with it? And the other thing is what are they doing also to respect our burials? Because I was involved in one from Skull Island. We did a reburial in Fort Folly – in Beaumont. That was a few years ago. They wanted to film it and everything else and we said “No. Once you turn the bones over to us, we did it traditionally and when the sun came up in the morning, that’s when we did it. Eleven o’clock they came around with the cameras and the tourists and everything else, and they say “Where is the graveyard?” “Well,” I said, “there is an offering right there.”

Who is going to doing the digging? And where are you going with this? What are you doing with this? So what we tell the Elders in the community – that this information pertaining to medicines and pertaining to, like, the mining companies, who probably put fill in an area where we get gi’gwaresgw/kikwesksuw, you know – how rare that is today. There is only about – I know of only three places. I know one up on the St. John River, and I know another one on the Miramichi, and another one in the lower province (but I can’t reveal that). There is another one in Maine, also. But what happens is – the sad part of it – there was a farmer in the Miramichi who – the Natives were going in his field, part of his field, but his water and what not, and picking kikwesksuw. What happened there is that he didn’t like the Natives so he dumped diesel oil in it. So for years, not getting medicines from there, see we had to – what we had to do was wait until nature cleared that up. So you don’t know who is out there and doing what, and who is angry at who.
And the other thing is who is going to exploit that? You take an Ontario, St. John’s Wort, and some other plants – they exploited that – they took it all and they use it for the pharmaceutical companies. Now one of the things you may, I don’t know if you realize, is that out west, gasteg [eastern yew or ground hemlock] which is the yew, it grows not too high – takes a hundred and some years. It is only the size of a broom handle. They exploited that and there is none out there now. They come to the east coast – we got some growing, it is like branches – we call it like hemlock. It grows out of the ground, and it has red berries on top. It is toxic if you take too much of it. But we use it. We use that medicine. I use it for when I am really tired or if I have to travel. I can recuperate with that. But 15 leaves has enough poison in it to kill you. But we know how to use it. But what they are doing is to appease the people in the east coast – they are only cutting eight inches off the top and you can see around the province that they are buying this stuff, you know, by the carloads. And people are actually making a living on it in the bad communities. And when they come to our community, we say “No, no clear-cutting because the clear-cutting, the sun kills it and then it disappears. So this is where the exploitation of that one medicine [happens] and you won’t be able to get it anymore.

Like the other thing is accommodation of campsites and graveyards. See, like Albert was saying, we cannot tell our leaders – our Chiefs and Councils – what to do. That’s a no-no. And it is not my intention to go to the Chief and Council and tell them “Look, you shouldn’t be doing this and you shouldn’t be doing that.” I was a Chief at one time. I was a traditional Chief and I was also a Chief under the Indian Act. First of all, would they listen to you? Secondly, you are interfering with the politics and next thing you know you will be ousted from the reserve. Or, if that didn’t work, you go to some other community and they make sure that you do not practice what you are doing in that area. So you see you have to be careful – you have to respect the leaders, the leadership of the community. Like I said, back to protocol.

The other thing is the teachings. We have to teach our young. But how many people will come to you with tobacco and say “Teach me about medicine.” You know what the Elders will tell you? “Well, what’s your problem?” They have to sit down and listen to you. One woman came to me and she said “Look, my house is haunted. There are spirits in there. Would you come do a smudging?” So I sat down and talked to her for a while. What happened, there, is she had a thyroid problem and she was taking Medicare. But then she got with a bunch of Native women and she said “I am going to start jogging. I am going to throw away my pills and I’m losing weight. I’m doing all kinds of things.” But all of a sudden, boom, it came down on her. So what happens is thyroid problem mimics bi-polar; it has similar symptoms. And what happens is your thyroid gets upset – the temperature of your body – different things don’t function properly. You have to take that medication. So I tell her “Get back on your medication.” And it took her four days before she straightened out again. And she got rid of her paranoia. I went to her
home just to appease her and I smudge the place and what not. The next day she asks me “Come back again” And I told her “Look, if you had an accident what would happen? These nightmares will reoccur.” And when I was going out, who did I meet coming in? It was the priest. She also had him coming in there, doing blessings. So then the priest looked at me and says what is he doing here? It was almost like a competition.

This is what I see as some of the problems out there. What are they going to do with it? And one of the things we have been asked to do with Traditional Knowledge is that the things pertaining to the people who live there – the practices and what they do – remains with the people of that community. And if you want to share in that community you have to ask for permission from that community. I would ask – like this group here now in the filming – that you ask if that reserve wants to share what they have and what they are doing. You can’t just sort of impose on them. So you got a lot of questions that are unanswered. And see, what are you going to do with that? And, of course, it boils down to respect. Like Murdena was saying yesterday, you have to follow that criteria of the different stages. What you going to do with it?

So, anyway, I didn’t want to talk too long, but I think that is important. And another thing is teaching your children. This is why I find it very important for the Elders. We should be sitting down with our children even though they are not coming to us. But in my community they knew I took a course, an undergraduate course in linguistics at St. Thomas, and ten years later they ask me “Gilbert, would you teach us?” I said “Yes.” I went to the Chief and Council. Do you know what we get per year for cultural, under education? Four thousand dollars. What does the Council do with it? They have one big dinner, we sing a few songs, we tell a few stories, and we praise each other . . . that’s it. So I had to pay some of my way to go Listuguj or Cape Breton, and what not, to collect information. And what do I teach? I had to sit in classes at Listuguj – I had to sit in a beginner class, the advanced class, and I had to go into the schools to find out how they were teaching and what they were teaching. Now when they are teaching in the schools, I worked for Indian Affairs at one time. Bonar Law [High School] and also Dalhousie – they skipped social studies to teach Mi’kmaq. So the child is suffering from that particular social studies, which they need in school. So one way they remedy the situation – that Dalhousie did – was that they set up a daycare center that people worked till five o’clock. Their children went into the band hall and they took the language, but they got their social studies at home, at the school.

You see what I mean? What are you doing? It is like a ripple effect – you throw a rock in the water, the waves start to fan out, and that is what is going to happen with their consultation, also. I will tell you another thing that happens in our area so that they won’t exploit anything – so that the Natives will keep their knowledge and what not. I would go to your family and say
“Look, gi’gwasuasgw/kikwesuasgw – that is your area and you look after that. You find out about everything and you help the people.” Then I’d go to your place and say “Pagosi [cow lily, cow parsnip] – you look after that and we will send people to you.” And then so on. And the spiritual stuff – go to so and so; he’ll do the sweat lodges and what not – “You are the keeper of that.” It’s almost like today – you can go to the dentist, you can go to a doctor, you can go to a physician (you know, for different surgeries). So you see, like a guy said “Oh, you go to a sweat lodge?” I said “Yeah.” He said “Well, what goes on in there?” “Well,” I say, “I will tell you right now, sweat lodges are – there is a cleansing sweat, which is usually the first one. There are pipe sweats, and there are healing sweats. It’s not just “sweat lodge,” you know what I mean? So with that I hope I have shed some light so when you come to speak you will have a little bit ammunition. Wela’lioq.

JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

Thank you very much, Gilbert. Now on to Josie. I am glad we are recording all of this because there is no way that we could have written all of this. Thank you.

JOSIE AUGUSTINE

Wli eksitpu’k. My name is Josie and I am really honoured to be here. I brought some papers with me coming up because we have done a lot of work within our community in the past years working with medicine people – and not only just with one – there are different ones. I have learned a lot about medicines. Medicines are very, very powerful because some of the medicines, if you ingest any kind of medicine – especially the ki’kwesuaspw (muskrat root) – if you take that, especially women that are carrying a child, that muskrat root could abort that child. So you really have to be careful of what kind of medicines you take. From one example, a few years back – maybe 18-20 years ago – there were other Elders that Frank and I went with to pick ki’kwesuaspw and it was my son also, my oldest. And we went up there and they didn’t know where to go. But I knew exactly, because I’ve seen some of our aunts that used to go there. Finally, I said “You know, just standing around the ground, standing and not even digging with my hands, I can smell that. So it is right around here.” So we started opening up a few plants here and we found ki’kwesuaspw. Anyway, we picked it and we took it home. But I took a couple of pieces after it was all dried up because that’s all I needed – a couple of pieces of that ki’kwesuaspw. It will last you a long time if you don’t use it every day. So anyways, after it was dried up I was holding onto this ki’kwesuaspw and all of a sudden, bang! And the spirits showed me a vision of this ki’kwesuaspw, but it wasn’t the ki’kwesuaspw – it opened up a lot of fields, but in these fields were tractors spraying chemicals. And just before this vision went
away I heard a kjijaqamig [Mi’kmaq word for spirit] – a spirit telling me anko’t’e’n ta’n telimknmin km’pisun [be careful of where you pick your medicines], and that was that. This picture tube just shut down. And I was really, really just thinking about it after that . . . you know, I looked at this ki’kwesuaspkw and said “You know, they are right, because I know where this ki’kwesuaspkw – where I picked it. I went across the border in Mars Hill, Maine. And this is where I picked it up. And through the years farmers spraying their chemicals on those fields affected the medicines. A lot of our medicines are growing right around the banks. Some of our medicines that grow by the waters are affected by the environment. Medicines conduct the way people conduct themselves.

If you don’t use the proper services from the Elders, the Elders will move away – will not answer you. It is the same with all the medicines. If you don’t use it and acknowledge it, it will do the same thing. Medicines move around. Medicines move around and medicines do talk in ways. And I agree with the Elder Albert – Albert Marshall. I agree with him 100% of what he said. What are the Chief and Councillors going to do with this knowledge that we have shared? Tala’ taq? Tal’ lukwetaq? [What are they going to do with it? How are they going to use it?]. Are they ready for it? If not, leave it alone till they are ready. This is my answer. Because we have done ceremonies – many, many ceremonies in the past. We’ve checked out everything that is happening in our communities, especially our community. And our community is not any different from the other ones – they are all the same. You see a lot of greed happening, a lot of power – msit wen kwilk [everyone is looking for power, everybody is hungry for power]. So one of the things I wrote down . . . I can’t really read my own writing right now. But I wrote down a lot of things, because we were told, once the Chief and Councillors are ready, they have to prepare themselves – spiritually – and they have to. The Grandmothers’ Council of Elders have to be formed in every community – Grandmothers’ Council of Elders have to be listened to and the Chief and Councillors really have to really listen to what these grandmothers have to say. And you know the grandmothers have to have the last say – not the Chief and Councillors – after they abide the rules, the traditional laws. One of those laws that was given to us, once they are ready to go and take this law, the traditional ways of doing things, the Chief and Councillors – even before they become a Chief, before they become a Councillor – they have to fast -- four days and four nights – like what we do when we administer medicines. Before you become a medicine person, you have to fast. You have to give in order for you to receive. It works both ways. So this is what I have to share. Forgive me, I cannot read my own writing. But that’s okay. I have shared what I have to share. Wela’liiq msit no’kmaq.
RICHARD RICH

Good morning, everyone – Richard Rich from Rigolet. Since I started in ’73-’74, on the north coast of Labrador into the membership of Lake Melville and wherever else. I spent a good many meetings on health and health sessions . . . . You know when we have Elders out, we’re young and we are learning. It is no good to go to meetings and hear about the medicines and the whole way of life our Elders lived in and put it on a shelf or down in the basement. That’s our problem, because I listened to a lot of Elders from my community of Rigolet and the ones who relocated from all different places – to Nain, Hopedale – they all got relocated. I was on the board for many, many years and in the evenings after supper – there was no meeting – probably had a game of cards and you listened to what they had to say. They will say the same things that I am hearing. We come to these meetings, but nothing gets done with it. I’ll say it in Labrador; I have said it many, many times – like I said yesterday. When I was knowledgeable about this meeting, I went to our government – the election was coming – but I did talk to the first minister – I gave him a heads-up: “I would like to see two Elders, especially if we can get one that was relocated from Hebron or wherever it may be, to come and share this.” You know there was only last week I got an answer – there was no money.

A lot of stuff that I have heard around this table is a lot of what the Elders have said about the medicines. You know they might tell me, they might tell someone else – they laugh at them. We’ve got to listen and make things become better, because we got clinics in the north coast now – we have doctors, nurses, and Rigolet had two LHIC nurses (one of our own, right from the community). We had another one; we had two nurses. I, myself, have diabetes. There are a lot of people within my community that have diabetes and other things. You can’t expect for a nurse to work in Grenfell; we got other problems and other people in the community. It was six years we lost these nurses, and there are people who can’t read or write. You know, when you get sick you have to go up to the nurse’s station over at the LHIC building. Someone within the own community got bring them in their own pickup or car. I think that is very, very unfair.

But I might as well say now there is another nurse in Rigolet. I hope that we can keep her. She is going to be finished her degree in December and she has two work terms. I hope she will come back. Because I sit down and talk to a lot of these girls and tell them stories as to what I have been told. It seemed like they, too, were interested. I just don’t know what else to say, but I would like to thank you for the invite for me to come to this meeting. I do my best to get back to the people. I got five other communities and I hear we might be having this video sent back, and I hope we do so the people can understand I do my best to work with them. So thank you all.
ALEX SAUNDERS

Good morning. I am Alex Saunders from Labrador – Goose Bay. The question is, I guess, how we would like to be consulted. From my perspective, I would like to see us be consulted in a meaningful way and have an advisory role in any type of development that is going to take place. Elders in the past – in our culture – ran the communities. There was no police, there was no priest. It was just the Elders. And the Elders – our Elders, I guess all Elders – are filled with humility, and I think with humility comes a great degree – a finer degree – of wisdom. That has been replaced by Band Councils, town councils, regional governments, and everything else. But I do feel that members – Elders – can still play an important, meaningful role in an advisory capacity. I think one of the people before me talked about traditional ways and that’s being experienced in all cultures – in Labrador, too – because all the people ever did was take what they needed and no more. But that is not the case today; the young people are not following the old traditions. So I think as Elders acting in an advisory capacity we could be involved in the education field, and perhaps not to teach ourselves but to make recommendations to educational people to teach the traditional ways at school. That would be something I think that we can play a meaningful role in.

I spoke yesterday a little bit about the big hydro development in our area I think we are going to have. One of the main reasons I was interested in coming to this conference was that I hoped by attending here it would give us a wider exposure of concerns. And with this big hydro development coming, you know, they talk about jobs – they talk about the power that is going to be produced. Nobody is talking about culture, nobody is talking about the people, nobody is talking about the environment, and so all those things need to be addressed. So, I think if you can involve Elders in economic development then it can have a meaningful outcome. Elders, in my opinion, Elders can, from time to time, provide clear moments in our lives, and that can lead to positive and meaningful decisions being made in the future.

I know there is a big balancing act between Elders and elected bodies. So, as the lady next to Richard said, “Are they ready?” And, of course, they are not. And neither are the Elders ready, but we have to start somewhere. And I would be very enthused if we can come away from this conference with a resolution that is going to be worded in a manner that says, at least, we will start the process.

Like Richard, I am very glad to be here. This is the second Elders conference that I have attended that has involved the Inuit and the Innu people, and that is a new thing, too. Because in Labrador, in the past, there has been division between Native groups – between the Inuit and the Indians – or the Innu – that is starting to be more relaxed. People are becoming more
accepting of each other and they are starting to really, I think, take a strong hold on Native pride. So I am really honoured and glad to be here, and I think it is a positive thing that we have these two different races together. Thank you.

SAM NUI

My name is Sam Nui from Labrador – Sheshatshiu. Alex and Richard have said Elders should be involved in everything. In our community, we don’t. Leaders – Chief and Councillors – they don’t. They brought us the news that they we first have to involve the Elders. If they say “Yes,” then we can do it; if they say “No,” then we couldn’t do it. Everything has to involve Elders in every community. Like when I was in the Council – Band Council – for six months. The people called me – “You’re the boss.” I said “I’m not the boss. You are the boss, and I am working for you.” That’s what I mean – Elders should be involved in everything and, like, in Innu community the leaders don’t do what we are supposed to do with Elders – like if the government wants to
do something in our land Elders got involved first – not the Chief, not the Grand Chief. Everything Elders have to do, you ask first. And that is all I can say about an Elder. Thank you.

JEFFERY LEVI

Hello. I am Jeffery Levi, currently residing in Metepenagiag. My concern is about medicine that we pick in the woods. That is very, very good medicine. Like the medicine that we pick in woods I am concerned about – like, it depends on what is wrong with you. Sickness that you have or anything that is wrong with your body – it depends on what you take for medicine. I am concerned about that. I don’t know what to say about people that – women that are pregnant – I don’t know what kind of medicine they can use. And I am not a doctor. While I was in the hospital I got better, and the specialists were wondering what I was taking. I was getting better all of a sudden. They tried everything – they tried to get me better and they didn’t do a good job on it, so when I started taking this medicine. I got better pretty fast. I mean pretty quick and they were wondering what I was taking, eh. And they asked me “What are you taking?” I told them that I was taking Indian medicine – that Mary Anne’s mother started that medicine for me. And she picked it up in the woods and that helped me quite a bit and I got better. The thing
that is my favourite medicine is Golden Thread, and it works like a good medicine that is good for everything. But I am not telling everyone to take that – just to try it out. If you are sick or something is wrong with you, ask your Elders and they will help you out quite a bit. But I am concerned about these medicines – how you pick them up – and it depends on what is wrong with you. I cannot answer that. So I would like to see that on paper to be more written down – what you are picking. It would be nice. And thank you.

MARY ANNE LEVI

Good morning. My name is Mary Anne Levi, from Red Bank. This is the first gathering that I ever attended in a gathering like this before. And this is my learning and especially listening. I am just listening right now and learning at the same time. I know quite a bit, but it doesn’t want to come out or I don’t know it’s . . . . Anyway, I am here just to listen and to learn about each one of the people here. And that’s all I can say right now. Thank you.

DOUG KNOCKWOOD

Good morning. I guess probably I have to go back to when I was a child in my learning process, you know. I wasn’t able to carry it through fully to my potential, I guess, but it all started with my mother and my grandfather. I thought of what people were talking about, and it has to go back to that, you know. When I started out in life my mother was the one who brought me into the world and looked after me, and helped me to understand part of the world we were growing up in. In those days the world wasn’t very happy – maybe happy in a family way – but otherwise it was very difficult. It was difficult for us to manipulate a living. And my mother and my uncle were very close, and my uncle never spoke a word of English – he lived in the bush. And he came out to visit every so often and it was a good thing that he did, because every time, you know, I see my mother standing at the window and cry because I would say to her “Why are you crying, mom? And she would say “I have nothing to feed you. I don’t know.” . . . But you know, when this happened, the next morning my uncle would arrive from his camp, four or five miles back on the reserve land, and he would go to the store and pick up some groceries and he would share these with my mom. And this was my early training in sharing and loving, you know. It sort of built part of my character.

My dad was an alcoholic, and he used to come home every now and again. But he was a very smart man. I think my brother and I were the only two people taken out of the residential school in Shubenacadie through the legal system. And my dad fought the courts in Amherst and he got us out within two years. I tell you these things in order not for you to feel sorry for me,
but it was the way of life that I had started out with. As I grew older, I started to work at farm and lumber woods and so on and so forth. I never got a good education because, once again, the fear of the authority-to-be was there. I went into grade five, and three ladies taught me from primary to grade five – they put me through in three years through five grades. On the fourth year there was a man teacher who came on the scene and he grabbed me on the shoulders for some reason. I guess I wanted to go to the bathroom, and he wouldn’t let me go. So what do you do? Let it go. So he bounced me up and down in a chair for a little while, and I hated that man for the next two years. But I had to go there because, if I didn’t, the fear of going back to the residential school was strong enough to make me stay.

I had a very checkered lifestyle. After I was old enough – eleven years old, twelve years old – I quit school to work on the farm. And you know the farm was around the home and then we moved to Springhill Junction. Then my life changed again as a teenager. I joined the service and I was in the service for five years. After I was in the service, I get – probably three weeks or a month later – I was recommended for corporal stripe. And I didn’t want these because that lack of – the lack of education, the lack of knowledge held me back. But in the army they make you do these things and you had to do them. I never realized until later how important it was for me to be . . . where I was, but I stayed for the five years. And I contracted tuberculosis and I got discharged. I spent another five years in the sanatorium – at that time there was no cure for TB. And they did a lot of butchering – took a lot of our ribs, ribcages – they took five of my ribs and on my left lung. When I went in I weighed 225 pounds, and when I came out I weighed 122 pounds. When you are drinking that is not a very good position to be in, because before I went in the sanatorium, you know, when someone sassed me I had no difficulty in sassing back – protecting myself. I look down and the guy is on the floor and I say “What are you doing down there?” But when you lose 100 pounds and you take a swing and the guy looks at you, blinks, and you say “What the hell is the matter with me?”

I am telling you these things because they are leading up to where I am today. I had to start a new lifestyle – that I couldn’t do the things that I was capable of doing before I went to the sanatorium. So I had to change that lifestyle from one of being challenging and so on and so forth to one of sitting and listening – I would rather get into an argument than sit and listen – and it paid off. I get married and I get married again. It was all because of my first marriage. I was only a kid and then, of course. I get divorced and I get the custody of my two children back. I never knew that I could do the things that I could do. . . . After I came out of the sanatorium, I got a job as a cook because I didn’t have enough education to take anything higher so the only thing open for me was a barber or a cook. And I said “Oh, great. I wanted to be a barber all my life.” So the Counsellor leafs through the pages and said “It is about two years before they have an opening” and I said “Holy shit – two years. I would starve to death before then. What about
cooking?” He said “It starts this afternoon.” So I became a cook and, you know, when you are forced to do things in order to make a living for your family you do them. And I excelled in that, you know, I become a chef. I didn’t know that I could do anything else. I hated cooking, and I still hate cooking with a passion. But you know when my family wants a meal I will sit down and prepare a meal for them, and I don’t have to worry about them throwing it out the window because I do it with love.

But somewhere along the way I done a lot of volunteer work in Boston and they open the program for alcohol and drug for Mi’kmaq people in Nova Scotia. And I used to pick up the Mi’kmaq News and I used to dream about this job – starting the alcohol and drug program for Mi’kmaq people in Nova Scotia. And I used to look at that and say “Gee, I would love to go back and do that work.” My friend, who is a very good friend of mine in Boston, he would say “What the hell is stopping you, Knockwood?” I said “I don’t have the education.” He said “Bring the paper over.” So I brought the paper over, the Mi’kmaq News, and he read it and said “Where the hell does it say that you have to have an education?” I said “I guess it doesn’t say.” He said “Go and apply for the job and if you don’t get it I’ll pay for your gas down and back.”

So I came down and applied for the job and there weren’t too many of us and I applied for the job and received the job. He called me on my way back and offered me the position and I went back home – or back to Boston was home – and I resigned my position there and came back home. And I started working in the drug and alcohol field. I say today that the knowledge that I received in later years was all attributed to building a program for our Mi’kmaq people in all of Nova Scotia – helping them to build a better life, build a way of life without alcohol and drugs. And I was very fortunate to get on the ground floor with the founder of the program, Lawrence Paul. And, you know, between him and I we made a team, because Lawrence was very good with the pen. He could sit down and write a proposal in whatever time it takes. But he couldn’t go out to the community to talk to the people about alcohol and drugs and that is something I knew something about. So I went out to talk to the people about alcohol and drugs. And because of that, I was able to promote our program very successfully – working together as a team. We hired people to work in all of the reserves. And we had a program on all of the reserves here.

And I decided that I needed more education, so I went to George Brown College in Toronto and I took a course counseling course and even that one curtailed because they started a college outside of Montreal and they had difficulty with drugs and alcohol. There they were going to close the place down. So they called me and asked me to come and I went up. We were able to quell the riot and so on, and I stayed on for a few years there. And everywhere that I went, I always had someone there to work with. And no matter what we do in our lives, we can’t do it
alone. And I think this is the way our programs in our Native communities should be working – is on a team-work effort. The most successful programs that I've seen are by two people, because one man can’t do it alone. I think that our leaders need to remember that this philosophy pays off, not forgetting who put you into the driver’s seat.

I'm going to tell you one little episode and then I am going to shut up. When we were full-flight in alcohol and drug programming I had a bunch of young people – a group of young people, teenagers – coming to me for counseling and group sessions. And there was nothing to do on our reserve and they come to me and tell me “We would like to have a sober dance.” I said “What is stopping you?” And they said “Well, we don’t have any money, we don’t have any treats, and we don’t have a band.” So I said “What’s stopping you?” And I thought it over for a while and I said “First of all you need a committee. You need a chairman, a vice-chairman, and someone to take care of the money and two other people.” I said “You can have five people. If you want a sober dance then you are going to have to work for it.” So they started to work and within three months of starting that program we had a sober dance on the Indian Brook reserve in Shubenacadie with everything supplied. We had all the treats and pop supplied and whatever it meant to make a party successful. So they invited their friends from the high school and they invited the ones they were working with in Truro. And when I asked them about the chaperone, they insisted that they wanted the priest and the nun, me, and three other people from the community. They had a sober dance of 125 people. And everything was free. They didn’t only have one band but they had three bands, who all volunteered.

You know, if we can encourage young people to work like that, and we can do it – you and I can do it, you know. I’m still not too old to help do something like that. It takes teamwork in no matter what we do. I’m certainly trying to keep myself active, and I try not to forget where I came from and I always have to remember that I had a blind grandfather that never knew what I looked like and, you know, when I was a little boy sitting on his knee I’d say “I love you, grampy.” And he would say [in Mi’kmaq “You are cute”]. It came out after a little while, didn’t it? That’s what he used to say to me and he was totally blind, and you know how he knew that? When I was a little boy sitting on his knee [makes the notion of rubbing his hand all over his face], he felt my features on my face, my hair, and my neck and he said that to my sister. And that man who was totally blind used to make a living for us. He used to beg from house to house and we the little guys – someone had to lead him. And we use to take him house to house so that he could beg for whatever. And I don’t know if some of you remember him, but his name was Blind Sam – Sam Knockwood. I feel that the important thing in building a program is teamwork. Teamwork effort starts from wherever and builds from there to what you can make it today. I hope some of the things that I have said would interest some of the older people that are working in organizations. If I can help them, then I will. Thank you.
JOHN HENRY ISAAC

My name is John Isaac, from Listuguj. This morning they asked us about what we thought to express to try to bring out our traditional values and how we can help out and to bring out and to express ourselves; and to bring out to help the program in terms of traditional ways, medicines, the way of life, and the way we conduct ourselves in our everyday lives. What I would like to talk about is to bring back traditional pride, traditional values. We have lost a lot of our values in our lives as traditional living in communal society. I would like to talk about what my experience was and what I have seen in as far as traditional values. I was away; I left my society, my community, and lived in a white community in a white world. . . . In my youth, growing up, I absorbed a lot of traditional ways – the way I was brought up, and how my neighbours and how my old community was living, and how everybody respected each other. When I came back, in 50 years, I could see the difference because now I have been exposed to something for 50 years and I grew up with it, a part of it – lived their lives, my life. I brought my family up that way. I came home and I run right into a wall of values that have changed and it was very easily judged. I could see the difference in the values of the people and the government that I was exposed to now. And a lot of my memories came back of what it used to be like. I can remember as a child going to Chiefs that we had. The government that we had was an Indian Act government, it was . . . we didn’t adopt it. It was forced on us – this is the way that you are going to govern yourselves. So right then and there, there were a lot of values that have changed. They had to change. When I went to witness some of the council meetings, there was always the Indian agent sitting there at the head table, the parish priest, and they made all the decisions for the Chief. Mostly, they were the advisors.

But I’d like to see the values that we have lost to be brought out to the forefront and pride of who we are. I can remember when somebody in our community died, the women – certain women in the community neighbourhood – would get together and all be congregated to that family. The person that passed away – the women would go and wash the body, clean it, put new clothes on – presentable as possible that showed respect and honour of this person that passed away. I mean, there were very meager means when they put this person in the casket. Somebody would pick up a few boards around the neighbourhood and make a box. It wouldn’t even be plain boards; it would be rough boards or whatever, but it showed that we had values, we had respect, with what meager means that we had we used. I’m not saying that we should go back to that era of life, but as far as values we should come up to date and bring back the values that we had.
Now when I go back I’d like to mention we elect our Chiefs now through what was brought to us by the Indian Act. We have our Council; we elect our Council. But we maintain a great divisiveness or division . . . This elected Chief we elected by a clan. These different families – groups – well maybe one or two families that come up that are stronger than the others, and they get the leadership. And somehow the values aren’t there anymore because now the wealth or whatever. It is the little bit of royalty that we get through our federal, provincial, and whatever oil companies or whatever enterprises that support us. All monies go to this and it is the conflict of interest.

Nepotism is rampant in our government . . . We will never eliminate nepotism, but it don’t belong – to be so stong – in our way of life in governing people. I think maybe if we could somehow reduce the nepotism – the conflict of interest – that exists, we could have a better community. People would show more respect for each other, but it has to come from our leadership. Our leadership has to change their ways and to be more “whatever the leadership decides benefits the whole community as a whole” – that everybody is equal and everyone is respected. And the divisiveness that comes from after every election – I think it is a responsibility of whoever is elected to stop this divisiveness and to show good leadership by using everybody equal – by respecting everybody. And by that I mean we will have a better government, a better community, more respect.

I would also like to see better communications between all communities now because as a child . . . we use to go to Maria, which is our Gesgepagiag now (which was our closest reserve). We didn’t have cars at the time. In the early ’30s Indian people didn’t anyway. But somehow there was more exchange. There was a lot of people from Maria or Gesgepagiag reserve, our reserve. There was people because I can remember when my mother taking me to Maria, to Gesgepagiag, and we knew people. Now there seems to . . . there is a wall there now. Somebody created a wall between these two communities . . .
So I guess the message that I would like to leave as far as traditional ways is values. We were a proud people before the Europeans. We adopted a lot of European ways of greed and everybody tried to be rich – step on your neighbours or just run anyone over so you can get ahead. The values of sharing and taking care of each other [are important], because the battles and struggles that we have today existed a hundred years ago. We still . . . still have a common enemy. One time it used to be the king of France, then the king of England, and now the Canadian government and the United States government. So we are still people, and I think the message I am trying to leave to this assembly is let’s try to get back our traditional values and pride. Thank you.

MURDENA MARSHALL

Hi. I can relate to all of your wants and your needs and our “probablys” and all that stuff. I especially connect to Loretta, with her fear of documenting anything that is First Nations. I, too, had that problem in the mid-’80s. When I first introduced Traditional Knowledge to my students in 1985 – grade six students – the whole community was in an uproar. They accused me of bringing back children 300 or 400 years, and “That thing you are talking about is all gone. We left it.” And so my lessons stopped at that because I grew up my entire life speaking Mi’kmaq and being trained by various aunts and uncles and so I let that be until I got to university and then I had some freedom. Working for a band school isn’t a joy. You take what you should teach, and if they don’t like it – even though it isn’t good for the kids – they won’t allow you. I tried to teach HIV, but they went crazy – they say you are teaching children how to have sex and all that. So I had a hard time.

I have always been a fighter, and I have been fighting every day. So when I got to university I decided to write them down, because the only way that you can teach a lesson is to document it. You cannot teach from your head. Everything has to be documented and presented to the council – academic council has to approve it – before you can teach it. But they said “You have to publish it before you can teach it.” That is a protocol here. So I wrote them down and my thought about publishing was different than those people. My writings, by publishing them, you put an ownership on them. “Oh, those are mine and you cannot quote from them until you ask me.” And you know that’s awful. And my training as a First Nations person was to spread this knowledge – spread it as fast as you can – while the language is here. And so, when I started to write them down, I’m literate in five different orthographies – starting from hieroglyphics to Smith Francis to Listuguj to Elsipogtog. I can read all of their systems. That said, that’s not . . . you are doing wrong because they are not in Mi’kmaq. And once you publish them they are no
longer oral traditions because they are now written down. But I had to think hard and long.

Seventy-five percent of our nations – all nations in here – are not speaking their own language. We only have a small bit of 25 percent to work with. And if we don’t put them in a language that is universal then children will never get them, then they will not have them. At least, reading them in English, they can digest them and retain the information and use it for their own lives and the lives of their children. So no – no, you can’t do that because it’s oral. You can’t put it down and the university is getting on this side. Preach It. Preach It. I said it’s either my job or my soul.

And so I took my oral traditions – we had 64 of them. I had pumped out 64, but I just printed out 30 so that they know. I don’t want them to get confused and I just published 30 so that they are precise and down to heart and they can relate to them, and I took it to the Senate of Elders that we have in Cape Breton. The Senate of Elders was represented by them – by the five reserves. And I took it to them. Oh, we had a good day. We argued the pros and cons. “Oh my god,” I said, “once you write it down then they’ll change it, they’ll abuse it, they’ll do this, they’ll misinterpret it.” Oh my god, what a battle. But, anyway, finally towards the end of the day they say “Alright. You can print them under one condition – that you do not put ownership on it and that you use just for education. You cannot sell this. You cannot do that. It is just to give away to whoever wants to listen and it’s not yours.” So I printed them out and gave the ownership to Elders of Cape Breton. That way they couldn’t argue with me too much because they had a little bit part of it in it. But it was a difficult journey. It was a terrible journey.

But now things have changed. You can bring up new information, that is versatile, and it’s just ready to be put to work and it pertains to all of us. And I was quite successful for a little while, and then I got tired. And I stopped teaching it; the only one that I teach now is Cheryl [Bartlett]. She has been working with me for about 22 years now, 20 years . . . . We meet and we discuss ordinary things like swimming and fishing and medicines, and we taught a class together in science, and I was very pleased with my First Nations students then. We went to visit habitats in science and we went to this forest of green and we found moss. And they were taking their shoes off and rubbing their feet in the soft moss. Of course you give it to them in Latin, and you give it to them in English, and you try to make the students familiar with this moss – scientific name, scientific use, and all that. Then one day the students said “I have another use for it.” Cheryl asked “What is it?” He lifted up the moss and underneath the moss, the carpet of moss, was wasoq taq jikl – all intricately designed in that carpet, and he said “See, this is medicine.” We were so dumbfounded, that we never even got into that yet, and they already were feeling the effects of that moss and knowing the effects of it. And the student continued “To use it, we use for babies and we use it for lining the cradle boards.” He had a whole story.
So that was the beginning of our science program, the Integrative Science Program. And nursing students found there are four colours: there are four sacred colours in a drop of blood. I am looking at it, and it’s red. Really? How do we find these? They said “Look under the microscope and you see that the blood is red but the fibres are white that holds it together, the serum extracted from blood is yellow, and when it clots it turns black.” “Oh my gosh,” I said. “How could they find that?” And I couldn’t find it. But it was really a revelation of all the knowledge that’s out there when the child’s mind is set for Inui t’asit thinking in their own language and many things that they can come up with. And these are all logistical things, you know. They are scientific, they are there – we never saw it, I never saw it, but they saw it. And also we made a film; we made a disc last year for the International Year of the Astronomy for Canada. That was the bear and the . . . what Gilbert was talking about yesterday – a little bit about that legend. It’s about the bear and the seven hunters, which are known in Mi’kmaq as ntuksuinu’k, and sometimes there is everything from that story. Ntuksuinu’k are hunters and some of the stars, the seven stars, at certain time of the year, disappeared. And women whose husbands took off to Maine to make a living never came back – nataw’en aq we jias naq [they found someone and they left]. And so when you’re asked “Where is your husband?” “Oh, he’s ntuksuinu; he is a hunter that disappeared.” So all of these things are important because humour is part of our lives. We have to have humour or it doesn’t jive. So that’s all I have to say, good luck, and I’ve enjoyed this conference.

ALBERT MARSHALL

I have spent the money they have given me for my singing lessons by speaking up first. Since I spent that money already, I have another option and that is [speaks Mi’kmaq].

Spoken in Mi’kmaq by Albert Marshall

**English version (interpreted by John R. Sylliboy)**

Yesterday, when Murdena was speaking, she said “If one wants to be loved, then one should love oneself as well.” Before we can take care of earth (creation) correctly, then one has to love oneself before you can love and respect/honour the rest of the creation. . . .

The ones that bring knowledge from abroad to our lands had taught us . . . . they told us to leave our ways of living, ways of speaking, and ways of surviving, and to adopt their ways of knowing – adopt their ways of living – and we will be better off. Today that has come back around, and now we know that their ways were wrong. We had to have held our strong Aboriginal ways of life and our languages. But before we could respect that – before we could do the right thing in life – we have to continuously remind ourselves where we come from – who we are. There is a need to properly take care of our earth and creations.

For me, I have to continuously remind myself that there is a need to love earth and all creations. I have to continuously say “Mother (Nature), we are grateful for the beautiful day you have given us; we are grateful for our father, the sun, for creating a beautiful world that is warm and that enables growth; for our grandmother, the moon, for taking care of suekawal and for creating and taking care of people; and for creating our uncles, thunder and lightning; and for taking care of the rains; and . . . for our brothers, the stars. We have to be grateful for the seasons – for the springs, summers, falls, and winters; for the wood/forests – minijkl – flowers, grasses, and medicines, and all the things that come from above, for the birds, animals, insects, fishes, and all the things that cannot be seen with the naked eye; for the
weather: rains, snow, winds, pawikl, alukl and the beautiful days. And all of that I have to continuously remind myself – all that work that is in store for us, today – and what things I have to do right. I have to keep myself alive. Ever since my forefathers left us this knowledge, known as netukulimk, I have to think alongside its teaching – that I can only pick what I need for my well-being. That is all what I want to say. Thank you all.

Synthesis provided by Albert Marshall
The gist of it is if you cannot love yourself, how can you respect other beings? How can you respect your natural world? Unless that is reaffirmed on a daily basis on how interconnected and interdependent we are with our natural world and with everyone else. We need that daily reaffirmation to be able to follow the path that our creator has giving onto us. Wela’lioq.

CHERYL BARTLETT
My name is Cheryl and I work in Unama’ki with Murdena and Albert, and I work at Cape Breton University. I’ve been working with Murdena and Albert for over two decades now and we have been trying to find ways for the Western sciences and the Indigenous sciences to walk side by side in the science classroom. And so I have asked myself for two decades now, “How can I help Murdena and Albert? How can I help their knowledge, their Traditional Knowledge, come forward in the classroom for education? And one of the things that I have come to realize is that if every project that I work on with Murdena and Albert, if I ask myself four things: How can I help Murdena and Albert and the other Elders to see language revitalization?
How can I help Murdena and Albert and the other Elders to see reconnections with the land? How can I help the Elder to see reconnections and revitalization of all the understandings for life – the teachings, the medicines, the seven gifts, respect, reciprocity, relationship, reverence, ritual, responsibility? How can I help Murdena and Albert and the other Elders share love? So those four “L” words in English: land, language, life, and love. How can each project I work in help bring forward for the young people in the communities traditional values – traditional understandings – for those four components: language, land, life, and love? Thank you.

WAYNE ABRAM

My name is Wayne Abram. I’m from Millbrook here. I enjoyed the session yesterday morning, but I had to leave. I am a dialysis patient and my dialysis is Friday afternoon. But I got some interesting insights from yesterday morning’s meeting. The first gentleman that I was listening to was talking about fishing – talked about not only fighting DFO but he also fought the Band Office. Another gentleman here talked about the division after the elections in the community and they asked people to go in and try to heal the community. One thing about the comments is that we all come from very small communities – probably communities that maximum number would be 2000-2500, maybe 3000 at the max. But one thing about the size of these communities is that they are small enough where we can talk together and we can have meetings to talk about the future, the present, what we are going to do, and how we are going to spend our money and what not. We are not only not talking to the Elders, we are not talking to anyone. The Band Office takes a Department of Indian Affairs attitude about government. They meet behind closed doors; they make decisions behind closed doors. There is no reaching out to the community to do things. And I think as long as we are going to do that we are not really going to reach our potential. We will always be second-class citizens living in a society that is divided – that has a 60-70% alcohol rate.

I was talking to a gentleman from one of the communities, and he was telling me that there were 1,500 people on the reserve and there are 150 of them on intravenous drugs. That is ten percent of the people on hard drugs. This community is sick, and the problem is one Chief tried to clean it up but they voted him out. And one thing that one of the people told me is that there are more people using drugs and on alcohol that are going to vote this guy out because it is interfering with the flow of drugs and alcohol. And I think our communities are sick – that in fact we don’t even know. I talked to drug and alcohol people for a few months now and I was asking them what is the rate of alcohol and drug addiction on reserve and they don’t know. And I asked . . . “How many people are dying prematurely, that are committing suicide, dying of cirrhosis of the liver, and other problems?” And no one knows. I said “How you can solve the
problem without identifying the size of the problem?” And I think one of the problems is we hire one person to be the drug and alcohol worker; we are not working with Elders or other community members to solve the problem. And as long as we are going to do that we are going to be a sick society. Right now, I think it was 60-70% addiction rate. We are a very sick society and we are not working as a community to solve it. What people are doing – they hire . . . a drug and alcohol worker that has a year or two of sobriety, no training or anything else, to be the drug and alcohol worker. What the heck is he going to do to solve the problem of drug and alcohol if in fact he has no training, no addiction training, and no training whatsoever? And most of them don’t have any communication knowledge; they can’t communicate what the problem is to our children, to our adults, and to the people that are addicted. Thank you very much.

JOHN JOE SARK

Some really good comments right across the table. What I would like to say – too many of us think that nature is out there. And as long as we think that nature is out there we can pollute the water, ruin the land, we can clear-cut. But we have to remember that we are also a part of nature. The same molecules in the tree are in our bodies. We need water, we need air, we need soil, and we need fire in order to live. And if we destroy any of those elements, we’re gone. But not only are we gone, but we are destroying the rest of what the creator has given us. So I like what people have said about respect. We have to respect ourselves in order respect and love other people – and not only other people. When you look at what the great spirit has giving us in creation, we have to respect every little bit that he has given us also because he gave that for a reason. In our life, we have to respect the life that was given to us, you know. It is a gift – every moment, every day, every year, every month is a gift from the creator. And we have to realize that without the creator we have nothing.

I like this meeting, but I think for the next meeting – if we have a next meeting – I think that the participants should have a say in how the agenda is created and have a say as to whether or not we can change the agenda as we go along. I know we are pressed for time, and I realize the amount of work that goes into setting up a meeting like this, but I think we have to move ahead now and have the Elders assist with the setting up of the next agenda. I also don’t think that we can dictate to the Chiefs what an Elder should be or whatever, but I think even the Chiefs in the older times didn’t have dictatorial powers. What they done was that they would gain the confidence of the people and lead that way. They weren’t emperors or kings. And if you see all the structures in Canada today, there are no Canadian institutions in this country. Every institution that is here – your universities, your churches, everything – is a transplant from
Europe. And that is why we are so disconnected from our own culture. When we have to live in this society, we have to learn how to connect with both societies at once.

I once heard that an Aboriginal person is 200% smarter than the white person because he has to know not only his culture and traditions but he must also know where the other people are coming from. Most of the reserve systems have come from classical writings by Aristotle and Thomas Moore, and that is where you got your reserve system. That’s why the Spaniards went into South America and hunted the people down like dogs because they based that on the classical writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas Moore. And this is what people are getting in university today if you study law or classical arts. Thank you very much.

CHRISTINE GABRIEL

My name is Christine Gabriel from St. Mary’s First Nation – Nilun ona nihtawi skicinuwatuahtipon [“I’m Maliseet and we know how to speak Indian, too.”]. We are Maliseet people and we are very proud. There isn’t too many of us left, but we do know how to speak Maliseet in our age group. The younger people do not know how to speak it, but I think it’s . . . some of the children say “It’s the Elders fault.” It is not the Elders’ fault. It is the school system that didn’t allow them to speak Indian around the schoolyard or whatever. So they brought it home, of course. We had to teach them in English, also. But, for me, I think that we should have an Elders group together in the Maritime Provinces. It is a start at least. People have been talking about this for years – to have an Elders group across Canada – but nothing was ever done. So, to me, if the Maritime Provinces started maybe it would follow through across Canada. The government has the Senate, and I am sure the Chiefs would like to have an Elders circle, too. I know in St. Mary’s we are allowed to sit in Chief and Council, one Elder at a time, and they are coming. It has only been happening the last five years. And our Chief does consult with some of the Elders and takes it into the Council, but some of the Counsellors are very reluctant to listening to us. But we still struggle through – we manage to push through.

And we do have a drug and alcohol worker on our reserve, but he sits in Chief and Council meetings, too. How can you be your own boss and work, too? I can’t understand that. But most of them that are on council – they work and are their own bosses – and I don’t think that is right. But we voice that opinion lots of times and it just doesn’t go anywhere. But I think all the other reserves probably have the same problem, too. And drugs and alcohol is very much alive in St. Mary’s. We have been trying to stop it because we are right in the heart of the city, but nothing we can do. They always say “We are on federal grant and that is provincial,” so they always try to block us off. But we are still struggling. We are trying do something, you know.
But our Elders are – they all have their opinion. Some of us don’t agree with some of the Elders, but anyway we respect and listen to them all. I always classify myself as an Elder-in-training because I still have to learn a lot. But that is all I have to say.

MAURICE SACOBIE

My name is Morris and I am an Elder, I guess. I ain’t got too much to say. Like I said yesterday, I am learning what everyone is saying here and what Christina said I agree with her – that’s mostly what I would have to say, too. I am learning. I don’t attend too many meetings, but the ones I have been to I’ve learned quite a bit and I am still learning. I enjoy a lot of it and the people I have met. And that’s about all I have to say. Thank you.

GWEN BEAR

My name is Gwen Bear. I am originally from the Tobique reserve but I have been living off-reserve for over 30 years, I guess. When I went to university in Fredericton I ended up living there, and I just didn’t want to uproot my children any more than they had been when I got
divorced. So I just kind of stayed there. And now we are off-reserve, but we are beginning a
new generation with the great-grandchildren. So you still have the responsibility, I think, as a
grandmother or great-grandmother to carry forward some of the things that I’ve learned. I’ve
had many teachers in my life. I think I was 40 years old before I started taking an interest in
cultural ways. It didn’t mean that I didn’t have any, but because I was a teacher I had to develop
curriculum. I worked in a community college system for 18 years. I retired in ’06 and one of the
fears that I had when I retired was the curriculum that I had developed was for Native students,
and I wanted to take that with me. But you get caught in that when you leave; everything that
you developed belongs to the province. And I tried to delete as much as I could before I left
because I felt that I had a responsibility not to the province. I know they paid me for all those
years, they are giving me a pension and all that stuff, but I just felt that the things that I had
shared with the Native students was ours, you know. It was our people’s. And so that was an
example of some of the things that can happen if we don’t have a guideline or protocol to some
of this knowledge that some of us developed from the teachers that we’ve had. You know it
doesn’t belong to me, but also I didn’t want the province to own it as well. And I guess I am in a
better position now. I work for the University of New Brunswick. And I am involved in a project
called “Before the Dam” and we worked out how we were going to save that knowledge. There
is a copy of it at the university, but whoever is interviewed within that research project owns
their interview. They are the ones that can say how it is to be distributed or how it is to be used
or, you know, they own it. And I think we are following the same sort thing here and sharing
things here.

I think as a group we needed to hear your stories yesterday because there’s always that build-
up of trust among us that has to happen before we can move ahead to probably the next step –
whatever that next step is. And I feel that I already knew some of the stories of some of you,
but not of everyone, and I’m sure in your case it is the same. We didn’t all know each other, but
we know each other a little better now. And that building of trust is important in any sort of
relationship, especially if you are a teacher and you are going to be passing some of these
down.

And I kind of worked at it both ways. I was working at the college, but I was also conducting
fasts in my community and I did that for 11 years. There was a sacred site discovered up there
and the archaeologists did come in. They found that we had three mounds; they said they were
farmer piles. I said “’Good.’ I am glad that they came to that conclusion because they will leave
it alone now. Now give it back to us and we’ll rediscover what those mounds were for. And as I
said, I conducted fasts there for 11 years. And it was the stones – that is my kind of where I am
strong – I heal with stones. I love petroglyphs; I love the messages that come from the stones. I
have Penobscot heritage and I know that’s why – why that is a part of me.
There is just this knowledge that I think that the universe has for us, and each one of us needs to connect with where you are strong. I know some of you are strong in medicines and thank god, because I use some of those medicines, you know. But for me it’s with the stones and the Earth and getting those energies up to help people. And the fasting – it kind of got to me after a while. I was conducting fasting in Tobique, Indian Island, and I can’t even remember the other place now. And you kind of get tired. So what I started doing was to give away some of those ceremonies to get more people working. And so there was that other education area that I had besides the one at the college. And both are a reality, really, and we have to come to, I suppose, some decisions on how to do that. I know when we did our research group, we looked at Cape Breton’s code of ethics – the protocols that they had developed. And I think, in a way, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. But all of us should know about it. All of us should know about what is developed in each of our territories and how we have to follow certain ways and processes of how this knowledge has to be. And I know I listened to Murdena yesterday – that this knowledge isn’t for ourselves because if we keep that knowledge it only becomes stagnant and it helps no one. We do have to pass it on, so how do we do that? We do have to look at that question, how do we pass it along? And share those universal ways, I guess, that we are going to have to develop. Anyway, that is all I have to say for this morning.

MADELINE MARTIN

My name is Madeline Martin and I am an Elder from Millbrook. It has been a very interesting few days for me. I have learned a lot. I might be an Elder, but I am not as wise as all of you are. But I have enjoyed all of the medicine that you have talked about. I have heard about it myself in my younger years. My father used to talk about the Indian medicine, but I was too . . . I don’t know, I just didn’t listen, I guess. Anyway, I am very interested in what you fellows have talked about – Murdena and Albert, the rest of you. And for yours, too, Wayne. It is right what you were talking about our reserves – we should have another AA worker. I believe you did a great job in saying that because one can’t do everything. No, nobody can do everything at once. You got to have someone to help you and, you know, like the Elders. I should say they just don’t listen to the Elders. But we try anyway. So I say I don’t do too much, but I am involved in prayer group on the reserve. What we do each week – we go from house to house maybe and all the Elders and women who are interested in our prayer group. We go to this person – whoever is in need of prayers. And now we have been lucky so far. Nobody has chased us out, but we are still carrying on. And I will tell you this, I have nothing else to say but I have enjoyed this conference the last two days and meeting so many people. And I thank you, John, for inviting me with all my heart. I didn’t think I would make it the last few days because I am not a very strong person.
and I am not an early bird. I sleep in till late, but I tried anyway. So thank you a lot and thank you everybody – pleased to meet you.

GRAND CHIEF BEN SYLLIBOY

Keskmnaq kelusiw, ketu miwamk wjit a’ ta’n John nikana’toq ula conference. John a’ pekisinkip niknaq na’tmiaw nine months ago-ek etuk suggest-ewip al-kwiluapni’k kisiku’k. Wen wutank kisiku’k. Na na’tel weja’toq1 nklusuaqnm wet-tetaputeskuajik ta’n wutank. Ta’n wen me’ kejitu’tit kijka’ sa’qawey kqoqey. Mu naqmasianuk na, nine months elukwatkek, pekisinkip three or four times niknaq. Aqq pekiskink aqq pipanimip kqoqey aqq telimk ta’n taqoey kejitu aqq suggest-awalikik kisiku’k tanik a’ ta’n keji’kik l’nuita’sultijik aqq kejitu’tit l’nuin-pisun, l’nui-ankitai’t. Mu naqmasianukek John tlukwaqnek ula conference-m maliaptik. Keji’k a’ melki-lukwet John APC a’ nem’kip. Na pekisinkek teluep job-ek mesnmanek taluisik conference wnaqa’tu wijit kisiku’k, ketu’ kjjitutit nkutey nie’ me’ kisi maw-aknutma’tinenew ta’n kqoqey kejitu’k, kisi l’n u kattaq, tape-attaq aqq kqoqey. Eykik na skwjnu’k kisiku’k mu welte’timi’tit wasoqitesmu’k wen, kelusij, kisma... Mu kjejiaq jipatmn, jipalan skwjnu’k e’tmatmtn kisma kqoqey. Katu amuj pa kkatninaq l’n’u’k qaqtmaik amuj pa ku’nik. Aqq ekinu’a’tuk kinijanaq, skwjnu’k, mi’kaq aqq mu pasik mi’kmaw, aklasie’wkw mawk, ta’n wetapektsul’taq aqq ta’n kqoqey kejitu’k. Keji’kik pukwelkik l’n’u’k kejitu’tit l’nuin-pisun aqq skwjnu’k keji’k Murdena. Nekm pukwel-kjjitioq ta’n tel-Ind ankmk l’nuey wirun, l’nui’simkl aqq kqoqey. Nekm a’ good luck-ewitaq kekina’masitaq aqq skwjnu’k tu kisi’k. Nekm a’ tmatmi’titl, fifty years ago-ek na me’ kiskuk ewsik ueltesin pik’l. Na aqq nkutey nujjaq ni’n a’ kisitoqnek wajuk nekmowey kesik ika’taqewe’l. Na mu weji l’ta’we’k Essissoqnik aqq telimupni’k job-1 msiintal Essissoqnik l’ta’ti aqq a’m job-1 aqq new house-1. Eykik me’ kiskuk me’ eskimatmi’titl, fifty years ago-ek na me’ kiskuk eskimatmi’titl wikual eltasin pile’l. Na aqq nkutey nujjaq ni’n a’ kisitoqipnek w’kek nekm, aqq siewqatm me’ kiskuk ni’n. Katu eykik four, five house-1 mesnmi’titl ki’s. Katu mu te’ketlamsitaswi ni’n. Aqq a’m welta’si nunki’kukaq mu e’ntoq keji’kik. Welqatmu’tiek aqq wetapeksi We’koqma’aq aqq mu etli te’tmu jikluksites We’koqma’aq. Aqq a’m ta’n tlimultoqsip nike’. Unama’ki nike’ maw pasi l’nui’sultijik nkutey nie’ We’koqma’aq aqq Essissoqnik aqq Potlotek aqq a’m Membertou kijka’ poqi e’ntoq nie’. Aqq Waqmiktuk l’nui’sultijik, tujiw wisqi’sultijik pas nekmowk. Keji’ak we’kqomma’q, Waqmiktuk ejin, wisqi’sultijik. Katu a’, katu wejku’en mainlandk, kutey nie’ Paqtnkek pem entu’tit nie’ l’nui’sultimk. Kutey nie’ wen meski’k wutan Shubie, mu pukweluk oqitikij’
Before I speak, I would like to give recognition and thank John (AAEDIRP) for leading this conference. John came to my home about nine months ago. He suggested . . . that he was looking for Elders from different communities – Elders in communities that hold Traditional Knowledge – to find out in which communities we would find Elders that hold various teachings about the old ways. It isn’t easy getting this ready in nine months. He came about three to four times to my house. He would ask questions about different things and I would tell him what I know. And I would suggest names of Elders that I know that think in Mi`kmaq, ones that know the medicines, . . .

It is not easy what John is bringing together. I know John works hard and I have seen him at APC. When he came and told me that he got a job to work on the conference to host Elders, so that they could talk/discuss about what we know – so that we could tape it and leave it behind. There are Elders that do not like to be taped or photographed when they speak. I don’t know if they are afraid if others would argue with what he/she has to say. However, we have to stand ground as Elders. We have to let our children know – Mi`kmaq people and non-Aboriginals know as well – where we are coming from and what we know. I know that there are lots of
Mi’kmaq that know about medicines – people like Murdena that know so much. She knows about medicines and its language. She is lucky that she learned and went university. However, there are some of us that come from – I don’t know if you know about Centralization. In our community, Waycobah, the school was destroyed so they wanted us to go/move to Eskasoni. There were people that did go to Eskasoni because they did not have a choice. But, my family/household had a choice; their choice was . . . my father had a job and we had a farm . . . with animals, like horses, cows, and chickens. What we needed for food over the winter we could get from the animals, like cows and goats. That would have provided us with provisions during the winter and for storage. That is why we did not have to move to Eskasoni. People were told that they would get jobs in Eskasoni, and new houses. There are still people, 50 years later, still waiting to get those new houses built for them. My father, on the other hand, built his own home where I still live today, while there are those that have had four or five houses. I did not believe in that. I am happy that my family stayed behind. We were happy here and I love living in Waycobah and I don’t think that I will ever leave here.

Now, I will tell you that Unama’ki today has the best-speaking Mi’kmaq people in Waycobah, Eskasoni, and Potlotek. Membertou is losing its language and Wagmatcook has language speakers, although they speak faster Mi’kmaq there. One knows when a person from Waycobah just came from Wagmatcook because he/she is speaking faster. As you come to mainland, such as Paq’tnkek, people are losing their language . . . losing how to speak Mi’kmaq, like that big community Shubie [Indian Brook]. There are not many people that speak Mi’kmaq there. And, I will tell you something – I know someone that says we have the teachers to blame. But I don’t blame the teachers. Parents, if they really want to save and encourage Mi’kmaq spoken at home, then they would encourage it and teach their children at home to speak it. They would encourage it and make an effort to speak it. I had lost my language at one time, when I had gone to Shubie [Indian residential school], but I returned and learned to speak it again. Of course, there were those that laughed because of errors that were made. That is one of the biggest values of our culture – humour. If someone were to fall, they will not feel sorry, but laugh at the person. I have seen lots of that all over.

Then, Wayne spoke about alcohol and drugs. There are lots of our people. I see changes in life. Ever since child and welfare have been distributed, you can see the changes – starting on welfare days, when you see young people staggering up the road, drunk or pilled out, and being put in jail. There are alcohol and drug workers – at one time, you had to get training for this. You had to complete sobriety first, then training, but today you don’t have that. The way I view it is if Chief and Council like you then they give you the job. That is what is having a negative effect on us today. That is for all jobs. I get along with our Chief and I do tell him, over again, that in our community the biggest problem is dope – the selling of it . . . . In fact, there are
Councillors I have seen sell dope. It is hard to criticize one’s own community. I have told them that many times and it just blows away like the wind – it falls on deaf ears in the community. It is important what John is doing – getting the Elders together. Perhaps the Elders will be listened to. Once we gather our strength . . . we could tell Chiefs and Councils – share with them what we know, where our values and traditions are coming from. There are lots of things that could be said, but time is running out [referring to both Elders’ time and the time approaching lunch time] . . . . It is almost noon. Thank you all for listening.

GRAND CHIEF BEN SYLLIBOY

Yup, Wela’lioq.

ISAAC METALLIC

When Ben was talking in the Mi’kmaq language there, it really touched my heart. I also like to talk in my language because I can express myself better than I can in the English language. But since this is – like when we started – we are going to have it in English, I have to talk in English, I guess. When I was young – I was maybe five or six years old – and I use to hang out with this old fellow, Peter Mitchell. He was probably around maybe 75-80 years old and I was only a kid. I would get up at four or five o’clock in the morning and I go to the beach where I use to pick driftwood – firewood for our stove because we had an old stove in the house and we picked up the driftwood for the wood. And old Peter Mitchell was the same thing. He goes out in the morning, so we had a little competition going, you know, who gets up earlier. Anyway, after a while we sit down outside on a bench. He had a bench facing the sun; he would tell me a lot of stories. A lot of them were true stories and a lot of them were little white lies. It was a little bit mixed with Mi’kmaw humour. He would tell me the story of how the old people – the old days – of how they lived, what happened. He told me a lot of stories and he told about the buried treasure out in the woods and stuff like that when they had the Battle of Restigouche. He used to tell me that there was treasure buried all over the place. And me, being young like that and listening to him, I was really impressed.

But there are a lot of things that he told me, too, about. He always used to talk about Niskam. Niskam, in our language, is God. Today I refer to him as my creator. And he use to tell me stories of how they used to practice – one time they used to practice Native medicine – and they used to have a gathering in a certain place and they would talk about the spirituality and they would have medicine with them. And he told me this priest – there was a priest at that time, I don’t know his name (he never told me his name) – but he used to come around there
and he would cut a piece of switch and he beat the Natives. “This is devil’s work,” you know. “You are not supposed to do medicine because it’s not God giving you the power to that. It is the devil.” He told me all these things and that stayed with me – stayed with me until today, what he said, you know. But, anyway, that went on.

I was going to school at that time. We had nuns at the school and these nuns used to tell me that Christianity was the only religion. If you were not a Christian, then you are going to go to hell. And I wasn’t supposed to talk my language. I was supposed to talk in English and they had a pointer, and I don’t know if anyone here knows what a pointer is, but it was a stick that long, made of hardwood, used to write on the board and they used the pointers to tell you what it means. And I used to get that on the head sometimes, you know what I mean, a tap on the head. They told me that I wasn’t supposed to talk my language. I wasn’t allowed to speak my Native tongue. I wasn’t allowed to do that and I was supposed to go to church every Sunday. Alright, if I got to church on Sunday, they had a little book there that had stars. If you go to church on Sunday, you get a star – a silver star. If you don’t go to church, then you get a strap. I’m going to tell you something – I had a lot of stars. And that wasn’t true, because I didn’t go to church and they always asked me “Where were you?” “Well,” I said or I always tell them, “Sister, I was right behind you all that time. And you know how nuns were – they wear stiff collars they don’t turn around. So they couldn’t prove that I wasn’t there. So it went on like that over the years and I never went farther than seventh grade.

My father died when I was nine years old, and my mother was alone. And of course I had my sisters, plus my sisters worked outside. And I had a brother, an older brother than me, and he was working outside. I was only nine years old when my father died, so I had to take care of the house. We had an old house that was always cold, and, you know, those windows were old windows and water coming in when it rains and stuff like that. I had to go to work and I had to cut firewood. I cut firewood with a bucksaw and it was hard. I was only nine years old. And I lived through my life working. I did everything to survive. We had to get water from the well – water was frozen – and if you wanted to get a drink of water you had to use a chisel to get a glass of water.

I had a hard life and I grew up like that. I worked in the woods, and I worked in Maine, and I did everything to make a dollar and I’d give a few dollars to my mom, you know. By the time I was 18 years old, 17 years old, I was working in Maine – doing labour work, work on a farm, and stuff like that. Later on I worked on construction – I worked on the iron for 40 years. During that time, the early years, I was involved in a lot of alcohol. By that time, then, I was married and I had five kids. And I stayed in construction for a long time and, of course, with construction I got involved with alcohol. I thought that was the right thing to do, you know, hang around with the
boys. I went on like that for many years in and out. Sometimes when I was on a straight line – if there was a powwow here or something happening or Native things going on – I would go. And I would hear the Elders telling me, talking about spirituality and that stayed and worked in my mind because if you plant something in a person’s mind it stays even though at that time you are not really aware of it. It will stay.

So I went in and out like that for years. By that time my two sons were starting to take after me, and they started drinking, too, you know what I mean. And I thought about these older people telling me about alcohol and stuff like that – spirituality and stuff like that – and even though I was under the influence I always prayed. I always prayed. I would never forget that I always prayed no matter what I am doing. At the age of 40, my son was still drinking. I associated with a lot of powwows and the Elders and they talk about spirituality and it stayed in my mind. It worked in my mind. One day, finally, it just clicked. It stopped. I looked back and I see my sons following me, my children following me as to what I am doing. At that time I said “You know this is a cycle – it is a cycle. My grandfather drank, my father drank, I’m drinking, my children are drinking.” I said to myself “Somebody has to break the cycle, and I’m the one who is going to do it.” I stopped drinking. I started going to sweats, doing sweats, talking to Elders. I am always talking to the Elders. The Elders are my idols. And sure enough, two years later, I didn’t tell my son to stop drinking; I didn’t tell him anything, I didn’t talk to him. About two years later he stopped by himself. And he started going to the same thing – doing the same thing – following me. He goes to the sweats and he talks to the Native Elders and sure enough he stopped and today he is okay. The next one down, when he seen his brother not drinking, he too stopped, and the rest followed. Today I’m proud to say that they are alcohol-free. They believe in the Native way of life: they practice it, they believe in spirituality, and they talk about it. It has to do with my Elders; it started from the word Niskam – when you think back, it started there. That was the seed that I needed to stay in my mind, and today I am awfully proud to say, when we talk about spirituality, it touches my heart.

When you talk about the Mi’kmaw language, it really touches my heart. I hear you, Josie talking, . . . and Albert, when he talked in Mi’kmaw, it really touched my heart. I am not trying to put someone up here and up there – I appreciate all the Elders here. I have learned a lot from you people. Whatever I have heard will always stay in my mind. I have enriched respect for all of you; I also have great respect for young people. I love everybody in here, and I wish after this meeting that we don’t disperse and disappear. I like to meet, I like to talk to you, I like to be with you. And I fully understand what you are talking about and I am very appreciative that I was invited here. I haven’t been an Elder for a long time. They put me in the Elders group the last few years. I am still learning, and I am learning from each and every one of you. And I wish we get together again because we can see our communities, like Ben was saying, our
communities are splitting. It is true – we have the same problem in every community. And what we are really trying to do in our community – we have the Elders, now we are getting together with the Elders, we’re bringing more Elders in. Me and John are a part of it – we are bringing all of the Elders in and we want to get them together and work together and we invite the young people in our meetings so we can share our experiences, our ways of life, our traditional life, our values. We teach them the values, and hopefully we all do that. You people are the people that should spread it out. Thank you very much.

FRANK AUGUSTINE

My name is Frank Augustine. I’m from First Nations Elsipogtog, New Brunswick. I’ve been hearing quite a bit here since a couple of days now, and a lot of it is good. I appreciate it. I’m learning just as much as you are of one another. And, you know, thinking back a few years we didn’t have all this. We didn’t have Elders come into our communities and talk about the ways, you know, that should have been. It is just recently now that we put Elders together to plan things that they are talking about – that is in the past. Like when I was growing up . . . our communities didn’t have electricity and there was no running water unless you run and get it. You know, that was the only running water that we had. So, you know, other things – outhouses and all this crap that we had, you know – it was all fun cause there was no alcoholism and there was no drugs at that time. And people, like 100% of people, were speaking their own language. Today in our reserve I could only say that 35 or 40 percent of people are speaking our language. And you know that, along with everything else, our medicines that are brought out, you know, to be – to be dug up and sold – everything is happening today. You bring out one medicine and the next thing you know it is all gone. You tell a person one thing, and where you found that medicine, and next thing you know when you go back it’s not there anymore. So I don’t know – I think it is being sold. To me once you put that in the paper – that what medicines are and where they are coming from – then everybody knows and then everybody digs them out. You know my father used to say one time “When you are sick, you go out in the woods and you get that kind of medicine that you need.” But I guess right now, I guess, you know, people are going there to get tons of medicine where they don’t need it. And what he was saying was you don’t pick enough to last you ten years. You pick only enough to last you that one year, till the time it grows again. But when you are out there trying to pick tons, you’re out there by your own sickness – you are going to be sick because of what you have done. You over-picked what you weren’t supposed to, and that is nature and nature has its own ways of protecting itself. You know, out west people know that now; all the medicine lands are under water because it is not any good anymore. And that’s how it protects itself. And thinking back now, you know, that when I first started these ways, my Elders always
told me about medicines and how to pick them and where to pick them. And, you know, I never
abused that thing that I have. I have always talked about Elders and talked to the Elders and
made sure that I was picking the right one and made sure that I was able to give to the Elders
what I have picked and how I have picked it and why I have picked it. And it works, because if
you offer tobacco for that plant that you are taking, and you ask and you tell them about where
that plant is supposed to be inside of you – what part of it is sick – then it works. But if you pick
a whole bunch there, and by the tons, you don’t what sickness it is going to create. So I am
running out of time here. I am just going to say “Thank you.”

JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

There are no words to express our gratitude. It has been so much information in the last couple
of days and so much sharing and rich feelings of everything. . . . When we were looking for
guidance on this process and looking for leadership with this process, like what John Joe had
said, you have to go to the Elders and look for recommendations about things. Albert had said
that you got to get guidance, get feedback into everything – the agenda, who should be here,
and where do we go from here? And what steps are we going to make to move forward? The
question I had, for example, was should we have an advisory board of Elders for the Atlantic
Chiefs? Well, I am sure every single person here would like to sit on it and give that input. And
should we have an ethics board? There is a Mi’kmaw ethics board, but an ethics board dealing
with Elders? I’m sure everyone would want to take part in that. Should we have a guideline
protocol put on paper? I know everyone would want to take part in that and develop
something out of here. What is the major outcome out of here from these past two and a half
days? And it’s not only the past two and a half days. This process has been a great journey from
a year back. And people that are behind this journey that is led by you – we are only the
mediators that do the little stuff around the back areas. Darcy is here, finally, so we want to say
hi to Darcy. She is on her crutches. She is an example of why this has become where we are. But
it is mainly led by all of you. It’s all of you that have decided everything, right up to the menu.
Jean, here, is the caterer – Jean Martin – and she is the one that has fed us all, health-wise, so
thank you. So that is important as well.

Gillian and I were just saying earlier – all these wonderful words that were shared by you – we
are somehow going to have put it down on paper. The only thing is how are we going to
transcribe so much information that we’ve had here in a couple of days here. There is so much
wealth in that knowledge. And we are going to have to find that solution. I know Darcy isn’t
going to be able to do it all for sure; even between the three of us we won’t be able to
transcribe all of this because there is so much wealth of knowledge. And then it is wealth of
knowledge categorized in different areas: someone said medicines, someone else referred to education, someone else referred to leadership, someone else referred to language, someone else referred to, let’s say, community. All these areas are very important. I think we can have an encyclopedia coming from this very Mawio’mi of information that we’ve shared in the last few days.

There are a couple of things that we still need to go through protocol-wise, one being that we would still like to get that group picture and we are going to do that at the foot of Glooscap over here in the back. And we also want to make sure that we give you gifts of appreciation from the opportunity of sharing this wealth of knowledge. Someone had said before that this was a celebration of knowledge during our discussions with the Elders – they said “This is a celebration of Elders Knowledge; this is what it should be recognized as.” And it should be that – a celebration of knowledge. I think Murdena had said, at one point or another, that every culture has knowledge and every culture can share that knowledge as you go along. And that’s our responsibility – to make sure that that knowledge, as Gwen had said, goes down. It keeps going on, it keeps developing, redeveloping. And someone else said, very wisely, that our knowledge will help us to use it in the time where we are at, the setting where we are at, the place where we are at to address those needs of our youth that have a lot of problems and the problems of our language, of our arts, traditions, how we want to protect our medicines. Our knowledge will be the answer to all of that. So we have to celebrate that knowledge and make sure that we have that responsibility of that and it is there for our future seven generations – and to make sure that our survival goes on. We have a closing prayer that Doug is going to do before our meal. We also have a closing hymn or song that Cathy is going to do. And I would suggest that we go outside and do the photo before we actually have our food. Is that okay with everyone?

ALBERT MARSHALL

I am wondering if I can interject for a moment.

JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

You certainly can.
ALBERT MARSHALL

I think it is imperative on a part of us [to say] you have received an overwhelming information and knowledge and I don’t think it is expected of you to try to decipher it at any given time. But rather can we talk about for a moment about where do we go from here? Now the overarching issue that I have heard the last few days is why are people so much caught up in a dependency mode, especially alcohol? Before we can talk about language, education, economic development, I think we have to focus on how . . . what do we have to do to follow the healing and reconciliation in our communities. I think, in my humble opinion, we should be in a position to, in these junctures, to prioritize because we do have an overwhelming amount of knowledge and in order to map out the next steps of what has to be done. Personally what I have heard over and over again is this big problem of dependency – dependency on social assistance, dependency on substance abuses. I think we also should be in a position to recommend the course of action that needs to be taken to overcome that dependency, because there is no sense for us to talk about education, economic development, revitalization of our culture if our people are sick. Let’s look at alcoholism. What must we do? What instances must we put in place? Must we ask the current alcohol program to come before us and talk about the methodology that is currently used – how they must integrate our traditional ways of wellness? Because unless we bite that thing at the butt, no matter what we do from here on this end – revitalization of languages and culture, economic development, education – if our people are so sick . . . they will not have enough energy to excel in any of those areas. So I would strongly suggest that we talk about that for a moment of where do we go from here? What are our priorities? And what steps must we take to ensure that the sicknesses that are prevailing in our communities are at least being addressed one way or the other. I’m not criticizing the current alcohol programs we currently have, but apparently it has to be fine-tuned, and the traditional ways of wellness would be very much integrated into that methodology. Wela’lioq.

JOHN R SYLLIBOY

Boy, that’s a heavy one. That is a very serious one and that’s a very – that is one of the most important priorities I think our communities are trying to address. Whether it be one person working in the community or, let’s say, through the different boards that, for example, the Atlantic Policy Congress has with health and wellness, with mental health and addictions, with child and youth, with the various health programs. On one scale I can feel safe to say that you know some of these things are being brought forward. We do need to go back to Elders, like you said, and maybe get some of that input in there and get some of that guidance and leadership and that how to address some of these issues. And, Albert, you are absolutely right –
those are the priorities that we have to go back to and look at. We are not going to be able to open up another discussion about this right now. I think people – their mindset is on lunch at this point – and if people really want to discuss further about different things we still have this facility until whenever we have. There are all kinds of opportunities; hopefully, we can discuss this among ourselves. And you are absolutely right – we can’t stop this discussion here and just forget about the fact that Richard, Alex, and Sam came from Labrador and that we have John and Isaac that came from Listuguj, and Chief Ben from Waycobah. Everybody has come here for a reason, and this is only one part of that reason why we are here.

The only part that I can defend at this point is that you are scratching the surface. Like I said, we are at the tip of an iceberg and there is so much more of it that we can excavate and develop and get from it. And you are absolutely right. Albert had said before, and it was great timing, when he said it is time for our leaders to look at this and look at these issues and make those recommendations to Chief and Council. Why not? You’ve voiced that. So we have to take all of this and process it – not process it for us, because you already know this. We have to make sure that there is something that comes out of this. And this parallel project that we have – the Elder Mawio’mi is one process that we are looking at. But the whole research piece that is here as well – we are going to have to take some of that out of that and go back to you and say “Is this what we want? Is this the document we want for recommendations?” Hopefully, we can do that. And this is where we are going to go back and look at you and get your guidance on that.

ALBERT MARSHALL

I have to kindly remind you that time is of an essence for us. For example, I come from a community of 4,000. Out of that 4,000 we have 67 people over the age of 65. Now if we can have this session sometime in the future there is no guarantee that all of us will be here. We are losing Elders on a daily basis, so there has to be a sense of urgency in the leadership to prioritize these issues while they are active – and try to come up with some kind of formula to how we can resolve it. We don’t have much time, John. I am sorry to remind you of that.

JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

I know that, Albert, and you know what? If we didn’t have time for that then we wouldn’t have had people here. We know the sense of urgency.
ALBERT MARSHALL

But the time in which our Elders are among us – that is the point of essence of time that I am stressing. They are disappearing on a daily basis.

GILBERT SEWELL

John, can I say something for a minute?

JOHN R. SYLLIBOY

I would appreciate it if we take this back to you. It is you that determine how we are going to do this. Do people want to take a break first? Have something to eat, do our group photos, and maybe come back and if anyone wants to stay and discuss this further we can go ahead?

GILBERT SEWELL

John, I just want to say something. What I think also the initiative should come from is the Elders. You have to take initiative to have control of your own situation. Not only that – we should take advantage of our learning people, our skilled people. I have a son who is doing his masters and a daughter who is doing her masters also, but we don’t have anything in place to invite these people to come back to our communities and put us forward. I think when I came back from the army, and I came back a machinist to my community, I felt that my people were being abused. My father and brother were having a hard time and I spoke up. I spoke up, and later on I became the spokesperson for my people and some of that initiative has to come from within.

And another thing is I collected so much information over the past and another thing is a lot of people took books and stuff that I had and they sleep on it and they dream – in an osmosis – they are going to learn the history. That is not happening. What you have to do is share this information. And I got some information here all about the Mi’kmaq. The thing is you have to share it and you have to have a place to do that. We don’t have that. Maybe some people should take the initiative. If you are educated you can find ways to find money, and doing this we should have more of these conferences and bring it forward. We cannot let it die here, because too many times I have attended meetings and we go home and this report sits on the shelf. I can show you a welfare study that I did with Indian Affairs 30 years ago, when I worked for Indian Affairs. The guy told me “You are going to write policy,” because I was working as an
advisor in the head office. And I said “No, you are because you’ve been hired $55,000 to do that.” But . . . I was a part of that study, and Indian Affairs shelved it, you know what I mean? So what information you got – are you going to shelve it? Or are you going to share it? What are you going to do with it? So it evolves in your corner right now, and also we too, as Native people, have a responsibility. I know people in Listuguj that I’ve worked with and whatnot. They had the information and now you know where it is? The person died and the family won’t share it. I know songs that were sung by some of the people, and when they started to sing it “Hey, that’s mine. You can’t share that.” You know what I mean? I have lullabies that I was singing last night in the interview with Cathy [sings a lullaby in English]. I haven’t heard that song in a long time, but I am willing to share them, that information. Like I said before, it is a sharing circle and it is about time we all take the responsibility. Wela’liog.

WAYNE ABRAM

One of the things I was going to suggest about Albert’s comment – this is a technical society or time. I don’t know why we don’t create a website. In the website you can outline what the basic principles are, and everyone can interact with the website. You can add your own comments, and everything else, and you could, I guess, communicate with the entire region without having to travel anywhere. Have someone create the website and I guess you can even do it for the summary of this meeting, and then you can ask for presentations about what other people think we should be doing to deal with Albert’s idea. What are we going to do tomorrow? And it is very easy to do.

JOHN JOE SARK

I think a vehicle we use – could use – is a community development vehicle. We are talking about economic development, but I think we have to develop our communities. And I think the Elders should have a role in how the community development is done. Government doesn’t like community development because our people start to ask questions, but I think that we should have it.

JOSIE AUGUSTINE

Can I say something? I don’t think I need a mic, do I? What John did was the proper way of doing things. He went to our uncle, the Grand Chief, for advice on how to bring the Elders together. So we are on the right track. Why I say that is because I work with Elder David Gehue.
I have been working with for many, many years. And he wrote a book and the book is now on the shelf out in here at the gift shop. It is called *The Voices of the Tent*. And he talks about when he first received that gift. He went up to Grand Chief Sylliboy – Donald Marshall – “he went to the Grand Chief to ask him” [spoken in Mi’kmaq]. He asked for permission for him to bring that gift home in this community of Nova Scotia. And this is what he had to do and the Grand Chief gave me the blessing – gave him the blessing for that ceremony to be conducted here and it started here in Nova Scotia. And right now it is travelling from New Brunswick, PEI – all over right now. So this is the proper way. I’m really . . . I want to touch you on the shoulder and admire you for what you have done out of respect – that you went up to our uncle. Wela’lioq.

**JOHN R. SYLLIBOY**

I feel that sense of urgency now and I think we have to do something about it. Well, we are about being as flexible as we can. Right now I think people are hungry, and as the facilitator I do have to feed people. Otherwise, our energies will dwindle. As Gilbert said yesterday, we have some people that need to take some medications. I am willing to stay afterwards. I know people have to get on the road today. There are people that want to stay and further discuss this. And what is it? And Albert is absolutely right – what are we going to do about this? And whoever wants to stay and help hash out some of that and plan it out, I am willing to stay. I’m not sure if Gillian wants to stay, but I can certainly sit there with you and get your guidance on that. Because two days and a half of just talking about this and hammering something on stone – “Take this to Chiefs right now” – by all means we can do that, but I want your guidance with that and that’s important. So, like I said, you are welcome to stay after lunch and we can discuss this further. But those who have planned to go home today or this afternoon – that is understood as well, as long as you trust the rest of us to go ahead and take some of this leadership on. And you are more than welcome to stay, like I said. I will leave you . . . to decide that at lunchtime. And what we are going to do is pass out gifts, and then we are going to get our picture taken. Do you think we should get our picture taken first? And the other sense of urgency was that the powwow grand opening is at 1 o’clock for some people who want to attend that. So, like I said, you guys decide on your own. Lunch is there, we will get the group picture done, give gifts out, and have the closing song and the closing prayer.

**JOHN JOE SARK**

A lot of us are diabetics so we should eat first.
MURDENA MARSHALL

I have something to say – “Let’s eat!”

LUNCHTIME

Closing song and prayer.