



Special Committee To Prevent The Abuse And Exploitation Of Children Through the Sex Trade

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO PREVENT THE ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION
OF CHILDREN THROUGH THE SEX TRADE
2000**

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Humboldt

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Carolyn Jones
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Don Toth
Moosomin

Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

The committee met at 10 a.m.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Ladies and gentlemen, we want to welcome you here this morning. Thank you very much for waiting for our committee.

I want to apologize to you for the delay in getting started. We were late leaving La Ronge this morning and then had another delay with taxis not waiting for us at the airport quite on time and all those things. So I'm sorry we're late getting here. Thank you very much for waiting for us and we're very much looking forward to this morning's hearings.

We're going to run through a little power point presentation for you. We're going to introduce ourselves as committee members and we're going to then look forward to some formal presentations.

We have a scheduled presentation from the Meadow Lake Interagency Committee and there may be others of you here who would like to make more informal comments, so please feel free to come up and express whatever views you'd like to or react to something that someone else has said.

I think we'll start with the power point presentation. But before we do that . . . And then maybe we'll have introductions. Does that sound all right with everyone?

So let's begin with the power point presentation. We're just going to introduce members of the committee. And I'll start by introducing my colleague and Co-Chair, Arlene Julé, who's the member of the legislature for Humboldt.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And I'd like to introduce to all of you, Mr. Peter Prebble, MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Saskatoon Greystone. And Peter is the other Co-Chair of the committee.

Just to my right here we have Ms. June Draude. She's the MLA for Kelvington-Wadena. And we have Ron Harper to my far left over there, MLA for Regina Northeast.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Carolyn Jones, just to the right of Ron, is the member of the legislature for Saskatoon Meewasin. And Don Toth to my right is the member of the legislature for Moosomin. And last but certainly not least, Kevin Yates, our member of the legislature for Regina Dewdney.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And I'd like to introduce the staff to the committee that we have with us. A wonderful staff, very competent, and certainly there every minute of the day for us to ensure that the proceedings of the committee go on smoothly.

Margaret Woods is our committee Clerk. And we have here, just to my left, Randy Pritchard; he's our technical adviser.

And we'd like to let everyone here know some of the background to the committee, why it was formed and what our mandate is and so on. But firstly we'd like to inform you of the committee's key principles. And those principles are very, very

important to all of us.

In establishing the committee we had to come up with some very basic principles that we thought were of value to all people of Saskatchewan. And one of the principles is that every child is everyone's responsibility. And we also believe and reflect the beliefs of the people of the province that the involvement of children in the sex trade is child abuse and nothing less.

And our goal, this committee's goal and we believe the goal of most people in the province, is to reflect zero tolerance for the sexual abuse of children on the streets or the sexual abuse of children in our society in total.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — We'll just give you a sense of the mandate of our special committee. Basically our committee was set up to address and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly to stop the abuse and exploitation of children through the sex trade within the province.

In the course of doing that you know, we're finding that we're dealing with other related issues. For instance last night in La Ronge there was a lot of discussion about domestic abuse in the home. And in fact a lot of the children who've been pulled into the sex trade for one reason or another, the vast, vast majority of them have suffered domestic abuse in the home as well. So these issues are all interrelated.

The committee has been instructed to consult with all interested stakeholders and concerned citizens that have an interest in this issue and seek their advice and input on what the next step should be in tackling this problem. We've also been asked to examine what other jurisdictions are doing. And we've begun, for instance, by examining what our two neighbouring provinces are doing.

We've looked, for instance, at some of Manitoba's initiatives around prevention and preventing abuse in the home and on the street. And we've looked at what Manitoba has done in terms of seizure of vehicles. They've set up new legislation that authorizes police to remove the vehicles of suspected johns.

And we've looked closely at what Alberta has attempted to do. They've set up a quite extensive network of services for children who've been victimized on the street. And as many of you will know, they have a law that has been struck down but that they're trying to reconstruct that among other things, provides for children to be taken off the street for a period of 72 hours for their safety and protection.

And so we're also looking at what other parts of North America are doing, and Randy is doing some research for us in that regard right now.

And finally we've been asked to examine the reasons why children end up on the street in the first place. And in this regard we've gotten a lot of advice that we'll perhaps talk about a little further later on in the morning. I'll turn it back to you, Arlene.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And so in order to facilitate

gathering of information from residents throughout the province, who of course are . . . whose views and concerns are extremely valuable so that we may make a good assessment in the final analysis and bring forth recommendations about what might need to be done in this province, so in order to do that, of course, listening is the way.

So we determined that we were going to set up a public hearing process such as we have here today, to listen to the views and the concerns of every one of you here and all Saskatchewan residents. And we wanted to make sure that we included youth because youth are the people who have experienced a lot of this and who have friends that have experienced it, so their voice is very important.

We have determined that the public hearing process would be in the three main cities — Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Regina — because that's where a high proportion of the sex trade on the streets is taking place, and behind closed doors too, but it's the main areas for the sex trade.

But we determined that we would also go to some smaller centres in Saskatchewan to see just how these areas may be affected by the sex trade, or in fact how there's an interrelatedness in as far as girls on the streets or boys on the streets in the main centres; and you know, just if there is a connectedness to the areas surrounding the main cities. And we're finding that there's definitely a relationship, so that's been sort of determined by the other hearings that we've had.

The public hearing process that we've had so far, we had some of the hearings in Saskatoon and Regina earlier this year and those were completed in April. And this is what we call phase two. It's the next round of hearings throughout the province and we've just begun that with this first week in Prince Albert, La Ronge, Meadow Lake, and Lloydminster. And we will be having two more weeks of hearings throughout the province in November.

So we also put forward a report on the phase one hearings, the ones we . . . the hearings we had this spring. And that report was tabled in the legislature on June 28 of this year. You may get a copy of that report through the Legislative Assembly Library or staff. And if anyone here wants that, we could possibly refer you to our technical adviser. But the report was a compilation of what we heard from people in the spring of this year in regards to the sex trade on the streets.

And there were about 35 witnesses that we had that were telling us of their knowledge and their experience about the sex trade. So 35 in total — 35 witnesses. You know there was more people than that that really spoke to us, but we had 35 presentations.

And we heard from — I think Peter has already mentioned this — from people in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba, different officials there. Outreach staff that's working in those cities; some of the youth from those cities as well as from Saskatchewan; from different community groups, agencies, and communities working with kids on the street; and we've heard from some parents.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'll just give you a very brief sense of some of the things that are . . . some of the things that are contained in this interim report.

The interim report — and we've got some copies with us today, so I hope you'll feel free to take them — basically focused on six areas. One I've already mentioned, which is the legislative approaches in Manitoba and Alberta.

A second is that there was a very strong feeling among a lot of the presenters that one of the big priorities of the Saskatchewan government should be a strategy for deterring johns. And one of the suggestions in that regard, of course, was the removal . . . the seizure of vehicles from johns.

We've also had a number of suggestions about, not so much tougher penalties for johns, but . . . The problem doesn't seem to be so much with the penalties, the problem is with getting the convictions — actually getting johns charged and arrested. And we've spent quite a bit of time looking at suggestions for making it easier for the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and city police forces to do their job in terms of getting convictions and being able to lay charges in the first place.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I would just like to interject for a moment if I could, Peter.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, please.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — That was the focus certainly, to assist the police in being able to lay charges if they find reasonable and probable grounds that someone . . . a child is in danger. But there's also . . . We've had it brought to our attention that a lot of people believe that the judicial system is just not laying on the penalties as they should be. And that's a main problem. And the big question is, why.

But that aspect of it has been brought forward and many people find that very frustrating because they believe that it's not . . . if judges are not throwing the book at the perpetrators, then it's not sending a message that's loud and clear that this is something that will not be tolerated. So I'll just let you go on.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — No that's fine. Just to briefly summarize some of the other key themes you find in the report, and this report doesn't have recommendations. Part of the purpose in continuing the hearing process is that we wanted to take some of these initial ideas that had been thrown out and get public reaction to them.

But there was a number of witnesses during the first phase of the hearings suggested that we need to give more attention to long-term healing for youth who have been victimized and that this process very frequently goes on well into adulthood. And the point has been made to us again and again as well, that we need more resources in our province for drug and alcohol treatment for youth. And most of the youth that are involved in the sex trade also have addiction problems of one form or another.

We've had a wide array of suggestions made with respect to preventive strategies that might be employed. And there's been

a sense that outreach services that are primarily in place in the larger urban centres are an important way of reaching out to young people on the street. In Prince Albert and Saskatoon and Regina, there are outreach bands that actually do this work.

And the outreach staff have been telling us that for instance there's about 250 children a year involved in the sex trade in Regina . . . sorry, in Saskatoon. These are children under 18, some as young as 8 — 250. And those same outreach staff in Regina have been telling us we're looking at numbers in the range of 300 children in Regina under 18, many, at least half of whom are under 14. Just to give you a sense of the scale of the problem in those communities.

And there's been . . . we've heard a frequent theme everywhere we've gone about the need for places of safe refuge for children. And we heard that last night again in La Ronge in a somewhat different context. Not necessarily a safe house just for children who've been victimized on the street, but the idea of a place of safe refuge for children who are facing abuse, whether it's on the street or in their homes or elsewhere in their community.

And finally we've heard a consistent theme to date about the importance of public awareness and public education to increase people's understanding about the nature of this issue and the widespread nature of sexual abuse in our society, whether it's on the street or in the home or in some other context.

So you'll see these themes developed in a lot more detail in the interim report. And for anyone who would like copies of that, please pick them up while you're here.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And we just want your input. So you can find us on the web site. And if anyone would like to just jot that down, you're certainly welcome to do so.

We'd like you to continue letting us know of your concerns. The committee will be meeting until the end of November in a sense, and then we will be looking at getting some recommendations compiled and doing a final report. So up until that time of the final report we'd certainly be most happy to hear any of your concerns that might be very well included in the report. So that's a web site.

Before we start we're going to do some introductions here. But before we start with the introductions of committee members — I mean not with the committee members, with our presenters, I'm sorry — I'd like to introduce and welcome Rudi Peters. He's the MLA for Battleford-Cut Knife; he's right over here. And welcome to you too, Denis Allchurch. He's the MLA for Shellbrook-Spiritwood.

These are your representatives and are concerned about what's happening in your communities, so they're here to speak with you and certainly to take in the presentation. So thank you very much.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I think we're ready to hear from our first presenters which are the Meadow Lake Interagency Committee. I understand Dave Esterby is going to

be presenting. Dave.

Mr. Esterby: — Good morning.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — And Mark — is it van Schie? Am I pronouncing that correctly, Mark?

Mr. van Schie: — Well done.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Well thank you. Anyway, we're really looking forward to hearing from you, and would you like to come forward and just take your time and get comfortable.

Mr. Esterby: — Good morning, everyone, and thanks for the opportunity to present some information to your committee.

The Meadow Lake Interagency group has been in place for a number of years. And I've presented the panel with a copy of the listing, which I'll improve a little bit and get a better copy to your later. I was trying to fix it this morning, but my technical skills are a little short.

At a recent interagency meeting we decided that we would send a few folks off on a task group and bring together a presentation for you this morning that would give you some of the highlights of what goes on in our community and what our concerns are and what some of our suggestions are. It's by no means all inclusive, and I think maybe as we get into questions around the presentation or other questions from the panel, that some of the other information will come out at that point in time.

So we'll give you a run through of the presentation, and Mark's the technical expert and the one that did all the hard work on this. So we'll have him run through that and then we'll try and answer questions. We have a number of the people, in fact probably all of the people that worked on the subcommittee here, so that we'll ask them to answer some of the questions that are appropriate as well, rather than Mark and I trying to respond to all of those questions.

Mr. van Schie: — Good morning, and thank you again for giving us the opportunity to make this presentation. I just want to emphasize that while it's obvious what my affiliation is, the ideas presented here are the ideas of our little committee and not my ideas.

Just to shed a little light on the context of what our presentation is going to be. When we met we basically had to conclude that there was no specific evidence in the community that children are involved in the sex trade in this community, but that's from a purely statistical point of view. From a policing perspective, I can tell you that there were no cases where we investigated child prostitution or child pornography.

However, if we consider the conditions and the situations that exist that would support this kind of activity, I think it's fairly clear that there is this activity going on in the community here. It just hasn't come to our attention.

And part of that is due to the statistics game. It's not really a game, but with so many agencies involved, not all agencies

keep specific statistics. And as much as we would like to interact with each other and share information, various privacy considerations don't always allow for that to happen. Many people will relate an incident to one agency with explicit instruction that it's not to go any further, so the data doesn't always get to the right places.

Part of the reason for the stats not being there is that the reporting level has always been low or non-existent, often due to the willingness of participants and/or the public embarrassment of reporting.

And by willingness I don't mean they really want to do this. Particularly for the older youth, participation in the sex trade is the only option they feel they have to provide the basic necessities of living or to provide the funds they need to satisfy a particular addiction. Once involved in this kind of activity, the participants or their family are often too embarrassed to come public about it.

Another key factor is public tolerance. It's relatively high in many areas, particularly where the individual or the community isn't affected. If there aren't kids on their street corner, if there aren't johns cruising the neighbourhood, it's not a concern to the individual.

A big aspect of exploitation of children is on the Internet, and the Internet provides anonymity. Many people perceive child pornography, particularly on the Internet, as a victimless crime — it's just a picture of somebody else from some other country or that I don't know; it makes no difference to me; I don't go to those sites; I don't view those pictures; there's no victim here.

And again when it comes to child abuse or sexual exploitation of children, the definition is quite loose. If you ask three different people a definition of sexual exploitation of children, you'll get three vastly different answers.

So the outline of this presentation, therefore, is going to be focused on what the root causes are of child abuse and sexual exploitation of children. Following that, I'll provide you with some local statistics that I've gathered that give the background to establish that this kind of activity very well could exist and probably does exist in this community.

A few general examples, some local programs that are in place here to deal with these issues, and finally the recommendations that we as a committee would like to make to this committee.

Now the root causes, when we were thinking about this . . . as I list them, they're basically the absence of these four basic elements that we feel contribute to children falling into the sex trade. Without a safe home, without security of their physical person, their emotional person, and their sexual aspect, without stability in the home and without food on the table, the door is virtually wide open for kids to become involved in this kind of activity. And from the comments from the Co-Chairs, I think you've heard this before.

Basically these four issues relate to family issues and poverty issues. Strong family relationships, strong family values, a lack of poverty go a long way in preventing the exploitation of

children in the sex trade. It's not to say that . . . I'm sure you've come to the realization as well that poverty in itself isn't the root cause. There are many middle class, upper-class families that have children that have become victims or have people in that family who are offenders.

These root causes, we as a committee feel, relate both to victims and offenders. And taking a quote from your interim report: "... to the extreme lack of self-esteem. Ill-defined moral values, self-loathing, self-hatred . . ." The lack of those four basic elements feed this kinds of feelings in an individual.

Some local statistics going back to 1995. Basically you can see in the last column, on average, about 50 per cent of the sexual assault files that we are involved with in Meadow Lake involve youth. And these statistics are not just the Meadow Lake community. Often we assist outlying detachments to conduct interviews of children that abuse has happened outside of the Meadow Lake limits.

Most of the children — or when I say sexual assaults involving youth, some of these are . . . most of these are youth as victims. Some of these are youth as offenders, as well. And the cases that I scanned through, it's more than just a natural, sexual curiosity of youth. It's far more advanced than that.

Relating to drug offences, the percentage again is fairly significant. The premise that I made earlier that sex is being traded for addictions. Here we're looking at drugs. We can see that there is a significant percentage of drug use among youth. And looking through the cases again, there are many that aren't included in that total that involve individuals just beyond the age of youth. And I'm sure it's not first-time use for those individuals as well.

I haven't looked at alcohol use but I don't think I'd be stretching it that far to suggest that there are many instances of youth trading sex for either alcohol or drugs in this community.

Ms. Jones: — Excuse me. What is the cut-off you're using for youth?

Mr. van Schie: — Eighteen.

Ms. Jones: — Eighteen?

Mr. van Schie: — Yes.

And getting back to our basic root causes — the safe home, secure home — these are apprehensions by Social Services in our area from 2000 back to 1996. The PG apprehension stands for period of grace, and that's where children are returned to the home within 48 hours; however, there was a need to initially remove them from the home because of some risk.

Just some general examples that we can provide for you — we have a significant number of the reported sexual assaults involving children under the age of 10, children subjected to abuse. Now the stats before were that about 50 per cent of the sexual assault cases reported to us involve youth, and I'm saying that a significant percentage of those involve children 10 years old or younger.

Some of those cases involve offenders as young as seven years old, and I know they cannot technically be called offenders at that stage, but participants I guess. Many incidents reported where children as young as 10 are coming to events for school in a stoned condition, obviously under the influence of drugs.

Teens running away from home to the cities and having no means of support when they arrive there. Just conditions such as that that really facilitate involvement in this kind of activity.

Some of the programs that are in existence here, some of these programs are available province-wide and are consistent from place to place. Some of these programs are fairly unique to the Meadow Lake area. Child and family service. It's part of their mandate — working with families where children are at risk or potentially at risk. They also provide in-home support, parent aides providing parents with the necessary parenting skills.

Our community schools have many programs as do most school divisions. Many are designed to ensure children have a healthy understanding of what a positive relationship or a healthy relationship is. Programs such as Care, Feeling Yes, Feeling No deal with the physical kind of relationships in families. Care is directed at the kindergarten age children. Feeling Yes, Feeling No, is directed at grade 4. Health and wellness programs focused on self-concept and life skills, developing a positive self-image; student supports such as peer mediation; strong teacher support as well in this community; many in-school, home and community literacy initiatives, and a community school model that's focusing on increasing the parents' involvement in the day-to-day lives of the students — all these things are geared to providing that safe, stable, secure home environment.

We have a local youth centre here that's been named The Other Side. It provides a safe, secure youth-related drop-in centre for kids aged 12 to 18 and it extends beyond that as well. It's kind of split into two age groups as far as programming goes. It's an open door policy there and it's staffed by three workers and a coordinator. They have I'm ongoing youth activities and they have numerous programs that are designed to promote positive social, physical, cultural, academic, and spiritual aspects of life.

There's a number of other community programs that are available. And just in listing them here I will no doubt forget some, and you'll have to forgive me for that but we have numerous addictions counselling areas — mental health, Positively Parenting, Healthy Babies Right From The Start, teen and young parent program, Children First daycare.

With the RCMP we have school liaisons and the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program which is a program designed to develop resistance to drugs. I believe that's geared at grade 6 students . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 5, I stand corrected.

Recommendations. The recommendations that we came up with are focused on how to improve the conditions in these root cause areas. As I mentioned originally we don't have . . . or we haven't had cases reported to us of children involved in prostitution or pornography. These recommendations are designed at improving the basic root conditions that we

consider essential for preventing kids from getting involved in this kind of activity.

We feel that the priorities must be established locally. Priorities in other major centres addressing this issue may not be the same as the priorities that we have in this community here. Programming must be flexible as well because the one-size-fit-all concept doesn't work.

Any programming must begin early. Early intervention is essential to be effective. Programming needs to be delivered into the home as well. Again the whole concept of safe home, secure home, needs the in-home programming. And it must involve all members of the family not just those that are either victims or offenders.

Resources and technology — a huge area of concern. The general consensus among committee members was that in all likelihood there are sufficient resources in place already. It's basically the administration of the resources that is the problem. Quite often, and this isn't a personal criticism, but quite often bureaucracy gets in the way. There's various government agencies that each have their own mandate, and to effectively deal with the problem, more than one mandate . . . or more than one agency has to be involved. And, you know, to address this issue you may have to go to three or four agencies and they can only do a portion of what you want to do. And it's very difficult to coordinate effectively.

Funding of course is tied to each agency's mandate, and if the community develops a vision on how they want to address a particular issue, whether it's this issue or some other issue, then funding is often based on fitting their program into a pigeonhole that the government has funding available for. To effectively deal with an issue, it would be nice to make a submission and have a true partnership of the various agencies and to effectively deal with it that way.

And the resourcing for many agencies is on a year-to-year basis. If they fit the criteria of a government mandate, they get funding. But often they don't know till the end of the fiscal year whether they have funding available for the next year, whether they can actually operate in the next year. And that makes it very difficult to try to coordinate any long-term kind of programming.

On the technology side, we don't often think of it as a technology issue. When we deal with or when we mention child abuse, child prostitution, we think of the physical aspect of it — children being victimized in the home, children being sold on the street basically.

In my previous posting before I came up to Meadow Lake, I was involved in criminal intelligence and the Internet; and child pornography is huge and it's not a big-city issue. There are many people scattered across the province from small towns to big cities who are actively involved in importing printed material, importing video material, audio material, trading pictures on the Internet. It's a huge problem. It has no boundaries and that makes your job especially difficult because it's an international issue; it's not a Saskatchewan issue alone.

Speaking from a policing perspective, to detect and apprehend people like this, there has to be a commitment to modern technology, up-to-date technology, and more importantly, up-to-date training. And the legislation needs to be there as well that allows police officers to go on the Internet in an attempt to locate these people.

I was at a seminar in Regina with an individual from the United States where they do nothing other than sitting on chat lines and trying to find people who are enticing children into pornography. And some of these cases have actually come back into Canada. So there is one individual out in BC (British Columbia) that was detected by this individual in the States.

And of course there needs to be the co-operation between agencies, and there was in this case. There was a successful conclusion to that file.

Effective legislation. And again, for the most part, I firmly believe that there is effective legislation in place and I don't have a lot of criticism for the legal . . . the legal system. There are certain cases, though . . . And I fully appreciate the need to have judges completely independent from politics. That's essential. There are, however, many cases where a legal ruling can be fully supported and fully logical from a legal perspective, but from a societal perspective it's completely off base. And I don't know what the answer to that is.

Specifically, the case in B.C. where the judge ruled that it was okay to possess child pornography. The law is there that says it's illegal, yet the judge's ruling was, from a purely legal perspective, it was okay. And how we deal with those kind of things, I'm afraid I don't have a recommendation for you, but it is a significant issue.

That basically concludes our legal . . . our committee presentation. I do have copies available of the presentation, as well as my notes. They're serving another purpose at the moment, but I will hand them out when time permits. And we as a committee are available for your questions.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. Thank you very much Sgt. van Schie. We're going to turn the questioning over, momentarily, to the committee members and we, as Chairs, will most likely wind up the questioning.

All right. You've certainly given us a good overview and put things in perspective in as far as what's happening in and around Meadow Lake. And it looks like you certainly have a good deal of programming in place to deal with some of the issues that are confronting you.

I have some questions in reference to some of the things you've mentioned and the administration and so on of the programs, and where the difficulties come in. But before I do that, as I mentioned, I'm going to turn the questioning over to our other committee members. And if committee members could give me an indication if you have questions at this time. All right, Ron.

Mr. Harper: — And thank you very much for your presentation. It was very informative. I'd just like to delve a little further into your local statistics. The instances of reported

sexual assaults on children, the number of actual reports as to what you perceive are the actual assaults in the community — how does that relate?

Mr. van Schie: — I wouldn't want to hazard a guess. I think it's fairly standard everywhere you go that the level of reporting is really only the tip of the iceberg. I'm afraid I don't have a question . . . or an answer to your question as to how much in addition to this actually occurs. I would only be making a guess.

Mr. Harper: — In the reported instances, were the perpetrators known to the victim?

Mr. van Schie: — In most cases, yes. Most of these situations are familial where, you know, some extended family . . . Very few of them are actually outside of the family or unknown. I don't think there are any unknown offenders in these cases.

Mr. Harper: — And the reported ones, these are children under the age of 18, 16?

Mr. van Schie: — Eighteen, yes.

Mr. Harper: — And the number that would, say, in your . . . Do you have the stat from the number under the age of 14?

Mr. van Schie: — I didn't break it down that far.

Mr. Harper: — Within the families that these assaults happened, would you consider these families to be dysfunctional?

Mr. van Schie: — I didn't review the files that in-depth. And being new or relatively new to the community up here, I don't think I can give you an answer . . .

Mr. Harper: — The reason I asked that question is we've been sort of hearing that trend I guess you would say, or thread that binds, is that it seems like there is . . . the number of reported assaults certainly happen within dysfunctional families. And as you've already indicated, poverty does not necessarily mean a dysfunctional family; we see them in all walks of life, whether they be poverty or middle class or upper class.

It's also been sort of a gleaning of mine that children that end up as a result of abuse within the home, end up, many of them, as sex trade workers on the streets of our cities but are almost driven there in their seeking for support for love, really, for family love, for that nurturing that they don't receive in their own dysfunctional families.

I'm just wondering if that is sort of a sense of view you arrive at also?

Mr. Esterby: — Maybe I can speak to that a little bit. I guess I've got 28 years of experience with Social Services prior to a change in roles and, I think, as we look at many of the families where sexual assaults occur, there is some form of unsafeness or lack of security in those families, but I don't know what you call dysfunctional.

We have families now who consider leaving their young

children after school for a couple hours while they . . . till they get home as a . . . We talk about latchkey kids. And if we call families who have latchkey kids dysfunctional, then I think what we have is we have a whole lot of those in our communities everywhere.

Latchkey kids are often victims of assault simply because they are not provided with adult safe and security there. They may go to a relative's place who may be an offender. So I find the term dysfunctional a little hard to deal with because there are so many different root causes that provide the opportunity for somebody to be assaulted, I suppose.

The instances where you have sexual assault within the nuclear family, I do believe that yes, you could call those dysfunctional families. Because somewhere in that system there's somebody who's in a power situation and who's got control over the environment there. And that's not a healthy family.

But once you've got other partners . . . or other players I mean, impacting on that family, it may not be because the family is dysfunctional. They just may not know what's going on. And a child may be I guess brought into a situation and then through fear will not tell their parents. Again, that happens in very, very solid families.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you.

Mr. Yates: — I have a couple of questions. And, again, I thank you for the presentation; it was very well organized and an excellent presentation.

We've heard a common theme, as Ron as indicated, about sexual assaults occurring in homes. Often in homes a pattern seems to be forming that more often will occur in homes where there's a lack of parenting skills, families involved in alcohol or drug addiction, parents involved in that; parents that don't recognize the need for proper supervision, and those types of things that you would see in a normal, well-functioning home — often, in many cases, root causes of poverty and those types of issues.

Would you say that in the majority of cases that you have in your community that there are other causes there that are identifiable — alcohol, drug problems? We've heard very strong evidence over the number of hearings we've had that, particularly in Aboriginal families, the residential school issue and a generation not having the opportunity to learn parenting skills and pass them on to their children has had some effect.

When you investigate sexual assaults here, are those there . . . are those common threads there as well in this community?

Mr. Esterby: — Well I think to a fairly significant degree I would agree with you. I think when we look at children at risk . . . And I guess we're wanting to present sort of from the perspective of prevention here rather than trying to deal with the kids who are already involved in situations.

And I think when we go back to the items we've mentioned — about parenting education, about strong family supports, about a school system that meets the kids of needs . . . or the needs of

kids and doesn't allow them to get discouraged and looking for other means of trying to achieve — I think those are the issues that, I think, are key ones for our community. And the direction that we've set as community goals is to provide supports for people very early and to ensure that there are as much as possible supports for the kids that are now youth as well.

But in looking really at the ways to address some of those issues, we often need to come back to a community perspective and a vision for our community on that. And it's community building.

And I guess when we see kids getting involved in the sex trade, yes, they've likely had some falling out in their family. There's been a shortfall somewhere along the way. It may be because of lack of parenting skills, and it may be because a parent somewhere along the way had a lack of success in parenting and that's been passed on to the next generation without the experience.

I think the reality for fixing these things is really building strong communities. And therefore community programming has to have continuity; it has to have interconnectedness. And the issues we raised earlier around the funding sources for so many of the community-based programs being so tentative every year, it's hard for a lot of folks to believe that, yes, they'll be there next year; that instead of doing things that have to be measurable today in order to get funding, they should be doing things that have a long-term impact and as a result need long-term funding to do that.

So we're coming at it from the perspective of trying to enhance that in our community by good inter-agency co-operation.

Mr. Yates: — What I'm trying to get to is very clearly before we can look at the solutions — and prevention is the solution, the most beneficial solution — we need to clearly understand the depth of the problem.

And I can tell you that even from my perspective, and I have worked for Social Services and Justice for many years previous to this, sitting on this committee has opened my eyes to the extent of the problem and to the depth and complexity of the problem.

So what we're trying to learn is some of that in the various elements within the community.

And my next question has to do with legislative solutions, and we've asked this primarily of community organizations and police agencies across the province. Are there tools that we could legislate within the authority of the provincial government to assist in dealing with abuse in the family or sexual abuse on the streets that you can think of?

We traditionally have worked within a set of rules but we have the ability, as legislators, to change the rules and to look at new and progressive ways to deal with problems.

And you may not be able to get an answer today, but I'd like you to think about that. And we've got the chiefs of police in the province and RCMP agencies looking at this as well. And

then if you have some recommendations, after you've had some time to think about it, you could forward them to the committee. Because the existing rules may work well in some environments and not in others. And that's part of the whole situation you're talking about is one size doesn't fit all and one solution doesn't meet all the problems.

So if you could take some time to think about that or if you have any response today, we'd be more than willing to take it. But if you need some time, please get back to us.

Ms. Harper: — There's one thing that I'd like to respond to. My name is Monica Harper.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Monica, could you just come up to the mike . . . (inaudible) . . . your comments.

Ms. Harper: — I don't talk loud enough is what you're saying?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — . . . Thanks for understanding.

Ms. Harper: — Monica Harper. I'm wondering if I'm related to Ron. We'll have to check that out later.

I coordinate a program in Meadow Lake called Positively Parenting Education and Support Program and we're just ending our fourth year of operation in Meadow Lake. It's a community-based, parenting project which maybe I'll talk a little bit more in terms of the way we're set up.

But in terms of some of the things that you were talking about, you know, what leads to dysfunction and abuse in families, I think all the issues that you mentioned and that Dave and Mark supported, yes, for sure, kids who come from . . . kids who are abused and exploited come from homes where there is addiction and there is neglect and there is a lack of supervision.

And you talked about cultural issues as well, and that's something that I wanted to respond to. Not specifically the residential school issue, but cultural issues as they relate to raising children. I'm currently leading a parent group on a reserve near Meadow Lake where we talk about the supervision of children and how important that it is to keep kids safe, to protect them.

And on reserves, it's not uncommon to see kids all over the place, because there's a belief that, you know, that community raises that child. But unfortunately, we know that that doesn't always happen, because kids get hurt and kids die not only on-reserve, in other places as well.

But on-reserve parents are telling me, I don't worry about my kids, you know. It's common knowledge and common practice for kids to wander without supervision. So I don't know how you address that. And kids get hurt and they do get abused and parents on the reserve are telling me that they're okay — not with the abuse and that — but they're okay with their kids wandering.

And I'm not sure if it's . . . when talking to parents about, you know, the stages of development, a child at four years old, their

job is to be an adventurer, right; to boldly go where no man has gone before. And they wander. It's a natural curiosity, right?

Well, kids drown on-reserve and they get run over more often, I think. And I trust someone will correct me on this if I'm wrong, but those incidents are higher and it's because of this, you know, free spirit.

And I just wonder about, you know, imposing . . . I don't know if it's imposing, but I wonder about educating folks on the importance of protecting an adventurer, you know. At four years old kids are pretty independent but they still need supervision as does, as Dave mentioned, those latchkey kids, you know, the 10-year-olds too who are going home on their own.

And somehow, some way, we need to impart to parents more about the need for supervision. And yet we know that we have heaps of parents who are out there working, like two parents out there working. Our program struggles, as we indicated in our presentation, year to year to year, our fourth year. We beg, borrow, and plead for money to keep our parenting program alive. Our program operates with a budget of \$45,000, and I'm the only paid employee. We have approximately, at varying times, five to nine volunteers. And it's crazy what we go through to maintain funds.

We're a community-based program. I have an office in my home, and I work to go where people say they want parenting education — be it on-reserve, be it at the college, be it at the high school, be it here. So we work to meet the needs of people by going out. So it's not agency driven, which is really neat. It's community owned, and we offer a lot of services — parenting classes, a telephone warm line, a lending library. And we offer flexibility as well.

And every year . . . Now we're at a place where our budget, our year end is October 31, and we don't know if we have money again for next year. So those things are frustrating, you know, when you have something that works, and it's a program that works to meet the needs of families. Family resource programs across Canada have been in existence for a long, long time and we have yet to gain credence in terms of core funding.

You know, there's all kinds of grants — associated entities funds, and prevention and support grants — and it's crazy the political bureaucracy, as we mentioned, that we have to go through to secure funding. And that's as frustrating as hell, you know, and because it meets the needs of families, and it's something that's working.

So when you talk about kids . . . And I hear what Dave's saying too in terms of, you know, so often we looked at the residual stuff, you know, what's happening after the fact? And we, as a community, want to focus on prevention. So we know that poverty leads to . . . can lead to kids getting involved in really self-destructive behaviours. But what I would like to know is for families . . . for children who come from families where there is poverty and where there are very unstable conditions, for those kids who don't get involved in self-destructive behaviour, what kinds of things have made them resilient toward that? What builds resiliency in kids?

Because I know lots of people, personally and professionally, who have come from really, you know, what we would call bad homes, with very, very less than desirable kinds of conditions, who succeed in life. So I'm wondering, you know, if we need to look more at what builds resiliency in kids — that's important.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you.

Ms. Harper: — You're welcome.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you very much.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — All right. We're just going . . .

Ms. Buchta: — You'll have to excuse my shakiness, it will go away by the end of the time I'm talking.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. Could you give us your name?

Ms. Buchta: — Yes, sure. My name is Gina Buchta. I'm the coordinator of The Other Side, that youth centre that was briefly mentioned.

I throw a loophole into . . . Every time we sit around and talk with people, I'm a . . . speak my mind, so I just say how I feel. When you asked to be . . . where it comes from or, you know, why there is the reason it is here. And, you know, for one thing it is here — I'll say that.

It's here in sexual abuse. It's here in the selling of it. It's here in the pornography part of it. It's here. I know that is an opinion, but I believe I know that because of what I see also.

Really what we wanted to do today from our youth centre . . . We have just started up as of July. It's amazing that our community has never once had a youth centre, and we are among the highest rates of teen pregnancy, addiction, drug-alcohol use, crime and violence in the province. And Meadow Lake has never had a specific agency directed strictly just for youth, targeting that age group. So that's for one thing.

And like Monica said, we are funded right now through NAFC and UMAC (Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres) — the National Association of Friendship Centres and UMAC. We are on a one year also. Next year we can try for two following more years. And also crime prevention funds are working for us. So again we struggle too, and year to year.

But for me I believe that it is a net and that's the way I look at it, a spider web to me. It is abuse at home. It is all these unsafe, unsecure things that cause this. But I throw a loophole in when I say that's probably 80, maybe 90 per cent of it where it comes from is the dysfunctional or the term you'd like to use. Then I throw out what the other 10 per cent is that just do it for curiosity, or just do it for the sake of doing it, or the excitement, or can come from everything you have in a home but still do it.

We're hitting . . . all our agencies hit that 80 to 90 per cent of the fact that there's something wrong — that's why they're doing it. But I know that there's people out there that just do it for the thrill of it also. So that's one thing I have as an opinion.

The other thing is, and when I say it's a net I do believe that it's a net. If you're addicted, you're into the trade in some way or another you can be. Addictions, I believe, and drugs are huge here. When we have 10 on our charts, I'll go from seven, I'll go from six. I'll go from a six-year-old that knows how to smoke dope. It's not a 13-, 14-year-old problem, it's not a 16-year-old problem, it's a 10-year-old for sure — maybe younger.

And our centre right now is directed from as two funding guidelines 10 to 29: accepting 10 to 12 who are at risk; 25 to 29 who can use our services. So we structure around the 12 to 18 just because we have a tiny building that we have a hard time doing this with. What I really wanted to do and what I felt was more appropriate for this day was brought you about five people that are involved in this. However, time I didn't . . . I have three workers that also work there.

And that was our approach that we wanted to take to this. I enjoy and feel it beneficial to sit as part of the interagency part of committee of it. But I believe to sit here and try to understand it and talk about it . . . we can all talk about it as much as we want, but unless we have four or five or one story or understanding of someone that's out there, been there, done that, why, from both sides of the fence like I said, from the . . . when something has went wrong to lead them this way to when nothing's went wrong and they're just doing it.

I think that needs to happen more often. That's why I am a 22-year-old coordinator of a youth centre. The committee that I have wants it to be a youth centre driven by youth, run by youth, owned by youth. My workers are all under 29 and we know we're not far off right now from what's happening. So when I throw in things from my level of understanding, it is an opinion when I say I know it's here but I could 95 per cent guarantee it for sure.

So I don't know what else . . . I probably had more to say but come up here rambling on. If anybody has any questions for us, if there ever is an opportunity for that, I know we can do it because to bring forward experienced individuals. We sat at a table just to discuss this one day and actually brought it to my attention. I have a worker who said, I'll go grab four right now. So like, it would be a possibility.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — . . . it's here. Just to clarify. You're meaning children's involvement in the sex trade? Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Buchta: — I'm meaning all . . . Yes. That's where I struggle. Because what actually fits into exploitation for me, right? So it may be lack of knowledge of it or just either way — I mean from the abuse to the actual selling. And usually it's selling for an addiction, selling for a parent who has an addiction or alcoholism, selling because they need money, selling drugs to buy it. You know like it's a two-way street to me I think. I believe that the cycle of it being done to you is being carried on — the abuse cycle — I believe that's a big part in our community. Having it done to you, you do it type of idea. I believe that's here also.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you, Gina. Gina, if you could just stay with us for a second here please.

Ms. Buchta: — Sure, no problem.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I think that those people that have presented so far will be certainly getting questions from the committee members because you've all said things that have sparked some questions in our mind, and some thoughts that we'd like to share with you to see whether or not we're all on the same wavelength.

Gina, just in reference to your comments, you'd mentioned that you could have found four young people that could have been here today to sit down and to tell us their stories. And I do believe too that we would learn a great deal from those stories. We have had youth in other centres, and I'm not quite sure why youth . . . why it wasn't seen to that there were youth here today, if in fact it would have been not too difficult for you to facilitate that. I'm not sure of the process that took place.

But, nonetheless, the other person or persons that I think would be really advantageous for us to have are perpetrators, or johns and pimps in whatever form that may take as such, and we did certainly try to have witness from one of the johns in Prince Albert, but they didn't turn up as it turned out.

So we need to hear from everywhere. Some of the things that disturb me is I see communities like you working so hard. I mean you . . . and bringing forth new and wonderful suggestions and ideas, and putting in programs. You can see, you know, all of the things that are helpful for children — support, services, everything that might help them in their healing process and help families to heal again.

But I don't . . . I just know that there's the other player, and I'm saying, you know, what, what are people proposing that we do about fathers and mothers and uncles and aunts and brothers and sisters that will abuse their own children sexually? And it's . . . this is the hushed part of it. This is the quiet part of it that no one wants to speak about, and that we remain and continue to remain in denial about.

So would you have any suggestions, Gina, as to how to sort of bring this out of the closet?

Ms. Buchta: — That's just basically it. I don't know if I have suggestions, per se. That was what I was also going to say is that, it's not on the statistics. But when you say in the closet, that's what I believe is in our community. That it is hidden. It's not on the statistics but it's here because it's hidden. And it's not because someone's out on the street with fishnet nylons and high heels. That's why I don't think we see it as often here.

And also what you said about the victims. That's where lots of it . . . I mean the offenders, that's where lots of it is right stemming from. We worry about the victims as we should, and take care of the victims as we should. But the offenders are the ones who are doing it, so what are we doing for the offenders?

And when I think about what to do for that, I mean I might have to sit back for a day and think about what I believe that we should do for that because it's, I think, why we're all sitting here today. Because we're trying to figure that out. And I don't know if I have the answer to that or not, but all I know is that

we focus so much time on the victim and that's fair — because they are a victim — but we throw the offender in jail if we catch him, and that's all. That's what happens to him.

I really don't know what it takes for the offenders. All I know is that they probably have so many issues to deal with themselves because they are the offender — why they are offending, what's making them offend — and rather than just saying you can't do it again, maybe we need to deal with more of why they are doing what they are doing.

A Participant: — I would say that about 90 per cent of the actual offenders are victims . . . (inaudible) . . . Dysfunction is generational. I come from a dysfunctional family and . . . (inaudible) . . . in my family who are dysfunctional too.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Excuse me again. Just so your comments aren't lost, would you come up to the mike, please.

Ms. Rowland: — My name is Mary Rowland. I'm the director of addiction services in Meadow Lake. I hear what everybody's saying and there's a lot of great points. In addictions . . . Every time I hear an RCMP report or, you know, the town council being reported to about the high incidence of addictions, I cringe because yes — I'm not going to work my way out of a job here and I don't intend to — but the thing is people forget that it's generational.

We're talking about implementing a legislation and starting from like zero to six, let's start educating kids and families. But it goes on for generations, so where does that fit in, I guess is my question.

We talk about funding. I've got a four-bed detox. It's not me. The health district has a four-bed detox that's been built into our new health facility that's not open until we find funding for it. Here I am; here it is. But I'm just making an awareness. Addictions is very high in this district, yet that's our problem.

A youth worker. I've been here for eight years and trying to get a youth worker on staff. We went from two counsellors in 1993 and I've got four counsellors . . . well three and halftime myself right now. And it's still . . . Our statistics are exceeding for years.

Gina says she can throw out examples. I can also throw out examples. I have a 19-year-old — 19 or 20 — that two weeks ago went to Saskatoon, was in a bar, and got her drinks spiked with Ecstasy. I mean, it's a city thing but it was brought back to Meadow Lake.

Two — one that was caught in a hotel room giving sexual favours for booze. And there's many others I can speak to but I don't feel comfortable with doing that in a small community in my position.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So what you're saying is that's what I'm hearing, I'm hearing the thing about addictions and how it's all interrelated but I'm also hearing that this sex trade . . . there are people in this community, young people, that may be involved in that but not necessarily acting it out within the

community, acting it out in other communities.

Ms. Rowland: — Yes.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay.

Ms. Rowland: — Youth will go to parties. They're going to parties and a lot of times . . . And I mean, that's just part of it, you know. Out behind the house or wherever.

I used to work in Cumberland House and there was parties where they would have pictures of people at the party who happened to pass out and that was going around. All these involving drugs and alcohol.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. I'm going to just open up questioning to some of the other members and we . . .

A Participant: — Can I ask one more question?

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Oh, okay. Could we just have you come to the mike for a moment please and mention your name.

Mr. Tredger: — My name's Keith Tredger. I'm also sitting on the same committee that's making the presentation.

I would like to respond to what can we do? And I've been working in and around sexual abuse and sexual exploitation for over 20 years. It seems to me that if we are going to make legislation to act as a deterrent we need to be very careful.

I'm not sure how effective that is going to be if it is not also accompanied with the supports to keep children from being lured into the sex trade. We're always going to have it. The only way to avoid it is to make or give our children an opportunity to become strong enough within themselves to resist the lure of the sex trade. Okay.

And people have been talking about the interrelationship between addictions and sexual assault as childhoods and neglect and poverty, and it goes across the range. It doesn't matter so much whether you're rich, poor, or whatever. You can be a rich family and still suffering from neglect from your parents; they're both out working 12, 14 hours a day. It doesn't matter if we do not provide those children with sufficient strengths.

We have institutions and we have programs in place that deal with a portion of our community. Where we lack is in those people in our community that are not confident enough to attend parenting sessions, that are not confident enough to walk into Robert Simard Centre. We need to address those gaps in a way that allows us to reach out to the people in the community that are truly suffering in a way that they perceive it as helpful. There are some programs in existence around the world that are beginning to look at that.

Quite frankly I don't believe we know how to treat perpetrators. We don't know how to really treat sexual abuse. We're learning, but we don't know how to do it. And if we do not reach out to the people that are being abused, the children that are being abused in their own environment to help make that

environment safe, secure, and stable for them, then I'm not sure we're spending our money wisely — or our time or our energies.

We need to go to those people. The Aboriginal people are starting to look at healing circles because the perpetrator is also a victim. And I have yet to meet a parent that does not want to do the best that they can possibly do for their children, but there's all these other negative influences that come into play. And we need to help them, and we need to help them in a way that they view it as helpful, not as a threat.

Okay. That was my little spiel.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you.

Mr. Tredger: — We need to be able to go into the homes and the families in our communities, and we're close to doing that in Meadow Lake. We have a lot of the organizations around but we need to focus now on where the services aren't being delivered, or received at any rate.

Ms. Rowland: — And that the people feel safe or comfortable to let . . .

Mr. Tredger: — If I'm a perpetrator and I want help with being a perpetrator, what choice do I have? What choice do I have? Where do I go, how do I go where I'm not going to be put in jail or I'm not going to be ostracized by the community? As a perpetrator, I'm a victim as well.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Just a minute.

Mr. Tredger: — Okay. I was hoping . . .

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Oh no, I'd like you to come back, please, just for a minute, because I'm going to do a little role modelling here. You have just mentioned that, you know, perpetrators certainly need to have the same sort of helps, the same tools and training or whatever in place in order for you to resist then the lure of the streets — if you were a perpetrator. Okay, then you were talking — I'm sorry, the names aren't getting . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon?

Ms. Rowland: — Mary.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Mary. Okay, Mary, we'd have to make this very brief because there are other things. But if in fact the service were there, if there was a service designed, a wraparound program for families and so on, then you would then approach the whole family? Is that right? And you would be part of this whole program that would offer services to everyone? So services would not then be provided in segregation from each other; it would be a whole wraparound for all family members?

Ms. Rowland: — Definitely. Addictions is a family disease, period. That's what we look at.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I just want to make a suggestion because I know, Don, you had . . . wanted to get a question in for a while. And I was going to suggest that we

temporarily at least move on to our next presenters and then come back for a collective discussion on both presentations. But I'm just conscious of the fact that we're got another presenter.

Formally, we're supposed to be out of here at 12, but I think we can stretch that a little and have a collective discussion on both presentations because we've just really begun to get into yours. It's very exciting and I'm sorry to cut it off, but I also don't want to be unfair to our other presenters.

So why don't we take Don's question and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You sure, are you sure, Don? Well listen if you don't mind, we'll change gears for a minute.

This has been absolutely wonderful. Thank you for what has been a very thoughtful presentation with a lot of work that's gone into it, collective work that's very powerful. We can tell that you're all very much a part of this. And we're very excited to have this kind of a presentation made to us. Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. All right our next presenters are some individuals who have requested that they be able to present to the committee today, and if you could come forward and sit at the table where the microphones are: Alex Bishop, child care, and Rose Richardson.

Okay, I'm sorry. I made somewhat of a mistake when I introduced them. The name of the organization is the Alex Bishop child care, and Rose and Richard Richardson. Is that correct?

Mr. Richardson: — Yes. We have slightly different perspectives on the survivor. I used to live off the avails of prostitution and so I wrote up a little bit of something on the predatory aspects of people being recruited into the sex trade.

And I appreciate what I've heard earlier about it being more a holistic issue, where if we only treat the symptoms by going after the prostitute without involving the client or the predator that arranged the whole thing I don't think that we can accomplish very much.

The problem of access to the system for young people. I first went to skid row when I was 15. I was unable to access any programs from the system without a great deal of fear because they would have only repatriated me back to a dysfunctional home anyway. So it becomes very easy for the predators to identify a runaway.

When I worked in the Yukon, I watched as children would become vulnerable and eventually run away to the city where quite often there will be a predator waiting at a bus depot or any other area that they'll come into — whether it's 96th Street in Edmonton or the skid row areas of any town. They know what to look for. They know how to play to it. They provide the companionship, and access to drugs and alcohol.

And at first it seems very, you know, party-oriented, fun-related, and only out to support the youth. Once they're embroiled in it, then the price comes. And once that price comes it becomes a lot easier for the predator to get the youth involved in prostitution, and that's both male or female.

Now I was I guess kind of fortunate I got into drug dealing and became an alcoholic ultimately and eventually escaped. But I was living with a woman who was 14 when she hit the street. She was indoctrinated into the life and she died when she was 20. Of course no one was ever arrested for her murder, and unfortunately the appearance when you're living on the street is that we were expendable.

When johns were arrested it's usually the prostitute that ends up in jail; the john doesn't. We had one instance in Alberta where it was the Solicitor General that was arrested, and he did have to resign his position. But I believe that the accountability wasn't there because that's as far as it went. You know, the hooker was still consigned to a life basically as a victim.

We have, especially when there's high-profile people involved in prostitution, the consequences are usually only on the person on the street and not on the offender. I think that if we're actually going to accomplish anything, the people at the street level have to realize that there is accountability. And if johns are going to be arrested, then there has to be some sort of a consequence, not only to the prostitute.

Ms. Richardson: — I'm Rose Richardson. I work at a group home. I'm a general caregiver. At home we get a lot of calls regarding young people that are having problems. And a lot of times it's not part of my work, but part of a caring . . . a caring need.

I will read one I have presented. And as you'll note, there'll be a few remarks added here and there that are not in the written material. And I guess that's based on a little bit of irony in terms of what is really happening. But, you'll note that there will be a few remarks that are not written in the paper, I guess. I guess if it's not recorded, then I can't be charged.

There appears to be an overwhelming . . . there appears to be an increased awareness and an overwhelming concern by parents and the general public regarding child abuse and sexual exploitation. As caregivers, we are of the . . . we are aware of the impact of such abuse as it relates to Aboriginal youth.

Many of our youths have migrated to the urban areas, attracted by what they feel is opportunity, excitement, and freedom; many to escape poverty, abuse and neglect. In all likelihood they escape from a dysfunctional family, community, or both, only to enter a very harsh, unfamiliar, unsafe, and unfriendly environment.

Unfamiliar with city life, many are quickly absorbed into an urban subculture. Young people are used by adults, gangs, and peers who are familiar with the young offender Act. Many assure these young people that the general process is as follows: first time offenders are warned and put on probation; they can have their record cleared at the age 18.

Many young people requiring the fundamentals of survival are quickly recruited into the lifestyle of crime. These young people are generally recruited in the lifestyle of B and E's (breaking and entering), theft, drug dealing, and prostitution. Unable and unwilling to go back home due to shame and lack of financial resources, they stay in slum housing, abandoned houses,

garbage disposal containers, makeshifts . . . makeshift shelters, and under bridges.

From these places young people are recruited. They become addicted to drugs. They become small-time drug pushers, prostitutes, and criminals to survive, to feed their ever-increasing, growing need for drugs and alcohol, to escape from the harsh realities.

In many cases they cannot escape due to the stigma, due to fear, due to the possibility that they will be blamed, and due to threats. One young girl talked about a time her finger was chopped off because she did not hand over all the money she made to her pimp. When you talked about getting AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) due to unsafe sex in return for money.

There are many northern kids who are relocated into the South because there are no high schools in the North. When they get to the southern schools, they realize that they are not able to mainstream. The only way back home is by air travel, and they're not able to get those finances, so they become stuck in urban areas.

There's many unwanted youth pregnancies, the result being children looking after children. A child looking after a child. A child being forced to give up a child. There are suicides, ideas of suicides, hopelessness, and despair. There are murders — young men and women — bodies being found. Parents worrying about their children, not knowing where they're at or the situation their children are in. Young people not knowing who to go to for help. They can't go to the RCMP because they don't trust them.

I'll give you an example — Ramsay, Jack Ramsay — there's a Jack Ramsay situation, if people are familiar with that. The incidents that have taken place in Saskatoon. Those are reasons why young people cannot go and seek help. They can't go to the clergy or the church because history states they can't be trusted.

There has to be a solution to this problem. What do the young people need? The recommendation that I'm making is that youth shelters must be established in urban areas to house young people who require help, shelter, food, clothing, without fear of being returned to an abusive home, community, or family.

Agents. There has to be an agency set up that's willing to take children into care, without having to take their name down, for at least a short period of time. Street workers must be able to communicate with the youth. Some should be available that can speak the language of the youth, like Cree and Dene or whatever other language is required.

Alternate lifestyles, jobs, and education must be made available since it is probable that the youth cannot or will not be able to mainstream into the regular school system. Youth must be protected from their abusers and exploiters. Youth must be provided with medical needs. The youth should be hired to work with the youths under adult supervision. This is not only a nine-to-five job, it's a 24-hour job.

All this must be done without putting the youth down and making them feel like beggars. They are entitled to a life and to dignity because they are human beings like us, only less fortunate.

There was a remark made in terms of legislation . . . you know involvement, and this is just a cynical remark I'm making — who will govern the country if everyone is arrested and put into jail?

In terms of programming and programming funds, most funds are designed to meet government funding requirements as opposed to funding based on needs identification. Most funding is based on soft dollars which can be taken away at the whim of government, especially when the government changes. An example of that is elections. Soft dollars focus in terms of how do we keep the money coming in because it's needed, as opposed to the original objectives.

And if we keep focusing on how we're going to keep the money, how we're going to keep it coming in, then we lose sight of the main objective and that's to deal with the issue of child abuse and exploitation. Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. We have . . .

Ms. Richardson: — If you have any questions, don't ask me. Just kidding.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Can I make a suggestion and that is that we maybe take questions for 10 minutes on Rose's presentation. And Mr. Richardson, are you available for questions as well? Yes, so questions for both of your presentations for maybe 10 or 12 minutes and then a more open discussion on both presentations.

And I hope everybody will kind of feel free to come forward and we can maybe go back and forwards. I'm going to start with Don who's been patiently waiting to ask a question for at least three-quarters of an hour.

Mr. Toth: — Well actually part of mine will go right to the first and then kind of a comment that's going to come up basically with both of the presenters. Maybe I'll start with that though. Listening to your presentations . . . and I thank you for the presentations you've made, and we realize that there is a major problem out there and I wish we had the answer.

I have a sense though that if we did have the answer we'd have a number of people in this room would be without jobs. I think somebody made that comment earlier. And to be very honest with you there is no clear-cut answer, there's no clear-cut answer. There's only one real answer to the problem we're facing and that's got an inner-heart change.

I'm going to be right bold and to the point. People are going to have to change. They're going to have to have a realization of what life is all about, and a reason to live. And all the legislation, all the programming will not do that. We got a sense . . . we have to have a sense of where we come from, where we're going.

And I just bring that out because that's what I believe. And I believe that because we've sat around spinning our wheels, and I can see we've put all kinds of programs together and we really haven't met that need. There's an inner conscience that has to be addressed, and without that we're just going to continue to spin our wheels. But in the meantime, we need to do what we can to try and meet the needs out there.

The other thing I would like to point out as well is the need for family. That's probably the one thing we've heard wherever we've gone, from the presentations again this morning. And if there's a concern I have, it goes to the fact that we've almost become a permissive society. We've become a very irresponsible society. And in some ways, we've actually downplayed the importance of the family and the role of the family. We were discussing it last night.

I think if I get something from a lot of women, it's the fact of individuals who have chosen to stay at home to be mothers to their children and they feel that they're scorned because they didn't get out and take a role and be an income earner as well. And I think we need to reinforce that fact, that if people make that choice, that that is a very important decision. So maybe that's a message we need to send.

We also need to let families know that if they really care for their children and are going to set some guidelines and discipline their children, that we're not going to have people knocking on the door and saying you're abusing your child. I think we need to be very clear about that. We need to distinguish what's abuse and what's a caring and loving family relationship — setting guidelines and basically offering protection and setting rules that will establish what that person is going to be as they grow up.

So those are just some points I'm pointing out just from my observations and what I've been hearing.

In regards to questions, I'd like to know — the presentation by Mark — of the statistics you brought forward to us, a number of communities we've been in, a lot of the statistics have been highly First Nations involvement. And in this community here, what percentage of the stats you have, would you indicate would be First Nations involvement as far as the abuse, reported abuse, and involvement in even some of the sexual activity?

Mr. van Schie: — I really didn't look at the stats that closely or the files that closely.

From the names involved, I would estimate probably 80 per cent, if not higher, involve First Nations families or individuals.

Mr. Toth: — I thank you. And I think that's . . . as a result those . . . from that comment, it basically reflects what we've been hearing from other groups and certainly what we've been seeing in areas.

And having said that, I would just suggest we need to really look at ways of working with our First Nations people as well to address this. It's an issue that was raised last night by one of our last presenters who really reinforced the fact that, as a First Nations person, they have to begin to realize that it's a major

problem in their community. I think the comment she made was that right now it isn't really recognized as a problem. And so we need to build that bridge I guess, if you will, to address that concern.

Mr. van Schie: — If I can make one other comment as it related to offenders. It came to my mind as well with respect to punishment — Mr. Yates, you might be able to correct me here — but it seems that with the corrections system and the justice system the kind of treatment that is required for offenders, the intensive kind of treatment to deal with these kind of issues isn't available until such time as a person commits such an abhorrent crime that he gets a very long sentence. And I hate to rate crimes against kids as to degree of severity, because from my perspective they're all abhorrent, but there has to be programming available to offenders that the entry level offender can get treatment.

I might be totally off base here as well, but I believe people who are sexual predators have a sexual addiction. I don't base that on any scientific knowledge, it's just an opinion that I have.

And these kind of offenders don't get the appropriate treatment in a weekend johns school. That might make an initial impact. But these are long-term offenders who are engaged in this activity for a long time and it just doesn't have the long-term impact from my perspective.

Treatment for offenders is essential. If there are no offenders, the number of victims will be significantly reduced as well.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, are there any other questions?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'm wondering first if there are questions specifically for Rose and Richard. Are there any questions specific to their presentation.

Rose and Richard, come on up again, if you could.

Ms. Jones: — I want to thank both Rose and Richard for their presentation and it's always so good to have first-hand stuff to talk about.

And I'm interested in Richard's third paragraph which says when a person is underage and attempting to maintain their freedom and individuality, to turn for help to governmental agencies is perceived to be surrendering.

And so my question is what are you deeming a governmental agency? I mean, to what extent is a governmental agency . . . you know, does it extend to non-governmental agencies that are funded by government? And what do you see as a place that they will turn to? I mean, how do we fund things and try to assist with agencies to help youth on the street, without being a governmental agency? I guess that's my question.

Mr. Richardson: — Okay, I've been off the street for 20 years so my information is rather outdated. In those days, you could go to a welfare office or the street agencies that were available at the time were either part of the counterculture or else they had to report. You had to put your name down, fill out papers.

As long as you were identified as a youth then the onus on the government was to repatriate you to your home environment rather than allow anything.

I was kind of fortunate that I kept a distance from them always believing that, you know, being underage I'd either be returned. And once I became of age, I was already deep into addiction so I had the assumption that government wouldn't pay me to get drunk. I'm glad that I never found out that they would until after I sobered up.

But nowadays what I . . . even in those days what I found was the youth hostels were mainly youth oriented and youth driven. Those were something that was funded by the government but wasn't considered to be a part of the government, because everyone knew that they did not have to make reports based on a daily intake.

Like I know that they did have to, you know, turn their books over to the police any time they wanted them to, but we always had this belief that they didn't and that the police wouldn't take action unless there was individuals on that list that had committed crimes and had warrants against them.

So I really applaud the youth-driven efforts that this lady and others have spoken about. And I think that the perception on the street, as long as it's very publicly known that anonymity is a big part of it, then they'll be approachable. As long as you would have to fill out forms based on, you know, having to go for, say, a welfare social assistance benefit, then I think there'd be a lot of suspicion just because they know that even if there's no convictions at home that there may be an intolerable situation in going home.

Ms. Jones: — So it's mostly like government offices with the sheaf logo on it. It's like, things like youth centres, outreach vans, safe houses, all of those things are not . . . you don't . . . in your opinion they wouldn't be something that a youth in need of assistance or wanting to get off the street or even just wanting, you know, a safe place for the night, those would be okay. It's just kind of the Made in Saskatchewan sheaf logo that scares them away?

Mr. Richardson: — That's right.

Ms. Jones: — And the need to record your presence.

Mr. Richardson: — That's right. I know . . . I used to work in the Yukon with family and children services. I was a native placement worker. And what I would do, because of the stigma of the offices, I would meet my clients in malls. I never had a problem. While I couldn't get them to attend scheduled appointments in my office, if I was willing to go to their environment it was okay. And that's where I think that the bands, like you say, or any of the street workers, the ones that go to where they live and are available in their home environment — whatever they consider that home environment to be — then the stigma is removed. I agree it's that logo.

Ms. Jones: — Okay thanks, very much.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Any other questions for Rose

and . . . June, did you have a comment or questions?

Ms. Draude: — I just wanted to know if there's anything else they wanted to say, anybody wanted to say, before I asked any questions because everybody had so much knowledge.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes.

Ms. Coulinear: — I would like to say something pertaining to everybody's issue on child exploitation, coming from the First Nations community. I myself am a victim. I'm a survivor.

And I look at these things when you're talking — like Monica was talking earlier about dollars — it seems that everybody is so worried about stats, dollars, where is everybody coming from is where I'm trying to think. What about us? What about us people who are hurting? Those people who are hurting others — what about them? What's going on?

You know it seems that everybody looks at stats, everybody wants to see what's happening out there. How much more does it have to take before we get recognized that we're hurting and before that people start to recognize that there are so many people are hurting out there.

This guy talked about the family, the — Pardon me, but, you know, I'm just getting all nervous here, sorry . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, when he talked about . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Dysfunctional families, yes. You know it is something that I looked at when he said dysfunctional families, what about the cycle?

It's a cycle. It's happening over and over, and we're in the year 2000 and it's still going. What are we doing to break the cycle rather than look at what is dysfunctional family? We've looked at that for so many years now and we haven't gotten anyplace. What about the cycle? What are we doing to break it? What are we doing to protect those people who are being hurt? What are we doing to protect those people who are abusers as well? Where are we going? You know, those are the things that I think about.

And you know, you look at the government. They put in dollars into programs for addictions, and yet they in one hand say, here, have it, go this way. But when you look at sexual stuff and stuff like that sex trade stuff that are happening in the world, in our communities, everybody's silent. It's just silent. It's just like it's a hush thing. We have to talk about it.

Even in our communities, where I come from in the First Nations communities, it's swept under the rug. I myself am a victim and I'm a survivor, and yet today I still see the things that have happened to me still happening to people in our communities today.

Nobody is recognizing the pain, nobody is recognizing the hurt that is happening out there. Everybody refuses to pay attention to that, but yet they still look at the dollars and who is going to pay for it.

Well I think it's time that people start looking at what really needs to be done for our communities rather than how much

dollars are we going to put into it. Where's the action? Not just talk. Let's get some action in here rather than just talk about what we're going to do. Because I'm tired of hearing about what we're going to do.

I'd like to see people take action now and start using . . . saying what they're going to do and doing it rather than just saying this is what we're going to do, and then back again we are sitting at another forum again. A couple of years later back to stage one.

So what I'm saying here is like it's a cycle and we have to break it. We can no longer stay silent any more and we can no longer sweep it under the rug.

My children are hurting because of it. My grandparents hurt because of it, and maybe other people in the past are hurting because of it, again as victim and as survivors. As a survivor of child exploitation, I had to sell my body for money. I know where that comes from. I know what it's like. The shame.

I was afraid to come up here. I felt very sick inside and I know what those people feel like out there. It's sickening to come up here and have to put yourself in front and say, is this what I have to go through before anybody hears? What's going out . . . what's happening out there that we have to go through this first? Do I have to be shamed first? Do I have to be afraid?

I don't think our children no longer have to go through that any more because sex is not a thing that's hushed any more, whereas at one time it was taboo. You didn't talk about it. You didn't bring it out. But today I think it's well recognized now in schools and, as well, in communities, and I think it's time we start taking action rather than just talking. Thanks.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you very much for your courage.

Applause

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Could I just ask you to give us your name, please?

Ms. Coulinear: — Marlene Coulinear.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Marlene? Okay. I don't know if they got it. Marlene, I have a couple of questions and I think the whole committee might like to address some of the things that you mentioned.

If it helps any I want to tell you that there are many of us just as angry as you are. Okay. That's why we're here. We're not here because we just wanted to have a committee running around the province. That's not the reason. It's because of awareness. We heard from people like you. Some of us have experienced the same thing that you have. We're here because we genuinely care and the intent is good.

Whether or not we end up to be . . . you know, what kind of things are employed as a result of this committee, that has yet to be seen. But I want to ask you: you are saying enough is enough. The cycle has to be broken. Please give us your perspective on how to break the cycle. What are your

suggestions? Who's responsibility is it to break the cycle? How can that be done? Help us with that.

Ms. Coulinear: — Well I think how to cycle . . . for myself anyway is that I think more of the people who commit these crimes and the people who are victims of these crimes . . . Like you were talking earlier, the penalties that people pay now today are nothing compared to what they should be paying. And if people don't pay the penalties the way they should be paid, then of course they're going to continue to abuse. They're going to continue to abuse and be abusers as well.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, that's good. And when you so passionately said, you know this is swept under the rug, this is we're pretending that it's hidden when really it isn't hidden. So that means, to me, that means, let's everyone get out of denial and start voicing what's happening. I mean it's hidden because it's seen as ugly and shame and all of this on the part of perpetrators as well as victims.

So the fact is it is, it is part of us, it is part of what we're doing so we need to be voicing this and discussing ways of healing everyone. Okay, so am I hearing you right? Is that what you're trying to say?

Ms. Coulinear: — Yes. And if I could correct you. I was not angry — I was more afraid. When you said, when you sounded really angry, I was not really angry, I was more afraid to speak up because, again, that thing of protection. Am I going to get that protection that I need? Am I going to get that care that I need? I think these are the things that our people need — is that protection, that care, and to be able to not be afraid to speak up.

Again, for even the people who are, who are the abusers. I know a few people who are abusers and who are afraid to come forward because of the shame and the things that people are going to put on them. They can't come forward because they have to protect themselves and I can feel for those people as well — for the abusers. I feel for them as well.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — June, did you have something you wanted to say?

Ms. Draude: — I have a question for . . .

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well June, go ahead. Go ahead.

Ms. Draude: — I'm not sure who my question is going to be directed at, but as a committee we've met at a number of places and this is the smallest place we've been at. And yet I believe it's the most open place we've been at. I believe it's the first time that we've had agencies working together to do a presentation that shows that everybody's on the same page. And I appreciated that very much.

And from what I heard there was, I think, there was four different things that I heard here that's kind of unique. First of all, it's the first time I heard people talk about the Internet. Maybe I slept through something but I believe . . . I don't believe I did that. But it was the first time that that was openly discussed and I think that's interesting.

I think it was the first time that I heard somebody bring up that there was children involved where nothing went wrong in their past. That there's going to be a number or percentage of people that may always try this just because of the way people are, and I think we can't . . . when we say we have zero tolerance, well I guess tolerance is one thing but whether it will ever go away or not, I guess the answer is probably no.

And the other thing, you talked about community. And I've heard the word our community so many times this morning and I think it's wonderful. Yet at the same time, I'm wondering when you say our community does that mean you are talking about the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Metis Society at the same time? Are you the voice for everyone? And if you are then that makes us feel wonderful, but that's my question, is it the voice of everyone?

Mr. Esterby: — I think it is. At times our interagency committee has people that come and go. But over the past couple of years we've usually had representatives at the table from Meadow Lake Tribal Council, from Flying Dust First Nations. Sometimes those are overlapping people in the sense that they're one.

We have had representatives at the table from the Metis Society. I think the . . . (inaudible) . . . community is in fact being felt very much more than it has in the past year. I think it's . . . a good indication of that is that the community school model that has been accepted by the Flying Dust First Nation which is our neighbour across the road.

And many of the residents live in town but that First Nation in the Meadow Lake School Division which represents the educational part of Meadow Lake plus the surrounding communities have worked together to put forward a community school model that includes five schools. One is on the First Nation in the community of Meadow Lake.

And I guess every time we sit at the table around the interagency table, we have people talking about doing things together and doing things jointly, which is very big change from where we were at when we started the table I don't know how many years ago. It started and died one time before, probably 15 years ago. The last 10 years or so of that table has been one that's been developing from a perspective of community integration and community support.

We are still somewhere on that stretch to get to full collaboration. But I hardly ever see anything in this community happen without consultation between some of the agencies and some of the people that are involved. So I think we are getting there.

And if you go back to our presentation I think what that table is saying to you is that we as a community work pretty well together. And when we set priorities they don't always fit into the stovepipes and the channels of departments and government funding, be that provincial only or provincial and federal.

And I guess that's one of the things that if we can do anything with legislation, anything at the senior departmental executive stages, that would be to somehow open those doors in a

different fashion for us to bring forward projects that we think will help the community.

The youth project that Gina talked about, it's been . . . it grew out of the interagency table. The planning project grew out of the interagency table. We had a summer program for kids this summer. It grew out of the interagency table and then on through to a number of agencies to help find funding.

The frustration comes when you try to do something and you want \$20,000 to help make it work, that you may have to go through three or four different agencies to get lottery money. You have to apply here and there and everywhere else and wait for everybody's agenda to get money from the very one source. And those things don't make sense to communities, and we need to fix that.

The human service interagency committees that operate throughout the province now, there's one in each region. We work with the North Battleford one as our closest connection. They're frustrated because they don't think they're making good decisions for each of the smaller communities or smaller areas.

So when it comes down to making recommendations for funding at that table, they've asked the interagency table here if we would take over making recommendations. And we did that recently. They followed our recommendations and sent something up the ladder and now we have . . . I'll name things here. We have an AEF (associated entities fund) group that has decided that dollars that were required in April won't be decided upon until December. And the recommendations of both the Meadow Lake interagency process, the interdepartmental committee of the North Battleford or regional level have been ignored and somebody else is making decisions that screw up some of the programs in the community. That stuff doesn't make any sense.

So if you're looking at legislative issues, the coordination has to work better provincially and federally, also with the municipalities who also spread money around. We need some different channels, folks.

Ms. Draude: — I just want to make sure . . . Rose, I know you were writing. Did you want to agree with what . . . I hope you're wanting to agree with what John said when we talked about our community? I'm wondering if you are . . . and I feel really great about that. I'm sure the committee around here is feeling great that we are hearing there's a coordination, an integration not only of groups within the community but what you're asking for is the coordination of departments as well. And we're hearing that very often.

And I think the last thing I wanted to ask about was, you talked about economics and the fact that it wasn't child exploitation went across the lines of the financial situation of the family. In your area, in your community, is it along all lines or is there a larger percentage of child abuse in lower income levels?

Mr. van Schie: — I think it would be a fair assessment to say that most of the reported cases involve lower income levels.

However, where offenders are middle class or where individuals are involved in the Internet and pornography, I would think that pushes the group into the middle class, upper class. And from my perspective, that's no less serious a matter.

Mr. Tredger: — I was just going to add that my worry would be, in terms of the question, that we may be aware of more incidences coming from the lower class or the less rich people, because they are less able to function in our society and they're less able to protect themselves within our society. They don't have the money to buy lawyers. They don't have the money to protect themselves at one level, where on another level we do.

I firmly believe that the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation flows equally across all classes.

Ms. Draude: — . . . are different then.

Ms. Richardson: — I would like to give you some general understanding of my background. I grew up in Meadow Lake. I was dirt poor as a kid. Sometimes we didn't have anything to eat for two, three days at a time and we were lucky if we had porridge, you know. We were lucky if we were even able to eat frozen potatoes that we cooked, you know.

But I can honestly say I was never sexually abused as a child. I grew up with high standards. We were poor, but there was no sexual abuse. I never drank a drop of liquor in all my life. I still consider myself a survivor but it took work.

I've got a Bachelor of Education degree. Right now, I'm working with high-risk children. I'm not working in a school. But it took listening to the stories that the children brought to me, being able to go on the street and being open-minded, having empathy, being prepared to listen.

It was about a year ago or two years ago that Rick talked to me about alcoholism and sometimes children getting involved with alcohol at a very young age. I was working in a group home where children were crying for help, at 12 years old were saying; I was an alcoholic at 10.

I did not understand that because I did not have problems with alcohol. I was affected by alcohol in that my father left us when we were children. I blamed my father till six months before he died, that he was a weak man. I never realized that it was an illness. I just learned that two years ago.

So if we're open-minded and prepared to educate ourselves and understand, we become of more value to the people that need us.

I'm just saying this because there's too many times Native people have been stereotyped as alcoholics, drunks, lazy, have been abused. I have never been. At a young age, at about six years old I knew what was happening in my life, that we were poor, and that my father was an alcoholic. I never wanted that to happen to my life and to my children's life.

I made a decision at a very young age that it would be different. We have to empower our young people to be able to make that type of decisions. I don't know how I ever made that decision,

but it was made at a very young age.

We have to educate ourselves, become aware of what's happening, accept what is happening, and admit it and go into healing and making changes.

I often wonder what's the difference between how I grew up and what's happening today. There's a lot of differences. We didn't have TV, we didn't have Internet. The media tends to sensationalize so many things. Many times they even talk about drugs, new drugs, you know, new mixtures of drugs that are being used, and the children want to try them.

There's a transportation area where now it's easy to go into cities. At one time it wasn't. We generally blow issues or sweep them under the carpet. As everybody will recall, there was a La Ronge incident not that many years ago. They blamed a warlock movie for inspiring a young child, and a tragedy took place.

We should have been focusing on why was the child, you know, wanting to fly, where was he trying to go to, or what was he trying to escape from? I would suspect that there was child abuse, that there was sexual abuse, and the child had nowhere to go.

We're responsible; we're all responsible as parents, as family, as human beings.

In terms of my own spirituality, I feel my life is governed very highly by my spirituality. I feel that when the end of my time comes I will be answerable for what I did and didn't do, and so will you. Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Rose, I want to thank you very much for your comments, and I'm very conscious of the fact that there are many of us that have questions, including myself. But I think the time is coming when we need to bring this to a close. Unfortunately we have to move on to Lloydminster. But I think we've heard some very powerful and helpful presentations here this morning and also some very courageous presentations.

And on behalf of all members of the committee, we want to thank you very sincerely for what has been a very rich morning. Thank you all very much.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Keep up the good work. You're a fantastic community.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — We will make sure that you all get copies of the final report. To help make that possible, if you haven't registered with Kathy in the corner, do so. As long as you leave your address with her, we'll make sure you get a copy of our report.

The committee adjourned at 12:28 p.m.