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
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The committee met at 9:30 a.m.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Gwen, we want to welcome you here. This is Gwen Favel, everyone and I understand, Gwen, you're a retired educator and also that you've got a lot of experience in mediation. So we're very happy to have you here this morning and we're looking forward to your presentation. So thank you very much for coming and I hope you'll just feel . . . we'll introduce ourselves . . . and then I just hope you'll feel free to proceed in whatever way you'd like.

I'm Peter Prebble and my constituency is Saskatoon Greystone and I'm one of the Co-Chairs of this committee. And Arlene, I'll let you introduce yourself.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Arlene Julé, I'm the MLA for Humboldt and also co-chairing the committee. Welcome.

Ms. Draude: — I'm June Draude, and I'm the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena. Welcome.

Ms. Jones: — And I'm Carolyn Jones, the MLA for Saskatoon Meewasin.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Gwen, we also have Don Toth. He's the MLA from Moosomin. He's not able to be here with us for the last couple of days simply because of the snowstorm in his end of the world. So he's just unable to dig out from underneath the snowbanks, but we also have two other members on the committee that are not available at this time.

We'll just ask you to proceed then, Gwen, with your presentation.

Ms. Favel: — Okay, well good morning and thank you very much for inviting me to come here. I'm not really sure that I'm the person you should have here. I think there are a lot of other people who should be here and I had, when I had talked with the gentleman who telephoned me, I had suggested that I would try to have some of the Aboriginal people in this area here to make a presentation or to at least have something to say. But with the snow and whatnot, it's been very difficult to do that.

I don't really have too much of a presentation. I guess I'm prepared to talk about what I do know and it may be fairly limited in this area. I know that your concern is the sexual exploitation of children and it does appear that no matter what I do and whatever area of work I happen to be working, this comes up as an issue.

I have spent 42 years almost totally immersed in the Aboriginal community in one way or another. Since 1958, I've been an educator usually in reserve communities, in the far North as well, and occasionally in more administrative-type positions either with Indian Affairs or with Indian governments.

I've spent most of my time in the education field as a principal or a director or a coordinator. And I point that out because ultimately at one point or other, I'm probably going to start making very strong comments about administration. And I do that because I feel I have a right to say that. I am administrator and I don't feel I am throwing stones at someone else. I know what it's like to be in an administrative position.

I have worked as a counsellor with Aboriginal people as well. I have been retired now for three years, and during that time I have been doing victim offender mediation and . . . almost, probably 60 per cent, 70 per cent of my cases are with Aboriginal youth or adults.

I am currently fostering children. My interest is in the area of the very, very high-risk teenage girls and I currently have three in my home. And I am working toward trying to set up a group home for high-risk teenage girls, very much taking into consideration the views and the recommendations of the Children's Advocate in her recent report.

I feel a strong commitment that it is my responsibility as someone who's had the privilege of working in the situations that I have worked in to use that knowledge that I have to try to set up situations that will help to correct some of the social issues that we are facing.

So that kind of introduces you to me and to who I am and where I'm coming from. On the actual issue itself of the sexual exploitation of children, I am somewhat relieved to see that it is coming more and more into the public knowledge — what is going on. I don't believe for one moment that anyone of us in this room has any idea the intensity of it. And I don't believe that we have any idea what the average child in the lower income or welfare situations is experiencing.

We don't have any idea what their world is, what their view of the world is. And their view of the world and the experiences that they are living through as very small children is what is shaping their value systems and their impressions; their actions are going to follow suit.

We as a society are very concerned about the problems with youth. We take very strong measures against them when they become a public nuisance and when they violate property. We do very little when we know that they are being violated personally.

And I have struggled with this. I'm not sitting here saying you should do more. I know how difficult it is. But I do believe that we have a great deal to do as far as effectively making it possible to implement the legislation that is there. I don't know that I have to take a potshot at legislation. And I have to be very honest — I haven't kept abreast of the newest legislation that's out.

But what I do know as an administrator is that you can have the best legislation in the world; if you don't have a realistic and effective means of implementing that legislation, you may as well not have it. And until our legislation, the legislation that is in place, begins to impact on the lives of the vulnerable children, we're not doing our job. And that's where then I come back to administrators and to what their job is.

I have always been revolted at the attitude of our society and our people in general toward prostitutes. I wish the name john

was as repulsive to people.

I was thinking about it on the way over today. If a group of prostitutes — women who had been making their living from prostitution — decided to go straight, to move into one of the better neighbourhoods, they would never be able to remove that stigma. And in that neighbourhood would be some of their clients and they would never suffer from that same stigma.

My introduction to — I grew up very innocently, very innocently — my introduction to it came when I started working on a reserve back in the '60's, in the days when my little car was the best vehicle on the reserve. But I noted something, that there were two or three homes in that community where several times during the week in an evening you would see a big car parked outside that house. And as I became more knowledgeable, I realized that that was the home of a severe alcoholic who had several daughters. That was back in the '60's. That has been going on for a long, long time. That was on the reserve in the Battlefords area but it could have . . . I mean, I realized then I had been in the File Hills area in the '50's and I realized then that the same thing had been going on there. I just hadn't checked it out.

These things have gone on to the extent that people have grown up accepting it as a *fait accompli*. It is a way of life. You cannot expect any better than that.

I just come out of three years in Wollaston Lake. I thought I knew bad conditions, bad situations. Nothing had prepared me for life of the average girl or woman in Wollaston Lake.

And I had people tell me, and people from Wollaston, women from Wollaston in fairly responsible positions who were working with me, tell me several times that I would not find any girl or woman in that community, 13 or over, who had not been sexually violated several times. They were speaking from authority — they were also included in that group.

I do believe that what is happening right now with the residential school issue is something we have to go through.

And I do believe now — and more and more now — that we are, those of us who are choosing to work in social service positions, community service positions, church positions, whatever they are, anything where you are working with people, we are dealing with a legacy of sexual abuse that has come through the residential school system. Very much caught up with also the whole loss of culture because of the residential school system.

It always overwhelms me when a young girl all of a sudden out of the blue decides that she has to disclose. I dealt with a couple of girls the other day. One of them received a death threat over the telephone — a very young child — received a death threat over the telephone. And when I took her to the police to make her statement, her statement was a statement of a raping that she had experienced at the hands of three young men the month before. It triggered that in her. And when I got home I got a note from the second girl, that she had wanted to disclose as well.

On the surface they seemed like normal kids. But they're hiding terrible, terrible, terrible secrets. And they don't know what to do about it. Because we seem to be hamstrung. We don't know what to do about it.

I worked in Waterhen Lake for several years. I was there for six years. And I knew the families really well. And there was one home that we never, never could really get the children into regular attendance in school. And it was the home of the woman who made her life from bootlegging and everything else that would go with it.

And I went back to Waterhen Lake five years later for a year and a young woman who grew up in that home came to see me. She had left home. She had made her break from home, gone to Edmonton, married, and she came back for a visit.

And we sat and had a very interesting visit as she talked about the life of the kids and the tragedy of situations in Edmonton. And then out of the blue said to me, Gwen, why did you never do anything about my situation as I was growing up? And I was unable to answer her. I had tried. I spent many sleepless nights over it, but I didn't come up with anything effective. And I said what would you have wanted me to do? And she said, anything to have gotten me out of that situation.

And today, I can go back over that and I'm still not sure what I could have done. But she as a child obviously had a dream that one day Gwen Favel, the principal of the school who could do all these great things, would see her plight and rescue her. It's that that is driving me now to try to do something to help change the lives of these young women. And it's not easily done because they will fight you as you're trying to do it.

But what I do know is that in their heart of hearts, they want . . . they want the good life. They're not even sure what the good life is right now. And I think that there's so many complicating factors in there — television, and what we have allowed, and what children see as a daily diet, is scary. And we may think well yes, but they should see that that's television.

I had an interesting situation. I was in the Artic for five years. And the fourth year I was there I brought two of my students, two young boys, 10-year-olds, and the parents of one of them, down for a couple of weeks. Well, I didn't bring them; they came. I met them in Edmonton and we spent two weeks seeing the south and going down to Yellow Grass, which is my home, and you know, seeing all these things, finding out what life was like.

And the one boy who came without his parents, their family had really adopted me. I was theirs. And I used to go out on the land with them every second weekend. I wore out two skidoos, you know. I was with them; I was in their life.

And they really debated whether they should let Tom go and it wasn't until I sat down with an in-depth discussion with them that I discovered that they honestly believed that when he would step off that plane in Edmonton, he'd be in the middle of whatever was happening in those television programs. It was very hard to convince them that he would be safe.

And that's when it kind of hit me, you know. Like people who watch this and who don't experience think that's what life is. Children who watch these sexually perverted programs, these violence, as a steady diet believe that that is life. They have no way of knowing that it isn't, especially if they live in a home that is suffering from real social issues. They have no way of knowing that there's anything different — no way.

And I worry about that. And we continue the process; we continue it — we don't stop it.

I don't know that I have a whole lot more to say. I mean this is where I'm coming from and this is what I've experienced and I guess what my concerns are.

I do believe that the most important people are our children. Our children — collectively — our children. And that I do believe that it is important for people to understand that all children do not have the same rights. And for anyone to be foolish enough to say children are born equal, I would ask them to come and spend a week with me and then see if at the end of that week they can say that. Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Gwen, thank you for a very eloquent presentation. I'm sure committee members will have questions. And I'd like to invite questions right now.

Mr. Yates: — Thanks very much for your presentation. I'd like to talk a little bit about sort of the socially acceptable norms in some of the northern communities you talked about. I've had the opportunity to be in Wollaston Lake and spent time in Wollaston Lake, Black Lake, and some other . . . I've virtually been in every isolated northern community at one point or another, and I agree with you that there is a very different set of social norms there in regards to the view of the family and the view of safety of children and how children are treated.

How would you recommend — in fact having worked for many years in the justice system, I've met people on the other side who have been the perpetrators of some of the events in these communities — how do you recommend we go about dealing with the issues of incest and those types of things in some of these communities where over very, very long periods of time it's been an acceptable issue?

And then secondly, how do we deal with those children who leave those environments because they feel unsafe there, and come to Regina and Saskatoon and then ultimately get involved in worse environments for them?

You've worked in these communities. I've only had the opportunity to spend short periods of time. What would you recommend, because it's such a cultural issue. It's a part of generations growing up in that way.

Ms. Favel: — Okay. First of all, it is not socially acceptable to anybody in that community. It is accepted as a way of life that they are powerless to change, and that comes as the legacy not necessarily of residential schools, but of the destruction of their culture. They have very strong cultural norms, much stronger than ours, with regard to things like this.

But they have been virtually wiped out and lost. And people are caught into cycles that they don't know how to stop. People are suffering emotionally at a degree that we could not tolerate. And so I do not want anyone to think for one moment that you will walk into Wollaston Lake and find people who say this is socially acceptable. They will not.

And I will also say this very strongly, that one of the differences between the Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal people is that they are not in the same type of denial as we are in.

I married into the Aboriginal community. I did not have any children of my own. My late husband left me with many children — some of them grown at that time — with incredible social problems, some of them almost grown; and with three very small children that I, after his death, I collected back from Social Services foster homes where they had been, and raised them.

I had my sons at 15 and 16 in small-town Saskatchewan and it was a nightmare because of the socially acceptable norms of the people in that community, that it was okay for your kid to drink. Don't get too excited — it's okay. I even had a parent come to my door and say, you know, my son will come and pick them up and they'll go down to the lake and they'll throw a few beer. I was in shock. Never, never in all my years on a reserve would a parent have ever said that to me or have ever indicated that it was okay for young people to drink.

I followed that year up by taking my sons and living at Little Pine, where the social issues were big. First Saturday we were there, we sat at the kitchen table and we looked out into a compound nearby where there were two RCMP houses and at least 30 young people blasted out of their minds, falling all over, having the world's greatest party out there. And we talked about it.

And the thing is this — the difference is this — that not one of their parents or not one of those young people would have said that what they were doing was right. It was socially acceptable at Little Pine, and on any reserve I've been in, to denounce giving liquor to children, to young people — to denounce the drinking that was going on.

That is why in so many communities they have what they call sober dances. They have those sober dances so that they can guarantee . . . it's their way of . . . How far would you get with a sober dance in the average small-town Saskatchewan? But they're very popular on reserves.

You go to any traditional function on the reserve, go to a powwow and try to get in there without your car being stopped. And if they don't know who you are, they might even decide to check it. They're looking for drugs and alcohol because you will not take them into those functions. It is not socially acceptable, and they are willing to say that.

And that is one of the first things that we have to come to terms with. We see the drunkenness, and we say oh, too bad, their value system. We have no idea what their value system is. Those people are hurt — they're damaged — and it's been

going on for generations. And they want help out of it. And until we understand that that's what's in the heartbeat of those communities . . . They can tell you.

I mean I've . . . hey, I've got into how many reserves, take over the school. And as I got older and my name got around, they knew if you had a bad situation, wanted it cleaned up, call Gwen Favel. I would go in and the school board would set me down, and the council, and they would clearly spell out to me, in no uncertain terms, what they wanted to see happen. And ultimately they would want a guarantee that there would be no drugs in the school. They would want no smoking.

Wollaston Lake took the strongest stand against smoking I could imagine. I mean I was kind of shocked because I wasn't sure I could carry it out. But boy, when people give me a command, I use that. I know where my authority is coming from. I know the backup I'll get. But they wanted smoking out of the school totally, off the school grounds by anyone at any time of day — staff, students, the passerby. They were very, very adamant. This was a smoking community, but they took that stand; I didn't bring it up.

Smoking is a hard thing to deal with. I don't go out and ask people to give me that one. But I've never gone into a school in the last 10 years where they haven't hit that one hard. And they want the drugs, the alcohol — they're very, very clear. Very, very clear.

This is the kind of help, the backup they want. And they're stuck. They're a damaged people. They don't know how to get out of this situation that they're in.

Diabetes is killing them, and the diabetes is certainly helped along by the heavy drinking.

But I remember the first time when I was down at Little Pine, first time I ever heard that come out. And it really made me realize how much I didn't know about our history, when a young man from the community stood up and accused them, he said this has been going — I don't even know what the issue was — this has been going on ever since you brought whiskey in to get our beaver pelts at half price. And that's the bottom line. That's where it's at.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Are there other questions from members of the committee?

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Gwen.

Ms. Favel: — Pardon me, I get carried away. You may be afraid to ask questions now, and I apologize.

Ms. Draude: — I'm not really scared of anything. Well you said that you've been dealing with children for 42 years, and children are not born equal, and you talked about their lives when you started 42 years ago. Has it really changed a lot? Have children's lives changed a lot on the reserves?

Ms. Favel: — Yes. Yes, it's gotten worse.

Ms. Draude: — It's gotten worse?

Ms. Favel: — Yes. Especially those that are moving into the city.

Ms. Draude: — Are you talking mostly about Aboriginal children?

Ms. Favel: — Yes. I think anybody below the poverty line. I don't think that it's . . . my experience is Aboriginal.

Ms. Draude: — Okay.

Ms. Favel: — Okay? And I've dealt with some that are non-Aboriginals, but I can't speak with the same kind of authority. I can surmise but . . . so when I do speak, it's usually from the aspect of the Aboriginal community because that is where my experience has largely been.

Ms. Draude: — I know you haven't lived in . . . I don't believe you've lived in this area for a long time lately. When did you move back here?

Ms. Favel: — I moved back here in '97.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. You talked about when you first started working how the big cars ended up on the reserves and that's when you knew what was happening. Is it still happening? Like, do the — we'll call them perpetrators — do the pedophiles, are they still going out to the reserves now?

Ms. Favel: — I don't imagine so much now because the Native . . . Aboriginal people are much more mobile and so they move off, if you know what I mean. Like they are not at home the same way they used to be. And so no, I doubt that that is the same. I mean, the same things are probably happening, but in a different way.

Ms. Draude: — So to your knowledge is there prostitution — as I would think of the word prostitution — is it going on in this area?

Ms. Favel: — Not the kind we think of on the stroll in Saskatoon. I don't think that's true. But I feel quite confident in saying that if you're an alcoholic and you're really a mess and you have daughters, it's going on.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. And you talked about children, the one young girl asking you why she didn't take . . . you didn't take her out of that situation. And we've heard witnesses testify to us that even though there is abuse going on, they still, because out of love and loyalty — when it's incest basically — that they don't want to be taken away or that that is . . . they're torn so badly. So a dilemma is, when you know it's happening, do you take them away?

Ms. Favel: — No. I'm very much against removing children from their parents.

Ms. Draude: — Even if they are being abused?

Ms. Favel: — It's a rare parent who doesn't love their child. But there are a very large number of very, very, I say damaged — I don't know whether I like that word — but parents who are

hurt so badly. One of the reasons I want to set up a group home is to stop this separation of mothers and children, and top priority will be given to the young girls with children.

I do not believe in putting children in foster care. I believe in putting families in foster care in our children. I don't know how . . . well I have some plans. If you want some time I'll sit down with you. I've got some projects underway. I've even got documentation on them. If you want to hear some of my ideas that I don't . . . some people may say that's pie in the sky and I don't think it is at all.

I am at the process of setting up means of challenging the United Church of Canada to pick up one of these projects, which is a massive project but I think it would work. I mean actually involves families. And I believe that we have to keep the family unit intact. It is very important. There's only one person who can love a child as a mother and that is the mother. The rest of us can try.

Ms. Draude: — And yet, we've also heard testimony that it's very difficult to — and I don't know if this is the right word — but to cure or to change a pedophile.

Ms. Favel: — I'm not sure you can. I mean pedophiles is something that I don't think you can . . . I mean that's a big one and a very special case. And I don't . . . what I know is that you can't if they're a real pedophile. If they're using the name pedophile to make an excuse for what they're doing, then probably something could be done to rehabilitate that person. But I think if they are a real pedophile, you can't.

Ms. Draude: — So then putting the children back in the home would be . . .

Ms. Favel: — It would be dangerous, it would be very dangerous and it would mean that you would have to have some very . . .

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Gwen, thank you very much for your testimony so far. It's obvious that you have a great deal of knowledge and experience that you've relayed some of this information to us that has also educated us a little bit more as far as the historical background of people and would have happened to them, the Aboriginal people I'm referring to.

Gwen, could I just have some clarity as to . . . in the description of your work here it indicates that you're a victim offender mediator. Are you working in that capacity right now?

Ms. Favel: — I just do contracts so I don't have a job. I would love to have one, but . . .

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — You do contracts for the Department of Social Services or Justice?

Ms. Favel: — Justice, yes.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay.

Ms. Favel: — And Social . . . they're connected. There's a connection. Daryl is the person who got me into this. He might know more about that.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — No, that's fine. I was just wondering if this was ongoing work right now.

Ms. Favel: — Yes, I'm doing it. Yes.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Could you just briefly describe to the committee how that works. Is it mediation by drawing the victim and the offender together to discuss what has happened, and too for the purpose of restitution and that kind of thing? Could you just describe it to us.

Ms. Favel: — Yes, it's the whole idea behind victim offender mediation is to give the offender an opportunity to accept responsibility for what they've done, to make amends, and to learn better ways of doing things. I liked it because it was the way I used to run my schools, accept responsibility. There's no punishment great enough for anything anyone does.

I just think that's . . . punishment doesn't work. But give the person a chance to really address this in a very sobering fashion, you know, what you have done — now what can you do to make this right. That's the whole idea behind it.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, have you been able to use your — for lack of a better word too — I'll say your program or this program for victim offender mediation to restore peace basically between the victim and the offender and to make restitution in a way that's not monetary restitution or whatever? It's just to be able to draw people together to help them understand the impact of what's happening.

Have you had success in drawing people together, all people that were involved in this, for instance if there is abuse within homes on or off reserves, if for instance incest father/child where the father has sexually offended or abused the child? Have you had the opportunity to get those people together, and has it been successful so that the activity has been stopped?

Ms. Favel: — Right At this point in time those kind of issues would not come before us. I think that . . . I think it needs to, but I see that we're treating victim offender mediation in the same way that we fill our jails. We look at the nuisance, the public nuisance, and we give him the attention and we don't look at the big issues.

I have had the opportunity to deal with one or two cases of domestic violence, and I've also had the occasion to sit in court and listen to what goes on when they try to deal with it there. And I honestly believe that the biggest challenge we're going to face in the next few years is being willing to actually bring those cases into the mediation context, because in my mind it is the only way you can resolve it. There is no other way. It has to be resolved there.

And what it's going to take are very, very expert mediators, very knowledgeable people and very strong people to be able to do it effectively because there could be problems come out of it. But I do believe that it is the only way that is going to work, and I also believe that this is one of the gifts that the Aboriginal people are giving to our society because this is how they handle

things historically. And this is why they had well run societies historically because they dealt with things in this fashion.

And I do believe that it is a gift that we are getting from them, but we are also having a bit of a problem because we want to put our stamp on it. And I hope that in developing the mediation process to be truly meaningful in the really critical personal domestic violent sexual issues, that we don't make it artificial in some way, that we understand that we have to get into the heart of it.

And I also say, like, I also do community justice forums where you do bring in, you know, a much larger group and you get into the issues in a much deeper level. My experience has been that when you do this in the Native community it is one of the most incredible experiences to go through because they relate to it so well.

I have had some difficulty with the non-Aboriginal people in being able to give themselves in, because they don't go in from the heart. Native people are very much driven from the heart and so it's easier for them to adapt to it and for it to become a . . . I remember a police officer who was a little reluctant to come in to one of them and kept telling me how busy he was. I mean it was his way of saying that if he had to leave it was . . . if it got something he couldn't take, he would leave. He stayed for a good hour afterwards just visiting with people, he felt so good about what had gone on and what he had been a part of.

So yes, I feel that it is the answer. But right now I think people are somewhat nervous.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Do you notice whether or not there is sort of catalytic action starting from any groups on reserve. For instance, you mentioned — and I agree — that people have been damaged due to residential school syndrome, the whole thing, and it's really hard for people to understand the impact of that and how difficult it is to get out of the cycles of addiction and so on because of that.

But I know of a number of Aboriginal people that have been sort of self-initiating at starting, for instance, healing circles on the reserves and so on so that they can have that kind of healing, their ancestral spiritual healing in a way that's meaningful to them and that works for them.

So have you, you know, when you have testified to us that you go . . . you know, the reserves it's getting worse today, like the children are more disadvantaged, there is really almost a sense of more despair as such. And so I'm just wondering if you have witnessed on any of the . . . within any of the bands or reserves, initiatives possibly by women's groups or other people or healing circles that would call their people forth, you know, to heal?

Ms. Favel: — Yes, yes. I'm thinking right now about three different bands that I worked with in the '90s where they were doing this. Now it certainly wasn't an easy process because there is such a lack of trust.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Among their own people?

Ms. Favel: — Yes.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay.

Ms. Favel: — That's another fallout of what they've been through so that everybody is very much afraid. And people are also still, at the band level, you know, the reserve level, there's still a sense of, you do it for us.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Yes, that's why I'm wondering if they're taking a self-initiative, if that's coming to the fore again.

Ms. Favel: — But the projects I get involved in are . . . I have many, many, many, many, many very, very expert, knowledgeable, civic-minded Aboriginal women that work with me hand in hand. There are a lot; but there's a huge job there.

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

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'm just conscious of the time, Gwen . . .

Ms. Favel: — Yes, I'm sure you are.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, because I have several questions that I'd like to ask but I know that we're . . . you're running behind. So I think I'm going to pass. But please don't take that as a lack of interest; it's just the time constraint we're facing.

And I'm just going to suggest that we have a three- or four-minute break before we hear from Ray Fox.

But we want to thank you very much for some really very eloquent testimony. And I've made quite extensive notes, and I'm looking forward to going over them again. And thank you for sharing your thoughts and your experience with us.

Ms. Favel: — Well I want to thank you people very much for calling me. I felt very honoured. And as I said, I wasn't really sure I had a whole lot to say, you know, but I do, you know, I do appreciate the opportunity.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Well you started off by saying that you didn't have a whole lot to say and then you shared with us some very wise thoughts. So thank you.

Ms. Favel: — Okay, thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you, Gwen, it was good having you here with us today.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'm going to suggest we . . . I know that there are a few members who still need to check out. I'm going to suggest we take about an 8- to 10-minute break and come back here in 10 minutes. And, Ray, our apologies for keeping you waiting, but we'll be with you as quickly as we can.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — We have with us as our next

witness, Ray Fox, who is the executive director of the North Battleford friendship centre. And, Ray, we're really pleased to have you with us and are looking forward to your comments.

I know that you came in after committee members sort of did their "first thing in the morning" introductions so I'll maybe just — just so that you know who you're talking to; I know you can see the name tags — but we'll introduce ourselves a little more. My name is Peter Prebble; I'm one of the two Co-Chairs of this committee and I represent the constituency of Saskatoon Greystone.

Arlene, why don't you go ahead.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Hi, Ray, really pleased to have you here. Thanks for waiting on us; we appreciate that. And it's good to see the enthusiastic energy that's coming right through to your wonderful smile, and we're happy to have you here today. I'm Arlene Julé and I represent the Humboldt constituency.

Ms. Draude: — Hi there. I'm June Draude and I'm the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena. And I'm looking forward to your presentation.

Mr. Yates: — Good morning, Ray. I'm Kevin Yates, the MLA for Regina Dewdney, and I'm very glad to have you here this morning. And I just caught Mr. Harper walking in the door here so I'll just give it a second until he . . .

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — While we're waiting for Mr. Harper, we just want to mention to you that we have one member of our committee who's absent today due to the snowstorm in the southeast part of the province — Don Toth — he's the MLA from Moosomin.

Mr. Yates: — And we should also point out that Carolyn Jones, the MLA for Saskatoon Meewasin is here, but she's been quite sick the last couple of days so she's going to lay down. She's not feeling good at the moment.

Mr. Harper: — Ron Harper, MLA, Regina Northeast.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Ray, just proceed in whatever way you'd like to.

Mr. Fox: — Thank you very much. As Mr. Prebble stated, I am the executive director of the Battleford's Indian Metis Friendship Centre here in North Battleford.

I also have the pleasure of sitting as the president of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Saskatchewan. There are 12 friendship centres in Saskatchewan and I'm their president. And I also had a bit of a stint with the National Association of Friendship Centres. Some of you may or may not know there are 119 friendship centres across Canada, and I was their vice-president for a term just recently ended.

My background is an interesting background and I think — at least I think it is — but I needed to, I think, let you know a little bit about the background so it gives you a better perspective as to the presentation that I'm about to make.

I've spent about 10 years, from 1985 to 1995, as the president of the national association of communications in Canada; National Aboriginal Communications Society. We have radio, television, newspapers, and other methods of communication that I was president and chief executive officer of for a 10-year period.

In that capacity, I had the good fortune of working with Elections Canada. For example, if you will recall the referendum question. I had the referendum question translated into 33 different Aboriginal languages so that the Aboriginal population could fully participate in that referendum question. And following that, we also did a translation for Elections Canada on the general federal election and managed to get I think some 40 Aboriginal language interpretations of the Election Act and what have you.

I bring that to you because I wanted to stress the fact that I have been and continue to be actively involved in various aspects of Aboriginal reality stemming from the fight to preserve Aboriginal languages in this country up to and including the understanding and underscoring the importance of the Aboriginal communications that are required. Communication being the key I think to successful integration of any kind, for any society.

And the subject that I wanted to broach with you today . . . I've read through your interim report and it looks like an awful lot of hard work and I can certainly understand and appreciate a lot of the emotion, a lot of the heartache, a lot of the people who have come forward and talked about this very sensitive issue, because it is a very sensitive issue.

And I tend to get emotional, ladies and gentlemen, with these types of issues because I have children. I have a four-year-old; actually he just turned five on September 25. He goes to kindergarten. I also have a seven-year-old who's in grade 2 and I have a 10-year-old who's attending school as well.

And any time that I think about their prospects, it confuses me and it saddens me. Because when I look into the eyes of my son, I see . . . you know what I see, is that his chances of going to jail are greater than for him graduating from grade 12. I think that's a horrible, horrible statistic and a possibility.

So I've been thinking a lot about what I wanted to say to you as a group here because I believe your work is important and I want to help as much as I can to give you a little bit better understanding of where I come from and who I am and what I do, hoping that in some way that can work into your task ahead of you.

I speak my own language fluently and I also understand and can communicate in other languages. The subject that I want to speak to you on, it usually takes a couple of days to go through it all but I'm going to try to shorten it as best I can because I'm hoping that there will be some questions. I'd love to be able to answer those questions for you.

The one thing that I'm going to tell you that may shock you is that I, for the last 30 years — I'm 49 years old now — and for the last 30 years I have been looking for an elder and I have yet

to find one. I wanted to let you know that. And as I indicated earlier, I worked in a national communications organization. I've translated into 33 different Aboriginal languages and communicated with older people, users of the language, purveyors and protectors of the languages, but I have yet to meet an elder in the last 30 years.

What does that mean then? Well let me take you back, if I can, to the early 1960s when the Aboriginal population began to migrate into the urban settings, into the urban centres because I believe that they came to the realization that there was not a lot of future in living on the reserve.

Eventually the idea was to try and break out of that reserve pattern and mould and go move into the urban settings because the prospects there of getting a better education and perhaps surviving were a little bit better than they were on the reserve with the housing shortages and what have you that were occurring at the time.

The different agencies, organizations, and governments I think to some degree, began to look at these people who were coming onto the welfare rolls, and the kids that were being parachuted into the schools, the offenders that were coming into the institutions, to the provincial . . . or the goals, the jails, and they realized that these people were different and they weren't quite sure how to handle them. What do we do with these people?

And a few things became apparent right away. One is the disproportionate number of Aboriginal offenders in the institutions was something that people said, well, they can't all be bad people, you know. How come there's so many of them in jail, right, compared to the general population? And then the other thing that became rather obvious was the almost total disrespect for the education system; that how come these kids don't come to school? They don't learn the same; they're not . . . they don't want an education, they're dropping out. What's going on here?

The dropout rate is a shame in this country never mind in this province. And the welfare rolls began to increase because that was the first place that Aboriginal people headed for. So what happened then is that some of the people got together and said let's try to figure this out here. How do we handle these people?

I remember one story in particular that still makes the circles around this community where the Department of Social Services actually set up a group of chairs with all their social workers in a circle and asked an Aboriginal woman to sit in the middle of that circle to try to get an understanding of an Aboriginal perspective — what's different about you people; we have some questions to ask — because they wanted to genuinely understand.

And one of the things that came out of those types of investigations and/or interrogations, I guess, is that these Aboriginal people they have a lot of respect for their elders. Maybe one of the things we should do is hire some elders. We'll bring some elders into the school so that they can provide some counselling and some direction to the youth who are in danger of dropping out of school.

We'll bring these elders and we'll hire them in the jails so that they can counsel the inmates and maybe the recidivism rate will not be as high and maybe people will want to rediscover their Aboriginal self and have some respect for the elders. And this began to happen. They began to hire elders. Actually they started putting ads in the paper and some people were applying for those jobs.

And a few years later . . . well I guess a few days later, the old boy got off the trapline and got himself a job and was sitting in an office, and he was the elder for the school. And the principal or the teacher had a problem with one of the students and they sent him to this elder. And the elder looked at the young fellow and said, well, what's your problem here, you know, and how come you're not listening to the teachers? You know you need an education and you be good to your mom and dad and listen to your mom and dad, and, oh, maybe once in a while you can go do a sweat lodge or something. And so they began to hand out this advice to the youth.

Somewhere along the way they also realized that hey, this is a steady paycheque here. It's not bad. Good digs. I don't have to be out on the trapline. I can be here and be an elder.

And so they began to come up with concepts and ideas because they were under pressure to produce something, and began to formalize different things that they were able to hand out to the teachers, that they were able to hand out to the principal, that they were able to hand out to the students.

One of the things that I notice that came out of that, for example, was a picture of a teepee. I don't know, probably you guys have seen it. There's a picture of a teepee and there's names for the different parts of the teepee.

This one here we're going to call respect, and this one we're going to call whatever, honesty, and so on and so on. And they began to teach with that model. And people bought into it, just like they bought into the dream catcher.

And the problem with that is it's like giving this piece of tile here a name of something and then trying to teach somebody on that basis. But nobody questioned the elder. They just went ahead. And a whole bunch of that kind of stuff began to happen. And now we're in the 1990's or in the year 2000, a new millennium, and we have the same thing going on again, except this time it's a little bit stronger.

I've got a document here, for example, from IMED. I'm sure you've heard of IMED, the Indian Metis education. They've got March 26, 1999, $3.5 million funding increase to education. Two million of it goes to new community education initiatives. IMED funding: Indian Metis Education Development funding; funding based on need and meeting program criteria for each applicant.

One of the first things they've got in here is Aboriginal elders outreach program. Let's go spent two and a half million dollars and hire some elders. We're back in the same predicament.

I had an occasion just last week to make a presentation to the Canadian Centre for Management Development, I think they're

called. They're from Ottawa and they bring in different managers from the different federal programs and it was in Saskatoon.

And I began to talk about this very subject and apparently one of the managers that was there — there were 26 people altogether — but he was a chaplain that works for the penitentiary. And one of the things that he told me was he said, you know what you have to say here is offensive to the elders. He said I've been working with these three elders for the last how many ever years and I've grown to love and respect and learn from these elders. And he said, what you had to say here is offensive to me.

And I said, I apologize. I apologize, but let me ask you a question if I can. What would you say was the most important thing that any or all of these elders may have taught you? And he said, I think one of the things that I learned was to be able to go into the sweat lodge and to pray. I said, okay. That's fine; that's reasonable. I can understand and appreciate that.

But do you remember if the sweat lodge entrance faced the east or the west or did it face the south? Do you remember if there were 8 willows, 16 willows, or 32 willows? Do you remember if there were 5 rocks, 9 rocks, 12 rocks, or 21 rocks? Do you remember if there was prayer cloth? Do you remember what colour it was? Do you remember if they took in cedar, sage, or sweet grass? Do you remember if they had a drum or a rattle or a pipe? And if they did, why?

And he said, no, I don't remember.

I said, well, if you would have asked him why, the chances are they would have told you because that's what somebody else showed me how to do, or somebody else showed me how to do that. So we're still following along in that pattern.

It's like that old story of the married couple. You know, after five years of wedded bliss, the husband finally comes home one evening and he says, you know, honey, I'm really happy with this marriage but there's one thing that really puzzles me all the time. Why is it you cut both ends off of the ham before you put it in the oven? I need to know that. And she said because my mother did that.

So the next opportunity they get they ask the mother-in-law: why do you cut both ends off the ham before you put it in the oven? And she said because my mother did it.

The old girl was still alive and on the next occasion, it was Christmas or something, and they had an opportunity to visit her. And the granddaughter asked her grandma, grandma, why did you cut both ends off the ham before you put it in the oven? And she said because my roast pan was too small.

And to me that's part of what is kind of happening here, is that we have now funding that's in place to hire elders to teach us stuff. And what they're teaching us is something that they learned from one of these 1960's elders. So all of this information that's being passed on to us now is erroneous. And we're trying to live up to a false expectation that somebody somewhere concocted.

So what am I saying then? I'm saying that we need to have support for programs that have Aboriginal cultural integrity intact. It has to have integrity. As a matter of fact, the end of our conversation with a chaplain from the penitentiary is he asked me, well, how do I find an elder then? That's what he asked me. In sincerity he said, well, how do I find an elder?

And my answer was really quite simple I thought — it depends on what you're looking for. What is it you're looking for? You're looking for an old person? I can find lots of those for you. No problem.

But I use the word elder, and you all think you understand what I'm saying. And maybe I think you understand what I'm saying. But you don't. Because everybody has their own idea about what that should be.

My understanding of the term elder, if you want my honest to God opinion — and as I say, I've communicated in languages and I've talked to several old people and I've read a lot of stuff — my understanding of the term elder is it actually comes I think, in the way that we're trying to use it anyway, from the Mormon faith.

The Mormon church has a council of elders, to the best of my knowledge, and those council of elders are selected from the time they were born till the time that they've got silver in their hair and snow on their heads. That they have lived an exemplary life; that they have reached out a hand to their brothers and sisters; that they had helped the community; that they had raised their children properly; they did not beat their wives; they did not abuse drugs. And they lived a good life and a fulfilling life and a helpful life to their community. So that at some point in time in their life they can reach a place where they can become one of the members of the council of elders in that church.

So that when that church has a difficulty or problem that they're not quite sure how to deal with, as some churches are now having, they're able to go to the council of elders and try to get some advice.

Now the council of elders don't know everything, but because of their lifestyle, because they are plugged in to their community and because they are respected in that community, they are allowed to try to make some decisions to help that faith along.

That's my understanding of the word elder.

Somewhere in all of that, we got shamanism. Somewhere in all of that, we have the sun dance lodges. Somewhere among all of that, we have the seers. Somewhere among all of that, we have the herbalists. It's all in there and we're all trying to take that one term and trying to fit it into what we're doing, right.

So the kids on the streets, they're lost. Simple. They have no . . . If we believe, ladies and gentlemen, if we believe that as a human being you have to be intact, spiritually, mentally and physically, and I think anybody will understand that, and all of a sudden look at us and our whole spiritual being is lost someplace and we're trying to follow along with all this

patchwork, different stuff that's coming forward.

Just for the record, I am a pipe carrier. I have an eagle staff and I have a medicine bundle. I will never ever walk the face of the earth as an elder because I just don't live up to that expectation. I won't. But I have the things. I have them and I come by them honestly.

I can tell you a story about each of the feathers on my eagle staff, where they came from. In some cases I could tell you where the eagle was born and how I acquired those. They were given to me. I earned them. I have the eagle staff. It's in my office.

What does it mean to me? It means a lot. I earned every one of those feathers, right. But that's mine. My medicine bundle — I can talk to you about my medicine bundle. I can talk to you about my pipe. But I will never be an elder because that's not my role in this life, you see.

So then the question comes back: then what do we do, right? Because we have lost. We are lost generations here in the city streets.

And we have begun, at the friendship centre movement, at the friendship centre level, a curriculum project, which we want to introduce to the schools. We want to be able to say that right now as the school system exists, there doesn't seem to be a lot of room for the Aboriginal kids. They don't see a part of themselves reflected in the curriculum that's being taught to them, so as a result it's not even real to them.

And you have to admit that in the last 125 years, education and Aboriginal people haven't really gotten along that well. And so now one of the things we need to be able to do is to be able to say we need to tweak this curriculum a little bit so that it more accurately reflects the reality of the Aboriginal peoples.

How do we do that? One of the first things we need to be able to do is to be able to acknowledge and get past this thing with the residential schools. We have to get through that, but we can't do that if we keep ignoring it.

So one of the things we're thinking about is . . . actually we've got the curriculum developed and we'll be piloting in two schools here in North Battleford in January. One of the first modules of that curriculum is the residential schools, is just being able to say the residential schools were here, this is a bit of what happened, and this is how we get beyond them.

And we have three modules that will be developed this year and another three modules that will be developed next year for a full K to 12 curriculum, Aboriginal-specific curriculum that will be taught in the schools. Because the other thing that's come to our attention is that there is no place for the non-Aboriginal kids to learn about their Aboriginal brothers and sisters either, you know. So it's missing.

As a matter of fact, and it's been a while since I've been in school, but I believe it's in a grade 3 reader. I don't know if you people encountered it; I know I did in the school. One of the spelling books, I think in grade 3, was a story of the RCMP and Chief Piapot, when Chief Piapot put his tent up — remember? — where the tracks, the train tracks were coming. They're were building these train tracks, and Chief Piapot put his tent up there and he refused to move because he didn't want that train, that train track being built on his land. And the RCMP gave him 15 minutes on the watch and at 15 minutes he walked into that camp and knocked over Chief Piapot's tent. That's what I remember from the grade 3 reader.

That's about all I remember from the grade 3 reader, and I used to go back to that story lots of times just because there was that little picture of Piapot there and somebody that I could identify with, you know. It was not a really good scenario for Chief Piapot — he got his tent knocked down. But that's what I remember most about grade 3. And I don't want to put my child there. I don't want . . . I think he needs more than that, you know.

And the one thing that's going on now, as you probably know, is the Aboriginal Head Start program. National Health and Welfare have put aside, I believe, $100 million over a four-year period for Aboriginal Head Start. And if you don't know, the Aboriginal Head Start program, the Head Start program actually originated in the United States of America where the Black and Hispanic populations in the United States are having the same type of problems, I guess, as the Aboriginal population here in Canada.

Their dropout rate is higher; their infant mortality rate is higher; their incarceration rates are higher; their unemployment rates are higher; and so on. And some 30 years ago they came up with this idea, and I guess this is where I have a failing, ladies and gentlemen, because I am not an educator. As a matter of fact I'm barely educated. But I understand that there are names like Jean Piaget, for example, who apparently was an educator some years ago, and they understood that as a child your learning curve, you learn most of your stuff — that is feelings, trust, love, all of those important things — you learn all of those when you're a very small child. The rest of the stuff that you learn is pretty much academic that you're being able to learn in the schools. But the important things that make you a little human person, you learn when you are very young.

So it makes sense then to apply some learning into that time frame. And so in the United States they did that. They began to try to strengthen the Black and Hispanic population while they were still preschool. And what they're able to do, because they have the luxury of a long-term program there, is be able to do long- and short-term studies on Head Start project in the United States.

One of the things they have found, for example, is that for every dollar that they spent at the preschool level in the Head Start programs, they were saving between $7 and $10 in the future life . . . in that life of that child because they were tending to stay in school longer; they were tending to not get pregnant soon, and they were getting better jobs than they would had they just been put into that school system.

So somebody went to the United States and actually saw the Head Start project and some of those studies and said, hey, this might work for the Indians, and so brought it back to Canada.

And they began to look at it seriously, and we've started now the Aboriginal Head Start project.

But what we try to do is to instill some type of cultural identity and recognition in our little people from between three and four years old. But the next time they encounter anything that has any Aboriginal content, if they're very lucky, is at a junior high level. And if they're not lucky then it's at the university level where they have Native studies and, even there, they're elective. So where do they go then from the time they're at the Head Start level to the time they hit university to learn anything about their Aboriginal identity? It's not reinforced anywhere in that school system.

So what we're trying to do with this curriculum development project is to put that back into the schools and see if we can make a difference in the lives of those children. And we know that it's a long, long, long-term investment, that we probably will not see any results from any of the work that we're doing now until after somebody has graduated from K to 12 taking in the Aboriginal-specific curriculum. But we are quite certain that it's going to make a difference in the lives of our children.

So that's one of the things that we're doing here in North Battleford to try to put that kind of identity and pride back in the kids that we deal with.

And I must be out of time by now. There's a lot of things I want to say, a lot of things I'd like to talk to you more about in that realm and in that reality. And I think the one thing that I want to say above everything else is that if there are questions in any way, shape, or form, if you leave here in the next day or two and you think of something, please give me a call. I would be more than happy.

And beyond all of that, the other thing that I want to be able to tell you is that what I share with you today is in sincere honesty. I have no hidden agenda here. I don't have any type of an agenda. I'm not putting together a proposal to go send it to somebody based on what I'm presenting to you here. I am telling you how it is on the street and that's where I come from.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you very much, Ray. Boy, that was educational. Whether or not you have a lengthy list of credentials behind your name or not, you obviously are an educator.

Ray, we're just going to, once again, as we always do, turn over some questions to some of our committee members so that they can talk with you more at length about their concerns and their thoughts of your presentation.

Ms. Draude: — I'd love to ask you lots of questions, but I usually get to be one of the first ones to ask so I'm going to defer to some of the rest of you for a change.

Mr. Yates: — Excellent presentation, Ray, and a lot of very, very good information. I've got a couple of questions and comments.

When you were talking about the Head Start program and the $1 invested in the US returned 7 in savings and those types of things, I think that there are some very beneficial results from those types of programs.

Now do you think that, from your experience, would those programs in the United States . . . We're embarking down the road of early childhood intervention and some of the ideas to get to children at a much younger age and give them the opportunity for that support and nurturing that you need at that young age to develop your values and help families where there's difficulties to do that. Do you think that those types of programs will have meaningful results not only in the cities but in traditional Aboriginal communities — on the reserves and other environments?

Or do you think there are things that . . . Or could you give us some advice on how to implement those types of programs as those types of things are being talked about over the next year or two? We're moving down that road and any advice you could give us, I think, would be very helpful.

Mr. Fox: — Well I work with the school district here in North Battleford and have been working with the school district in the development of this curriculum that I'm talking about. And one of the things that I encountered earlier on is the political reality of the Aboriginal peoples, not only in the reserves but in the urban settings in particular.

We have the Metis people on the one hand, on the one side of us, saying that they represent the interests of all of their constituents and all of the Metis people, and justifiably so.

And we have the First Nation's people on the other side of us saying that they represent, regardless of residency, all of the First Nation's people wherever they may reside.

Then you've got in the middle of all of that, the friendships centres, and then you've got the Native women's, and you've got these other groups, if you will, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

The school district was under fire from the First Nation's politicians and they were told that they need to hire more elders, work with more elders in your school system, that's what's lacking in your education system. You have to, you know . . . the cultural integrity, the reality, what have you. And they brought that to the table when we began our discussions and dialogue.

My answer to them was, well, have the First Nation's people then identify those elders for you. If they are telling you to hire more elders, then say well bring them, bring them out here. Because right now what's happening is like with this 2.5 million or whatever it is that is going to this community education initiative, what's happening now is that if you put an ad in the paper, chances are people are going to apply for the job because unemployment is rampant out there. So how do you determine then that the people who are coming through the door are actually credible people who are able to teach, you know, what it is you're learning. So I think the onus is on us as Aboriginal people to be able to try to make that happen for you.

But the critical thing, I think, is if we say, you know, we want

this brown shirt, don't come back and say red looks so much better on you. You know, like we have to . . . here has to be some accountability built into these types of programs. And I think that squarely the accountability belongs with us.

Mr. Yates: — My second question or comment . . . I worked for a number of years in both Social Services and Justice and in that period of time I worked in the correctional centre system for a number of years. And as we hired more Aboriginal people, and in particular brought elders into the system, there were marked changes to the system including a decrease in violence, a number of very, you know, positive things.

Now how do you square that sort of issue of the elders and then they're not, you know, sort of not being able to define it with some really positive changes, I guess, and a decrease in tensions and the number of things that could be seen as very positive. It's not culturally based . . . You know where . . . Do you understand where I'm coming from?

Mr. Fox: — I understand what you're coming from. And I know the short and rather ignorant answer is, if you have nothing to believe in the first place and somebody comes along and gives you something to believe in it may help you. Right, that's a short answer.

But the bigger end of the problem, I guess and I'm glad you brought it up, is that a lot of our people don't learn anything at all about their spirituality or customs or culture until they get to jail, you know. That's the first time that they actually start looking seriously within and saying well, Jeez, maybe there is something out there. And that's where this spiritual aspect of who we are is missing already, right, when they get into the jail. So you present these people with anything and yes, I could help them.

I'll underscore that and go just a little bit deeper. I had the good fortune of talking . . . Well my first cousin, okay, she was diagnosed with fourth-level cancer just recently. She, for whatever reason, came to me and said I need to go to The Pas, Manitoba, there's a medicine man there that can cure me. Okay, I'll drive you if that's what you want me to do.

So the first thing she had to do was come up with $1,500 to put into the bank account of this gentleman because he needed to do whatever he needed to do over there to prepare for her coming. So we helped to raise the $1,500. She put it into the gentleman's bank account. I drove her to The Pas, Manitoba to the residence, to the lodge, to the ceremony, brought her out. I never went into the ceremony. The medicine man came out with her to the van and my cousin then asked would it be okay now if I went to the doctor to have a checkup. And he said, oh yes, you can go to the doctor and have a checkup. They won't find anything anyway. You're done. You're cured.

Four days later she died when I got her home. A very good friend of mine just recently passed away, just recently, just a few days ago. Same medicine man, same prescription, same diagnosis. And I'm sitting at home and I'm thinking to myself, why me? Why me? Right? There I was minding my own damn business and I get dragged into this thing.

But if I'm sitting here and allowing that to go on, right, and people to do that to my people then I'm just as guilty as those people. Somebody has got to get up and say something and do something here. I made a phone call to a friend of mine who works with Justice in Manitoba. This man has been incarcerated three times, including child molestation and sexual abuse, and he is coming to our communities over here claiming he can cure people of diseases, right, and we're buying into it. Okay?

Somebody's got to say stop. If you want to understand, right, if you want me to go into this sweat lodge I need to know why I'm going in there. I need to know what I'm doing in there. And I need to come out of there understanding what just happened in that sweat lodge — whether it's shamanism, whether it's magic, whether it's whatever. I need to understand. And some of us got nothing, especially these people who are ending up in jail.

They start with nothing and they are going into these institutions and they'll grab at anything. And then what you've got in the institution is you've got a population from the Ojibwa, you've got a population from the Dakota, Lakota, Nakota. You've got the Crees, you've got the Inuit. And they're putting together stuff on their own and becoming pipe carriers and medicine men overnight and prescribing stuff that they know nothing about, probably causing more harm than good. But they're there, and they'll always be there.

Just recently in Saskatoon, last September in Saskatoon, a Provincial Court judge had to make a decision as to whether a pipe could be used in a ceremony at the friendship centre in Saskatoon or not. It breaks my heart to say that but that's what happened. We have one group of people with elders and another group of people with elders. This group saying the pipe should not be used in a city because a city is dirty, you've got bars, you've got mental institutions, you've got prostitution. You got all this stuff going on and the pipe is sacred and therefore should never go into an urban city setting.

And you've got the other group of people who are saying, a pipe should go where it's needed. These guys sued these guys and the Provincial Court judge said, good Lord, me, why me? But it happened. It's there. So we need to get a hold of that somehow.

And I don't know the answers. I don't, honest. Like there's a lot of answers that I don't know. But what I do know is that I have been looking for an elder for 30 years. And if we have to start rebuilding then, from you know, the Head Start and supporting the kids themselves, I don't know at what point in time we're going to realize any reward for our hard work, you know, but if we don't start now because the parents are . . . Some of the kids that we're dealing with are actually the . . . the kids of the kids of the kids of the kids, who went through the residential school system, who were told all this stuff is no good for them, you know. That it's all paganism and mumbo jumbo, you know.

And so it's hard to put that back into some kind of a perspectus. But there are some groups, ours included I hope — the friendship centre movement — who are trying to get through all of that. And saying what we need to be able to do here is just put some kind of an accountable system in place.

Why don't we, for example, in North Battleford, have a cultural council? Why don't we all, as a group here, and we've got . . . we know there's, I think, at least 19 different agencies, organizations under groups here in the city of North Battleford that in one way, shape, or form try to teach some little bit of culture, you know, or something to do with the Aboriginal reality. Why don't we as 19 people who are proponents of the Aboriginal cultural teachings, why don't we sit down and say, you know, this elder from Sweet Grass here he's not bad with counselling. This other elder from Mosquito here, he's . . . knows a little bit more about herbs and healing stuff. This guy over here, he can counsel sexual predators or whatever. You know, why don't we sit down as a group of people and make those kinds of decisions that are affecting our community and our kids and our people, right?

Right now it's not happening because we're fighting for the same dollars usually, the same programs, the same proposals.

Mr. Harper: — I want to thank you very much for your presentation. My question is: as your term as the executive director of the North Battleford Friendship Centre, during that period of time, have you been able to identify any children under the age of 18 who have been involved in providing sexual favours in return for a reward, whether that reward be money, drugs, food, shelter?

Mr. Fox: — I would answer that in the affirmative, sir, that yes, yes we have. But I'd need to be able to qualify it. I have a youth counsellor on staff, and I've also up until just recently had a storefront social worker on staff, who worked with the client group from the food bank that we . . . we run a food bank here in the city of North Battleford. And of the clients who are utilizing the services of the food bank, we have begun a process of doing interviews and consultations with that client group to try to find out why it is that they need the food bank and how we can help them get out of that need. And some of the things that we have been able to identify are those kinds of problems.

Personally, I do know . . . I have two brothers that live in Saskatoon, and I do know that they've first-hand experienced it within their families.

Mr. Harper: — But here in North Battleford, how many cases have you identified that would have been involved in that transaction, providing sexual favours in returns for a reward?

Mr. Fox: — We've only been keeping statistics on the food bank since April and I've . . . prior to that, being the executive director of the friendship centre I have staffing positions. Their role and responsibility is to try to provide the counselling. Most of the time it's of a confidential nature and so a lot of information is not shared with me that the counsellors work on. But I do know that my personal attention has been brought to three cases specifically with child prostitution in North Battleford.

Mr. Harper: — Those three cases would be over what period of time?

Mr. Fox: — Just since April.

Mr. Harper: — Since April.

Mr. Fox: — The other thing that I do know, and I don't know if this relates, but the child's help line received some . . . I think they average about a hundred calls a month from the North Battleford area. And that again I don't have the privy to the information, but what it is basically is if children are having problem in a community, there is a help line that they could call. And for the North Battleford region I believe that it's averaged about a hundred calls per month.

Mr. Harper: — Would those hundred calls all be calls as a result of sexual abuse of someone under the age of 18?

Mr. Fox: — I'm sorry, sir, as I say, I don't have that information. But I guess all I'm saying is that there appears to be some problems that the children in this community aren't having resolved in this community, that they have to phone an outside help line at the rate of about a hundred per month to be able to try to . . . So those could be something like that, I would suspect. There are things that are unfortunately shared in confidence with our social worker and/or our counsellor that are not open to my discussion.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thanks, Ray, for that. This is quite a unique perspective that you've brought to the hearing process and I really appreciate it. And I think in it, you know, lies some direction that we may want to think seriously about pursuing in terms of how we move the healing process forward. And I guess that's what I'd like to focus, you know, my questions on.

We've heard a lot of testimony over the last day and a half with respect to really difficult abuse situations that are occurring in this community, and we've heard those stories, you know, as we've moved around the province.

But I would like to focus in on your suggestions with respect to healing. And I guess what I've heard you saying is that, you know, you'd like to see the province supporting programs that truly reflect Aboriginal integrity and that for healing to be effective, Aboriginal integrity needs to be in place.

And I'm saying this in part to be sure that I've heard you correctly, so correct me if I'm wrong. And I also heard you saying that in terms of directions that we might set out on, the work at the preschool level and at the school level are key, and that we need to be building on programs like Aboriginal Head Start, and that we need to revamp our curriculum to make sure that when Aboriginal children are in the classroom they see their reality and their past being talked about in the curriculum as well as the reality and past of non-Aboriginal people.

So what I'd like to do in terms of questions, if what I've heard reflects what you've said in part, I'd like you to just elaborate on those themes from a healing perspective. You know if we're going to move forward in terms of the healing process in our communities, not just on the sexual abuse front but on a whole array of fronts really, you obviously see these things as being key.

Right now I think Aboriginal Head Start is federally funded, if

that's correct, and I know we've made some revisions to our curriculum, but what I hear you saying is those are really just the beginning, that we need a really substantial overhaul of where we're going from the point of view of curriculum.

Could you elaborate on the curriculum process a little more, Ray, in the sense of would you like to see the . . . What's been happening at the provincial level, to the best of your knowledge, in terms of the provincial curriculum being revamped? Because to the best of my knowledge, it really . . . it's been modified but there hasn't been this kind of major overhaul that you're talking about. That process has not begun and I'm wondering whether you know . . .

Normally the curriculum revisions are a partnership arrangement between the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the school trustees association — June, you may be able to help me out here as somebody who's really knowledgeable about education issues — but members of the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) as local teachers work on curriculum committees, the province, provincial officials from the Department of Education are involved in that process, and usually school trustees in some way are sometimes represented in that process as well, plus obviously interested parents. And I'm just wondering if that process has really kind of started at a provincial level or whether we need to get it started.

Mr. Fox: — Last year we — as in the friendship centre — got invited to a meeting with the school boards and the school district here in North Battleford. What apparently had happened is some of this money — the funding increase to education — had . . . that information had been given out, I guess, to the province. And the North Battleford school division and school districts needed the support of the Aboriginal population to be able to apply for increased funding for services in the Battlefords.

What they wanted to do — or what they did actually, it now has come about — there is a project called the Phoenix project here in North Battleford. There is also the Avalon school project which is . . . the Avalon school is where kids have dropped out of school and they want to put them into some place, and I think it's a correspondence type of thing. And they applied for, to the best of my knowledge, the number that was batted around was $800,000 to be able to increase the retrieval programs.

I went to that meeting and essentially said to them, I don't believe in what you're doing but I will support your initiative if you will support my initiative. My initiative is to redesign the curriculum to better reflect the reality of the Aboriginal kids who are in some cases up to 85 per cent in the classroom. That's what I want to do. Obviously what you guys want to do is retrieve these kids and get them back into school over here. Right.

My way of thinking is you've got a leaky faucet here. And instead of trying to fix the leaky faucet, you're putting this container underneath to catch the water and making that bigger. That's all you're doing because next year you're going to be applying for what? A million and six now? Because this problem is increasing over here. The kids are dropping out faster because this is not able to hold them in school. So I want to fix this and I'll support what you guys are doing over there.

As far as I know that's where we parted company, and I believe that in fact that has happened; that they have increased their retrieval program. I've been attending meetings since 1974 and I've been basically saying the same message since 1974, right.

The education system needs to be revamped. It needs to be relooked at especially — especially — in light of the current statistics. If we believe our own statisticians, the demographics in this province, right, are changing drastically. If we don't start putting steps in place today, how we're we going to handle those in the couple next years, all right? Our kids and our grandkids are the people who are going to be carrying that load. We're sloughing off that problem to these kids. Because the jails and the youth centres and the institutions are not going to be big enough to hold all of us. And that's what we're building.

We can't retrieve all these kids. We got to start over here by educating properly in the first place so we don't have to worry about this retrieval program. But for some reason everybody jumps up and down and says, well, we got to get these kids back in school over here or we got to sober up the parents or maybe it's the grandparents who should be telling these kids all about their culture. So I can't help them. I'm sorry.

We have to start some place. If this is the point, if the year 2001 is where we begin, then let's begin. But we can't forever be going on saying well, we got to fix the parents, we got to fix the grandparents, we got to . . . That's dumb. Today's kids are who we got to worry about.

My own personal situation is that both of my young kids have gone through the Head Start program. My seven-year-old went for a year. My two-year-old went for two years.

My five-year-old is now in kindergarten. He's come out of the Head Start program. At the time when he was graduating from Head Start, he knew, in Cree, most of the animals. He knew how to count to 20 in Cree. The girl, when she went out of Head Start, within three months she was coming back to the boy, the younger boy, to try to reinforce what she had learnt at the Head Start program. Today, my boy is forgetting how to count to 20 and he's only just started kindergarten in September.

So what's the point of doing all this Head Start if you're not going to put something in the system to reinforce and keep these kids going until they're able to elect the Native studies course in university, if that's how far they have to go. So there's nothing in there for them, you know.

And yes, there appears to be some movement again, you know. There's $2 million to new community education, but they're still talking about Aboriginal elder outreach program. And the problem is I don't think they know what they're talking about. Right? But they're putting money towards it.

So what I think needs to happen is that . . . And the beauty of the curriculum project that I'm developing — I have to tell you this because it's really exciting to me. Apparently what had happened is the First Nations people came to the school district

and said you got to do more, you got to do more. Our kids are dropping out, you ain't teaching them properly, we're getting better results on the First Nations; etc., etc. And I think they got cut a cheque of, what, $800,000 to develop curriculum? Something like that. And I don't know where it went. I haven't seen it.

But anyways, what happened then is that you've got people positioning, right? Saying, the First Nations people saying, we'll develop the curriculum, we'll teach our own kids, and that's what we're going to do. Right? And then you've got the school district saying no, no, no, no, we'll do that. Here, here is some money; we'll hire some elders and we'll put something together.

We came through all of that as a friendship centre and looked at the problem — the whole problem — said these guys ain't doing it for us. These guys ain't doing it for us. Where the heck do we go? Thank God for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Because it was a conversation that I had with George Erasmus, and I explained to him what was going on here. And he said, well that's what the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's for, Ray. That's what it's for. We're suffering the intergenerational effects of these residential schools. You can put in a proposal and I'll do the best that I can to get it through the system.

And so I put a proposal together and I sent it to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. And they said yes, this is what the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is all about. We will support this.

So then I came back to the school district. I said, well here's what I'm going to do, guys. I'm going to develop curriculum. Now if the First Nations people don't want it, I don't got a problem with that. If the school district don't want it, I don't got a problem with that either. Because I have friends at the Plains Indian Cultural College in Calgary and I have friends at the Ben Calfrobe School in Edmonton, okay, who are a separate, entire school system unto themselves on cultural learning.

I will take my curriculum and I'll start my own school. The 4 to $7,000 that you pay per student per year, I can access that, based on this curriculum. So do you want me to be a part of this action or would you rather I stand alone?

That's how I had to get involved. I didn't want to do that. I prefer that we learn side by side and work together. But if the bottom line is that I got to do it by myself, these are my kids we're talking about, and I will do what needs to be done.

I made a connection with Charles Fiddler. I don't know if you know Charles Fiddler. Charles Fiddler has a master's in education. He also has a bachelor's degree in strategic planning for education. He's part of my curriculum team. I have a Dr. Tim Goudard, who has a doctorate in education, his wife, Sally, who has a master's in education. And I also have Lyle Frank, who is working on his master's in psychology.

Those four people are my curriculum team. And that's the kind of stuff we're able to put on the table. From Ray Fox, who dropped out at grade 7. I'm not an educator. I see a problem in the system; I'm trying to do something about it. But everybody's kind of saying, well what? what? what? what? Right?

And that's when I began talking with these educated people with the credentials. That's one of the first things they said. You know what makes this unique is that it comes and kicks us in the ass and tells us as educators you're failing us. And yes, we want to be involved. And we've got curriculum, and it's going to happen.

But now we're taking it back and saying, whoever wants to use it, use it. That's what it's for. It's an investment in our children, because my kids are in this system. And I always say about my son . . . I love my son to pieces. And I always say to myself, you know after all I've done and after all I've been and the heartache and the misery and whatever I caused as a youngster and even recently, my Creator still saw fit to give me this life to bring into this world.

I can't leave here until I know he's going to be okay. And then when I do leave here all I'm going to leave behind is what's in that boy. Right now I can't go because his chances of going to jail are greater than his chances of graduating from high school. That's sad. That brings tears to my eyes, guys. And we got to do something about that.

And to me that's a lot of what's going on with the young people wherever they are. They're lost. They're lost. They don't see that. They're not whole. You know, people will say you're out of balance. And if those three things are somehow disproportioned and you don't know where to go to reinforce that part of yourself, you're lost.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Ray, it's almost 12, and we should break shortly. But, Arlene, you may have a question or two so I'll turn it over to you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I have a lot of questions. I have a lot of thoughts that I'd like to receive from you just to . . . as a continuum of what you've said here. I'm going to ask you one question before we break for lunch, and I hope that we can open ourselves to conversing with each other, possibly via telephone or something, in the days ahead.

Have the North Battleford school district accepted your curriculum? Are they teaching it in the schools now?

Mr. Fox: — I have a commitment from the school district that they will pilot the curriculum in two schools here in North Battleford beginning in January.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Beginning in January?

Mr. Fox: — Yes.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Very good. I just want to ask you just a quick follow-up. You mentioned that within the curriculum, this part of the curriculum, that there would be education for youngsters from the Aboriginal communities to understand the effects of the residential school system, what this was about. Man, it's a long, long story. I'm just wondering

how you can make it part of a curriculum. It might be . . . But I'm glad to hear that that's part of it.

I'm wondering if you have also instilled in that curriculum some reawakening of children, of what it is they can celebrate about their Aboriginal culture, the celebration of who they are, in spite of the residential schools? In other words, your . . . everything that comprises your spirituality, to awaken children to the beauty and the wonder of Aboriginal culture and spirituality.

Mr. Fox: — Yes. We have begun to talk about just small things. And I think that for me to try to explain or talk to somebody about things that I know nothing about is kind of pointless. So what we've done is we've begun a small council of people that get together periodically. They're just kind of like a full-gospel businessmen's association, if you've heard of them. I think they're a great idea and I used to participate in them. But it's kind of like that except this one's kind of a different colour — it's brown.

But one of the things we will do for example is we'll say to ourselves, why is this eagle feather so important in our culture? What does it really mean? Well we know that we hold the eagle in reverence because of its vision — you know, eight, nine, ten times the vision of a human being. We would like to see that vision so that we can see clearly. We can see through things. We know that when the eagle is flying way high that they can see a mouse in the field and swoop down and pick him up. We love that vision. So for that reason we feel the eagle is important.

We also think that the eagle makes a full circle. You know the eagle and the little tines around the feather, they make a full circle. That's part of our culture and custom, you know.

We begin to talk about those kinds of things, and we put them on the table. And if somebody has a different perspective on it or a different slant on it or some of these elders or somebody goes on the Internet and finds information or somebody goes to the library and finds, you know, whatever, or somebody goes to visit an elder and they're given a different perspective, we bring that back. And we say, yeah, well except the Ojibwa belief is kind of like this, and well the Mohawks might think that way — you know, that kind of thing. But at least we come to some kind of a conclusion on why that feather is important in our culture so that we can then move forward, you know, onto the next thing, right. And that's what we're trying to build on.

We almost have to start all over again with that. That's how bad that, I think . . . and I can't, I don't want to blame . . . I'm not that kind. I'm trying to walk a different path. But I think organized religion did a number on us too in that arena, you know, and we lost a lot.

And we need to rebuild but if we're rebuilding on a solid foundation, coming from a belief system that's within us, then what we need will find its way to us, right? And so that's how we have to move forward. We don't know all of the answers. We don't. Not by any stretch of the imagination.

We have as I say, we have doctorates, we have psychologists, we have psychiatrists, we have all kinds of people that are inputting into our system but we're able to sit down and honestly dialogue. And if I don't know things then . . . I don't know why they use 16 willows in a sweat lodge. I haven't got the foggiest idea. But if you're going to go in there to that sweat lodge with 16 willows then you should have some kind of idea why and we don't.

So that's how we're trying to move forward and start to rebuild.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. Thanks a lot, Ray.

Mr. Fox: — You're very welcome.

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

Mr. Fox: — You are very welcome. So nobody's buying lunch.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Good afternoon, everyone. This afternoon we are going to be welcoming Gene Ouelette, who is from the Battleford Tribal Council. And we're really pleased to have you with us today, Gene.

Just before we get started we're going to have some introductions of the committee members here just so you kind of know who's sitting over on this side. I just want to first . . . before the committee members give their introduction, I just wanted to mention that Mr. Peter Prebble is co-chairing the committee along with myself and he sends his regrets that he cannot be here this afternoon. He has to attend a funeral. We also have one other committee member that is snowed in down in the southeast end of the province and that's Mr. Don Toth, and he's the MLA from Moosomin.

So I'm going to ask the committee members at this time to introduce themselves.

Ms. Draude: — Hi, I'm June Draude. I'm the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena and it's great to see you.

Mr. Yates: — Hello Gene. I'm Kevin Yates, the MLA for Regina Dewdney.

Ms. Jones: — And I'm Carolyn Jones, the MLA for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Harper: — Ron Harper, MLA, Regina Northeast.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And Arlene Julé is my name. I just mentioned that to you a little bit earlier. We're just going to take a moment also to bring to your attention that we have the MLA for Battleford-Cut Knife with us today and he's sitting behind you. And that's Mr. Rudi Peters. And we welcome you, Rudi, and thank you for coming.

And we also have a very great support staff with us today, Gene. And I'm just going to ask the support staff to introduce themselves also. They come along with the committee to give us all kinds of support and to record the proceedings in *Hansard*. So we'll start over here.

Ms. Woods: — Margaret Woods, the committee Clerk.

Mr. Pritchard: — Gene, I'm Randy Pritchard, technical adviser.

Ms. Klein: — Donelda Klein, *Hansard* office.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And just seated at the back of the room.

Ms. Wells: — Kathy Wells, *Hansard.*

Mr. Bond: — Kerry Bond, broadcast services technician.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — All right, thank you. And we welcome our guests here today. And we're just going to ask you to proceed, Gene, at whatever pace you feel like and with the comfort level in which you are used to. So just please proceed.

Mr. Ouelette: — Well good afternoon. I'd like to thank you for . . . I'm not sure who it is, but Randy had given me the initial invite to come and speak to this committee. I was just kind of looking through your guys' interim report and I was pretty impressed by it.

I was speaking with June earlier that rather than having the bureaucrats sitting behind closed doors and trying to come up with some sort of end-all policy that's going to be implemented into people that are out there digging those trenches, it's comforting to realize that you guys are going out to the communities and listening to some of the real concerns and interest that people are facing in this area.

First of all, I know I guess I should introduce myself for the record. It's Gene Ouelette, originally from Mistawasis, just down the highway in the area of Leask, a farming community, and grew up in Leask but the reserves were right close by. And went to university down in Regina and came to college here in North Battleford about five years ago and started working with the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

Actually I was kind of disappointed Peter wasn't here, because one of the things that I was going to mention to him is that when he was involved with Communities for Children I used to facilitate a lot of circles. We had an alternate measures program where we diverted the young offenders out of the courts. And we would do it in a culturally sensitive manner and we always used a circle process. And Peter's office . . . he always put in a lot of hours now, and he knew the confidentiality with young offenders.

And I was going to mention that, you know, when we used to facilitate circle he used to walk by because he was doing so much overtime and we had raised the issue about the confidentiality of him not supposed to have been knowing any of the young offenders names or anything. And he used to walk by if the circle was over here, he'd be walking by like this, eh? And I'll have to mention that to him at another time.

I worked with the Saskatoon Tribal Council for about two years. And about last November I resigned from them and I worked for about a month and a half with a federal Department of Justice covering Saskatchewan and Alberta troubleshooting programs that they had. My background came in mediation, facilitating those kinds of processes, ideally in a circle. And there was a bigger and better offer that came along and it was in Ottawa with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

And I was out there for eight months and the healing foundation has now has developed when Jane Stewart was Minister of Indian Affairs, I believe. And there was a 350 million one-time deal to come up with a community-based program to address physical, sexual abuse that stemmed from Indian residential schools. And my job there was to monitor and evaluate these programs.

I was definitely exposed to the bureaucracy that's in place. The original attempt of me going to Ottawa was to troubleshoot the program. So we're experiencing some sort of difficulties, so I could go out there, and whether it was internal . . . a lot of the programs that were experiencing problems, they had problems with their chief and council and that. And they needed somebody that they could count on to go across the country and do that. That was my job.

And then the North Battleford and Tanya Stone, who was my predecessor here at Battlefords Tribal Council had phoned me and mentioned that she's going to be moving on and there's going to be a job opportunity here and asked me if I was interested. And I felt well it's good that she thought of me and that, and I really did a self-evaluation or assessment as to where I was at and where I wanted to go.

And Ottawa had wanted me to stay there for probably until I'm old and grey but, I don't know, like I felt that I could have a significant amount of impact by the job that I was doing, but I felt more I could be at a more personal level if I was somewhat downsized to a tribal council level. And so I came for the interview, and well the way it ended up was that I got the job and I've been here for about three months now.

When I first spoke with Randy over the phone, I had thought about, I wonder about what kind of information he had wanted and I was kind of focused on well, prostitution, does it even exist in North Battleford? And I don't know like I've . . . when I was going to school here like I know that it exists but it's not really called prostitution. And I thought to myself, well what would it be called because you go into some of these local bars here and you have some of the older females where, you know, they want a drink, they have their addictions, and they'd be willing to do sexual favours. In return or exchange, they get somebody to buy them drinks for the night and I know that still goes on, but somebody might not label it as prostitution.

I know like I know from experience that people use it as a term that they call marking. If all of a sudden you see in, I know like, not to sound racist or anything but typically it was an old white man that would be the one, okay I'll buy you drinks and maybe you could do something for me later in exchange. And that still goes on and people used to kind of term it as marking a person.

Since I've been here in the last three months that a number of issues were brought to my attention that young girls were being propositioned by other older people, and it's not always a

typical john where it's 40-, 50-, 60-, 70-year-old farmer from the middle of Saskatchewan that came in town for a convention or anything. But a lot of the people that were propositioning these girls were their older relatives, brothers, uncles, maybe. And I just can't help but think that it's not a one-time thing. It's not like you wake up one morning and decide well I'm going to go and recruit some girls now. Like I want to make some money.

And like my background is in restorative justice and the driving force behind restorative justice is to focus on the real underlying issues as to why people do what they do. And I know, like, I think when you look at addictions . . . (inaudible) . . . like in the report and you look at some of the socio-economic factors that go along with it that would probably be the number one, like where you have to look at the financial situation. By far, the majority of the girls that are working on the streets come from very impoverished backgrounds and they have to do what they have to do in order to survive out there.

A worker in Saskatoon heard in Pleasant Hill School, I believe, where some of the girls would go to . . . they'd be outside at recess and getting propositions. And like, I felt like I want to go out there and I've got to see this for myself. I was always the kind of guy that won't believe something until you see it.

And so I went out there, me and one of my staff, and just kind of cruised and strolled and we were just kind of looking and watching the johns pick up these young girls. And I'd say 80 per cent of them were . . . they looked like farmers who were driving, you know, the typical farm truck and they had farm licence plates. So I know, you kind of put one and one together and realize that well, they can't be coming from the city.

And I know, like, you know that in areas of the province that there's a very, very high numbers of incestual cases and that, where it's not really brought to the forefront. And I think that when you have the father committing incest on their daughters that you have to take that into consideration. And again, there too, I know, like, I don't think a person would wake up one morning thinking, well, today, I'm going to go and cruise the stroll and I want to try to find a young girl.

I was looking on the Internet last night and I found some of the stories and some of the other initiatives that are being taken throughout parts of the . . . throughout different parts of the world. And I know, like Cambodia, India, Japan even, with some of their initiatives and I was kind of thinking, well, I wonder how that would work here. And it was definitely focused on the johns and that.

And I know, like, I know that right now you come up with these johns' school. I don't know, like, it seems like the justice system tends to forget the people who are the real victims. And it's encouraging reading through the interim report that you guys did identify the children as being victims. I think that's . . . definitely has to be spoken to.

With that I know, like, I was thinking that the residential schools . . . I know, like, I really didn't see it mentioned in your interim report, and I know, like, my experience in facilitating any kind of circle when you're focusing on people's real issues and they're disclosing this sort of information, then it's one thing to focus on the youth.

But from my experience, they never allow an opportunity for the parents — the people that are very influential on a young kid's life — that if you never give them an opportunity to do any sort of healing themselves that it would be almost useless. The analogy and I don't know, excuse my language, but I don't know it didn't make sense to me that you'd work with a kid, polish them up, and throw them back in the same pile of shit they just crawled out of.

You know, like, when I was working in Saskatoon we always said that you know, like, doing circle, the prep work and the circle itself, was only half the battle. What are you going to do for the follow-up? And that's where we really felt that we had the most impact, was doing the follow-up. And we had really good working relationships with Social Services, with the Saskatoon city police. We utilized all the resources out there.

And right now, you go into any sort of community, especially an urban area . . . When I first came here I told my staff, I said, do an inventory of all the resources that exist already. I think far too many times that we have . . . If we were to focus on the number of dollars that are being funnelled into a certain community, and if each one was to be utilized by everybody else, that maybe we wouldn't have all the problems that we do today.

I don't know, like, I know that a lot of times it seems like it's almost like a pissing contest where no, those are my kids, you ain't going to touch them. And, we're working with them and your work is maybe, could be, questionable.

And rather than taking that approach — well, hey, what sort of work do you do? Let's start working together. How could we complement one another? And that's the kind of approach and initiative that I'm going to try to take here in North Battleford.

So I don't know, like, I think that again, I know, like, in the short time that I've been here, I'm going to be entering discussions in preliminary stages. I was speaking with Daryl Jones about this, is that we're going to be putting forth a . . . I'm just doing a letter of intent for a proposal for a young offenders' healing lodge. And just from my experience I said, you know I don't want to work with just the kids. You have to provide an opportunity for the family to come in to talk about some of their issues.

And nine times out of ten you're going to realize that it all stems from the residential schools where people were abused, molested. And they always say that abuse is a cycle. And if that cycle is never stopped, when will it stop?

And then I just had lunch with a lady that was telling me that she had . . . there was a girl that committed suicide, I think on Sunday or something like that. I think she might have spoke to you this morning. And man, I was just . . . it was unbelievable.

I don't know, like you hear stories about that and you just kind of focus, oh the poor kid, she must have had a rough life, felt

like she couldn't take it. But once you understand everything that goes on behind it, it's not just that one individual; it's the entire family. And I think that's the approach, recommendation that I would make, is that just don't focus on the ice of the tipberg . . . or I mean on the tip of the iceberg. You have to focus on what's underneath, why they are the way they are.

You look at the statistics here in Saskatchewan where at one extreme we incarcerate the highest per capita of young offenders in anywhere throughout the world. I think how much further do we have to go to the end of the pendulum before we can switch back where we start taking ownership, responsibility and being accountable for our own youth. Time and time again, not only in the First Nations world, non-First Nations world, we always hear youth are our future. Well what are we doing about it?

We come up with these band-aid solutions that doesn't have any real long-term commitment. I can't help but think that when my grandfather's ancestors signed the treaties that they didn't think about themselves then and there. They looked at education, health care, and everything, and they all included that within the treaty. And for how long? Well as long as grass grows, rivers flow, and the sun shines.

So I think that when you focus on such a complex issue such as this, that you have to go forward and you have to focus on the real underlying reasons, the real underlying issues.

And a healing lodge, I believe, is the best. It doesn't take a person 28 days to heal when they go to a treatment centre for alcoholism or gambling or drugs or something. It didn't take them 28 days to turn them into where they're at — it takes a lifetime. And I know that I would be willing to think about this young offenders healing lodge that it's not a one-time strike and if you screw-up, you're out. You can keep coming back because I know that slowly you're going to start getting across and the kid will be at one level. Well the next time he comes back, he's going to graduate to the next level.

The analogy that we like to use is in the area that a First Nations kid is more likely to go to jail than to graduate from high school. And once they enter that young offenders' system, they graduate into the adult population, provincial — it's like high school for us. And university would be the penitentiary where you come out very hardened.

And I know that places such as Nekaneet, Oki Maw Ohchi Healing Lodge, I believe they identified that as much as 80 per cent of the women that are in there have been sexually abused at one time or another. And I think that primarily that's unfortunate that it's the females, but as well, it's the males. And when it happens to the male, the chances of them doing somebody else are very high.

I think that you have to incorporate, implement and take a real serious look at the entire family, the family as a whole and not to separate them. And I think that's where the judicial system, they don't really focus on the family. All they focus on: look, you committed a crime against the state and now we're going to punish you for that and we don't care what happens to everybody else.

I don't know; like, just to put it in simpler terms that, you know, even with Peter not being here, being the co-chair, maybe you guys don't feel as unified as you guys did if all you guys were represented, you know. It's a piece of the puzzle — a very important piece and without that piece you don't feel as complete. And I think that's the way you got to look at a family as well.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. Are you wanting to add a little bit more to your presentation or would you be open to some . . .

Mr. Ouelette: — Probably not. Actually, I would probably like to . . . I don't know. Like, I'm just looking through that interim report. And I know that you guys have gone to a lot of communities. You guys have heard some people that have a lot more experience and wisdom than what I have. And I know that you guys do have questions and the way I could answer them is it might be a different viewpoint, but it could be the same.

I had a reporter from the *Wall Street Journal.* He's going to be doing a front-page story on Aboriginal justice and I took him to about six different communities in Saskatchewan. And the one comment that he had was that it doesn't matter where you go with First Nations people, you guys all speak the truth and have a common ground. I don't know, like, he said he was used to working with politicians in Ottawa where, if he talked to six different politicians, they had six different answers. And he said it just felt like he was chasing his own tail around and around. But he says, with First Nations people, there's a common theme.

And, I don't know, like, looking at the report, I think it emphasizes going back to the culture, the traditional holistic approach. And I don't know. It's not rocket science, but just going back to the basics.

So, yeah, I don't know. Like, I would definitely answer any questions that you guys might have.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — All right. Thank you very much. I do appreciate your presentation. It added a great deal to many other presentations that we've had and there is a little bit of a different perspective that comes with each person that presents to us, so I thank you for that.

I'm just going to open up some questioning to some of the committee members right now. Ron?

Mr. Harper: — Well Gene, thank you very much for coming in and making your presentation.

In your brief time here in North Battleford, have you either identified yourself or heard of cases of organized, I guess you would say an organization or organized young ladies making themselves available for sexual favours in return for rewards?

Mr. Ouellette: — I don't know. Like I mentioned before, I know that young girls have been propositioned to go out there and work the streets by some of their own relatives and that.

But as far as an organized ring I guess, I don't know. Like, I

know at the adult level that when these women go into the bars, it's sort of like they're going in there solo. And, I don't know, from my understanding and that, there is no sort of like pimp, I guess, that forces them into it, but I could be wrong, just because I've been here for a limited amount of time.

Mr. Harper: — Right. During your period of working with the federal government on various programs they have, were you able to get a sense that the same situation existed in other provinces, and maybe have some insight into what the federal government was doing in other provinces to resolve the issue?

Mr. Ouelette: — Well I don't know. Like when I was working in Ottawa, my job was to monitor and evaluate the funded programs, and I had to read reports that they had submitted on a quarterly basis. And the reports ranged in from half a page to literally 200-, 300-page document.

And I figured that if somebody took time and effort to put this together . . . I was the only one doing the job and I thought, well I'm going to take time and effort to read it from end to end. And like the understanding that I got was that sexual abuse is far too real.

And I don't know. Like I think that when a person, like they don't wake up one morning and all of a sudden they're going to decide to go work the streets or anything, and they're usually coerced or forced into that sort of thing. I don't know. Like it happens right across the country.

And I know that if you've been sexually abused, that you probably won't feel too good about yourself. Your self-esteem, your confidence level is so low that you figure, well hey, if I'm going to be doing it, I may as well do it for some money.

And once they start getting into that sort of lifestyle of street life, that there are certain rules I guess that are sort of like that go with the territory. And one of them is after a while you're going to need protection.

And I think . . . I know like in Saskatoon a few people have approached some of the people I knew and they've asked, well you're kind of a big and tough guy; could you be like our pimp sort of thing, just for protection. And I know that it does exist in Saskatoon but not here, and it does definitely exist across the country.

Mr. Harper: — In your opinion, being that we've identified that there are families out there that are having difficulty I guess you could say because of the abuse that they themselves went through in their younger years and a continuous cycle being in place to break that cycle, in your opinion would an early childhood intervention with education, something along that approach, be a step in the right direction to start to break that cycle?

Mr. Ouelette: — Well I think any time you're faced with a problem, that more people always fear what they don't understand. And, you know, the area of sexual abuse in the last 10 years has definitely come to the forefront whereas 10, 15 years ago it was almost like a taboo to be speaking about it.

So I don't know. Like I think as far as increased awareness and understanding, of course it's going to have a tremendous impact, and I think that's where you would definitely have to look at the residential schools.

I was told and I've read it through a lot of books and through schooling and everything, that traditionally Aboriginal people, that we never had that. And not until the concept of hell and heaven was introduced through the missionaries through residential schools, and I think that's where a lot of our First Nations people were first exposed to that sort of abuse.

And like I know one specific residential school where it was different for each generation. I don't know . . . like I know that one generation there was hardly any reported cases of sexual abuse, the next generation there's literally hundreds. And I think that has to be spoken to where it depends on who was in charge that time.

You know like I think when you have a hundred cases coming out of one residential school, how could the government not think, well maybe there's some truth to what they're saying. And I know, like I think with understanding, it has to be recognized and acknowledged. I think before you can move forward you have to understand where you've been.

And that's, yes, I would definitely think the understanding . . . And like I know that it's one thing to just to look at the history of Aboriginal people, but also to see where we're at today. Like why do we have . . . residential schools don't exist now but the abuse definitely has been a cycle where it's been passed on through intergenerational impacts.

Mr. Yates: — Just a couple of questions. Do you have any knowledge or experience or any of your staff having talked to you about the issue of individuals coming to North Battleford to recruit children to become involved in selling themselves in the streets in either Saskatoon or Regina, Prince Albert, where we know there is active prostitution and abuse on the streets?

Mr. Ouelette: — Yes, there have been. I know like limited cases to my understanding, just because of my limited time here in North Battleford. But I know that right now it's only the tip of the iceberg.

I know, you look at the gangs, where they're going. Where are they going to get their money? And I think the gangs and prostitution goes hand in hand. Whoever has more power is probably going to have the most number of girls working out there. And a lot of times they're forced. And I'm sure that you've heard some personal testimonies where they were forced into working the streets and being recruited to the larger urban centres.

And I know like, I think maybe that should be looked at when you talk about education awareness that when you go to . . . like even at a reserve level, it makes them aware of what does actually exist out there. And by having some of these people that have been there going out there and speaking to some of these schools doing the prevention, it can definitely have significant impact in the future.

But I know for a fact that right now it's just the tip of the iceberg and it does exist.

Mr. Yates: — Gene, from your experience here in the Battlefords, you're aware that some of the . . . (inaudible) . . . Is that children or is it older women? Or are we dealing with children 12 to 16, or 12 to 18, or are we dealing with 20-year-olds?

Mr. Ouelette: — Actually I think as far as age is, it's probably wide open. I know, like, the reason why I say that is that I know like girls when they are propositioned or when they're being recruited that it's usually by somebody that's a pretty smooth talker and that. And when they go out there they think about well, how can we hook this girl on coming along sort of thing, for the ride.

And by trying to use an incentive such as drugs, buying them gifts and that, you know, trying to get . . . I don't, like, there's how many different shows where mothers lose their daughters for X number of years and find out that they're living in an abusive relationship and being forced to work the streets. And it definitely does.

Mr. Yates: — My final question, just one follow-up question. Do you know of any — and I'm looking for sort of whether the history of somewhere this occurs — would it would be normal, if this occurred with each child, for the mother to report that to the police or report that elsewhere or is it because . . . are the family members are involved and it's kept quiet?

Mr. Ouelette: — Well actually I'm a firm believer and I know this from experience that by far . . . when I worked in Saskatoon, I know like there's a lot of talk that is being done as to girls that are being charged with prostitution, and I heard so much talk about what could be done, what should be done, but at the end of the day nothing was done.

And we were approached on numerous occasions if we'd consider taking a solicitation charge. And I thought, well I know like I'd heard so many people talking about and that and I thought, well okay what the hell have I got to lose. Let's do it.

So I know like we had the circle and we had the mother there and the mother was a prostitute as well. And the reason — this came out in the circle the disclosure that they revealed — was that she was abused in residential school, the mother was, and she felt not worthy. And coming into an urban setting you look for . . . I don't know like you're almost instantly labelled as, well you're going to be living on social assistance. And I don't know, like if you're going to be facing addictions because of . . . you never came to terms with your own issues that all of a sudden, okay if you've got drugs or alcoholism addiction, how are you going to feed that habit? How can I get money?

Well social assistance will never . . . well very limited amount of dollars there. So you learn how to start surviving — coping skills. And the coping skills that they pick up are survival skills, which work in the streets, pulling off scams here and there.

It was interesting because I saw right in front of my eyes the impact that it had on the younger girl. Because when people have been abused they tend to find people as partners, potential partners, that will fit that description as being an abusee. So all of a sudden you go into a relationship like that and if you have kids — because maybe you're labelled as being promiscuous in your early years — now you have your kids and a lot of times people look at it and say well if I have a couple of more kids. Man that's, how much do they get for each kid nowadays — $300. And I know that. And people have kids just for the sake of the dollars because now they can have a guaranteed income from social assistance where it's going to provide enough for rent and that.

So when, like when you enter a relationship like that now you're exposing your kids because you're drinking and that, you're bringing the parties back at home or you want to be the more popular person; that all of a sudden now your four- or five-year-old kid is sleeping in the bedroom and there's a party going on. You pass out. Well I don't know. People take advantage of a situation like that. Now it's passed on to the next generation. And now this kid is being brought up in that same sort of environment in an urban setting where the values are not there and they have no hope at all for the future.

So I think by them relying on themselves as far as resources that they start working the streets.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you, Kevin.

Ms. Draude: — Maybe the question I'm going to ask you first is . . . it may seem like it's off base but you brought up the issue of . . . when you were in Ottawa you were hired to evaluate program set-up to deal with the residential school problems. Maybe you weren't there long enough to actually arrive at any conclusions, but I know that often we've heard the concerns . . . this committee has heard about the concerns of residential schools as related to prostitution.

So did you learn anything there that's going to help you to . . . gives us any insight as to whether the $350 million that was put in to address this concern has done anything towards helping to deal with the problem?

Mr. Ouelette: — Well I don't know. I don't know. Like I mentioned earlier, there's no program that will change a person overnight.

And the reason why that I would be willing to keep working with the kids time and time again is that each and every time that you bring them into an environment where it's conducive to positive healing, that one time it ain't going to heal them all at once. And I figure that if they keep coming back, that could be labelled a success. And when it came time for evaluation, that's where I would include that sort of information — looking at the impact that you have on the individual.

I know that in the area of justice, a lot of times people always, well what's your success rate? Well like I always ask people that in contemporary judicial system: what's your guys' success rate? And say, well, you know, why should you question us? Well why do you question us?

I know that each time when we go into a circle and if it's done

in proper manner that there is going to be something new each and every time they come into a process like that where they're going to learn from it. And that's where it's going to start shaping and moulding these young people into healthy individuals when they do get older. Because like I know that living in an urban setting, it could be a good thing but it could definitely be a bad thing, especially if you're living in poverty.

Ms. Draude: — I hope you didn't get me wrong. I don't mean that I thought it was wrong that they did something. I just wanted to understand if money given to individuals is going to help at all in the healing process.

Mr. Ouelette: — Well I know that this is a very complex issue because . . . Like I know that it's one thing to give out dollars and that, and I know that down south in southern Saskatchewan the government said, okay, we abused you and that; how many dollars?

And I'm not sure how they ever came up with a dollar figure, but I figure what the hell is the sense if you're going to give somebody a hundred thousand dollars where they've been used to living on social assistance all their lives, making 10, $12,000 a year on that; all of a sudden you're going to give them that sort of money?

What are they going to do? Well shit, I don't know. Like I'm not sure if you guys heard some of the stories where, you know, like two or three will get together and they'd rent the entire top floor of a hotel and party.

I know like when you're living in poverty, you learn how to live from paycheque to paycheque. And I don't know. Like I know that our non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters, they're very good at identifying what they want to do in their lives by the time they're 18, 19. And I know we as First Nations people, we mature a lot slower. And 24, 25, you're lucky if you know what you want to do.

And like I know that the dollars, it's there, and I know like I think that they should be rewarded for the abuse that they had suffered, but there has to be a certain clause or stipulation in there that, even by them attending . . . If it was based on instalments even, like over five years or something like that, it could be more beneficial.

Because during that time . . . Well before you get next year's instalment, you've got to go to a treatment or a healing lodge. Because again there, it's different levels. And I don't know. Like you'll never find anybody that's going to go from one extreme where they're living in poverty and they have multi-addictions — drugs, alcohol, and gambling, or something. And all of a sudden you put them in 28 days or whatever, and then when they come out they're going to be healthy, productive individuals? Who are we trying to kid? You know, I don't know, like I think definitely instalments.

In Alberta, with some of the oil rich reserves, that's where all my family lives and I see this first hand. All of a sudden a kid turns 18 and they get 120, $140,000, and I'm just thinking well why did I go to school, why did I work? Man, get a brand new vehicle and all this.

I don't know. It was discouraging, but like I know that in the long term that I'd sooner be where I'm at today, living from paycheque to paycheque and barely paying the bills and trying to make an honest living.

Ms. Draude: — If it makes you feel any better, I'm over half a century old and I don't know what I want to do yet either.

Mr. Ouelette: — If all else fails, be a politician.

Ms. Draude: — Yes, that's right. You talked about getting into your new job and looking at the duplication or the programs that were available. And I felt good and I heard you say that you are concerned about duplication of services, and if there's a person in need here, and we use North Battleford as an example. Maybe there's not so much . . . maybe they feel like there's nothing available but also there's so much available that you don't know where to go to?

Mr. Ouelette: — Exactly.

Ms. Draude: — Is that a concern that you've heard in other areas or is this a concern in your position you'd like to address or . . .

Mr. Ouelette: — Well actually, I don't know, like I feel that I was going to submit a proposal to crime prevention regarding exactly that, where I could have a full-time staff person to identify all the resources. Okay, I don't know, like next week, what's going on over in your shop? And the week after, what sort of program do you have, the activities?

So when you start working with the kids and that, well I know like, rather than trying to have a pissing contest with one another, you start working together and all of a sudden for each day of the week you have an activity. And I think that's where it has to be spoken to with the kids that feel like they don't have anything.

For myself even, growing up, and I don't, you know, I don't feel like I'm an old man when I say this but, you know, like when I was a kid, like we didn't have the stuff that they have nowadays. And the only thing you hear of when you go to the reserves and that when I'd speak to the kids, that we're bored, there's nothing to do, what do we do?

I'm thinking man, you guys got like all these computers and all these Nintendo games and everything, and I said, to me, you know when I was growing up a toy was two blocks of wood and a nail and you nail it together and that's your automobile or plane or skyscraper or something. Use your imagination.

And I don't, like, to know that if we had creative activities where you could buy some of the young people's time, that it's going to definitely curb their appetite for I guess destruction. One week you start looking at alcohol and drugs and promiscuous acts, I guess.

Ms. Draude: — I think that duplication of services is a concern because not only could there be financial waste but it's sometimes a concern for the people that we are trying to help as well.

I have just have one short question left. When there is sex abuse identified within a family, and I've asked this question to a number of witnesses and we've had different thought processes on it, is taking them out of that family the answer?

Mr. Ouelette: — All I know, I can think for the safety and protection of that individual, yes.

Ms. Draude: — What about love and loyalty?

Mr. Ouelette: — I don't think, like I think take them out of that family where they could have some sort of an awareness or understanding that hey what's going on there, it's not right. It should not be acceptable. If you leave them in that home environment there's going to be opportunities for persuasion, coercion, and I don't . . . like once you separate the individual from the family on a short-term basis, then looking at the family and saying okay, what can we do — let's do some of this healing and that.

And I don't know, like, I know that there's probably some parents that would not be willing or wanting to heal. And I don't know, like maybe it's going to make a situation like that, that's going to bring it to their attention that . . . You know? I know, like perhaps me doing that, I know like it felt like it was control or something, a sense of power. And the more chances than not that they've been abused as well when they were children or a teenager.

And I don't know, like I've heard so many people say that when you're abused and that, emotionally you stay at that age. And I don't know, like I know that perhaps that's why a lot of First Nations people they don't mature until they're 24, 25, because they were stuck at a certain level.

And I don't know, like you go into some of the cities and that, and I don't know, like I have so many friends that in their early 20's all they want to do is drink — day in, day out. And I'm just thinking, wake up you guys. Like why? Like why do you guys want to?

And I don't know, like I've heard some of their personal testaments where something did happen to them and that's just the way they're coping with it. And the next thing you know, that one month of partying turns into one year and then five years and all of sudden, man, they're going to be 30, 40 years old, still doing the same thing.

And I don't know, like you have to look at FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome), FAE (fetal alcohol effects), you know. It's such a . . . again it's the tip of the iceberg. And I think that it's going to be such a dilemma, such a crisis.

And I saw one statistic out of the federal institutions by a doctor that said that there is, in the adult population in the P.A. pen (penitentiary), 40 per cent of the Aboriginal population is probably FAS or FAE. And when they're having kids and that, the mothers, it's such an intergenerational effect, such a negative effect.

And I don't know, like I think that when people are practising sex, it's going to happen, and hopefully they're safe. And if not, well if they do get pregnant, I think that there should be a house where these mothers could go especially if they're young and that, to avoid the potential of abuse and even alcoholism while they're pregnant and that.

I don't know, like they always say that FAS is 100 per cent totally preventable. Well I don't know, like I think you have to put the dollars where their money is and put their money where their mouth is, and back it up with some sort of dollars and some sort of homes and that.

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Gene. I'm glad you raised it. The question I was going to ask you or the thing that I wanted to ask about was when you were talking about healing lodges and working with the whole family because as you so succinctly put it, you can't polish them up and then throw them back into the same pile, how successful . . . And in the healing lodges, I mean, we know that we're dealing with a high percentage of fetal alcohol syndrome and effect. Can you work with the whole family and make progress in these lodges when you're working with people who have FAS and FAE?

Mr. Ouelette: — Well I don't know. I'm not down that road yet. But I know there will be a day when I'm going to have to work with FAS. And I don't know.

As far as the program goes, I don't know, like I realize that not everybody is going to be doctors and lawyers or politicians. But we still need the people that make tables, chairs, set up the lights, electrical work. And at this healing lodge that I'm going to be suggesting, proposing, that a large part of the programming is going to focus on a woodworking shop maybe or a mechanic shop, wherein we could teach these kids some skills that's going to prepare them for what's out there, for them to make a little bit of a living and, at the same time, having an understanding of at least the parents.

And I don't know, like perhaps some of them think well, they always try to minimize everything. And if I was a mother and all of a sudden I drank when I was pregnant and my kid grows up and he's always in trouble and you notice that something was always wrong, what's your first reaction? Denial. And they'll minimize it — no, no, I only drank for the first three months when I was pregnant, that's it. I never did that much. It's not my fault; something else, must be his father. And they always feel they have to blame. Well, I don't know.

Like I know that hey, look . . . I don't know. Like having that one drink for that one night or a hundred drinks over a hundred days well, when you're pregnant, it's all going to affect your kid. Like I know that that's something that we would probably be pretty aggressive on.

But as far as the programming, I think that's where we're going to have the most success. And, I don't know, like I know that when you mention success, right away I'm just thinking well, like I don't want to get caught up in, well what are you going to be gauging success by? The chance of them coming back? I don't know. You can't.

Because like I said, it doesn't matter if he's sentenced then there for three years or three months, that it didn't take him three

years or three months to turn him into the way they are that day, so I don't know. Like I think that time and time again they're going to come back and they're going to accomplish, achieve different levels. And I don't know, like when I used to work in Saskatoon at the tribal council that was our approach as well. I don't know.

Talking about duplication of services. There's a million and one programs all over the place that focus on the first, second time offenders, and the chances are they're not going to reoffend anyway.

Finally we said, well what can we do that's going to come up somewhat unique. Well let's focus on the kids that are habitual offenders. And I know some of our funders were saying well, I don't know. Like you guys work with this kid; if he fails — and the prosecutors had said this as well — we ain't going to refer him back.

But I don't know. Like I know that each time that an individual does come back you're planting all those little seeds in them, hopefully making them realize that there is going to be hope for them in the future, that somebody actually cares about them.

I don't know. Like again success right away. People want to focus on the quantity. And our approach was hey, we'll take as many kids as we need to and we're going to focus on the quality of the care that we provide. And I know that the success was tremendous. And it's not only going to be with that one person, because the two people sitting beside you, if we worked with you, and all of a sudden they're going to . . . it's going to have that rippling effect. And now all of a sudden they're friends, and the next thing you know it's going to be wide open. And hopefully it goes directly to the source of maybe where some of the trouble had stemmed from is directly to their parents.

Ms. Jones: — I guess what I was thinking more of is if we hope to break the cycle of abuse and have to work with the parents so that the child when they're helped isn't put back into the abusive situation with the parents . . . I mean, the children that are victims of abuse and become abusers, as you very ably put it, I mean, you have to stop the cycle, you've got to get off of the treadmill at some point.

But if we're working with the family . . . I mean, FAS isn't new; it's diagnostically and it has a nice catchy new name, but it's not new. And I think that in many instances, the parents are also sufferers of FAS and certainly sufferers of habitual sexual abuse.

So we want to stop that. If you're bringing . . . and you're trying to create a program that will heal the family. I guess that was my point. When you take into consideration fetal alcohol syndrome, are we going . . . I mean, because one of the symptoms is the sort of inability to distinguish between right and wrong and to make, you know, proper judgements, and so that complicates the matter. And so I was just wondering if you have any experience or had anything to share on how you might deal with that within the setting of healing the family, so that we can begin to stop the cycle.

I know that's very complicated, but you would certainly . . . I'm hoping that you have more knowledge and experience . . .

Mr. Ouelette: — I know, like with that I would, I don't know, once you look at a holistic approach and you go back to basics, tradition and culture, through the traditional teachings that will be lived day in and day out at the healing lodge, that you're going to accomplish that. And through respect. Well, okay, today, or this week, let's focus on respect as traditional teaching — what could be taught here?

Well before you can respect somebody else, you have to respect yourself. By respecting yourself, how can that be accomplished. Well first of all, your body. The most number one important thing to you is your body. How could you not abuse it, but respect it? Well, abstain from alcohol, abstain from drugs, abstain from, I don't know, probably not, I don't know, sex, I guess. But . . .

Ms. Jones: — Unwanted sex . . .

Mr. Ouelette: — Yes, where you respect your body and your private parts where you're not going to allow somebody to come and abuse you and cross your boundaries. To me that could be taught through the respect. And then once you start respecting yourself, the people that surround you are going to start feeling that respect that you give to them. Because now you respect yourself, you know how to give that to others.

Like just going back to the tradition and culture, you have the 14 teachings and each one of them . . . I was at one of our schools on the reserve here and that's all I saw plastered all over the wall — were all these traditional teachings. And I don't know, like I wouldn't feel comfortable in trying to go and do a workshop or talk to the kids about these teachings. I don't know, I think that's where an elder should come in. But as I was sitting there I was thinking, you know, one of these days I am going to have to do that. And I was thinking okay well, respect. Before you respect others, you've got to respect yourself.

Obedience. Well, I don't know. Like I know that, you know, like I can't help but think that with the number of kids that are involved in sexual activity . . . I was watching a thing on cable last week and 13-, 14-year-old girls saying that from their experience that the majority of the kids lose their virginity at the age of 14. And then after that they continue on with sexual activity.

And it's that personal satisfaction, I guess, what they're trying to achieve and it turns into that self greed and not being able to respect themselves. And I was thinking, well through obedience you could teach them that you got to turn into something that's very special, that it's an expression of love for one another, and that it's not just something that you go and do just to satisfy yourself. And I don't know, like I was thinking along that line of obedience.

And then through the love and that, well you got to love yourself before you could love others again and love for your brothers, sisters, your parents.

Forgiveness. I don't know, like it definitely goes down the line and I don't know, just going back to basics as far as our culture

and traditions go. I think that in that healing lodge that once you have these teachings day in, day out, that hopefully you can polish them up.

Ms. Jones: — Okay, well if I can just go in one other area. When you were speaking with Ms. Draude and you talked about some sort of conditions on settlements, just to help me understand, did the money come from the federal government to the Indian band, to the individuals?

Mr. Ouelette: — From my understanding is that it came from the federal government directly to the residential school survivors.

Ms. Jones: — To the individuals directly?

Mr. Ouelette: — Yes, to the individuals; it wasn't to the band. So I don't know, like I've done a lot of work with mediation services for the province and I was speaking to some people that are still involved in that field and you know, they've asked me to say, well like how can we do this? Because I know, like when you have lawyers involved in a process, especially in a circle, let's focus on the abuse that you suffered. And all of a sudden your lawyer is there and they're saying, well no, don't answer their question. It kind of hinders that process.

And I don't know, like it's the same thing along the line of . . . to kind of go off track about sentencing circles. I don't know, like it's a ceremony that was traditionally ours and the contemporary judicial system is saying, wow, sentencing circles, okay you can have one. Well I don't know, like it's still sort of like white faces in brown places.

I don't know, like the judge comes in and . . . I was a facilitator at a few sentencing circles where all of a sudden the judge is going to enter the circle and the court clerk is saying, all rise, the hon. so-and-so is now presiding. And I just think, what total ignorance; no respect whatsoever. That is the ceremony that was traditionally ours and now you're just abusing it because everything we ever taught through that circle process is lost by just announcing that the hon. so-and-so. When in that circle we're all equal; no one's above another.

I don't know, like I know that's something that if you're going to go along that line then it has to be in a very, I don't know, I guess a culturally sensitive manner.

Ms. Jones: — The reason I was asking is because there's . . . I mean we're all very aware of jurisdictional push/pull. And if the money had gone to the bands, to the individuals, I think we both know that there would have been a lot of criticism if conditions had been placed upon the money.

At least that's the way I feel is that there would likely have been criticism that we were interfering in moneys that were rightfully belonging to somebody else even though they were coming from the feds. And I wondered if you had any ideas on how . . . when we're, you know, dealing with those touchy issues of jurisdiction, how things could better be accomplished.

I mean, and we have very local jurisdictions here to deal with as you were talking about, the variety of services that are available and how to best utilize them and whether you have . . . you know there's the safe house that's operated by the tribal council in Saskatoon and Egadz youth centre operated by another agency, predominately white, and the quagmires that you get into. And I don't know that you can answer me today, but when we're talking about things like that it would be really useful I think if we could come up with some better collaborative ways to not only kind of have one-stop shopping but to have better co-operation between the agencies so that we can work together to deal with this horrendous problem that this committee is only just scratching around the surface on.

Mr. Ouelette: — Yes, yes. I don't know, like I think that with all the agencies and organizations out there, they do a lot of good work but I don't know. Like I know that if you're thinking of about some sort of monetary compensation it might be somewhat controversial if you were to stipulate and try to include a clause in there for them to attend a healing centre or something. I think there should be a healing centre that is specifically for sexual abuse.

Whether they're youth, I don't know, I guess you could go with youth or maybe with a male only or a female only and like I know that with some of the safe houses, those kind of places, it's a band-aid solution if you ask me. And you look at the long-term effect; it's not really their mandate to try to focus on some sort of healing.

Like okay, you come to us; we've got you for a maximum three days before we have to report to Social Services or something. And all of a sudden you start working with them, exposing them to another life, another life that you've never had before by having a warm, safe, caring environment where all of a sudden you're going and doing all these activities and that. But at the end of the day, when you have to leave and that, you think about that and you're always going to think I'll go back there when I'm hungry or something like that. And it doesn't really focus on any of the underlying issues.

So I don't know. Like I think that when you look at all the resources that do exist out there, that there has to be another resource — another resource in place where they can address those issues. And I think that a healing lodge specifically for sexual abuse, people that have been sexually abused — one should be created. I know we have one for addictions, for substance abuse, for gambling, for, with those issues. Sexual abuse is something that we really have to look at. Physical abuse.

Ms. Jones: — Okay, thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thanks. Gene, I just have a couple of questions and I guess they result from some thoughts that I've had as you gave us your presentation.

When you were speaking initially you were talking about some of the women that would be basically soliciting and that was happening in bars and so on. They were trading sexual favours for drinks or whatever it may be. So we talked a little bit about that and you talked about there definitely were men there that would accommodate them, you could say.

On the other hand, we hear a lot of people saying, and I think you've mentioned too, that we have tended to look at the young girls and boys as the people that were perpetrating this activity. And now we're seeing clearly that they are victims. Simply because of their vulnerability and so on, they are being exploited, and so we should be looking more at them as victims.

So that brings us back to the perpetrators. And we've talked a great deal today here about programs and so on for healing and healing historically, what has happened to people, a lot of which included sexual abuse. In a sense it's still going on today — exploitation and sexual abuse — not only of Aboriginal children but non-Aboriginal alike.

I tend to look at the bigger . . . like a little bit of a broader vision. And I understand historically what the impact of residential school systems . . . what that impact has had on Aboriginal children. But I also recognize that a lot of other non-Aboriginal children have had intergenerational experiences of incest and abuse within homes and within families and so on.

So if we look at this problem, as you know, as a problem of all of society, even though in Saskatchewan there probably are more children that have suffered in this way that are of Aboriginal descent, I agree that healing programs, you know, healing incentives and stuff, we have to deliberate over what's best. We recognize that there is a number of programs out there and people aren't working together to make the best use of the money and that kind of thing. But we also have to look at what we need to do to deter the people that would be continuing to offend our children and violate their bodies and their souls and their minds.

So taking into account that there are non-Aboriginal perpetrators and sexual offenders as well as Aboriginal, how do you think we can send a message clearly to the perpetrators of this crime against our children that we will no longer tolerate this crime?

Mr. Ouelette: — I know, like, you look at some of the legislation that has been passed in other countries throughout the world and they're definitely taking a tough standpoint on it. And I think Saskatchewan has to follow.

Saskatchewan, I think, traditionally has always been the last to kind of jump on the wagon when it comes to so many different areas. And here again, I don't know, I think we're always one of the last ones to get tough.

And I think that incarceration, and impounding the vehicles, large humongous fines, publication of their names. You know with this Youth Criminal Justice Act, if they're going to go along the line of publishing young offenders' names, why the hell can't we do that to grown men, grown women, where they've established themselves taking advantage of the vulnerable, the ones that are at most risk? So I don't know, like, I think getting tough with them by all means.

And I don't know, like, I know that I was looking at a few places where they have legalized prostitution. And I don't know, like, I think that we as a society throughout the world have come so far where we just can't say okay, we're going to legalize prostitution over here and these are the policies and regulations. All of a sudden you're going to see a black market develop, an underground. Why? Because they're going to go against rules . . . it's too strict, can't abide by those, we're going to come up with something underground.

So I think that for the people, for the advocates that are saying, well if you legalize prostitution it's going to get rid of a lot of these problems. And I don't know, they say that prostitution is the oldest profession in the world and I would have to agree that, like, I don't know, like, we ain't going to get rid of it.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. You mentioned incarceration, getting tough with these johns and so on. And I'm sure that you said that bearing in mind that sexual abuse and sexual violation of children is unacceptable, regardless if it's on the streets or in the home. So with that in mind, do you feel as strongly that if family members are violating their own children, or raping their own children, that they also should be incarcerated?

Mr. Ouelette: — Well I don't know. Like I think first of all I would probably distinguish between prostitution and incest.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Under 18 years old . . . You know, if we consider children and their age is under 18, I mean it is sexual abuse of children. And so under 14 it's rape; it's statutory rape. So it doesn't matter in what venue it takes place, it is still considered that.

So would you think it was reasonable to be able to . . . for in fact legislation to come across that would be tougher, that would target all people that would commit this statutory rape or sexual abuse of children under 18 and treat them in the same manner?

Mr. Ouelette: — No. Like you can't. Like if you have a person that's sexually abused and they're out there working on the streets and, I don't know, if you pass legislation, that's only going to address the johns. Personally, I think that's where you get tough. Because these people have the resources and they have the knowledge when they go out there and they're looking for a young kid.

But like in a family situation, I don't know. Like it's that cycle. And I don't think you could address both of them under the same blanket.

I don't know. Like I think one is incest. It's sort of like behind closed doors. And I think that it's more of a unhealthy as opposed to a person that's going out there for their own satisfaction and trying to pick up a young kid. I don't know. Like I think that it's two different worlds.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. I thank you for that. The other thing I just wanted to ask you about is you had mentioned that there were 14 teachings of traditional Indian culture and so on, that sometimes nowadays repeated to the young people so that they can start to regain and restore their understanding of those and base some of their decisions on those cultures that are very valuable to Aboriginal people.

From my understanding of Aboriginal justice — community justice — traditionally there were measures taken against anyone who would sexually assault or sexually offend people in their bands, and it was dealt with by banishment.

So would you agree that those kind of measures would be something that maybe should be reconsidered?

Mr. Ouelette: — For sure.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — If you're in a band, so the bands, you know, maybe would take responsibility to come up with their own measures and maybe restore that kind of a measure?

Mr. Ouelette: — Yes, definitely. I think that there's no better way than going back to tradition. And if it included banishment, by all means. And I don't know. Like if it's banishment to an island for a year or else if it's banishment from the community forever, so be it. But I think there again you would have to allow the community to decide for themselves.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. Do you know of any either tribal councils or individual bands that are taking that kind of an initiative right now to kind of get tough with people that would abuse their own children?

Mr. Ouelette: — No. Not to my knowledge, no.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — What do you think it will take in order to restore that?

Mr. Ouelette: — Well I don't know. First of all, I think that if you're going to allow a community to deal with it, Saskatchewan Justice has alternative measures policies and procedures which does not allow sexual offence related cases to be referred.

So first I had spoken with Sask Justice and I told them, I said five years ago when you guys created this, maybe it served a purpose back then. But we've been doing this for a number of years and I think we've come so far now we're confident and we're comfortable in dealing with such a case.

And that would be something that I would definitely entertain in this area, is dealing with some of these sexual abuse cases with the proper training and guidance and support from not only our resources but outside resources, the professional help and the price tag that goes along with it.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. I just want to refer back to my original question about, you know, the banishment and whether you thought it could be re-established. And I know it was a measure that was taken some years ago.

Do you have any knowledge from maybe the generation just one beyond yours, a little bit older than you, that banishment was really a very effective way of stopping that kind of behaviour? You know, when one was banished and brought back after some time, back into the community, was that person sort of . . . did they learn their lesson? Was there a cure?

Mr. Ouelette: — With the proper process that is set up in place, I think it would be very effective. I don't know, like if you have a punishment such as banishment for a year or something like that, and then that individual thinks that they are going to come back into the community and probably the family, looking at what reintegration looks like, what have you learned from it. Like have you come to terms with your own issues.

Perhaps he needs to do some healing on his own. And I know that with the proper channels in place, yes it would be effective.

I know that banishment is one way. Like I've heard of some cases where through traditional circles that if a person was constantly abusing their wives, like physical abuse, like in a circle, the one circle I heard is that that man was required to carry a stick everywhere he ever went to hold in his hand for one year as a reminder of his anger. And to me, I don't know, it's not rocket science by carrying a stick with you, but as a reminder.

And I know that there are certain avenues that a person could explore. And I think the only restrictions that that community would have would be their imagination as far as, for lack of a better word, a sentence.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — For instance if there was a band right now that discussed this more in depth and that really wanted to go ahead with these kind of traditional measures, and say for instance that the whole federal justice system approved alternative measures to be taken by band members according to their own knowledge, understanding, and belief of what they should do, do you think that band members would be capable right now of taking on that responsibility?

Mr. Ouelette: — Throughout the province of Saskatchewan we have a number of tribal councils and independent bands that are administering their own justice programs, and we're all at different levels. And I would not force a tribal council or a community to take that upon themselves until they feel ready and comfortable.

I can't help but think of Hollow Water out of Manitoba, and them just realizing that if this is out there and it's not working for us, we have to come up with something on our own. And I think they have to be commended for their efforts and the impact that they're having, not only on the immediate generation, but the generations to come.

And I think that their model over there is very, very effective. I'm not sure if you guys are planning on maybe even making a visit or having a presentation from them.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — We have heard from Justice officials and other officials in Manitoba, but we haven't heard from that particular area.

Mr. Ouelette: — It definitely would be worth your while.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well I thank you ever so much for coming and joining us today and for making your very helpful presentation to the committee. We are certainly considering everything that we're hearing. And this remains a

very complex problem and we're going to have some working to do to sort out some sort of initiative . . . not initiative but rather recommendations that we can put forward to the Legislative Assembly.

As you well know, there's so much that can be done legislatively and there's other things that can be done by communities. And much like the Indian bands, there are communities at different levels of capability and willingness to make changes that they see necessary. And you know, we might have to be considering a lot of different ways to tackle the problem and listening to community groups to see what's best for them.

Mr. Ouelette: — I don't know, like, I'd like to thank you and also for you guys's effort. I don't know, like, that I mentioned this to June before that rather than having that top thumb approach where you have a bunch of bureaucrats sitting behind closed doors trying to come up with some sort of solutions, at least you guys are humbling yourselves and coming out to the communities and listening to the people that are mostly affected by this.

It's definitely a step in the right direction. And when you guys are actually going to be hammering out some sort of piece of legislation that you guys are going to put forward, don't forget where it came from and allow some of the, I don't know, I can't help but think that, with the resources that you guys have, including this report, it's unlimited potential and they are the ones that have the answers.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Yes. I really like what you've just said, unlimited potential. Because sometimes we look at this whole thing and the thought can come to mind there are unlimited problems. But we have unlimited potential also, and we need to be thinking positively like that.

So thank you very much for that comment and thank you for being here today, and God bless.

Mr. Ouelette: — Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. We have provided about half an hour here for public comments or any other guests we have here today that would like to come and present their views, concerns, ideas, knowledge, to the committee. So we will take the time right now to invite anyone forward, or to speak or question and . . . if you have any questions.

All right. Well we thank you for being with us and for adding your information from the Battlefords and district area. And we certainly do appreciate everything that we have heard and the discussion that we have been privileged to engage in with you. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 3 p.m.