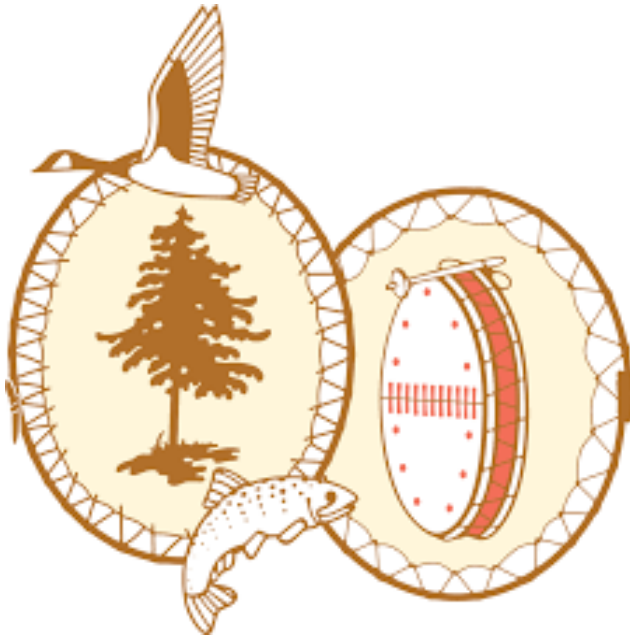


MARCH 26, 2026



LEADERSHIP CONNECT FORUM  
CREE NATION GOVERNMENT  
DAY 2: MARCH 19, 2026

NOTES/TAKEAWAYS

RACHEL MACLEOD  
CONSULTANT

## Table of Contents

Welcoming Remarks by Deputy Grand Chief, Linden Spencer: .....	2
Presentation of the Cree Youth Protection Commission Report presented by Jonathan Sutherland, AED – Pimtehau:.....	2
Response from Chair of Cree Health Board. ....	3
Chairman/Grand Chief of GCC;.....	3
Roundtable Discussions: .....	3
Chief of Whapmagoostui First Nation, Robbie Kawapit: .....	3
Chief of MoCreebec, Walter Jolly: .....	4
Mabel Bearskin; .....	4
Lisa Petagumskum, AED of Miiyuupimatsiun. ....	4
Chairman/Grand Chief of GCC: .....	5
Kelly-Lee Pepabano, Director of Childcare Programs and Services in Eeyou Istchee (Miyuupichinaausuwin Apatisiwin and Christina Duff, Coordinator of Childcare Operations: .....	5
Darlene Cheechoo, Director of Higher Learning;.....	6
Roundtable Discussions: .....	9
Presentation on Diabetes and Chronic Diseases presented by Dr. Maggie Odel & Paul Linton: .....	10
Randy Kitchen, EEPF Inspector & Steven Boudrias, Captain, Eeyou Eenou Police Force:.....	12
Department of Justice and Correctional Services, Losty Mamianskum, Manager of Correctional Services; .....	13
Roundtable Discussions: .....	14
Key Recommendations (Calls-to-Action):.....	15
Daniel Mark-Stewart:.....	16
Gaston Cooper responding by teams: .....	16

## Welcoming Remarks by Deputy Grand Chief, Linden

### Spencer:

Meeting will resume and continue to discuss the things that are crucial to discuss and one of them is mental health and families suffering from traumas.

Our families are suffering and how are we going to respond?

We should work for it and not let it just be a “call for action” but to actually do something about these community issues.

## Presentation of the Cree Youth Protection Commission Report presented by Jonathan Sutherland, AED – Pimtehou:

He expressed gratitude for being part of this forum, emphasizing that the report reflects insights from interviews conducted throughout the commission, rather than just the commissioners’ perspectives.

Task Force and Commission’s and the task force was formed in 2021 for the Youth Protection (YP) commission, with commissioners Bella Petawabano and Lorraine Spencer appointed in November 2022 to gather data from the Eeyou Istchee. The commission was launched in April 2023 and the commissioners interviewed over 1,000 individuals, inspired by Cindy Blackstock’s work in the Laurent Commission.

Its main goal was to make recommendations to improve the YP system, with *liyuu lituun* as a core principle for driving these enhancements. The final report, released in September 2025, includes 70 recommendations, with many initiatives already underway under the Cree Health Board (CHB), like the NISK Model of Care and the *Wiichiwaawin* Helpline.

Recognizing the importance of trauma-informed approaches is essential for supporting staff, front-line workers, and families. Key areas for improvement identified by the CBHSSJB include the strain on YP services, which affect staff retention and community trust.

There’s a need to enhance communication with families, who often lack clarity about the system. Gaps such as insufficient preventive services and delays in clinical assessments have been highlighted. Recommendations call for integrating Cree culture into interventions, addressing homelessness among aging-out youths, and promoting *liyuu lyitiiwin*.

COVID-19 disrupted many planned services, and there are concerns about RTS response times, with no follow-ups after calls of reports.

Social Determinants of Health in prevention for vulnerable families is crucial, along with ongoing reports on poverty and social inequities. The focus is on utilizing existing laws while integrating Cree cultural practices.

Support from communities and regional entities is important, encouraging collaboration to develop a stronger system.

Key Takeaway are the YP system that must be culturally grounded, emphasizing collaboration with regional and local entities. As stated, “we formed working groups that branched out to develop these recommendations.”

### Response from Chair of Cree Health Board.

When we discussed the report with the ED to the ministry. The ministry was more reluctant and wanted to see other Nations on how they operate their YP systems.

Reflecting on Eastmain’s structure, it is a good structure, and we can learn from theirs. Going back to Covid, it greatly affected a lot of workers, which caused overwhelming, stress and anxiety. A lot of people went on medical leave and caused a lot of movement/shifts with employees. During Covid, we stayed at a cabin and it was so rejuvenating and felt refreshed. This is something that would benefit families. There is a need for land-based families for healing.

The public always rely on CHB to run or build land-based programs, but the CHB cannot run everything in Eeyou Istchee.

### Chairman/Grand Chief of GCC;

We can open the table for discussion regarding the YP commission. There is something on the report that does not stand good with me. It seems that we are separated from the collaboration, however, we can work together to fulfill the recommendations from the YP commission. I had to sit and work and walk with Jeannie and Sarah in their role and it is a big job but brought a lot of understanding and perspective. There is no highlight on we should continuously work together, but we should always consider to work together, but we should not do things on our own because it will not work.

“To fulfill the recommendations, WE NEED TO WORK together.”

### Roundtable Discussions:

#### Chief of Whapmagoostui First Nation, Robbie Kawapit:

He shared his experience working in various departments and organizations, highlighting the social issues facing the community. There was a lack of structure when families were intervened, particularly for those coming from broken homes.

We need to identify the root causes of problems within families, as many are dysfunctional. It's crucial to find ways to provide support for these families, including consistent outreach and follow-ups. One pressing concern is young mothers who drink during pregnancy, resulting in children being born with special needs. Additionally, there is a significant issue with the lack of timely assessments due to long waiting periods.

Youth are also experiencing a loss of identity. We should encourage the principle of "liyuu lituun," which means "Go back to see the history." This involves listening to and inheriting the teachings and knowledge of our elders.

- Incorporating traditional medicine and healing practices, such as sweat lodges, is important. We must honor our people's stories and work together to find solutions. Land-based healing is an essential part of this process.

### Chief of MoCreebec, Walter Jolly:

Recognizing the efforts of the YP commissioners, the findings highlighted issues related to drug and alcohol use. Many women consume alcohol during pregnancy, leading to children with special needs. This situation often leaves mothers feeling frustrated and stressed as they care for their special needs children. Substance abuse frequently plays a significant role in affecting these families. Reflecting on “weskich,” it’s notable that we didn’t observe a high incidence of children with special needs in that context. We appreciate the hard work and also acknowledge Taria's presentation yesterday, which shed light on the challenges faced by YP and the workers involved.

### Mabel Bearskin;

She expressed her eagerness to see the report from the Youth Programs (YP) commission. As a foster parent, I am familiar with the YP services. Land-based programs are frequently discussed, even in meetings with the Cree School Board (CSB) and other organizations. These topics are mentioned numerous times during local general assemblies and public meetings. The EEPF has also shared their challenges, which are similar to those faced by the YP. It is important that the recommendations from the YP commission be initiated as soon as possible. We can share costs, and funding should not be a barrier to implementing these recommendations. We also need to break down the existing silos.

### Lisa Petagumskum, AED of Miiyuupimatsiun.

She shared that she is a consultant in trauma and works with both men and women. There are land-based programs, including a five-day program that integrates caribou hunting into the activities. Recommendations are already in progress as we work with the Justice Department and the EEPF. We also meet with first responders, and a five-day retreat has been launched to provide counseling and debriefing for frontliners.

Trauma-informed care is a priority, and Community Miiyuupimatsiun Centres (CMCs) are also trained in trauma-informed practices for debriefing. Referrals are also made for long-term support. Additionally, Niishiyuu hold Cree rites of passage gatherings. The program has been offered in Mistissini and Ouje-Bougoumou, and it includes a first moon ceremony for

girls experiencing their first menstrual cycle. Age-appropriate programming is taught by an elder, focusing on how both girls and boys should take care of themselves.

The phrase “to earn the title of elder” is integrated into Niishiiyuu teachings.

### Chairman/Grand Chief of GCC:

We need to consider several aspects regarding the YP commission, especially because lawyers will be reading the report. How often have we heard references to families? We cannot rely solely on YP; we must work with the families.

In the non-native world, families often lack rights and are only perceived as a means to breakdown relationships. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child emphasizes that separating a child from their family can be detrimental.

We must focus on the wellbeing of families, especially those with special needs children. We should support these families by providing them breaks or respite to rejuvenate.

It's important to be aware of “cultural bias” as we move forward. The report must be approached with caution, but it also contains positive highlights that we should strive to emphasize.

- We still need to be careful about how we address the report, as it can be interpreted in different ways.

Health break: 10:32 am – 10:54 am

### Kelly-Lee Pepabano, Director of Childcare Programs and Services in Eeyou Istchee (Miyuupichinaausuwin Apatisiiwin and Christina Duff, Coordinator of Childcare Operations:

The department consists of 16 individuals spread across Eeyou Istchee, focusing on supporting early childhood development. Their Head Start program serves as an outreach initiative for children not enrolled in daycare. This department is responsible for overseeing all daycares within Cree communities.

A new project will soon be rolled out at child care centers, introducing an educational file that tracks a child's development over time, with an emphasis on personality growth. Additionally, there's a special needs program being implemented across the centers, although there's a concerted effort to move away from the term “special needs.” Many parents often find it difficult to acknowledge when their child is facing challenges.

Partnerships are being forged with the Cree language commissioner to choose more sensitive language, opting for phrases like “children with additional needs.” This initiative ensures that resources are available to support children who may require extra help.

The Head Start program aims to address the developmental needs of children who are not in daycare. However, one of the challenges lies in staffing. Various programs are being offered, including financial literacy workshops and the establishment of an Elders council in each community, recognizing that each community has its unique cultural dynamics.

The work ethic of daycare staff is commendable; one can see the desire to truly understand the life of an educator in a daycare, which can indeed be overwhelming. They work diligently from Monday to Friday and deserve acknowledgment for their vital role in caring for the community's children. It's worth noting that a recent recognition award ceremony excluded daycare workers, highlighting the need for these caregivers to be celebrated for their dedication. It's important to show gratitude for their efforts in nurturing our children.

One successful initiative shared by YP is the Baby College program, which emphasizes early childhood education, health, and social services within a unified model. This aligns with the goal of “breaking down the walls of silos” and fostering collaboration to benefit our communities.

Desiree Blacksmith will be leading training sessions in the coming months, aimed at supporting parents through a cradle-to-career model that guides families from birth to graduation. Daycare workers often go above and beyond their official responsibilities, assisting with food and winter gear donations for children in need. For any new programs and workshops, consistency is key, and the message is clear:

“Let’s not turn away children who need support.”

## Darlene Cheechoo, Director of Higher Learning;

Most students are pursuing their studies while managing dependents. A significant number are enrolled at the college level. Highlighting attendance rates is crucial, as it plays a key role in student success and overall well-being. Additionally, psychologists have made observations about the challenges these students face.

## Brandi Taylor, Coordinator of Socio-Emotional Wellness:

### **School Psychologists and External Counselors and Understanding Student Challenges:**

Today’s students are grappling with several significant issues. One major concern is the surge in screen time due to the pandemic, which has led to a rise in both video gaming and social media use. Excessive gaming is particularly alarming, as it rewires brain structures and results in heightened dopamine levels, ultimately dulling mental stimulation.

Consequently, many students are losing important social skills and cultural traditions, spending excessive amounts of time absorbed in their screens rather than engaging with the world around them. They're often cooped up indoors, leading to a decline in outdoor activities. This lifestyle shift has also been linked to an increase in marijuana use, which alters brain chemistry. While some students turn to it as a way to manage anxiety, it often exacerbates feelings of social anxiety instead. There's been a rise in drug and alcohol consumption among youth as well. This begs the question: “Why are so many students absent from school or consistently late?” This issue is not just localized; it's a worldwide problem.

- On a positive note, there has been a noted increase in the use of the Cree language at home, which counters the trend of increased screen time. However, the rising levels of anxiety and depression, often leading to suicidal thoughts in the aftermath of COVID-19 and lockdowns, highlight the critical need for students to step out of the virtual realm. Engaging in traditional activities and connecting with the outside world can play a vital role in addressing these challenges.

*Angela Bearskin Gates is not available to present – Department of Iiyiyuiyihitiwin Research and Development:*

The department was established four years ago and is dedicated to promoting language-oriented initiatives. It acknowledges the vital role of the Cree language and culture.

Key initiatives include:

- Emphasizing the Cree language
- Celebrating Cree culture
- Implementing land-based teachings
- Creating a Cree immersion program for parents
- Highlighting the significance of teaching the Iiyuu way
- Involving knowledge keepers within schools alongside students

As schools shift towards decentralization, there is a stronger focus on developing hubs for both inland and coastal communities.

*Christina Duff, Coordinator of Student Engagement of CSB;*

There are Breakfast Programs for the schools and the lunch program is gradually being introduced in some communities, with hopes that it will be available to all in the near future.

Orientation trips are organized for all Secondary 5 students, allowing them to explore various colleges and cégeps.

We're also initiating driving school programs for students. Service agreements are currently in place in both Chisasibi and Mistissini.

*Edith Sam, Director of Education Services;*

Teaching the history of residential schools presents a significant challenge for educators. It's essential to connect students' identities to the land and the governing bodies. Furthermore, incorporating Cree traditions into the curriculum can enrich the learning experience for students.

*Catherine Rutherford, Director of Complementary Services;*

Understanding Psychosocial Literacy and Wellbeing is an importance of literacy for psychosocial health and wellbeing is being recognized across schools, where tailored interventions are being implemented. Direct support is available through the wellness department, which has adapted strategies for teams to learn effectively during the Covid period.

*Lexia* offers two key programs: Core 5 and Power Up. These initiatives focus on reading interventions, particularly for students with dyslexia. It's crucial for students to achieve reading proficiency by grade 3, as failing to do so poses significant long-term risks. Therefore, our emphasis is on enhancing reading skills during grades 1 to 3 through structured literacy programs, including those tailored for French speakers.

- For students needing extra assistance, *Lexia* provides valuable reading support. We are also partnering with the Cree Health Board (CHB) to create a stronger support network. Additionally, we offer a Work-Oriented Training Path (WOTP) that helps students secure full-time job placements, ensuring they have practical opportunities as they transition from school to the workforce.

*Brandi Taylor, Coordinator of Socio-Emotional Wellness*

SEW: Socio-Emotional Wellness Support provides essential support for students facing mental health challenges. Our program collaborates with CHB to facilitate case discussions and crisis responses tailored for students in need. We have one dedicated school psychologist and one school counselor who make regular visits to address social and emotional concerns that may hinder academic success. For further assessments, we offer referrals to ensure that students receive comprehensive care. Our approach focuses on psychotherapy and close collaboration with school administrators to explore effective strategies for success. Additionally, our re-adaptation officer plays a crucial role, helping students develop the behavioral, emotional, and social skills they need to thrive in the school environment. We continuously evaluate what's working and what isn't in our schools, recognizing that many students struggle with anxiety, ODD, and other challenges.

To address these issues, we are developing a program centered on a simple three-step framework. This includes providing a hybrid educational program to accommodate diverse learning needs. We've noticed that students often experience social anxiety and behavioral responses when they feel overwhelmed in school settings.

- Our behaviour management systems (BMS) are designed to support students who become disconnected, addressing behavioral concerns and critical incidents as they arise. Training and implementation of this system are vital,

and we ensure that all staff members receive proper training in behavior management for a cohesive approach.

Lunch break: 1:00 – 2:05pm

## Roundtable Discussions:

*Clarence Jolly, Chief of Nemaska:*

Question on the staff: Gender-based educators, are there any male educators?

*Answer:*

Yes, there are male but not many.

*Chairman/Grand Chief of GCC:*

During our meeting with the Childcare services, we recognized that while the programs offered by the department are valuable, we are still operating in isolation. It's essential that we collaborate more effectively. GC will speak with Rodney Mark to foster this cooperation, involving the Directors and program officers in the process. He also like to take a moment to express gratitude and appreciation for Kelly and her team.

*Paula:*

When discussing collaboration, have you thought about the benefits of home daycares? If you're involved with the Childcare department, consider the option of renting a house to establish a home daycare.

*Kelly:*

It's part of the mandate, yet no one has stepped forward to establish a home daycare. We adhere to the guidelines, and this is something that definitely needs to be taken into account, especially with a training center currently in the works.

*Suggestion: CSB and ChildCare and family services by Paula Napash:*

As a former teacher, I completed a program in special education. When community-based programs are made available, we see a greater success rate in course completion. It's essential to increase the number of programs offered in our communities. Additionally, providing accredited online courses would be beneficial. By investing in our people, we can help them thrive in their educational journeys. Some students only require a few classes to graduate, so it's important to offer part-time options in the special needs area. This way, we can cultivate more educators to support our students.

*Sarah Pash's response:*

Students are currently receiving allowances to support their education. CSB will cover tuition costs once students have completed their coursework. Additionally, we offer specialized programs designed specifically for children with special needs.

*Catherine Rutherford's response:*

- Special needs education is in development

*Kelly Pepabano's response:*

- Training offered
  - Hybrid resource education training
  - Other programs are offered to advance educators in daycare centres
  - 96% of graduation level for Early Childhood Education

## Presentation on Diabetes and Chronic Diseases presented by Dr. Maggie Odel & Paul Linton:

### **Understanding the Real Causes of Diabetes:**

Prevention is crucial in tackling diabetes and other chronic illnesses. Each year, the prevalence of diabetes continues to rise, leading to an increased demand for dialysis among affected individuals. Many children are now exposed to high sugar levels from a young age, which raises concerns about their long-term health.

Diabetic ketoacidosis is a serious complication to be aware of. In Eeyou Istchee, cancer is also recognized as a chronic disease. While the overall rate of cardiovascular diseases has seen a decline, the factors influencing heart health remain critical. These factors include hypertension, smoking, diabetes, low levels of physical activity, and sedentary lifestyles.

The implications of heart disease are significant: they often lead to reduced life expectancy and a diminished quality of life, reflecting a loss of autonomy. However, it is possible to live a long and fulfilling life with diabetes, but with the assistance and careful management that may include dialysis.

Moreover, social determinants of health play an essential role in this scenario. Elements such as time spent on the land, changes in employment, and shifts in neighborhoods can all influence health outcomes.

*Question from Chairman/Grand Chief to the presenters:*

During the time when everyone came together during Covid and meetings took place 3 times a week, “Did Covid 19 increase the risk of diabetes since?”

*Paul Linton:*

Diabetes has always existed, yet it hasn't significantly affected those living with it until now.

"We overcame Covid-19, but the reality is that diabetes continues to rise, and more people find themselves needing dialysis." It's crucial to prioritize education on self-care. Our main goal is to engage many in this effort, starting with parents teaching their children about healthy habits. Young men and women often fear they may have diabetes, largely due to the stigma surrounding the disease. Tragically, we lost a youth to diabetes—not something we should take lightly. "Twenty years ago, we should have come together to discuss diabetes, but fear held us back." As communities become increasingly connected to urban areas, access to unhealthy foods grows. Diabetes is becoming more common, almost a norm.

"Our traditional way of life helped us stay healthy," but now we are less active and spend more time away from the land.

Our previous lifestyle kept us healthy, but we've become more sedentary. Our typical diet these days includes poutine and pizza, which isn't helping. We must be proactive—don't wait for change. Get active! Even as a family, encourage your children to exercise for at least 20 minutes a day, morning and evening. Diabetes never existed in our past, so "why aren't we represented in food policies?" Our food sources have become inconsistent and are often influenced by government regulations. Milk consumption is particularly high in Cree communities, and while there are laws in place, they do not necessarily apply to our territory. We need to design land-based camps and introduce workplace lifestyle programs. However, finding traditional foods is becoming increasingly difficult for our elders. "The best traditional food comes from harvesting and sharing with family." Unfortunately, many opt to sell their harvest rather than share it.

"We're not sharing enough, and we need to think of others." To prevent diabetes, we must embrace a lifestyle change.

*Chairman/Grand Chief of GCC:*

"We need to be imaginative."

The Grand Chief shared an example: When ppl came to get their energy subsidies, they had to sign their leases in order to receive their cheque. This was a way for the tenants to signed renewed leases, because the tenants would not come in to sign their leases. So, they came up with a way for them to sign, and that is by signing the renewed lease first before receiving their subsidy cheques.

Health Break: 4:00 pm – 4:29 pm

## Randy Kitchen, EEPF Inspector & Steven Boudrias, Captain, Eeyou Eenou Police Force:

### **Overview of Crime Statistics and Response in Cree Communities:**

#### **Types of Crime:**

- Sexual assault
- Sexual contact
- Incest
- Aggravated assault
- Attempted murder

#### **Suicide-Related Statistics:**

- Deaths by suicide
- Ideation of suicide
- Attempts at suicide

#### **Other Emergency Calls:**

- Persons in distress
- Disturbed mental states

Mental health-related calls are particularly frequent, with a significant number focusing on suicide. There is a pressing demand for prevention initiatives, as well as for assessment, monitoring, and follow-up services. Instances of suicide ideation among youth in major communities are alarmingly high. The call dispatch center frequently receives calls regarding suicide ideation. Additionally, there is a substantial need for psychosocial support for EEPF patrol officers. Many officers take medical leaves due to mental health challenges.

#### *Question by Raymond Shanoush;*

“What are the approach and actions in our community and what are the stats in drug related interventions?”

#### *Response by Randy Kitchen:*

Interventions generate valuable statistics. Community members can reach out to the Crime Stoppers hotline after hours. Press releases are consistently shared across social media platforms. Overdose statistics are meticulously tracked and recorded. Building partnerships with the Crown is a priority. Lieutenants are encouraged to advocate for prevention efforts, with each community entrusted with that mission.

#### *Chair of CHB provided her input from the presentation:*

When discussing the statistics surrounding sexual assault, it becomes clear that there is a significant need for community education, particularly regarding the concept of consent. One effective approach could be to create infomercials on the radio that explain what consent truly means.

- Jeannie mentioned her experience in gathering evidence for sexual assaults, specifically through the collection of rape kits. She found this work particularly challenging because she felt she had a deep understanding of the issues at hand. However, she emphasized the importance of collaboration and the potential for upstream efforts to foster meaningful change.

#### Randy Kitchen:

Melanie Lamboy is the Prevention Advisor and will be visiting schools for prevention workshops.

After a workshop done in school, a girl recently visited the police station to report that she had been sexually assaulted. The EEPF team has received training on how to properly fill out sexual assault forms. Additionally, EEPF members are invited to participate in training sessions where they can provide valuable insights about sexual assaults and other crimes, including specialized training for nurses.

## Department of Justice and Correctional Services, Losty Mamianskum, Manager of Correctional Services;

Implementation from the JBQNA, section 18:

- The Justice Department was established in 2007 to enhance access to the justice system. It focuses on reinforcing and promoting traditional values within the Cree Nation to effectively tackle the root causes of our challenges. This initiative emphasizes strategic leadership and advocacy, alongside providing operational support and professionalism. Moreover, it champions community-led prevention and restoration efforts.

- JAC: Justice Advisory Committee
- DOJCS: Department of Justice & Correctional Services

#### The Pillars of Support:

1. Regional Administration
2. Correctional Services
3. Community Justice Services
4. Crime Prevention Initiatives
5. Capital Infrastructure
6. Facilities and Equipment Operations

There are lingering effects of intergenerational trauma stemming from residential schools and government policies. Previous psychologists have indicated that 99% of clients have experienced trauma. Many of these clients lacked essential nutrients, love, and care in their

childhoods, leading to difficulties in sharing their past traumas. The individuals who commit crimes often represent just the tip of the iceberg, revealing a broader issue.

We are witnessing more shocking crimes than ever before, and the number of people becoming homeless in places like Val-d'Or and Montreal is on the rise. Rehabilitation plays a vital role in helping our community. Unfortunately, when clients reoffend, they often end up in maximum-security penitentiaries, which can contribute to further mental health issues. Trauma impacts people's nervous systems, making them more easily triggered than the average person. Mental health is crucial, and there's a need for collaboration with Community Health Boards (CHB), which have not yet engaged with justice clients effectively. Stigma surrounds mental illness and those who commit crimes, leading many to feel disconnected from their families and communities. A partnership agreement exists between the Department of Justice and Community Services (DOJCS) and Apitisiwin (ASD) to facilitate job opportunities for clients during their reintegration. However, challenges remain in working with clients in the justice system and DOJCS.

It is essential to develop models that help clients feel included and connected to their communities. When children feel disconnected, it often affects their adult lives. There are currently no requests for restorative justice practices within communities, prompting the question, “What were the reasons behind committing the crime?” This opens up possibilities for understanding and potentially forgiveness through restorative justice initiatives. Clients have expressed a preference for speaking with psychologists or professionals who communicate in Cree. Lorraine Spencer has been invaluable as a psychologist for clients in detention. We are also exploring tiny home facilities in Mistissini, Waskaganish, and Chisasibi to aid in the reintegration process.

Support programs focused on conflict resolution, mental health counseling, correctional services, restorative justice, healing and wellness, family and intergenerational support, emotional regulation, and harm reduction, along with youth development and life skills, are crucial for successful reintegration.

“Everybody has a story. I feel a sense of responsibility for my community.” - Losty Mamianskum.

## Roundtable Discussions:

Clarence Jolly:

Over the last two days, we have discussed various topics, including education, health, childcare, youth protection, and justice.

*Call to Action: We need to prioritize early childhood development as it offers a long-term solution rather than a quick fix.*

What if we all identified areas where we could strengthen our efforts and concentrate our energy in one specific place?

What seems to be more visible: is it violence in our community? If we tackle the issue of violence, we may continue to see its effects.

We should aim to "fix it at the grassroots level." When a child is in a safe environment, well-educated, and properly nourished, we build a stronger foundation for their future.

It is crucial that we start teaching our children at a young age, ensuring that we include all of them.

- Let's remember that "coming together is just the beginning."

#### Chairman/Grand Chief of GCC:

Some of the chiefs present here were formerly police officers. It's important to identify solutions promptly, as key details may be overlooked. We need to establish common priorities and develop a shared language. We must work diligently to create effective calls to action.

#### Michael Petawabano:

The conference includes chiefs, council members, CSB, CHB, and community leaders. Each group has specific mandates that address different aspects of community safety. When these efforts are not coordinated within a shared framework, it leads to gaps in support for patients and a failure to address underlying causes.

#### Examples of Working in Silos:

- A school counselor identifies a risk, but there is no protocol connecting them to the Cree Health Board (CHB) and the Cree School Board (CSB).
- An emergency domestic violence call is received by the EEPF, but there may not be a women's shelter or CHB intake available.

"The community is not asking for more programs; it is asking for existing organizations to work together as one."

The most transformative outcome of this conference could be a formal commitment to a shared core data structure.

#### Key Recommendations (Calls-to-Action):

- 1. Develop a framework for a community safety collective approach.**
- 2. Designate representatives from each entity (CNG, EEPF, CHB, CSB, etc.) to ensure they have a seat at the table.**
- 3. Appoint a coordinator to facilitate these meetings and serve as a liaison to communities and organizations.**
- 4. Implement key mechanisms with a frontline team to form a unified response involving EEPF, CHB, CSB, and other entities.**

## **5. Establish a shared protocol and communication system to facilitate shared learning.**

Additionally, consider the role of a neutral coordinator who will facilitate meetings, maintain action items, track milestones, and ensure that representatives prepare follow-ups.

### **Michael Jolly:**

Essential insights, discussions, and collaborations that were exchanged and explored. Gaining knowledge and sharing valuable information that can be taken back home.

### **Thomas Shem:**

There is a common issue within our communities: we need to focus on our students and the younger generation. Many people express, "I don't see an economic boost in our Cree Nation." It is essential to include everyone when we aim to support our people—this includes those currently in school, those who want to attend school, and even students who have dropped out. We also need to reach out to youth who are not in school. Additionally, it is important to teach our youth basic skills, such as time management.

### **Daniel Mark-Stewart:**

We come together and often find ourselves competing with other communities, focusing too much on our own statistics. Our elders would advise us to unite, reminding us that "if you think there are silos at the regional level, there are even bigger silos within individual communities."

There is a noticeable lack of collaboration among our communities, often stemming from political history or sports rivalries. This division creates significant challenges; we have much work to do to address these barriers. Our actions inadvertently make access to services more complicated. Initiatives from housing authorities, for example, often complicate matters further.

Navigating the system can be daunting due to the complex web of referrals that individuals face. We must ask ourselves, "How are we going to resolve these small but significant problems?" It is crucial to educate our people that the school board belongs to the community, not just to the chair of any organization.

As individual leaders, we must make a commitment to work together towards these goals.

### **Gaston Cooper responding by teams:**

We all encounter problems. While we left out some points in our presentations, there were certain items that were not discussed. For instance, there was no mention of psychosocial support for first responders, such as the EEPF. Additionally, in reviewing the justice program, it's clear that OJ does not have a justice committee. Offenders often receive just a "slap on the wrist" and are then reintegrated back into the community.

Today, youth face far more challenges than we did growing up. Drugs are much stronger and deadlier now. We need to start addressing issues at the family level and work toward "fixing" these families. Prevention programs in schools focusing on drugs and alcohol are crucial. Parenting is a significant issue, and we must reinforce the responsibility of parents in caring for their children. There is a troubling trend of youth using weapons to harm or kill each other. We must resolve these issues as much as we can, beginning with the parents.

Our nation is in trouble and truly needs healing. This meeting is just the start; we will need to hold many more meetings to follow.

Meeting adjourned: 6:20pm