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ED THUNDERCHILD, ED LALIBERTE,
JONAS LARIVIERE, FELIX SUGAR,
ALEX POORMAN, MORRIS LEWIS,
J.B. STANLEY, JAMES GEORGE
CROOKED, JOE MACHISKENIE, BILL
WAPASS, MARIUS NAHNEPAWISH,
PETE WAPASS, EMILE PIAPOT

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- Discussion on problems of the younger generation, including alcoholism. Also ways in which parents and elders can help by instructing children and young people and by maintaining the Indian religion.

CREE MARRIED COUPLES WORKSHOP

ED THUNDERCHILD, THUNDERCHILD RESERVE & PRINCE ALBERT:

I was invited to come and listen here and I am glad to see what is going on. I will tell you a little about myself and how I live. I'm 63 years old and I have never been before a judge, for being in trouble. I had always tried to live a good life, stay out of trouble. I was brought up by my parents. My father was a chief and his name was Thunderchild. And I also had other grandfathers that used to talk to me when I was young. They used to tell me about where I was heading for in the future. And I think these are the things I have to depend on myself and talk about them. But before I say any more, my grandfathers used to tell me never just start like that. Before anything else, always think of our Manitou. And now I ask you, all of you here today, to help me pray for all our children. Help me in your minds. I am not very healthy. So I'm not feeling very

good when I'm with you here today. So pray with me and maybe we get help from our Maker in what we are trying to do.

I have been thinking quite a lot of these workshops and I have heard quite a lot about them. These elders come here and we might call this "lecturing or counselling meeting." It is all very good to try and save our children before they are completely lost.

I have started something like this at our reserve, but the people were not too interested. So what we did, after, my wife and I asked the school committee if it would be possible for me to speak to the children, to tell them about what is good. And why I did this I will tell you first. These children were getting into too much trouble and they were also a big headache. They would steal and do all kinds of things. There was even a four-year-old child mixed up with a bunch of children who broke into a store and stole some things. And these kids were just running loose; there was no one to try and talk to them. And this is when I got to thinking of some way to help these relatives of mine, because these were some of my relatives. So I thought they might listen if I start something like this, I thought. Because the way they were going they were heading straight into trouble and at a very early age.

And this is when I approached the school committee about speaking to the young boys in school. So they gave me so many hours a week to talk to the boys. I tried to tell them about the law and what would happen if they keep on going this way. I told them they would have to think now of what kind of people they are going to be in the future. And this was mainly my way

of talking to these young boys. And my wife, she had the young girls to talk to. And she was the same way too. She told the girls that they were the mothers of the future and they should look after their bodies. And also she talked to them to respect the Indian religion and ceremonies.

And this is what we started but we didn't get very much response from the people of our reserve, so we finally let it go. And now when we are talking about it here, I think to myself, it's useless. When I think of the young person and how they act, a person my age just wants to give up. These young people don't have an idea of what respect means. They have no respect for us or anything for that matter. They won't listen to us because they read in a book and they think they know everything; and these are the people we raised since they were babies. I will say here that we have all kinds of programs on the reserves for these young people to do. We have workers to see that these things run such as recreation sports of all kinds. If these workers were on the ball they would keep the young person interested. We also have education people, child counsellors, and these are all kinds of people. If they would get to work maybe our young wouldn't be in that much trouble. These people are all getting paid to do this jobs on the reserves but are they doing them? We don't see them a lot of

us older people. They don't think nothing of us. This is why we have to move out of the reserve and live in city. I have two of my brother-in-laws here and they know all about this. They too had to move because they seen that nothing was being done on our reserve. Whenever we say something our words fall on deaf ears.

But now it's different with our religion. I also put on a Sundance last summer and I asked Manitou from my heart to give me strength so I can bring up my children the right way. And this is what we should try and tell our young people today, our Indian religion. Some of my grandchildren come to ask me, "Why are you doing this to yourself and making yourself suffer?" I told them that they don't understand. But it's up to us older people and parents. We are the ones that should be telling our young people these things. We have to try and tell them where we can turn to in religion wise, when we have something pressing us too hard. And I know it is very hard to make the young people understand these things now. Some of them think that this is a thing of the past. We are living in a different world. Even very small children you see on the reserve you tell them something they swear back at you. They don't respect you because you are old. And this is the way it is on the reserve. I think we should try and do something, us older people. Or try and get some help some way. I think we should try and ask for a few hours a week for an elder to lecture these students in the Indian way. This is what we should ask for and I think we would be helping the Indian student this way. And this is my thinking and I won't say much more. I'm only saying parts of what I think. I could talk about many

things but I will say them the next time around as we usually have long discussion on these things.

About alcohol now this is our biggest problem today, no matter which reserve you go to. It's like that all over. This is what is killing us and we young people. And now I will say thank you and I hope we can make work together and have something, so we can help our young people. Let's ask for a little time in these schools so we can talk to our young Indian students. Thank you.

ED LALIBERTE, MEADOW LAKE RESERVE:

In my travels I always bring this up about these Indian children that are being brought up in white foster homes. These are the children we are hurting very much. They forget their language and their relatives they also forget their Indian identity. And when I think about it I always think that these children should be all taken out of white homes. And raise them on our reserves as we are hurting these children and they have lost everything. Many times I've come across a young man maybe 18 years old, and he's allowed to go back to the reserve. When he gets on the reserve he's gotten into a lot of mix-ups. Why he does these things is because this child has never known love. And because his parents throw him away at an

early age. And I usually have a lot of say about these children in my travels, because I pity them. And I would like all of you here now to think about this. See if there is any possibility of getting these children back on the reserves, and not in the white man's homes.

And it is right too that there should be elders going to these schools and speaking to these students. Many of these young Indians even forget their native tongue. They can't speak Cree and this is one thing we should work at very hard and to teach these children not to forget their own native language.

It is true that at one time I was an alcoholic myself, but I have quit now for a long time now. When I was drinking I forgot everything. Even what my grandfather used to talk to me about and what they showed me. I sat in a Sundance myself last summer. What my cousin here was talking about, that they were two of these Sundances and tents side by side. We were praying for the people in the whole universe, and those that are in the hospitals we asked that they be made well. I'm just now waking up and start to think of what my grandfathers taught me. I am just now starting to follow these. These were the things my grandfather showed me and taught me. In my travels all over I've seen many old people men and women with black eyes. And myself I don't call this the Indian way of life. And also these children being raised up by white men this also I don't call the Indian way of life. We were put on this earth here to love our relatives. In the old days these elders used to be available to talk to young men; and same with the old woman

they used to talk to young woman. And what I understand here is that we try to start this again. And whenever we go to a meeting such as this, we are not to keep what we hear to ourselves but we tell other people about it, because other people will make use of the good words that we hear also. Many times I have visitors and I use my pipe because I enjoy people coming to visit me. I talk and pray for them so they will have a safe journey home, and this is what I do. I pray and thank my Maker every evening and glad that I'm finished another day without using this downfall of ours, ALCOHOL. I pray and say prayers for all mankind. And also do this in the mornings. I pray and say prayers for my relative. Long ago I wasn't like this, I didn't do this, and now today I firmly believe that this is true. In what I'm doing every morning and every evening. When I got here yesterday we had a pipe ceremony and said prayers. We asked that our meeting here would go right and have nothing bother us, so we will be able to get something good out of it, so we would have something good to take home with us. I won't say very much today but I might be able to add some more later on about the Indian culture in what you are trying to follow. Thank you.

JONAS LARIVIERE, CANOE LAKE:

My relatives I will say a few words myself even though I don't know very much. I wasn't brought up like you people, where you

have seen everything. Up north this was different; we didn't have very much of these ceremonies that you people see in the southern part. I will tell as far back as I can remember of what I've seen and what my parents told me and what I was taught as a young person. The reason I can't read or write is I was too much of an Indian and I depended too much of an Indian and his way of life. And this is why I never went to school. I have always made my living the way the Indians used to do long ago. My parents told me what would happen in the future, but I was satisfied with my Indian life. And so I didn't take schooling. What I wanted most in my life was hunting and trapping. I thought this would be my lifetime job, but I see now that it wasn't.

And what I have heard so far this morning it is true. I stand with these people on what they said. We are having a very hard time the way we see our young people today, it's very hard to talk to them. It is the same way with me on my reserve, they are giving me a very rough time. Even my own children are giving me trouble and we worked very hard to try and bring these children up right. We tried our best to show them the good road and we tried talking to them. But they are still lost and I can't blame another person for them being this way because when one young person does something he usually gets another young person involved. So now one does something and they all do it, because if they won't do like the rest they are called "CHICKEN." And all of us we know that a young person is very light and he will do anything without thinking about it first and his mind is wandering all the time.

Whenever he told something good he thinks about it for a while and thinks he will follow it. But as soon as he meets another young person he forgets what he was told right away. And it happens the same way with the young leaders we have now. When they are told something, they understand. They listen to an elder but as soon as they get up and see a ball game or something they forget about it. They don't seem to think about their leadership; they would rather go and have a good time. And they are money hungry and they are there for this reason just for the money and not the people.

But we should never tire of telling our children about their lives. How are they going to live in the future, we don't know. And this is what puts the big worries on me. I think times are getting harder on the Indian so this is what worries me. There are many things that we are afraid of. When an old man thinks about things like this it hits right in the heart and he feels these. There are many old people dying because they worry too much about their children; and this is love. We all love our children and maybe they love us too but they don't show it. This puts a lot of worry on an old man or woman when they think about their children and grandchildren of what will happen to their loved ones in the future. These young people they will never have the easy life we had long ago. The times are changing. Maybe we will all go all at one time, we don't know. I'm even scared of this snow this year; it's very bad up north. This is about the worst winter I have seen in my life.

We don't know what will happen come spring. But we can't give up. We have to keep going somehow. We have to keep talking to our children and our grandchildren. They will see in the future, what we were trying to say. But we should never be afraid to tell our children that they are Indians and should act likewise. Because we can't never become rich as some of the whites among us. But to try and put in their minds the Indian thinking and not to make fun of people to have respect for people.

It is true that these young people today that they don't pay no attention to elders. Just recently on my reserve they had a meeting and I was away at that time to a co-op meeting in Prince Albert, but what I heard was that the people were trying to change the leaders at my reserve. And there were older people there trying to say something but were told they had no business talking there as they were pensioners. They were told to go home and sleep. So you see what these young people think: as soon as a person gets a pension he automatically has nothing to do with band affairs. But we know different; we were running our reserves before these people were born. But that's one point there, this is the respect they show to the older men now. There was one young man tried to speak this way when I was there. But I got up right away and I asked him who raised him since he was a baby, and he didn't have very much to say

after that. I told him, "If it wasn't for the elder that brought you up and loved you, you wouldn't be standing on the face of the earth today," I told him. And this was my nephew and this is how I quietened this one. So let's all try and help each other in what we are trying to do. And also about what was brought up here earlier, about having elders talk to the students in schools, to remind them of their culture so they don't lose it altogether. And now I would like to thank the leaders here for what they have done for us. It is a very hard job they are doing. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

FELIX SUGAR, PIAPOT RESERVE:

My relatives and friends, I will start by saying that I went to school for a long time. This was long ago and I was there so long that the priest told me maybe I should become a priest. So I told the father I will try it. And I did try it for two years. But it was very hard. I spoke a little French. I can still count up to 100 in French. I am truly an Indian, a Saulteaux. And this is why I'm telling this. I hope no one will be hurt because this is my own of what I'm going to talk about. My [parents?] used to try and discourage me about the priesthood, and I was a little glad.

Because I left school and back to my own Indian way of life. I had a woman. I was given this woman and there I'm bragging. But this one was my wife and later on we had children and we would lose them right away. We lost our first five children and this last one we had was a girl. And I was very scared whether

she would live or not and I didn't know what to do. I kept thinking, I wonder if she will live? So I went to my father so I told my father that I loved my little daughter very much. What can I do?" And my father thought for a while and he said, "You shouldn't have come now. You have been crazy and did you finally wake up? And now you do as I tell you." So I asked him, "What?" "Try and get a spiritual cloth and a pipe and something that's cooked, and you go and give these to an elder. He will perform a ceremony and he will talk for your child and give your child a name." This is what I did and my daughter lived and she is still living today. She's over 40 years old now. This daughter is from my first wife and I also have children now from my second wife. I have grandchildren also from my first daughter.

I turned from white man's way our Indian way again. And I have done a few of the Indian ceremonies so far. I have put up one smoking tent so far and my father told me that I had come to the point where I was ready now to make a Sundance. So I told him, "All right," and this is what I did when I was afraid. I also did a Sundance when another person wanted me to do it for them. And I have made several Sundances so far and I'm very thankful when I asked Manitou's help to see my child grow up

and my prayers were answered. I took the pipe and believed in it. And my father used to say to me, "You will see that you get to be an old man." And I have studied the Indian way in. And these medicines, I got them from elders when they were still with us. These I was going to use when my children got sick. And this is what I have done, now today I see my grandchildren they are growing up. I raised one of my grandchildren since he was a little child. He was always sickly and he was having fits, and sort of going out of his head, when they told me to give him a name. And that's what I did. I sang for him and gave him an Indian name. And some of these are very hard to believe but my grandchildren got better; now he grew up today. And this is when I came to have a very strong belief in this Indian way of life. There's no Indian on earth who will turn me now and there is no white man on earth who will turn me either. This is the belief I have in our Indian way. All of these Assiniboinés know me and how I run my life. Whenever they have something wrong with them they come to get me. And this is what I always use this medicine that I got from the elders. And from there they get better and believe in it. And this was what I was taught.

My children all drink alcohol. I try and tell them, "No, don't do this," but they don't listen. So when they won't listen, that's all right go ahead and drink, drink. So they drank. Finally my daughter got sick. I told her, "Go ahead. Drink." So they did. My husband and I we are going to stop drinking. So I told them they will have a better life this way, as my son works in Regina and makes a good money. And I also told these people not to promise anything, as they would harm themselves or their children if they break their promise. Only recently one of my grandchildren cut his wrists and tried to kill himself, and this was also on account of alcohol. So I am very

happy when I hear you people telling each other these things. This will get us a long ways. It is very hard to tell our young people about this alcohol, the white man's got them where he wants them and they listen to the white man more than they do to us. The priest used to tell us, "You will go to hell if you do wrong." And I guess they know, because they have everything else. I am trying my bested to work for the Indian in every way I can. I am slowing down now as I'm getting to be pretty old now. This will be all. And I would like to thank all of you for listening to me. Thank you.

ALEX POORMAN, POOR MAN RESERVE:

My relatives and friends, I'm not a good speaker as I'm a little too young yet to be telling something to people. My name is Alex Poorman from Poorman's Reserve. I also have an Indian name which was given to me by an elder. I have travelled quite a bit listening to people. I go to lots of the Indian meetings. We are always listening and getting ideas on

how our young will do in the future, what we can plan for them so they will have a good life. In the future our young children will be thinking about what we are telling them today. The same as we do today now. We think about what our parents told us. In the old days they gave an elder lots of stuff, to lecture their son or daughter. This is how much they wanted their children to learn about the Indian way of life. Today it is very hard to talk to the young people. But when they get older they will think about what we try to tell them. Well this will be all I will say. I like to follow another person and I will think about what I will say next time and will listen to you. But I just want to say that our old chief who was named Poorman was absolutely [right] when he predicted that this would happen. We went to see him one time. This old chief was my grandfather, and while he used to talk to us, my father and I, sometime I would fall asleep. And I guess my father really wanted me to know what my grandfather had to say. So when I was a young man my father gave me some tobacco and he told me to go and give this to my grandfather. And when I got there and gave him the tobacco, he thanked me and told me I came for something. So he told me to sit down and he said a few prayers and then he talked to me. And he told me what I see today now all around us and the fears we have for our young. But I will leave that to tell later and in the meantime I hope we get some good points from each other. We will have to think of the future for our young. Thank you.

MORRIS LEWIS, ONION LAKE:

My friends and relatives, I greet you all. But I'm also an Indian, so before I start I will say a prayer. It has been very nice to listen to you people this morning, and I enjoyed hearing what you were discussing. All what you have discussed these are this things that are scaring us today. Or these are the things that we are afraid of. You have talked about schools and about children and one old man told his life history. And

as I sit here this is all I can think of to talk about. Of how my life has been and some of these people here know me and they are my relatives. I was brought up poor and I was raised up by old people. As I grew older then I was put in school, but today I know very little about school. I can only speak a little English. After a while I got myself a woman; this is the one I'm sitting with here today. My father was well known among Indians of the western parts, because he was working as an Indian. He was always there whenever there was some kind of ceremony taking place. He used to make Sundances; this was his work. And I helped him ever since I was very young. I worked alongside of him till he died. And after that I still hang on to what he taught me, and the word he used. He used to say, "Never refuse when someone invites you to help in a Sundance."

And this has come upon me today, my relatives. I have five grandchildren and what you were talking about today, I'm beginning to see that now. I'm getting more fearful every day. I was even afraid to come here when I was invited. I didn't want to leave my children and grandchildren. I have a great concern for these young people. Yesterday morning I took out my pipe and said prayers. I asked our Manitou to take care of our young people while we were gone. I asked the Maker to make our roads safe for all of us that will be meeting here today. And also asked for a good mind, strength, and guidance so that we may understand each other in what we are afraid of. To give us a good mind and this is what I did.

And I'm like you, I'm worried and I'm scared. I only hope and pray that I could find some way that I can help you people. Especially the leaders we have here. Everything that has been discussed, I was very thankful when they brought this out. This will be a place where a person will wake up to see all the worries we have. To come and listen, they will wake up and think. I was thankful when I heard this was starting up. And I'm still thankful now that I've been invited to take part. These leaders have a good thing going, and although they have a lot of tough things going they still manage to keep at it without weakening. As this program is very at every age someone mentioned children how can we help them. And I think myself that it should start right from the home. The parents should start right teaching their children and they should start talking to their children as soon as they are able to understand. And I think this way a young child would learn respect. Because if we know that our parents don't speak, then a child is lost. Even us parents we forget what our elders told us. These lectures they gave us, all of these we have forgotten. And now today they are upon us; these were the things they told us about. What can we do now? Our young won't listen to us and they see every day of what's wrong, but they don't care. They are fighting a losing battle. I'm always very sorry, very sorry, that this happens. And I guess all of us that are sitting here today are the same way. But all we can do now, I guess, is try and work together. If we can get something going on reserves and in the classrooms, I think these would help. But if we don't give up, and work together,

and help one another, I think this way too, we can maybe have some followers.

J.B. STANLEY, FROG LAKE, ALBERTA:

My friends and relatives, I'm very happy to see what you are doing here. I will say a prayer first myself and I come from Frog Lake, which is in Alberta. My great-grandfather was the one that signed our treaty from our way. And my father was George Stanley, and was raised by my parents. And these people

told me about the things we are hearing here today. This is the first time I've been to these workshops, both my wife and I. But I really enjoy hearing the elders talking. They bring back what I had forgotten. They get me to thinking, as I have young children myself. But I hope you don't say just the right words as I'm not used to speaking to people. One thing I think about all the time when I speak to my children, if they have white man's jobs, not to think white but to keep their Indian way of life. About these schools they are mentioning here, I think myself that this is not the only place we can go to learn. A child can start right at home because a parent is the first teacher that the child will have. And from there we could tell them of what the elders used to tell us. This was left behind for us to tell our children about. And this is what I think and this is the only way we can do this, is never to give up speaking to our children about these, because we weaken and then they will be lost for sure. Get a young person to think and get them to think about their mother and of what the mother has done for them ever since they were babies. When they cry at night no matter what time it was, who was it that got up to take after them? And this is where they should get the idea from. They should listen to their parents. If we could get the young person to think and think real hard, then maybe he would realize and see what we are trying to tell them. This will be all. Thank you.

JAMES GEORGE CROOKED, LOON LAKE:

You have me scared, my relatives, and I'm not used to going to meetings, and this is the first time for me. But I like it very much and I'm very thankful for being invited to come to this workshop. What you are doing here is very good. I have heard about these meetings before, but no one explained to me just what they were about. But now I know and I'm very glad to hear words that I can take back to my children. I'm very glad myself and I get scared when I think of the things that are happening to our young people. I thought I was the only one that was kind to my children, but now I know that every one of you are very concerned of your children also. I'm very thankful from the bottom of my heart that you people don't turn me down. What I hear here is what my old people used to tell me. My grandfather was very old and he had relations way from the south, and this old man gave me this Indian name which I still use today. "CA CA KO," a raven, in English. This name he gave me and asked Manitou for me to reach old age and guys gray hair. Today you see me now and I'm very grey haired and now it's my

turn to start telling my young people of what was passed on to me. I was 15 years old when my parents first started me at Indian religion. And since that time I have been helping elders

with their ceremonies. At first I was a server and helping the elders and serving the people. And this is where the elders used to tell me how to go about the various ceremonies that we have. There are many of these ceremonies and all of them are different. All of these they tried to tell me about, but I don't remember lots of them. So this is where I'm glad to say that you bring these back when I listen to you elders. And I can't say very much today so I'm thankful to be here and to be of a little help. So I hope and pray to our Manitou that he will give us strength to carry on the work which we are trying to do. It is true of what I heard so far. I'm very worried myself for my young people. It's very bad where I come from. We live right in the town of Loon Lake and we see all kinds of things going on. But the same way as any place else, the young won't listen to us. Because maybe they see many of us doing the same thing. And talking about being a server, I never gave this up even when some of my children got sick and died. I still kept working and believing in scent of sweetgrass and the pipe. This was given to the Indian nation; our Manitou gave us this. He gave his angels kindness to pass on to us. He put us on this earth and gave us animals and all the fur-bearing animals with which to make our living.

JOE MACHISKENIE, POOR MAN RESERVE:

My friends and relatives, I'm thankful of what I've heard here so far. So I'll just say myself that you people are sure doing a job very well. Indian culture, that's ours and we should keep it all no matter what the cost. We should never think of throwing it away. And it's very nice the way you people work together to try and get this thing moving. This was the way the people of long ago operated, they worked together. And they worshipped together. We haven't got half of that today. About the only thing left now is the Sundance and all the rest are forgotten. Our forefathers were given these to pass on to us. They predicted to what will be like in the future, and we see this now. I remember when there would be a few elders sitting around and they would invite young people to sit with them. They said we would use what they told us then in the future and now I see this today. It is true that we are all having a very hard time with our young. These white men, we hear that they do all kinds of crazy things. And our young people are following them. They don't listen to us because we don't read very many books. And I'm all alone the way you see me now. This fieldworker is the only one that comes to see me and invites me to go with him. Sometime we go a long ways. But I like this as I figure I'm helping him a little. But all you workers here, I hope and pray to our Maker that you will get people to come to you as this is our way. I only hope that the

people would wake up and then we would be a strong Indian nation again. Everything that you see growing outside, all these things were given to us to use. And if a person asks and

believes strongly that it is right, then he will be granted his wish. This has been my way through the years and I'm getting pretty old man. Whenever there is going to be a Sundance I always try to be there, because this was what my elders used and they were listened to when they prayed. This is my strong belief and it will be till I die. I try my best to tell young people but most of these young people today they think that the elders are crazy. Well, I think myself it is the opposite. But us Indian people we are always afraid, and the white man has us scared of everything. Even when they lose something they will say right away, "the Indians stole it." And these are some of the things he does. They will take our women and make fools out of them and then let them go, and laugh at them. But some of these never learn; they go back for more. And we all get the blame. One Indian does something and every one of us get hurt.

But I will say one thing more. When our Manitou gave us our religion he never gave us a book where we could memorize these and all and say the same thing. Our songs are not written, so how did the Indian get these? I heard some say that they got these in a dream; and some were given to them by their elders. The Indian was given a mind to use and to say his prayers from his heart, to sing his song. The white man has everything written down so when he goes to church and told to turn to a certain page he can find his page. If the white man didn't have this he would forget his religion.

I'm very deeply hurt when I hear an Indian being put down and a lot of the elders here would be the same way. They are kind and don't want to hear their people being called down. I've never wanted to make trouble with anyone; I've always talked to people and always get along. So about what we are trying here, it is a small start, but we will be strong if we don't give up our Maker will help us. These leaders, they are trying to bring back Indian culture, and this is very good but it will be very hard. So as you look around you see many of our young people can't even speak their native tongue, so how are we going to tell these people about our religion? It is true that the liquor problem is got us and in every reserve too, but I hate alcohol and I don't want to even discuss it here. We are trying to discuss something here that is good and also what we can use. I would rather talk about what was given to an Indian, the sweetgrass and pipe. These things we should hold. I nearly brought my pipe along, but at the last moment I thought I would leave it behind. I only brought the sweetgrass along. I do this every morning and every evening. I do the pipe ceremony and I say prayers so that my relatives will be well and also all the people. The people wonder sometime why I

do this, but it's for them. It's hard for me as I'm the only old man left in that part of the country, and have to travel a long ways for these ceremonies. But I still go and help as I know that we will beat the devil and we see that now. It is going on all over the world. We try to tell people not to [do] this but they do. They do wrong instead of listening to us. So

I think no matter how hard we try we will never be able to beat the devil. He has most of us under his grip. We try to go straight but he stops us and tells us "This way to the bar where your relatives are laughing," and right away our mind starts to have ideas. This is the white man leading us there. We hear of our young people getting hurt or getting into trouble, on account of alcohol. I have lost two of my children on account of alcohol. My daughter was shot in the head and killed and my son shot himself, so this is why I'm scared. Sometimes the young men come to me to give me a drink and just to satisfy them I take a drink. And this is the way the young men are today. They give these old men to drink and they try to lead them to the devil.

But long ago there was lots of Indian religion. Today we don't see any. There were all kinds of ways too, to do these ceremonies. One way was for a person to go to a place where he will be all alone for a few days and nights, praying so he will have something like kindness. Some of these young people have tried this, but they are scared and they come home as soon as the day is getting to be dark. And so I thank the leaders for letting me speak. And I hope you never give up as always there are mouths that will say, "He's only there for the money." And to us old people when we get home and some will say, "That guy didn't know what he was talking about," because this is the way we Indians are; we talk about each other. It is very hard. I get old age pension myself, but it only lasts me two days when I get my cheque as I'm kind to children and this is what they do to me. But I don't care much for money as this is not what was given to us. This is the white man's god. Every other word he uses is money, money, and this was not the way it was with us. We were given religion, kindness and to love each other. We weren't given a bunch of money and told, "Here this is your god." When I'm at home I usually get up early in the morning, and I get my drum and sing a few songs. And my relatives around ask me what the hell I'm doing. So I tell them I'm asking for everything that is good to come to our reserves. So this is the way it is. I should have stopped speaking long ago. But I'm glad that I was able to tell you a little of what we were given. I haven't told you half of what the old Indian way of life is. But this will be all for now. I greet you all, my relatives, and I sure enjoy being with you.

I can only barely see as I'm nearly blind and maybe I have met some of you before. Thank you.

BILL WAPASS, THUNDERCHILD RESERVE & SASKATOON:

I'm from the Thunderchild and my name is Bill Wapass. About what this man said, this is where I've been ever since I can remember. This is a very big job, what you are starting here. This Indian culture, it wasn't so hard when we were young, because we had elders to speak to us then. And the times were different. I have been involved in these Indian ceremonies since I was 13 years old. And I helped in every kind of ceremony the elders did. I don't think that I missed one or two of the Indian ceremonies which was given to our forefathers. This is my belief because these were given to us who are Indians. We

should never let these go. These ceremonies that I know were not my own, but was passed on to me by my elders. And I've followed these and today I'm thankful, because my children are all well and grown up. Also today I don't have very much worries from alcohol as my children don't use it.

I would now like to say a few words on what I told you before. I told you that I have worked at our culture for a long time, and I've never missed for any length of time, to miss the ceremonies. I always try to be where there is some ceremony going on. At these meetings I don't want to speak too much, because my father used to tell me not to do this too much. He used to say don't say very much just show what you can do. And this elder was right when he said we are afraid of everything today. This is right because we see our young people the way they act, and we worry about them. And today, to my way of thinking, we brought this on ourselves, because we don't say enough to our young people. We don't show them what we want them to like when they grow older. Some of us keep telling our children that this is no good, don't do it, but we keep doing it ourselves. So this is what we have to watch for. When we tell our child that this is no good and if we don't do it ourselves and maybe he will believe that it is no good. And this is what I usually tell my children. When I say this, that doesn't mean to say that I never drank because I used to drink. And I drank with my children, the ones that were old enough. Finally there was my father-in-law and he got sick and stayed with him. And he told me before he died, "You are a good person, my son-in-law, but you use alcohol too much and you should quit that. You know I love you, both you and my daughter. So I told my father-in-law that I would quit drinking. And I tell you now, my relatives, that it took me two years before I could quit altogether. As this old man said, there was always someone trying to give a drink and I did drink a little. Sometime I'd get feeling good. So finally I was on the wagon, but now my sons were drinking. So finally I told them that I would leave them if they continued to drink. And this is what I did. I went to B.C. for a year and worked there. When I came back last Christmas I saw my sons and

they told me, "Dad, you drink with us." So I told them, "Okay. I will drink with you just this once, and then we will forget about alcohol." And this is what happened and that's why I say that I'm not worried too much about alcohol as far as my own children are concerned. But they weren't down and out alcoholics so they didn't have hard time to quit. But my brother's children and my other relatives, they drink. And these are the people that we worry about, as we all love each other and we care for each other. We all have kindness and when we hear that our relatives are sick we worry about them. My children, they are on their own and I don't worry about them but my other relatives, they are the ones. And as this elder said we should love each other, be kind to each other, and work together and as Indian this way I think we can get some place. To tell each other our ideas because a man speaking at these meetings we all like to hear his ideas, and if we all kept our way of thinking together maybe this way we can accomplish

something. Bring out our ideas and let people know what you want.

These are many things I could discuss as I have done many things in my life. I have done work with white man, for instance; today I'm halfway. I love my Indian way of life and I'm also with the white man's way. But I will never let my Indian culture go. I'm always with the church and I very seldom miss going to church on a Sunday. I go and make confession. I tell my Maker what kind of man I am. And this is why I say I'm never ashamed to speak out, because he sees what kind of person I am and I can't hide anything from him. So at meetings like this I never say anything that will offend anyone, or I never want to talk foolish, and I won't say much more.

One thing I liked to hear that you mentioned children. I was with a school board myself and it's true that we hurt our children. For instance, we are a little better off than our neighbor and we don't look at him. And these are the people we hurt, both the child and parent. As you all know, when the Indian children are in school with white children they are laughed at even when they come to school not quite clean enough. And there are a lot of things that we can help our neighbor with, in all these problems the children face every day. And when these young people go to high school and have education, we don't get them where they will help us and our culture. They are given a job elsewhere and there are many things that I can discuss on these. I went to a meeting in Prince Albert and I was still a councillor of my reserve at that time. And this is what I discussed up there, that we would like to have a day school right in our reserve. But I didn't know this, but we can get one anytime we want. So I told our leaders that but they are not doing anything about it yet.

But we can get one on our reserve whenever we ask for it. And this will be all before I drag on for a long time, but I want you people to bring your ideas out. This is why we are invited here for, to tell each other what we know and what we would like to have these people do. I didn't really know what these meetings were all about but now I know and I am glad to be here. But you all know that whenever people get together in a bunch and work together things usually get done; so let's work together and be strong. So I asked the leaders here not to give up, to work hard at this. As I told you here today, we are the ones that are wrong. It is the parents that are wrong for not talking to their children, and this is why we see our young this way today. But our Manitou is very strong. We will ask him for his help and in the future we will have our children with us again. Keep our culture and respect will be taught to our children and in the future our children will be happy. I don't believe for a second that our reserves will ever be abolished. Manitou put us on this earth and I don't think no white man is ever going to put us off. This is if we try and go back to what these people are working at, but if we become lost then it will be pretty hard to say. This will be all for

now. I will maybe have a chance to speak again tomorrow. And to the leaders here - keep up the good work, keep bringing these elders here, so we can hear the good words to pass on to our children.

This is a great thing you are doing here. I didn't know this before. I only heard that you were having meetings, but I didn't know what kind. So keep up the work and I would like to thank you all and I greet you all. I hope you all have a good day.

MARIUS NAHNEPAWISH, PIAPOT RESERVE:

I never speak at meetings very much. I'm always afraid that I will say the wrong word as I usually make mistakes when I'm speaking. I can't say very much as you people said about everything that is making trouble. It's the same with us and I go along with all of what have been said here. But I'm from Piapot Reserve and my name is Marius Nahnepawish. And now I thank you all.

PETE WAPASS, THUNDERCHILD RESERVE & SASKATOON:

My friends and relatives, I thank you very much of what I hear you speak about. You people are discussing something that is good. This is what we were told by our elders, and the reason I don't come here too often is I'm working here in town and I don't have the time and by the time I quit well your meeting is over. But I'm very thankful to hear you talk this way, talking about our Indian culture and also our children. Every morning and every evening, my relatives, I cry because of my children. They work at liquor full time. And what you say here that we

ask, this is what I try to do, but to try and talk to our children to stay away from liquor. I pray to our Maker every day to give us help - not only myself, we have lots of children. We have many of our children that are grown, both my sisters and my brothers have big families and alcohol is getting them down. I'm very scared every day on account of this because it has the best of us. I've quit drinking myself now but I still lose lots of sleep, thinking of my mistakes when I was using alcohol. I have 42 grandchildren at my age. I didn't wake up early enough as the alcohol had me, but I never gave up on our Indian culture. Maybe this is what helped my children along, and my grandchildren. But I wish to thank you all. You have given me lots of things to think about, and pass on to my children. I was as if I was waken up; this is the way I feel. I thank our Maker for getting us together, to tell each other something. And also these workers that are trying to start this up I thank them very much. I hope and pray for them to be given strength, guidance and kindness and a good mind, so they will never give up what they are doing. And to succeed in this, and I think that this a great thing for the Indian nation. This is the first time here for me and I really enjoy hearing the elders once again. I thank them again for making us understand these things. Thank you.

EMILE PIAPOT, PIAPOT RESERVE, CRAVEN, SASK.:

What I have in my hand is what I was told long ago by my elders. To always depend on these things. And I have never been without them, but I'm not bragging when I say this. This sweetgrass are what my elders were talking about. My father whose name was Piapot, was a very religious man in the Indian way. He died when I was a baby. So I lived with my mother and older brothers. One old man especially used to say to me, that if you have these they will help you speak. Or a spiritual cloth. And these elders told me all these things which I'm saying. Myself, I don't know anything. I was also raised up in a white school and it was till after I got out of school that was when I started. But not right now; I never went to any ceremony at first. And at my age I have grandchildren, and I didn't bring my wife along to this workshop, but was unable to come because of my grandchildren. Because their father uses alcohol too much and they are scared of him and so they come to live with us. Their father has a job in Regina and lives there. One of my grandchildren is 14 years old, and the other is 13 years old. These children were going to school in Regina but they were scared of their father drinking too much, and they finally managed to get out of school and come to live with us. And this is why I couldn't bring my wife here. My grandchildren now go to the town school near our reserve and

she has to look after these boys, and she didn't like the boys to miss any school so she gave up coming here instead. And what you are discussing here today it gets me thinking at times. In the past I always worked at the ceremonies helping elders and maybe this has brought me along this far. I have worked for many elders, maybe this has given me the long life and grey hair. Whenever there is a Sundance I help, if they don't turn me down, and this has been the way for a long time now. I do this, hoping that my children and grandchildren will grow up. So that I may be able to see them when they grow up. And this is why I never fail to show up and help whenever they have a Sundance. There are people here from our way and they know me. I'm not bragging when I say this. I'm poor and I'm alone the way you see me here; this is the way I am. My brothers all died and I'm the only one left. And this is why I never quit trying to help when our elders has a pipe ceremony or anything like that. I never want to let my Indian way of life go, but I don't want to get in anyone's way. I'm very thankful of what the elders are saying here. They have brought back many things that I had kind of forgotten. So I won't say much more as there are many of us here, but I just wanted to say thank you to all of you.

One thing that I used to do when I was down in the dumps, I used to go to my older brother and he used to talk to me, but now he's gone too now so I have no one to go to. But this is what he used to say, that we should never let our Indian culture go for this is our way of life, this was given to us. And we should all keep it and learn from the elders we have now. Just recently back on our reserve there was a man who killed himself

there, and the people were running around looking for me to speak for them but I was away at that time, so they couldn't find no one to talk for them. And this is why I say now, what are the young people going to do when the elders are all gone? Who's going to speak to them? My cousin came to me one time and he told me that he would ask the doctor if we could come to a Sundance that he was going to make. I trusted my cousin but I didn't want to go with him very willingly. But he told me to come on and that he would talk to the doctor himself. I went with him; we went into the doctor's office. So the doctor shakes hands with us and my cousin told the doctor that he was going to put on a ceremony, and that he wanted to let the doctor know about it. "There are two men here that I want to come and do the pipe ceremony," he said. And it's true that we were allowed to do this. And this is where my cousin got me well from. And this is where I worked, as you see me here today, and that's my story. My cousin made me well there and he told me, "Never give up the Indian way of life, I won't be with you for sure." And this is what happened. My cousin loved the Indian way of life and believed in it. This is what was given

to an Indian to have a strong faith in the Indian ceremonies. And he told me never to give these up, to keep going at all times. And this is all I can tell you. It was very nice for you to allow me to say a few words. I'm poor but I thank you for listening. I ask our Manitou for a good day for us. Thank you.

(End of Interviews)

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