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- Passing on of information by elders.
- Increasing interest in traditional culture.
- Speeches of thanks to organizers and participants.

ELDERS:

Ted Wheatley
Native Studies Department
Trent University
Peterborough, Ontario
Tribe: Ojibway
Language: Ojibway

Ernest Benedict
St. Regis Reserve
R.R. #3
Cornwall Island, Ontario K6H 5R7
Tribe: Mohawk
Language: English

Angus Nogongiig
Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve
Manitoulin Island, Ontario POP 2J0
Tribe: Ojibway
Language: Ojibway

Jim Dumont
Native Studies Department
Laurentian University
Sudbury, Ontario

Tribe: Ojibway
Language: Ojibway

Johnny Thomas
St. Regis Reserve
R.R. #3
Cornwall Island, Ontario
Tribe: Mohawk
Language: English

Sam Osawamick
Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve
Manitoulin Island, Ontario POP 2J0
Tribe: Ojibway
Language: Ojibway

Alex Fox
Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve
Manitoulin Island, Ontario POP 2J0
Tribe: Ojibway
Language: Ojibway
John Tootoosis
Poundmaker's Reserve
Cutknife, Saskatchewan
Tribe: Cree
Language: English

Louis Bruce

Sid Fiddler
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0A2
Tribe: Cree
Language: English

Lawrence Tobacco **
Poorman's Reserve
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0A2
Tribe: Cree
Language: English

Mary Lou Fox
Ojibwe Cultural Foundation
West Bay
Manitoulin Island, Ontario POP 2G0
Tribe: Ojibway
Language: English

Eddie Benton
643 Virginia Street
St. Paul, Minnesota, USA
Tribe: Ojibway
Language: English

Herman Atkinson, Chief Carl Roberts
Roseau River Reserve
Box 30
Ginew, Manitoba R0A 2R0

** Speakers on this conference tape

Lawrence Tobacco: The days and times are past, I spent in the bushes in them hills. The value that he gave me at that time, and the education - how to make my living, how to survive out of the nature that was given to us from our Creator.... And a lot of times he used to lecture me, give me lessons to do, but never did I disobey. My father at that time, he was a stern and a strict man. I believe Mr. Tootoosis knows that old man. I recall at that time, in one year, in 1936, the winter of 1936, John was out there along with my cousin John Skibosh(?). They were talking about, and they were discussing about changing ideas about our country, about our people - for the future generation of our young people. I used to sit down there and listen to these people, what they were talking about. A lot of times I recall today the words; what it meant; in what way was I going to use these words. I believe at that time, the experience that I went through, the schooling that I went through by my elders gave me an expression to know how the... maybe this is why I'm here today. Because afterwards, I listened to different elders from my area. So in 1939, when I got married, it happened an uncle of mine who was paralyzed for two and a half years - a man with knowledge and wisdom because he was one of the greatest in our tribe at that time and from our reserve, a great lecturer - he was in bed and he called me toward evening. I'd say about six, seven o'clock in the evening. And he asked me at that time (I'm telling a little story, mind you, excuse me), "Get my pipe." I had to do what he said. I made a smudge. I filled the pipe with that tobacco. "Now," he said, "I can't hold a pipe, I can't move my arms, I can't move my fingers. I'll tell you where to point and I want you to say these prayers in a certain way." Which I did. After we got done smoking, he called my father-in-law. And at that time he said, "What I'm going to say, what I'm going to do, this is the path I'm showing you. This is what you're going to do in the future providing you have a right mind. If you think you are going to use that mind the way I'm teaching you, probably maybe this mind will work into a value system towards the future generations." This is how he talked. So he lectured, for four nights and four days I didn't sleep, my friends. Today I don't regret that. A lot of times the words that I recall in my mind, the mistakes I'm making, I correct myself right away. I'm not supposed to do this. These are the words, the convincing words that I heard from that elder. His name was Mr. Tapaqua(?). John Tootoosis knows that old man. And also he had a brother by the name of Jim Warren. And he also was a man of value, of value and reputation also for lecturing people, counselling the people. Today my friends, I come here with a value. I believe it means a lot to a lot of my young friends that are going to this Federated

College here in Regina. Here I talk about obedience. Going down I talk about respect; going down I talk about humility; going down I talk about happiness; going down I talk about love, faith, kinship, (inaudible), thankfulness, sharing, strength, good child rearing, hope. The ultimate protection and then at the end a control flaps in the wind. I believe at this time of age, we got to recognize all these value systems which meant a lot to the people of the past. Today we're trying to pass the information which is very important at this time of age for the young generation to understand and recognize this kind of system which is very valuable. I know, the young generation after they are starting to recognize, they are starting to try to get back to that path once again. We all got to have that intention. We got to get back to our heritage. So, before closing I'd like to say maybe to one of my friends here, little friends, to pass these amongst you people there - just if you want to read them. I've brought a few copies here. So anyway, getting back again, I'm making a request from the director and the coordinator also, when we got back to show the people of our tribes back in Saskatchewan, to send the minutes of this great meeting, show the people were here. The very intentions, the very feelings we have here today. I think with that, I can't say too much more because I'm trying to fill in a gap, here and there, that was unnoticed when my friend here John and Lucien and my friend here said. But with that, I say (Cree) to everybody.

Speaker: Before we close for dinner, maybe I'll ask Ernest Benedict to come up here and close the meeting with a prayer before, or over, the dinner.

Ernest Benedict: I guess we're going to go for another fifteen minutes before dinner is ready so they are going to have a few more speakers.

Ernestine: I just want to take a minute to thank our speakers from Saskatchewan. From John Tootoosis we have the same feelings as you expressed this morning. We believe, as you do, that our Indian nations, regardless whether they are Cree, Chippewa, Ojibway, Mohawk, we were meant to gather here together for a purpose. And as you mentioned, unity, in unity we stand and you also said that divided we fall. We believe in this philosophy, too. This gathering was meant to be for unity and you said that it would give us strength and I think some of us have expressed that already because they said they felt it. I would like also to thank Lucien Bruce for participating this morning with the ceremony and again for speaking a few words to us this afternoon. To Sid Fiddler, we feel the same as you do. You said that our rituals from our Saulteaux and Ojibway

friends from Superior are very similar and that we have the same Creator. Very, very little difference in our ceremonies and in our prayers. Lawrence Tobacco, we feel the same as you do that the reason we get together is to exchange ideas, to share our ideas and like you said, there is a flame left in the fire and the flame is now reawakening and I think we feel that too. Mary Lou wants to say a few words to you now.

Mary Lou Fox: I'd like to just say a few words now because I don't think I'll have the opportunity to do so again because many will be leaving this evening and tomorrow morning. So first of all, I wanted to say how sincerely grateful I am to all of you people who have been here, to the resource people who have attended from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, different parts of Ontario and our brothers and sisters from Minneapolis that were here and that left last night. I think that Manitoulin is a very special place, not only because that's where I'm from but we hear it not only from our own Anishnabe people but from many other Indian people who come here as well. Even people who have never been here before have said that they have heard about Manitoulin and that it is the special place and a very spiritual place, a sacred place. Certainly here where we are gathered is a very spiritual and sacred place to the Anishnabe people. Right here, where we are, is the place where Indian people came to fast and pray so that they would receive their dream or vision of what paths their life would follow. Some of you who are here today have gone up to Dreamers Rock I think, while you've been here. And this is really why we chose to have our meetings here.

I would like to go back perhaps a few years. One of my own personal concerns and interests is education and that it be a meaningful and relevant experience for our Indian children. And then thinking about this, when I think back twelve years ago, our concerns about things like the language, the teachings of the Indian people, the songs and dances, we thought that it would be important to be bringing teachers of Indian children together because often they express the concern that they didn't really know how to motivate Indian kids. You know, they said they were uninterested, they were passive, they didn't respond. They said, "What were we going to do. We don't know how to motivate them." So, because of this concern that was expressed, we brought together Indian teachers. That was sort of our first conference in Indian education for my involvement with the Cultural Centre. And what we did was we brought in Indian speakers, Indian academics from all across Canada - Indian people who had achieved academically in the area of education. We felt these were the people to bring in and we proceeded to do so. While that was very good we did that, I

think for two years or so after that we kept hearing and saying and perhaps paying lip service to the important role that our elders played in the revitalization of our culture. We kept saying these things. "Our elders are important. They are the keepers of our history and our philosophy. Ours is an oral tradition. They are our medicine people, our lawyers, they are the keepers of the land." At that time, I think, really we were only paying lip service to it. We were saying it but we really weren't doing anything. And the point I'm trying to make here is that that's how we had started originally but as we went on, our meetings have come to where they are now and I think that we have that involvement of our elders. And it's very encouraging for me to see our own local elders participating and every year we see more and more of

them coming.

I would like to tell you that I grew up on the Birch Island Reserve and this is where we are having our meeting. This is reserve land. And I used to always say that when I finished school that I would come back to Birch Island and I guess maybe I have because I certainly keep coming back every summer and it's really great to see the people from Birch Island. I've seen some here the past couple of days that I haven't seen for 25 years so it's a great personal experience for me. Besides the Dreamers Rock that I mentioned, we've also talked about the Bell Rocks which are located just around the corner from Dreamers Rock. Then the first morning we decided it would be a good thing if we opened our meeting with having a pipe ceremony at Bell Rock. We went there last year and took the elders with us and the elders, especially the ones from out west, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, impressed upon us what a spiritual and sacred place that the Bell Rocks were. They said, "You know, you people are lucky that you have this spiritual place here." And I guess it was only then that I realized how truly special and sacred that area is. They kept touching the rocks and rubbing up against them and they wanted us to tape the sound that came out. They wanted pictures of them, photographs to be sent to them, because it was so special. And they kept saying how lucky we are. And I think that myself personally, I'm starting to realize that we certainly are lucky, that we have spiritual places such as that. It's unfortunate that we couldn't meet there last night but perhaps there was a reason for that, too. We're thinking about tomorrow morning, the pipe ceremony would be held at Bell Rocks to sort of close the meeting that we had. I wanted to say that I'm very pleased and honored to be a part of this meeting and this gathering. As I mentioned, I grew up in Birch Island and I think I was thirteen years old when we left and moved to Espanola so I lived in a non-Indian community for over 20 years and then finally returned home to Manitoulin. So, during those 25 years I

really wasn't involved in cultural things although it was always in my heart that I kept going back to Wikwemikong. My mother used to always say, "I don't know why that Mary Lou wants to keep going back to Wikwemikong." But there was always something there that was bringing me back. Anyway, my point that I was trying to make that this is a very special place and sacred place. In the past many people have had experiences here, spiritual experiences that they've told us about. I won't go into that now but there are many things that have gone on here that are very, very special.

I'd like to express very sincere appreciation to the people in the planning committee who helped us plan because we have a very small staff at the Cultural Centre so we had people involved from the different reserves and I see some of them are here today so I'd like to say, "Thank you very much," to them. Also thanks very sincerely to the staff at the Cultural Centre. We have a very small staff. There are only six of us and there are some of them here today. I'd like to thank them. Gordie, who is sitting over there looking very relaxed, Wonogiig from

Wikwemikong. I think that we have very special people working at the centre, people who are dedicated and committed to the whole thing of cultural realization, revitalization; and certainly Gordie is one of those. He looks after the audio visual department but he's also very interested in the singing and dancing. He's a fluent speaker of the language and we're very lucky to have people like Gordie so I wanted to say thank you to him. And I'd like to say thank you to Ernestine who has been a busy bee here coordinating the conference. She's been working very hard for a month. Lawrence mentioned that Ernestine is my friend and she certainly is that. Her mother and my mother were very good friends so Ernestine and I have grown up together. And in all the years that I've known her, I have never seen her get mad. But she assures me that when and if she does get mad, that she gets very violent so I kind of have to watch my step. So I'd like to say, "Thank you," to Ernestine, very much.

Yesterday one of the young people that was here remarked that she would like to hear some women speaking. She said, "You know, being a woman I would like to receive perhaps some guidance and direction from some of the women, some of the mothers and the grandmothers that might be here today." So then when I sort of looked at our schedule I realized that we didn't have any women speakers. So I'm going to ask some of the women who are here today who maybe might come up and say a few words. Is Edna here? I'd like to ask Edna to come up and sit with me up here. And I'd like to ask Gladys to come up and sit with me up here. And maybe ask them if they would say a few words. She said that next year she would like to ask us if perhaps women, Indian women, could be identified as speakers.

I thought that was a very good suggestion. I'm always pleased when I hear young Indian men and older Indian men talk about the importance of women and one of the things that when my first involvement with the Cultural Centre, was concern about the ceremonies of our people. I hadn't been to any. I didn't see that there were any. So we became very involved with the Cree people from Saskatchewan because we could see that their efforts....

(End of Side A)

(End of Tape)

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