

**CREE NATION OF WEMINDJI DELEGATION PRESENTATION
TO THE
CREE JUSTICE SYMPOSIUM
JANUARY 27,28,29, 2009-01-27
MISTISSINI QUEBEC**

INTRODUCTION

WEMINDJI will celebrate 50 years in 2009. The community was relocated from the Old Factory River in 1958 but the official move took place in the summer 1959 of all the people.

The population is at 1200 and is dominated by approximately 57% of the youth population are under 30 years with the female gender being the higher number.

The population has more than doubled since 1959 and is a young population.

Wemindji has always maintained, practised and valued its traditional life style to the present day.

Wemindji Iyiyuuch continue to instill and pass on Cree oral traditions, ceremonies and history to the younger generations.

CHANGES AND PROGRESS

Changes came soon with the Hydro development projects in 1974 to the community.

Within ten (10) years the community began to develop and prosper as new water supply, sanitation infrastructure, new housing, health, social services, band administration office, new school, recreation facilities and airport became available.

By early 1980 to present day the community began to control the delivery and administration in housing, water/sewer infrastructure, road maintenance, garage gas station, a fleet of heavy equipment as they

began to perform their own construction of their community infrastructure i.e. police station and fire hall etc.

THE PRESENT DILEMMA

Much change has come in 50 years to The elders are still the backbone of the community but the younger generation is not in sync with the elders teachings. We need to make that connection, the communication between our elders and our youth. The present education the youth gain are foreign to the elders and they are unable help them in the western dominate society of materialistic ideas such as computers, videos games, TV and modern influences of today's youth movement and dominance in fashion, music and ghetto (gang) culture.

Although we have the latest in modern facilities as indoor arenas, sportsplex, swimming pools there are those youths who still fall through the cracks and are involved with drugs, alcohol and substance abuse. The illegal sell of drugs, alcohol and other substances is on the rise in the community and is causing the social problems and crime rate.

COMMUNITY CRIME RATE

The crime rate in the community has risen drastically in the last 15 years and is getting more serious. All the infractions all relate to drugs and alcohol in some way or another. Most crimes committed are related to assault on police officer, drinking in public place, BnBs, theft, vandalism, assaults causing bodily harm, violence against women, sexual assault, illegal sales of alcohol, drug trafficking and firearms etc.

THE CREE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

So what do we do? Do we turn a blind eye and do nothing and continue to let western influences rule us? Do we let outside cultures take over? Do we go back to our traditional ways of governing our nation with the help of our elders and learn to walk in balance in the two worlds of the western philosophy and our traditional and spiritual philosophies?

YES, we will go back to our original Cree traditional teachings and embrace our elders, community people and began reconnect to the our roots and bring our people back on the right path before it is lost.

THE PRESENT JUSTICE SYSTEM

- **Present Justice system is not compatible to the Cree philosophy, treatments and judgement.**
- **No rehabilitations facilities and program delivery at the grassroots level.**
- **No community Elders involvement, recognition and representation.**
- **Present system regarding the Cree families, youth and women protection is not compatible to Cree philosophy.**
- **Policing is not effective in the community because they are not seen as authoritative figures.**
- **No role models in the police force relating to community interaction and rapport with the youth population**

GRAND COUNCIL OF THE CREE OF QUEBEC/CREE REGIONAL AUTHORITY

The GCCQE/CRA support the initiatives and implementation of the Cree Justice in the Eeyou Istchee.

The Regional Elders Council is to be recognized as the traditional voice and knowledge keepers of the nation.

The Elders Council must be involved in the implementation and deliverance of the Cree Justice System in Eeyou Istchee.

THE CREE APPROACH TO JUSTICE

The Cree Nation of Wemindji foresees the development of a community based participatory mediation approach to the delivery of Cree Justice utilizing all sectors of the community population.

CONCLUSION

It will be a long and difficult road but the road will become easy because the traditional approach is our way and only we as Crees can find the solutions to solve our problems spiritually.

When we look at the issues that plaque our youth we first have to look ourselves as individuals, as parents.