

Cree Justice Symposium News

RE-CAP OF DAY ONE

Donald Nicholls, Acting Director of Justice and Corrections, opened the Symposium by updating delegates in regards to developments occurring within the justice file. Mr. Nicholls spoke of many exciting developments, including the continued negotiations in respect to the administration of justice in the Cree Nations; the many new justice positions to be posted in the Spring to support the justice process (such as community justice workers, community re-integration officers, etc.), and the construction of justice facilities in each of the Cree communities. A diagram of a large justice facility is found on the last page of this newsletter.

Michael Chettleburgh the briefly discussed the objectives of the Symposium, which is to gather input from communities on matters of crime, victimization, policing, justice and youth; to discuss and achieve consensus on scope and direction of integrated CRA crime prevention program, and to receive updates in regards to police force regionalization, justice system developments and other matters. He also noted the nine “agenda” crime prevention and community engagement strategy endorsed by the Grand Council of the Crees, which will commence in each community after the Symposium. A diagram of the nine agendas is contained at the end of this newsletter, which will be discussed more fully prior to Thursday’s electronic polling.

The Chairman of the Cree Health Board, **James Bobbish**, then presented his views on the differences between traditional and Aboriginal approaches to justice. Mr. Bobbish also explained the notion of restorative justice approaches and the conditions that are necessary for it to be effective when mediating disputes or crimes. He concluded his remarks by highlighting the demonstrated benefits of restorative justice practices including the reduced likelihood of repeat offences, the opportunities for all voices to be heard, the speed

with which cases can be dealt with versus the traditional system and the fact that restorative justice is aligned with the Cree values of respect and concern for community cohesion.

Next, **Gordon Blackned**, Chairman of the Cree School Board, provided us with a thought-provoking discussion of school safety and its essential role in producing positive educational outcomes for our youth. Mr. Blackned discussed some of the safety issues affecting Cree schools, and highlighted the many initiatives already underway or in place to enhance school safety.

In the afternoon session, Grand Chief Matthew Mukash officially welcomed the delegates to the Symposium and discussed the essential role justice plays in the Cree Nation. The text of the Grand Chief’s address in English is found on the next pages.

COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Three communities – Eastmain, Waskaganish and Waswanipi – presented their key justice issues. Summaries of their presentation are available from Ms. Judy Cooper or Ms. Rita Blackned. Today, the remainder of the communities will be asked to make their presentations, so that Thursday we can vote on key issues that affect us all.

GUEST SPEAKER

Rick Osborne, Executive Director of Truth for Teens in Toronto, shared with delegates his story of drug addiction, gang involvement, sexual and physical assault, and more than 20 years in Canada’s federal prison system. He highlighted that redemption is possible for people who may feel they have no other options in life, and that for him, what ultimately saved his life were the values bestowed upon him – a “moral compass” – by his parents when he was young.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

Please see the agenda below for an update of today's proceedings. We will have several engaging guest speakers, including Stacy Bear, Louise Logue, Doris Bobbish, John Henry Wapachee, Donald Nicholls and Ashley Iserhoff. The remainder of the Cree communities will make their presentations, and

the day will be capped off by a summary of tomorrow's agenda by Michael Chettleburgh, where he will explain the facilitated discussions and the electronic polling process. Don't forget the wonderful community feast beginning at 5:30 pm and concert by CerAmony, which will begin at 6:30 and end by 8:00!

TIME	DETAILS
9:00	<u>Youth Issues and Justice:</u> Stacy Bear, Cree Nation Youth Council <i>Results of the Cree Nation Youth Survey will be highlighted and discussed.</i>
9:30	<u>Domestic Violence and Family Issues:</u> Doris Bobbish, Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee <i>The impact of domestic violence will be discussed along with the need to develop supportive programs for victims and families.</i>
10:00	<u>Results of the Cree Nation Survey:</u> Donald Nicholls, Cree Justice Committee <i>Results of the Cree Nation Survey (of adults) will be highlighted and discussed.</i>
10:30	BREAK
10:45	<u>Community Presentations 4, 5 and 6</u>
12 noon	<u>Lunch and Speech: Youth Engagement through Sports and Recreation:</u> John Henry Wapachee and Andrew Neeposh, Recreation Department, CRA <i>This presentation will focus on sports and recreation programming and its role in engaging youth in positive, prosocial activities.</i>
1:00	<u>Cree Police Commission:</u> Ashley Iserhoff, Cree Police Commission <i>An update on the progress the Cree Police Commission has made in 2008 and its objectives for 2009 with respect to the regionalization of the Cree police service.</i>
1:30	<u>Community Presentations 7 and 8</u>
2:30	BREAK
2:45	<u>Community Presentations 9 and 10</u>
3:30	<u>An Integrated Approach to Crime Prevention:</u> Louise Logue <i>A presentation about how an integrated approach of prevention, intervention, diversion, enforcement/suppression and re-integration work together to ensure safe communities.</i>
4:15	<u>Overview of Day 3 Facilitations and Polling:</u> Michael Chettleburgh

SPECIAL THANKS

We must honour the hard work and commitment of two special ladies who have worked tirelessly to ensure the success of this event. Join us in a heartfelt "thank you" to Ms. Judy Cooper and Ms.

Rita Blackned, who have gone above the call of duty to coordinate travel, organize facilities, and do all the little things that are so important to a special gathering such as this one. Meegwetch ladies!

TEXT OF ENGLISH ADDRESS BY GRAND CHIEF MATTHEW MUKASH

Wachiya>Hello friends, honoured delegates and those that are listening to us now by radio throughout the Cree Nation, it is with great pride and pleasure that I welcome you today to the Cree Justice Symposium, an event I believe with your leadership, will help shape the health and safety of our great Nation for decades to come.

Issues of justice are fundamental for our growing communities. To succeed, prosper as a people, and ensure future generations of Cree children the society they deserve *tomorrow*, we must always be mindful of ensuring an intelligent and balanced approach to equity, fairness, law, ethics and morality – all aspects of justice – *today*.

Martin Luther King Jr., perhaps one of the world's leading minds on issues of justice, wrote over 40 years ago that "True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice". He also wrote that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly". Mr. King's ideas are universal, and apply to us today in the Cree Nation as they did in the United States in the tumultuous 1960s. Justice is not something we invoke, something we cause to be done to another as if we are somehow not party to its effects. Rather, justice defines us as a people; justice is something that is embedded in the very fabric of our society, and therefore affects us all even when we may not perceive that it affects us at all. So, we all have a stake in this discussion and therefore must all be engaged which, indeed, is a defining characteristic of those democratic societies that have assured their people the greatest justice outcomes. Properly harnessed, justice will ensure our peace; will ensure that all Cree people are treated with respect and consideration, irrespective of the things they have done; and will produce for our children the greatest public "goods" that they can bestow, too, on their children.

As Cree people, we have much to be thankful for and have many assets at our disposal to achieve a framework of justice that can stand as a model for other First Nations communities from coast to coast

to coast. We have incredible natural resources, a rich Cree cultural heritage, wonderfully skilled and engaging people, a young and vibrant population, passionate leadership, wise Elders, vibrant political will, federal and provincial agreements in place that will begin to help us make good on our destiny, and many more. Notwithstanding our many gifts, we are also presented daily with the challenges that face any growing society. Crime and victimization are unacceptably high; drug and alcohol abuse continue to take its toll on our people; gangs and predatory organized crime syndicates increasingly influence our young people; and, families and the family structures are under attack because of media influences, the pressures of modern society and the haunting legacy of residential schools.

These challenges are real and they are ever present, but they are decidedly not insurmountable. One of our greatest traits as Cree people is our resilience, our ability to confront challenges, take stock, plan our approach and prevail. Addressing the justice issues that affect all of us will be no different, and will require our very best thinking and commitment. That's why we are here together at this symposium, a most important opportunity for us to set upon a productive course of justice reform. As I noted earlier, the communities that have assured their people the most advantageous justice outcomes are those that are engaged and inclusive; those where all sectors of society own the justice process and contribute to its constant shaping. Communities that have also produced the best justice outcomes are those that have employed a balanced approach, recognizing that justice problems will often fail when an "arrest our way out of the problem" mentality is adopted and where ever-increasing police departments are asked to take the lead and deal with societal ills. Justice - criminal, social or otherwise - cannot be crafted in a vacuum only within our formal institutions. Justice, by its very nature as a product of human interaction, must spring from our people, for our people. It is therefore your responsibility, our responsibility, to carefully guide it. Justice begins with you.

This is perhaps the guiding principle for this Symposium: to bring our communities together to discuss challenges and debate solutions. Over the next three days, we want to hear your views about key justice system issues. Among other things this includes issues related to primary prevention, youth

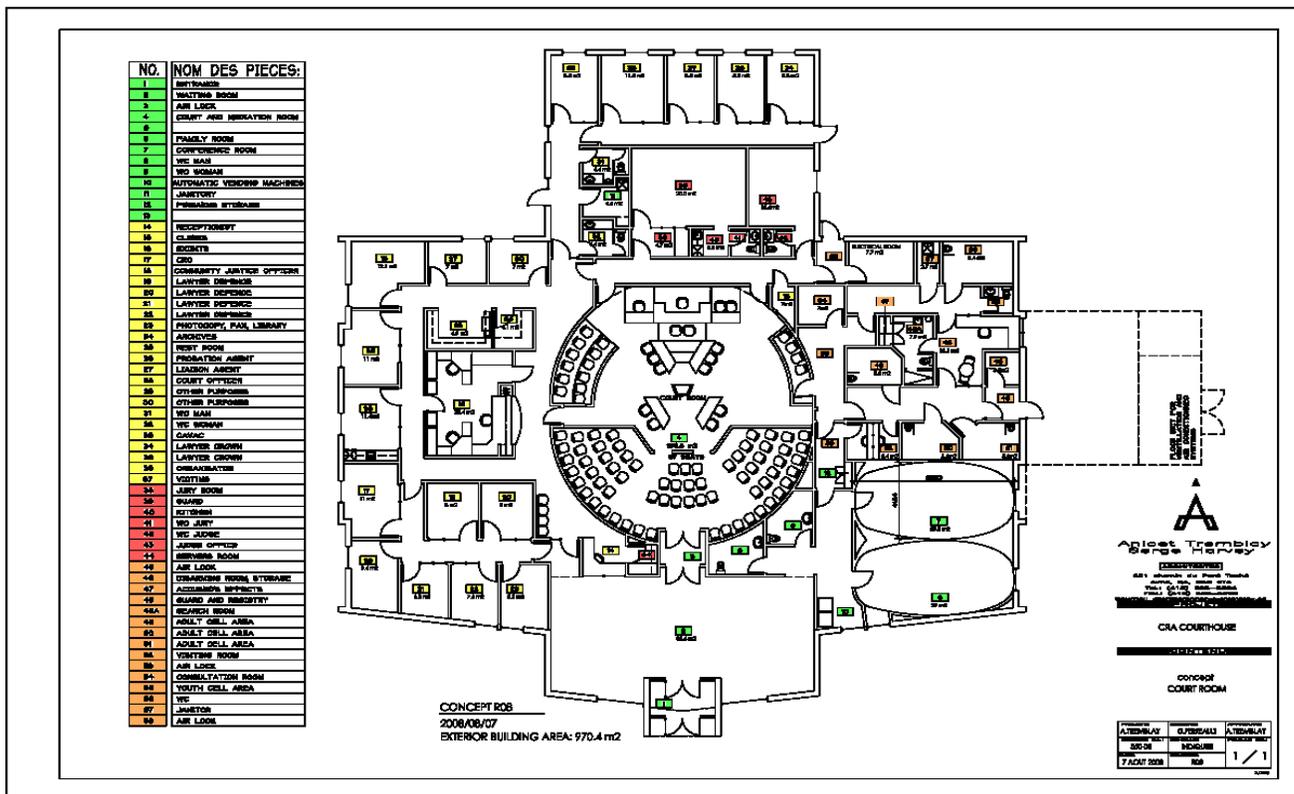
intervention and diversion, domestic violence, policing and the courts, restorative justice approaches, how we address the scourge of drugs, alcohol and gangs, and how we engage our youth with prosocial sports, recreation and other activities. We are hopeful that the tenor of this symposium is positive; dwelling too long on problems will not move us forward and will only stall us from making the justice changes we need to make for our people.

Rather, we seek solutions, backed by your energy, vision and commitment, so that we can make things right for all of our people and for future generations to come.

Meegwetch/thank you for your time and contributions, and I look forward to continuing on the path of justice with every one of you.

DIAGRAM OF LARGE JUSTICE FACILITY

On Tuesday, Donald Nicholls, Acting Director of Justice and Corrections, highlighted plans for the construction of large and small justice facilities in each Cree community. An engineering diagram of the proposed large facility is found below:



NINE AGENDA CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

On Tuesday, Michael Chettleburgh provided a brief highlight of the nine “agenda” crime prevention and community engagement approach endorsed and approved by the Grand Council of the Crees in Chisasibi in late 2008. Essentially, these nine agenda items represent the key elements of a comprehensive approach to dealing with justice and

related matters. From an implementation perspective, the concept is for each of the nine communities to take charge of one of the nine agendas, and work with the CRA to develop programs, frameworks, materials, strategies, etc., in respect to that agenda. In essence, each community is asked to “pilot” each agenda, and once evaluation takes place and any changes are made, that agenda item will be implemented in each of the other eight

communities. In this way, all communities can “own a piece” of this process and work collaboratively with others to implement the entire strategy in a time and cost effective manner.

We please ask each delegation to think about which agenda you wish to pilot. More discussion of this will take place tomorrow morning prior to our facilitated discussions and electronic polling process. A diagram of the agendas follows:

