

REMARKS OF GRAND CHIEF DR. ABEL BOSUM
CLOSING CEREMONY FOR HEARINGS IN MISTISSINI, EYYOU ISTCHEE
OF THE
PUBLIC INQUIRY COMMISSION ON RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
AND CERTAIN PUBLIC SERVICES IN QUEBEC:
LISTENING, RECONCILIATION AND PROGRESS
JUNE 20, 2018

1. Commissioner Viens, on behalf of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to you and your colleagues on this Public Inquiry Commission for your presence here in Mistissini over the past two weeks.
2. In the months leading up to the creation of the Commission in December 2016, we sometimes heard questions as to whether a Commission of Inquiry such as this one would be useful. We don't hear those questions very often now. The professionalism, the integrity, the energy and the sensitivity shown by you and all the members of the Commission have laid those questions to rest.
3. The Commission is already making a difference, in large part by giving a voice to Indigenous people who have never had one before. The proactive approach of the Commission in making interim recommendations in urgent cases, without waiting for the conclusion of the hearings, is also having an impact. A good example is your recommendation to suspend detention for non-payment of fines in Val-d'Or, a recommendation quickly acted on by the City.
4. I want to acknowledge, in particular, the fact that the Commission has made it a point of leaving your base in Val-d'Or to visit the Cree communities. That's where the Cree are who have stories to tell. Not all are able to travel, so it is vital that the

Commission come to them. Many Cree individuals have taken advantage of your presence here in Mistissini to share their stories with you. They might not have been able to do so if you had not come to Mistissini.

5. The Commission's mandate includes the words "Listening, Reconciliation and Progress". As Madame Viviane Michel stated on the first day of hearings one year ago, listening comes before reconciliation. It is encouraging that the Commission has taken seriously the "Listening" part of your mandate by going to the communities to hear the people.
6. It is also important both that the Commission be seen in the communities and that you see for yourselves the conditions of life in the Indigenous communities – good and bad. If we are to work together towards the "Reconciliation" and "Progress" parts of the Commission's mandate, we must, as you say in French, *se dire les vraies affaires*, or tell it like it is.
7. The Commission has had a busy first year. I'm not sure what the numbers are now, but by last December, the Commission had already carried out 11 weeks of hearings, more than 130 witnesses had accepted its invitation to testify and the Commission had opened over 280 investigation files. These numbers must be much higher by now. More than 600 exhibits have been filed to date.
8. After setting the table by hearing various experts and representatives of organizations, the Commission is now hearing more and more from Indigenous individuals as you visit the communities. We can probably expect that this will be focus of Commission's work for the remainder of this year. And rightly so.
9. Over the past year, a number of representatives of Cree institutions have made presentations to the Commission. They include the following:
 - (a) Former Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come and Melissa Saganash on June 4, 2017;

- (b) Donald Nicholls, Director of the Department of Justice and Correctional Services of the Cree Nation Government, on September 15, 2017;
 - (c) Chair Bella Moses Petawabano, Executive Director Daniel St-Amour and Dr. Darlene Kitty of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay on September 29, 2017;
 - (d) Chair Kathleen Wootton of the Cree School Board on January 24, 2018;
 - (e) David Bergeron, Director of the Eeyou Eenou Police Force of the Cree Nation Government on June 11, 2018;
 - (f) Jessika Boulanger, Midwifery Services, Laura Bearskin, Assistant Executive Director, Nishiiyuu Department, and Clara Cooper, Nishiiyuu Group, all of Cree Board of Health and Social Services, on June 14, 2018;
 - (g) Donald Nicholls, Director of Justice and Correctional Services, Cree Nation Government, accompanied by Anna Neeposh, Regional CAVAC Officer; Ruth Masty, Community Justice Officer, Whapmagoostui, and Louise Coonishish, Community Justice Officer, Mistissini, on June 15, 2018;
 - (h) Paul John Murdoch, Lawyer and Corporate Secretary of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government, on June 18, 2018; and
 - (i) James Bobbish, former Chair of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services and principal Cree consultant on customary adoption, on June 18, 2018.
10. The scope of Cree participation to date is evidence of our commitment to the mission of the Commission. My predecessor as Grand Chief, Dr. Matthew Coon Come, played a central role in the establishment of this Commission. I want to assure you

and your colleagues that you can continue to rely on the full cooperation of the Cree Nation as you carry out your work over the coming months.

11. Let me thank Chief Richard Shecapio and the Council of the Cree Nation of Mistissini for their hospitality in making available these facilities and support services over the past two weeks. This is another tangible expression of Cree support for the work of the Commission, and I thank them for it.
12. With that, Commission Viens, I wish you and your colleagues “*Bon retour*” and “*Bonnes vacances*” until we see you again in August.

Megwetch.

Grand Chief Dr. Abel Bosum

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