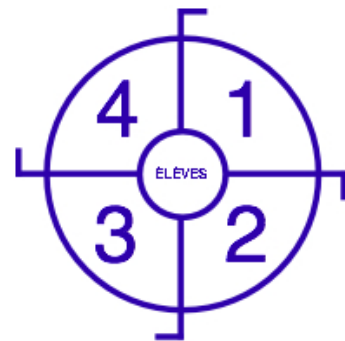
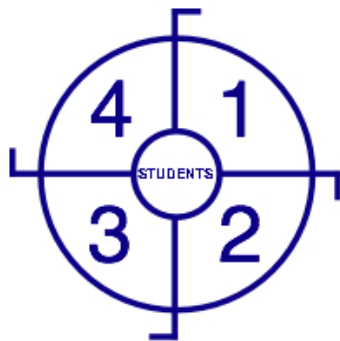


**Cree School Board  
Educational Review: 2007-08**



**Étude sur l'éducation : 2007-2008  
Commission scolaire Crie**

**C** Communication  
**A** Accountability &  
**F** Follow-Up for  
**S** School  
**I** Improvement

Communication,  
reddition de  
comptes  
et suivi pour  
l'amélioration  
scolaire

**Highlights of the CAFSI Report**

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Services professionnels  
**Talleyrand**  
Professional Services

 **Brentwood Consultants**

*Communication, Accountability & Follow-Up for School Improvement (CAFSI): Highlights of the CAFSI Report*, is one of a series of documents that make up the final report of the Educational Review: 2007-08, prepared by members of the evaluation team:

William J. Smith;  
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Kimberly Quinn.

With corrections, October 27, 2008.\*

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The complete series of report documents consists of the following:

- The CAFSI Report:
  - Part 1, Overview, Context & Mission;
  - Part 2, Educating Youth in the Cree School Board;
  - Part 3, Educating Adults in the Cree School Board;
  - Part 4, School Board Support for Learning;
  - Part 5, From Findings to Action;
- Appendices of the CAFSI Report;
- Highlights of the CAFSI Report;\* and
- Executive Summary of the CAFSI Report.\*
- A Spotlight on Youth Education.\*<sup>†</sup>

\* No substantive changes have been made to the report originally published in June. The authors wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Kathleen Arsenault in the editing of this revised version.

\* **Disponible en français.**

♦ **Available in Cree.**

French translation by Kathleen Arsenault, Ottawa; Cree translation by Brian Webb.

The report and all related materials can be found on the CSB Educational Review website.

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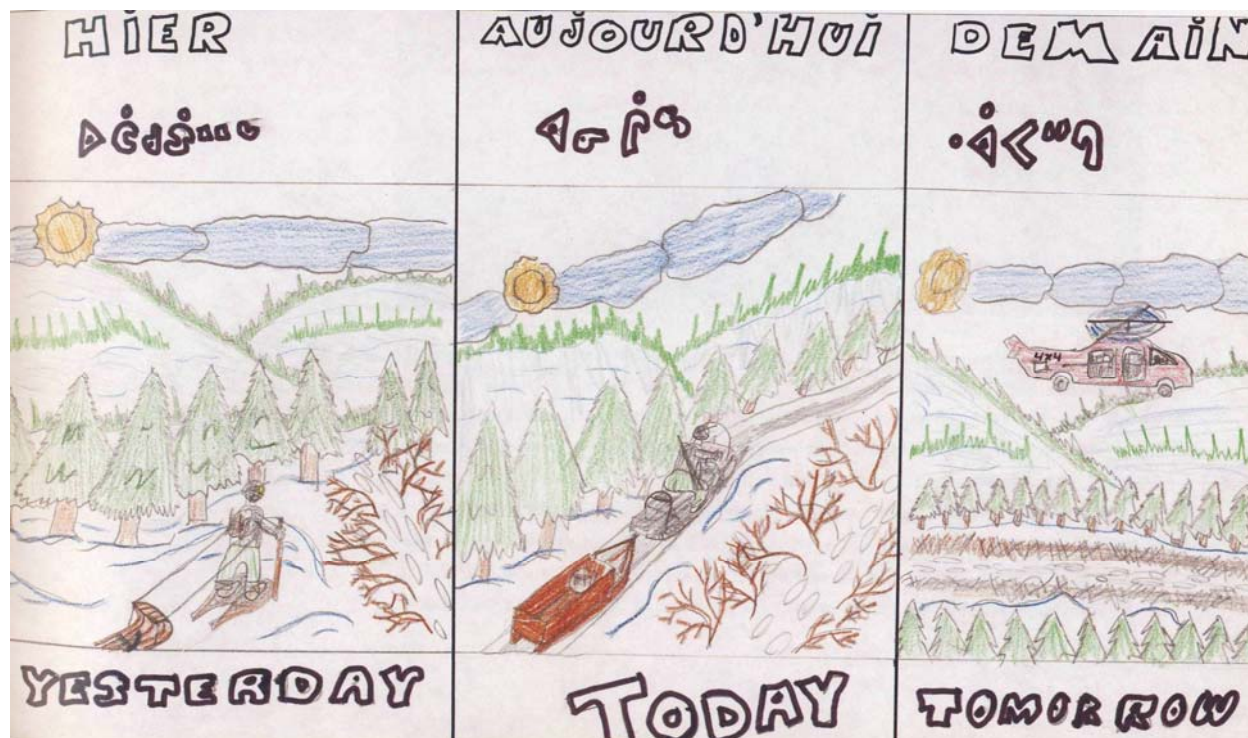


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## PREFACE

*To the Stakeholders of the Cree School Board*

This report of the Educational Review, 2007-08 is about many aspects of the Cree School Board but they all centre around its students. We therefore thought it appropriate to preface this report with an image created by a student to express what it is all about. As suggested by this drawing, done by Darren Moar, then a twelve-year old student at Wiinibekuu School in Waskaganish, education links the past, the present and the future.

Looking back, education can help preserve what is important in our **past**, celebrate our values and traditions, but it can also help us to overcome any past conditions that would hinder our development. Looking ahead, education provides the means to secure the **future**:

The greatest challenge facing the Cree School Board today is to improve the quality of the academic education received by the students and to maintain and improve the Cree content of the curriculum. In part, this effort will depend on the economic opportunities open to Cree students once they graduate. Students coming through the education system must have experience and knowledge of the many careers from which they can choose.”<sup>1</sup>

Education has the potential to provide students with these options but as this quotation suggests, options cannot come from the school or the school board working in isolation. Partnerships, networking and other forms of collaboration at multiple levels - community, the James Bay region and beyond - are required to ensure that students can be successful on whatever path they choose to pursue, be it in a Cree community or elsewhere.

In taking this long-term perspective, we sometimes forget that the **present** lies between the past and the future and education is equally important in the present. For students, a very large portion of their present life is spent in school or engaged in school-related activities. This

<sup>1</sup> The text and the drawing are from Michael Gnarowski, Ed., *I Dream of Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Celebration of the James Bay Crees* (Kemptville ON: Golden Dog Press, 2002), pp. 122-123.

'present' state stretches from early childhood to young adulthood and beyond, especially if we embrace the notion of life-long learning. The quality of education therefore includes the quality of the experience that students have throughout their school life, as well as the opportunities that it affords for the future. We owe it to them to make that experience as meaningful and enjoyable as possible.

Some of you, as you read this report, may be reminded of Henry Mianscum's report in 1999 to which we will refer throughout this Review. He captured the essence of the issues facing the CSB and its schools. In fact, if his recommendations had been followed, our report would be unnecessary. You will find that we too are very critical of the current delivery of educational services and that we argue, as he did, that **profound change** is required if students are to benefit from the education to which they are entitled.

***We want the school to be the best there is; however, the steps to make it the best are not taken (Stakeholder).***

Several people with whom we spoke talked about the fallacy of **wishful thinking** ("pensée magique") - that believing something will happen will make it happen. They realized, as we do, that such magic only works in fairy tales. Simply telling schools that student results must improve does not make it happen, nor will

it help schools to make it happen.

This report does not offer any 'magic bullets' or 'quick-fix' solutions because the route to improvement will be neither easy nor quick. Improvement will require serious attention by the leadership of the Board to build the **capacity** of its schools, centres and board offices. Most of all, it must build the capacity of its personnel to deliver quality education services. We do hope however, that this report will provide a solid basis for this long-term process.

Although we wrote this report and are solely responsible for its content, we could not have completed our work without the help of the students, parents, staff and other members of the Cree School Board community who participated in the Review. We thank you for your input to this work and regret that we did not have the opportunity to present this report in person in each community. We hope that you will hear your voices in our words, especially in Part 5 where we summarize 'what stakeholders want to see happen.' We are very conscious of your expectations from this Review: a marked improvement in educational service delivery for youth, adult and post-secondary students of the Cree School Board. **Stakeholders want to see action, not words.**

***Let us put what we are talking about as a priority. Let us really try to help these children. Let us not hide or sweep under the rug the things that we talked about today (Elder).***

This report marks the end of our work but it also marks the beginning of the next crucial step - **action planning** for improvement. It is now up to the leadership of the Cree School Board to ensure that this report is used to help transform the Board into a learning community where students come first, not just on a poster, but in reality.

William J. Smith,  
Mary Bear,  
William E. Corrigan and  
Kimberly Quinn

June, 2008

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## INTRODUCTION

This document provides the '**Highlights**' of the report on the conduct and results of the Educational Review: 2007-08, the evaluation of educational service delivery in the Cree School Board [CSB]. We have titled the report: *Communication, Accountability & Follow-Up for School Improvement (CAFSI for short)*, to reflect the need for a major change in the way the CSB operates, if it truly intends to improve its performance to deliver quality education to its students.

[http://www.cscree.qc.ca/Edreview/ed\\_review.htm](http://www.cscree.qc.ca/Edreview/ed_review.htm)

[http://www.cscree.qc.ca/Edreview/Fr/Etude\\_Ed.htm](http://www.cscree.qc.ca/Edreview/Fr/Etude_Ed.htm)

If you want more detail than this version offers, we invite you to consult the complete CAFSI report, which consists of five parts, plus supplementary materials. All publications associated with the

Review are available on the CSB Educational Review website.

## PART 1, OVERVIEW, CONTEXT & MISSION

Part 1 of the CAFSI report provides an overview of the Educational Review and our analysis of the Board's context and mission.

### Overview

The CSB was created to meet the goal of the Cree Nation to have an education system that was truly responsive to the needs of its students. This aim appears to have faded over the years and the Educational Review is part of a wider process which includes the Organizational Review led by the Wyman Group, to restore the place of students within the Board.

### The CSB, Its Schools & Centres

The CSB has jurisdiction for elementary, secondary and adult education for members of the Cree Nation of Eastern James Bay as well as other persons residing in one of its nine communities (▲) shown in the map on the right.

The head office of the CSB is located in Mistissini. Its structure is similar to those of other school boards in Québec but it has powers that are different from other boards. The CSB also has a department for youth educational services located in Chisasibi and offices for post-secondary education in Montréal and Gatineau.

Each of the nine communities has a school that offers elementary and secondary instruction, and a continuing education centre that provides various upgrading and vocational courses to adults. In addition, the Sabtuan Regional Vocational Training Centre [SRVTC] is located in Waswanipi.



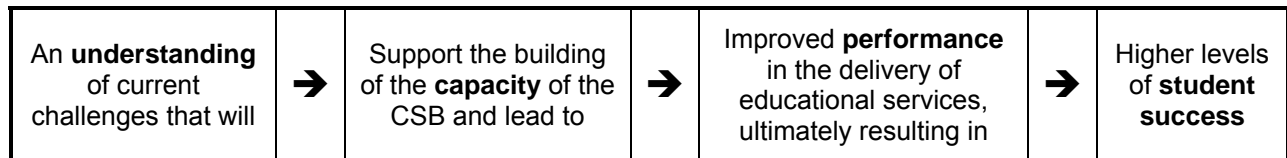


## Purpose & Results

The purpose of any evaluation tells us *why* we are undertaking it. A statement of intended results tells us what we *expect* to happen because of the evaluation. This Review was designed to serve two complementary purposes:

- **accountability**, to permit the Board to *answer* to its stakeholders for the trust they have placed in it for the education of their children, youth and adults; and
- **improvement**, to support the development of programs and service delivery in order to make its schools and centres more effective places for teaching and learning.

The results intended from the Review are:



## Evaluation Design

The design of the Review was guided by the following principles:

- The Review will be grounded in the **values**, **mission** and **context** of the CSB, its schools and centres.
- The Review process will be **participatory**; in other words, stakeholders will be invited and encouraged to take part in the evaluation and the follow-up to the final report.
- The Review will be guided by a set of **ethical principles** that will apply not only to the evaluation team but to all officials and employees of the CSB.
- The Council of Commissioners and the Management Group of the CSB shall ensure that the Educational Review will be followed immediately by an **action plan** for improvement.

Originally, the Review was supposed to build on past planning and evaluation initiatives and construct a synthesis of current ones, in order to provide a **holistic portrait** of educational service delivery in the Board. During the analysis of data, the Director General decided that our report should not contain any analysis or synthesis of these other initiatives.



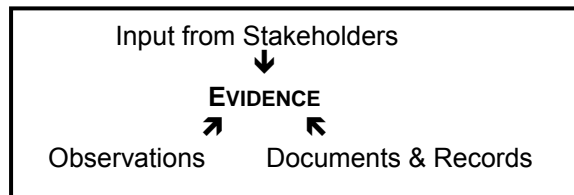
The Review deals with various **performance themes** - the major aspects of performance and capacity that matter to **stakeholders**, given the mission and context of the CSB. The first theme is student results. Every other theme focuses on levels of support for learning. Performance is determined by the extent to which the school, Board office, etc., contributes to student learning.

This perspective also inverts the traditional hierarchical 'control from the top' image of a school system. In the revised image, students are at the top of this 'performance pyramid' and the school board is at the bottom, providing the foundation for the support for teaching and learning.



In an evaluation, data are sought as ‘**evidence**’ - ‘bits’ of information gathered from records and documents, stakeholders and observations, that serve to measure, or at least demonstrate, the level of performance being evaluated. During the Educational Review, we visited all nine communities. School visits included:

- observation of classes;
- focus groups with students, parents, elders;
- interviews of administrators, commissioners;
- questionnaires for teachers and other staff.



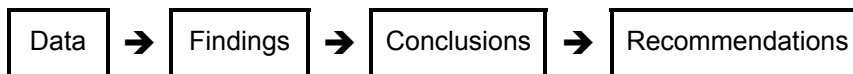
Centre visits included an interview with the consultant, and questionnaires for students and staff. Data collection also included visits to the Post-Secondary Education offices in Montréal and Gatineau and the Board office in Mississauga. A focus group was held with post-secondary students and interviews were conducted with the Chairperson of the Board, the Director General, the Secretary General, as well as all Directors and Coordinators.

In total, we carried out over 200 separate acts of data collection, involving approximately 900 stakeholders.

If you are looking for an evaluation of your school or centre, you will be disappointed. We could not provide that level of detail in the time we had. Neither will you find a ‘quick fix’ solution or a detailed ‘blueprint’ to be followed. What we do offer are the insights we have gained about the strengths and weakness of the performance and capacity of the CSB to provide quality education to its students.

An evaluation rarely produces *absolute proof* of whatever it claims to have learned but whatever claims it makes must be supported by evidence. Accordingly, this Review was designed to

produce a credible and sufficient ‘chain of evidence’ linking data to the findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in



the report. Although many of our findings will be considered critical, they are not intended to be destructive, for the purpose of assigning blame, **but constructive**, for improving the capacity and performance of the CSB, for the benefit of its students.

In the remainder of this document, we present the **highlights** of the CAFSI report, namely a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations for each aspect of performance that we considered in relation to:

- the context and mission of the CSB (**Part 1**);
- the education of youth (**Part 2**);
- the education of adults (**Part 3**); and
- school board support for learning (**Part 4**).

We have also included a summary of **Part 5** which includes the expectations of stakeholders for change, lessons learned from this Review and the ‘road ahead’ for improved service delivery. In keeping with our promise made in the Preface, you will also find the voices of stakeholders in text boxes, as the one included here, throughout this document.

***This is the first time that we as elders were asked about education. There were some meetings before about the problems but we did not see any changes. (Elder)***

## The CSB-in-Context

We recognized that it was not appropriate to evaluate the context of the CSB because the Board does not, by and large, control its context. However, efforts to improve the CSB based on the results of the Review are unlikely to succeed without understanding the context in which they are to be implemented.

- The regional context of the CSB begins in the ‘bush’ - the traditional lands of Eastern James Bay, outside the nine communities. This context includes the major regional bodies, notably the Grand Council of the Crees and the Cree Regional Authority [CRA].
- Each school has its own particular local context but the nine communities share many characteristics, especially a high level of social problems and a culture of dependency.
- The historical context is shaped by the three ‘streams’ of education that flowed in to the formation of the CSB: traditional Cree education, federal First Nations education policy and the Québec education system.
- There have been many landmarks in the Board’s own history; we were particularly interested in the Mianscum report of 1999, which provides the direct forerunner to this Review.
- Every organization operates within an administrative and legal framework; for other school boards in Québec, the *Education Act* is the basis of that framework.
- For the CSB, the framework is found in the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* [JBNQA] and the *Education Act for Cree, Inuit and Naskapi Native Persons* that applies to the Cree, Kativik and Naskapi school boards. This Act has never been updated and its unclear which regulations apply to the CSB, especially for the organization of educational services and curriculum.
- Finally, we looked at the wider context in which the CSB operates, especially the Québec education system.

*When I see kids, 9, 10, 11 years old, in the park next to this school until one or two o’clock in the morning, I wonder what they’ll do in the school the following morning (Principal).*

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 1-2

- Clarify the **application of current public education legislation** to the CSB, especially for the organization of educational services and curriculum.
- Proceed with the drafting a new **Cree Education Act** and associated regulations.

## The Mission of the CSB

The mission of an organization expresses what it is and what it hopes to become. The ‘dual mission’ of the CSB is **to provide students with a quality education** that is:

- grounded in Cree values, language and culture; and
- provides them with opportunities to pursue further education and employment in either the Cree nation or beyond.

During the Review, we talked to stakeholders about this mission.

- Like other school boards, the CSB’s reason for being is based on the value of education but unlike other boards, it is also grounded in Cree values. We briefly examined the Board’s Regional Educational Project which anchored the CSB in relation to these values but which unfortunately has been allowed to fall by the wayside.
- We discovered that many stakeholders are unaware of the mission; some describe it as ‘mission impossible,’ while others think the mission is fine as is.
- We see no valid reason to question the Board’s dual mission. Without Cree values, language and culture, the Board cannot claim to be a Cree institution but without the provision of quality educational opportunities to its students, it cannot claim to be an educational institution.
- It must have both halves in order to be a viable Cree educational institution. As the highlights presented in this document will reveal, the problem is not with the Board’s mission, but with its service delivery. It is not the ends but the means that need to be changed.
- A mission statement should also specify the major results the organization wishes to achieve, something the current mission does not do.
- What is needed, as described by one stakeholder, is a focus on the “Cree way.” It is not a time for assigning blame, but rather a time to move forward and plan for improvement.

“The future of the Cree Nation depends on its ability to establish a harmonious and dynamic balance between two seemingly paradoxical needs: that of preserving and developing its traditional heritage expressed basically through language and culture, and that of developing as a society in a modern context open to the world.”

(Matthew Coon Come)

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 3-6

- Reaffirm CSB’s commitment to provide **quality education** grounded in **Cree values, language and culture**.
- Initiate a new process, linked to other improvement initiatives, to engage stakeholders in the creation of a new **results-based mission statement**.

## PART 2, EDUCATING YOUTH IN THE CSB

Part 2 of the CAFSI report presents our analysis relating to the education of children and young people in the nine schools of the CSB. It begins with student results and then deals with four successive layers of support from the classroom to the community.

### Student Results

We looked at three general types of student results: student engagement; curricular learning; and social and personal learning.

**Q: Are you satisfied with student results?**

**A: No. No I'm not. I'll say it that bluntly (Outside stakeholder).**

### Student Engagement

We analyzed student engagement in relation to three issues: attendance, perseverance (staying in school) and actual engagement in their own learning.

- Student attendance was a major concern in virtually every school we visited.
- In 2006-07, the average attendance in all schools of the CSB was 77%. This means that, on average, students are absent for 43 days of the school year. Even more disturbing is the fact that attendance has been getting worse over time.
- When absence from school becomes permanent, we are confronted with drop-outs, students who do not *persevere* until they graduate.
- In 2006-07 11% of secondary students dropped out between September and June, a rate that has not changed much over time.
- Many of the students who remain in school are not truly *engaged* in learning. We attributed this situation to a combination of a variety of factors described in the highlights that follow.

**Q: Are kids really engaged in their learning here?**

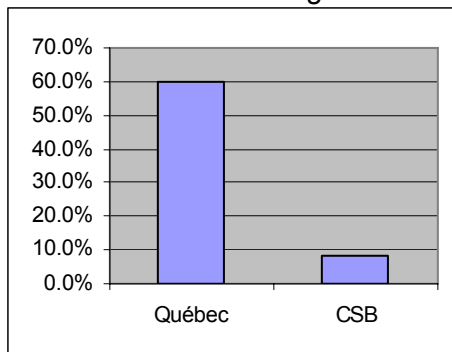
**A: I would say none of them is really engaged. Sports is more important than education (Vice-Principal).**

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 7-10

- Use available data to identify points of comparison to set appropriate **standards** for student attendance, perseverance in school and engagement in learning.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to set and meet annual *targets* that enable them to eventually reach the standards they have set for student attendance, perseverance and engagement in learning.

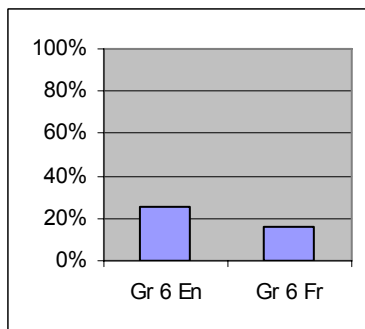
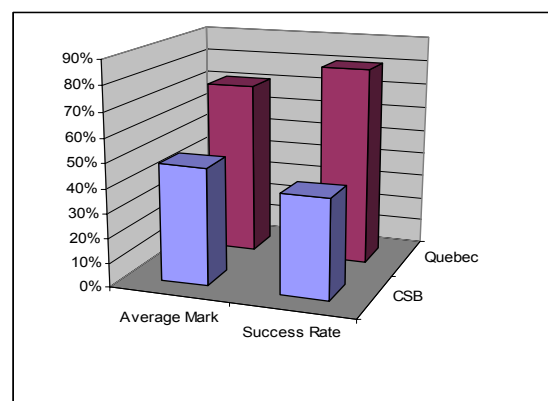
## Curricular Learning

Curricular learning can be understood as the mastery of the ‘competencies’ expected by the curriculum that is taught at each level of instruction. We looked at graduation rates, success in mastering individual subjects, scores on standardized tests and feedback from stakeholders.



- The average graduation rate in Québec, five years after starting of secondary school, is 60.1% while in the CSB, it is only 8.6%. In the past, CSB rates went up more than other boards after six and seven years but that is no longer true. This means that instead of taking longer to complete school, students are simply dropping out altogether.

- We also looked at various secondary IV and V subjects. In the exams written in June 2006, the average mark in Québec on a selection of these subjects was 71%, while the average mark in the CSB was 48%. Across Québec, 81% of students passed these subjects, while only 40% of students in the CSB passed. Excluding Kativik, the CSB is 30 points below the lowest success rate of any other board in the province.



- Results on standardized tests in reading, language and math at the grade 6 and 9 levels in English and grade 6 in French show that students do not have the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed to successfully complete school. Over the past 4 years, only 24% of grade 6 students in English and 16% in French showed mastery of reading at their expected level.

- Stakeholders know that the level of curricular learning is very low and realize that it has been getting worse, year after year. They also realize that expectations are low, beginning with the language of instruction: the Board only expects students to perform in English or French at a second-language level.
- You cannot expect students to master a range of subjects whose language of instruction is English or French mother tongue, if the language expectations for these same students are based on second language levels of proficiency.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 11-14

- Set **standards** for progressive learning outcomes for all curricular subjects at each grade level.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## Social & Personal Learning

We were not able to collect very much data on social and personal learning. This is unfortunate for three reasons.

- First, social and personal learning is closely associated with Cree culture and tradition, both in terms of transmitting values and connecting to family and community.
- Second, this type of learning includes physical and emotional well being, two important issues given what we know about youth in the region.
- Third, this type of learning reflects student's ability to interact with others, an essential skill for adulthood.

***Our parents taught us the cultural skills from the time we were born. Today the young people are not learning the cultural skills and are not able to pass them on to their children (Elder).***

These cultural skills are not only those required to live off the land; they include all the social behaviours associated with Cree values, including honesty, integrity and respect.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 15-16

- Set **standards** for the social and personal learning of students at every grade level.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## Classroom Instruction

### Teaching

The quality of student learning is directly related to the quality of teaching that students receive. No issue presented in this report deserves more attention than this one.

- There are some excellent teachers in CSB schools, teachers that any school would be proud to have on its faculty.
- On the other extreme are those who should not be teaching.
- In between are teachers with below-average to above-average skills and engagement, achieving some level of success.
- Our overall rating of the teaching we observed was merely 'adequate,' and this from a sample that probably included fewer weak teachers than would have been found in a representative sample.

“Students are reporting little or no instruction in the classrooms. The teacher attempts to teach with limited success and the students are unreceptive. Therefore, the standard becomes that the students merely attend class to satisfy the education requirements for that course. The only requirement placed on students is that they remain in the classroom and occupy themselves with something” (Mianscum report).



- Quality teaching requires qualified and motivated teachers. As will be seen in the highlights that follow, there is a pressing need for support and supervision of teachers, both of which seem to be all but non-existent.
- Although focus groups were held to provide students with a confidential non-threatening opportunity to talk about school, it was often difficult to get them to express themselves.
- However, even when their answers were monosyllabic, they revealed a great deal about what it is like for them in school. The picture that they painted is not a very pretty one.
- No one more than teachers is better aware of this reality, as reflected in the statement quoted in the text box.

***I believe we make attempts to provide a quality education but we do not succeed. I believe we need to work smarter not harder and with one voice. Our standards are too low. - Most of the students are below grade level. - We need to help the students to work to grade level and stop making excuses for them (Teacher).***

#### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 17-20**

- Undertake a more **thorough analysis of classroom teaching** in all schools and, after consultation, adopt and implement a set of **standards** for teaching in the CSB.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

#### **Instructional Resources**

- The quality of teaching is often compromised by poorly trained teachers, especially substitutes who account for a high percentage of this key human resource.
- The timely provision of adequate and appropriate instructional resources is problematic at every level and in every language of instruction.
- The nature of these problems and the means to address them differ, depending on the types of resources: teachers, facilities or instructional materials.
- These problems will never be solved by throwing more money at them. As several teachers noted, money is not the problem, it is how that money is spent.

***We have more than enough money. It's not a money issue (Teacher).***

#### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 21-24**

- Review qualifications of all teachers, including substitutes, and ensure that instruction is being provided by **appropriately qualified teachers**.
- Undertake a thorough needs assessment of **instructional facilities and resources**.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## Curriculum

This is obviously a key issue in seeking ways of promoting student success. We began our inquiry by looking at the provincial framework for instruction (the Ministry regime) and curriculum (the Québec Education Program - QEP). We then asked: What curriculum is actually offered to students in the CSB?

- We found that the answer to this seemingly simple question was revealed in layers.
  - First layer: there was one regime applied at the kindergarten and early elementary level, where the Cree Language of Instruction Program - **CLIP** - is used.
  - Second layer: from the point at which CLIP leaves off, the regime is the same as followed in any school in the province, with the exception of the provision for Cree language and culture and a modified History of Québec and Canada course in secondary IV.
  - Third layer: the application of CLIP varies from school to school and so, by consequence, the grade level at which the provincial regime is applied.
  - Fourth layer: although English or French is the language of instruction after CLIP, expectations for language proficiency are, at best, at a second-language level.
  - Fifth layer: what is *actually* taught in classrooms often bears little resemblance to the provincial curriculum because students do not have the competencies to handle the subject matter.
- Language of instruction is at the centre of the debate over curriculum. For many stakeholders, it is the only issue that matters. They believe that if this issue were resolved, then students will succeed. As much as we agree that this is a crucial issue, we do not agree with this view:
  - Student success depends on many other factors, not just language of instruction. If they are not properly addressed, then students will not succeed, no matter how the language of instruction issue is resolved.
- In considering this issue, we were very much aware of two other related matters.
  - First, that language is a highly charged issue, with very strong feelings held by stakeholders on both sides of a polarized divide: for and against CLIP.
  - Second, the supporters of CLIP appear to have been successful at associating CLIP with the preservation of Cree language and culture. In other words, if you are against one you are against the other.
- We regard this as a very unfortunate state of affairs and look to the leadership of the CSB to convince everyone to take a step back from this stance which is not only inaccurate but harmful to finding a way forward. CLIP is one means to preserve Cree language and culture but it is not the only way.

No provision was ever made for the transition from Cree to English or French as a language of instruction. (1995 Evaluation Report on CLIP)

- As a team, we struggled to come up with an appropriate solution. Unfortunately, our findings and conclusions will be welcomed by some and criticized by others.
- An entire generation of students has passed through the current regime and they are failing in record numbers. Among the many reasons for this terrible state of affairs, and we would argue the main reason, is that the schools have failed to teach them to read and write. Something drastic needs to be done as we have concluded that the present curricular model is not working and no amount of tinkering is going to make it work.
- The Board does not have nor will it be able to develop in the short term the capacity to provide a complete curriculum in Cree.
- The model generally now used in CSB schools: instruction in Cree from kindergarten to grade 2/3, followed by instruction in English or French, as presently structured and resourced, does not serve either aspect of the Board's dual mission:
  - promoting Cree language and culture, or
  - preparing students for further education, employment and life-long learning.
- As we have said before, both these goals should be pursued, but a new means is required to do so.
- Our analysis of the data leads us to conclude that both aspects of this mission would be better served by a single curricular model from kindergarten through secondary school. Although, we cannot provide the detailed specifications of such a model, we can provide some guiding principles, as outlined in our recommendations.

We're passing our kids through the system; we're lying about their future and their potential. Some of our teachers think it's too late to teach them. I told them it's not. It's never too late for them, never (School Committee Member).

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 25-34

- After consultation, adopt new a curriculum framework that provides for:
  - ◆ the teaching of **Cree language and Cree culture** from kindergarten to secondary V;
  - ◆ **English or French as the language of instruction** as of kindergarten;
  - ◆ all compulsory and elective subjects at the elementary and secondary levels based on the QEP and Ministry certification requirements.
- Provide for **progressive implementation** beginning at kindergarten and moving forward one year at a time and a **transitional plan** for students currently enrolled.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## Complementary Services

'Complementary services' cover a range of services provided to students, other than classroom instruction by a teacher. For all students, these include guidance, tutoring and extra-curricular activities. For students with special needs, they include assessments and adapted programs.

- Our brief time in schools did not permit a thorough analysis of complementary services or enable us to provide specific suggestions that would improve service delivery.
- It is apparent that in some cases, helpful guidance services are being provided, in others, services may not be up to the mark, and in still others, no services at all are offered because of vacant positions.
- We have few data about extra-curricular activities but in general they seem to be lacking.
- Special education services rely heavily on outside consultants and in-school department heads, whose capacity to provide needed assistance appears to vary widely. Educators work with individual students but we do not know the extent to which their services are effective. There is a need for a more in-depth probe of these services.

*We really need job descriptions for counsellors and SATs because I do not know what their job is supposed to be (Vice-principal).*

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 35-38

- Conduct a thorough needs assessment regarding the complementary services to be provided to **all students**, including extra-curricular activities.
- Draw up a complete picture of the number and type of students with **special needs** in every school and the services they require.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## School Support for Learning

### School Culture & Organization

- We asked stakeholders about school atmosphere, whether it was warm and welcoming and received very mixed responses.
- We looked at how learning was organized in each school and discovered many issues such as the grouping of students, that should be examined more closely.

*Steps should be taken to ensure that an enabling environment is created for learning to be effective (Teacher).*

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION 39

- Help build the **capacity** of the school to improve its culture and the way it organizes instruction.

## School Leadership & Planning

This theme looks at two key issues regarding how the school operates, the leadership provided by the school administration and the way it plans for both the current year and the years ahead.

- We began with a longstanding but still controversial issue - the respective roles of the principal and the community education administrator [CEA].
- To the outside members of our team, the current arrangement whereby the school had two heads made no sense. The inside members understood the history behind this arrangement and why it had seemed sensible when it was introduced.
- We all agreed that this arrangement must now come to an end and that the principal should be the sole head of the school.
- However, this change cannot be made with the stroke of a pen. Effecting this change will depend on the results of the analysis provided by the Organizational Review and will require considerable capacity building to make it work.
- We have seen serious deficiencies in the capacity of the administration of most schools to provide the leadership required to manage them effectively.
- Likewise, we have concluded that the current school planning process - the Local Education Plan, or LEP, is badly flawed and in need of a major overhaul. The problems we observed reside as much at the board level as they do at the school level.
- The 'bottom line' of our analysis is that the current approach to planning is essentially a paper exercise that is not helpful to schools.

***We need to have a common vision. Right now we give lip service to the idea but when push comes to shove, we are not on the same page at all. Teachers need to be observed by qualified and helpful administrators who know how to groom the staff. We need LEADERSHIP (Teacher).***

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 40-45

- Eliminate the current role of the CEA and make the **principal** the single point of **accountability** as part of a general **restructuring** of the administration of schools.
- Replace the current LEP by a short-term plan to involve the school in the follow-up to this Review and then develop a **new local planning process**.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## Allocation & Management of Resources

- At present, the management of resources is a shared responsibility of the principal and the CEA. Therefore, the treatment of resource management issues is partially dependent on how problems arising from this relationship are resolved.
- At present, school budgets appear to be set at the board level; while recognizing that the level of available funds must be taken into account, school budgets should be developed on the basis of school needs and priorities.
- A high level of problems with the management of human resources were noted:
  - the process for recruiting and selecting teachers and other staff is very problematic;
  - little time is devoted to teacher supervision, which ought to be among the top priorities of the school administration;
  - professional development is weak or non-existent in most schools.
- Naturally, schools look to the Human Resources Department for help. Unfortunately, when they call, no one responds.
- Human resources are the life blood of a school. Teaching and learning will not improve in CSB schools until these issues have been properly addressed.
- We also examined material resources, other than instructional materials (dealt with earlier; see p. 9); schools find purchasing procedures to be very bureaucratic.
- Material resources include school and residential facilities; the main concerns seem to be building maintenance and cleanliness and the upkeep of these facilities.
- These are all responsibilities of the CEA. In many cases, it appears as if work is not done or done very poorly, and no one is being held accountable for these poor results.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 46-53

- Base the **school budget** on the organization of instruction in the school and the school's operational and strategic plan.
- Make the **supervision** of teaching a **priority** responsibility of school administrators.
- Develop, in consultation with school staff, a comprehensive **professional improvement** plan for all school staff.
- **Develop** and **implement** more efficient **procedures** for hiring, purchasing and for the maintenance of school facilities and residences of school staff.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.



## Monitoring & Evaluation

If planning provides the ‘first half’ of the process for managing schools, evaluation provides the second half. Successful schools take responsibility for evaluating their own performance and continually strive for ways to improve. Schools that do not, tend to be ‘stuck’ at low levels of performance or worse, fall even farther behind.

- Our analysis of these performance issues was short. Schools do not fulfill these functions in any systematic fashion.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION 54

- Involve and support schools in a process to **develop** and **implement** a framework for **self-evaluation** of school performance.

## Home & Community Support for Learning

### Parental & Community Involvement

- We describe parental involvement as the ‘power of three,’ a metaphor created by Canadian researcher Peter Coleman to refer to the strength that comes from the close collaboration of students, teachers and parents.
- As a general rule, in schools of the CSB, the ‘power of three’ is a state to be desired but not currently achieved.
- Many of the problems with low student engagement highlighted earlier find their root cause here. When parents value education students tend to take it more seriously. When parents don’t care, neither do they.
- Many schools have worked hard to involve parents but with few results. A new fresh approach is desperately needed.
- We also looked at the operation of the school committee. We feel that its mandate needs to be better focused and its composition enlarged to include grandparents and others with custodial care of students.

*For me there are three things that really need to come together to make things work: the parents, the school and the community as a whole (Band Council education representative).*

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 55-60

- **Develop** a **framework** for the consultation of stakeholders in each community on parental participation in schools which can be **adapted** by each school.
- **Include** grandparents and others with custodial responsibility for students as members of the School Committee and review its mandate to **focus** on its role of supporting the school and community.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## School Linkages to Outside Bodies

- We did not manage to collect a significant amount of data on this theme. There are some schools with active collaborative links with local agencies that we wish we had been able to examine more thoroughly.
- In other schools not much seems to be happening in this regard. However, this does not mean that schools are unaware or uninterested in forging these links.
- During the course of this Review the principals of all nine schools took the unprecedented step of addressing a letter to the Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees. In it, they expressed their deep concern over the level of social problems in the communities and sought the support of the Grand Chief and the Council to join with them in a search for remedies. By the time we had finished collecting data, this process was underway and we hope that it signals the beginning of greater school community collaboration.
- In this section of the report, we offered some insights into a current initiative underway in many Québec communities, the development of school-community partnerships under the banner of the Community Learning Centre, or CLC, as it is known.

***We're starting to really find ways to work together on certain things such as bullying and vandalism. The Band Council as well is finding ways to get involved which is important because it has resources that it could contribute to solving problems (Commissioner).***

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 61-63

- **Develop a framework** for the building of **effective linkages** between school and community for their mutual benefit which can be **adapted** by each school.
- Help schools to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## PART 3, EDUCATING ADULTS IN THE CSB

### Continuing Education Services in the CSB

#### Student Results

We looked at three types of student results: student engagement; curricular learning; and employment.

- We know from anecdotal comments that student attendance is very problematic: *They have good intentions but they don't follow through*, said one consultant.
- Unfortunately, the Continuing Education Department was unable to produce any data about attendance or other student results, except for those found in the preliminary version of one external study.
- The data we had gathered from the youth sector on declining graduation rates (see p. 7) suggest that continuing education is no longer providing the 'safety net' it once did.
- The only data we were able to collect on student success in continuing education came from the Sabtuan Clientele Study. It reports an average success rate of 76% for general and vocational courses. However, these rates vary considerably over time, from a high of 96% in 1996-97 to 17% in 2006-07. We have no data on employment.
- The picture that emerges from comments from stakeholders is, overall, rather dark, with some bright spots. Some adult students are working hard and are being successful. Others appear to be more interested in the immediate benefits of attending school, especially a training allowance, than investing time and effort in their own futures.

***As an adult learner, I learn more than I did in regular school. I'm really interested in what I'm taking now (Adult student).***

***Students rely on the system; there is a mentality of dependence (Centre consultant).***

- It has been suggested that this is due to a culture of dependence and an expectation that the system will look after everyone - no individual effort required.
- In the absence of any satisfactory data, the only conclusion we can draw about adult student results is that the Board needs first to determine what those results are.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 64-65

- Undertake a thorough analysis of adult student results in relation to student engagement; curricular learning; and employment.
- Provide centres with resources and help build their **capacity** to achieve high levels of student results.

## Training & Other Services

This theme deals with the range of direct services provided to adult students: curriculum, teaching, instructional resources and complementary services.

- Curriculum does not seem to be a major issue but one teacher suggested that there was a need for curriculum that would be relevant and stimulating to adult Cree students.
- As is often done in adult education, the CSB uses modular teaching where students work through course content on their own.

Adult students have very poor reading skills, yet Continuing Education expects them to work through course material on their own.

- This approach is not appropriate for students with low levels skills in reading.

- Moreover, if teachers

are providing little actual assistance during class, then distance education may be a preferable alternative, provided that tutoring and other support services are provided.

- With the exception of the SRVTC, facilities are a major issue in every centre. There is a lack of space for classrooms, shops, offices and storage and the lack of residential facilities for staff that prevents many courses from being offered.
- The facilities of the SRVTC are state-of-the-art but there is a lack of capacity to make full use of them. The most serious problem of this facility is its location in a small and isolated community, with no infrastructure.
- The other issue on instructional resources on which we received considerable comment was course materials, namely having appropriate materials provided in a timely fashion.
- As observed in the youth sector, Administrative Services and the centres have very different views on the cause of the problem. The one thing we are sure of is that the problem is real and must be addressed.
- Complementary services are minimal in the SRVTC and non-existent elsewhere. This situation urgently needs to be remedied. Such services could also deal with the disappearance of courses for social and personal learning raised by one teacher.

***We don't have our own building.  
We don't have access to the library.  
We don't have access to the  
computer room (Student).***

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 66-71

- Review current teaching practice and investigate the use of **distance education**, with tutoring and other support, as an alternative mode of service delivery.
- Undertake a thorough needs assessment of **instructional and residential facilities, resources and student services**.
- Provide centres with resources and help build their **capacity** to deliver quality services to their students.

## Centre Support for Learning

There are nine continuing education centres in the Board. All of them are small and none of them has a facility of its own. By the contrast, the SRVTC has a complete 'stand-alone' facility that resembles a secondary school plus a residence. We therefore decided to divide this theme in two, treating the continuing education centres and the SRVTC separately.

### Continuing Education Centres

- In the CSB, each of the nine centres is administered by a consultant. At the present time, there are six consultants; three are responsible for one centre; three for two centres. We do not have any explanation why persons who do the job of a centre director are classified as consultants. We have also been told that the centres are not even officially recognized by the Board as centres.
- Subject to any analysis provided by the Organizational Review, we conclude that both the status of each centre and the person responsible for it should be revised to reflect reality. Such a change would also serve to send a strong message: that ***continuing education matters***.
- Like any educational institution, centres must plan courses and programs, manage the delivery of these services, monitor their progress and evaluate the results. Course and program planning appear to vary considerably, depending on whether the 'demand' for the service originates from individuals or an outside agency such as the Band Council.
- Essentially, consultants are 'fixers.' When a course is set, they find a facility, perhaps a teacher. They may order supplies but this may be done by Continuing Education. They act as a go-between with the school administration and other agencies such as the Band Council. As such, they provide the liaison with the community.
- Many tasks are assumed by Continuing Education, which is understandable, given the size of the centres and their lack of staff. (With the exception of Chisasibi, they have no administrative staff at all.) However, when it comes to providing support to the centres, none is forthcoming.
- There is no form of evaluation of courses, programs or services. Like everyone else in managerial and professional roles in the CSB, consultants attend lots of meetings, often in Montréal.

Consultants should be recognized as centre directors for that is the function they perform.

When problems arise, the consultant often does not have the authority or the capacity to respond, and Continuing Education provides little or no help.

- Community liaison seems weak in most communities, as evidenced by the general lack of a functioning Local Continuing Education Committee [LCEC]. Despite its name, this committee has a distinct Board-level flavour.

It seems to be have been designed more to provide input to the Board than promote adult education in the community. The only community where we saw a functioning LCEC was in Waswanipi. It appears to be quite active and may well serve as a model for other communities.

## SRVTC

- The one truly adult education facility in the CSB is the SRVTC. We tried to build an image of what the centre was like for students and whether it created an atmosphere that was supportive of learning and encouraged success.
  - There appears to be a weak culture for learning at the SRVTC. For the most part students were more interested in their living conditions than their learning conditions.
  - The administration does not appear to have the capacity to deal with this phenomenon and it gets no support from Continuing Education.
  - The SRVTC is administered by a director and a consultant. As with the continuing education centres, we could find no reasonable explanation for the latter not being classified as an administrator.
- In the SRVTC, the consultant seems to fulfill the role played by a school principal, while the director plays the role of a CEA.
- In fact, it appears as if the consultant fulfills the role played by a school principal, while the director plays the role of a CEA.
  - Subject to any analysis provided by the Organizational Review, we conclude that the status of the consultant here should be revised to reflect reality.
  - The SRVTC ought to provide leadership, not only for its own students and staff but for vocational education throughout the Board. We saw no evidence of such leadership though we heard about some attempts at 'outreach' by the centre that were abandoned because of lack of Board support.
- The SRVTC ought to be the hub of vocational education for all the communities.
- The SRVTC does not engage in any strategic or operational planning and does not evaluate its services. It has some contact with outside agencies such as CHRD. However, it appears that liaison with external bodies is mostly left up to Continuing Education.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 72-78

- Clarify the status of continuing education centres and recognize the role played by consultants by reclassifying them as centre directors and, in the case of the SRVTC, as a deputy director.
- Undertake a detailed review of the operation of all ten centres, to develop and implement a plan of action for the planning, management and evaluation of the services they are supposed to provide.
- Review the composition and mandate of the LCEC and support the development of centre-community collaboration.
- The SRVTC should assume a leadership role for the promotion of vocational education in the CSB.



## Post-Secondary Educational Services in the CSB

The Post Secondary Student Services Office [PSSS Office] operates two 'field offices' (our expression), where services are provided to students, one in Montréal, the other in Gatineau.

### Student Results

- Our initial task was to build a statistical portrait of student results in terms of access to and success from this level of education. We were not able to complete even an outline of such a portrait due to a lack of data.
- We also wished to enrich this portrait with qualitative data, especially from students, to understand what this experience meant to them. Here again, we were blocked by a lack of data. Two students came to one focus group and none to the other.
- On the basis of the data we did collect, we suspect that the performance standards are not being met but we cannot say anything definitive.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION 79

- Undertake a thorough analysis of post-secondary student results, including extensive feedback from current and former students.

### Student Services

- From the limited input we received, financial assistance does not seem to be a major issue. Further investigation is required to determine if, as we found in schools, money is not being spent wisely by the Board. Is the Board getting a good return on its investment? Are there any ways in which the assistance provides a disincentive for students?
- We were also unable to obtain much information about student services. It appears that the counselling and support services are good but neither the range nor the accessibility of these services is adequate.
- Counselling needs to encompass students in secondary school, in continuing education and others not in school, as well as those enrolled in post-secondary institutions.
- This cannot be done by the PSSS offices alone; it requires collaboration with many other units of the Board.
- A more integrated management approach is needed for this to happen. Much more information, especially from students, will have to be obtained before any firm conclusions can be drawn about post-secondary student services.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION 80

- Undertake a thorough analysis of post-secondary student services, including extensive feedback from current and former students.

## PART 4, BOARD SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

Given the restriction of our mandate (see text box on page 2), our investigation of the performance of school board level units was limited to direct support to schools. A wider analysis of their performance should be provided by the Organizational Review.

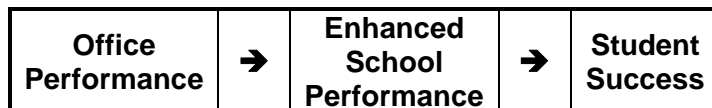
Board support for learning constitutes the bottom layer in our performance pyramid, which we divided into three separate layers, starting with the layer closest to schools, centres and post-secondary education field offices:

- educational service delivery for youth & adults;
- administrative services; and
- governance & general administration.

### Educational Service Delivery for Youth & Adults

#### Office of the Supervisor of Schools

- This Office has line responsibility for schools which ‘locates’ it in the **results chain** for student success. If it performs well, then this Office helps schools to do a better job, which in turn will lead to improved student success.



- We found little evidence of such results being achieved. However, we need to be very clear about we mean - and do not mean - by this statement.
- It would be grossly unfair to attribute low levels of school performance to this Office. As presently structured and resourced, this Office has an enormous responsibility - line authority for schools. Unfortunately:
  - it has been allocated very few resources;
  - Educational Services often does not provide the assistance that is expected; and
  - the Board provides no other support to enable it to discharge its mandate.
- The leadership of this Office is trying its best to do what is expected of it but is caught in a ‘squeeze play’ between the schools and the Board administration.
  - It tries to respond to demands from above which are more concerned with administrative deadlines that schools must meet rather than with their performance in relation to teaching and learning.
  - It tries to respond to demands from below but is unable to provide schools with the assistance they require, because it does not have the capacity to do so.

Solutions to current administrative problems will not be found by changing structures but in building the capacity of the units and individuals who staff them.

- The result: poor communication, little accountability and inadequate follow-up.
- Blaming the leadership of this Office for these poor results would be utterly inappropriate as we saw no evidence of bad faith, only a sincere attempt to do what it can in these difficult circumstances.
- The results that should be expected from such an Office will only be forthcoming when the Board decides to take school performance seriously and begins the long process of building the capacity of units such as this one to support schools.

#### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 81-84**

- After consulting schools, consider making this Office the **sole point of accountability** for the supervision and support of schools.
- Provide this Office with resources and help build its **capacity** to make this happen.

### **Educational Services**

The Educational Services Department is made up of five separate units:

- Instructional Services;
  - Special Education;
  - Student Services;
  - Cree Programs; and
  - Professional Development.
- In 1999, the Mianscum report stated that the Educational Services Department was perceived to be ineffective in the delivery of the pedagogical program to schools - a form of invisible leadership within the Board.
  - If the perspective offered by Educational Services during this Review were to be believed, major changes have occurred since then.
    - Educational Services sees itself as a dynamic professional organization actively supporting teaching and learning in schools.
  - However, from a school perspective, it appears that nothing has changed, as reflected in the comment included in the text box.
  - Judging from the curriculum guides and other documentation provided to us for review, the material produced by Instructional Services would be of little use to teachers who are not well informed and confident with the content and methodology of their course of study.
  - There is material in Cree on the website at Carleton University ([www.eastcree.org](http://www.eastcree.org)) but teachers must be quite computer-literate to use it and the process for obtaining print copies is cumbersome and costly.

***I call them the castle on the hill. We feel sometimes that these people they are just there to create their own jobs - they create projects, they create workshops, or they will develop a new program just to maintain them (Vice-Principal).***

- The Department's record for managing data on student results is extremely poor. Most of the responsibility for this function has been 'outsourced' to an external consultant. Data reports are mainly about attendance and little is done to help schools make use of the data to improve teaching and learning.
- The so-called Professional Development unit only supports the Teacher Training Program, which from all accounts is not well managed and has disappointing results.
- Special Education is an exception as it seems to be quite responsive to school needs, while thinking about the 'big picture' beyond individual schools. Building the capacity of this unit would be a worthwhile investment.
- Student Services is a partial exception. It appears to be well organized and successfully manages a wide range of activities. However, there does seem to be a lack of 'connectedness' between this unit and the schools. The seriousness of this problem needs to be investigated so that the unit can take appropriate remedial action.
- On the basis of the evidence we were able to gather, we conclude that the performance of this Department, subject to the exceptions noted above, is not acceptable. From what school stakeholders have told us and what we have seen ourselves, a detailed investigation is needed to determine if it actually lives up to the claims it makes on its own behalf.
- This investigation should include a probe into the possible conflict of interest caused by the reliance of Cree Programs on an external publisher. The services of the consultant at Carleton University could be a very valuable asset in any such investigation.
- The CSB has invested considerable resources in this Department over the years. Under current structures, it is supposed to be the mainstay of school board support for teaching and learning in the schools.
- Corrective measures might have to include reassignment of responsibilities to other departments, notably the Office of the Supervisor of Schools and relocation from Chisasibi.

#### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 85-89**

- Undertake a thorough **performance audit** of this Department.
- Consider **eliminating** this Department and **restructuring** its functions as units of the Office of the Supervisor of Schools to ensure schools receive the support they need.
- Thoroughly **study** the Teacher Training Program currently operating and the ones proposed for the future, and **develop** a program that meets the needs of schools for properly qualified teachers at **all levels of instruction**.
- Help this Department to develop the **capacity** to support schools in whatever role it is assigned.

## Continuing Education

In the CSB, the Department of Continuing Education combines both line and staff functions for adult education. It thus has the equivalent responsibilities for adult learning that the Office of the Supervisor of Schools and Educational Services have for youth education.

Continuing Education does not appear to have the capacity to exercise either its line or staff responsibilities for adult learning.

- Unfortunately, it does not appear to have the capacity to exercise either of these responsibilities.
- The Department presents itself as being dedicated to a mission-driven commitment to adult students and makes several claims in this regard.
- Some claims could not be verified because the Department failed to provide us with the data that we requested time and time again; others were too vague to be verifiable.
- For those claims that we could verify, at least in part, we found that the Department did not measure up to its own standards with respect to Cree values, support services, facilities, centre-community collaboration or individualized instruction.
- There is a very low level of leadership in Continuing Education, both internally with respect to its centres, staff and students, and externally, in terms of being connected to the wider world of adult education.
- The Department does not engage in any systematic strategic or operational planning.
- Despite its claims to the contrary, we conclude that service delivery by this Department is extremely poor. Its poor performance is clearly caused by a profound lack of capacity

There is no accountability for Continuing Education to perform, as judged by the Board's apparent lack of interest in what this Department does.

to do the job that has been assigned to it. Radical surgery, not a band-aid, is required to address this situation.

- Monitoring is confined to feedback about activities obtained during periodic

meetings and evaluation is non-existent. This situation appears to be due to both a lack of capacity and a lack of incentive, as summarized in the text box.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 90-94

- Undertake a thorough **performance audit** of this Department and a thorough review of the policies and practices to determine the need for and approval of adult courses.
- Take steps to ensure that Continuing Education provides centres with direction and support and plays its due role in regional development.
- Help the Department to develop the **capacity** to discharge its mandate.

## Post-Secondary Student Services Office

The PSSS Office is located in Montréal, where one of its two field offices is located (see p. 21). Here we are concerned with the Board level aspects of this Office.

- We were not able to collect sufficient data on the PSSS Office to properly analyze either its performance or capacity. There appear to have been several serious problems with the administration of this Office in the past, which the new Director needs to address.
- The PSSS Office seems to be a 'paper mill' concentrating on the processing of applications and associated paperwork for post-secondary student support.
- Despite the existence of detailed Board policies and a decision making process based on these policies, some decisions are reversed by the Council. We do not know how extensive this problem is but it clearly needs to be addressed.
- The newly appointed director of this Office faces many challenges, not the least of which is the lack of any strategic planning or evaluation of the performance of the PSSS Office.
- In the absence of a more complete set of data, this Review will not contribute much to the capacity of this Office to meet these challenges. Such input is necessary but it will have to come from the follow-up to this Review.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 95-96

- Undertake a thorough analysis of the PSSS Office and a plan to develop its **capacity** to discharge its mandate.

## Administrative Services

Administrative services in the CSB are provided by four separate departments: Human Resources; Finance; Material Resources; and Information & Technology (IT). These highlights are only concerned with the direct support these departments provide to schools, centres and PSSS offices.

- Schools and centres look to these departments for the following types of support:
  - the allocation of an adequate level of the human, financial, material and IT resources, including staff housing;
  - efficient processes for the recruitment and hiring of school/centre staff, the purchasing of materials and supplies and other aspects of the provision of various resources, as well as guidance and support in the conduct of these processes;
  - appropriate remuneration and working conditions for school/centre staff;
  - guidance and support for the management of all the resources the school/centre has at its disposal, especially human resources; and
  - professional development of school/centre staff in a wide variety of fields.
- Our analysis of the allocation of human resources was rendered all but impossible because of the lack of data from this Department, as was our analysis of the allocation of financial resources because of the lack of data from Finance.
- We are very critical of the affirmative action appointments of Cree staff because of:
  - the apparent disregard as to whether the appointee will, given support and time, be able to do the job in question; and
  - the failure to put such support in place.
- We have found that creating employment opportunities for Cree adults seems to be more important to the Board than providing educational opportunities for Cree children.
- There is a wide discrepancy between the school/centre and departmental perspectives on the process for purchasing, managed jointly by Finance and Material Resources. These differences of opinion are serious enough to require a detailed audit of the process.
- We also found that the attitude of the Finance Department reflects the perception in schools and centres that the CSB is a board-centred organization.
- Given the importance of the Material Resources and IT departments, we regret that we were unable to provide any detailed analysis of the other aspects of these units.

***Human Resources needs some serious revamping. Its process is too bureaucratic; it's not flexible enough to be able to accommodate what the local school operations need (Commissioner).***

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 97-105

- Re-examine the present policy and practice on **affirmative action** hiring and promotion to ensure that candidates have the *potential* to do the job and measures are in place to ensure support.
- Take the steps suggested to be better prepared for upcoming funding negotiations with the Ministry and the next round of collective bargaining.
- Conduct an **in-depth examination** of policies and procedures for hiring and purchasing.
- Given the importance of the Human Resources Department and its extremely poor performance, consider placing it under **internal trusteeship**.
- After consultation of all major stakeholders, **adopt a framework** for the allocation of resources to schools that includes a clear public statement of the guiding principles and criteria used and provides for a transparent process for ensuring an equitable distribution of available resources based on schools needs.
- Develop a long-term plan for the investment in information technology in support of learning.
- Help each Department to develop the **capacity** to make this happen.

## Governance & General Administration

In this section we take a brief look at the base of school board support for learning in relation to: the Board's structures and systems; strategic direction; community relations and external linkages; and organizational culture.

- In keeping with our revised mandate, our analysis of the structures for the governance and management was brief; again, we must rely on the Organizational Review.
- It is obvious from the feedback of stakeholders that they believe that the Board is top-heavy and unresponsive to school, centre and community needs. Rather than seeing itself as the base of a pyramid supporting schools and centres, as we have suggested it should be, the Board seems to see itself at the top of the pyramid, with schools/centres at the bottom.
- In the CSB, even basic communication is lacking. Schools and centres lack the capacity to deal with the enormous challenges they face. School principals and centre consultants do what any sensible administrator would do - call the Board for help. Unfortunately, when they do, all they get is a recording: No one can take your call, please leave a message. They do but it seems that no one calls back.

***The Cree School Board is seen by almost everyone to be too bureaucratic. Bureaucracies tend to exist in hierarchical structures where we see layer upon layer of management. Organizations that are flat in nature, where there are fewer layers of management, are more responsive (Stakeholder).***



- The leadership of the CSB is invisible in the communities. Many stakeholders hope that the Organizational and Education reviews signal a change in the attitude of the Board leadership but they are now in a 'wait-and-see' mode. As will be presented in **Part 5, From Findings to Action**, the first test of the Board leadership in this regard will be the presentation of this report to the communities. They will be waiting to see who comes and what the Board is actually going to do to follow up on the two Reviews.
- Leadership, we have argued, needs to come from all levels of the organization, not just the top. There are leaders in the communities, in the ranks of teachers, and the student body. What better opportunity to develop the leaders of tomorrow than the participation of students as leaders in the change process. After all, it is their future that the Board is trying to ensure.
- Although the Board has had many plans over the years, it has a poor track record in planning. It needs to develop the capacity to set long, medium and short term results that are linked to each other in a coherent fashion.
- Then it needs the capacity to develop strategic and operational plans to achieve these results. These plans must fit with school level planning or else the disconnectedness that we have observed between the Board and its schools and centres will simply continue.
- Monitoring and evaluation are essential components of the overall framework for managing an organization. A high-performing organization not only needs to know where it is going and how it intends to get there, it needs to know how it is progressing and whether or not its journey has been successful.
- Monitoring and evaluating performance require data, and that requires an efficient data management system, something the Board does not have at the present time.
- We have discussed the importance of community relations and external linkages to the Board. In general, community relations are weak, a sign of the poor communication and leadership discussed above.
- We have seen some examples of collaboration with external agencies in the region but we were not able to determine the extent of these linkages. This is an area that needs to be further explored.
- We also mentioned the importance of connections to the wider educational system, connections that appear to be underdeveloped at the present time. We urge the Board to take measures to remedy this situation.
- Just as schools and centres lack capacity and must look to the Board for support, the Board lacks capacity and must look outside for support.
- In the final section of our analysis of school board support we attempted to deal with the elusive notion of **organizational culture** - 'the way things are done here.' We found that:
  - the Board's organizational culture is not connected to the Board's mission;
  - it is characterized by a weak sense of moral purpose, an inverted sense of values, where students come last;

***It's easy in an organization to change the boxes, right? It's not so easy to have the right people in charge of the boxes (Coordinator).***

- there is an utter lack of any accountability;
  - time and resources are spent in meetings and travel rather than productive work; and
  - there is a virtual absence of any follow-up.
- This kind of organizational culture does not support student success.

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 106-115**

- Take immediate steps to '**downsize**' the Board's top-heavy administration, **improve communication** and develop appropriate forms of **shared leadership**.
- Begin a long-term **process** to develop appropriate forms of **strategic and operational planning**, and a framework for the monitoring and **self-evaluation** of organizational **performance and capacity**.
- Take immediate steps to **rebuild positive relations** with schools and communities and build effective partnerships, networks and other linkages with external agencies.
- Take immediate steps to deal with the **negative elements** of the present organizational culture and begin a long-term process to develop a **positive organizational culture** that is supportive of the Board's mission and purpose.

## PART 5, FROM FINDINGS TO ACTION

Part 5 of the CAFSI report draws the various strands of the report together. In addition to providing a consolidated list of recommendations (not included here), it contains reflections and lessons learned from the Review, including a summary of what stakeholders want to see happen as a result of this Review; and a brief discussion of some key issues to be considered in planning the follow-up to this Review - the 'road ahead.'

### Reflections & Lessons Learned

#### From a Team Perspective

##### Values, Vision & Purpose

The values of any organization should provide guidance when considering various 'means' and 'ends.' In the CSB, Cree values provide these guiding **beacons**. The vision and purpose of an organization are about 'ends' - the destination, not to be confused with 'means' - the journey. Leaders are expected to be able to tell the difference between means and ends and help others understand such differences. This is especially important when dealing with controversial issues such as the language of instruction.

##### Achievement of Results

This Review set out to determine what results were being achieved in relation to three types of student learning: student engagement; curricular learning; and social and personal learning. The Review confirmed what most stakeholders knew: the level of student learning is appalling. The Board slogan, **Students first**, does not represent reality and students in the CSB will never achieve success until it does.

##### Operational Performance & Capacity

Overall, the Board's level of performance and capacity to perform are very low. Creating a high-performance organization begins with **everyone** being accountable - and being held accountable - for the contribution they are supposed to be making toward student success. Dramatic changes in the way the CSB operates are required if it is to develop a culture of accountability for success.

### From an Insider Perspective

Our team included two 'insiders' who work for the CSB. This was done to balance the view of the external consultants. Every aspect of our work and every section of this report have been informed by these two perspectives. However, in compiling the lessons learned, we felt it was important to have one reflection from a purely insider perspective.

There is a lack of 'Creeness' in schools, units, and offices. We need to model for our students more of what it is to be Cree. Staff engagement in general does not seem to be high in the CSB and professionalism needs to improve overall. Most of all, as stated in the text box, we found that we must put personal feelings aside, seize the opportunity provided by this Review and use it to help all our students succeed.

At times, we struggled to decide whether the findings of the Review bothered us because we did not agree with them or because we pictured the well-intentioned people who worked in these areas and who would be affected by what we were saying. We found the latter to be true and that we all had to accept the findings of the Review and move on from there to all do what is best for students and future generations.

### From a Stakeholders Perspective

At the end of focus groups and interviews, as well as various questionnaires, we asked stakeholders the following question:

This Educational Review is meant to lead to **action** to improve the quality of service delivery to students. What evidence would satisfy you that action is being taken to effect this improvement?

The following provide some highlights from their responses.

***Q: How will you know when change is really happening?***

***A: When magical thinking has been eliminated (Teacher).***

## Student Results

All stakeholders want to see improved student results, namely:

- better attendance and higher motivation;
- decreased drop-out rates and increased graduation rates.

As reflected in the statement quoted in the text box, stakeholders want students to leave secondary school with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to succeed in college, and the work place.

***When my child finishes grade 11 in the Cree S.B., I'd like to see her go to college and succeed. When my child comes out of college with a diploma or certificate on a non-native basis, that's success (Band Council Representative).***

However, stakeholders moved quickly from results to concentrate on the conditions for learning that they believed would bring about these results. We have summarized their input below as 'indicators of successful change.'

### INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL CHANGE IN SCHOOLS

- Instead of saying, 'School is boring,' students are saying: 'Hey, school is fun!'*
- All teachers from pre-K to Sec. V have proper training.*
- We have stopped pretending that students are at level.*
- Students are receiving all the support they need, whether special education, social services or other.*
- English or French is being offered starting at pre-K, as is Cree language.*
- More traditional activities such as drumming, are going on in the school.*
- A greater variety of courses are offered in high school, including more 'hands-on' vocational programs.*
- Teaching strategies and methods are evaluated.*
- There is good communication between teachers and the school administration.*
- The school environment is safe for students; there is zero-tolerance for violence.*
- Parents are more involved in the education of their children, helping the school to see how it can help them to learn.*
- There is an active community team in each school.*
- Smiling interested students, parents, teachers and staff can be seen in the school from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm.*

## Leadership for Change

Many stakeholders are aware that successful change requires leadership at every level of the system, from the Grand Chief to individual parents - everyone has a role to play. Stakeholders are hopeful but sceptical. They need to be convinced that the Board is getting serious about education, serious about change. The following provide some of the 'indicators' they will be hoping to see.

### INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL CHANGE IN SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

- The Board shows that it has a new focus on the curriculum.*
- We have a standardized curriculum throughout the Board.*
- There is consistent and focused leadership from the top.*
- The Board has involved all stakeholders in the action plan.*
- Everyone is being held accountable for their actions.*
- People that don't belong are asked to step aside.*
- Each person is aware of what his or her role is and how he or she can contribute to student learning.*
- There is constant communication in the media about education.*
- The Board leadership is visible in the schools.*
- Continuing education centres are given the recognition they deserve.*
- Continuing education centres are assigned facilities that allow them function.*
- There is good communication among the PSSS Office, local schools and centres, Continuing Education and other departments.*
- The PSSS Office is not always operating in crisis mode.*
- We have stopped going around in circles and are now going somewhere.*
- Leaders are **taking action** instead of going to meetings and **talking about action**.*

## The Road Ahead

We took this title from the report of the Cree Language and Culture Conference, held in November, 1997. Like this earlier report, the CAFSI report is seeking action from the Council of Commissioners, which means the Council must:

- **communicate** its commitment to stakeholders;
- be **accountable** to them for this commitment; and
- **follow up** on this commitment.

We do not know what commitment, if any, had been made before the Conference. In the case of the Educational Review, the commitment was made at the beginning, as reported in Part 1:

***The Council of Commissioners and the Management Group of the CSB shall ensure that the Educational Review will be followed immediately by a final step ... to create and implement an action plan for improvement.***

A considerable investment has been made in planning and conducting this Review but it is the faith that stakeholders have placed in this Review that is the greatest investment of all.

It is beyond the scope of this report to provide detailed guidance about the road ahead. However, we would like to offer some initial 'food for thought' as the leaders of the Board begin to plan how they will prove that the faith stakeholders have in them is justified.

### Communication

There are countless ways that the Board can use to communicate with stakeholders. An effective communication strategy is needed, one that identifies:

- the range of target audiences the Board wishes to reach;
- the purpose and intended results from each communication;
- the key issues that need to be communicated; and
- other related matters, including format, resources, time line and accountability.

In our view, a communication strategy should begin with the 'people on the point,' the members of the Council of Commissioners, and Board and school administrators, notably the principals. Each of these individuals is the 'point person' that answers for the Board to a particular group of stakeholders.

One essential form of communication is direct dialogue with each community, as recommended by the Mianscum report in 1999 (see text box). These community presentations will likely constitute the first public demonstration of the Board's commitment to follow through on both the Educational and Organizational Reviews.

They need to be well planned, in collaboration with the schools and community representatives, and most of all, they need to include students: after all, it is their future that is at stake.

**“The Council of Commissioners must determine the next phase of addressing these problems. One thing I can attest to is that the Cree School Board should look forward to meeting the Cree schools and communities. Your presence in the Cree communities and schools would be a greatly appreciated by the people” (Henry Mianscum).**

## Accountability

Accountability begins with the Board accepting full responsibility for the current state of affairs and being accountable to its constituents for the progress of change. It is important for everyone to realize that this new mode of accountability is not a search for 'scapegoats.' While there is still a need to better understand much of what has happened in the past, seeking to assign blame will not be helpful in moving forward. However, the Board must make it crystal clear that from now on every administrator and staff member of the CSB, regardless of position or family connections, will be held accountable for the performance of his or her duties.

There are many people in the CSB who do not have the capacity required for the position which they presently occupy. This reality needs to be acknowledged and managed. Accountability needs to be firm but it needs to be fair and it needs to be based on realistic time lines and means of implementation.

We concur with yet another recommendation of the Mianscum report, the need to appoint a 'task force' to oversee the change process. In fact, we firmly believe that such a body should already be at work. In addition to seeking broad representation on this task force (without allowing it to become unwieldy), the essential characteristic of any member must be personal competence, not family connections. The Board cannot afford to appoint persons who are not capable of providing the needed direction to change.

## Follow-Up

As mentioned in the overview provided in Part 1, originally the Educational Review was expected to 'roll up' the data and analysis of other initiatives such as the Organizational Review to provide the Board with a holistic portrait of its performance. Although this mandate was withdrawn, the need for this synthesis remains.

Once this synthesis is complete, the Board can then move forward to create an action plan. An action plan provides a 'road map' to the organization embarking on a 'journey of change.'

Action plans come in all shapes and sizes. However, they all share certain common characteristics; in general any action plan includes:

- **intended results** for improved capacity and performance to deliver education;
- the **means** selected to achieve these results;
- the **resources** required for this purpose;
- the **planning** of improvement efforts, including a **timeline** for all aspects of the plan; and
- the means for **monitoring and evaluating** the results.

As the Board begins to move forward with the development of its action plan, it should discover that many of the activities in the plan are for **capacity building** - if this is not so, then the plan is in serious trouble.

Action Planning cannot proceed until the Board completes a synthesis of all current planning and evaluative initiatives.



## A Brighter Future for Students

Throughout our report, we talk about the importance of *lifelong learning*. In brief, we want to send two clear messages to stakeholders:

- First, learning is not something that stops when a person leaves school; and
- second, even though ‘catching up’ can be extremely difficult, it can be done.

We have recommended a ‘fresh start’ to teaching and learning with a new curricular model that will ensure all students learn to read, the primary building block of lifelong learning. This change cannot be made overnight. That is why there must be a transitional regime for students currently in school. One of the most important tasks for the Board in the coming months is to assure these students and their parents that they are not being abandoned. It is up to the leadership of the Board to re-kindle a spark of hope in all students, represented by the young girl in this picture,<sup>1</sup> whom we imagine asking:



### Who is going to teach me to read?

The Board must convince them that:

- *learning is important;*
- *it’s not too late; and*
- *we will help you to succeed.*

At the end of one focus group, we told everyone that the Board was committed to use this Review to make a difference in the lives of students. A teacher came up to us and said:

***You know, I almost believe you.***

“The most valuable resource that the Cree nation has is our children. Schools, teachers, students, parents and communities will always require more of the Cree School Board in regard to our children’s education and well-being because in these children lay our dreams, hopes and aspirations for the future of the Cree nation”  
(Henry Mianscum).

To us, this simple but powerful statement expressed all the fears and hopes of stakeholders that we encountered throughout the Review: fear that, once again, nothing would happen, but hope that, this time, real change would take place.

It is now up to Board to prove that the hopes this teacher expressed, not her fears, are justified. If it does, then the vision expressed by Henry Mianscum in 1999 (see text box), will finally be realized.

<sup>1</sup> The picture is from Michael Gnarowski, Ed., *I Dream of Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Celebration of the James Bay Crees* (Kemptville ON: Golden Dog Press, 2002), p. 163.

Let us put what we are talking about as a priority. Let us really try to help these children. Let us not hide or sweep under the rug the things that we talked about today (Elder).