

9 Roundtable Discussion #2

George Sioui, Cora Weber-Pillwax, and Ralph Makokis

George Sioui

We were there when the visitors arrived from Europe. We were there. We were not impressed because they were weak, sick, poor, and they asked us for a little place to live. This has very much conditioned our feeling about history. When the invaders arrived here in the west, they could show much more power because they had taken so much from the land. They had taken away so many of our peoples that maybe people here had a reason to be more impressed than we were in the east. We still are not impressed. In the east the Mohawks, the Iroquois, the Wendat, the Abnackies, the Micmacs, all the eastern peoples, have this sense about history that we refused to be controlled. We refused to be impressed by a value system of people who had to leave their lands in the first place. We never had to leave. We consistently refused to be controlled and to be impressed because we know the harm that was done to our peoples. Prior to contact we had great nations, we had great confederacies of nations.

Today the Iroquois Confederacy represents what remains of large confederacies of Wendats, Neutrals, Arias, Tobacco peoples, and an infinity of Algonquin nations with which the Iroquois Confederacy traded before contact. The Iroquois were able to save the remnants of all these destroyed nations and confederacies. The Iroquois are representative of what we are today as Native peoples. I believe that we all suffered an incredible shock and an incredible amount of destruction. Today I think that our ancestors and our Elders know that we are giving each other what remaining strength we have. Together we will recompose a great Indian nation, which will not be Wendat, Cree, Huron, or Iroquois entirely. It will be a great Indian nation and it is coming together right now. This attempt to go through the exercise of the dominant society and tackle their education and come out alive and still able to speak from the heart as First Nations people, not destroyed in our spirits and our souls, is very welcome. This attempt is a sign that the times are changing, not only changing but changed.

A new trend exists right here in the air of our land. No one can do anything about this change. It is here already. We have suffered a severe shock for 503 years. We are taking our place again as the leaders in our land and the protectors of our land. Our nation, the Wendats, just like the Iroquois had a high gift for adopting people and assimilating them into our societies, as Elder Porter said. He made us repeat one Mohawk phrase and said that he thought that we were all Mohawk. That is very Mohawk, very Iroquois, and beautiful because that is what it is all about: adopting each other. Our ancestors were able to survive because they were able,

supposedly, to help the French fight the English. Their real agenda was to kidnap English children and adults to bring back to their villages and raise them as Wendat people. The Iroquois did the same thing. Others did this too, but we did it systematically. Today among our people the notion of being part Indian does not exist. I am not part Indian, even if I have a French accent. An English or Spanish accent means nothing. I am a Wendat. I believe we are in the process of reclaiming our people, that is, those who say they are part Indian, part Cree, part Cherokee, and so forth. They will come back and be First Nations. And the door is open to non-Indians. We were always able to transform non-Indians into Indian people because we all come from the Circle.

There is no such thing as races and distinct civilizations. There is only one civilization that is adapted to the human being and the world. It is the Circle of civilization. The people who chose to become linear and had to leave Europe because of this linear world view are not able to sustain their civilizations much longer here in our land. This is because the linear world view does not adapt to our land. Slowly they will have to adopt our civilization because it is circular—a circular world view. Eventually, we will adopt and assimilate them. As we said in our old Wendat language, we will *eat* them. The English word carries the same meaning: assimilate means to eat someone up. Despite the small numbers of Wendats or other tribes in the East, we were always able to eat up the dominant society. We never lost our distinct identity. We are not part Indian; we are what we are. We are Wendat or we are Iroquois. You would never think of Elder Porter as part Mohawk. He has the vision and the spirit intact from his people, from our people.

I will talk a little about my academic experience. I went to school for 29 years. I wanted to rewrite history when I was young. When I was 6 years old, my father said that one day I would have to write other history books. I did that. I first tried to study history at Laval University in Quebec. Laval University was still controlled by the priests—the Jesuits and the clergy. I dropped out of that university and told them I would be back when they had finished their time. Instead I started studying languages, including Russian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Inuktitut, Cree, Montagne, and English. Although I amused myself studying languages, my dream of becoming an historian and rewriting Indian history was always there.

Eventually I came back to history, after meeting someone—Elder Eddie Belrose. It is coincidental that this conference happens to be in the city of Edmonton because it was here 15 years ago that I met Eddie and other Elders—Saulteau, Assiniboine, Uncle Abe Burnstick, and Peter O'Chiese. Like most of our families, mine suffered from alcohol, and still suffers. But my friends and I were relieved and liberated through the teachings of our Elders, and one whom I deeply respect is Elder Eddie Belrose.

This meeting with Eddie Belrose and the Elders led 10 years later to my going with my brothers to meet the Province of Quebec in the Supreme Court of Canada over a case of religious and territorial rights. It came to be known as the Sioui Case. Eventually, we wanted to take what we had learned from Eddie and the Elders back to our homes in Ontario and Quebec, and did take it back to Quebec in 1982. We fasted in Quebec on some of our traditional hunting lands, and were branded in Quebec as Sioui people, which is why I am not working there today. We were accustomed to going to those territories to hunt, fish, and collect plants, but this time we were fasting. We won eventually, but it took eight years. We went to court four times and finally won in the Supreme Court. The Sioui case caused a great upheaval in Quebec politics, Canadian politics, and world politics concerning Indigenous peoples. And it started here in Alberta, on the Kootenai Plains. We were arrested because we had built a sweatlodge and some fasting lodges. They said we were mutilating the forest even though thousands of square miles of forest have been clearcut and destroyed in forest exploitation by white people.

We finally found and pulled from our archives an old document that we had signed. It was written by the hand of the British Brigadier-General James Murray in 1760. This document said that under the new English regime our tribe would have the free exercise of our religion, customs, and our trade with the English. We looked on this document as a treaty because it talked about customs and religion. They countered by saying it was only a safe conduct to go back to our settlements without being attacked by the British soldiers in 1760. We fought this interpretation. Through the vision and tradition that the Elders gave back to us came an understanding of our deeper identity, and we were able to infuse new meaning into that 230-year-old scrap of paper: We were able to put new life into this dead piece of paper. Eventually, the document was recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada as a treaty. This defeat gave Quebec even fewer reasons to like us than before.

In discussing this case I wish to stress the importance of Elders and the importance of spirituality in our own experience with the case. We already had our consciousness and our pride as Indian people belonging to this eastern, very battered tribe of Hurons (so-called Hurons, really Wendat). However, we lacked the deeper understanding of our spirituality, of our Indianness, and of our being, that is, the sense of our being as Indian people. The Elders here, your Elders, gave us back that sense and understanding. This was consistent with what our parents had always told us about our people. We are all one family, they told us, one family wherever you go: north, south, east, or west. They told us to approach all Indian people as relatives, "Treat them as your relatives and you will be treated as relatives in turn." The Elders gave us back what we had lost, just as we have to give back to the white people what they have lost. The white

people have had to become linear for some reason. It is not their fault that linear thinking can only produce destruction. There is only one word for what has been happening, and that word is *destruction*. We have to give them back the Circle, their original circular vision, where we all come from as human beings.

I would have liked to use a little more humor, because our brother Dale Auger gave us such a strong medicine at the banquet. He has that gift of giving his medicine with humor, and I said to myself, "Maybe I should not be so serious all the time." I guess his medicine will be working in me, so next time maybe I will be a little more humoristic. I would like to stress how I thoroughly enjoyed the presentations that were given to us by the different participants. All come from different nations, different corners, and different parts of our land. All of those are efforts to give, share, and give what we still have. As a Wendat I don't have much left, but I have something important, which is my sense of history. I believe that we are forming a powerful people, a powerful nation. I have to congratulate Alberta because for the first time in the history of Canada there is a part Indian minister. I hope that some day he says he is Indian, not just part Indian and his wife is Indian. That will mean that we are headed in the direction of Native leadership. I firmly believe that we will come back into a position of command in this land of ours.

I want to stress that when we say *our land* we say we come from the land, just as when I say I come from my mother and my father. I don't say my mother is mine or belongs to me, I belong to her. Non-Indians say *my land* and they mean the land belongs to them. This is what we have to change: we must be able to give non-Indians the feeling that they belong to this land rather than this land belonging to them. If we fail to meet that challenge as First Nations, we can expect the great hunger that our Elder talked about earlier. I still think we can hope, all of us together. First Nations have to get busy assimilating the non-Indian society, that is Indianizing the society, thereby avoiding what is coming. If we continue to think in a linear way, on the path of destruction, we will not avoid the great hunger. If we come back to the Circle, we will achieve our goal and responsibility as First Nations in relation to our white, black, and yellow brothers as well as the great human family of which we are a part.

Cora Weber-Pillwax

I find it almost impossible to summarize what has been said or what I have experienced in this meeting. For the first time in an academic setting, I feel that I have experienced a tremendous infusion of love and respect. I say this after many years of studying and working in the field of education. It was hard to organize my thoughts to say anything because I have been like a sponge taking in the positive energy of this whole conference. It will take me years to integrate what I have heard and felt here. It has been a task of

great creativity, and I know there will be growth in many directions as a result of this conference.

I was thinking of the three main presenters that we have heard and of their gifts to us. Carlos Cordero talked about a pre-Columbian knowledge base that we need to be able to access and understand. The existence of such a reality and the realization that some of our students in schools today would one day access this resource injected new life and purpose into my own work. The notion of creating "Indian space" in our schools for our children requires much work and research on the part of Aboriginal educators and academics. As a teacher and administrator, I appreciate Dr. Cordero's naming of the concept and the inevitable empowerment that this naming brings to us as educators. From Eber Hampton I remember the words "unrolling the sacred bundle that is ourselves." Words about finding those memories bring us to knowledge of ourselves—a knowledge that is absolutely necessary for the development of understanding and compassion that will lead us beyond the limitations of our past experiences. Finally, I appreciated very much Bea Medicine's comments that women's issues were men's issues and that the two issues are inseparable. Large families of men and women who respect each other demonstrate the truth of those comments.

I can't describe what it means to me to hear such distinguished people who have dedicated their lives to thinking and being who they are. They have offered hope, confirmations, and validations of things that have gripped and troubled me all of my life. I have had to work around these issues and finally say, "This is the answer and this is what I'll work with." To hear people express their ideas and their beliefs so confidently has been very encouraging. I find that emotions have been a critical element to what has been offered and received at this conference. Yesterday in one of the sessions, there were a lot of tears. I think even the people who didn't shed tears were probably crying. We recognize the signposts and that we have all been on those roads. And we cry because we are saying to each other, "Yes, we know your pain." Besides a sharing of knowledge, it has been a sharing of healing.

I will share a little of who I am and how I got here. For a number of years I was a halfbreed. Then I became a Metis. I guess I am still a Metis if I have to tell anybody what I am. When I was growing up, I was first a child, and then I was informed that I was a halfbreed. I grew up in a northern lake community in Alberta. It was typical: dirt road, no services as we call them today. We were happy and self-sufficient because we had to be. My father was a trapper and a fisherman. My mother created the home for nine of us children. We lived on our own resources in typical Metis fashion. My father was from the United States, and the people called us Longknives in Cree. My mother was Cree, so the white people in the community called us Indians. We grew up with a strong sense of the Cree

ways of being and also a knowledge of the English ways of being. Spirituality was the way of being as I learned it, and this is also what I have heard here.

For most of us in the north we must leave to get an education if we are to go beyond junior high school. As I wanted to become a teacher, I had to leave to attend high school and university. I thought that as a teacher I would be able to incorporate the knowledge of my grandfathers into the curriculum. I had never been taught the ways of seeing into the future or into a different space the way my grandfather could, but I truly believed that as a teacher I would be able to ensure that the following generations of children would be able to gain that knowledge. I think maybe we all start out that way. My teaching experience was finding out that those kinds of things—little ways that are not so little, hundreds of them as you know, ways of being, ways of knowing that are ours—would never be a part of the learning experiences of our children in the context of standard schooling. I see this as one challenge that we must still overcome if our children are to benefit from the knowledge of their forefathers. We know it will not be an easy task. I have hope, however, because in my short time here I have seen and heard an increasing number of voices raised in support. I believe, with George, that we will be one nation, and when this happens all ways of being and of knowing will be respected and passed on to the following generations.

All my life I have grappled with the question of how schooling affects oral cultures and how to prevent the diffusion of oral cultures. How is an oral culture kept alive and whole in this society today? The question arose through my own efforts to understand my mother who had never been to school. Schooling was not a big thing in terms of what we saw and lived at home, but both of my parents insisted that we go to school as long as we could. There were other ways, however, in which I could see they did not respect or appreciate what the schooling process was doing to us. My mother would not let us read in the house and she would not let us bring books home from school. I realized later—at least this is how I interpreted it—that school alienated her because it left her out of our lives.

As I grew older I realized that I could not grasp the wisdom of my mother. It seemed that I was always trying to get into her head. One day it occurred to me that perhaps I would never be able to understand her. Once I had learned to read, I could not return to a time and space where I couldn't read, to live the mind and the being of a person who had never learned to read. That is where I am today, and I live this out with a great sense of sadness. A part of me feels the tragedy of having been taken out of that experience and that way of thinking and being. It may sound contradictory for an educator to say this, but I feel there must be a way to achieve balance. Through all the years of high school, university, and teaching, one of my primary goals was personal survival and integrity.

Today one of my most important roles in our system is to support other Aboriginal educators who are struggling not to give up in the face of the same overwhelming difficulties.

I believe that the one thing that has carried me through all of my life is that I have always felt loved. I have never felt or believed—and this is because of who my parents were—that my schooling had anything to do with who I was. But I also know from the way people treated me that schooling influenced how they viewed me. Most people treated me better if they knew that I was educated or if I was in school. I received rewards and recognition because schooling and degrees were respected. I had to be aware of my own being and not end up working and settling for such recognition. The one thing that kept me solid on that principle was the fact that my mother never went to school. I respected and loved my parents, and I thought, “You can’t balance that way. I can’t be such a great person and my mother is nothing.” There is something drastically wrong with a system and a society that operates like that. As I grew I learned the truth of my earlier thoughts, which were motivated by love and respect. Now I know and I have seen just how devastating such reward systems have been and continue to be for so many of our people.

I feel a deep sense of shame and sometimes do not know where to hide when I see an Elder being subtly put aside in favor of the educated young. There is a difference between the honors accorded to people for who they are and what they have become because of what they have done and those accorded to a person who has a degree; that is not truth, that is not what life is about.

As other presenters have said, I have found that the underlying element in education systems today is colonization. The struggle is how to break this colonization process in a real way in a classroom or in a school in an isolated, traditional Cree community. How do you make that place an authentic Cree space? Theories and academia aside, this is what we are working on every day. Unfortunately, we cannot claim a great deal of success. My only hope rests with the communities themselves. I appreciated what the Harvard students said about their lifeline being in the communities. Communities are not just people; communities are all the living things where you live. Communities are where you have praying spaces and where you have the living things besides people that talk to you and give you strength. Knowledge as I get it from the university is of no value unless it makes a difference in a community where the children are the future, where we know that the children are our future. Somehow the knowledge we acquire at the universities has to become living; it has to be lived. It cannot be a package of papers. Knowledge has to be something that I have integrated into my own being and given life. I can take it back into my community in a way that is understandable, so I can put it into

Cree space in other more meaningful ways. If I can't do this with university knowledge, it probably doesn't belong in Cree space.

I feel strongly that it needs to be said that our communities need people like you. This is not just a nice thing to say. We need you and we need the work that you are doing. We need to be able to access the knowledge base that you represent. When we are in the communities, the knowledge and sheer information that has been shared here is only a dream. Yet I think your dream must be for stronger communities and stronger peoples. How the information and the knowledge is used must be determined at the community level, but it is clear that there is a need for academic research and the development of a knowledge base that supports Aboriginal education and the goals of our communities.

An image came to me when Stan Wilson was talking. Stan commented that a person does not need to fast or follow prescribed rituals in order to find truths or have visions. For much of my life I doubted the visions and the truths that I was given because I had not been taught any rituals or practices to go through in order to get these truths. I found Stan's words affirming even though my mother and other Elders had told me that everyone finds the truth in their own way. You do not have to run all over the country looking for the right Elder, guru, or anyone else. You find truth in yourself, and it may come from or through any medium. I feel that what we are doing here is good. We are all of different nations and different peoples, but today it is one planet with an overriding principle of ecological balance, a balance that requires the creation of some kind of an active love that has the power to rekindle the faith of the people and reenergize the planet that is our home. To participate in this process we need our roots, and we need our ancestral memories if we are to carry a message of hope and strength to our own people. We must live and practice our beliefs even when we get slapped down. There has to be love to accomplish this, and this does not come from our heads. Knowledge must move from our heads to our hearts. If knowledge does not go into our hearts and from there out to our communities and our people, then what we are giving will not be received in gladness, nor will it add to the meaning and richness of our peoples' lives. Of what use then would be our knowledge?

Ralph Makokis

I like a lot of the words that have been said like *rebirth*; it is a good feeling. I want to thank you for your participation in this important initiative.

We have to keep in mind that by the year 2000, as Indian people, we are going to own a third of this land base again. We will need a lot of management people, a lot of PhDs to go out and help our communities. There are many reasons why we're standing and sitting around here. I want to ask all of you a favor, to do something to give me a connection with you. I want to ask you to close your eyes for a second. I want to talk

to your mind. I want to talk to your bodies. I want to talk to your spirits. As Cree people—that is what I am—we say that we're four people in one person. I want to talk about that so I can reach a foundation where I'm talking with you. In my mind ever since I can remember—I don't know how long and how old it is—many people have been talking about memory and how it takes hard work to lay a foundation, to build a framework, to get structures and processes working inside there. It is the same with our bodies. Our bodies need and have the foundation—the frameworks, their structures and processes. Our spirits, that is, who we are as people and all we are doing: we're given everything in this life to see, to hear, to taste, and to touch, and what we do with these things is up to each of us as people. We can go in this life and discover. We can apply our lives in many different ways. We can achieve all kinds of different things like PhDs. We can enjoy our lives with these things. There really is no challenge. There is a decision and an action on the part of each and every person. It is not really difficult. Many people say that my action is dependent on somebody else telling me that I have to listen to another person. I built this myself, and it is independent of any words that people throw at me. This independence also feels like autonomy, and I have dedication to my life that means I am going to accomplish something. I also have to act with integrity toward my life and to acknowledge who I am as a person and accept who I am. I am not seeking your acceptance. I am working really hard so that one up there is satisfied with me.

That is where I want to start, and my task now is to talk about this PhD program. I would like to talk about the pre-PhD program activities. First, two people came to this campus from somewhere else. They started talking, and pretty soon there was collaboration, cooperation, and coordination. They started talking about a PhD program, and after the talk it became a proposal. From a proposal it went into a submission. The submission was partly accepted, so that plans could go a little farther ahead. There were meetings, and there was more support. Now they could advertise for people to come together so that others could deliver this message to you.

I would like to talk about the scope of the conference program in terms of the different people who attended. First, I want to talk about our Elders. I want to say, Thank you, Ralph, Regina, Ed, Elder Tom Porter, and those who came from the west who went home early. I also thank the Elders from the north and the south.

I thank the range of presenters from different academic fields who took the time and made the effort to attend. The organizers of the conference had to find the presenters, prepare invitations, prepare budgets, and make travel arrangements. They had to find volunteers to help them with the organization of the conference. They had to arrange accommodation and

meals. They had to look at sites, access, transportation, and communication, as well the data recording, control of the data, and so forth.

They had to gain consensus from various boards, faculties, departments, programs, and committees. Then they had to gain consensus from the Indian nations, our communities, and our students. They need support to develop partnership agreements so that this PhD program can become a reality. It is important that this does become an Indigenous program in process, delivery, acceptance, and expansion. There is concern about the completion rate of the students who enter the program; about the readiness of our Aboriginal students for advanced training; and about the satisfaction such students would gain from this program. The admission criteria are so that Aboriginal people will be committed to complete the PhD program and gain experience in their various fields as well as the marks. There is much at stake in this, and it is unfortunate that we have to compromise the success of this program to external people to view us and grade us.

Tuition fees, transferability of credits, program course work, qualification levels for certification, supervision, advisors, supervisors, committees, residency, languages, examinations, and employment levels: all these must be considered. Along with this goes accountability and the quality of the PhD program. What program indicators will measure the success of performance in the different areas of the program? What does it mean to the student, to the instructor, to the administration, and to the Native communities that will hire these people? Important also is the training context and the content that our old people have discussed. Everybody has been talking about this mindset, this connection, and how important our languages are to us. Our traditions and customs play an important role in the education, development, and growth, and the expansion of every individual Native person from the youngest to the oldest.

They have to think about program maintenance and program expansion; about the establishment and achievement of higher standards required to accommodate the needs, concerns, and issues that have been talked about. Somebody said that our standards are too low. Personally, I agree and I am glad to hear somebody say so, because this is a great challenge. These have been the pre-PhD program activities.

We have talked so much about understanding assessment evidence and evaluation that the PhD program itself was not discussed. We did talk about Native education and Native control of Indian education, which indirectly have to do with PhD program, as it will address these issues. We must find ways of mitigating the effects of problems that have been mentioned. We must look at ways to collect and transfer information about the state of our Indian communities, of ourselves as individuals, and of all of us as a whole Nation. For every problem there is a solution. We have information and models, as speakers have mentioned. We also know

about the depth, quality, and the opposition this field has had since the early 1900s when people were getting PhDs and the people with status left. This effort has been around a long time. I see that we have community support, student support, and academic support. What I have not seen is Indian leadership support. And I have not seen the institutional academic decision makers.

In spite of these omissions, people are excited about the PhD program. We have always known why we need this kind of program. We know what we need, what areas, and we know how to do these things. It has always been with us that we have nothing new to look for. I am glad that I do not have to make it up on my own because I would probably make a mistake and hurt somebody. There are many challenges for the PhD program and how the foundation, structure, and process will be worked out. But the excitement has brought me closer to a definition, closer to the issue of acceptance of the tools, knowledge, and protocols of our traditions. It also reminds me of comparisons and the problems and dangers with these. An important observation is that some people have had PhDs for status and some who got a PhD for status went to work in the community. We are now at the stage where we want PhDs to go and work in the community. In doing this we must deal with many issues of academics and what academics should be. One is the problem of denial of who we are as Indian people. People do not want to say they are an Indian and go to school at the same time. There is also an issue of acceptance: if one gets a PhD, that person will not be accepted at home because they will say he or she is white. There are also issues of responsibility, all of which have different meanings. We have heard about relationships, interrelationships, and balance.

Indigenous scholars are needed, but they must be people who have a committed and vested interest in their communities. None of us should be excluded from that statement, because that is where we all come from. The justification and the verification come from all the statements made by all the presenters. Our old people, academics, and our students say that. This committed and vested interest and the responsibility that we have as Indigenous scholars goes toward two things. Either we choose survival or we choose extinction. If we choose survival, it means a lot of work. If we choose extinction, it means just giving up, not doing anything or acting on anything. Then it becomes easy to go home and blame our community, family, brothers, and sisters. It becomes easy to blame everyone else for losing our language, not practicing our customs and traditions, and getting away from the context and relationship with the Creator, the Great Spirit. That is what we would be giving up. If we go for survival, we will do the opposite. We want to go back and somehow get everything together. We want to share with everybody, give it back to everybody, and yet this is hard.

Some people say we are the same as white people. There are similarities and differences. We can take one reserve as an example. There may be 3,000 people in that community and the similarities are that they all have homes, jobs, go to school, or do something. These are the only ways we are similar. Where we are different is in the application of the Indian Act and Treaty Rights. That is how we are different, but the Indian Act and Treaty Rights are really not differences, but benefits that we have. We should respect and be honored that we have these. We should take care to protect, preserve, and pass these on to our children, our grandchildren. This is what our forefathers wanted for us. This is what these old people are talking about. This is why they are praying and crying—because they know we need a lot of help.

This PhD program must be focused, organized, and considered, and action taken and directed to the resolution of issues. It should be flexible enough to include things like discovery. It should be rigorous in research, decisions, application, results, directions, and destiny. PhD people already have the consciousness, awareness, an attitude, habits, and skills, and I think I have some of these as well.

We talked about values. One woman talked about her nation and the values they hold dearly: generosity, bravery, fortitude, and wisdom. Carlos and Walter came up with some more: compassion, truth, respect, and excellence. Those kinds of values are not difficult for a PhD program, a PhD student, or for anybody. The Indigenous research model should include delivery, accountability, implications, alternatives, and recommendations for solutions to problems, like healing. Everyone says we were dysfunctional, and as a nation we are 100% dysfunctional. We need to be healthy, whole, and united. We need to grow and expand. From here to there is a long way to go.

We are told to value books, but in our communities we are told that knowledge is sacred and cannot be written down. When we go back to our communities, how do we resolve this conflict? One way is to transmit our culture to our children, our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and to all our relatives; and yet we think we cannot do this. At least, this is what other people are saying, but we have never explored whether we can. Who says Elders cannot attend our dissertation orals, and then as soon they are over we burn the document? There are many alternatives to explore.

It has also been said that we are prisoners of peace, that is, education versus brainwashing about our identities, philosophies, languages, and culture, even when memory and knowledge come into conflict. I have heard that people resolve these issues by taking action in some other way. The program and action talked about at this conference are geared to revitalization, exploration, and discovery. The role models—context, languages, and our culture—must be regulated, perhaps by our Elders or communities, or perhaps our leadership. The program must be diverse,

because of problems with terms and translations, with developing encyclopedias, and so forth. The result of all that we are talking about here is that there will be changes in our communities. We will all affect our community members somehow with the thoughts that we have had here. Those thoughts will translate into behaviors or actions in how we affect our community.

One theme that I really like is *dispirited by assimilation*. What this means is connection to the context, and the context is the Great Spirit, who is all over the place. This means that somehow we are all connected and that there are all kinds of kingdoms including a kingdom of water, minerals, and the kingdom of all human nature. There is a kingdom of vegetation where we get our roots and herbs. There is the kingdom of all animal and bird life that is all the way around the globe and to the end of the universe. We are connected to something really huge, beautiful, and powerful. Why would anyone want to deny this connection? That is what we have to go back to, unravel, and connect with. We need to accept, be thankful for, use, and benefit from our connections. That was why they were given to us in the first place.

Our traditions and customs shine a bright light for us like the sun. They shine a bright light and guide, help, and teach us. They protect and heal us. There are many different things in this life that we have been taking for granted or not using. What we do not use we will lose. For example, our languages represent to us all the different concepts about life, health, happiness, being prepared for any opportunity, liberty, peace, prayers to our Creator, and not being ashamed of who and what we are.

That is what consciousness is. It requires a little action on our part, a little attitude, some really good habits, and these skills we need are going to be ours. We are not far away from attaining these skills. We are living it. The post-PhD program discussion activities will require taking this experience and guidance and developing a PhD program that has all of the elements. Then the PhD program will become something really wonderful in terms of discovery, application, achievement, and enjoyment for all Aboriginal peoples wherever they might be.

With that, I want to say Thank you again, Peggy, Stan, and all the people who have been helping you. I want to thank our Elders again. I want to thank our presenters. I want to thank our students, volunteers, and those little people who have been here. I wish all your relatives and your loved ones a good thought. I hope that you have a safe return to your homes.