

A Strategy for Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

The Justice Reform Commission acknowledges that there is an over-representation of First Nations and Métis peoples in the justice system and that many people have lost faith in the present system. We were appointed to address these concerns. The Commission was created in November 2001. The members convened in January, and sit on a part-time basis.

We began by reviewing previous reports from various commissions and boards of inquiry, by meeting with people who have experience with previous commissions and with known experts in various areas of justice. In doing so, it became apparent to the Commission that the people of Saskatchewan have first-hand knowledge and experience with the justice system and were in the best position to assist the Commission with developing strategy. Through the wisdom and guidance of an invited stakeholders group, the following strategy for dialogue was developed.

It is with a sincere interest in exploring and understanding the perspectives and solutions of the people of Saskatchewan that the following Strategy for Dialogue is presented. The goal of the dialogues is to listen to the wisdom of the people of Saskatchewan. We want to know what concerns you have with the justice system. The Justice Reform Commission is asking three very basic but essential questions:

1. What concerns do you have with the justice system?
2. What examples of successes or positive programs have you seen?
3. How do you think the justice system can be improved?

It is the vision of the *Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform* to build One Community - working together to create a healthy, just, prosperous and safe Saskatchewan. "*Meyo Wahkotowin*" is the Cree concept.

It is the Commission's mission to create change and make a difference by:

- Listening to people
- Building relationships
- Promoting respect and change
- Recognizing successes, and
- Making recommendations for future justice reform

PURPOSE OF THE DIALOGUES

The purpose of the Dialogues is to generate information and solutions for change that will improve the relationship between First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal peoples and the justice system. Specifically, the Commission wants solutions that will:

1. Reduce levels of offending;
2. Reduce levels of victimization;
3. Reduce levels of recidivism;
4. Improve the safety of First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal communities in Saskatchewan;
5. Identify short and long-term implementation strategies to achieve the above; and
6. Identify the vehicle to oversee the implementation of the Commission's solutions.

TYPES OF DIALOGUES

The Commission will meet a cross-section of community members in Saskatchewan. Primary input will be sought from First Nation, Métis and non-Aboriginal communities in Saskatchewan and federal, provincial, First Nation and Métis government departments and agencies working in justice-related areas. Other sources for possible input are the academic and professional communities, and individuals and organizations familiar with justice reform initiatives and projects in other jurisdictions. The experiences and insights of youth and women are of key interest to the Commission.

Among the Dialogues anticipated are:

- *Community Dialogues*: the Commission will hear directly from community members on justice reform.
- *Formal Presentations*: the Commission will hear prepared statements from organizations on reforms to the justice system.
- *In-Camera Dialogues*: the Commission will hear presentations from individuals who wish to maintain their confidentiality.

A Strategy for Dialogue (continued)

- *Stakeholders in Justice Reform*: the Commission invites selected community voices to discuss the work of the Commission.
- *Round Table Dialogues*: the Commission will hear expert opinion on particularly difficult but promising areas for reform of the justice system.

FORMAT

The Justice Reform Commission is sensitive to the fact that each community it visits will be unique - with unique histories and relationships to the justice system, with distinctive needs and cultural factors to be considered. The specific format and agenda for each Community Dialogue will depend on the community.

Typical formats could include large community circle dialogues, working group dialogues or town hall meetings. Depending on the circumstances, some Community Dialogues could blend features of these typical formats.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES VS. OTHER FORUMS

The Commission feels its emphasis on the Community Dialogues gives it a strategic edge in getting to the heart of justice reform. However, it is aware other forums may be required to further develop the solutions it identifies.

