

**Stakeholder Consultation  
Session**

**Séance de Consultation des  
Parties Prenantes**

**Commissioners / Commissaires**

The Honourable / L'honorable J. Michael MacDonald,  
Chair / Président

Leanne J. Fitch (Ret. Police Chief, M.O.M)

Dr. Kim Stanton

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**Held at :**

Mass Casualty Commission Office  
128 Esplanade Street  
Truro, Nova Scotia  
B2N 2K3

Friday, September 16, 2022

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128, rue Esplanade  
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B2N 2K3

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## II **Appearances / Comparutions**

Krista Smith	Research and Policy (Facilitator)
Megan Harris	Engagement Coordinator (Co-facilitator)
Hannah Langille	Communications Advisor (Tech support)
John Paul	Executive Director, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs
Andy Cox	Community Liaison, IWK Mental Health and Addictions
Shawna Wright	Community Outreach Coordinator, Inspiring Communities (Between the Bridges)
Danny Graham	CEO, Engage Nova Scotia

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--- Upon commencing on Friday, September 16, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

**MS. KRISTA SMITH:** There we go. Yeah, I suppose if anybody has any objections, say it now.

So I'll be facilitating the conversation, and that's mainly just to keep things moving and to make sure that we cover as much ground as we can during our time together.

I have -- we have lots of questions and I'll probably direct them to specific individuals, based on what I understand is their area of expertise.

Hi, Shawna.

**MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Hello.

**MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Hi. I'm just sort of running through the basics here. We've just started recording, and I explained how I told you on the phone that this is so that the Commissioners can read this transcript and that this conversation is to help the Commissioners when they're formulating their recommendations.

And so -- and that today's focus is on community safety and how that relates to the experiences of children and youth in Nova Scotia.

And so as the facilitator, I'm going to be asking the questions, and I'll -- and Shawna, I was saying to people, like, because we have so much ground we want to cover, I'll probably direct certain questions to certain people, and then -- but if you ever want to weigh in on a comment you've heard or on the question itself, just raise your hand and I'll make sure that I get to you before I move on.

So I think those are the main points. Does anybody have any questions before we get started? Looking good?

Okay. So let's just go around and introduce one another, introduce ourselves, and maybe tell us a little bit about your organization and what the organization seeks to do, and maybe your connection or how you encounter or work with children and youth in Nova Scotia.

1 I'm going to be completely arbitrary. Actually, I will start with  
2 Commission staff so that you sort of know who's who in the zoo.

3 So again, Shawna knows me. I'm Krista Smith. I'm Research and  
4 Policy with the Mass Casualty Commission.

5 And I'll pass it to Megan Harris.

6 **MS. MEGAN HARRIS:** Hi, folks. I know I've been kind of on the  
7 end making the arrangements for this, so I'm sure I've chatted with a few of you, but I'm  
8 a Stakeholder Engagement Advisor with the Commission, so I do a lot of talking to  
9 people and planning events like this.

10 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Thanks, Megan.

11 **MS. MEGAN HARRIS:** So I'm battling with a little bit of laryngitis,  
12 so I hope you guys don't have any problems hearing me as the meeting goes on.

13 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** You sound great today.

14 Hannah?

15 **MS. HANNAH LANGILLE:** Hi, everyone. So my name is Hannah  
16 and I'm the Communications Advisor with the Commission, and I'll be monitoring tech  
17 and logistics today, as well as the recording. So I'm going to put my phone and email in  
18 the chat, just in case you have to reach us or step away for a moment, or if you're  
19 having any issues. So I'll throw that in the chat now. Thanks.

20 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** That's great. Yeah, I was thinking too, if we  
21 run into any issues or if there's something you want to speak to, you can always throw it  
22 in the chat, and we'll be monitoring that.

23 So John Paul, could I ask you to introduce yourself? Oh, you're on  
24 mute.

25 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Unmute first. My name is John Paul. I'm the  
26 Executive Director of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs. We're a  
27 regional organization which primarily works for the chiefs across Atlantic Canada and  
28 Gaspé in Quebec. And we're primarily a policy research advocacy group for chiefs in

1 our region, and Nova Scotia is one of our provinces that we're working, basically, and  
2 we get involved in anything that impacts the communities or our chiefs across the  
3 region, basically. So that's -- I don't know how I ended up here, but I'm here anyway.

4 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Thank you very much. We're happy to have  
5 you and to hear your perspective.

6 Andy?

7 **MR. ANDY COX:** Hi. My name is Andy Cox. And I'm with IWK  
8 Mental Health and Addictions. And my role is kind of a unique role. I'm a social worker  
9 but what I do with -- well, my title is Community Liaison, so I create relationships with  
10 community organizations, you know, two-way relationships.

11 And the second piece of my job is I help our young people and  
12 families get connected with some of these community organizations.

13 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Okay, thanks very much.

14 Shawna?

15 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Hi. I'm Shawna Wright. I work with  
16 Inspiring Communities (Between the Bridges). I'm fairly new.

17 So what they do there or what we are doing there, we work -- we  
18 are creating programs or supporting current programs, or they're enhancing the  
19 programs, supporting residents -- youth is my piece -- supporting youth in the schools  
20 and you know, figuring out what we can do to make lives better and supporting the  
21 different cultures in the community in Dartmouth North.

22 Also, with HRCE, I am an African Nova Scotia student support  
23 worker for the last six years, but I have worked with youth for 30 years or so now.  
24 Yeah.

25 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** That's great. Thank you, Shawna.

26 And Danny?

27 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Hi, folks. I'm Danny Graham. I'll have my  
28 mute button on and my camera off for most of the time.

1 I'm wearing two hats. The one hat is as a former defence lawyer  
2 who eventually became a youth justice policy and restorative justice policy person, both  
3 in Nova Scotia and eventually, as part of the team that replaced the *Young Offenders*  
4 *Act* with *Youth Criminal Justice Act* in Canada back about 20 years or so ago.

5 And I've been around public policy for a long period of time, and I  
6 currently am with an organization called Engage Nova Scotia, and some of you might  
7 be familiar with it. Amongst the things that we have done is advance the Nova Scotia  
8 Quality of Life Initiative which is -- resulted in 13,000 Nova Scotians giving us responses  
9 to 230 questions about how their lives are, and we're -- we've been in the process over  
10 the last year, particularly, of just aggregating what the findings related to people's quality  
11 of life is at different demographic profiles.

12 So for example, our questions include issues of sense of  
13 community, confidence in police and the justice system, along with many other related  
14 issues, experiences in mental health challenges.

15 But we've been able to disaggregate the information relative to  
16 different family arrangements and sizes that includes single parents, low-income  
17 parents, and the like.

18 So I'm wearing two hats as a justice policy person and with my  
19 Engage Nova Scotia sort of broad quality of life social determinants of health kind of  
20 blends on as well.

21 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** That's great. Thank you, Danny. I'm going  
22 to keep you on while you're there before you go, and just ask you the first question for  
23 today, which is what -- how do we start -- how do we articulate what community safety is  
24 when we're talking about children and youth?

25 So another way of thinking about it is what needs to be in place for  
26 kids to be safe in community?

27 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Oh, just a little question. Just one  
28 second. I need to direct us to go to yet another exit to the team. My apologies. I'm

1 doing some backseat driving here for us.

2                   It's -- so what needs to be in place? What needs to be in place,  
3 there's just so many things, but I'll start with something that when I was part of the ONE  
4 Nova Scotia Coalition, you'll recall that the Ivany Commission was established, and then  
5 there was a coalition that responded with a substantial seven-chapter report that was  
6 made up for -- just go on that ramp in front of us straight ahead and we'll be good --  
7 sorry guys. My apologies.

8                   The -- so when some of us who had more background in social  
9 policy were in that discussion, something that we emphasized (audio cuts off briefly)  
10 that all societies (audio cuts off briefly) in particular need to do a much better job related  
11 to the experiences from prenatal to pre-school actually being the most important ones,  
12 and it's the area where public investment in wellbeing has been thinnest over the years.

13                   So if I were to point to -- there are no silver bullets, but if I were to  
14 point to something that has been -- that even with new initiatives, that we're all kind of  
15 aware of, that are getting a bit more prioritized, our society begins with our youngest  
16 ones and we need to do a much better job of anticipating all the challenges that exist for  
17 different -- for families being led in different ways and across different cultures and by  
18 different combinations and parenting environments.

19                   So that's really the beginning. And this is an intergenerational  
20 question that shows up dominantly as, you know, something that it needs to go beyond  
21 just sort of a reactionary approach but to something still more fundamental than they've  
22 been able to get to in terms of seeing the big picture about the importance of the early  
23 years.

24                   That's just sort of the big sweep of a perspective.

25                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** That's great. That's a great way to start us  
26 off. Thank you so much.

27                   Shawna, I'd like to take it over to you, knowing that you spend  
28 many, many hours working with children and youth. What is -- from your perspective,



1 what does community safety look like for children and youth?

2 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Community safety looks like? Wow.

3 Well, for me, just what has always worked to try to make kids feel safe, is like, adults  
4 reminding them to -- you know, to advocate for theirself [sic]. Kids need a lot of -- there  
5 should be a lot of structure and routine in place, just reminding them who they are and  
6 who they have around them that makes them feel safe, recognizing when they need  
7 help.

8 I feel like social media plays a big part in their safety, and I think as  
9 parents and you know, when they're at school, and I think it's good that when they're in  
10 school, they're not allowed to use their phones. But there's a lot of violence on social  
11 media that they watch, and I think minimizing that too, you know, minimizing that would  
12 help with safety as well, because I feel like there's a lot of bullying on social media, like,  
13 in the schools and stuff. A lot of negativity on social media.

14 And I've seen that, like, you know, people -- kids in other schools  
15 will message somebody in another school, like, "We'll be over there at lunchtime," you  
16 know? That's an unsafe environment. School goes on lockdown.

17 So those are just some things, just reminding kids who they are,  
18 how strong they are, how capable they are, who they have in their lives, and just  
19 monitoring that social media.

20 Trust is very important with kids. Learned that over the years, and  
21 trust and respect.

22 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** The kids feeling respected.

23 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Kids 100 percent need to feel respected,  
24 they need to give respect as well. It's a two-way street. And they feel they -- and they  
25 need to trust you. Very important. Yeah, if they trust you, that goes a long way.

26 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** I want to keep following that thread, but I  
27 think I'm going to come back to you and go a little deeper in a couple of minutes.

28 Andy, how about for you? What -- from your vantage point, what

1 does community safety look like for children and youth?

2 **MR. ANDY COX:** For me, and I'm bias coming from Mental Health  
3 and Addictions, but that's not a small chunk of kids. I mean, what they're saying one in  
4 five, now they're saying even one in four, and youth even more suffering from either  
5 mental illness or some type of mental health problem.

6 So safety, for me -- well, I mean, these are -- you know, and then  
7 there's the youth that aren't getting help because we don't have the resources or the  
8 wait list, or then there's the youth that don't come to us because of stigma. So all the  
9 different things that go with mental health; mental health can be loneliness, you know,  
10 low confidence.

11 And then it gets to the point of the safety issues, like self-harm or  
12 even suicide.

13 But I do want to stress -- so there is the actual, you know, mental  
14 health and illness, but I'm finding the safety issue comes along with stigma, because our  
15 youth are -- you know, we're hearing more and more about mental health and  
16 companies are talking about mental health, but there's still that stigma.

17 And within that stigma there's the societal stigma, which is the  
18 youth getting that stigma and the discrimination from other youths, be it bullying or just  
19 secluding or ignoring, and then there's even the institutional stigma from -- you know, for  
20 example, the schools who maybe not meaning to, but aren't understanding mental  
21 health or don't pick up on mental health issues, and then, of course, the -- from that,  
22 there's that awful self-stigma which sometimes youth talk about being even more  
23 harmful and would -- you know, even more serious and bothersome than the actual  
24 illness, the stigma. And of course, that can lead to some of the safety issues such as  
25 self-harm or suicide.

26 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Thank you very much, Andy.

27 John, I'd like to take it to you now, if that's all right, and maybe  
28 speak as you can from the perspective of Indigenous youth and creating safety in

1 Indigenous communities.

2 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, I think one of the most important things  
3 with Indigenous young people is them recognizing and understanding their identity and  
4 their culture and language and all those beliefs that go with it, because it becomes a  
5 way to look at the world, basically, in a way that makes more sense. And our multi-  
6 generational connections and values in our communities is really something that has  
7 occurred for many, many years.

8 And in communities today, it's changing a bit because you know,  
9 decades ago, it used to be the whole community used to raise all the children, basically  
10 versus a single mother or a dad or whatever it involved, aunts, uncles, grandparents,  
11 everybody else was involved in the whole process.

12 And I think that a lot of that is connected to our -- their individual  
13 identity as Indigenous people, because once they figure that out or have greater clarity  
14 on that, it helps build a more complete person. And the younger you do that and get  
15 them on that path, really helps them deal with other more complicated issues that they  
16 have to deal with beyond their own communities.

17 And even off communities, it's amazing that how many people live  
18 wherever in Nova Scotia are connected back to communities and families, and it's  
19 something that has -- something I know that's helped us survive thousands of years or  
20 many years, because of all these connections.

21 And in terms of safety, it's a mindset of building that mindset early  
22 on and recognizing wherever you are who the people are you can actually trust.

23 And another thing is, one of the things we've really tried to focus on  
24 in the last number of years is strengthening our on the ground resources and people  
25 with training on and providing ongoing, year-over-year training to build a greater pool of  
26 people that have the right skills to deal with very complex issues, to deal with many  
27 young people and the challenges that they deal with in this fast-paced world of what  
28 goes on on TV, Facebook, Twitter, and all this stuff. It's easy to lose yourself in all that

1 stuff.

2                   And you know, I've always seen that people that are connected to  
3 who they are and that it really helps in terms of them understanding how they fit into the  
4 broader society or broader world around them, basically.

5                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Can I say something right quick?

6                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah, I wanted to say that was sounding a  
7 lot like how you began as well, Shawna, so I was going to pass it to you anyway.

8                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** I just love that Mr. Paul said that,  
9 because that's exactly how -- I grew up in a Black community in Beechville, which I love,  
10 and you know, I've been -- you know, I moved to other places, but I knew I was coming  
11 back home, because this is where I wanted to raise my kids so they could feel as safe  
12 as I did growing up.

13                   Like, I felt protected and safe in my community. Everybody took  
14 care of everybody. The church was the backbone of the community. It still kind of is,  
15 but because of urban sprawl, there's so many people in there, they don't have the same  
16 connection that we had growing up. We had all -- we had -- you know, our parents  
17 made our clothes, like, they had sewing classes, they had -- you know, it was all that  
18 stuff.

19                   And I couldn't -- I remember I felt uncomfortable, like, going into the  
20 city because I felt comfortable in my community. I didn't feel comfortable outside of my  
21 community.

22                   And I know I moved to Toronto and stuff, but I always knew I'm  
23 moving back to my community because that's where I want to raise my kids so they can  
24 be safe. And, you know, I actually did that, and I'm happy that's happening, you know,  
25 that they get to grow up.

26                   And I mean, like I said, there's a lot of urban sprawl. I'm not feeling  
27 as safe in my community because there's people here that I don't know, but I still live on  
28 the same land, you know, the -- my ancestors lived on. Like, our family's been here for

1 over 200 years and I'm living on that same property and my kids are living on that  
2 property, which is awesome, but there's all kinds of activity, unfortunately, happening  
3 around us, you know? We're losing a lot of land and all that fun stuff.

4 But our community was definitely a safe place. It's a different world  
5 today.

6 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** So Shawna, when you're working -- when  
7 you're spending time with a young person, how do you help them remember who they  
8 are?

9 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** You know, what we did last year, I had a  
10 group, you know, a group at the school, and we talked about -- because some --  
11 unfortunately, some kids don't know who their father is and they don't know who their  
12 grandparents are, they don't know what community they're from. So we did a lot of that  
13 research, and I said, "Well, go home, have those conversations, and we need to know  
14 who you are because it's so -- that's so important to your growth of your maturity,"  
15 because a lot of -- I have a lot of kids who are mixed, they're, you know, half White, half  
16 Black, and some of them don't socialize with that -- with the Black half. They're -- like,  
17 they're embarrassed of that half, so you can see that that child doesn't feel safe, they're  
18 not comfortable in their own skin until they realize and accept who they are, and that's  
19 when they feel safe.

20 You know, it's the unknown and uncomfortableness about who they  
21 are as a person. You know, it totally -- they have a total identity crisis because they  
22 only see one side of who they are, and they don't know who the other side is.

23 So we do a lot of that work, which is fun, and they find out who their  
24 grandparents are and what community they're connected to.

25 **MR. ANDY COX:** Krista, do you mind if I just interject?

26 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** No, please.

27 **MR. ANDY COX:** Just with -- for Mr. Paul and Shawna, the -- we --  
28 I have had youth who've been on our inpatient unit, youth who are First Nation and also

1 youth who are Black, and they've used the word "s-a-f-e, safe", not feeling safe on,  
2 because we are not competent at all. But they, yeah, they would use the word "safe".

3 The other observation I had, I did a little bit of work in the Prestons,  
4 and I was just very, I guess, jealous because it seemed like if a youth was having  
5 trouble – and it doesn't matter what -- it just seemed like not only is it the family, but the  
6 extended family and the community would come out to help the youth.

7 And I don't think the rest of society, you know, typical White Nova  
8 Scotia does that.

9 And speaking of safety, we think of our neighbourhoods and our  
10 communities, how much more safe it would be to mirror something like that.

11 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** And Andy, I didn't catch where you were  
12 speaking of. I want to make sure it's clear for the record.

13 **MR. ANDY COX:** Yeah, sure. Yeah, so I've been doing some  
14 work down in East Preston and North Preston, and I just observed that and it was  
15 amazing.

16 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yes. Okay. So Danny, I'd like to take it over  
17 to you if I could, and if your -- if the data that Engage Nova Scotia has gathered gives us  
18 some further insights into these issues?

19 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Yeah. They very much do and so that's --  
20 it's a helpful segue. So I'll build on the idea that I think is really rich and what's been  
21 shared so far, and that is that, you know, what John and Shawna have been talking  
22 about in terms of a shared responsibility for raising children is something that's been --  
23 that shows up in a lot of literature, not the engaged stuff, but just generally in literature  
24 around the degree to which families can rely on other families and other supports to get  
25 what they need.

26 And while sometimes it's related to trained people, by the time you  
27 get the trained people in the room there, it's rather late because the complexity of the  
28 issues facing the family as a whole, not just the child who's exhibiting behaviour that

1 creates safety risks for the community is -- by that time, has become too significant.

2 So if we're looking for ways to imagine and create a preventative  
3 kind of environment, it increasingly is pointing quite specifically to the way that we  
4 support families.

5 And (audio cuts off briefly) been talked about are -- let me just  
6 share a few things, and one that shows up in our literature about family types, and it is  
7 this. I don't think we appreciate the degree to which the time and adequacy of parenting  
8 is different. Time and adequacy is much more stressful for parents to be themselves, to  
9 (audio cuts off briefly).

10 In our data, it shows that parents -- and it doesn't matter what the  
11 income is or the living arrangement -- consistently show up as having greater  
12 challenges, I think, than society understands right now.

13 Now, as an anecdote, we might appreciate that to be true, but it  
14 doesn't mean that it doesn't warrant some kind of attention. So the pressure that  
15 parents experience are not insignificant, just as a rule, but when you load on top of that  
16 the economic and other disadvantages that come for some family arrangements, then  
17 the stresses become that much greater.

18 So I may have mentioned at the outset that for example, our data  
19 shows that (audio cuts off briefly).

20 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Danny, I'm just going to interrupt you.

21 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** --- families being led by single parents are  
22 experiencing -- yeah?

23 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Sorry, you're breaking up on us a little.

24 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Can you hear me?

25 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** You're breaking up a bit. I think if you turn  
26 off your camera -- if you turn off your camera, your audio might work better.

27 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Yeah, I'm sorry about that.

28 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** So sorry to interrupt you.

1                   **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Just going up Kelly's Mountain, and it's --  
2 some of the turns here can be challenging.

3                   Let me know. Please interrupt if I'm -- if you're missing anything or  
4 I should just stop.

5                   So the point that I was just making is that the stresses on parents of  
6 pre-school and school-age children are probably more significant than we really fully  
7 appreciate in society more generally, and I won't go into all the details associated with  
8 how that shows up in our research, but when you load on top of them many of the  
9 disadvantages demographically, economically, and I was just pointing to families being  
10 led by single parents, showing up in our data as being particularly stressed across all of  
11 the hundreds of questions that we have asked, they warrant far greater attention than  
12 we have been giving them in public policy more generally. And that's not in any way to  
13 separate them in a way that could be stigmatizing for any of the groups that are  
14 experiencing extra stresses (audio cuts off briefly).

15                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** I think Kelly's Mountain is winning right now,  
16 Danny. I'll give you a minute to get over the mountain, if that's okay, and I'll -- I'm going  
17 to pass the baton.

18                   I'm just thinking about how so far we've heard ---

19                   **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** I think there are pockets of information in  
20 what's showing in 13,000 responses. (Audio cuts off briefly).

21                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** So we had a little technical glitch there, for  
22 the record. I see Danny has muted now, so Danny, I'll -- kindness to you, I'm going to  
23 go ahead and pass the baton, just to move on.

24                   So I think so far, I've -- one of the questions that we circulated to  
25 you in advance was the question who should engage children and youth about  
26 community safety, and what's the role of public education in teaching children and youth  
27 about community safety?

28                   And it's -- I think it's really interesting that so far, we've heard how



1 important community is, webs of community, and how important, of course, parents are.

2                   So I'd like to maybe build on that a bit and also think about what are  
3 some of the more formal institutional ways that organizations can support and create  
4 safety for children and youth? So we talk about public education, we talk about other  
5 things like, Andy, maybe with your organization. You're a pretty formal institution, IWK.  
6 How do you -- what role should the IWK have in all this?

7                   **MR. ANDY COX:** I mean, I won't speak in, you know, the IWK in  
8 general, but I'll speak about -- with mental health and addictions.

9                   I think it's very important to talk about safety with our youth because  
10 the youth that we have already have barriers, so I think it's our duty to not just -- not just  
11 to make our youth better or, you know, be -- provide therapy, but also provide networks,  
12 what they call the -- I can't remember what we talked about -- like, I guess a network in  
13 a web of youth.

14                   And that's where my role comes in, is with creating community  
15 connections, and not just about mental health resources in the community, but getting  
16 our youth hooked up with the Boys and Girls Club or helping them get a Big Sister or a  
17 Big Brother. My job is also helping them find resources like MacPhee Centre.

18                   And these aren't just kind of -- you know, just finding places for  
19 youth to go. An example would be like, MacPhee Centre is very much interested in the  
20 safety of the youth. They don't just do -- it's an arts centre, but they don't just do arts.  
21 They're very much interested in the individual, and they've taken the time to train their  
22 staff around mental health and trauma informed care. And you know, like I said, they're  
23 more than just an arts centre. Hopefully, you know, some of the sports will be more  
24 than just a sports centre, but you know, I've heard of some coaches taking mental  
25 health first aid, which is great.

26                   So yeah. So it's our -- you know, we do provide therapy, but yeah, I  
27 guess it's our duty to do more, and one piece of that is my role.

28                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Bringing people into community, and again,

1 as you were speaking about the MacPhee Centre, I was thinking again about helping  
2 children to know who they are, that you know, art is one way to help with that.

3 So I'd like to take it now to John Paul, and I wanted to first  
4 apologize. I always -- I should have said this explicitly at the beginning. I always run  
5 sessions by first names because we always all come from so many different walks of  
6 life, but I certainly hope it wasn't disrespectful to refer to you by your first name, but we  
7 didn't have a chance to talk about that ahead of time.

8 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** That's fine, that's fine.

9 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** But yeah, if I could just ask you to weigh in  
10 on this?

11 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, I guess the big thing in many of our  
12 communities is a lot of the young people are bored, in a lot of cases, and you're always  
13 trying to create a safe space or a facility in a lot of cases for them to engage with each  
14 other and to engage as a group to be involved in all aspects of the community. And I  
15 think that that is really important.

16 But another piece that's kind of changed in our communities about  
17 over a decade ago was almost 15 years ago, I think, our communities in Nova Scotia  
18 took over control of education, and that involved giving back control to communities, to  
19 parents, to teachers, and students, in all our communities to help re-engineer and  
20 refocus the education system on those things we believe are most important that should  
21 be part of the educational system, and that goes from Kindergarten right up to Grade  
22 12. And really trying to instil those fundamental values early on so people become  
23 more resilient in what they're doing, but also have great respect of what they're doing  
24 and who they are, because the way -- like, all our students in all -- in the communities  
25 are really focused on identity or cultural practices and our traditions and language, and  
26 those things that were kind of forgotten in a lot of ways and rebuilding them right in --  
27 right from day 1 when they enter into the school system.

28 And I think that's really changing the communities because they

1 now believe or believe they are in control of the system, and they believe it's their  
2 system.

3 I thought it was really interesting when, you know, when we did this  
4 almost 15 years ago and you look today and our retention rates in our schools are way  
5 beyond any other Indigenous schools in the country. And I always looked at that from  
6 the thinking of the people when we first gave the control back to individual communities,  
7 which were like, parents and teachers and students, and when they got directly involved  
8 in all this stuff and took ownership of what it is, they had a dedicated interest to make  
9 things better.

10 And over time, they have adapted more and more and more. Even  
11 in the onset of technology, is really trying to use technologies and those things in a good  
12 way to expand the horizons of young people, you know, in the communities. And I think  
13 that, you know, it helps build the connections with -- it's an interesting way that really got  
14 all the parents involved in what was actually going on in school, and it kind of had all  
15 kinds of ripple effects to other things that went on in the community.

16 And it really built a whole different thing, because our communities  
17 come from a legacy of things like the residential school, Indian day school, all those  
18 things are trauma over trauma, intergenerational trauma. So the more you build  
19 something that you believe is your system actually makes a big fundamental difference  
20 in terms of how program evolves and the range and breadth of services that are  
21 provided to kids and their parents that are involved in the system in the communities.

22 To me, it's quite amazing, and I've seen -- I've been able to notice  
23 the transition because I was involved in the initial discussions when we started this, and  
24 now, this many years later, I do see the difference because people don't -- I'd say  
25 people don't notice incremental changes. Like, you don't notice something change until  
26 you look back 5, 10, 15 years and you say, "Oh God, you guys are totally doing it  
27 different here."

28 So I'm not involved in the delivery, but I see the differences

1 because I work at the level of the chiefs, and I see the transformation of the teachers,  
2 the counsellors, the students, the parents, and the kids, how much it's actually changed,  
3 changed to a really good way in terms of what they contribute now to what goes on in  
4 many of the communities.

5                   It's really quite interesting, and you know, it really demonstrates that  
6 change can occur in a way that makes sense to people. And like I said, nobody really  
7 noticed, but I can tell you, when I think back to 20 years ago in terms of what was going  
8 on versus today, it has evolved quite a bit, and now they're building it into the early  
9 education side as well, so it's consistent with our whole logic at the beginning where we  
10 said education is a lifelong activity, so you start when they're in the womb and you keep  
11 doing it right til they're in the ground on the other end.

12                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** It's so nice to hear that, that it's the  
13 hopefulness, the role that education can play in building community safety.

14                   So I want to pick up on that and pass it to Shawna. I know in your  
15 role as an African Nova Scotia support worker, I feel like you may have some insights  
16 about what should and what is the role of public education in building a sense of  
17 community safety for youth.

18                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Say that again?

19                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Oh, yeah. Well, and I think you should take  
20 it whatever direction you want to take it. I just can imagine in your role as an African  
21 Nova Scotian support worker especially, you're working with children and youth all the  
22 time. How -- where do you see the school system, I guess, playing into community  
23 safety?

24                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** That's been a, you know, a major issue.  
25 We're definitely breaking ground on that, especially this year, because that was a whole  
26 issue in the previous years. I'm like, you know, our kids and all kids should feel safe in  
27 a school. That's something, unfortunately, you deal with every single day in this school  
28 system, and the kids don't feel safe in school. Like, if you're from a different culture,

1 those kids don't feel safe, don't feel safe in school for whatever reason.

2                   And it was, you know, it was like, enough is enough. This is a  
3 place -- like, speaking of our A&S kids, like some kids would leave class because they  
4 didn't -- they were the only one in the class and they didn't feel safe. Just in the hallway  
5 sometimes they didn't feel safe.

6                   It's uncomfortable, but people don't realize that if you're not, you  
7 know, you're not an A&S student or one of our Indigenous students, you don't -- you're  
8 not recognizing that, right? Everybody's going about their day-to-day, but we see it, you  
9 know, because the kids are going to come and talk to us about it.

10                   The school's playing a major role. We created, at the high school,  
11 Bay View level at the high school, we've created an equity team, put more emphasis on  
12 being respectful, being kind. It has to start somewhere, and it's a small step, but it's a  
13 major step, and we're trickling it down to our family of schools, like, the junior highs and  
14 elementaries, and if we continually send this message and we all work together,  
15 definitely going to change. This hasn't been done before in these schools, and both of  
16 the schools that I'm at are on board with it.

17                   And I see the changes already, and it's only day 7, you know,  
18 because it's enough to -- it's fine to talk about it and say, you know, "You shouldn't be  
19 doing this," but when you put that into action with kindness, it is received better, right,  
20 and you're consistent with it. When you're consistent with your message, kids will  
21 receive that, right? It's all in the delivery.

22                   And admin is on board. Student council, we get buy in from the  
23 student council, which is amazing. And I think there's going to be some big changes.  
24 Like I said, I've already seen the changes in the school. School plays a major role in  
25 community because that's where our kids are for the majority of the day. The schools  
26 are the -- is the institution that has our kids, other than their parents, for the majority of  
27 the day, so that impact, that's major.

28                   And they have to take that seriously. It's not just something that

1 you say or, "Oh, go read the code of conduct on the website." Not enough. There  
2 needs to be action, and I know in my schools, we're taking action.

3 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** That's awesome. Thank you.

4 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** You're welcome.

5 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Danny, I know that you're going to have to  
6 jump off soon. I guess I just want to ask if there is anything in particular that you were  
7 hoping to share with us today that you haven't gotten to speak to yet, and that could go  
8 any of the directions that we talked about during our preparation call yesterday, I guess  
9 it was.

10 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Okay, thanks, and hopefully the service  
11 holds for the next (audio cuts off briefly). Can you hear me all right?

12 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** You're a little bit slow.

13 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Can you hear me all right?

14 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** You're all right. You're not great, but you're  
15 all right.

16 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** I've been told that. Okay, yeah, they're --  
17 relatively succinctly.

18 Part of what I was sharing before was that all things related to  
19 supporting families -- and that includes the community supports, and not just  
20 professional supports in creating communities where families are holding each other  
21 together and neighbours and relatives are given the opportunity to be holding each  
22 other together is, from my perspective, critically important, all the more important in the  
23 early years, and not just when children are attending formal school systems. And the  
24 building of safe communities begins with building resilient family or (audio cuts off  
25 briefly) family arrangements are under greater stress for economic and other reasons  
26 (audio cuts off briefly).

27 Did that (audio cuts off briefly) cyberspace. Did that land?

28 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah. I'm going to say -- I'm just going to

1 repeat for the record that you're talking about the importance of building resilient family  
2 arrangements for ---

3 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Yeah, a support for families so that they  
4 have resilience themselves, yeah. That's sort of the order in which I would use those  
5 words, okay?

6 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah.

7 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** The second thing is that what we can do  
8 is (audio cuts off briefly) spend too little time doing, and at one time was where (audio  
9 cuts off briefly) responsibilities of some of the organizations that got slightly referenced  
10 in both of what Shawna and John have talked about, I'm come together to knit together  
11 the strength and commitments from family to family, and in support of children where,  
12 you know there's a shared responsibility for families together, needs to be rethought in  
13 many different ways.

14 So all things related to social connections and togetherness -- I'll  
15 just put that out as a bit of a made up word -- are -- there's a whole field that's emerging  
16 around the importance of us building societies where we create more opportunities for  
17 people to be connected with each other, in relationship with each other, and supporting  
18 each other even before you get to all the specialized experts in a reactive way who deal  
19 with, for example, in the experience that I have, these who are in conflict with the law.  
20 Often by the time that happens, too much of the complexity of somebody's life has been  
21 deeply seated in all members of the family in order to -- and it becomes that much more  
22 difficult to address those challenges.

23 Was that relatively clear?

24 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yes, that came out nicely, yeah.

25 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** And it relates to something that certainly  
26 from -- as a former defence lawyer and youth justice person that I think there is some  
27 emphasis, especially as it relates to the Mass Casualty Commission. If I'm  
28 understanding the evidence that has surfaced so far in a way that, you know, all of the

1 (audio cuts off briefly) which is my intention, some things more than others. And if I  
2 were to emphasize something (audio cuts off briefly).

3 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** That's the worst moment to lose our audio.  
4 Okay. Well, I'm going to hope Danny comes back to tell us the  
5 most important thing.

6 Maybe in the meantime I'll pass it over to John Paul. I don't think --  
7 maybe just -- I don't know where you want to take it, but ---

8 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, I understand what he's saying. It's just,  
9 you know, how to get people away from this -- the so-called nuclear family with one  
10 parent and kids or two parents or divorced parents or whatever combination you got,  
11 how do you get them to connect with other people, basically, and other families in a way  
12 that's positive, basically, and a way that actually builds relationships?

13 I always wonder, now I live in the city, like, I only know very few  
14 people next to me. That's about it. Everybody else, I don't know.

15 That's different, you know, and there isn't very many mechanisms  
16 to actually do something like that unless somebody organizes an event or an activity in  
17 the area. You don't get -- necessarily get to meet people, or they find different places to  
18 meet people, and it's never back on your home base, like, you know what I mean? Like,  
19 it's usually work related or some other thing, and it's never a family-to-family connection,  
20 other than you're -- in my case, it's the many, many people I know, plus their extended  
21 families or relatives that I know that I get to see.

22 You know, it doesn't matter where I see them, but you know, it's  
23 how do you create that dynamic, basically, in a way that's useful and beneficial for  
24 individuals and gives them a positive outlook on what they're doing and what they could  
25 be doing to improve their situation, going forward, you know?

26 And it's -- in today's society, trying to be a parent to deal with all the  
27 issues as well, and everything else on top is not easy, and as people have more and  
28 more pressures piled onto them, it becomes more challenging to open up to others, I



1 find.

2 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah. So I'm just thinking -- I'm trying to  
3 think about your policy lens and how -- what might be the most effective ways of  
4 building family -- the resilience of families, both on and off reserve?

5 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** I think that we've got to figure out a way to  
6 provide supports or services to people to connect to each other, more ways for people  
7 to connect to each other, whether it's by age group or by, you know, like, school to  
8 school. We've got to find more ways to interconnect with each other and really figure  
9 out ways in which -- like, we're always good at supporting people when a crisis is  
10 occurring or when something tragic is happening. We're always mobilizing to do stuff,  
11 but we need to figure out how to do that when it isn't a crisis and when it isn't focused  
12 on something.

13 We need to figure out a way to promote that in our own  
14 communities, both on reserve and off reserve, basically, because I think that the more  
15 resilient networks that we can build across communities is a way that I actually believe  
16 will help us deal with whatever is coming into the future and help us figure out different  
17 ways of actually dealing with things.

18 And you know, I find that there is enough dedicated leaders in our  
19 communities that see these things as really important, and are struggling, trying to  
20 figure out ways to get people more engaged, because it's -- and it's building -- I think it's  
21 coming down to how we're going to build our own collaborative networks of individuals  
22 and people that will support parents and young people, basically, in our communities  
23 because you have to understand, in our communities, that is the biggest dynamic of  
24 everybody is below the age of 20, and we're dealing with a very large group of people  
25 which will dictate what the future will be.

26 And in my discussions with our chiefs, I said, "You know, most --  
27 you guys realize that most of our people in the community are below the age of 25 or --  
28 you know?" So I said, "Everybody's a voter at 19, so you got to start dealing with them

1 when they're 10."

2 Well, you've got to figure out ways to engage them at -- very young  
3 because they'll be the ones deciding and making those decisions as leaders in the  
4 future. And the more you can build a reliant network of support between parents and  
5 between communities or between individuals, I think you have a better chance of  
6 improving what the future will be, because I think that it's about services, but it's also  
7 about empowering people to take control of what is going to happen, and empowering  
8 them to actually take the positive steps that will help young people see and believe in a  
9 better future, basically, for themselves and their families, really.

10 And you know, we just went through a tragedy in one of our  
11 communities, and it's a young guy. He had six kids, and he just went out one morning  
12 and committed suicide. And you know, no rhyme or reason.

13 And the strange thing was, the job he had was probably the most  
14 dangerous job you could have, working on a fishing boat, that he did every year. He did  
15 it every year, and successfully, and it just got so bad that that was his only out. And he  
16 left a wife and six kids, I think, that are now struggling, trying to figure out what to do.

17 And you know, it's going to take time to support them as a group,  
18 but I'm positive the family -- and I know our community will be there to help, basically,  
19 and be supportive to the tragedy that they're working themselves through over the next  
20 probably years, really, to get to a better situation.

21 And you know, I think that, you know, we -- it's like I mentioned  
22 earlier, our ability to build a resilient trained expertise on the ground across communities  
23 has been one of the primary goals that I've been undertaking now for three or four years  
24 directly to build a greater pool of trained expertise on the ground in our communities to  
25 actually help deal with these very complicated and very difficult situations.

26 And you know, they -- I think it's -- I've been doing it about three or  
27 four years, so the pool of people I would call that are para-professionals on the ground  
28 is actually growing. So I think that's a way to empower those peoples and those

1 communities to come up with things that build stronger networks of people, basically.

2 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah, so I was just thinking about how you  
3 said you need to have the support before the crisis, and it might take a professional to  
4 know that someone's on a path to tragedy.

5 And so I suppose challenges to this strategy would include  
6 resource ---

7 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** It's always been resources but I always believe  
8 that giving people the skills and giving people the knowledge at least empowers them to  
9 actually do things, paid and unpaid, that have very significant implications in a  
10 community or a family setting. And I think getting people to think like that, to do that,  
11 and just do it, basically helps in terms of -- just, it helps. I know it helps, because I see  
12 it.

13 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Is my sound okay?

14 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yes.

15 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** I'm still here, but probably have to (audio  
16 cuts off briefly).

17 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** You should have went the Number 4 there,  
18 Danny, because the reception is better.

19 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** --- where we -- I'll need to stop.

20 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** So yeah.

21 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** You know what, John Paul? I would  
22 have, but I'm going to Ma'git -- there's a wake for Ma'git in Waycobah, but I was just ---

23 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Oh yeah. Yeah, I heard that.

24 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** So that's the motivation for Route 5. So  
25 it's still spotty, then I'll just stop and jump off.

26 And Krista, perhaps there'll be an opportunity to connect with you  
27 directly later on.

28 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Sure. That would be great. Thank you so

1 much for valiantly trying despite our rural spotty ---

2 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Rural connectivity.

3 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** -- challenges.

4 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Yes. No, I'm -- I understand the problems  
5 even more acutely in the moment, so I'll make those interventions with -- the points I  
6 want to leave with is that there's a great initiative with the provincial government that  
7 centers youth voices in these questions. Lorraine Glendenning and (audio cuts off  
8 briefly) are leading it out of the office (audio cuts off briefly) approaches. So I think it'd  
9 be important. These are kids who have really been through the mill, and they'd be  
10 important to catch too.

11 And as -- and the biggest thing in relation to all things tied to  
12 violence, it traces back to, most -- more than any other thing, witnessing or experiencing  
13 domestic violence in homes that often is intergenerational.

14 To all the wonderful points that John was making, I think if there are  
15 resources to be deployed -- and we wrote this, again, in the ONE Nova Scotia  
16 Economic Report, Chapter 1, we need to really rethink how we invest in support for  
17 families with children before they reach school. And (audio cuts off briefly).

18 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Well, Danny ---

19 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** --- has been shown to be most effective in  
20 reducing addictions, mental health, ever since the Hawaii Healthy Starts Initiative. Got  
21 to run, thanks, and sorry for ---

22 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah, you had a great run there, and we  
23 managed to get a lot of it.

24 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Okay, great.

25 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** (\*Inaudible 1:07:35) and then you started to  
26 get warbly.

27 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Thanks. Okay, bye now.

28 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** I think we'll come up as a success, and

1 thank you so much for joining us today.

2 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Good luck.

3 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** All right. Take care.

4 **MR. DANNY GRAHAM:** Bye now.

5 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Bye.

6 Just while we're in this little transition moment, I was going to note  
7 as well that Andy Cox from IWK had to depart as well, and he left us a little note in the  
8 chat, which I'll just read for the record.

9 It says, "Got to go. Have a client who coincidentally needs help  
10 with safety this weekend. When answering some of these questions, what came to  
11 mind is the old block parent program, which I found out still exists and does more than I  
12 thought for community. Something to think about without reinventing the wheel."

13 So Shawna, I'd like to bring it back to you, and I feel -- you're, of  
14 course, invited just to comment on whatever is coming up for you based on what we've  
15 heard.

16 The other piece I was hoping to explore today was around  
17 prevention and -- the role of prevention and early intervention, which I think we've been  
18 talking around anyway, but I just wanted to bring it up squarely and see if there's  
19 anything more anyone wants to say about that.

20 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** The gentleman that just left the call, I  
21 think that's what he's talking about, and I totally agree with what he's saying. We're in  
22 like, a reactive overreacting because of whatever's happening now, and I believe Mr.  
23 Paul mentioned it, about -- earlier about basically being proactive on issues.

24 And I think early intervention is huge when, you know, you're talking  
25 about -- are you talking about communities or just youth in general?

26 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** I'd say youth in general, yeah.

27 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** A hundred percent, and I think you know,  
28 we often talk about how different the generations are. You know, I look at kids today

1 and I'm like, you know, even my own, I have four of them, and they're different  
2 generational kids, and I know my two older ones are way different than my two younger  
3 ones.

4                   And I don't know if we did something different. I know I'm a  
5 different parent than I was with the older ones or whatever, but -- and only -- and I don't  
6 know, like, I feel that prevention piece is huge, like, that early intervention. Like, what  
7 we're talking about now, put that in place, like, in primary, in preschool, or whatever, and  
8 you'll have a different group of kids coming up.

9                   Now, we're -- at this point, we're reacting to what's happening, you  
10 know what I mean? So it's a little more difficult, not impossible. I try to always go back  
11 when I'm working in communities and working with youth, I go back. I always go and  
12 reach back on how I was raised and how I grew up in a community and how successful  
13 that was, the whole, you know, it takes a village thing, that actually works, you know?

14                   And the sense of community is so important. Community spirit is  
15 now missing in a lot of communities. I started a little project with a bunch of youth,  
16 asking them what community spirit was, and I knew the answer before they answered  
17 me, and I felt sad because I knew what they were going to say, and they said, "I have  
18 no idea what community spirit is," which hurt my soul, right?

19                   And I said to them, "How come -- why don't you know?" Again, I  
20 knew the answer, but hearing it come out of their mouths hurt me because we're  
21 dropping the ball as adults, as parents, as community members, and we're not teaching  
22 them.

23                   And she literally said, "Nobody's ever taught me what it was,"  
24 because they had never seen it.

25                   I've seen it growing up. I've seen it in North Preston, East Preston.  
26 My grandmother took me to all those communities and we always visited. They have no  
27 -- they have nothing to be connected to.

28                   Like, community is not the way it was back in the day, and they

1 don't have that same connection as we did to community, because they're so -- a lot of  
2 the communities are spread out now, right, and so they don't see the same community  
3 spirit. They don't have the same connection to community and love for community  
4 because there's not really communities any more. We call them communities, but --  
5 and the word "community spirit" has changed so much over the years. You know, I  
6 lived community spirit. Kids don't know what it is. There's no connection. They're so  
7 detached from everything because of social media.

8                   What is the word I'm looking for? They're not -- they're numb, but  
9 they're desensitized, almost, right? And I don't know, are we really ever going to  
10 change the whole social media thing? I think parents wish, right? All I can do is not  
11 give my kids a phone. That's how I can do it.

12                   And I'm trying my best, you know, because all their friends have  
13 phones and all that kind of stuff, but I think that early learning, you know, when they're  
14 younger about, you know, it's not that important to have a phone, something simple like  
15 that, so that early intervention about stuff like that, because that's what we're dealing  
16 with now.

17                   And you know, because I did, it's hard to tell them no, you know,  
18 you can't have a phone, or you -- because I don't -- because just simply because I don't  
19 want them to have a phone because I don't want them to be dependent on the phone. I  
20 want you to go outside and play. You know, those things, right, it's just so important. I  
21 think it's -- I don't know. Like, that early intervention piece, I totally agree with -- was it --  
22 what was his name again?

23                   **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Oh, Danny, Danny, Danny.

24                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** I think that's important. Right off the top  
25 of my head, I can't think of anything else right now, but I think that is definitely being  
26 proactive when it comes to -- you know, their wellbeing, is intervention, because I'm just  
27 thinking when I was a kid, what helped me growing up and being so confident, you  
28 know, when I'm going to school, feeling safe when I was in school because I knew my

1 community was there and they had my back. I knew who my parents were. They  
2 supported my siblings, my uncles, you know? We had all that, and I felt safe. How do  
3 we give that to other kids, right?

4 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah. You're making my mind spin as a  
5 parent because I think we've all been through COVID, and that was, you know,  
6 everything got blurred with kids online learning and having to work from home while our  
7 kids are home, so they're on social media, they're on whatever. It's -- I've been feeling  
8 like the tide is really against us right now, the cultural tide.

9 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Yeah. But you know, you do your best  
10 and during COVID, it was -- I'm blessed with lots of property, so the kids were outside  
11 and you know, I get a lot done working from home. I think you do more, like, because  
12 you're home, so you're cleaning while you're working and doing all that stuff.

13 But I don't know. Yeah, it's kind of put everybody in a kind of a  
14 tailspin, so hopefully ---

15 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Take a while to sort it out, yeah.

16 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Take a while to sort it out. I don't know if  
17 back to normal is a thing. Was it ever a thing? What's normal? But anyways ---

18 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** So we've got about 10 minutes left, so I  
19 really - I just want to kind of open it up and ask if there's anything anyone wants to  
20 share, especially recommendations wise for the Commissioners, before we end the day.

21 One alternative or one way of thinking about this is sort of the  
22 magic wand question, and I feel like we're talking about this anyway. It's like, if you  
23 could identify or talk about the ideal conditions for community safety for children and  
24 youth, what would that look like? And I do -- I think we've played with that a little bit, but  
25 if you want to build on that or any other area, I'm happy, whoever wants to go first.

26 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Sorry. I just want to say one thing really  
27 quick. I think, you know, living where I live, I touched on it a little bit, just about there  
28 was so much activity, used to be so many programs and stuff like that. It's just not



1 enough to have, like, a summer camp.

2 Like, you need -- there's literally nothing out here between these  
3 three communities that I'm in, there's literally nothing in the evenings for youth that is  
4 just like, community based, like, they can go -- and it's not just about hanging out.

5 There's more to programming than hanging out in a building, you know what I mean?  
6 There needs to be more stuff in place for the older kids.

7 You know, something my grandmother used to say, "Idle hands is  
8 the Devil's handiwork," or something like that. But there's literally nothing for them to  
9 do, and there's not enough community focused stuff, you know, outside of school.

10 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Okay. And, so just for the record again, so  
11 what are the three communities that you're working in?

12 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Well, the community that I live in is  
13 Beechville, and then the community that's attached is Lakeside, Timberlea. And I just  
14 feel there needs to be more resources, I mean, because they're building a community  
15 centre out here, but I'm like, that's great, but then there's going to be so many rules,  
16 like, you can't -- you know what I mean? Like, just have events for kids to come to.

17 I think money in that regards, it needs to be more accessible to put  
18 on hiring people to do that. It's always a bunch of roadblocks and obstacles to get  
19 money to create programs. You have to jump through hoops for the money. You know  
20 what I mean? That's part and parcel why a lot of stuff doesn't happen these days.

21 It was easier to do back in the day because the community did it all.  
22 Now, you have to ask for money to fix this, build that, you know, hire this person, you  
23 know, like I said, jump through 10 million hoops to do it, and I wish it was a lot easier to  
24 do. And I think the magic wand is putting more resources into the community like that  
25 supporting the youth, you know, supporting the seniors, having, you know, the  
26 gatherings you used to have. Bring some of it back.

27 It's -- I don't think it was a broken structure, you know, and it gives  
28 kids more sense of community. They respect the community they live in, you know,

1 because they're helping build the community and then they'll come back and volunteer  
2 in your community, right? So some more at community, that would be great.

3 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah.

4 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Yeah. Thank you.

5 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** John?

6 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** The big thing I see is, you know, one of the  
7 interesting things that one of our organizations has started was the Ulnoweg Education  
8 Foundation, and it's really a program about empowering youth to come up with  
9 innovative ideas about the future and what we should be doing in the future. And those  
10 kinds of things help produce leaders for the future with the right mix of values and  
11 approaches that are more connected to who we are as Indigenous people, really,  
12 because I think that, you know, giving more young people the opportunity to contribute  
13 to different things goes a long way in making them part of the solution to a problem  
14 which may be only at adulthood [sic], right?

15 And you know, getting them engaged in that, I think, would be  
16 actually beneficial because I think that one of the interesting things about Mi'kmaq  
17 people is they actually believe everybody has something to contribute, and you need to  
18 get and put together and listen to all those contributions to actually figure out what is the  
19 path forward. And you know, we've been trying to do that more and more, engaging  
20 youth and helping them contribute to what the path forward is going to be, because you  
21 know, I always explain to our leadership, "They will be the leaders, guys, and they just  
22 have a different way of looking at things."

23 And it will become more apparent as these young people get into  
24 more leadership roles. Like, we have one councillor in one of the communities is only  
25 19 years old, and he's a councillor of one of the largest communities in New Brunswick.

26 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Wow.

27 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** So it kind of tells you they are coming, they're  
28 coming up through the ranks and I just tell our leaders, which are most of them are

1 getting -- I'm getting up there, so I tell them they're getting up there too.

2 And I said, "These kids are coming along, and they want to move  
3 the markers and want to make change and want to make things better."

4 So it's quite interesting that many of these young leaders are  
5 emerging, slow but sure, across all our communities. It's amazing how many of -- it's  
6 amazing, when I look at it, at the age profile of our elected leaders in our communities.  
7 It's very interesting because the age of the council members is going down. It's  
8 amazing, but you know, I tell people, they have different ideas about what we should be  
9 doing, so I said, "That will continue to evolve," I said, because they are elected by their  
10 peers in those communities, right?

11 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah.

12 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** You mentioned that -- is it Ulnooweg  
13 Education Fund [sic]?

14 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Ulnooweg Education Foundation.

15 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Now, where would I find that information  
16 for my high school students?

17 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Look up [www.ulnooweg](http://www.ulnooweg.ca), u-l-n-o-o-w-e-g.ca

18 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Okay, perfect. Thank you. I'll pass that  
19 on to the Indigenous students at the high school.

20 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Yeah, it's something interesting they started,  
21 but I really see a lot of potential because it opens the boundaries beyond what we used  
22 to think about in the past, because they're talking about what we need. They got the  
23 kids thinking about what we need to be, what we need to do to make things different 50  
24 years' time. So it's quite interesting.

25 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Wow, that's awesome.

26 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Right? I figure they'll come up with stuff. I have  
27 no qualms about it, and then that's the way it works.

28 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Well, I can't thank you enough for this

1 conversation. It's just been -- it's kind of nice to end on a optimistic note. I mean, we  
2 come together out of tragedy, so to spend some time thinking about how we can do  
3 better, we can support each other more, and build community is -- it's really -- it's  
4 actually -- it's why I took this piece of the work on the Commission, the Research and  
5 Policy piece, because it's more hopeful than the facts, so ---

6 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, thank you for letting me participate.

7 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Oh, it was lovely to hear your words.  
8 Thank you so much.

9 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Thank you.

10 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** All right.

11 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Take care.

12 Well, thank you.

13 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Okay. Bye.

14 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Thank you. Bye.

15 --- Session concludes

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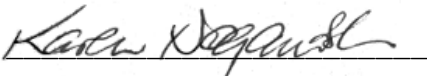
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## C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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19 I, KAREN NOGANOSH, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate  
20 transcription of the audio recording provided to the best of my skill and ability, and I so  
21 swear.

22

23 

24 KAREN NOGANOSH

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