



### **Focus Groups – General Information**

**Community:** REACH – Community Organizers

**Date:** November 17, 2014

**Moderator:** Rachel George

**Commissioner:** N/A

**Topic:** Experiences as Community Organizers

### **Participants**

- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Barbara Kates (BK)    | 4. Arla Patch (AP)    |
| 2. Stephanie Bailey (SB) | 5. Wenona Lola (WL)   |
| 3. Maria Girouard (MG)   | 6. Esther Attean (EA) |

### **Recording**

**MS. GEORGE (RG):** Okay. It is November 17, 2014. We are here at Indian Island, Maine. My name is Rachel George and I am here today with:

**MS. KATES (BK):** Barbara Kates.

**MS. BAILEY (SB):** Stephanie Bailey.

**MS. GIROUARD (MG):** Maria Girouard.

**MS. PATCH (AP):** Arla Patch.

**MS. LOLA (WL):** Wenona Lola.

**RG:** Fantastic. And the file number is FG-R-201411-0012. Barbara, have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

**BK:** Yes.

**RG:** Stephanie, have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

**SB:** Yes.

**RG:** Maria, have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

**MG:** Yes.

**RG:** Arla, have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

**AP:** Yes.

**RG:** And Wenona, have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

**WL:** Yes.

**RG:** Great. And I have to let all of you know that if at any point during this recording you indicate that there is a child or an elder currently in need of protection or that there is imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death to an identifiable person or group, including yourself, that that information may not be protected as confidential. Any questions?

Is there anything that you guys would like to say starting off or do you want me to just jump into the questions?

**MG:** Just jump in.

**RG:** Okay, can you tell me about your experiences doing community organizing? Or how about let's start off with something easier. How did you come to be involved with Maine Wabanaki REACH?

**WL:** For me, Esther just asked me if I was interested in helping doing community organizing and that's pretty much how I got involved.

**MG:** I had already been doing a lot of community organizing outside of REACH in various capacities and was asked I think it was last summer, the summer of 2013 if I would be interested in organizing for REACH. So I started off in a part-time capacity organizing and then became the Wellness Coordinator.

**BK:** I got an email from Penthea last February and she had a job description, asked me if I knew anyone who might be interested in this. I showed it to my husband I was like is she really asking me if I know someone else or is she asking if I'm interested. He said I think she wants to know if you're interested so that's how I got connected.

**SB:** I got connected because first I was asked to sit on the selection panel and for to select the Commissioners and then after that I was interested in the work so they had hired Community Organizers for Township that live at Pleasant Point and so they I started helping them as a volunteer. I was volunteer coordinator of an Indian Township for a little bit till I quit.

**AP:** Almost three years ago now in January I put in a search, actually it was before that three and a half years ago I put in a search for Native Americans Quakers in Maine and the signing



of the mandate came up and so I started to pursue and got to, and then got asked to come to Indian Island as a volunteer, volunteered for a year and a half and then a year and a half ago got asked to be Community Engagement Coordinator.

**RG:** That's fantastic. Why was it important for each of you to be involved in this part of the REACH?

**MG:** For me it's about the healing and the change necessary in our community and that's my primary focus is healing and change for Wabanaki communities and then realizing that we can't heal or change by ourselves. We all need to somehow engage the broader society into some sort of understanding of who we are and where we've come from.

**SB:** Mine was, I was really interested in the work and interested in how it was going to potentially affect our communities so that's why I jumped on at first as a volunteer to see how that would, to see how it was going to play out. I wanted to be part of that. That healing.

**WL:** I was going to say, I can't remember how many years back, a friend of mine, Rebecca, was telling me about this whole thing and how it was developing. She thought that I would be a good candidate to be, you know, a part it, but she didn't really explain too much about it, like she didn't know the details so I just kind of like didn't really give it much thought and then like I had seen stuff on TV and then read articles in the newspaper and I think it's really important because it affects our children, you know, our future and potentially our communities and then when I seen how, I think it was the Supreme Court or a Federal Court case about the little girl who was a Native and they went absolutely against the Indian Child Welfare Act. It just, I don't know, it just really kind of got to me and I just felt like this is something that we really need to make sure that does not get pulled apart, you know, and I think it is really important for our people too to start healing also from things that have happened in the past and that I think are still happening in our communities.

**BK:** I think for me it's a couple of different things. I heard Esther speak about it, probably about two years ago and right afterwards I sent an email to her and at the end told her that I was interested in volunteering in some way. So it connected with me for a couple different reasons. One is in terms of the work that I've done in child welfare. I worked in child welfare for about ten years and then I left working in child welfare and had the opportunity, someone said to me what would make you come back to work in child welfare and I said if I could come back and help kids not to go into the system. So I did that for a while, for about twelve years or so. So I already, and through that process learned about more about Indian Child Welfare Act than I knew before and with the leadership that Native Americans have taken in the child welfare system and improving it, and creating systems that follow families. So I already had that piece and I also my in-laws are survivors of the Holocaust in Europe and my mother-in-law lived with us for nine years and so I lived with her with her experience of having been through a genocide and so that connection is very strong with me personally. So I think those two places.

**AP:** Well, for me it started when I was twelve in a Quaker meeting. We have something we call first day school which is I guess what other people call Sunday school and I first learned a little bit about what happened to indigenous people at that age and I decided then that someday I wanted to do something to, something about it. I didn't know what. And then four years ago I got to go out to the Navaho reservation with my friend who'd been a counselor there. She's also non-native, she was invited back to a wedding and just getting on that reservation and experiencing the feeling made me realize how much work there needs to be done, how much healing needs to happen and so that's when I put that search in. So it's, it's been a lifelong issue as a Euro-American of wanting to give back in some way.

**RG:** Can you tell me about your experiences doing community organizing within each of your communities? What are some of the things that you've noticed? What are some of the challenges you faced?

**WL:** For me I kept like getting a lot of people said 'oh yeah, that's interesting, yeah, I'd be willing to do a statement' and then no one would make a commitment. No one would commit to a time. And I'm like well, maybe they're just afraid to say no to me, you know what I mean? So I started saying it's okay to say no, you know what I mean like? But I just, that was like the biggest thing for me like the apathy I think. It was just making me so frustrated and then I was like starting to get mad, what the fuck's wrong with telling our truth? Why can't people just stop? Why can't they just say it? You know, because it's something for me so that's so freeing about saying what's on your mind or saying what the truth is, you know, and I just can't understand how, why people would want to keep that in or I don't know. I'm just from a totally different generation I can tell that. I know that. It was just really frustrating and I think kind of sad too sometimes, and you know, like knowing that some people would benefit from it but they're just so afraid, you know, and like just seeing that fear made me sad for them.

**SB:** Part of mine was because I am considered a troublemaker in my community because I am an activist, people wouldn't talk to me just because of that. They thought, you know, like because I am a peaceful person so people think just because I speak out against forestry issues or against water issues or whatever it is at the time and justice, that I'm not a peaceful person. So that was a problem for me in trying to reach more people on a personal basis rather than seeing me as this political, because like a lot of our relationships are tainted or ruined because of politics and nothing else. It's not because we ever treated each other poorly. It's just because of the politics on the reservation.

And that was, you know, one of the things that I, you know, we come up against and people like same with Wenona, you know, getting people saying that they are going to give a statement and some people you really believe they really want to give a statement, but for some reason or another like you'll set them up and they just don't come or they just don't show up and I'm not sure what it is. It is a little aggravating because you just think like it could just get done and you're showing this interest. If you're not interested, then just tell me you're really not interested but people don't do that and so I wonder too is it just because they want to please me and not say no because our people are friendly people so, you know, I think that that might be part of it.





And going especially talking to a lot of the elders, you know, one of the things that they would say is do you know how many times people have come here and say they're going to help us and said that they're bringing information to us and, you know, they had people doing this educational thing and that they were going to bring education to our people and they never even did it. They sell it to white people. He's like so what's any difference about, different about this, well, one man in particular was very angry about, you know, when I was sitting there with him. But that was a common theme with a lot of the older generation. They just think it's a bunch of bull and why should I tell you anymore when we've said and spoken till we're blue in the face about the injustice and nothing happens. So it was like people are apathetic because they don't think something is going to change.

**WL:** Yeah, I had anger too. Like this one lady she was like the state of Maine is not going to change. We could tell our stories. We could do this. We could do that. We've done this. We've done that. It doesn't matter. We're not going to do anything about it and that's something that I try to explain, well, you know, maybe the state of Maine will change. Maybe nothing ever does change but what we can do is change for ourselves, talk about the stuff, you know, get healthier, you know, and she's just like, whatever, you know. Blowing me off. But it is, it's sad. It's hard. It was hard to especially the older generation.

**SB:** Yep. And then knowing that the mandate ended. Like this one fellow knew the mandate ended and said so when you're work done, who's going to hold these talk, because he comes to the talking circles. So who's going do the talking circles.

**AP:** Uh-huh. Good question.

**SB:** You know, who's, it's going to stop, you know, that's what he said. It's going to stop. You might be doing good right now and I'm glad you're doing it Duz, but it's going to end. It's going to stop and nothing's going to change.

**AP:** Because what's different this time?

**SB:** Yeah, yeah.

**AP:** That would be a great thing if we had, if we had what is different this time. It could be said. And could say this, you know, and that's where money would come in, where we would have the ability to actually have the people, the resources who could say, no this is ongoing.

What I've run into is in the white community is what I've been calling un-metabolized grief. It's like the grief is there and kind of, even if they don't know the full story, they have a sense that there is like some guilt and some bad stuff that and not that many people want to face it and the groups that have come forward the most is the faith community is willing. Because they understand on a moral level that it's time. I've run into racism just plain and simple in the schools and I've run into a lot of people who are open to hearing and, you know, we call it the

shock and awe talk because that's exactly what they didn't know. They just didn't know the information. And I would say for the most part and at least maybe it's the groups that we've picked and the places because a lot of them had been following up on an inquiry. Somebody wants us to come there and especially in the faith community but there mostly wanting, it's like it's time. We're ready to take this on, but there is also a lot of minimizing and denying and then like this teacher that I just got an email from from Bonny Eagle was downright rude. Don't contact me again about anything is what he basically said. So and I had in my own school district where I did a training for the teachers two and a half years ago I had a range of answers of reactions from 'this is really important and we need to do this in the school system.' 'This was so overwhelming, I have no idea how I'm going to help my students through this.' 'And it was controversial what I had to say, it was controversial,' which was a concept that never occurred to me that the Spencer Phips proclamation was controversial. But I do think we're up against a huge 500 year tide of minimizing and denying and having grown up in an alcoholic family, I've seen that firsthand and as an adult, I've seen it firsthand in my relationships and I know it's really a powerful thing and it feels like that's what we need to breakthrough and I don't know if this is a good time to roll into where I think the TRC is lacking. I've been really sad from the first beginning of being on the communication subcommittee as I said almost three years ago now, that we have not had a media person. We have not had a communications publicity media person. I mean John Dieffenbacher-Krall played that role as a consultant with us and gave us a lot of good information and as an individual when I was a volunteer I did a lot of that on my own. But like the Bates Event we had one coverage and that was the Lewiston Sun Journal because I called them and we had one reporter cover that. That should have been on television and I don't, you know, I mean we're just not getting enough. I still keep running into people who don't know about the TRC. They've never heard of it and it's like please, we need to get it out there and have people know what it is and that's been really frustrating and it just seems like if we had had a person, like if somebody like John, who knows the newspapers and knows the people, could have been on our, have that as their job...

**WL:** Like a peer.

**AP:** Yeah, yeah and a communications person and, you know, and also somebody to help herd all the writers that we might have and to really, you know, I mean I've tried but I don't have enough time in my job to do that. And when I was doing it on my own, you know, I did some but I don't know, we just don't seem like that part has been as good as it can be and I think it needs to really upgrade in a big way so that we can have much more communication just getting the word out. Because it's kind of that thing you were talking about, the first time that people hear it, they like I don't know, but it plants a seed and it creates a process and so the first time somebody hears that this truth and reconciliation is going on and what, we took Native children? I mean that's like the beginning and then the next time they hear it and then the next time. I mean I, the lady who represents my photographs said that she learned in all of the marketing classes that she took that any product has to go in front of an audience seven times before they act on that product. So I mean it's kind of the same principle that people need to hear about us a few times before they can start to let it in and then go to a deeper level and a deeper level. So that's been a huge frustration and I think a piece of the puzzle that's been missing. And an important piece so I don't know what we can do about it but.



**SB:** That would have been nice. It's just, you know, thinking when I first started as a volunteer I, I'm a big newsletter person. I love it because in a newsletter you can get a lot of information out in a few amount of pages, you know, little paragraphs and I volunteered at my community to do newsletters in the past and so I start off with a newsletter for the TRC just so people would always have some understanding about it, but I couldn't keep up with that financially and I didn't have the support, the paper and stuff. And so it would have been nice if maybe somebody within the organization had took that on and made sure because the tribal chiefs all signed on and said listen, here's a copy of the newsletter, distribute this to your commun-- because they distribute flyers all the time so send it out to all your households in the community. That would have helped I think keep people informed because, you know, I've handed out flyers door to door and sometimes people don't read the flyer but for some reason if you can make a newsletter pretty and interesting, people will at least look through it and pick up little pieces, you know, so yeah, I think that was a big part of ours of trying to make it visible, you know, putting up flyers in the news, little ads that I would put up in the Housing Authority or in the community buildings, health center and stuff. Not everybody goes to those buildings. Not everybody goes to the health center every week or to the tribal office, you know, or they don't stand there and look at the billboards. They sometimes they do, like even me when I do go down there it's rare that I'm standing there to look for something. I'm the talker so I'm talking to whoever is there, you know. But, yeah, information there needed to be better flow of information.

**MG:** I found it challenging to organize just because people had so many other things going on and at first I wasn't really excited about organizing for work with REACH for the TRC because I felt that the focus was too narrow because like I said I had been doing all kinds of different community organizing in various capacities in the community and I felt for myself that it was too narrow of a focus and so a lot of the work that I've had to do is, you know, to really talk, talk it up. Like this is, you know, a place to start, you know, starting with looking at what happened to the children from this, you know, this small period of time which is the TRC's focus. It's difficult to get people to be on board with that when you have people who are just trying to survive. People who are just trying to figure where their next meal might be coming from or how long the drop of oil in their tank's going to last. They don't care about coming and participating as good as it may sound, they're in survival mode. So it's been really hard to strike a balance I guess. It's hard to strike a balance and so it think it's, you know, overwhelming.

**BK:** I think for me it, I'm organizing in the non-Native child welfare community. There's like different layers: there's the people who don't respond to my phone calls or emails. 'I never got them.' And then there are people who respond but are quite insistent that they have nothing to add and then there are the people who are willing to talk to me and then some of them are going to come forward and make statements. Some of them are not. And it's been, it's challenging because I don't think I'm getting a cross section. I'm getting the people who are willing and I'm not sure then the child welfare community, I mean I feel like we're dealing with a lot of what I've been thinking about with Thanksgiving coming up in particular I think

is the stories we tell ourselves and the history and how both of those have some value and the awareness of what's what and I think in child welfare there's stories we tell ourselves about child welfare and there's stories we tell ourselves for non-Natives about our relationship with Native peoples. So we kind have a double layer there and I don't feel like I really got to dig into that with folks. I'm not sure how to make that happen (*Inaudible*) stuff but it's in my head. So that's I guess would be the challenging things for me.

**SB:** Yeah, another challenging thing too was just people believing that they have something to say. Like when I've talked to so many people who don't think they have anything useful to say at all, that anything they say won't benefit the work that we're doing even though I explain to them like they're looking just for historical context and all. You know, the different ways that they could help the work and so, you know, for instance, now I've talked to this one woman probably three times and she's ready to give a statement now. And it's been months and months and months because she's talked to other people besides myself who has helped it to settle in I guess so it's just helping people to understand because it takes more than a few times I guess. You know.

**WL:** Yeah, I agree you reminded me of this one elder. Someone told me to go talk to her because she had been adopted out and this, they said they knew that she'd been through a lot of stuff and it felt like I was pretty close to her and I felt like I could go approach her so I did. You know, she was the one that had anger about 'like nothing's going to change, doesn't matter what I say. I'm telling you all the God-awful things that have happened to me. It's not going to change anything. It's not going to do anything,' and then so I went and talked to her daughter and I was just 'like, jeez, I wish there was a way I could get through to your mom to convince her that if anything, this would be good for her, not just for, you know, whatever.' And she was going on, some was like sometimes she was, she'll just coming out and telling us about these things that has happened to her and she'll just be like but that's not abuse and then she goes and I'll be sitting there, like, yes, mom that is abuse. You know, like, she doesn't even realize what her experiences were. I mean she doesn't see them as being wrong or...

**AP:** They get normalized.

**WL:** Yeah. I was just like whoa, and I'm afraid, and I am afraid to keep going back to her, you know, even though I know she has a lot she can contribute, and say and yeah, and like, plus that was the other thing. I don't want to feel like I'm knowing people's business. Like, oh, I know you were abused and can you want to talk about that? You know, I just try to say, you know, I'm not I know I don't know your story but I heard that you might have something, you know, something to contribute and but I just, I feel like I'm being nosy or being...

**SB:** A bother even.

**WL:** Yeah, or like...

**AP:** But-in-sky.

**WL:** Yeah or assuming or yeah.



**BK:** I ran into similar kinds of stuff when I was, similar with the child welfare community and like one person I spoke to she clearly had a story and something that was, you know, in her heart and she just said I don't see what good is going to come out of saying it. And I had kind of made peace with myself but there really wasn't anything that I could have assured her of. She had to find that, I mean I could throw stuff out there and I did but she had to connect. She knows what's going to be useful to her now. I don't. And I kind of had to let go of that, you know.

**WL:** Yeah, and those people that were really afraid, I just said, you know, it's okay. You will talk when you want, when you're ready to talk. You know what I mean, and just to make them feel good about their decision not to do it or not to want to go there, you know, because I don't, the last thing I want to do is put more stuff on them.

**BK:** Yeah.

**SB:** And each person is work, you know, it's not like you approach them once and that's it, it's like you have to keep going at them. You know that's one thing I noticed like when I was doing my logs I'm like I know it looks like I talked to this person like five times already but because either they'll see me and ask me again and I end up talking to them or, you know they're thinking of still giving a statement so you keep wanting to check in without being a pain in the ass but, you know, there's just, it's a lot of work to get somebody into that place.

**AP:** Yes, it's a process.

**SB:** Yes, it is.

**AP:** Well, and also I think there is a phenomenon, I know experienced in being in a domestic violent relationship is that in order to live in it and survive it, I had it all minimized and that it wasn't that bad. And after I ended it, then I started having the feelings of what it really was because I, you minimize and deny so you can survive and so it's hard to cross that threshold and realize you're actually going to get healing if you talk about it.

**BK:** It's hard to do that balancing you guys are talking about because on one hand that acceptance that you were saying of like, you know, like letting people know it's okay that they're not coming forward is like a real powerful thing. It's really saying to someone I'm accepting where you are right now and on another hand you're trying to get a sense of do they really want to move further? And, you know, you want to go back there and give them another opportunity and so you guys are kind of doing both those things at the same time.

**AP:** Well, and it's so scary that they want to feel like they have a partner who's going to be there helping them almost like a midwife, you know, you're not going to be able to give the baby, give birth by yourself, you're scared and it's overwhelming and you need somebody to kind of really, should, okay, you know. So I think your process of going back and then back

and going back is really the only thing you can do.

**SB:** Yeah, and the other hard part was I didn't think it would be hard but when somebody asks you to sit as their listener, you know, to be that support person like I had been asked to sit in on statements and that was really, I mean, there was one time I was so depressed. I was crying and crying just thinking about it because I was, on top of my own life which can be stressful, you know, and then remembering and hearing and, you know, it just, it hurt so bad. It was hard, you know, and then so then you have to find somebody to help process that with, you know, you as somebody, you know, there are some people even still want to give a statement that want me to be their support person and I'm a little bit afraid of it now because I don't know where it is going to put me at and or how intense their story is and so then you that other person's-- I mean it gives you more respect and love for the person in the world which I appreciate but it also puts this layer on you that's, you know, I don't have healthy ways that I deal with things. You know, sometimes I let them build, build, build until I have this like little explosion, you know, all on my own. I don't act out or hurt anybody but it's like my, I break down myself and so because I don't have a way to process that. I mean Esther's been a really big help for me because when I feel overwhelmed at times she catches me. She's really good about-- she knows I do a lot of my work on Facebook too so she'll see, you know, sometimes something that I posted, recognize that I'm having a hard time and she'll message me. So I really appreciate her awareness and to make sure that I am able to function and move in the world so that was really for me really beneficial to have somebody that support, to be aware, but I don't know how good she was to be aware of other people and their potential breakdowns. You know what I mean, she's only one person. That wasn't her job. She just happened to tune in and catch me and I was like, holy cow. You know, if she didn't, I probably would have had a real bad breakdown this day and have to just suffer through it until it was done. So.

**WL:** I had one woman, she was, she wanted to do it but you could tell she was kind of iffy and her and I, like had no problem having discussion with me and then we were like kind of reminding each other of things that we had been through. And I was like jeez, I wish an interviewer was listening right now. Like why can't it just be this easy, you know. She was like, well, maybe it could be. Maybe you could just go in with me and I had agreed to do that but then she ended up not showing up. And I mean she is still saying she wants to do it but then like there was an older lady that's like I'll give a statement if you are the one that's giving the statement. I'm not talking to any white people, this and that whatever. I'm like I'm not a trained interviewer though. She's like no, I'm not doing it then.

**BK:** Do you guys feel like it changes your relationship in your communities or cause it seems like you're all, you're caring more the communities and individual's history as part of doing this work and maybe you already had that role or maybe that's new. Does it change in your relationship in your communities?

**WL:** I don't know. I don't know. Because it seems like it's easier like just to go to talk to them than to agree them to do this. This is a totally different thing.

**AP:** Yeah, it's another whole step.





**SB:** Yeah, because I've sat there where people start telling me their story and I'm like well, wait, you know, and I've listened to people telling me part of their stories without being, you know, because they won't come and tell it on... You know, it would have been nice if there was a way for us to sit and have that opportunity like, you know, some sort of informal type of setting where if it was on the fly, are you okay with me recording this so that we can use it, and we can bleep your name out. You know, give them all of those options too but have a way to do it if it comes up like that.

**AP:** At the moment, catch the moment.

**SB:** Yeah, because there are several moments that I've had that are gone because the person won't and then I had one person that gave a statement that told me, you know, like 'Duz, I didn't dare say a lot of things because, you know, they're white and I didn't want to be rude.'

**AP:** Oh, yeah.

**SB:** So she held back because they were white people. And I was like well, why don't you write it out and we can add it to your statement and she was all embarrassed, 'write that down! Are you crazy?' Yep, so.

**AP:** I thought we had a facilitation where somebody could come into somebody's home so that is a way that a statement could be...

**SB:** We've done that.

**AP:** It's still more formal compared to like what you're talking about, Wenona, where it's right at that moment and what about if Wenona were to go in with her for the statement. Like as if she's talking to you.

**WL:** Yeah, I asked her and she said that was fine too but then she ended up backing out. I know I wish there was some way that we could've captured some of that stuff ourselves but then Esther was saying well, it would be biased or it would be whatever, you know, I just like, I think that's who they are most comfortable with.

**SB:** Yeah, that's true.

**AP:** Yeah, exactly.

**WL:** --talking to.

**MG:** So I think it's pretty clear that we're not getting really an accurate reflection from the communities because there's so many trust issues and there's a whole lot of fear. So, you know, we're probably not getting the real full representation from the tribes of this, this



investigation and as far as changing my roles, in the community I don't feel so much that my role has been changed more than it has been solidified. So I always had considered myself an activist and, you know, advocate and I think hearing people's stories has made me more, more of an advocate for the tribe. You know, in just getting a better sense of the overall poverty, you know, there's some saying about the frog in the water, you know, like they don't even realize, you know, that they're living in the water, and it's the same thing like we're just surviving in this place and not till we kind of back up and take this look do you realize, you know, all the poverty that is everywhere and because people don't talk about these sorts of thing but I remember one elder during the TRC gathering who was sharing a story about, you know, him being in danger of losing his children because he was too poor to be able to afford a bathtub. I mean how fucked up is that? Your children, you can't afford a bathtub so you can't have your kids, you know, so it's made me be even more stronger of an advocate but on the other hand it makes me feel kind of futile to like what am I going to do this is like so much to have to know and have to be aware of.

**RG:** Thinking back what did you envision for the TRC? What did you want outcomes to be? What do you want outcomes to be?

**MG:** I think one of the things that was most appealing for me was the fact that they were going to have the full documentation of history, in pulling all those historical pieces together and to be able to document it, like, yes these things happened. So I was definitely appreciative of that and then just not knowing how it's going to turn out but hoping that they are going to have some stronger policies around protecting the children going forward because a lot of the people who did participate were really adamant that they were only really doing this, you know, for the kids and to ensure that this doesn't continue to happen. It was really important to a lot of people and, you know, I passed on the information that was given to me to folks involved in that, we're not going to go away. We're going to make sure that whenever recommendations come out of the TRC that they get adhered to but now I feel bad like I told them some mistruth because it's not a big guarantee anymore that we're going to be able to move forward, you know, because I'm saying, well, REACH isn't going away and I thought, I did think that we were in a better position then we really are. So I feel a little frustrated like I may have misled people.

**WL:** Oh yeah, made out to like a liar.

**MG and SB:** Yeah, yeah.

**MG:** So, you know have to be very conscious and conscious of those things when you're doing work in the community and especially with the level of distrust that already exists, you know, for somebody somehow planted into my head that we're going to be around and we're going to ensure these are adhered to and then to find out well, we may not be around or we may not be around in that capacity or we may not be able to do that. But then I'm like well, I went around and frickin' told everyone now that they've told their story, oh, never mind. You know, so it feels kind of shitty to me.

**AP:** It gets back to what you were saying, Wenona, like what difference does it make? Why should we bother doing this, you know, how is this time different?



**WL:** And then it's going to affect people's credibility in the community (*AP: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly*) as well if things don't go the way they say they are going go, you know, and I don't mean to backtrack but I was also thinking about some of the people that I was trying to get to come forward to talk about situations and they were so afraid because they were currently going through situations and they were so afraid that if they did say anything, that it would affect their current situation negatively and I'm just like that's why you need to say something so, you know, whatever they're doing to you, they won't do to somebody else. But when you're in that right then and there, you can't think about other people, other people's children or the future for that matter, you know, and I kind of wished I, I wished we had more participation, more people that are at that level, ready to heal, ready to talk, you know. That's what I was hoping for but I mean I know this stuff doesn't take, doesn't happen overnight either.

**SB:** I know my hope is, you know, I believe when I come into this work that the recommendations that were going to be made by the Commission were going to be adhered by the State and the Tribe but from what I've learned there's no guarantee that the recommendations are going to be made but then it's an individual choice whether or not they are going to accept and implement those recommendations and so, you know, that's something just like Wenona said it affects your credibility because I do at court advocacy work for people. I go in and help people with their children that have kids in child welfare and here I had been asking, you know, them to participate and like she said, you know, it's hard for them to see beyond what they're in, there's a lot of fear and what's going on is really disgusting like when you're in it and you see how disgusting the state works especially and then when our own tribe has the right to say we're not going to step in on this case and they allow the state because of resources like that's disgusting too. There's so much going on that needs to be changed and there's no guarantee of any change and that makes me really sick and it makes me afraid at the same time because I feel like I am going to be letting people down, like she said and then who's going to trust me again? You know, I'm an advocate as well. I consider myself an activist and an advocate and I feel like it's going to really, you know, impede on that that whole what people think I'm trying to do and that it was just a waste of time.

**MG:** I actually even got some criticism from, you know, some people in our tribal communities that, you know, are well established and doing well for themselves and they do a lot of good work and I would have thought that they would be more on board with the work that we're doing but it seems like, you know, there's a certain few I always run into that are real critical and of the appearances that we're bolstering ourselves through this process. And so when, when people involved in this process are, you know, on the TV or in the news or, you know, really, you know, being lifted up there, that it's on the back of the people who are suffering in our community and I'm very conscious and aware of that. That's why I don't like this Thursday event (*Referring to the November 20<sup>th</sup> event "Genocide and ME"*) and all the attention around it like I was some big frigging superstar. You know, that was never my intent. It was just to deliver a message and I don't want to be on all these talk shows and talking about myself and what I'm going to talk about because that was never what I had signed up for. And

so I feel a little bit resentful about the Thursday event because people are looking at this process critically like that. Like, oh yeah, we'll see what happens, you know, when it's all done but you had a good a job and you had a good time, didn't you? You know, so I'm very aware of that dynamic too.

**AP:** One of the visions that I had right from the start was educational. Being a teacher and especially having a lot of years with high school age and knowing now that my high school kids are getting back to me as adults on Facebook that they're quoting things I said to them. I just know what an impressionable time and age that is and I think our young people have really good I call it a 'shit detector,' I was going to say, but anyway, okay, 'a poop detector' and they know that our country is not in compliance with who we say we are and that's part of their discontent and their angst and so getting this right, admitting the truth, acknowledging our past and getting that out in some product. I mean my vision initially was a twenty minute video that would go around to every public and private school in Maine and all the kids would be on the same page with the same information and they would get it and, you know, I too feel really concerned about when the recommendations come and REACH is going to, I've been saying that same thing to all kinds of people. REACH is going to carry on the work of the recommendations by the Commission. Well, where is the money? That's the thing. We need the money to make that happen. We need a way to fund it and I just am sick to my stomach with the amount of money and, I know I'm a pacifist and a Quaker and all that, but the money we spend in the military what we could with that money, what we could have done with that money from all these stupid wars that we've been in and just, you know, any look at any segment of society, you know, where it's ridiculously overspent and our priorities if we could just shift some money and if it was well funded and then all of us who have been sticking our necks out and saying these things won't be discredited and won't be... I mean that to me is just like a huge risk that we're taking. We're talking about getting across this river and we don't even know if we have the money to build a bridge.

But education to me is one of the biggest shifting the consciousness and, of course, my vision is that the whole country gets this. You know, that Maine starts it and then it's like a saying that spreads, you know, that hundredth monkey story where there were the islands off the coast and all these, you know, hundredth monkey story? It's they've seen it in nature many times in different situations. They've seen it with birds but the hundredth monkey one is is that there was this island and suddenly the monkeys on that island started washing their food and they by washing their food they, you know, realized that that was a better way instead of having all the sand and grit and stuff and when enough of them had that in their minds and had that in their awareness without any transportation over to the other island simultaneously once it reached they say a hundred monkeys then the monkeys on the neighboring island with no contact began doing the same thing. So it's like there is a capacity for the mind to create enough awareness that it begins to kind of catch on and spread and I mean that sounds really idealistic but I don't know, we've seen it in nature. There's another example of birds in England with something about the caps on milk bottles or something and same, they've seen that phenomenon before so, you know, my hope is is that there a lot of us baby boomers who are willing to look at this history in the non-Native community and hopefully the people behind us if they get educated, you know, that that will grow. I mean I know I saw a film a five-part series from Minnesota where students in the University of Minnesota did a film called The Apology and they did the whole history of what happened to Native people in that part of the country and it was



phenomenal and it was beautiful and, you know, they're like owning and taking it on and doing it so if we could be that model, and other states would wake up and have that same desire for getting right with our history for being a higher level of integrity, of teaching the truth and speaking the truth and owning our history, that would be so awesome. And all this work would be a groundwork for other people so that they could take the model and do it in their, you know, and that's what kind of keeps me going is why we're doing this is because we are figuring it out.

**SB:** I just had a thought to when she was talking another challenge in talking to people. They, there are people in our communities who are associated with health and wellbeing already, well-known people. Maybe we know in Penobscot land, and Township, and even in the non-tribal community, some big names that people associate with health and wellbeing and so some people have questioned why aren't these people supporting your work? Why haven't they spoken up? Why aren't they involved? So they question the validity of the work because these people in the background have shown like oh, I don't trust this process or big names, you know, have not supported...

**AP:** Really?

**SB:** Yeah. Oh, yeah.

**AP:** Have they been approached and that's been their?

**SB:** As far as I know, I know the names I know have been, know about the work but don't say the word, don't try to get to know, don't go to get involved and don't promote it. So and because of that lack of...

**AP:** That's weird.

**SB:** Yeah, it can hinder, you know, other people's involvement so, you know, if there is ever any other Commission, I hope that's something they can do is get in touch with these big health people and make sure that they're, you know, involved and understand the work and help promote the work.

**AP:** Is it too late for that? Do you see that also in your community here?

**MG:** Yeah, I've been in touch consistently with counseling services and health department and they're just not there.

**AP:** Why is that?

**SB:** Like I said—

**MG:** Maybe they're afraid it might trigger something in their own family.

**SB:** Oh, yeah.

**WL:** Or maybe they view it as more work.

**SB:** Or maybe they don't like you because you are an activist or an advocate. I'm just kidding.

**BK:** Everybody likes Wenona. Do you think they may be hesitant to take the risks that you guys were just describing that you've taken?

**AP:** It is a big risk taking.

**WL:** It's like in order to get anyone to do anything around here you have to get out your bosses to make them do it. It's stupid. Why can't they just like go I think this is worthwhile, can I be more involved in this? Can I have time to do this, to help do this?

**MG:** Well, it almost just highlights the disconnect, you know, the haves and the have nots. And so the people who are working the jobs and have the, have the higher paying government jobs can collect a nice paycheck every week aren't really connected to the real problems in this community and I've seen it time and again.

**AP:** So there's like a gap?

**MG:** Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, I've seen it, you know, just in conversations with people who, you know, work for the tribal administration about this work and, you know, some of the things that come out of their mouth, it's like, it's just so disconnected. You have no idea, you know, they think like oh, you know, it's fine. No, everyone is not fine. And if you get out of your office without your computers long enough, you would realize that.

**WL:** *(Inaudible)* drug abuse and alcoholism

*(WL and MG talking over each other)*

**MG:** -- nothing in their capacities to fix it.

**AP:** So it's kind of like I've got mine and I'm going to protect that and I'm not going to do anything that's going to put a crack in that.

**SB:** Right.

**AP:** And talking about this the truth...

**MG:** That's what it feels like.

**SB:** Yeah, that's what it feels like. I shouldn't say for sure.



**MG:** I can't say that's what it is. But I would say there is a massive disconnect between the people and the tribal administration.

**SB:** And other people that are just connected to health in bigger ways.

**MG:** We have the GONA, the Gathering of Native Americans last year in 2013 I helped to organize that and Esther and Heather were going to come and do a presentation. They were so resistant to that. You know, having that presentation, she said it was going to upset the whole flow of the day and, you know, I was just trying to get things, you know, from our community that were here and that we were working on into that setting for some discussion and they were, they really didn't like it. And it did turn out to be something drama because of something someone said during the GONA something to the effect that we don't need to rely only, you know, licensed healthcare professionals to take care of us. That we have the innate inability to care for one another and nurture one another.

**AP:** Yeah, I remember that.

**MG:** And so, you know, the healthcare professionals took it the wrong way and then it became something frigging to do for a few weeks.

**WL:** And why wouldn't they want to be fostering that mindset?

**MG:** Right.

**SB:** I know.

**MG:** They get to be the experts.

**SB:** They want the big bucks to help...

**WL:** That was the other thing that I had heard someone say oh, well, what makes Esther the expert? I said well, who says she was the expert? Well, she's the one on who's in on the news, the newspaper. I go well, she's probably the only one willing to do all that. And I'm going do you know her history? Do you know what her experiences have been? No. I said well, you shouldn't say that unless you know.

**SB:** Yeah, good for you, yeah.

**AP:** So are there, in the non-Native community, are there health, high profile, because I don't know who those people are?

**SB:** Yes.



**AP:** Who are they? Would you say? Do you know?

**MG:** You're naming names, now? *(laughter)*

*(Recorder turned off at request of participants to discuss for a few minutes)*

**AP:** I'll just say that again. I just think that what Stephanie said is a really key point and a huge watershed if we don't have high profile people, you're absolutely right then people will say well, what are you? Some kind of fringy, bunch of do-gooders that are making promises but, you know, where's the meat?

**BK:** Yeah, it seems like the out of the place where we can look at that and take this learning that we are doing now in identifying these issues is with the recommendations. You know, hopefully it will be something where high profile people will want to say yeah, that's the best way to go and we'll build on that.

**AP:** And I've also thought about our federal reps and our state reps. Well, I was thinking about Chellie Pingree because I was at a, I did an event at Planned Parenthood when that opened up and I met her there and then I really liked her and I like how she is a lot and what I've heard her say and I've thought hmm, on my list, I'd love to go make an appointment with her but then, you know, I realized with the hierarchy within TRC and REACH that I just can't go talking to her. I did do that with Michaud though because I went as a citizen in terms of I wanted to share with him how important the TRC is and the impact on my community so I didn't go as my role but just as a citizen and made an appointment and talked to him. Because I just felt like, you know, if we can get some of those people to have this really on their radar, of how significant it is and, I mean, that's something that I try to say over and over again is to local people they don't get that we're being studied by, you know, St. Andrew's. We have been published in Columbia University's press. This, people are watching this process and it's hugely significant and if this thing comes off in D.C. that Bennett is trying to, you know... and just when Esther told me that when they were down in Florida and they just did that presentation, there were Native people from Hawaii there who were completely like 'oh my God, we need to do this in Hawaii. You know, how did you do this? And what's the road map?'

So I mean I don't know if I'm an idealist or not, but I just think it's huge potential and and I think, I hadn't even thought about that what you're saying because I don't really know who these characters are. I don't know these people but that would seem to me it's that validation. Well, another idea that I've never been able to make happen is to get famous people to do a tiny little spot and my friend who is an actor and is really good friends with indigenous actor named Ben Bratt, really good friends with him, and I started the letter and she was going to tell him, you know, and I mean he's not huge, but he's big enough and if we could get Winona LaDuke and, you know, just a few really high profile people to say 'I support what's going on in Maine, you know, you guys are this is amazing,' you know, and just have these little spots but see, that again, would have been the publicity person that could have taken that and run with that for us and helped us to make those. Because I mean anybody can take a phone and do a 30 second spot and then we could, you know, I mean I don't know how hard it is to get that on the air but you certainly we could get it on the internet. It's that validation piece





that I hadn't really thought about what the way you're saying it but I have been thinking about it, you know, how can we get ourselves validated from the outside so people will trust it and realize how big it is.

**SB:** I mean I think it's sad also you need some sort of validation because then anybody whoever does any grassroots work is always going to be questioning that they're not good enough. And that's a really sad mindset to be in and unfortunately, that's where we're at.

**AP:** It is.

**SB:** You know, with money all involved and everything and people, you know, are so like this to some people. It's, that's just that an unhealthy route that we do have to think of.

**AP:** But it's a human phenomenon because I've always seen that in my own community if you'd say to the kids, like in my art program, oh, this is so great, this is so great, it doesn't mean anything compared to when they went on the state level and the state says whoa, this is first place, you know. It's just, it's just a human thing. You don't trust the people in your own community to be...

**SB:** Yeah, that's true.

**AP:** You don't think that they know what they are talking about.

**WL:** Was there any articles or anything like in Indian Country? (*Indicating Indian Country Today*)

**MG:** I think Indian Country did follow something.

**AP:** They, I got one on Molly Ockett Day and I got one on the unveiling thing that happened with Didi. And I don't think, those are the only two I am aware of but.

**RG:** There's been a bunch of stuff, in the Bangor Daily News.

**WL:** Yeah, I've seen some of those.

**RG:** In your opinion, the individuals that we've mentioned, so of key people in the community and outside of the community, like Child Welfare directors, Health directors, in your opinion, why haven't those people been involved?

**MG:** I really don't know.

**SB:** I can't say for sure. I can only assume some people don't like to work...

**WL:** You don't want to know my opinion.

**SB:** No, I know. That's what I mean. My opinion isn't a healthy mindset and I can't understand. I don't get it. If somebody wants real healing and real change and they see the problems then why not? And so I just think of work ethic is all. Everybody has different work ethics.

**RG:** When you think about what your vision was for the TRC and just pretend like I'm not part of the staff, in what ways has the TRC not met what you envisioned or hoped for? What would you have wished had been different? What do you wish had been different?

**MG:** For me it's hard to answer because I don't have any criticisms of how the TRC has operated to date. I'm just waiting to see what becomes of it all. You know, again that being cognizant of all the attention we are giving to the TRC as this great healing effort, but is it? We won't know until it's done. So it's hard for me to answer that. I guess I have to reserve judgment until it's done.

But as far as how things have happened so far in this community I don't have any criticisms. The visit was good. The commissioners always seem willing to extend themselves to be helpful to the community when asked. Gkisedtanamoogk did a work shop. Sandy did two workshops. Carol's been up there facilitating, you know, these brainstorming meetings and so they've been helpful to the community. But then I think the community is more like, you know, what have they done? What, we've got to wait and see.

**SB:** My thing is that I really believed when we were coming in this when I come in that the recommendations and things were going to be acted on. And so now with no guarantee like I wish that somebody had made sure with the state and with the tribes like we're making these recommendations. We need you to honor and implement the recommendations that are made. Make that a part of the mandate and that wasn't done. So right now everything that we've done could be done for nothing. Depending on who gets in office, what their agenda is, and so that's my one criticism is that I want change so badly for our people that I don't, I don't know if it's going to happen like Maria said we're going to have to wait and just see how it plays out.

**RG:** The TRC has been and continues to be in discussion with different organization outside of REACH to ensure that it's not all for nothing, setting up meetings with people who are in government, setting up meetings with people, with other organizations outside of the government that can help push those recommendations forward so I want to stress that it's not solely on REACH. What happens to REACH, we don't know, just like you guys don't know. I mean I don't know. And I'm sure you have a better idea than I do. But want you guys to know that I absolutely hear that frustration. And I want you to know that we are trying to make sure that that does not happen.

**BK:** I think a lot of things have gone right around the TRC, been thinking about things that have been wrong. The thing that irks me is when there've been some people from the non-Native community have come to provide statements and there's been not a, these's been no Commissioner there and the person they are interviewing is a child welfare person, and it just seems to me a real missed opportunity because a lot of work went into getting that person to be



there and then it's all on that person to make sure they say the TRC needs because there's been except for the questionnaire and I know they're following it, but there's no one who can, that's able to, 'what did you mean by that? Or how does that fit with this?' So I (inaudible)...it would have been good make sure for those two things so that when it was a child welfare person a commissioner was there each time.

**AP:** Well, I've thought the Commissioners are just rock stars. I mean I've been so touched and amazed and impressed by those people and so proud that they have come together and done that and I think Rachel is the child wonder. I don't know how you do what you're doing. And I know it's a learning process and it's all part of the story but I really have to stop myself from bemoaning the fact that we got such a false start off with our first Executive Director. I just think what if we had started now and didn't wait. I feel like almost it was wasted time and there were so many frustrations of so many things that were done that weren't, that didn't make any sense and they weren't collaborative and bad communication and personal agendas and so frustrating and some of the ways of presenting to communities, Native communities, I felt really was a miscommunication and disappointing. So that to me was, oh here she comes. That to me, you know, like I've processed with Esther and Esther said it's all part of the deal. You know, it's all part of the learning and yet I can't help but feel darn, if we had that year back or however long that was, where would we be now? You know.

**MG:** Yeah, and the money.

**AP:** And the money exactly. So that to me is definitely one of the frustrations or disappointments or sadness's or wonderings.

**WL:** I wonder if, if it would have been better to have a couple of training interviewers from each community. Like, you know, would that have made a difference in getting more statements?

**MG:** Yeah.

**RG:** That is something we tried to do, and I...

**WL:** Then I had something like someone saying well, that would be biased. I'm like how would it be biased?

**RG:** I wasn't receiving a lot of response from people that wanted to be involved in that way.

**WL:** I wish I had known about it, I would have applied for it.

**BK:** Are you going to ask us what the TRC did well? *(Laughter)*

**RG:** Sure. What has the TRC done well to date?

**SB:** What has the TRC done well to date?

**RG:** Yes.

**AP:** Hiring Rachel.

**BK:** Yeah, I think that you Rachel, and the Commissioners and the non-Native communities are so right there listening to people, helping them feel welcome when they come in. The non-Native people come in and they're shoulders are up next to their ears when they walk in the door. They're like 'I don't, I can't believe am going to do this.' You can see it all over their faces. 'Didn't I have other things I could be doing right now?' There's a lot of tension for them but by the time they leave, their shoulders are down and they know they've been part of the process. They'll build some trust and they have that look of something is willing to listen to. You guys have done it over and over and over again. I'm impressed.

**SB:** I agree. I think Rachel has done well and Commissioners when they come in. I like when we had, I think I've had Carol probably more often than any and Carol is really good with clarifying questions. Like I was really glad to have her in there to help elaborate on some things so I appreciate the work that you all put it into so that we could do our work and work well together.

**AP:** So we're not talking about what REACH has done well? We're talking about what the TRC has done well? I'm about to stop it for a second.

*(Recording stopped to go over consent forms with Esther Attean)*

**RG:** All right. Esther Attean is joining us. Esther, have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

**MS. ATTEAN (EA):** Yes, all three.

**RG:** So, we have been talking about things that you in your opinion the TRC has done successfully to date.

**MG:** They seem that they have been available to the communities so that's one thing that I appreciate. I know when we had our visit here, they did workshops which were really well attended and they were willing to stick around for that hand drumming and they went to the social and so. They've been a presence.

**EA:** And they don't get discouraged if, you know, they go for statement gathering and a lot of times people don't for whatever reason.

**WL:** That's true.

**EA:** No, I mean, still it could, you know, they understand it's part of the process. I think what, and I don't know if we talked about this, but I think it's really good that they see that they're



just a beginning of a real larger process, that it's not, you know, they're going to create reconciliation. They're going to start to dig at that wound.

**SB:** Yeah, I agree with Maria they stayed and participated in the ceremony and everything. Getting up early before they even had to come to the events so they were really. The Commission and the staff come in and participation was just on spot for sure.

**EA:** Sipayik sunrise in frigging November, was that November?

**SB:** November, yeah. February at Motahkomikuk.

**EA:** Yeah, that's right. It was freezing. It was so cold. You couldn't put enough layers on to stop that wind. And they were all out there.

**RG:** What do you, *(phone beeps)* sorry, what do you see as the needs for your community right now?

**SB:** A new system of government.

**EA:** Do we have to?

**WL:** What was the question?

**RG:** What do you see as the needs for your community right now?

**MG:** I think the State of Maine needs to get off our backs and we need infrastructure in which so that we can create our own, create our own, I want to say local economy but everything's falling to crap and we have no space on these little reservations. And we're still in a system where we have to go and ask for permission for something as simple as building homes on our own land and *(Inaudible)* we have to go to the State government and grovel for permission to deal with the change, the status so that we can get certain funding and then get road blocked constantly.

**SB:** Yeah, becoming self-reliant I think would be important and then say we don't need agreements with another country because we can take care of ourselves now. You know having our own system in place to be self-reliant in all ways, whatever economy we want. It doesn't have to be monetary money, American money, but something different.

**WL:** And it doesn't matter *(Inaudible)* if you don't have access to the land.

**AP:** I think we need educational instruments so that what I was talking about earlier of reaching every high school kid in the state that we need educational materials and educational video. We need products, educational products that would make it really easy. YouTube's

that can be downloaded teaching things for the teachers and those they have a whole archive apparently, the Department of Education where people can download talks that teachers can use. We just, educational materials would be my big dream.

**RG:** What are some successes that REACH has had?

**SB:** Actually getting statements. *(Laughter)* Yeah.

**AP:** That Esther is still alive and well and sane.

**EA:** *(chuckles)* That's a success of REACH? No, that's due to something else.

**AP:** I think at least the educational of ones that we have done, gotten the word out.

**MG:** I think one of our biggest successes is helping people to understand the history, the historical trauma and where it stemmed from. I remember, you know, when we showed the Wellbriety video. You know, it was really kind of like this ah-ha moment, you know, when people realized that a lot of the breakdown in our tribal communities stemmed from this specific U.S. government policy and how it broke the community, how it broke the family, how it broke the individual. And then, you know, they sent it back to the community and everything's broken and it was almost like a relief that there was something that they could trace it back to.

**SB:** What are you doing?

**EA:** I saw that trick. That was good.

**WL:** I think that was a big one for me too, Maria. You know, I always knew all these social issues that we've had with our communities was just a symptom of something much larger but I just didn't have that terminology or that knowledge of where it came, I knew about trauma. I knew about all that but I just didn't link it all together. And so that was huge for me.

**BK:** I think another success of REACH is that in the non-Native community we got so many volunteers we weren't sure what to do with them all. It's a great position to be in because then your creative juices can get going and you can start thinking about all kinds of things. So...

**AP:** And I think it was a huge watershed moment when we realized that we needed to not just have volunteers but we needed to actually train them and empower them to be allies and give them tools to go out in their own communities and that's really, it's just in its beginning stages but that's working really well.

**MG:** Another success of REACH I think is empowering people with tools for healing. You know, our resiliency workshops that have been pretty well attended and we're starting to identify a core group of people who are really motivated and interested in healing and change in our communities.

**EA:** And people are talking about going back and doing the old rituals, birth and death,



coming of age. People aren't really, I mean people here and there I think would talk about it but not like it was gathered there at the wellness gathering, that was great.

**AP:** Ah, the wellness, that was just amazing.

**MG:** I look forward to picking up some of those threads this winter, make some things happen.

**RG:** What are some of the challenges that REACH has had to overcome?

**AP:** Finances.

**EA:** Resources. Never having enough money to do what we want to do, what we could do. Always having to spend energy trying to figure out how to do stuff.

**AP:** Which reminds her.

**MG:** I think resources is huge because, you know, a lot of us don't have the wherewithal financially to be able to, you know, support our work as well as we could. And it's like, you know, we're almost like expected to have to do that. You know, just in terms of having adequate equipment or... If you have to print something.

**EA:** In an email.

**MG:** Everything becomes and friggin' chore. Everything, because if you don't have the capacity. I don't, anyway.

**EA:** I mean, we're creative but jeez, all the time, that's spent.

**MG:** It's exhausting trying to...

**EA:** Time that's spent trying to get money so we'll have more time.

**SB:** Yeah, I know that was one thing is just the resources to go and, you know, I'm all about I'm happy when I'm being fed so I'm always about feeding people and there are actually people that are attend talking circles that come just because they know I'm going to have food there. So...

**AP:** And where does that money come from for the food?

**SB:** Yeah, I mean I do get help sometime but I do donate too which I mean I don't mind because I like to nurture people I guess. It's just one of my feel good things.



**RG:** What do you want to see come out of this process?

**EA:** The TRC process? *(Laughter)*

**RG:** The TRC process. *(Sad nasally as a joke, emphasizing the difference between the Canadian saying of “process” and the American saying of “process”)*

**SB:** Process. Don’t sound right. *(Laughter)*

**EA:** I’m really looking forward to when the Commission goes back to the tribal communities and tells them this is what we found out in your community. This is what people are saying. And I want that to be meaningful and I want it to work like not be, I don’t know how to say it.

**AP:** You want the tribal community to receive that?

**EA:** Yeah, and people are ready to figure out how to help REACH implement those recommendations to not just recommendations for... I mean, if I don’t even know if they’re going to give recommendations for the tribes. I think it’s enough for them to just give the information back and say this is what we found. And for the tribes to figure out, when I say the tribes, the people, the administration, everybody to figure out what to do and...

**AP:** And even taking in consideration the report and recommendations of the Commission who’s participating in the presentations of and discussion forums of the Commission’s report. *Reading directly from TRC Mandate)*

**EA:** So, but, you know, REACH is going to help, move those recommendations forward and then I would hope, you know, I want us to help with whatever happens in the tribal communities as far as what the Commission found out. That’s why it’s so important for all the communities to participate, how what are they going to share.

**AP:** I, yes, I was hoping that the Commission would have really concrete recommendations that are really clear so that, again though, it’s always the funding thing but like, you know, just let’s just say a curriculum change to try to address LD 291 or...

**EA:** Well, they will, but there, but the scope of those recommendations is about best child welfare practice with Wabanaki.

**AP:** Yeah.

**EA:** It’s directed at the state really. I mean the mandate, we knew that. The mandates from 1978 till present and it’s around that but we also knew that we put a mechanism for them to give information back to the tribes that they find out so that it fulfills that piece too. I mean so it’s helpful. So I don’t know how strict they’re going to read the mandate. They may interpret it a little bit wider than we had, we had said so... I mean we’ve met with them, REACH met with the Commission and we went over the mandate and talked about what our intent was behind when we wrote it and to help them understand so. We just have to trust. I am excited to see what the recommendations are really because I’m not privy to what people have been



saying in their statements, some, somewhat, you know, when the organizers were sitting on those statements or if stuff happens in circle which doesn't necessarily get into the statement but I have an idea of some of the things people are saying. So it should be interesting. And I really want to know what they're saying, the non-Native people in their statements. That's, I'm so curious about that because I have no connection to that. I wouldn't know.

**BK:** I'm curious too. I know what they say to me but I don't know what they're saying to the Commission.

**EA:** Right.

**BK:** I'm thinking, I wonder what the relationship is.

**WL:** I kind wish the TRC, I wish they would give recommendations to the tribe as well.

**EA:** They may. I mean they could interpret that as, you know, I don't know. They don't have to but they could interpret it as they can and they should. And if not, you know, we could always bring it up. If they, you know, tried to start thinking of each tribe let's think about what the recommendations would be. So this is information they found. Let us make the recommendations. What should we do about it? So either way I think it could be a good thing.

I'm having a hard time believing it's coming to an end. It's been so long that we've been doing this.

**AP:** Is it June?

**EA:** Yep. They didn't get the extension. It's just too costly really. Really. And that's why we're pushing, right, Rachel? Get more statements.

**RG:** You betcha.

**EA:** I'd really like to get (*Name Unclear*) to give one though

**WL:** Those logs that we do we put names and numbers on them. Those names and numbers followed up by somebody?

**EA:** No, no. That doesn't get followed up by anybody.

**SB:** I'll go see him. I'll go see him when I'm down there Thursday.

**MG:** Tell him we heard he was a radio star.

**EA:** (*Inaudible*).

**AP:** So Rachel, I kind of have a question about the people who are Wabanaki who don't live in the communities who are out like in Western Maine. Is there any mechanism for seeking out or finding those people and reaching out to them or no?

**RG:** That is... not that I am aware of. I, my assumption had been that it would be the community organizers have connections to those people but I'm not sure.

**EA:** Probably, maybe in some cases, maybe depending on, you know, connection they have to the tribe and other cases maybe not. I know that there was one person that connected through Barbara, right? And then set her up to have come to Wabanaki Health and Wellness. So, however, people want to get into it is fine. They don't have to go with the tribal.

**BK:** We've been, I've been active with, with all the non-Natives I talked to, I asked them if they are in connection with any of the people that they served and if they are, then I talk to them about possibly reaching out to those people and letting them know and then sending them materials to share with them in hopes of, because it had been my hope that we'd get some Native people who grew up in non-Native homes and are in communities, non-Native communities to come forward and talk about their experiences. (*Inaudible*). We've gotten a little bit, but not a lot.

**AP:** Because I'm thinking of two Native people in my own community in Western Maine and I know they're both really hurting and I know that there's stories there but who would be the person?

**EA:** You can if you want. I mean we don't have, if we had the resources to do that, we don't even have the resources to give the people who are living right here. But if you want to reach out to them, I think that's perfectly fine and share information with them.

**BK:** And then you could connect them with Tom as process for information to.

**EA:** I mean that's really what we want allies to do too, right? In their communities – educate and if they know, you know, reach out to people and tell them they can participate and even if people give statements to the TRC, that would be fine. However, they get into it. They can always call Rachel.

**AP:** Okay.

**EA:** I think that's cool.

**RG:** Are there any other comments that you ladies have for this process, anything else that you want to make sure is documented?

**AP:** I've been asked how good is our follow up support for people who've given statements and I have to say, I brought that into share. I have to say I don't really know. The one person that I was a support person for the statement, I just took it on that I should follow up and stay in touch with her, but do we have...



**SB:** That's what I do.

**AP:** So it's really up to the organizers to deal...

**EA:** Well, ideally, when you're helping somebody provide a statement, you help them find somebody that will be their support person that they can identify in their life that will do that.

**AP:** Ongoing.

**EA:** Yeah, and if they can't, then you could, you can fill that role and then you just check in with them after. Always encourage people to go to circles.

**SB:** Yeah, I always check in every now and again, I'll check in and if I get to circle, or remind them that we're having a talking circle and if they want to come, and then I'll check in again. I'm just constantly, or if I see them, I'm like hey, how are you doing and checking out.

**AP:** Is there therapy on the, in the communities through the health center?

**EA:** Yeah, but I mean it's they do, you know, I think they probably, even if they all have full caseloads, if they don't, they can't serve the need fully.

**WL:** I won't go to (*inaudible*) because I don't like the medical model. That's not what I need. That's not what I want. And that's the only thing that they provide.

**BK:** I think going back to the earlier question about expectations of the process, my hope, and I was thinking about what other people were saying about being specific and so about child welfare, so I'm hoping there may be some specific things about child welfare but I hope the Commission puts in the context of the larger issues so it doesn't just become about oh, workers need to get trained and dah, dah, dah, dah... that we have the larger picture of ending genocide and how do we as communities come back from their experience. How we move forward together. How do we end it and how do we move forward together and that's the larger picture and every specific piece within that.

**EA:** I also to hope people see that, you know, best child welfare practice for Wabanaki children translates into best practice for all children which turns into a healthier communities and move towards the reconciliation and, you know, moving forward. Because I think people well, what's so special? You know, you get that a lot. Native kids, why is it so important that they have a federal law? And to understand how helpful it is that every kid should have a tribe as a third parent. I mean every kid should have a community or, you know, extended family or something. It should, they should realize the trauma and that, you know, every kids does experience, you know, that it is different for Native kids though.

**Ap:** Yeah, and I would piggyback on what she said about the larger community. I know that

it's about child welfare but my wish would be that it's like a fertile field, that the recommendations need a fertile field and that means that everybody understands the history together and the context so that when those things are made, they have some depth of understanding so I hope that's, that's why I hope that they extend it to education and...

**RG:** Alright, I want to thank each of you for your time today, this afternoon.

**BK:** Thank you Rachel.

**RG:** Thank you for all of your comments.

**AP:** Thank you, Rachel.

**[END OF RECORDING]**