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CONSEIL CRI DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX DE LA BAIE JAMES  
CREE BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF JAMES BAY

**Bella Moses Petawabano  
Chairperson**

**Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay**

**Opening Remarks**

**2018 Eeyou/Eenou Regional General Assembly  
on  
Health and Social Services**

**Waswanipi, Quebec**

**April 10, 2018**

## DAY 1 - Opening Remarks

Bella M. Petawabano, CBHSSJB Chairperson

### 1. Preamble

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 2018 Regional Health Assembly. I'm Bella Moses Petawabano, and I'm the Chairperson of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay.

Thank you to our hosts, Waswanipi Cree Nation, (Chief Happyjack), and our honoured guests **Annie Bobbish, James Bobbish, Eliza Lameboy Dr. Elizabeth Robinson, Diane Reid, Rebecca Swallow, Bertie Wapachee and Emily Asquabaneskum** who wasn't able to join us today.

And thank you all for being here. Greetings to everyone listening on the radio in your communities, and to those of you who are following the Livestream on our Creehealth Facebook page.

## 2. Strategic Regional Plan

Two years ago, at the 2016 Regional Health Assembly in Waskaganish, we carried out a historic process.

We invited over 200 people representing all of the communities of Eeyou Istchee and asked them to work with us to identify what should be the most important priorities of the Cree Health Board for the coming years.

You ***told us*** what was important to you, and following your guidance we developed our roadmap for the next 6 years, which is called the Strategic Regional Plan 2016-2021.

After that assembly I visited every community to report on the process of developing the Plan and how the priorities we identified together in Waskaganish were reflected in the SRP.

We made a commitment to the communities and we are here today to deliver on that commitment. After the Break Daniel and I

will go through the section of your information kit that deals with the Strategic Regional Plan –

The four orientations and the thirteen focus areas. It is really important all the participants in this Assembly to be familiar with the SRP, because everything we do at the Cree Health Board needs to fit within this framework.

### 3. 40th Anniversary

The timing of this Assembly is very special to us. We wanted to have this event in April of 2018 because it is the 40th Birthday of the Cree Health Board. There is no better way to mark this milestone than to celebrate with you.

The 40th is an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come since 1978. The Cree Health Board was born with the JBNQA and this organization is one of the pillars of Cree self-governance.

Some people have called the Cree Health Board an experiment. I think after 40 years it's time to declare this experiment a success.

I hope you brought your dancing shoes for tomorrow's feast and entertainment! This is just the kick off for what will be a year of celebrations in all of our establishments around Eeyou Istchee.

#### 4. Community engagement for miyupimaatisiiuun

The theme of this event - and the reason you are here, is partnership. As you know, there are many challenges facing us as a Nation – diabetes, addictions, mental health issues. I don't need to list the challenges because we as Crees live them every day.

If you have questions, talk to each other. There are many professional experts in this room. Ask them for the stats. Ask them what it's like at the front line.

There are leaders in this room. We know, as leaders, that public policy matters, that funding matters, that education matters, and that with the privilege of leadership comes the responsibility to do

things today that will make things work better tomorrow, in other words, to plan.

There are Elders in this room. They know where the problems come from, and they have the insight that can point us in the right direction, if we know how to listen.

There are youth in this room. They are the ones who will define what it means to be Cree in the future.

We know, that to create miyupimaatisiun in our own lives we need to live well, but we also need a good environment where we are safe, where we are loved, where we have the things we need to be healthy, like clean water and good food.

Where we have our language, our traditions and our land. Most of all our land. Our own land where we can be the masters of our own destiny as Abel has said so eloquently. The Cree Health Board can give you medicine but we CANNOT create a healthy

society all by ourselves. We must all work together to ensure a healthy future for our children and future generations.

## 5. Agreements

So prepare yourselves to shape our future. Over the coming days we will learn about some successful and inspiring partnerships that are already working. Later this morning we will be signing an agreement with the Cree Nation of Nemaska that is a great example of this.

I hope by the end of the Assembly that our leaders will be ready to sign a Declaration of Intent to work together to create healthy communities and a healthy Cree society.

## 4. Closing statement

We will be following the Open Space approach that worked so well two years ago in Waskaganish, with a few new twists like the Maamuu Café. This is an interactive type of assembly where every person's voice counts.

To those of you listening in our communities, we invite you to take part in the discussions on Facebook.

Thank you for your attention – and I wish you a very thought-provoking and productive three days!