Interview with Jennifer Wood*

BRYAN P. SCHWARTZ

I. EARLY LIFE

Bryan Paul Schwartz (BPS): Jennifer, you've worked with many of the most significant figures and in some of the most significant events through time, dealt with many lawyers and legal issues. We will cover some of those as we go along. Just at the beginning, which community did you come from?

Jennifer Wood (JW): I come from a community in Southern Ontario, Cape Crocker, the Ojibway name is Neyaashiinigmiing. It's on the Bruce Peninsula, which is off of Lake Huron. Our reserve is in Georgian Bay.

BPS: Was that party to any of the numbered treaties?

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* Interview conducted by Bryan P. Schwartz.

Jennifer is a proud Ojibway from Neyaashiinigmiing First Nation (Bruce Peninsula) Ontario, now residing in Manitoba, Canada. She is currently the senior political staff person for Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO), a governance organization representing 31 First Nations in northern Manitoba.

Drawn into politics her whole adult life, Jennifer had worked for ten years in the role of political assistant to MP Elijah Harper. Mr. Harper was one of the first Indigenous members of the Canadian Parliament and had become famous for his stand against a legislative proposal called the Meech Lake Accord.

Earlier in her career, Jennifer had also worked for nearly a decade for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs as both the Coordinator of the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and head of Intergovernmental Affairs.

In addition to her full-time job, Jennifer is the owner/operator of an event management business called Dawn Rae Planners. She has organized some of the largest and most important Aboriginal conferences in Canada.

A rabid hockey grandma, Jennifer and her husband Darcy live in Winnipeg- the same city as their two daughters and ten grandchildren.

JW: Lake Robinson-Huron.[1]

BPS: That was really the foundation of all the later treaties. Officially not one of the numbered treaties, but the numbered treaties are modelled after it.

JW: Yes.

BPS: Can you tell us a bit about how you grew up in the reserve community, and did you go to school in the reserve community?

JW: Yeah, I lived in the community until I was eleven and then my father re-married to a United Church minister. She was a widow and my father was raising us, the last three of thirteen children. Then we moved to a small community outside of Ottawa called Ashton.

BPS: Sure, I've heard of Ashton. I went to high school in Ottawa so I am familiar.

JW: We stayed there for a year I believe, and then my step-mother got a posting right up in northern Manitoba, in Oxford House.[2] I am the youngest, so I had to move with my father.

BPS: Was that a big cultural shift from Ojibway to Cree?

JW: Absolutely, it was a culture shock because I had never been in a community where everyone was solely speaking their language, and that far north. But I adapted quickly. I knew that I had to make a conscientious choice to be positive and deal with it and just enable where I am, so I did.

BPS: So you grew up initially speaking Ojibway?

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1 The Robinson-Huron treaty was signed in 1850.

2 Oxford House is a First Nations Cree community located about 580 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

JW: No, both my parents were fluent in Ojibway, but they never taught us because they felt that it was easier to speak English, because it was taught in school.

BPS: I see.

JW: So when everyone would come home it was easier to speak English. As well, it was a lot of colonization, oppression, trying to make yourself fit. So yeah, I understood it and spoke a little bit of Ojibway but nothing near how they speak in northern Manitoba.

BPS: Speaking to the culture shock, I think that the mainstream tends to see that there are First Nations, and all First Nations are First Nations are First Nations, right? To some extent that is a legal construct because the *Indian Act*[3] said that you come under the *Indian Act* whether you are a coastal people from British Columbia, or a semi-nomadic people from Newfoundland or Nova Scotia. You all come under the *Indian Act*, so people tend to think that you are in this one group. How different is it, for example, being in an Ojibway Nation versus a Cree nation? Is it just a question of language, and the experience feels the same, or are there a whole lot of other cultural differences between First Nations communities?

JW: Every language has their own laws, like how they describe and define your place in the language system through speaking Ojibway. I'm sure there is a difference in how they identify in Cree and Ojibway. That would, I think, be a difference. But to me, being in Southern Ontario, moving directly to northern Manitoba, I saw a lot of the differences when they would go hunting, and in a lot of the traditional foods that we would eat. A lot of the legends that we would tell were different, but at the same time they were similar; they were given different names, but we all knew who and what they represented in the language. Growing up beside a small town and towns in Southern Ontario we were integrating with non-native people more than anyone ever likely would from northern Manitoba, so that was another difference too for me.

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3 *Indian* Act, RSC 1985, c I-5.

BPS: You were at Oxford House and there was no neighbouring community to just pop into. Sometimes there are parallel communities, but Oxford is one that is way far north. Is there a significant effect on the culture and the outlook on life just because of the weather – it's dark and its cold up there – does that affect people?

JW: Now that you mention it, I've never been in those kinds of conditions, minus 40. But at the same time, I've never experienced northern lights like I did in Oxford House anywhere else in my life. The culture of the people and of Oxford House is unlike any other community to me, and I've been all over to every community in Northern Manitoba travelling and campaigning. Oxford House is very unique. They are very skilled at hunting and fishing and going long miles of travel and being able to prepare for the weather and the conditions. There were dog sled teams up there that they used for hunting. I'm totally just in awe of that community to this day. My father was a skilled hunter too, so he would tell me a lot of the things that he had never seen in southern Ontario. For example, in Oxford House they had to get wood by boat; you would have to go out on the lake, across the lake, get the wood, cut it, tie it, and pull it by boat. It's a long process. It made me appreciate everything that we had. We had to go get our wood as we all had wood stoves. The climate was the big difference in Oxford House.

BPS: You mentioned the long travelling trips. Nowadays, there seems to be a widely shared understanding, both among First Nations and governments, that Manitoba is divided into traditional territories and different First Nations groups. For Oxford House at that time, was there a sense that there was a traditional territory for Oxford House, "We don't go into other people's traditional territories," or was there none of that in those days?

JW: They all have traditional territories up there, all over they have traditional hunting grounds that they've hunted and trapped for hundreds of years, where one family would go to that area, and this family would be in this area; it is the same I am sure all over the North. There are traditional territories and everybody respects them.

BPS: So everybody would be conscious that, "I'm not going to go hunt, fish, or trap on somebody else's territory."

JW: Absolutely.

BPS: So you initially went to school on the reserve or nearby community?

JW: Yeah.

BPS: So you wouldn't have experienced any of the kinds of extremely difficult circumstances in the residential schools?

JW: Well my mother was a residential school survivor, and five of my brothers and sisters, and myself as well.

BPS: You did later go to residential schools?

JW: I did.

BPS: Was that after you moved to Manitoba.

JW: Yeah, in Oxford House. They sent me to Portage la Prairie[4] because they didn't think that the education was adequate, or the standards weren't adequate, so they sent me to Portage when I was thirteen.

BPS: When you came to this new community, did you have to go to residential school right away?

JW: No, not right away. I went to school there and I made a lot of good friends there, and then my step-mother thought that the education wasn't adequate and I would be better off to come down south and go to what they called the Indian Student Residence.[5] I had the same type of feelings of loneliness and isolation and another cultural shock, I guess you could say. You are with strangers and you are away from your parents. It was the same type of school, there just weren't those stringent rules and restrictions where you had to work half a day and go to school in the afternoon, and those types of things that were exercised at that time.

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4 Portage la Prairie is a small city located 70 kilometres west of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

5 The Portage la Prairie Indian Residential School operated as a residential school from 1888-1960, where it subsequently became a student residence until 1975.

BPS: There were students from a variety of Northern communities?

JW: All over the north.

BPS: So you'd have seen a very North American European settler kind of city there. When you saw it did you have the idea of, "Well this is interesting, I am visiting here, but I am definitely going to go back and live in a northern community?" Or, did you think that there was this other world that you might want to live in eventually? Did you have any sense of that?

JW: Well you know, the thing is I didn't know where I was going. I didn't comprehend where dad was taking me, and that he was leaving.

BPS: How old were you then, Jennifer?

JW: I was thirteen.

BPS: So this was a whole other world that you hadn't seen before and not knowing, "This is my immediate future, my long term future, my permanent future," that would be a very lost feeling. You did go back home in the summers?

JW: Yeah, dad said, "You can come home at Christmas, and during the summer." So I did go back home to Oxford House at Christmas, I was so happy. And then, again, I realized that I better get a grip, and realized that you need to keep a positive attitude and get through it and make friends, which I did, I made a lot of friends.

BPS: And these would probably be friends you've kept in touch with all through the years.

JW: Totally, to this day.

BPS: The education, was it the mainstream curriculum?

JW: It was. You know, there are high schools in Portage La Prairie – Prince Charles, Portage Collegiate, Arthur Mead – and all of those schools, so we were all sent to different schools. I knew then that I better really put on a positive cap, so I made instant friends. Either maintain that or I would be lost in loneliness. I didn't want to be miserable, I wanted to be happy, because I knew it was for my own good that dad took me there. He wouldn't have done anything that he knew would have hurt me – it was for my own good, in his mind. But still, leave your parents, right. Or parent.

BPS: I can just imagine from the things you've described what kind of feeling that would be like, just being there the first day and wondering about all of those questions. So you finished high school, and what did you do after?

JW: The residence stayed open two years because the enrollment was always going down. People would go home at Christmas and they would stay home. Some wouldn't come back, and so forth, so it went down slowly. Administratively, I don't think that they could sustain the school so they closed it down in '75 and then there were some of us that stayed in Portage la Prairie and boarded in town, and I was one of them.

BPS: So did you think of going to university then, or what?

JW: Oh yeah, I was always pursuing school. My father and step-mother had moved on from Oxford House, as she got another posting in Bella Bella Island.[6] My dad came to me in residential school and asked if I wanted to move with them. I said no because I knew that I was already cemented, made my friends, and my father was happy and I didn't want him to feel that he had to accommodate me because I wanted him to have a nice happy life. I just decided, "I am here now, and I am going to make it work." So they went on to move to Bella Bella Island, and I boarded in town in Portage la Prairie until 1977. I was fortunate to have really good boarding parents. The house parent was Glen Carlson who was the industrial school's teacher in one of the schools, and his wife, Joyce, she was just an amazing woman. So I was really fortunate again there, too. He then went on to become the mayor of

6 Bella Bella is a First Nations community located on British Columbia's remote central coast. It is the home of the Heiltsuk First Nation.

Portage la Prairie. That was long since I had gone, so I was really proud to hear that.

II. POLITICS

BPS: Just curious how you ended up being involved in this life with organizations and politics and so on and so forth. Did you have in mind when you finished at the high school level that eventually you would be involved in organizations, activates and politics, or were you thinking something else?

JW: As a kid you always have these thoughts that you want to become a teacher or a nurse, right. You say all those things, and I was no different, that is what I wanted to do. But in Portage la Prairie I heard that my aunt, Vera Martin, was living in Winnipeg. So, when I was in grade 11, I think, I came to Winnipeg and I found her. She asked me to board with her, because I had one more year left. So, I stayed with her and she was very instrumental in Winnipeg, a strong First Nations woman that advocated for First Nations rights. She worked at the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.[7] At that time in the mid-late seventies there was this upsurge of First Nations' rights, and we were coming into our own, that we are proud to be First Nations. Her house on Ruby Street always had people coming in and going out, whether it'd be First Nations activists, or people that needed a place to stay; it was just a very interesting place to board. Again I thought, "Here I am, very fortunate, I am in the right place." I always had the attitude that I will do anything and try anything and challenge anything because I first took that attitude in Portage la Prairie, and all throughout my life, I guess. Cyril Keeper[8] was running for Member of Parliament, I think, and his area was where we lived in Westminster. So she says, you go help Cyril, and you go door knock, and deliver these pamphlets," and I was going, "I don't even know him." She said, "It doesn't matter, just take the pamphlets and go door to door, ask them to vote for him." So I folded pamphlets, and got my bag, and went door-to-door and was promoting Cyril. So that is where I

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7 The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba is a Crown agency that provides addictions services and supporting healthy behaviours.

8 Cyril Keeper is a Métis politician from Manitoba. He was a member of the House of Commons from 1980 to 1988, serving as a member of the New Democratic Party.

learnt to get some doors slammed in my face, and realized that you just gotta keep going.

BPS: It's a character builder.

JW: But I wasn't interested in being involved in politics, I wanted to be a facilitator. They had a life skills program here in town, and that is what I wanted. I wanted to be a life skills coach. I wanted to master anything and deliver it.

BPS: You have these incredible adventures in your life, certainly not a life of being in a zone of comfort. It's constantly going from one zone of discomfort to another and coping. So I can certainly see interest in making that a vocation. So did you go to college or university after high school?

JW: After high school no, I didn't. I got pregnant, but that is another story. We had our two children and I went to Red River College, I wanted to become a nurse. My husband was in University and one of us had to give because it was too hard, it was just too hard. So I dropped out of college and I raised my daughter, and then I went back to university, the University of Winnipeg. I went there for two years. Then I wanted to become a journalist. I thought, "That is what I want;" I had made up my mind, finally. I thought that I wanted to interview people, and I wanted to do the best stories, and I wanted to relay them. That was during the time that Elijah[9] was running, 1988 I think it was. We helped out in his campaign because we were so proud that we had this First Nations man running, and we were going to get involved and get him in. I think that he did get in that time.

BPS: You got to know Elijah then?

JW: I didn't know him personally, but my husband is from Island Lake,[10] so everyone knows everyone. I was always campaigning and always helping

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9 Elijah Harper (1949-2013) was an Oji-Cree politician, consultant and policy analyst from Red Sucker Lake, Manitoba, who played a significant role in the ultimate rejection of the Meech Lake Accord.

10 Island Lake is a community of Manitoba First Nations located approximately 400 air kilometers Northeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

out. It was on my thirtieth birthday, after the Meech Lake Accord,[11] September 20th, he called me and he wanted me to go for coffee. I gave my husband the phone and said, "I can't meet him!" I was terrified, I thought, "I can't go and meet him," because I was going to be a journalist, and I was already in this program, and I was short listed. I really thought that I was going to get picked, but, I said, "Well, I'll come and meet you." So I went and met him down at a restaurant where we had a coffee. He knew my husband and I knew his wife, so I said, "I will come and try it for a few months, but in the event that I get picked for this journalist course, I am taking it. But I will try." So I did. I went to work in 1990 at the legislative assembly. I walked into his office and saw its cathedral ceilings and I felt like a little mouse, there were boxes to the ceiling. There wasn't even a path to his desk, and those are long offices they had there. I thought, "What did I get myself into?" So I just started box by box and we went through the mail together. He was a global and international figure at that time, so I just got thrown right into that.

BPS: What was your job description?

JW: I was his assistant.

BPS: So you would have lived close hand to all the events with Meech Lake and everything. I knew Elijah very well, and I so wish that we had had the opportunity to do this kind of interview with him before he passed away. Tell us a bit about Elijah. There have been books written, and documentaries done, but you worked with him very closely. Elijah came across as very pleasant, but he was a very smart guy in my estimation.

JW: He was exceptionally smart. I don't think that he gave himself enough credit. He was really good with physics, numbers, and charts. He was very smart. He was always thinking and always looking through things. He was one of the people I knew that could read through something and just grasp out that one important thing. He didn't have to know all of the details and everything that was behind the scenes. He was, as you know, a very humble man. He was a very spiritually based person. He was raised by his

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[11] The Meech Lake Accord was a proposed amendment to the constitution negotiated in 1987, which ultimately failed. Indigenous groups opposed the amendments because they had not been represented in the negotiations.

grandparents and lived and learned off the land, so he had that real appreciation and knowledge of where he came from and who he was. He did go to university and he was very much driven to advocate on behalf of First Nations people's rights. He never stopped advocating. I think that he got a taste of that in university, where he said he got involved with the school council. Ovide Mercredi[12] and Phil Fontaine[13] would remember that. I think that he just had a real passion and drive and purpose to serve his people. He was always a very warm, loving and funny man, very nice to be around all of the time.

BPS: He also had a very entrepreneurial mind. He wasn't thinking only in terms of politics and law, there were other things like business opportunities and economic development. Where did that come from?

JW: Elijah had a very aerial view of things, he never just saw things in a box. He was always thinking about First Nations rights and advocating for them. He knew very well the rights that we had in terms of our resources, our land, our jurisdiction, our fiduciary rights, he was always thinking that way, so we always knew what was rightfully ours. What should be rightfully ours. We should be the richest people in the world, not the poorest people in the world. He knew that this was our land, and this was our home, and that we have no place else to go. Canada is our home, we have to take care of it; the resources, the mining, the extractions, everything. He knew that we had royalties, we were to have royalties from using the resources of our land. He was always thinking that way, he was always thinking in terms of business, what was rightfully ours, what we should have. He never stopped advocating that, and that is where I think that came from.

BPS: Another dimension that people on the outside would never know from seeing Elijah operate is just how many difficulties and travails and tragedies he had to cope with. He always came across as optimistic and positive. In any community there are some people who will react to adversity by withdrawing, and some people who, notwithstanding whatever happens, will have this determination to move forward. What is your sense of where

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12 Ovide Mercredi, a member of the Cree First Nations community, graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba in 1977. He is the former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

13 Larry Phillip (Phil) Fontaine is a prominent Canadian Aboriginal leader.

Elijah's stoicism might come from? Does it come from something in his experience and background?

JW: His father, as you know, was a layman minister, a pastor. He was raised on strong, strong faith, very much so. His father was one of the icons in the north, Alan B. Harper. He walked the walk and talked the talk, and you don't find very many of those people around. Elijah was raised in that environment of having resilient faith and persevering and going through the storms and seeing everybody as a kind person and seeking the best in others. Always of that mind all of the time. When he got into politics in the legislature, as one of the first treaty Indians, he maintained that strong, strong faith and his ability to see through things. He never stopped. When he would get tired or stressed out he would always go back to the land, because the land is where you come from. He would go back and practice his hunting and fishing rights, and he would stay there for a week or two. He would get recharged and reenergized, visit his father, and get himself grounded back on the land again. That is what I know of him. He was raised with a strong faith and he never abandoned that.

BPS: You would have been side by side when he went through the white feather episode in the Manitoba legislature.[14] People across the country were telling him that he was threatening to break up the country. He was the only person in the Manitoba legislature, even on the other side of his own party, to stand up and say, "No." Can you tell us about what that experience was like? Did you feel all of that pressure from elsewhere? Were there moments of doubt like, "My gosh, this is just too much responsibility for one person?"

JW: I wasn't with him then. I started in September, and this happened in June. But, certainly when I started in September there was pressure from every level you could possibly think of. There were so many invitations and so many issues and challenges coming at him. I remember later on I would ask him, "How could you ever go through that?" You know how we all feel when someone talks about us, or says a bad word to us, you know, it hurts us. I couldn't imagine how he felt with a whole country looking at him. I thought, "How did you do that?" He says, "There were times where I just

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[14] Elijah Harper brought a white eagle feather to the legislature when voting against the Meech Lake Accord in 1990.

felt like hiding," but he always came out on the other side and always said, "I am doing this for our people, and I never lost sight of that." It was almost like his calling. We all have our purpose, we all should know what our calling is before us, but most of us don't. He was certainly one of the ones that did. He was not like any other person that I have ever met in my life that could sustain such challenge and overcome it.

BPS: I remember in the last three or four years when he would come to Winnipeg he was on dialysis. From what I've read and from what people tell me, that is very physically draining and exhausting, but it didn't stop him from going back and forth to Ottawa. He was still involved in his business and his various advocacy causes. It is always hard to understand how somebody dealing with that level of physical stress on top of all of the other stresses could just keep going and going and going. He was waiting for kidney transplants. It wasn't a fearful thing, it wasn't, "What if I don't get it," it was just extraordinary. I wasn't familiar as much with this dimension, but maybe it was the faith. "There is a plan, and God is looking after me, if the kidney comes through it does, and if it doesn't it doesn't, just do my best." Is that your sense?

JW: He was always that way, all of the time. He was never afraid of anything. I remember at times I would be so mad about something and he would be just calm as ever and say, "It's okay," and I am like, "How could you think that it is okay!" But he was always like that, he was always assured and always had a lot of faith. Even in his illness he always felt that the Creator had a plan for us all, and that that was his plan and he was going to keep on going, and keep on moving. There was no way that a man of his mind and abilities was going to sit at home. He was always working and flying, and he'd always make arrangements with any city he was flying into to ensure that he could get dialysis there. He would be friends with all of the doctors and the nurses. He would go on dialysis and then go do his job. I think that it kept him busy like us all. He just took having a kidney and being on dialysis as one of the things that he had to endure and go through.

BPS: In many parts of Canada, Christianity was an integral part of the Aboriginal culture. It was woven into the longer standing traditions and so on. You're the step-daughter of a minister, you say, and Elijah had this faith based tradition. On the other hand, there were all these problems with the

residential schools, which were run by the churches. Not talking about you particularly Jennifer, but how has that affected the faith tradition of Indigenous people who are in the Christian tradition? Did it cause a crisis of faith for some of them, or did they just separate the individual bad doers from the faith?

JW: Elijah's upbringing was Pentecostal,[15] he was never ashamed of that. He was of the mind that there is only one God, but there are very many different religions in the world, and it didn't matter if there were different religions in the world as long as we understood that we all look up and all have a benevolent Creator looking upon us. He was always mindful as well that he was a very traditional man. He was raised on the land, and hunted on the land, and there is a very spiritual significance tied to the land. He understood that very well. What I am trying to say is that he respected all religions, all cultures. He would go to sweats[16] as well, he never looked at that as something that was wrong. He would entertain that and go, and as you know, when he got sick he was trying to get healed. He would go into pipe ceremonies,[17] as well. At the end of the day when he put up his cap, so to speak, his religion was what his father taught him.

BPS: Sound like he had a larger, much more encompassing spiritual perspective. The fact that different churches did different things didn't affect his fundamental world view.

JW: Right. Elijah appreciated them all, and maintained his strong faith. He was a very spiritual man.

BPS: You mentioned activism in the late 70's. Elijah went into electoral politics and had a very major impact in that arena. With the benefit of hindsight, we can now see that a lot of that activism has been channeled into the formal legal system. For example, with cases going to the Supreme Court of Canada and major judgments, a lot of rights were being advanced through the courts rather than through politics or social activism. What

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15 Pentecostalism is a movement within Protestant Christianity with an emphasis on Holy Spirit baptism.

16 Sweat lodge ceremonies performed by North American Indigenous peoples are both healing and/or holy, with each individual ceremony having a distinctive purpose.

17 Pipe ceremonies are meant to connect the spiritual world with the physical world.

were people in the late 70's thinking in terms of the courts being an avenue? What were your observations about the extent to which the reform movement for First Nations moved in this legal direction? You would have dealt with a whole lot of situations and had to ask, "Should we go to court," and so on. Any perspective on how you saw the legal system as being a friend or not so much a friend between your youth and now?

JW: A common thing amongst First Nations people is that when we are born we are automatically political. Because we are born with it you will always hear First Nations people say, "From our cradle to our grave." We are political right off the bat because we are enshrined and integrated in the *Indian Act*; it governs us and it is a law that we still are existing under to this day. In the 70's when I was a teenager watching all the politics uprisings my mind was all full of wonder to think, "Wow, we are amazing, we all come from greatness." Even within my own family we have leaders in our history and in our DNA and in our blood. I was fortunate to live with my aunt who had a lot of people in her home who were fighting for First Nations rights. We knew that we had to come together in bodies, and as you know, if you talk with Phil, they were forming the Confederacy of Nations[18] here, I think in Winnipeg, at the time. My aunt was involved in that, and I was listening and watching the leaders forming their organizations and advocating for their rights, especially for the north and the south. We knew that we had to get involved with the legal system too because those involved in the legal system are the ones that are going to look into our agreements, our rights, our jurisdiction, our fiduciary rights, everything. When Elijah came in and brought everyone in solidarity across Canada, that was the most uplifting time in the history of Canada, I believe. We were all unified and we all felt proud to be First Nations. We knew that we all had rights to the land, to the resources, to the agreements. It was a really amazing feeling. Much like in Africa, the people came together there. They were kept in a certain state for so long, and realized that that was their country and that they were the majority of that country.

BPS: The 60's and 70's were a great time of political activism and legislative reform for the civil rights movement in the United States, which was

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[18] The Confederacy of Nations is one of the principle portions of the Assembly of First Nations.

primarily about African Americans. There were strong parallels between the American civil rights movement and the situation as Aboriginal peoples in Canada – both traditionally disadvantaged and traditionally discriminated against groups. Were you aware of the parallels? Was that sort of some inspiration for First Nations in Canada, or distant and different?

JW: I don't know. I think that I was too young at that time. I certainly remember my father was very political, as well. I was always interested in getting what was rightfully ours and speaking up; he certainly taught us that. I think what I recall is that South Africa adopted the model for residential schools here in Canada and they applied it there.

BPS: It said that some of the past laws were actually adopted using the Canadian *Indian Act* as a model. When you mentioned that galvanizing moment, do you mean that specific moment when Elijah stood up in front of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly?

JW: Absolutely. You are looking at people that exist in their own country but can't exercise their own rights. You are looking at people that are legislated by the *Indian Act*, and that live on reserves across Canada where they don't even own the land. Then you have this one First Nations individual in the legislature. The pride, I don't even know how to describe it, to be honest. But it sure gave us hope that there is a light at the end of this tunnel, that we will see our rightful place in our own country, and that we will be treated as equal, we hope, in our own country. Co-existing the first founding peoples. Think about how our people felt and were treated during the residential school era, or even how the First Nations veterans were treated when they came home from fighting for their country and weren't given the same rights as non-native soldiers. Think of how they felt when the mothers and fathers sent their children off to residential school and were gone for many years. Think of the oppression that our people felt. You've got to really think through our time since the birth of this country and what we have endured, and how resilient we are. And then when Elijah comes along and says, "No" to the Meech Lake Accord, because it didn't recognize the first peoples of this country, I mean, it was like grassfire. We just felt so proud that there was a man out there that was going to speak on our behalf. It certainly encouraged other people to think that way as well because Elijah always said that if you want to be involved in the system and

to make changes for our people then you have to get involved. Become lawyers, doctors, accountants, bankers, you name it. Get inside the doors where they are making changes and policies on our people.

BPS: Just thinking when you say that, one of the other individuals we interviewed made the point that one of the very significant impacts of the involvement of Elijah with Meech Lake was that it showed that you could make change in the mainstream system. You didn't have to put up road blocks and have violent demonstrations, because Oka[19] was around the same era. There is another way activism could have gone. I don't want to put value labels on it, but it certainly could have gone in a more confrontational direction. Instead, Elijah's world view was, from what you say, "Let's get inside the table, let's get inside the legal system as lawyers, let's get inside the political system as elected politicians." It demonstrated that you could make progress working within the system rather than in confrontation to it.

JW: Absolutely, it was. He was totally a person of diplomacy. He always felt that you could meet with a group and negotiate terms and conditions where you both come out winners. There is always a way. But the key was to meet and to have that, even if it was adversarial, confrontational, or impossible. He always had a way to meet and to talk it through. He would look at all the facts, legislation and agreements and extract all those and put it down at the table to see how we could negotiate these terms. We all know that protests do work, they raise attention and awareness and they make you look at that issue. They do, and they have in the past, I am certain. But he was always the one that felt that you should never think that you can't talk anything through for the common good for both of you, so that you both win. He always was a man of the thought that if the truth was there, and you were fighting for the truth, there was nothing to be afraid of. Whether or not you are going to come to that end result was another thing, but he certainly never stopped pounding the table for the truth.

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[19] The Oka crisis refers to a stand-off between the Mohawk Nation and the Quebec police force in Oka, Quebec. Following a court decision to allow a development company to expand a golf course onto traditional land, the Mohawk Nation protested by blocking access to the region. The standoff began July 11, 1990 and lasted 78 days. It gained national media attention and resulted in one fatality.

BPS: I was centrally involved in Meech Lake in my own way, and as we do these interviews about Aboriginal people in Manitoba we come back to it a number of times as a monumental moment. Remember the tent village on the Manitoba Legislative Assembly the last week of June 1990? It was when Elijah was doing the thing with the white feather. Part of the deal was that even if the bill was passed at second reading, it still had to go to hearings. My recollection is that hundreds, maybe thousands of First Nations citizens signed up to be at the hearings. A large group gathered on the legislative grounds, some were staying in tents and stuff. It was not only a symbolic message, but the practicalities were that they never could have gotten through the hearings in time because there were so many people who had signed up. Do you remember that?

JW: I was on the grounds. I wasn't working for it, but I was certainly there. Again, you see that feeling of pride and solidarity amongst our people. We rarely come together in those kinds of numbers, especially at a legislative building. For our own people, being the instrumental body for that whole event happening was overwhelming. I was there and I remember everybody was like they were walking on air, and together our numbers made us stronger. We were not isolated from each other anymore. We came together on a common issue and the power of people coming together was something I will never forget.

BPS: After Elijah's stint, the Meech Lake Accord ended in 1990. What were your next involvements with First Nations politics and organizations? You had been working with Elijah, did you go with him when he got elected federally?

JW: In 1990, September the 20th is when I got the call from him. We saw through a lot of things. He was an international icon, nationally, regionally, everywhere. He was extremely busy – at the same time he had to make sure that he fulfilled his duty as a member of the legislative assembly for Rupertsland, I believe.[20] It was an amazing time for those first three years in the legislative assembly because he was constantly moving and constantly busy, and so was I. He was in the legislative assembly for eleven years, and

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[20] Elijah Harper won the northern Manitoba riding of Rupertsland for the New Democratic Party in 1981 and served as a member of the legislative assembly for the next eleven years.

there came a point where there was a national election coming up. The liberal government wanted to come into power, and of course Elijah was NDP. Of course, he is politically driven all of the time, and so we discussed it in length, about the election and the territory and Elijah being an NDP. He decided that he was going to walk the floor and run as a liberal. Of course, at that time in the legislature you had to follow the party line, and when he walked the floor and announced that he was going to run liberal against Rod Murphey[21] it was really kind of stressful. But, at the same time, he saw his purpose where he would serve on another level in Canada. He really felt that he had a good chance.

BPS: From what we discussed already he wouldn't see liberal, NDP, or whatever label as being definitive, but instead that there was a much larger cause involved.

JW: Yes.

BPS: Secondly, he was of the view that you wanted to make change at the table. You wanted to be in the room where decisions were being made, so being a member of a third or fourth party wouldn't give you the same opportunity to make changes as would being in the Liberal party of Canada, the ruling party of Canada for most of the 20th century, and certainly in that era. I guess he took some flak from what you say from some of his NDP friends, but always because he had this larger vision, larger purpose, he was able to overcome.

JW: A lot of his colleagues had great respect for him, and you know, it was almost like his next step, they knew too that he should do it. You know the party lines of loyalties, we certainly felt it. Him being a politician for all those years, you saw the writing on the wall and thought, "Hey, what do I have to lose?" He made that decision and we formed a team and we studied the riding and knew what we had to do.

BPS: Just one question I always wonder because I teach legislative process and looking at electoral; I always wondered about the sheer pragmatics of

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[21] Rodney Murphy was a New Democratic Party member of the House of Commons, representing the Manitoba riding of Churchill. He held the seat for four elections (1979-1993) until he was defeated by Elijah Harper in 1993.

campaigning and representing Rupertsland. Rupertsland is just a name but if you look at it on a map it's enormous, certainly the biggest provincial constituency by far. Way bigger than almost any other constituency at any level in Canada. It's made up of many small communities. In those days, it's not like everybody is hooked up online, or everybody's even got good phone service. Could you just talk a bit about the logistical practical demands of actually trying to stay in touch with your constituents in those circumstances?

JW: It became the Churchill riding; it's two-thirds of the province. It's the largest riding in Canada and a lot of it is fly-in communities. You have a great challenge with how to campaign, how to raise your money, how to get your airlines, you have to get a group of people, you have to get contacts in every community, you're an electoral officer… it's a large task. It's a challenging one. Even keeping in touch when he was the MLA for Rupertsland, we had to really go all out to make sure that we were in touch with as many constituents as possible and leaders.

BPS: So did you and Elijah fly in a lot of small planes and buses going all over the place?

JW: Absolutely, when I said that he was not afraid of anything, he was not afraid of anything. I was afraid to fly in small planes and he wouldn't even care. We flew in storms, and rain and sleet.

BPS: Those little planes you get on and they tell you, "Well, you move to that side of the aisle, and you move to that side. Hold your magazine a little bit to the left so the plane is balanced." You're feeling like you're in a little box above the ground.

JW: And you have to fly in less than ideal conditions. There were several times when we were in scary flights where the indicator light for the wheels didn't come on to show that our wheels were down. I am like, "Okay, flash in the paper, we're gone." So, we had to fly to Garden Hill,[22] over the runway, so that they could physically see our wheels, and then we were able

[22] Garden Hill First Nation is located approximately 600 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

to land. Those are some of the stories. I remember when we were campaigning, I would always talk to the people at the airport to say, "We are going to be back at this time, watch our plane." I turned around and I saw one of the workers putting oil into our engine. I am like, "I will never fly in that airline again." As it so happens, that was one of the airlines that crashed, Keystone.[23] But, I don't think that a lot of people realized the differences in campaigning in the south as opposed to a territory where it was mainly fly-in – and then getting a boat, and then getting a taxi, and then getting to your destination. But, he was already an icon and very well-known so we made sure we had two sets of pamphlets made. We had one set for First Nations, and then we also made pamphlets for our non-native urban centres. We were very strategic.

BPS: What happens after you were working with Elijah in the House of Commons in the 90's?

JW: '93 we got there.

BPS: And you were there for how long?

JW: Five years.

BPS: Where does the story pick up after that?

JW: He ran again in '97 and he didn't win. As you know, between those times, he got very sick, and it was a challenging time in Ottawa. Again, even if Elijah was sick he never stopped working. So, when he recovered he ran in the '97 election and he lost. We were still in Ottawa at that time, and then he picked up an organization, I think it was called Project Reconciliation.[24] I stayed in Ottawa another year and then moved back to Winnipeg in '98. Elijah, of course, lived in Ottawa, and he stayed there and

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[23] Keystone Air Service is no longer in operation following a crash in September 2015, caused by the wrong fuel being put into one of the aircrafts.

[24] Elijah carried on what he was attempting with the Sacred Assembly, promoting Aboriginal Justice through spiritual reconciliation and healing between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. He was a keynote speaker on reconciliation, speaking on those issues, reconciling land claim issues, to bring everyone into a common way of thinking "We are all the first people of this land."

ran that company for a couple of years, I believe. He took on that Sacred Assembly in Gatineau, Quebec in '95 I believe, where they had over 4,000 people. But that was part of Elijah's healing, I believe. And then he recovered and carried on as Member of Parliament for Churchill and ran and lost. He just never stopped advocating for people, being a lobbyist for agreements. He was always sought after and continued his speaking engagements all over the world.

BPS: I was involved in one of the comprehensive implementation agreements to try to overcome some of the flaws in the Northern Flood Agreements.[25] I remember Elijah coming in when I was in a meeting in one of the remote communities. I think sooner or later everyone in the prairies would have met Elijah. The number of people that would have met him face to face over the course of his career must be astonishing.

JW: He met a lot of people, affluent people that have great respect for him, such as Desmond Tutu[26] and presidents in Taiwan. I can't even think of all of them. Very affluent people that sought him out and wanted to meet him. He got so many awards, including the Stanley Knowles award.

BPS: Stanley Knowles was a great parliamentarian and member of the NDP for many years, and was regarded as dean of parliamentary procedure. In the 90's, Jennifer, did you start working for some of the major Aboriginal organizations here?

JW: Yeah, when we moved back from Ottawa in '98, I started my own company, it's called Wood Events Planning. I did that naturally when I worked for Elijah because we always had to retire the campaign debt after an election so I was always putting things on, and coordinating and organizing them, it was a very natural ability to me. So I did that for seven years. And then I got asked to work as the residential school agreement coordinator for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs[27] in 2006.

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25 The Northern Flood Agreement, signed in 1977, was negotiated in an effort to compensate for the damage caused by the Churchill River Diversion constructed in the 1970s as part of Manitoba Hydro's hydroelectric development in Northern Manitoba.

26 Nobel Peace Prize awardee Desmond Tutu is a South African social rights activist and Anglican cleric known for his opposition to the policies of apartheid.

27 The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is an organization of First Nations leaders

BPS: The compensation system is starting to wind down the deadline passed for filing individual claims. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission[28] has reported what happened, and consciousness of what happened has been raised at the national level. But how effective was the compensation system? Was it significantly effective? You could never fully heal the wounds, I don't know how to put it on a scale, but certainly nobody would think that just the fact that there was a compensation scheme somehow undid all the damage that will last for generations. But did it do some positive good, having that compensation scheme set up?

JW: I think that it did. I think beyond the compensation, even just the fact that there was an agreement being negotiated across Canada for survivors did some good. There were pros and cons to the agreement, but the fact that there was an agreement being negotiated on behalf of the survivors in Canada I think raised a lot of excitement, pain, uncertainty, fear, joy, a lot of mixture of emotions and feelings came out at that time. Again, you are stirring a pot that hasn't been touched for many years, hundreds of years. The legacy of the residential school era, the fact that they are talking about survivors, and children of survivors, that in and of itself created a lot of things. The fact that you are going to be compensated for being taken from your home and away from your family. But at the same time, in the same breath, there were positive stories too. There were a lot of positive stories, it wasn't all gloom and dark and bad. There were survivors out there that you will hear from that it was a positive experience for them – they got very educated and they welcomed the school. At the end of the day, when it is all said and done you are still feeling that impact of having to leave your families. It did a lot. I know that you will hear from a lot of other people in this project that you are working on, but they were all impacted and still impacted to this day. I see it as a beginning and I see it as a mark to move forward in an appositive way that there will be a lot of other things that will come after this agreement that will probably be looked upon from this new

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in Manitoba.

[28] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's mandate is to educate and inform Canadians on Indian Residential Schools, and to help promote reconciliation. The TRC's final report consisted of 94 "calls to action" regarding the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools and the process of reconciliation.

government as well. Everything that should be rightfully ours, maybe it will come to light, maybe we will see that day.

BPS: Let me ask you just a couple follow up questions in the whole residential schools, TRC issues. One is lawyers had a big role from beginning to end in the whole process. It was partly because law suits were brought up against residential schools in the ordinary courts, against the churches, against the government of Canada. It was one of the factors that spurred the political resolution of setting up the system and having the adjudicators and so on. While the system was in place you've got lawyers going out and looking to represent individual survivors. Do you have any sense as to how well, or badly, or in-between the profession did in terms of seeking out people, being sensitive to how people must have been to tell the stories, effectively representing them. As a profession how did we do?

JW: Again, there are a lot of pros and cons to that. It was a comprehensive agreement that had so much legal terminology and conditions and terms and so forth in that agreement. It was very complex. I always felt that there was never enough time for the length of the agreement and the amount of survivors that were eligible to apply for compensation under the different levels that they had, the independent assessment process, the common experience payment… there was a lot of complexities in and I've always advocated that the method of getting information to survivors there would never be enough time to reach everyone. Even if we did reach the survivor who was eligible for one of the more serious cases it was another thing that they felt comfortable to even discuss it because there is so much trauma, there is so much impact, opening up wounds that again have never been talked about for hundreds and hundreds of years. You have to think of how that person felt. The agreement had its flaws and lots of loopholes, lots of interpretation, lots of everything. I always felt that the time wasn't there for it, and they did the best that they could in each province to get to as many survivors as you can. But, realistically speaking, you needed a lot more time than that.

BPS: Another question, I wanted to ask about the aftermath about this, the TRC recommended that there be programming about Indigenous law in all the Canadian law schools. If you were telling a law prof, do you have any thoughts about how and what we should be telling law students? How we

can educate law students to effectively represent, or negotiate when they are on the other side with Aboriginal people. As lawyers we tend to look at law as a bunch of cases and a bunch of rules on the book, obviously there is a lot going on as to the relationship between the two communities. Any thoughts on if someone said to you, Jennifer, what is it that law students should know emerging from law school about the whole situation of involving Indigenous people?

JW: I think number one is go back to the truth. The truth about the residential school era. How it came to be. Why it came to be. How it impacted our people. Learn the truth of the establishments of the residential schools. Really dig down and understand the impact those schools had on the survivors. To understand the laws and regulations and enforcements and everything that was mandatory that was put upon our people. Go back to the laws of not being able to work, that you had to have yourself enfranchised, and give up your treaty rights of being an Indian in order to go out and work and have employment. Learn that law, learn that because a lot of that affected our people. The fact that the government was able to force our people from our communities; in and of itself where has that happened in any other country in the world? We were forced by law, mandatory to go to school because the churches and governments of the day said that it was okay. To understand how that mother may have felt having to give up five of her kids. Imagine the impact and the amount of turmoil and hurt and sadness and pain that was in an entire community. That there were all these children now gone from the community. How did those parents, how did they seem to get through that, and how did they function as a community? How did they just carry on without the children? So I really think that I really want people to learn the laws that applied to our people and the impact that it had, and look at the cultural barriers, look at the geographical barriers, look at the language barriers, look at everything and then when you go to represent that survivor, that they are coming from a place not your average person, Canadian, comes from. They are born in and experienced trauma and don't even know that they are living in trauma, they don't even know that they are operating in trauma. A lot of the governments of the day and the organizations, they don't realize how much and when our people are triggered to trauma. It is one thing to experience trauma, it's another thing to talk about your trauma. I will always go back to it; our people have a real difficult time expressing themselves because they

always felt that they weren't worthy of being asked. I want people to understand that, all organizations, whether they be parole officers, superintendents, doctors, police, nurses, lawyers; everyone that is in contact with our people, I am hoping that they will take the time to understand the place that they are coming from, and understand that there is a revolving door to these parole officers, to these institutions, to these organizations and social agencies and CFS, I want them to understand why there is a repetitive revolving door, and not to judge that person but to know where that person is coming from.

BPS: One risk that we have is this: we've done the residential schools compensation thing, then there is the TRC report, and the law in the Supreme Court of Canada and so on is obviously much more balanced, so some people might come new to this and think "that was then, there were injustices, and this is now." They might not fully appreciate the long-term impact of the whole system on the family. Even if the experience at the residential school was not terrible in some cases, the mere fact of separating children from their parents when they are growing up can be profound. You don't have that same experience with a parent, you don't have that model of how a parent nurtures a child and that disruption can disrupt generation after generation. It may not be very obvious or visible when you are trying to understand what's happening now, but you have to realize that the whole pattern of family structure was disrupted and that is not something that you can just fix by saying "okay we are not in residential school anymore." Family trauma or family disruption can be passed on from generation to generation, that is my non-expert understanding.

JW: Definitely. You will always hear people talk intergeneration impact. My mother was a survivor, and five of her children, no, more, six of her children, went to residential school. I'm always advocating and trying to educate people that the intergenerational impact goes on to our children. To the survivors' children through blood memory and cell memory. That is why I'm sure if you go downtown and interview any street person down there, if you peel the onion he would have been a child of a survivor or somehow directly impacted by that residential school system. I will always say it's not our fault how we became, it's the laws that governed us why we are in the state that we are in today. I am hoping that everyone will go back to the truth of the legislation, and how it still impacts our lives. When I

mentioned before about how they defined us as Indians under the *Indian Act* was anything other than a person or persons. It was actually my father when I told him that I was working on a residential school file, because he asks what I am doing when I visit, and that is what he told me. I started to realize that I better understand this file and I have to understand why a whole country with residential schools how so many people could be abused. I had to wrap my mind around it to understand it. When my father told me that that is where I started. I started to realize that by definition under the *Indian Act* and the fact that we weren't allowed to vote, and all the legislations and rules and regulations on our lives, how that impacted us as survivors and how we are going to turn out. I realized that the residential schools, the first one, I don't know what year it was, but the Catholic and the United Church were able to take our children at a very young age, sometimes 3 and 4 years old, you'll hear that from other people how it would have broken families, would have broken their spirits, and how it impacted their families and an entire community. How could you ever heal from that?

BPS: The question I asked was what we should be doing in law schools, just thinking out loud here, but looking ahead at understanding Indigenous issues, just picking up on what you said. Now, in orientation week here students hear from an elder, or maybe we are reading more Aboriginal cases. I've learned a lot just talking to you; my sense is that maybe the most effective way to round out the education has to go beyond printed words and cases or ceremonial appearance from an elder. Maybe all of our students should be sitting down with someone like you at least once in their law school career, doesn't have to be a lawyer, just talking to somebody in the Indigenous community, to give some human concreteness, a real story to attach to all of these words and ceremonies. There is no substitute for actually sitting down and having that kind of conversation. Maybe it is something that we should actually make a point of doing. What do you think?

JW: I know when I was on the file for six years we would do presentations to everyone, RCMP groups, social agencies, lawyer, surgeons, doctors, parole officers, victim services, women groups, church groups. We did the presentation to them and I always said that I am not here to blame anyone, I am not here to make you feel bad, I'm here to hope that you will take time

to learn about the truth of our people and that the end result is that we coexist and we understand one another. That was the whole message during the presentations when I was the residential school coordinator. I am hoping that will continue, and I am hoping that with the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations that they will be honoured and that just here talking and even by the mere fact that you are doing this project says a lot. That it is taking the time to learn and interview different lawyers and people that were involved in the residential school settlement and lives. I know that is what is happening now with church groups. The greater larger public has awareness now, it is out there now, and it's being talked about now. It's being discussed in universities and at community levels and surgeons and doctors and lawyers and corporations, its being talked about. That is what we want. We want it to be talked about, we don't want it to be under the rug and that we never existed, and it never happened to us. So, the mere fact that it is coming from your body out and discussing to me, that is going to change the perception of Canada's thinking on First Nations people.

BPS: I'm extremely grateful that you did this Jennifer. There are some things that have emerged from this that I won't forget for the rest of my life, like your description of Elijah and that one moment in Canadian history. Even as somebody who lived through it, as a fairly significant participant myself. That to me is a remarkable perspective on just how important that moment was for Indigenous l people. I will think a lot about what you told us in terms of as we move forward to try to move forward with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but how you actually teach these things in law school, just for this interview maybe it strengthens the sense that I already had that it is not enough just to read words and books, you've got to talk to people, not just lawyers. To get a real understanding words aren't enough, you have to talk to the people who've lived the experience, and that gives you a whole other perspective that you bring. When you read the whole Truth and Reconciliation Commission report it is still not the same as talking to someone who lived it. Maybe as a result of this interview, one good thing that might happen is law students are going to be having this kind of experience, sitting down and talking like you. I am thinking right now that is something that I am going to recommend, that we make that part of teaching Indigenous content. Not just an elder coming in during

orientation week, and not just reading the printed stuff, but actually having some more human level interactions so that students get a real appreciation of the actual factual and emotional dimensions of these issues, and carry that with them as they go through.

JW: I never got to mention this but there was a time during the file that I think the author was John Dobson, I'm not sure, but there was something that caught my attention when I was reading the book. It was all about children. I always want to know about children, the psychology of children and so forth, because I wanted to understand the file. In order to present you have to understand it so that you can speak on it naturally, that is what I wanted to achieve, and which I did. But there is a point in the book there quote that said, "A child's self-concept emerges from the way he thinks you see him." Even subconsciously, or unconsciously, I can't remember. I knew then and there when I read that that that is how our children felt in the schools. They knew how you felt about them without even saying anything, and that impacted them. Our people came from a place that not your average person would be able to come from, but they did because of their resilience and spirituality. I want people to learn, about how they may be feeling and the amount of trauma that they endured, and that they got past it, and that they are still out and contributing today. Maybe I know how lawyers are taught and the rules that they are taught, and the ethics that they have to apply and comply with, but look at that one human aspect of where that person really came from and appreciate that. A lot of our people, they have a hard time to trust and for very good reason. When your trust is breached at a young age, it is hard to undo that, even as an adult. Even to know that from a lawyer's eyes to us, to see our human side that we are not being resistant and stubborn, angry and all this stuff. It is not that we are choosing to be that way, it is that we had to be that way to survive, to contain that treatment of the teachers and nuns in the residential school area, to survive. We had to put it in a containment to say, "I am okay, this is okay, how I am living, this is okay." Even though it wasn't okay, we made ourselves believe it was okay to survive, and that is something that I would like lawyers to learn.

BPS: Thank you so much Jennifer! I found this absolutely fascinating, and I really did learn a lot of things just talking to you today. There were events to which I had some involvement myself, but I have more insight into them

having heard your recollections as someone closer to the epicentre in many respects. I appreciate, for example, your recollections of Elijah Harper and his impact on history.

Introductory Note to the Appendices

BRYAN P. SCHWARTZ

As explained in the Introduction, this volume, in conjunction with the release of this special issue of the Manitoba Law Journal, we have launched a new course on "Indigenous Peoples, Oral History and the Law." It's creation and delivery has been supported by the Indigenous Initiatives Fund by the University of Manitoba.

This volume will become a regular part of the course materials in years ahead. We hope eventually to also introduce a for-credit practicum on Indigenous oral history that would involve the students producing oral history projects. The work that our graduates do in oral history could eventually cycle back into our teaching program, so that Manitoba has a steadily expanding pool of materials, experts and researchers in the area.

We have aimed to make the course publicly accessible; https://perma.cc/PNM7-JKK2. Many of the lectures can be found at the YouTube site of the University of Manitoba, https://perma.cc/LJY9-PJY8.

We will be exploring the years ahead whether it is feasible for students at our University and beyond to participate in the course online.

We wish to thank everyone involved with creating and delivering this initial offering of the course, including the first group of students to participate in it. Special mention should go to Tamara Edkins (University of Manitoba J.D. (2019)) and Andrew Weber (University of Manitoba J.D (2020)), student assistants who helped with the preparation and logistics, Christine Mazur, Director of Communications at the Law School who has assisted with making the lectures publicly available, AV services at the University and my colleague, former Associate Dean Lisa Fainstein who volunteered a great deal of her time and wisdom to this project.