

April 17, 1995  
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Ms. Leslie Anderson  
Director, Strategic Policy  
Room 2020A  
Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada  
10 Wellington Street, North Tower  
Hull, Quebec  
K1A 0H4

Subject: **"Communities in Crisis"**

Dear Leslie;

This letter, I hope, will provide you with some idea of what we were trying to accomplish, back in 1992, collectively and positively, to a whole raft of social ills hurting First Nation communities. These ills ranged from alcohol dependency, thru a whole series of abuses, to actual suicide pacts by young Aboriginal people. The need to respond quickly was not just up to Health Canada, but DIAND, other Federal departments and the Assembly of First Nations. This became evident from the discussions that took place between the AFN's executive and DIAND's A.D.M.s, most notably, our own John Rayner and Bill Montour, Chief of staff, of the AFN. The Shammatawas, Attawapiskats, Davis Inlets, etc., were the headlines at the time, and this major issue became an agenda item at these joint-executive meetings. It just happened that I was working for John and Richard Jock was the Health Director for the AFN, working for Bill Montour. Since Richard and I were (and still remain) close friends, it was almost natural for us to be delegated the task to get something positive to happen. The following was the result:

1. A number of planning meetings took place with representatives from DIAND, HC and AFN to plan a national symposium on "Communities In Crisis".
2. From our side, Catherine Bragg's group was brought in because they had the mandate and the budget for this sort of project. They became the "secretariat" of sorts for the proposed symposium and produced the proposal.
3. The national symposium was put on hold for a number of reasons, but primarily, it was that both locally and regionally, a number of workshops, conferences, healing circles etc., were being conducted to address these problems directly.

2.

Rebecca McPhail would be the person to contact to get the draft proposal and any other relevant information on the subject. When I left, she and Brian Bedwell were the main contacts with the AFN and Health Canada.

If I can be candid: I still believe that a national symposium on these social ills should be strongly considered, because the problems are still with Aboriginal communities. This symposium could address what worked, what didn't and why, and what needs to be done now, albeit, not to throw more money at the problems. It could focus on, how do we get more Aboriginal professionals and communities helping each other, instead of relying on outside agencies, or governments? This could be the theme. Anyway I have some ideas on the subject and would be willing to share them with you. I will not be in Ottawa this week as planned as my meeting for Toronto has been re-scheduled for mid-May. I am planning to be in Ottawa next week. Please call me at 506-536-3701, and we can arrange a time to meet in your office to discuss this subject and Davis Inlet, or Moe Dunnigan. Whatever suits you.

I humbly beg to remain your most  
loyal and obedient servant,

Peter Garrow