

Talking Points for the Witness to the Gathering

Introduction

Tansi! Jonathan Kaiswatum, nitisiyihkâson. Piapot Cree Nation, Treaty 4 Territory, ochi niya. (Greeting in Cree).

Oki! Nitsiska'sim, Jonathan Kaiswatum. Nitomahtoto, Kainai Nation, Treaty 7 Territory. (Greeting in Blackfoot).

Dadanastada! Sizi, Jonathan Kaiswatum, ata. (Greeting in Tsuut'ina).

I am the Director of Education for the Tsuut'ina Nation in Treaty 7 Territory. I am also the First Nations School Authority Director on the College of Alberta School Superintendents Board of Directors.

It is an absolute honour to stand in front of you today to deliver the Witness to the Gathering.

I would like to introduce you to my son, Heath Allen Joseph Kaiswatum. He was born on March 18 and is very new to this world. I took a month off from work to be with my family after he was born. This was one of the greatest times of my life. I am a husband, father, son, brother, and friend before I am any of the roles that I hold in my work.

I was offered protocol yesterday by my good friend, Diane Roulson to provide this closing keynote. I am grateful for this and I will speak from the heart.

Recite Gathering Theme

Our kêhtê-ayak, elders tell us that as indigenous people, we have no "concept" of reconciliation in our language. They teach that this is not without reason and when asked about it, the general response is that in our culture, we have deep teachings about never breaching the natural order so there should be no transgression so terrible to require reconciliation. With that in mind, the term kwayask-wastâsowin is used to refer to "making things right" when wrongs are done. We have many words for forgiveness or forgiving as we learn at an early age that learning to forgive is one of the hardest things to learn but once we learn to forgive, it frees our spirits and cleanses our minds to live in a good way.

Connection to the Gathering Theme and Related Topics

Living Treaties

- *What treaties have come to represent?*
- The interpretation of treaties is that they are between person to person.
- In Place-based thought, land is not vibrant matter awaiting human meaning-making. It is agentic. It is society.
- Agency is distributed across a web of relations that includes animals, waters, winds, rocks, and stories. To call habitats societies is to recognize that they operate through forms of order and accountability.
- There are treaties between species. There are protocols of reciprocity.
- Ensuring that agreements are treaty-based means following through on your word and understanding that agreements are not just person-to-person; they are between all species.

Learning as Relational Responsibility

- Learning is not an individual pursuit—it is a responsibility held within relationships.
- Throughout this gathering, we have been reminded that education is not just about outcomes, but about how we show up for one another—as educators, leaders, relatives.
- Relational accountability asks us:
 - *Who are we responsible to?*
 - *How are we honouring those relationships in our decisions?*
- The call to action is to move from systems that manage learning to systems that care for people.

Land Relationship

- The land is not a backdrop to education—it is a teacher, a relative, and a source of knowledge.
- Many voices in this gathering have reminded us that when we disconnect from land, we disconnect from identity, language, and responsibility.
- The work ahead is not simply to include land-based learning, but to re-root education in place.
- This means asking:
 - *How does the land shape what and how we teach?*
 - *How do our schools reflect the territories they sit on?*

Empowering Youth

- Youth are not just learners in our systems—they are knowledge holders, leaders, and vision carriers.
- We have heard clearly that empowerment is not something we give to youth—it is something we must make space for.
- The question is not whether youth are ready to lead. The question is:
 - *Are we ready to listen?*
- The call to action is to create systems where young people can:
 - See themselves
 - Hear their voices reflected
 - Shape the future of education

Language Revitalization

- Language is more than communication—it is identity, worldview, and relationship.
- When language is present, culture is alive. When language is absent, something deeper is at risk.
- This gathering has reaffirmed that language revitalization is not a program—it is a responsibility.
- The work ahead is to ensure that language:
 - Lives in classrooms
 - Lives in leadership
 - Lives in decision-making
- Not as an add-on, but as a foundation.

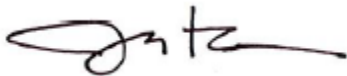
Mentoring Indigenous Educators

- Indigenous educators carry more than instructional roles—they carry community, culture, and continuity.
- The deeper responsibility is:
 - *How do we support them once they arrive?*
 - *How do we ensure they stay, grow, and lead?*
- This requires systems that are:
 - Culturally grounded
 - Relationally supportive
 - Reflective of Indigenous ways of knowing
- The call to action is to move beyond hiring toward mentorship, belonging, and long-term support.

Closing

- These are not separate calls to action—they are deeply connected.
- Relationships to land, to language, to youth, to each other—they all point to one truth:
 - Education is relational.
- As a witness, the responsibility is not just to remember what was said here, but to carry it forward with intention.
- The question we leave with is not *What did we learn?* But *What will we do differently because of it?*

Ay hiy! Kaitama'tsin! Siyisgaas!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Jantz' or similar, written in a cursive style.