

INTERVIEW WITH JACK SMITH

.....
Warren I. Weir

In this interview conducted during the Value(s) Added Conference in May 2002, Jack Smith talks about Aboriginal organizations and management. It provides insight into the institutions that drive CED and the people that run them (including some of the day-to-day and practical issues and challenges they face).

WW: Please introduce yourself.

JS: My name is Jack Smith. I am a person of Plains Cree and Métis ancestry. My mother comes from the Ermineskin Band, at Hobbema in central Alberta, which makes me a Plains Cree. My father is a Métis person who grew up in the Lethbridge area in Southern Alberta. I currently work for the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, which is mandated to negotiate treaty with the federal and provincial governments. I represent six tribes: the Lyackson, Halalt, Lake Cowichan, and Chemainus First Nations, as well as the Penelakut and Cowichan Tribes. Approximately six thousand people live in the territories that we are in the process of negotiating for. In that territory I have also worked for four years as Director of Programs and Administrative Officer for the Chemainus First Nation's local schools — the Chemainus Native College and Stu'ate Lelum Secondary School.

I've had experience in all aspects of management. In addition to the two jobs that I have had in the territory, I have also had experience working at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology where I was primarily instructing. I have also instructed at several First Nations schools, including the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, the department of Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, and the Faculty of Law at UBC in relation to First Nations law and economic development. I also taught property law in the University of Saskatchewan's Native Law Program.

WW: What does the term Aboriginal organization mean to you?

JS: I have two responses to that. True Aboriginal organizations are more clearly defined as Aboriginal organizations that are owned and controlled by Aboriginal people. There are, however, Aboriginal organizations that are controlled, managed, and run by Aboriginal peoples, but whose particular parameters and mandates come from outside sources or are directly tied into non-Aboriginal organizations. For instance, a lot of First Nations or bands manage programs that Indian Affairs Canada has organized for the band or other Aboriginal related organizations.

WW: What do you think makes a successful manager or leader in an Aboriginal organization?

Jack Smith was the Executive Director for the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group. He is currently self-employed providing management and other professional services to First Nations, government, and private business.

JS: The successful leader who works in or manages an Aboriginal organization is very skillful at communication and is very flexible in his or her approach. I don't think you can go in with a solid mindset about most of the issues that you will face as a manager. Everything from finance to human resource issues, to particular mandates that the organization has to accomplish, and all the strategic planning, has to be considered with the community in mind. And this involves a considerable amount of communication and flexibility. I believe that is the mark of the most successful Aboriginal organization. If the lines of communication are not clearly established that link human resources and finance, and if other issues that are part of the management function aren't attended to and clearly communicated, then you start to have issues of accountability, issues about decision making, and so on.

WW: You say that the relationship the organization has with the community is important. How do you personally facilitate that relationship?

JS: I have done that primarily through establishing stakeholder groups, working groups, and community groups. For example, in the Treaty Group we have six First Nations that look for input from community members and other people who are in charge of forestry, mining, or some other substantive area. They look for those people to come forward and either volunteer some time, or help us out with those issues. They bring the perspective of their community to us and we all work together to try and create a negotiating stance that is acceptable to all six communities. In addition to that source of input we also turn to a group of representative Elders who are organized into an advisory body. We are also organizing youth groups to give us their views. With that, alongside extra community meetings to gather the input, we're able to synthesize all the information and go to the main negotiation table or to the side tables to negotiate those issues. We have that input from the community and that is the more informal side.

Or, at the Chemainus Native College, we organized stakeholders' groups. These are committees that we met with to give us their input and provide us with guidance for what we should be doing at the College. We discussed how all areas impacted on the students and the parents of the students, as well as on the

community to reflect upon what they wanted to see in the programs. That is the formal side.

Informally, I think it is very important to get input through meetings and going out and actually speaking with the Chiefs, and speaking with the people that administer various programs, whether they are involved with education or having to do with treaty, economic development, or whatever it might be, and then working together. That is part of the communication process on an informal basis.

WW: Can you give us a breakdown of what a day for Jack Smith the manager might be? What sorts of things do you do generally in a day and what takes up most of your time?

JS: I generally arrive at the office between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Right from the moment I get in, it is either the phone is ringing or people at my door. I work very closely with the Elders' coordinator who works closely with the Elders of the six communities. We have a very strong component of our organization that respects the Elders' input whether it comes from community Elders directly or through formal boards like the Elders Advisory Body. There is usually a line up that occurs very quickly and the communications coordinator will come in and ask me about, or give me a briefing on, the previous day's events with the group as well as what's coming up. I also have an executive assistant who provides me with administrative support and does a lot of the logistical work around arranging and making sure that things are in place when we facilitate meetings. We have external and internal functions. Externally, we are involved on a regional basis with First Nations or other tribes that are involved with the treaty process. We meet with them regularly and that is part of an influential body. So we work closely with them and actively participate on political things. There are correspondence and telephone calls and updates related to that group's activities that I have to attend to. We have a person come in to do our finance twice a week and those days are particularly busy because that is when I have to review all of the finances, approve all of the expenditures, sign cheques, and query the authority to spend that money. There is a lot of discussion around budget preparation and then determining what is unexpended. We spend a lot of time with the finance function during those two days, and

making sure that the human resource side is not forgotten. During this time I also make sure that the people are adequately paid or have the right time recorded on their timesheets for their positions.

I then take part as much as possible in the meetings over substantive issues that we have with the federal and provincial governments as well as with the working groups. It is critical that I maintain some part in what the people are working on, whether it's forestry initiatives or aqua fish tenure and shellfish initiatives or governance issues or economical issues. All these things are critical to the treaty. I am ultimately responsible as executive director for facilitating the treaty development: the negotiation strategy, its ongoing development, and the signing of treaty documents related to the business of treaty on behalf of the six chiefs who are the directors of the organization. I frequently meet with them on an individual basis but we also meet at least once a month to talk about the business of the organization.

So a typical day will include all or some aspects of these practices. We seem to have many issues that are of an emergency nature that we have to deal with from time to time because we have personal politics concerning anything from who gets an honorarium to why this man did that when another representative did something else. These things happen and it is all part of my function to coordinate resolution of those issues. I have the authority to delegate some of that resolution activity, but for the most part, I take care of the issues that come forward.

WW: It seems as if that is a 24-7 job. Are you there all the time or have you found a way to escape from your job and also include personal activities?

JS: The question is, is it possible for me to divide my personal life from my business life in any way? I've taken the notion that I have to do that to keep things in balance. I don't want there to be issues around stress management. Particularly in Aboriginal management, there are those people who forget that their positions at the senior management levels come with many stresses because of political influences, a lack of capacity or the inability to see things through because of various factors that influence their environment. I have made it a personal policy to

do as much as possible to separate my work life from my personal life. I do that in a couple of ways. Number one, I live a little bit away from my work so it is a 35-minute commute from my work to home. I can make the transition from home to office, and from office to home, and mentally be prepared for the next one. This is important because there is just as much stress at home. I also protect my work from my home life. I want to bring as little as possible of my personal issues into my work place. I get paid x amount of dollars for so many hours of work with reasonable expectation for some overtime. Beyond that, I do not encourage people to call me unless it is an emergency. I don't hang on to the phone or encourage directors and other business personnel to call me or have anyone else call me for every little reason. So, that is generally my stance. If we are very busy because we are coming close to terms with a treaty, then at that time I would expect that I would have to be hanging on to the telephone and spending more time at the office.

WW: Historically, we know that Aboriginal organizations in the community are often constrained by their relationship to the federal government and increasingly to the provincial governments. What is your thought on that historically? More importantly, has the situation changed today?

JS: With regard to the constraints those relationships with other governments bring to First Nations organizations and their central management, I believe that in some areas, such as land reporting procedures and accountability structures, they are important. In other areas, they are less important. Primarily, it is a question of the capacity to fulfill the function for which the ties exist. I can say that in our territory of 6,000 people, there is knowledge, a really deep pool of human resources available for many of the technically skilled areas where we need people to perform functions.

I will give a specific example. For instance, we want to negotiate for shellfish and aquaculture resources within our territory. Technically, this means that we have to do an inventory of what exists to date within our territory: everything in terms of the areas we want to negotiate for, and where it would be best to put in aquaculture leases and create fish and shellfish farms. Then there is a legal issue related to that. For example, how does the

definition of farm fish, which may be provincial fish or federal fish, interfere with our overall work? We can presumably produce products based on our Aboriginal right to do so and based on our Aboriginal title to the beach area which is the subject of the lease. However, if we're dealing with farming clams on the beach, those are federal clams supposedly. Those kinds of issues come up. Decisions don't go in favour of our own people who have been harvesting those resources for thousands of years and know how to manage them. They know how to take care of the species so that we know that there is going to be another batch of that harvest, or species, come the next season. But it is one of those factors that you can't now control and so we have to work with the federal and provincial governments on some of these issues.

When it comes to doing things around aquaculture, such as clam harvesting, we have to negotiate to become part of the management workforce for those resources so that we don't lose that aspect of our traditional ways and whatever part that plays in our culture. The capacity to work in that respect is different because some of the ways that the government endorses to environmentally protect those species have derived from scientific knowledge rather than traditional knowledge. The traditional knowledge is scientific in many ways, but it isn't scientific in the sense that the federal and provincial governments monitor species in the water today. We have to have people that can do that kind of work even though they may not be a marine biologist. So, it may be that we have to accept that there is this innovation that we have to be very flexible with, and we have to weigh whether we want to go that route and allow for intrusion on our rights, if that is the best thing that we can do in these contemporary times. I think there is a range in which you have to locate yourself depending on the circumstances.

WW: Is there intrusion on the way you can manage by external governments?

JS: Yes. If your mission statement is to create a program of studies that is sensitive to cultural values and beliefs and that actually incorporates the details of those cultural values and beliefs and the way that those things were done, very often that is a very tough task. In the education field it is tough to attain and then put all the

programs together and manage the people to do that. The limitations are often unrelated to criteria, such as education, that the government accepts for its standards. For example, they set the curriculum in most places and if you don't have the resources to marry the government's stated curriculum with what you want to achieve culturally, it does influence what and how you do things. It also sets boundaries. It affects the way you do business because I can't hire, for example, all First Nations instructors, because of a lack of formal capacity. We don't have that many qualified First Nations teachers who have professional designations and want to work with certain age groups of students or have masters' degrees to do post-secondary studies.

WW: So as a manager in an Aboriginal organization, do you also manage non-Aboriginal people?

JS: Right. But, I haven't taken a different approach to managing those people than the First Nations employees in the organization. I think that whatever we have as the mission statement, or the objectives that we are trying to meet, all relate to the performance of the job in the end. If we see someone come in who is First Nations and has the capacity to learn how to become qualified for the position, then I know the opportunities we would make. We would want them to train for that position. We have that luxury in the treaty group because we have more resources than we had at the school. At the school we didn't have the resources or funding to train First Nations individuals to teach some of the courses that we offered. We had to focus on the front line people with whom we could actually afford to do some things, such as training on the job. I think in that respect we treat them differently. Most of the non-First Nations that we retain right now will come with qualifications. The Hul'qumi'num Treaty group staff members are all First Nations people with the exception of two now (who have the qualifications for their job). Of the First Nations people that we have, approximately half have been sent to various training courses. We have that luxury here; we didn't have it at the school.

WW: So you build capacity within your organization and that relates to capacity-building in the community?

JS: Definitely. For example, we are currently implementing a personnel policy that contemplates hiring people with the use of a selection committee, and advertising and promotion of the job. But the ideal situation is, and hopefully we will change this, is to bring on people we recognize as having potential and provide them with training. I've always encouraged people who have met the challenges of the job to spend their time doing ongoing training with our support. If it means that their next step is a job elsewhere within the community, then we can go and pick somebody else out and continue to build capacity in the community. We encourage those people at the school and particularly here. I think anybody who would leave the Treaty Office is going to have a fair amount of capacity to do a number of jobs, particularly the administrative functions right now. But we also have our own employees who are in training.

WW: I have always been intrigued by the role humour plays in the day-to-day management of Aboriginal organizations—in decision making, communications, interpersonal relationships, and employee relations. Is humour important?

JS: Humour is very important in running our organizations. I think it is part of the management function. I am a manager now but I've also worked for other managers, and probably the least favourite positions I have held were under managers who had no sense of humour. As soon as I build capacity to bail out of those positions, I do. The problem is when the manager is a downright sour manager. I had one in the past and I did not feel comfortable. It makes for a poor work environment—a poorer work environment—one where I was less enthusiastic doing my work and where I was less productive than I might have otherwise been. Those managers basically closed lines of communication and there are other factors too. I think humour adds to a position. In regards to that, I hear lots of people say that First Nations generally have a good sense of humour, that we used that humour to survive the experience of dispossession historically. I see humour as essential on a human basis. It lightens up tensions and stresses of the workplace and makes for more productive employees and managers. It really opens up the lines of communication for all the different groups and provides a comfort zone making it comfortable for people to help

us or assist us through our work, including the treaty process work. It is essential.

I get jokes from all over the place. I don't tell jokes as well as I hear them. That is the other thing. When people have something funny to say, there is a line that we have to draw, and it is not so much about being politically correct, although that is important too. You don't want anybody intimidated by a supervisor that is in a position to make comments that an employee is not. I think that we can say the wrong thing at the wrong time and I assume that is an aspect of the overall communicating process, the personal part. If you see that your employees are laughing genuinely at what is being said, and the things you do, that is probably good. However, you have to be careful if you see that they are laughing nervously or you know that you said something that may lower their esteem. You can be too humorous at times. How are they going to take you seriously the next time? So, it is a balancing act and you have to be sensitive to that in the workplace.

WW: Tell me a little bit more about your Elders. How are they selected and what role do they play in the management of your organization?

JS: I can speak about the roles of the Elders in terms of my experiences at Chemainus Native College and also in terms of the Hul'qumi'num Treaty group and the negotiations process. The Elders at the school should have been but were not a very integral part of the school. We did not have Elders in place at the school, although there was always the intention to have more Elder participation and involvement. What occurred, however, was that, due to a lack of resources and facilities, we could not have as much Elder participation as we liked. Even though the business management programs, as well as the basic education and high school programs, seemed to be in a transition state that allowed for greater cultural activity in the curriculum, we were limited by our lack of resources. Because these programs were directed by federal and provincial government policies, our only option was to have the Elders attend school functions only. We had very little physical space and had no separate room for the Elders so they could not meet at the school—nowhere to have Elders in residence. It was a very difficult situation and we really always wanted to have

conversational hall communities. There are only one hundred or so fluent-speaking people in the whole community of over six thousand people. We could never do it, simply because we did not have the funds for language or resources to build the cultural components in our programs, although that was always part of our goal.

At the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group it is an altogether different story. One of our initial changes was to have the Elders participate actively in discussions of substantive issues so they could advise us as well as the board of directors. However, you have to be very careful about the Elders' role when it comes to administrative matters such as the finances, the personal issues, and so on. They were not in charge of that. We had this whole discussion and we had to establish our terms of reference about what the Elders should be able to do. Ultimately, it was decided that they would advise on substantive issues. We have an eight-member Elders' Board and we meet at least once a month to discuss our progress on treaty. They feel very much a part of that whole process and they feel very much involved. The other thing that we do is to organize all the Elders in each of the communities to meet 10–12 times per year. The principal reason for that is so that they can advise their chief directly. We take part in those meetings if they want to talk about management issues in relation to fishing, gaming or governance issues, or genealogy or if they want us to give them an update on those kinds of things. However, the main purpose of those community Elder meetings is to have community Elders speak directly to the Chief and provide the Chief with input so that the Chiefs are informed without having to come directly to those meetings because ultimately they are the decision makers. The Elders are very much involved. We have sub committees — we call them working groups actually — and some of the more active Elders have been on committees and working groups.

WW: Are there any challenges or issues with organizing and working with Elders?

JS: Yes, there are a number of challenges and issues that arise all of the time. There is no simple solution for any of the issues. I guess I have to respond to one of the questions you asked which was how do you go about selecting the Elders? Well, it is a very sensitive issue.

There are six different First Nations in the treaty process. When we establish the Elders' committees as well as the Elders' Advisory Board, there is the whole question of who is an Elder? There is also the issue of remuneration. My approach to that was that we were not going to get involved in dictating who is an Elder. If one community wanted to talk about that in terms of age, or in terms of knowledge, that was for them to decide. I asked our Elders to coordinate the process, and to be very diplomatic, to go to the Chiefs, to discuss with the Chief who might be an Elder and whether they are going to be appointed by the chiefs and so on. We have a community liaison in each community who goes out and does some of our legwork within the community to put a face to our organization.

Then, who are the potential Elders in the community? They draw up a list and the chief gives us some names; these people give us names of their people. They are kind of self-selected. That is what we encourage. And then we have each one of them appoint a chair, which the community approves. That was difficult too, and then the other part of it was the question of how we could get representatives from that group to sit on the Elders' Advisory Body, the formal body that actually advises the chair and directors. How do they go about doing that? For some groups it was very easy. But for communities that did not have regular meetings of Elders, this proved to be a very good thing because it got them organized and participating in the negotiation of treaty. We also encouraged them to meet and review many of the substantive issues including land and some other things. For some of the communities of Elders, it was difficult to say who among them should represent them under the umbrella advisory group. We let them work it out over two or three meetings. I prompted them gently to make some decisions, some resolutions about that. It is not rigid and they can change it.

But then once the Elders are appointed, it becomes difficult. They are ensconced. They do not have terms of reference that say so and so will sit for two years, and I do not think that it is appropriate for us to say that. I think it is when the person is no longer functioning in that position or adequately representing them that someone else may be considered and the community of elders can usually take care of that. They can tell what not to report in discussions

and what is personal. Also, there is a little bit of politics at the Elders level as in any other level of our processes.

We have Elders in our community who need assistance for health reasons, and so, some family member will accompany them. Sometimes we have some of the staff sit in a meeting and take notes for those who are hard of hearing. At a number of meetings, we ensure that there is translation, from Hul'qum'num to English and back. One of the difficulties we are finding is in the stage of negotiations that we are in now. When we discuss technical aspects of substantive areas, it is very difficult to translate, even the notion of mapping, for example. We talk about borders and boundaries, and Hul'qum'num people, well, they didn't have borders and boundaries; they had no fences. Some of them talk about the area of the world in terms of "where we worked—this was our workplace". We fished here, here and here. I remember we used to go up the Fraser River; we used to go way up to Kingcome Inlet and to the North Island and beyond. We used to trade with the Kootenais and with people from the interior, and we can talk that language. But when we are talking about tenures and forestry, or tenures and the sea, minerals, mines and even some issues of governance, we do not talk in the same way. There is no adequate translation for that, and there are very few people who can do a good job, even for the administrative aspects, such as "here is the annual report", or "here is the audited report".

WW: To whom do you look for inspiration?

JS: One person whom I admire and with whom I have had the opportunity to rub shoulders, both as a student of his and I believe as a student of mine, is Harold Cardinal. He speaks very eloquently and he promotes peaceful negotiations, careful considerations, and thoughtful resolutions. He has strong cultural values that influence all the things he does on a daily basis. I admire him very much. I don't know that we think the same on all the issues but whatever he has to say he says. I respect his views and so I see him as a hero because he has done a lot of things. He has taken the time and gone back to his roots. He has gone back and done all the big things that I wish I had finished like a doctoral program and those kinds of things. I will

just have to get more wisdom in order to accomplish that at a later time, I suppose.

WW: More and more corporations and other government organizations are looking for and recruiting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit employees. In many cases they are competing with Aboriginal organizations looking for the same people. Do you run into that at all?

JS: Yes. I think there are two sides to that, though. At the same time we have competition from different outside sources. We do have that competition from Canadian mainstream business, corporations, and institutions, but we also have that competition from educational institutions, and competition can even be strong from the bands themselves, the tribal councils or the larger Aboriginal organizations. There are so few of our people in many of the programs that we have to train them to fulfill the positions that are certainly available. Once they graduate from the program, the competition is fierce. For example, BC Hydro and other organizations and corporations have Aboriginal sectors so that they can liaise with the Aboriginal communities and be respectful of the environmental and cultural aspects in order to do their business efficiently. They have a bottom line to protect and they need First Nations people to produce a lot of that work. They are in the position to pay a pretty good dollar to those individuals, to offer them benefits that are not available in many First Nations organizations and, if they are available, they are often redundant because some of the services or employee benefits are benefits that some employees may already receive as status Indians on a reserve.

Internally, the other part is that many people leave communities to go to school and find that there is such a weak economy at home that there are few jobs available. Furthermore, most First Nations that I had the opportunity to speak with do not have specialized departments, such as forestry or resource management. They just do not have the resources to run a department like that or other departments—legal services, social services—they all have to get together to achieve economies of scale. There are not the resources to provide enough incentive for these people to come back to what they sometimes see as a dysfunctional community. It could be because of political interference or just because there is not a job there. Life on

the reserve can be very tough; socio-economic conditions are the lowest in the country.

WW: At this conference Ken Tourand spoke about the unionization of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. What is your view on unions in Aboriginal organizations?

JS: Should unions enter into Aboriginal organizations or should people request unions? I can't say yes or no. It is more of a maybe. I think it is very dependent on the situation. I think that unions can bring a lot of stability and certainty to certain working environments where there may be coercive power exercised in terms of the employee-employer relationship: jobs that are not strictly defined, variable vocation scales, or uncertainty about whether provincial or federal labour codes apply. There is a general lack of knowledge about human rights legislation and the employee laws that are available to the people. I think unions can do a lot of things. They can establish rates of pay and so on. But they are not traditional ways of dealing with employer-employee relations. I do not think that many of those structures are in place anymore to resolve fair and equitable relationships between employers and employees. The unions can do a lot of good in a community. Where there are larger unions, though, that have national affiliations or international affiliations, that may be problematic because then many of the norms and values of those larger organizations are going to be just another imposition of the cultural values and norms of mainstream people. On a regional or local level, there is going to be a tension that cannot be resolved with the larger union, and the people are going to have some impact on the package. But I think unions can do a lot in establishing the boundaries of the relationships between management and employees.

WW: Tell me about the relationship between tradition and culture and organizational management.

JS: I guess practically speaking, as I stated before, there is a very prominent role for Elders in pretty well all aspects of our treaty-making process. However, Elders do not speak on issues of finance and issues of human resources policies and so on. They do, however, speak on the substantive issues and the creative issue that will impact upon people generally. They provide

advice to the decisions of the six directors of the treaty group. They also advise the chief negotiator. And although that does not sound like a lot, it is a lot. Most of the Chiefs do respect the Elders and it will show up in their decisions. What we do not see as part of that formal process is what is behind the scenes—where that respect comes from at the community base, at the community level, and where in a community those particular Elders have strong influences in all aspects of those decisions, and of course in other peoples' decisions. That is reflected at that level. And so, although it does not sound like a big deal, it is very influential. It affects the politics of some of those decisions as well as any consequences of those decisions. So they play a large role, and it is cultural. It is about respecting the Elders and some of that discussion takes place at the big house.

We also use cultural protocol to open relationships with our neighbouring First Nations in discussing the resource sharing and land sharing issues that we have. We certainly use cultural protocol in terms of meals and opening meetings and have Elders when possible commence those meetings. They are a part of everything that we do. Even in the discussion with our technical people, there are individuals on the board who persistently remind us about the cultural aspect. They are not saying "do not forget the cultural aspect"; they are saying that there is a cultural connection to everything that we do in terms of resources, and we are sensitive to that. The frequency that people use the Big House very much depends on how much the Elders permit access to it. It is very much dependent on things like the availability of certain kinds of seashells that are required for some of the regalia and where you get that or cultural wood. You would not think that we have a lack of firewood in our territory, but we do not have enough firewood and access to firewood to keep the fires of the Big House burning. We have to go to Weyerhaeuser or some other large corporation. We have tenure on the land to get the wood, but we need certain kinds of trees to carve out canoes, ocean-going canoes. They have to be a certain kind, and that is not available in our territory anymore. So, we have to go to our neighbours and talk to them about it—to Weyerhaeuser and other places that might have that stand of timber on their lands.

I think the language, the preservation of language and the cultural aspects of our

traditional use of the land and sea and the resources, the Elders tell us those things. We take them out on the land and so on. And the actual management decision-making process, when it comes to what I do, I administer the personnel policies, I administer the fiscal policies, I ensure that the facilitation of the treaty process is running according to the strategic plans that do not necessarily have, at least not directly, Elder involvement. But we are always conscious of being accountable to our Elders and our people and respectful of the culture.

WW: How do you define leadership?

JS: I guess in defining leadership in relation to management, I see leadership as meaning being able to establish a vision and follow through to attain the vision and that means doing some of the things you need to do particularly in First Nations' organizations. I think you have to establish or show by example or be a good role model about all aspects of the organization: what it means to be working 35–40 hours a week; how to set up strategic plans and follow through. In addition to talking about where we ought to be, for example, in treaty, it is actually taking the steps to go out and be there and sometimes it is rough. Obstacles and a lot of internal barriers, as well as the external ones, are part of the process. Sometimes you have to be very firm about that and other times it depends on the situation. You need to be fairly democratic in some of the decisions that

you make in management. But at other times leadership is about being able to walk the talk as well.

WW: What is your view of the role that Aboriginal organizations will play in Canada in the future?

JS: I hope for change; I think we need change. I think we have become ineffective at the national, perhaps even the international level. Largely, it has been a response to underdevelopment and initiatives that make us less effective. Groups like the AFN I do not think are as effective as they once were. I have concerns about this in our own treaty situation, where we are grouped in with all the other tribes and First Nations and talk about some of the larger problems we have with treaty. But I find that, when many of the issues get there and we want to make resolutions about what should be done, we are not able to accomplish those things because we are too cumbersome. So I advocate a more regional approach to a leadership role, actually going out and doing something about issues, building in the process and evaluating whether we are being effective or not. You have to do something. I find that many of our leaders want to do something but lack the capacity somehow or have to meet the status quo or whatever factor there might be. We just have to go out and do it. If we do it wrong, then we just have to go out and learn from that, but we have to take action.