

**Stakeholder Consultation
Session**

**Séance de Consultation des
Parties Prenantes**

Commissioners / Commissaires

The Honourable / L'honorable J. Michael MacDonald,
Chair / Président

Leanne J. Fitch (Ret. Police Chief, M.O.M)

Dr. Kim Stanton

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Mass Casualty Commission Office
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Truro, Nova Scotia
B2N 2K3

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II **Appearances / Comparutions**

Krista Smith	Research and Policy (Facilitator)
Megan Harris	Engagement Coordinator (Co-facilitator)
Hannah Langille	Communications Advisor (Tech support)
John Paul	Executive Director, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs

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--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 2:30 p.m.

MS. KRISTA SMITH: Oh, there it is, and a transcript will be made from that. And this is really just helpful for us and for the Commissioners to have your perspective, as we're -- as they're formulating recommendations.

Yeah, so today's theme is on community safety in rural communities. I'm just going to pull up the questions.

So it'll be interesting to see how this conversation is similar and/or different to the conversation we had on Friday. I imagine there's some similarities.

Two, I'd be very interested as you're formulating your responses if you think about --give some thought to the experience of people, both on and off reserve, and whether the answer changes a little bit in those two contexts. That would really help us, too.

So the first question is, what does community safety look like in rural communities?

MR. JOHN PAUL: Well, I think in the rural communities, it's usually if you're part of that rural community and know the people that are next to you, is usually a big factor in what you believe to be safe. In an Indigenous community, you usually know everybody. That's the big difference.

And in the broader community, you would actually have to go see them when you actually arrive in a rural area, because houses are usually, like, quite spread apart. So you know, it's usually up to the individuals to reach out to the other people that are nearby, unless it's close, just to go see you there, really, in a lot of cases, because many people don't.

And it depends on the type of rural community. If it's a place where people live year-round or live there seasonally is another big factor, because if they're there year-round, you have to know the realities of living in some place in rural Nova Scotia. Nobody can actually help you if you're stuck, and you may not have any power

1 or any -- there's different realities, depending on where you're at and depending on the
2 type of people that are living there, whether they're seasonal people or people that live
3 year-round. And you don't really know unless you go talk to them.

4 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** And so do you -- do people within
5 Indigenous communities tend to do that, to actually ---

6 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Yes. They do it ---

7 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** --- go around to ---

8 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** --- automatically. They usually know you're the
9 relatives of somebody or whatever, so they usually do know from generations before.
10 And I find, like, in rural Nova Scotia, you may not know your neighbour that lives next to
11 you because maybe the newer people are from -- not from around there, usually, right?

12 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah. And so it's not much the -- as much
13 the case in Indigenous communities where you have new people?

14 I'm just thinking, my mother-in-law lives in Lake Ainslie in Cape
15 Breton, and yeah, it's just ---

16 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Everybody knows everybody there.

17 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** People do, and people -- but people are
18 moving in from away as well, and you know, my mother-in-law always makes it her
19 business to know who's new and to welcome them into the community.

20 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** And you don't have that as much in an
21 Indigenous community because the people have lived there most of their lives already
22 or moved away and came back or -- it's not as transient as the outside world, per se, in
23 terms of people could -- in a rural ...[indiscernible] ... officer, you know, people could
24 change every year. And I'm sure in the last year or two a lot of people have decided to
25 move to Nova Scotia, right, that are from away.

26 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah. And are there drawbacks to everyone
27 knowing everyone in a rural setting? Does it -- can it -- are there situations where it can
28 actually be an obstacle to community safety?

1 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** No, because you'd know everybody. You'd
2 know the good, the bad, the ugly, basically, if you know everybody, in that case, when in
3 another circumstance, you wouldn't, basically, because you'd only know -- you would
4 only know the surface of the person, basically, on what they tell you and what they want
5 you to know, and that's all you would know. You'd have no way of verifying somebody
6 was not telling you the truth, right?

7 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** But there's a deeper knowledge of people?

8 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Yeah.

9 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah, okay. And our next question is what
10 resources or strategies will help rural communities be safe, welcoming, and inclusive
11 places for everyone?

12 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, they've got to figure out a way to
13 interconnect. Like, that's one of the things I see, is they've got to figure out a way,
14 because in the long history in the past, people had to connect to help each other
15 because of circumstances. And now, because of the way things are more modern, you
16 don't necessarily see the need to connect as much. And there needs to be some way
17 to mobilize those small communities of people to just be more knowledgeable of each
18 other and figure out more ways to connect, because even in the modern context, you
19 know, other ways to connect are through Facebook and all these other things. And you
20 know, you just have to modernize the ways to connect, because many of those small
21 rural communities usually had a firehall, usually needed volunteer firemen or something
22 like that, and you know, it just required people to get together for different things, for a
23 variety of reasons over the course of a year versus now, not that much happens on that
24 basis. So it creates more isolation, family to family, basically.

25 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** So I know you do policy work. Are there
26 strategies that have been tried to increase opportunities for connection? I'm just
27 thinking too about what you said last time about how the majority -- not the majority, but
28 you're really getting to the point where a lot of the people who are living within

1 community are quite young, and so maybe it's like, different strategies are needed?

2 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** It depends on the age group. You've got to
3 figure out the way to connect and mobilize the largest population group. And if it's
4 young people, you got to figure out how to interact with them, to connect with them, to
5 get them involved in terms of what's going on in a community, and even in a rural
6 community because kids, kids grow up. They start off at daycare, then they go to
7 school, and they're in school for 12 years, and then they usually go on to university or
8 community college or whatever. But when they're there in a very young age, the more
9 opportunities to connect through activities or other things becomes really important to --
10 just to build stronger connections, basic and stronger knowledge about other people in
11 your area.

12 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Okay. So then the next question we've got
13 takes us in a little bit of a different direction. It says, what do police services need to do
14 or understand better to contribute to community safety in rural areas?

15 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** I figure they've got to understand more about
16 the nature of a rural community and the people that are living there. They've got to
17 understand it way better, because when it's the RCMP or whoever it is that comes in
18 there, the first people you meet are the criminals, and it's just by the nature of what they
19 do, it's -- that's who you meet, you know. You don't necessarily meet all the good
20 people in the community if -- unless you all go to church on a Sunday or something like
21 that.

22 But there's less mechanisms for them to connect with people in the
23 community, and it is important, because many people do not have interactions with the
24 police and those who do, don't really want to have any interactions with the police, you
25 know. So they've got to figure out better ways to just to get to know who the community
26 is, really. And how --- Especially in small places, like, you know, just it's really going
27 there and actually finding out who they are, taking an interest in who they are.

28 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** I was thinking about some of the things I've

1 learned about in doing this Commission work, some of the initiatives around First
2 Nations policing. Have you gotten to observe any of those processes unfold and sort of
3 any learnings coming from those?

4 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, the biggest thing is that -- in our
5 communities, the police have to end up being part of the community, and that means
6 participating in everything in the community, good, bad, ugly. They go to funerals, they
7 go to the powwows, they go -- they're visible everywhere, whether they have a uniform
8 on or not, and everybody knows who they are. And increasing that visibility in the
9 community is very important, and it helps people build trust with people, them as
10 people, not as police. And that does help in communities, understanding that they're
11 somebody that -- it just makes them more part of the community.

12 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** And I guess another aspect I've thought
13 about a little bit is in situations where a member of the Indigenous community is in the
14 role of authority, a police officer in the Indigenous community. Does that -- I can --
15 based on what you just said, I can see how that would help, how that's helpful, because
16 you know everyone, but there's also like, these deep inner connections that I think could
17 make it very difficult to police.

18 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, it's -- usually in a community, the leaders
19 of the community have a lot of insight about what's going on in the community, and I find
20 it's not listened to as much as it should be, because it'll help them decide and focus
21 where they should focus versus going after things that may not be important or relevant
22 in the community, basically. And that is really important, especially if you're an
23 Indigenous person. It's even better when it's somebody is not an Indigenous person
24 and participates in the community stuff. It changes so many things and I see it all the
25 time, because the people feel comfortable talking to them as a person, not as a police
26 officer. And that really helps. It helps communication both ways, really, to talk about
27 what's going on or what's happening in the community. And you know, it's really trying
28 to build a positive, open relationship, and you know, it's -- the importance of the

1 relationship is paramount in the community, because once you've lost trust or
2 understanding, all the communication is lost and nobody hears anybody any more. And
3 to me, that is really important to always have that so everybody knows and understands
4 what's going on, good and bad, right?

5 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Do you think that -- is it different in different
6 contexts? I mean, I can imagine those characteristics or attributes, they need to be
7 there regardless of whether you're rural, urban, on reserve, off reserve. Like, it's trust,
8 relationship, and effective communication, yeah, they seem like cornerstones.

9 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, you've got to have those things to do
10 other things, basically. It's like a foundational kind of thing to have other things going
11 on, basically, and you know, to build credibility, build more credible credibility, really.
12 And you know, many of our people have a long history of not a positive relationship with
13 the police or the justice system, so their first train of thought is usually not good.

14 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Right. Yeah. And then the other piece of
15 that that I'm thinking about is the conversations that are, you know, you hear
16 everywhere these days around de-tasking the police. And I wonder -- it's a difficult thing
17 when you think about having RCMP or some kind of outside police force come in and I
18 don't know, deal with criminal activity without a good understanding of the surrounding
19 context. And so that's a piece of it.

20 And then I guess I'm thinking about de-tasking within that
21 conversation, you know, because that's almost like putting them in that box of the
22 criminal, like, they just come in and do the criminal, and maybe other folks take care of -
23 - you know?

24 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, it's -- policing is its own way of doing
25 things. That's how I would describe it. And it isn't an Indigenous way of doing things,
26 for one. It's not.

27 And the distinction is that unless it's built into the policing equation
28 with communities, I think only then will communities give it more legitimacy, because

1 you're putting an Indigenous mindset into the way policing is done.

2 And you've got to understand, like, we didn't have police in our
3 communities for thousands of years. We had very specific ways to deal with people and
4 to deal with issues in the community, and there was traditional ways of dealing with
5 those issues to either punish or address situations in communities. And that was
6 usually dealt with through the traditional leaders of the communities, basically, in a lot of
7 cases, and left to them. It wasn't somebody specifically hired to do anything, it was just
8 ordinary people in the community that would deal with these things, if it was dealing with
9 young kids or whoever, they would figure out how to deal with that through their own
10 cultural practices or lens and deal with it that way versus the other way, basically.

11 And I always wonder, you know, in the time that we've had policing
12 in our communities, you know, it's always been an outside force, it's always been
13 somebody outside, and that process is the way the system is set up.

14 But putting more of an Indigenous lens of how you would deal with
15 that to have those things of justice, equality, fairness dealt with in the community or
16 within people in your community, I think would make it a better place because I always
17 believe a lot of these things were dealt with through whatever traditional processes that
18 they had envisioned at the time, and they still had bad people or good people doing
19 things they shouldn't be doing, but they'd figure out a way to confront them and deal
20 with them, basically, and come up with a solution to deal with them, basically, and -- you
21 know, which is totally different today, because we live in a modern world now, and I
22 think that it's really trying to -- and I know we're having a discussion today trying to
23 figure out a better way to do policing in communities in a manner that contributes to our
24 Indigenous vision of what it means and what would be the expected outcomes out of
25 that, what would demonstrate the tangible results or success from that, basically, in our
26 mind, that made the most sense.

27 And you know, I think that that's something that could help because
28 I've always believed building resources locally in the community is always an important

1 way to not be reliant on people outside or -- it's a strange thing, but you build this
2 reliance on everything outside all the time, and if you really want to live by our so-called
3 traditional values, build it into whatever it is you're doing.

4 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** I'm just -- I keep thinking -- I can't speak to
5 this eloquently, but one of our -- one of the advisors to the Commission is Jane
6 McMillan, who's at StFX, and she did this study called "Policing in Mi'kma'ki". And she
7 talked about -- one of the things she talks about in that report and in some other work
8 she's done are -- are Indigenous police, you know, on -- in communities, on reserve,
9 and how a couple of things happened. One was that demand was so high because
10 everyone -- the trust was there, there wasn't the fear of outside police forces, so they
11 felt safe to call. But then the companion to that was just how terribly under resourced
12 they were. Like, they didn't have the resources to meet that kind of demand.

13 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, it's -- I'll give you an example of
14 something, and then you'll see what I mean.

15 It's like, when we talk about fire and fire prevention, well, in
16 communities, we talk about our fire departments as foundation savers because they
17 only show up in time to save the foundation, which there's nothing left.

18 In policing, because you've got over the hurdle of trust, it requires
19 more resources and more manpower to deal with the range of issues that you end up
20 dealing with, and it's usually double of what the norm would be in a community that
21 you're just dealing with the narrow scope of justice issues or -- and that's why, in the
22 cases where communities do have policing, they're usually overwhelmed by their own
23 good work. They become overwhelmed, basically, right? It's just -- you get burnout of
24 people because they're overwhelmed doing good work. It's really a strange
25 phenomenon, but it creates so many diversions away from crime and other things that
26 have tangible benefits to the community, basically. And they're never really in the
27 measuring stick.

28 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** That's -- yeah, right. There's -- that's a topic

1 I would like to talk to you about all day.

2 I'm going to switch gears a little bit. Another one of our questions is
3 how can we consider the needs of vulnerable or marginalized individuals in rural
4 communities, and how can we improve on their community safety?

5 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, I think you just have to focus an extra time
6 and effort with them, and do the necessary outreach with those people or those groups
7 that you would not normally go to talk to in the community, basically.

8 And you know, whether it's women or whoever you believe that are
9 those left outside the equation, whether disabled people or seniors or whoever it is, take
10 the time to focus first on them to hear what -- hear their perspectives before you deal
11 with everybody else, because it could give you some very good insight as to what their
12 tangible needs are, and then hearing it directly from people makes a hell of a difference
13 than hearing it secondary, second hand or third hand of what their specific needs are.

14 And because, you know, it -- because of how they're always
15 marginalized, just work backwards from that, work the other way, basically, when you're
16 doing those things in those communities, and you know, make a real effort to ensure
17 that their needs are included in what it is you're aspiring to do, basically.

18 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** I was thinking about what you said on Friday
19 about having, I don't know, subject matter experts, I guess, embedded in community,
20 and it's really -- yeah, getting ---

21 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** It's a way to -- you're figuring out more
22 innovative strategies to connect with people, basically. And you're trying to get honest
23 opinions and feedback from people. So the more innovative you are in doing that,
24 better your plan or your strategy will come about.

25 And you know, it's -- I know that it's really trying to ensure,
26 basically, that you have the best intelligence of what's going on and you know, no
27 matter what, and the best intelligence that somebody has in doing anything always
28 produces a better outcome or a better result.

1 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** And yeah, the first-hand intelligence rather
2 than second-hand.

3 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, I'll give you an example of that, and
4 maybe this will help.

5 A long time ago -- this is a long time ago -- we converted from
6 policing the City of Sydney Policing. I was the Band Manager in Membertou. We
7 converted from policing at the -- from Cape Breton Regional Police to the RCMP.

8 And we met with the RCMP and we told the RCMP when they were
9 -- they told us the date they were going to take over and all this sort of stuff. And we
10 specifically told them, "Do not go to this event. Stay away. Even if you're called, just
11 ignore them and leave them alone."

12 They disregarded that advice totally and went to an event, tried to
13 arrest somebody, the groom of the wedding party. They arrested the groom and the
14 bride too I think, put them in the lockup, which was across the street, and the party, the
15 partygoers, the wedding goers, while they were busy doing that, basically ignited the
16 RCMP car at the event.

17 So they activated all the emergency stuff. The emergency team
18 was called. Everybody was mobilized and it became a big, big, big, big event, lots of
19 cops, like, lots of -- that was the first day the RCMP were in our community.

20 And I said -- and I met -- we met with them after, and I said, "Guys,
21 what did I just tell you? I told you don't bother them. Just leave them alone. They'll be
22 fine. Leave them alone. Don't go over there. Just leave them alone."

23 And it was only -- it was probably about 70 people, 70, 80 people,
24 and of course, the guy is new, comes in, comes roaring in and that was the outcome.
25 And it really impacted the relationship from that point on, just by one incident. And that
26 relationship was never repaired as a result.

27 So I always wonder, I said, if something went -- was done different,
28 would it have played out differently? Like, I don't know. I just know what happened and

1 you know, and it's because I know our community has very significant sensitivities about
2 the police and who polices us.

3 And they have very longstanding memories of our relationship with
4 the police, and you know, people don't forget. That's one thing about our communities.
5 They don't forget things that happen with police or other things. And you know, they
6 have long memories of -- it's easier to remember something that's bad than something
7 good, and it's difficult when you're trying to build a new relationship, right?

8 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah, you have all that history to get over.

9 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Years, yeah. I even reminded them about the
10 Royal Commission that occurred then. That was just -- I said, "Do you guys know this
11 guy by the name of Donald Marshall Junior from our community and the Royal
12 Commission?", I said.

13 So you know, but that -- you know, you really need a way to build a
14 relationship of trust with the government, which are the Chief and Council, and with the
15 community so that you have a solid foundation to build, strengthen, and sustain a
16 relationship that's workable, basically, and that's all. It's so important to have that in a
17 community, especially when you're dealing with this -- well, just dealing with the
18 community generally or specifically.

19 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** And I remember you saying last time that
20 your role is to advise Chiefs about how to, you know, give them the policy perspective
21 on things.

22 What, if any, approaches have there been in recent years to
23 improve relations between Indigenous communities and policing agencies, or is there --
24 does it seem like it's getting better, or are there obvious ways that it could get better?

25 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** People are working on it and trying to make it
26 better, and it's going to take time, and it needs time and it needs focused effort. And
27 people forget about the focused effort. And unless you have that and -- like, I'll give you
28 an example. I think they usually, the way the RCMP work, usually talks to the Chief and

1 Council every couple of months. I know now many of the communities are
2 implementing it, doing it way more regularly, talking to the police about what's going on,
3 like, even getting it into a system, meeting and talking about what's going on almost on
4 a regular basis to ensure they're on the same wavelength about what's going on in the
5 community.

6 And the leadership and staff are involved who are people providing
7 services in the community, so they know what's going on, and they do it with the
8 leadership and with people knowledgeable about what's going on in the community, and
9 that dialogue and discussion happening on a reoccurring focused basis helps ensure
10 what's actually going on in the community or what's being done by the police in the
11 community.

12 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** And take us back to our sort of the questions
13 that we circulated, I think this ties in. The question is are you involved in or aware of
14 any initiatives designed to improve community safety since the mass casualty?

15 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, I know -- well, the mindset around safety
16 and community safety has evolved, and it's gotten more on the radar of people. Like,
17 one of the interesting initiatives that our communities develop for our communities is
18 called the Mi'kmaq Alert System where we have our own alert system for Mi'kmaq
19 people. Like, I can sign up to it as a Mi'kmaq person and they'll send me notices about
20 stuff going on in communities or a variety of communities, a variety of different things.

21 And it's something that they've -- people have developed and are
22 now using, and they're now using it as a tool to create better awareness of things going
23 on across communities. And they're using it for missing persons or weather stuff, like,
24 with the hurricane or -- you know, they use it all through COVID for important notices,
25 and so on.

26 But they've noticed that younger kids are more on their phones and
27 that stuff today, so you want to get them involved with what's going on, I mean, using
28 this Mi'kmaq Alert System to do that. And it's a simple application, a technology that

1 has such wide-reaching implications.

2 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah, we had Jennifer Jesty on our
3 Roundtables about emergency communications and it was just such an inspiring story.

4 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Well, like, I'll give you an example. It's like, if
5 you have one like that between all our -- because it doesn't exist in all the communities.
6 They're trying to make it grow, but imagine if you had one like that that hit all 633
7 Indigenous communities in the country. What would be the effect of that, helping
8 identify or find somebody who was missing, right? To me, it demonstrates the potential
9 of things like Facebook or these other things that are mass communication, a good
10 idea, to be a good idea to get people to be aware or take action on something.

11 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** And create this bigger ---

12 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Create a synergy about awareness, really, and
13 it's -- I really believe that's something that is really important.

14 And we just went through a tragic incident in our own community
15 about a guy committing suicide and you know, the whole community was mobilized,
16 other communities were mobilized.

17 But it's really trying to find ways to grasp people's interest in
18 something enough to do something about it, basically. And I thought that the innovative
19 idea of the alert is something that could be an ingenious way to do that and to use
20 technology for its better intended use, basically. "They have all kinds of other uses," I
21 say. "Why don't we make a good use of technology," I say, right?

22 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Absolutely. So John, before we part
23 company here, I just want to, I think, check in around, I guess specifically, thinking
24 about community safety in rural areas. Are there things that the Commissioners should
25 be thinking about as they make recommendations for how to make our rural
26 communities safer?

27 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** I think about a way to define it, because I think
28 people got to figure out or people got to get in in their head what does this actually look

1 like? What will it look like? What does it mean for me as a citizen, right?

2 And if they can get clarity on that, and then maybe it'll mobilize by
3 community by community, because the diversity of the communities across Nova Scotia
4 are quite different, say, in Yarmouth, Preston, We'koqma'q/Waycobah, or whatever. If
5 there's a way to define it by that rural area, whether it's, you know, Neil's Harbour or --
6 well, I wouldn't call Arichat or Isle Madame a mega city, but it's finding out from the far
7 reaches of where we're at today in terms of rural.

8 Rural is defined by population density, I think, in terms of what it is
9 or what it isn't, and if they can figure out a way to help define it better and figure out
10 ways -- like, what Danny says in terms of people connecting with each other, then I
11 think that people -- people believe home is safe. If you can believe your home is safe
12 and your neighbour's home is safe, then your community should be safe. It's trying to
13 connect the dots in a way that anybody, whether you're old or young or even a disabled
14 person or wherever you are can connect to that, and then if they get connected, what
15 can they do about it? And there's got to be something for -- there's got to be a way for
16 them to mobilize, to contribute to that. And if they could do that, that'll go a long way in
17 terms of dealing with that whole thing about where people are at, and you know, what
18 does it mean, you know?

19 I know it doesn't mean the same where I live in the city for sure.

20 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Yeah. Well, that's -- there's a lot to think
21 about in there. That's really helpful.

22 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Okay, yeah. [indiscernible, audio cuts off
23 briefly] contribute. That's all I wanted to do.

24 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Thank you so much. I'm glad we got to have
25 this conversation today.

26 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Okay then.

27 **MS. MEGAN HARRIS:** Thank you, John. I appreciate it very
28 much.

1 **MR. JOHN PAUL:** Thanks a lot. Bye-bye.

2 **MS. KRISTA SMITH:** Bye-bye.

3 **MS. MEGAN HARRIS:** Bye.

4

5 --- Session concludes

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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10 I, KAREN NOGANOSH, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate
11 transcription of the audio recording provided to the best of my skill and ability, and I so
12 swear.

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