



CLIENT PROFILE

Sometimes it is hard to be honest

Sometimes it is hard to be honest, to face up to what we have done. Sometimes we can do the wrong thing, but only see it from our point of view and think we are right. I was very mad and angry at the Local Commissioners when I received a notice to attend conference. I was told my partner and mother-in-law were asked to be there as well. I did not want to discuss private matters with these Local Commissioners. Some are family members, some are from traditionally opposing families, and then there are a few outsiders like the big Commissioner.

I was pretty sure I knew what they wanted to talk about. I told my partner and her mother to go in the morning and tell the Local Commissioners I was on a training course. My partner came home and said the Local Commissioners would wait until I had finished the course, that they would wait all day for me and the next day if needed. It made me even angrier to think that they thought their time was more important than mine. Grabbing the baby, we walked to the Commission building. Once we were inside I began telling them what I thought. Immediately they said to be quiet, sit down and listen, or go away and come back later when I was prepared to talk calmly. The yelling was not going to intimidate them. I decided to sit and listen.

The Local Commissioners asked my partner if I had hit her hard in the stomach while she was nursing the baby. She looked at me to answer the question, but they wanted her to answer instead. I was shamed when she said yes, and then she said I did it other times as well. Her mother came to our defence and said we had a good relationship and it did not happen often. The Local Commissioners said they knew what went on; they knew I lost

my temper and that I was a hothead. They looked me in the eye and said I didn't have the right to hit her. Then they told my partner she did not deserve to have it happen to her, no matter what I said.

There was some silence in the room whilst the words settled. They asked me what I liked about being a father, what I thought my job as a father was and what type of father I might be when my child is 10 years old. I had never thought about this. It was difficult. They then asked if I would want my child to be beaten like I hit my partner when she was grown up and in a relationship. I asked what I could do to make myself a better father and partner.

Since that day I have tried to make myself better. I attended the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Service (ATODs) program and still go when I need to. I went to the Wellbeing Centre to do some anger control programs and to understand why I get frustrated and angry. Most of all I have stopped drinking grog. This was and remains the hardest thing I have ever done. My friends and family don't understand, but my partner and child are much happier. We hardly fight at all because I am more in control and there are no more money troubles caused by the grog. My partner also stopped drinking grog. We go to the homelands, fishing and hunting instead of staying in town with the drinking. We have gone back to the Local Commissioners a few more times and although they have to address the issues, they always praise me and tell me I am a good father for giving up the drinking. We leave there with a bit more confidence each time, determined only to return to let the Local Commissioners know how well we are doing – no more issues or problems for our family. Sometimes it is hard to be honest and face up to what you are doing wrong, but it has paid off for my family.