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I’m just in my early thirties and I know I have a lot of good years ahead of me. I’ve been having trouble with my kidneys for some time now. In fact, I’ve been going to Montreal for dialysis treatments twice a week. That’s pretty rough because I have to hire a taxi from here to the village, and take the bus the rest of the way. Sometimes, on Saturday nights, the bus is crowded and there’s no place to sit. So I just stand in line like everyone else. But after three hours on that dialysis machine, and all of that treatment, I’m usually very drowsy. I wonder how many people think I’m just another drunk Indian? People just don’t take the time to learn about each other. That’s the biggest reason why I don’t like Montreal.

It’s bad enough going there twice a week, and having to deal in French. But now, I’m faced with the possibility of having to stay there for a long time. The doctors have given me an ultimatum. I’ve got to have a kidney transplant. One good thing about that, however, is that at least I’ll be able afterwards to get back out to work. I’ve been without a job these past four years. Before that, I worked for a treecutting company and I also operated pre-set machinery at an industrial factory. Now the doctors say I shouldn’t work.

That makes it tough. It takes a lot of the human being out of me, and a lot of my dignity. I’m living on a fixed income and there’s not much

of that. Now I’m waiting until we can get a donor and the doctors can do the transplant. In the meantime. I don’t do much of anything. Some people think I drink too much. I don’t know. I spend a lot of time just sitting on the corner in the village.

It beats sitting in Montreal. Here, I’m surrounded by friends, relatives and good people. A lot of people look out for me here. Even though Montreal is closer to the hospital, it’s very expensive and very unfriendly. There’s corruption there, and I don’t trust people with corruption in the city. You know, in the winter time, I have to move to Montreal because it’s just about impossible to make my appointments for kidney dialysis from the village. I can’t stand it for very long in the city, so I come back here for the week-end, every chance I get. There was a time when that was just wonderful. I’d come back and stay with my grandparents, and we would have a great time travelling back and forth on the bus, but it was worth it.

I suppose the Friendship Centre in Montreal is okay, but it’s all French. And me, I do not speak much French. Hello, goodbye, a few little words here and there. They tried brainwashing me, but it didn’t work. I guess I’m lost in this province, because I don’t speak French and I’ve got my disability. But I’m not lost here.

I guess this reserve is very important for all of the Indians here, but I can see some problems. Our young people seem to be leaving to try out the big city. I know a lot of them want to come back when they find out that it was only a dream, but what have they got to come back to? Look at the housing around here. What we really need is apartment kinds of housing. Some kind of a small complex so that families are not so crowded. I actually think that a lot of people leave the reserve because it’s too crowded, and then they end up getting in trouble with the law because they cannot handle the big city.

Actually, things would be a lot better for everybody if services that everybody takes for granted were closer to the reserve. Like myself, I spend a lot of money on transportation, taxis and busses. Sometimes, the welfare people pay for it, but a lot of times I do, too. I would sure be better if you could get some of those services closer to home.

“I know in my head I’m an Indian, but it’s not on a piece of paper. My mother was an Indian, but I was an illegitimate child.”