

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

LOCATION/ENDROIT: Watson Lake,
 Yukon

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"for the record..."

STENOTRAN

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Aboriginal Peoples

1 Watson Lake, Yukon

2 --- Upon commencing May 28, 1992 at 9:10 a.m.

3

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Good
5 morning, ladies and gentlemen. We will start our
6 proceedings this morning with a prayer which is brought
7 to us by the Ross River Dene Drummers.

8

9 (Opening prayer in native language.)

10

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Our
12 thanks to the Ross River Dene Drummers for leading us in
13 prayer and giving us that spirited welcome to Watson Lake.

14 This is the Royal Commission on
15 Aboriginal Peoples. We have two commissioners here today.

16 My name is Allan Blakeney. My fellow commissioner is
17 Viola Robinson. I will tell you a bit more about the
18 commission in a moment or two, but I would like to make
19 a few announcements and introduce one or two other people.

20 The person in your community who helped
21 us organize these hearings for today is Georgina Stone.

22 I think she is known to you.

23 You will see some cameras about. These

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1 proceedings are being filmed by the National Film Board,
2 which is going to make a documentary of the activities
3 of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. We, like
4 other Royal Commissions, will produce a report and,
5 doubtless, numerous sub-reports, and it will make an
6 interesting mound of paper, not much of which will be read
7 by many people. Royal Commission reports, when they are
8 turned out, the summaries may be read, but the detail is
9 only for the experts.

10 However, we felt that we could tell the
11 story of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples more
12 effectively in a documentary film, which we can dub over,
13 if I may say so, with other languages. We could dub it
14 over in various aboriginal languages. This story could
15 be told much more effectively in a documentary film, with
16 a soundtrack in the appropriate language, than we could
17 with a huge report. The National Film Board is world
18 famous for making documentaries, and we felt that the
19 National Film Board was the best group we could get to
20 do that.

21 I would like to say a bit about the Royal
22 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. There is a general
23 belief in Canada, I believe, that relations between

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1 aboriginal and non-aboriginal people are not as good as
2 they should be and that there ought to be changes in the
3 manner in which these two cultures interrelate.

4 The federal government decided to
5 appoint a Royal Commission. The reasons for deciding that
6 can be speculated upon, but the fact that they decided
7 to do that is clear; they wanted it to be as clearly
8 non-partisan, or at least not nominees of the federal
9 government, in a political sense, as they could. They,
10 therefore, got former Chief Justice Brian Dickson, of the
11 Supreme Court of Canada, to draw up the terms of reference
12 and suggest people who might be on the commission, on the
13 grounds that Chief Justice Dickson was regarded by
14 Canadians, universally, as a man who was not politically
15 oriented and who was sympathetic to the aboriginal causes,
16 but aware of the fact that there are other people living
17 in Canada.

18 Based upon that, Chief Justice Dickson
19 drew up the terms of reference and suggested some names,
20 all of which were accepted by the Prime Minister. So,
21 we have a Royal Commission.

22 Some may say, "Another Royal Commission.
23 What can we expect from it?" That is a fair question.

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1 We can only wait to see whether or not positive results
2 are achieved.

3 This Royal Commission is, in some
4 respects, different. There are seven members, four of
5 whom are aboriginal. That makes it significantly
6 different than past Royal Commissions. There are two
7 chairpersons; co-chairs. One is Georges Erasmus, who has
8 just finished being National Chief of the Assembly of First
9 Nations. He will be known to some of you people as a Dene
10 from the Northwest Territories. The other is Rene
11 Dussault, who is a judge of the Quebec Court of Appeal.

12 Among the other five members is Viola Robinson, who is
13 with me here. She is a Micmac from Nova Scotia. She has
14 just retired as President of the Native Council of Canada,
15 which is an organization that represents many off-reserve
16 people of aboriginal origin, particularly in eastern
17 Canada, but elsewhere as well.

18 Another member is Bertha Wilson.
19 Bertha is a woman from Ontario, who was born in Scotland.
20 She is a distinguished lawyer, who was the first woman
21 to be a judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, which is
22 our highest court. In her judgments she showed that she
23 was sympathetic to aboriginal causes.

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1 Another member is Paul Chartrand. Paul
2 Chartrand is a Métis from Manitoba. He is a lawyer. He
3 is a graduate of an Australian law school and the University
4 of Saskatchewan, with a Master's Degree. He teaches at
5 the University of Manitoba, where he has been head of the
6 Department of Native Studies.

7 Another member is Mary Sillett(ph).
8 Mary is an Innuk(ph) woman, which is one of the Inuit
9 people, from northern Labrador. She has been President
10 of the Inuit Women's Association, as well as the
11 Vice-President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, which
12 is the main Inuit organization.

13 I am Allan Blakeney. I have been a
14 politician. I was Premier of Saskatchewan for eleven
15 years, and I have been in public life for a good deal longer
16 than that.

17 Those are the seven people; four
18 aboriginal, three non-aboriginal; four men and three
19 women.

20 We were asked to undertake an impossible
21 task. Chief Justice Dickson, in effect, said that he
22 didn't know what needed to be looked into, but he made
23 a list of all the possible things, put them all into the

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1 mandate, and we would have to choose.

2 We were asked to look into the history
3 of relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people
4 in Canada. We were asked to consider aboriginal
5 self-government, what it means, and how it could be
6 implemented. We were asked to look at a land base. We
7 were asked to look at issues arising from treaties. We
8 were asked to look at the Constitution of Canada, as it
9 relates to aboriginal people. We have already issued one
10 report on that, dealing with the inherent right to
11 self-government, which was accepted by the Beaudoin-Dobbie
12 committee of the federal Parliament, which reported at
13 the end of February, whose report is now being considered,
14 as we speak, at a conference in Toronto. We were asked
15 to look at the position of Métis people, and the special
16 problems of aboriginal people who live in the North. We
17 were asked to consider the Indian Act, how it has worked
18 and, if it should be repealed, should it be replaced by
19 anything and, if so, what? We were asked to look, in more
20 general terms, at social issues, such as social services
21 and health; economic issues; cultural issues; education
22 issues; justice issues. Finally, we were asked to look
23 at the role in aboriginal society of the elders, aboriginal

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1 women, and aboriginal youth.

2 By any standard, that is a tall order.

3 We will not get all of it done. We have started by
4 staffing up. We have a substantial staff now. More than
5 half of that staff are aboriginal people. This is not
6 simply to provide jobs for the folks, it is to be sure
7 that the information which we get comes to us, in part,
8 through aboriginal eyes.

9 So much of the material which has been
10 written has been written by non-aboriginal people and,
11 with all the good will in the world, it will come through
12 the focus of non-aboriginal eyes. We now want to get some
13 material coming, not with the biases and prejudices of
14 non-aboriginal people, but with the biases and prejudices
15 of aboriginal people. We all have them. We should
16 acknowledge that and try to see whether we can get both
17 points of view.

18 That is what we are about. We started
19 last winter by visiting the provincial capitals and talking
20 with the provincial governments, to enlist their support,
21 and the main aboriginal organizations, to see whether we
22 could get on a wavelength with them, getting communications
23 open. We particularly wanted to find out what reports

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1 and material they had in their files. We have a team from
2 Carleton University going through all of the previous
3 reports to see what recommendations have been made and
4 what has happened to them, so we don't spend our time
5 re-inventing the wheel, but trying to go forward from
6 there.

7 We are now having a series of public
8 hearings. We started three or four weeks ago, in Winnipeg,
9 with the full commission. We have now split up into small
10 teams, which are visiting many, many communities. We hope
11 to visit as many as a hundred communities over our period
12 of hearings.

13 We are asking major organizations to
14 prepare briefs and studies for us. With that in mind,
15 we are prepared to give to provincial and territorial
16 aboriginal organizations -- and non-aboriginals too, if
17 they need the money, as well as regional organizations,
18 such as tribal councils involving several bands -- some
19 money. It is "intervenor funding", as we call it. The
20 rules for that intervenor participation program, as we
21 call it, are set out in a booklet which is available to
22 you.

23 We want to hear, as best we can, from

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1 ordinary people and extraordinary people -- and there are
2 many of both -- what the problems are and what you think
3 should be done about them. We are here to listen. We
4 have no preconceived ideas at all, at this stage. We would
5 ask you to tell us not only what the problems are, but,
6 even in a tentative way, what you think should be done
7 about them and who should be doing it.

8 With that, we are delighted to be in
9 Watson Lake today. We were in Teslin yesterday, and at
10 Fort Simpson the day before that. I have been at Inuvik,
11 Fort McPherson, and I have been up in northern Manitoba
12 in the last two or three weeks. My colleague, who I will
13 ask to say something in a moment, has been around in eastern
14 Canada and on the West Coast. We happen to be meeting
15 here today in Watson Lake.

16 With that, I will ask Viola to add a word,
17 and then we will move along.

18 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank
19 you. There is not much left for me to say, except to say
20 that I am glad to be here, as part of our public
21 participation exercise. We are going to try to reach as
22 many communities as we can, over the next two or three
23 years. We think this is going to go on, probably, for

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1 another two years, at least, and possibly we will not have
2 a report until around the latter part of 1994.

3 As it was mentioned, we have already
4 produced one commentary. We do have the capacity to issue
5 interim reports, or to deal with issues which need
6 immediate attention. Some of the issues do not really
7 need to wait until the report comes out. Those kinds of
8 things, I think, the commission is prepared to look at
9 and to deal with. There are a lot of things which are
10 being brought up, particularly in the social area, where
11 there has probably been enough study and work done in the
12 past and all we need to do is to get something done about
13 it.

14 With that in mind, I don't think there
15 is much more I can say. Three groups are travelling
16 simultaneously; crisscrossing the country. The other
17 thing I would like to mention is that the first round will
18 conclude with a round- table conference in Edmonton,
19 because we have to study the urban situation. We have
20 a lot of aboriginal people in the urban communities, in
21 the large cities of Canada, who are not being represented.
22 They are suffering a lot of injustice in the cities and
23 there is really nowhere for them to turn. We have been

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1 asked to look into that. There is no research and there
2 hasn't been much work done in that area, so we will deal
3 with those situations, as well. We will be holding round
4 tables in the cities with aboriginal groups, as well as
5 service delivery groups, to try to get them together to
6 work out their differences.

7 We will wind up this first round of
8 hearings in Edmonton with a round table at the end of June.

9 By the end of June we will have visited about thirty
10 communities. We have a huge staff working. Everything
11 which we hear is being transcribed immediately and, in
12 some areas, we have translation. All of this is going
13 to the commission right away so, hopefully, by the end
14 of June all the information that we have heard will be
15 synthesized in some manner and, possibly, we will produce
16 some kind of a paper over the summer months. That paper
17 will go back to the communities, back to the people we
18 have visited, as well as others, for their reaction and
19 response.

20 That means that the second round of
21 hearings may be more focused. This time around the agenda
22 is wide open. Anybody can talk about anything they want
23 to talk about. We are not focusing our agenda at all.

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1 Everything is very broad and general. You can talk about
2 anything, even if it's something which is not on our
3 mandate. I don't know how we could have possibly left
4 anything out, but some things are probable.

5 With that, I think we should begin.
6 Thank you.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thanks,
8 Viola. I would invite Mr. George Miller, representing
9 the Kaska Tribal Council, to come forward, as well as Mayor
10 Barry Ravenhill, to give us some opening remarks; welcoming
11 remarks. We are going to hear from each of them more
12 extensively in a substantive way. Mr. Miller.

13 **GEORGE MILLER:** Good morning, ladies
14 and gentlemen. My name is George Miller and I am a
15 representative of the Kaska Tribal Council.

16 Today I have the privilege of welcoming
17 members of the Royal Commission to the homeland of the
18 Kaska Nation. At the outset, I want to thank the
19 commission for coming here to meet with us. The Kaska
20 are interested and concerned about the evolution of our
21 relationship with non-native Canadians and how our rights
22 have been affected by that relationship. For that reason,
23 we appreciate this opportunity to express our views on

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1 these matters.

2 Before turning the floor over to others,
3 it would be useful if I were to briefly describe the Kaska
4 Nation and our homeland to members of the commission.

5 The Kaska Nation is, of course, one of
6 the aboriginal nations of Canada. Our homeland stretches
7 from the Fort Ware(ph) area of B.C., some 300 miles south
8 of here, through northeastern B.C., through the
9 southeastern Yukon and into the Northwest Territories.
10 Altogether, our homeland comprises some 50,000 to 60,000
11 square miles.

12 The members of the Kaska Nation live in
13 communities located in a number of areas in our homeland:
14 Ross River, the Watson and Lake Liard area, Lower Post,
15 Good Hope Lake, Muncho Lake(ph), Fort Ware(ph) and
16 Firesay(ph).

17 The first contact with non-native
18 Canadians was about 80 years ago. Like many other First
19 Nations in northern Canada, the Kaska Nation has never
20 entered into any treaties with Canada regarding our
21 aboriginal rights to our homeland. The Kaska Nation is
22 also like any other First Nation, in that we have suffered
23 greatly as a result of the influx of non-native Canadians

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1 to our homeland. Today, however, we have started to take
2 control over our own affairs and, although progress is
3 slow, we are confident of a brighter future.

4 Having said that, I would like to
5 conclude my opening remarks by saying that we hope the
6 commission enjoys its brief visit to our homeland and finds
7 it interesting and informative. Thank you very much.

8 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
9 very much, Mr. Miller. As I indicated, we will be talking
10 more extensively to the chief, and others, who are
11 representing the Kaska Tribal Council a little later.

12 Your Worship.

13 **MAYOR BARRY RAVENHILL:** Thank you. I
14 would like to welcome you back to the Yukon and,
15 specifically, to Watson Lake, on behalf of the Watson Lake
16 Town Council. I believe the task which you have undertaken
17 is very important to the aboriginal people of Canada, as
18 well as the non-aboriginal people.

19 Hopefully, your report will point to
20 some ways in which people can satisfy their aspirations
21 and receive the justice which they seek. I would like
22 to thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** We will

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1 be talking with you a little later about the specific
2 concerns of your council and your town. Thanks very much.

3 The first presentation is from the Kaska
4 Tribal Council, Tribal Chief Hammond Dick, and anyone else
5 who he wishes to have with him.

6 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** Thank you,
7 commissioners. Welcome to the Kaska homeland and to the
8 community of Watson Lake. My presentation will probably
9 take about half an hour, or so. I have a prepared draft,
10 which I will be reading. Throughout my presentation I
11 may elaborate on some points. For the purpose of this
12 hearing, I think that everyone who needs to address their
13 concerns should be able to do that. I appreciate that
14 times have been slotted for the purpose of conducting the
15 hearing in an orderly manner.

16 Up until the last few days, I tried to
17 encourage as many people as possible to take part in this
18 hearing. We know the importance of this to Canadian
19 society, as well as to the aboriginal peoples. I have
20 tried to have some elders attend. As you saw this morning,
21 the opening ceremony was performed by a group of young
22 people from Ross River. They are of Kaska descent. Ross
23 River is but one of the Kaska communities which make up

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1 the Kaska Nation.

2 To begin my presentation, like I have
3 said, I have a written draft. I have not had time to have
4 it typed, but I will do that and submit it to the commission,
5 once it is completed. From what I understand, this is
6 being transcribed anyway, so, either way, you will get
7 my presentation.

8 With that, I will begin my presentation
9 to the commission. I would like to welcome the
10 commissioners to Watson Lake, Yukon, on behalf of the Kaska
11 people and their communities, in both the Yukon and
12 northern B.C. It has been over a year since the inception
13 of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The Right
14 Honourable Brian Dickson was given a mandate to consult
15 widely with native and non-native people on issues
16 important to their relationship with governments and
17 aboriginal peoples. This process is seen as a possible
18 vehicle which can improve the relationship among
19 aboriginal peoples, governments, industry and third
20 parties.

21 It is with some optimism, and much more
22 than scepticism, that we make our presentation here today.
23 You have come to a mixed northern community of

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1 approximately 1,400 people. Here, too, the demographic
2 of aboriginal people to non-aboriginal, or non-native,
3 is that we form a minority here. There are as many as
4 seven known Kaska groups which make up the Kaska Nation,
5 in both the Yukon and northern B.C.

6 When we deal with governments and
7 industries we find that the first hurdle we have to overcome
8 is that of jurisdiction. That usually leads to delays
9 of any plans, proposals, or what have you, which we want
10 to submit or propose. I will give you an example.

11 Government policies for negotiating
12 claims in a territory, or a province, are restricted to
13 their respective jurisdictions. On the other hand,
14 Ottawa, from which these policies are formed, is permitted
15 to develop its own jurisdictions to suit its purposes.
16 For example, with respect to the regional districts, here
17 in the Yukon, the programs are carried out in the Yukon
18 region, as one of many regions across the country, for
19 the purpose of carrying out programs and services to Indian
20 people. These two jurisdictions need not be so, if only
21 the governments had the political will to have taken the
22 time to consult with the people who were the most affected.

23

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1 This relates to the issue of the
2 establishment of boundaries. We find that the boundaries
3 directly relate to the impact of providing service to our
4 people. There is one issue which the tribal council and
5 the Kaska Nation have been working toward to try to overcome
6 that issue. On the one hand, the government has said,
7 for the purpose of carrying out their Indian affairs
8 programs in northern B.C., they have included the
9 communities as far south as Muncho(ph) Lake. That
10 oversteps the provincial boundaries, in that instance.
11 When it comes to a land claims issue, that fence is
12 automatically there. As the Kaska Nation wants to
13 approach negotiations as a group, we find that we are not
14 permitted to do that, because of the boundary.

15 This is only the tip of the iceberg, so
16 to speak. There are other processes which have been
17 implemented with little or no consideration of the impact
18 which they may have had on either the communities or
19 aboriginal peoples.

20 This is 1992, going on to the year 2000.

21 If governments had taken the time to consult with
22 aboriginal peoples on community development, economic
23 development, social development, national development,

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1 or any other development, for that matter, this country
2 wouldn't be in the mess it is in today.

3 We find that Canada is one of the major
4 players in the developing countries and, still, we, the
5 aboriginal peoples, find that we live like those in third
6 world countries. Our people live in a deplorable state;
7 dependent on the hand-outs of governments. Our people
8 were one proud, independent people. We still are.

9 We have survived and we have come out
10 ahead, because we know that we use our inherent rights.
11 That you cannot take away from us. We know that is your
12 aim, in developing your policies for settling claims,
13 whether they be specific or comprehensive.

14 In the Yukon and in B.C. we fall into
15 the comprehensive claims bracket, or category, but the
16 definition of "comprehensive" is a farce.

17 Self-government does not form a part of the settlement
18 agreements. That will be dealt with as a separate issue.

19 The land claims process is an effort to
20 allow First Nations to gain back the control over their
21 lives, as their elders knew it before the emergence of
22 European people on this continent. Over the last century
23 the impact on the aboriginal people by governments,

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1 industries, and third parties, had a diverse affect on
2 the aboriginal population. Throughout, the aboriginal
3 people managed to survive and persevere in order to
4 maintain an identity that continues to exist to this day.

5
6 The land claims process in the Yukon will
7 continue for some time to come. For the Kaska people,
8 the process has been a learning experience, to say the
9 least. We have been advised by our members, especially
10 by our elders, not to accept anything short of what they
11 consider a sell-out by agreeing to limit their rights,
12 or fence them in, or to have them confined to areas which
13 restrict their ability to use the land and its resources
14 in a manner that is consistent with their knowledge.

15 The Kaskas can only agree to an offer
16 that provides exclusive control over lands selected for
17 their use by their people. We can accept an offer where
18 we play a significant role in the management of our
19 renewable and non-renewable resources on our traditional
20 lands.

21 The other processes, such as the
22 negotiation of the Canadian Constitution, are seen as an
23 avenue to show the world how the aboriginal peoples have

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1 been treated. Through the repatriation of the Canadian
2 Constitution, in 1982, aboriginal rights were recognized
3 and affirmed. The history of that clause is one of
4 paramount value to the Canadian Constitution.
5 Governments cannot pass laws which override the
6 Constitution. But, in this day and age, they do.

7 The development of the Charter began in
8 approximately 1759, when the French and the English were
9 at odds with one another in the East. In 1763 England
10 recognized aboriginal rights and sovereignty in order to
11 appease and promise the aboriginals for assisting in
12 defeating the French.

13 Canada began making treaties with
14 aboriginal groups across Canada where settlements were
15 beginning to spring up. There were some parts of the
16 country which were omitted, for example, British Columbia,
17 the Yukon, and some parts of the Northwest Territories.

18 The governments then began to change tactics when it came
19 to aboriginal peoples. Rather than trying to uphold the
20 highest law in the land, they devised legislation,
21 regulations, expropriation laws, policies, et cetera,
22 either to restrict, limit, or totally ignore the rights,
23 titles and interests of the aboriginal peoples, where there

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1 was either a direct or indirect impact on them.

2 Up until the second world war, there were
3 no efforts made by aboriginal peoples to litigate to
4 protect their rights, titles and interests, as set out
5 in the Constitution. It wasn't until the development of
6 the white paper on aboriginal rights that any real question
7 began to be raised by aboriginal peoples. As a result,
8 Frank Haller (ph) took the federal government to the Supreme
9 Court of Canada, where the decision was split by six judges.

10 Another aboriginal issue which was
11 brought to light during that time was the James Bay Treaty
12 Quebec Settlement Agreement, where the court upheld that
13 the aboriginal people had legal and constitutional rights
14 in Canada and their needs were to be taken into
15 consideration by the federal government.

16 The Prime Minister of Canada at that time
17 repatriated the Constitution from England, in 1982. The
18 aboriginal groups sent delegations to England to lobby
19 and contest that Canada did not have any right to change
20 the Charter, where aboriginal peoples were concerned,
21 without their consent. As a result of that strategy, the
22 Canadian government, in section 35 of the Constitution,
23 recognized existing aboriginal rights, titles and

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1 interests.

2 It wasn't until the Ron Sparrow
3 decision, just recently, that the certainty surrounding
4 section 35 of the Canadian Constitution began to
5 materialize in favour of the aboriginal people. The court
6 ruled that the government's regulations did not apply to
7 aboriginal people where statutes intrude on the rights
8 of aboriginal people. The courts could not decide where
9 these rights belonged, because these rights were unique
10 and they could belong anywhere. It also emphasized that
11 the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility for
12 Indian people, as of 1763.

13 Negotiations with, and between, the
14 First Nations and governments to define section 35 is
15 presently in progress in many parts of Canada. In the
16 Yukon, an umbrella final agreement within the land claims
17 process has been initialled by the chief negotiator for
18 the parties to the process. The umbrella final agreement
19 spells out the roles and responsibilities of government
20 and First Nations on such issues as fishing, wildlife,
21 land, and financial compensation, among many other issues
22 common to the parties.

23 On the issue of devolution, the role of

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1 Parliament in Indian and northern development was first
2 suggested to the Gordon Royal Commission in 1955. The
3 deputy minister suggested to that Royal Commission a
4 co-ordinated federal program of infrastructure,
5 investment and tax incentives to accelerate the industrial
6 resource exploitation in order to generate wage employment
7 for northern natives, whose traditional and economic
8 activities faced terminal decline.

9 It is interesting to note that, during
10 that same period, the Department of Indian and Northern
11 Development was involved in an even greater devolution
12 exercise in its Indian affairs program. As early as 1964,
13 Ottawa had approached the provinces with proposals to
14 devolve the administration of such programs, while
15 retaining the financial responsibilities. Five years
16 later the question was revived in a more radical form from
17 which the white paper of 1969 was established. It proposed
18 that the government terminate its special constitutional
19 relationship for Indian peoples.

20 Nonetheless, if the administrative
21 delegation of the northern affairs branch is considered
22 against the devolution goals of Indian programs, it seems
23 evident that Ottawa was able to accomplish in the

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1 territories what it failed to do in the provinces; shift
2 the delivery of all major programs for Indians to a single,
3 sub-national authority, which is the Department of Indian
4 and Northern Development. This has really been what is
5 Ottawa's ministry of devolution, up until now, and it still
6 remains so.

7 The list of powers transferred to each
8 of the territories differed markedly. This should not
9 be surprising, because of the difference in which their
10 government structures are institutionalized, and in the
11 politics of relationship between the respective aboriginal
12 populations and territorial governments and their natural
13 resources.

14 In addition, the devolution process has
15 been a classic illustration of heterogeneity of the federal
16 government that the Department of Indian and Northern
17 Development, as an agency mandated to oversee northern
18 constitutional development, has attempted to promote
19 devolution. However, it has had to address concerns of
20 central agencies concerning the fit between specific
21 devolution initiatives and national priorities, such as
22 budgetary implications or the encouragement of northern
23 agency resource development in the national interest.

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1 The Department of Indian and Northern
2 Development has also had to interact with individual line
3 departments whose responsibilities have been, or may be,
4 devolved. These departments have varied greatly in their
5 response to the devolution attempts.

6 Some participants, such as the
7 Department of Indian and Northern Development, have
8 figured in all the instances of devolution. However,
9 because the cast of characters is unique for each case,
10 the outcome of these cases, inevitably, has differed.
11 The number of players, for example, native, territorial,
12 federal, and third parties at the centre of the process,
13 and those in the communities, create an atmosphere of
14 trying to decide which one to believe. For example,
15 federal officials maintain that some central agencies in
16 Ottawa approach the process as an opportunity to budget
17 cut. The experience has been that responsibilities have
18 been devolved with the same or greater funding than Ottawa
19 had allocated to the function before the transfer.

20 The second variable which has led to
21 contrasts amongst the various transfers has been the nature
22 of the responsibilities being devolved, for example, the
23 management of small airports, which may have no bearing

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1 on aboriginal claims. Other transfers, such as management
2 of forests, can have profound implications. There are
3 still others that could only receive administrative
4 responsibilities, for example, freshwater fisheries.
5 Still, there are other types of devolution of powers which
6 go from one government to another, but these require
7 careful consideration to protect all parties to withstand
8 court challenges once implemented.

9 The one most detrimental piece of
10 legislative garbage is that of the Indian Act. This piece
11 alone was, and is, a model being used by South Africa to
12 assimilate and manage their aboriginal groups in their
13 own country. This piece of legislation has marginalized
14 aboriginal peoples across Canada. It has failed miserably
15 to serve the people it was set up to protect from intrusion
16 and to be allowed to be trampled and treated as third-class
17 citizens in their own homeland. It was devised by
18 governments to divide and conquer the aboriginal
19 population and to divert the focus of their true intent.

20

21 The governments did nothing but hush-up
22 any efforts which were put up by a few aboriginal people
23 who had tried to raise the issue of treaty when it became

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1 known that gold was found in the Yukon for fear that the
2 precious metal might be on Indian land. The same fear
3 exists today.

4 This leads to the policy that the
5 government uses today when it comes to land used for Indian
6 purposes, or something to that effect. In the Yukon
7 region, and in land claims settlement proposals, reserved
8 lands and lands set aside are still being proposed. These
9 two have the same meaning, but are being interpreted
10 differently by governments for their own purposes.

11 When it comes to the role and
12 responsibility of the Minister of Indian and Northern
13 Development, this person alone can decide what is good
14 for the Yukon and what is good for aboriginal peoples.
15 This person determines the substance of First Nations
16 membership codes. This person decides which First Nations
17 can be recognized by the government. This person can make
18 people believe that there are only fourteen First Nations
19 in the Yukon. What happened to the others who were
20 recognized by Ottawa in the early part of this century?
21 Were they amalgamated for the purpose of convenience for
22 the bureaucrats? This minister can deal with aboriginal
23 issues in northern B.C. as part of his duties in the Yukon

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1 region and district, but cannot do the same for the same
2 region in regard to land claims negotiations.

3 Policies dictate that any other claims
4 are determined as overlap claims and, as such, will need
5 to leave the issue to be resolved through reciprocity.
6 That's baloney.

7 We, the aboriginal peoples, have found
8 out firsthand how the European people really operated.
9 Since they first set foot on Turtle Island they were
10 interested in the land and in the natural resources of
11 the new land for their own purposes. They brought their
12 own system and their own culture to this land which was
13 already occupied by First Nations people who had trade,
14 commerce and inter-tribal relationships that had been in
15 existence for thousands of years.

16 We are forced, in this day and age, to
17 become knowledgeable and find ways and means to understand
18 and use this foreign system in order to preserve ours.
19 It is with this that we are before you, the members of
20 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, to convey our
21 message and presentation in the hope that the dominant
22 society will provide a niche for the First Nations people
23 to be able to determine for themselves where they fit in

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1 the Canadian fabric.

2 We recommend to this panel and to the
3 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to do everything
4 in your power to see that these recommendations are
5 implemented. We do not ever want, again, to be put under
6 a microscope by the governments so that the output would
7 do nothing but gather dust.

8 We expect that there will be fundamental
9 changes to the portfolio of the minister and to the
10 Department of Indian and Northern Development for the
11 Yukon. We recommend that the Department of Indian and
12 Northern Development be resolved within the next two years,
13 and be replaced with a portfolio that it will deal, on
14 a bilateral basis, with the First Nations people of the
15 Yukon region.

16 We cannot stand by any longer to plea
17 with the Department of Indian Affairs to present our
18 proposals to Ottawa. We should be the ones to do that,
19 on behalf of our people which we serve. We should have
20 a significant political role in management decisions in
21 the Yukon region with regard to development plans, fiscal
22 arrangements and other matters.

23 For statistical purposes, the

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1 aboriginal people across the country create approximately
2 4,500 jobs for bureaucrats, of which only 20 per cent are
3 of aboriginal descent. The main reason for this low figure
4 is directly related to government policies in the
5 workplace. There needs to be a review of these policies
6 if the government is to work co-operatively with the First
7 Nations for the First Nations people.

8 The Indian Act should be scrapped and
9 be replaced with a statute applicable only to the Yukon,
10 which will allow First Nations to address issues on a
11 bilateral basis. The settlement agreement will not
12 address all the issues of importance to the First Nations.

13 What becomes of the residual
14 responsibilities of Indian affairs and other regulations
15 as part of the Indian Act which are not a part of the
16 umbrella final agreement? We want the federal government
17 to live up to its fiduciary responsibility, as set out
18 in the existing Constitution, and not shift the
19 responsibilities to the provincial or territorial
20 governments, as they have been doing in this present
21 government council and office. We will decide for
22 ourselves when the government has served its term to
23 promote, protect, and to enhance the culture of aboriginal

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1 peoples of our nation, the Kaska Nation.

2 Thank you.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
4 very much, Chief. Just hang in there for a moment, if
5 you don't mind. Can we ask you a few questions?

6 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** Sure.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Some of
8 them are just for information purposes, because we are
9 not as well informed on some of these things as we should
10 be.

11 Were the Kaska part of the Council of
12 Yukon Indians negotiating group that reached the agreement
13 in principle and the umbrella final agreement?

14 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** Yes, they are.
15 Just to elaborate further on that, the Yukon Kaskas, which
16 are the Liard Indian Band and the Ross River Dene Council,
17 are a party to that process. But, over the last few years,
18 the tribal council has recognized a third Kaska party,
19 which is the Pettybanks(ph) First Nation.

20 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Some of
21 your people you regard as part of the Kaska Nation; people
22 who live at Lower Post or Good Hope Lake or Muncho Lake.
23 They are all in B.C., if my geography is right.

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1 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's correct.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** These
3 people are not involved in the Yukon -- the CYI --
4 negotiations. Am I right, in that? So, you find yourself
5 split?

6 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** Yes, you are right
7 in your questions on that. The Kaska Dene Council did
8 receive maintenance funding from Ottawa, just to keep them
9 treading water, I guess you might say. But, they didn't
10 have a significant role in the negotiations for the Yukon
11 claims.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** So, that
13 part of your nation, which is in B.C., really is going
14 to be caught up in what I trust are going to be new
15 negotiations which are likely to start up, or perhaps have
16 already started up, in B.C., with the federal government
17 and with the provincial government.

18 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** Yes, the process
19 of land claims negotiations is just getting under way for
20 the B.C. province. The Kaskas from B.C. are actively
21 taking part in that process.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Moving
23 along from the umbrella final agreement, some of the First

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1 Nations have concluded, or are about to conclude, First
2 Nations final agreements, I believe, in the Yukon, if my
3 information is right.

4 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Have your
6 people started negotiations for a final agreement; a First
7 Nations final agreement? Or, are you already there, or
8 half-way there?

9 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** No. We are
10 scheduled to be at the table in the second round, or, you
11 might say, the second wave. The first wave has been for
12 our First Nations that took part in negotiating their band
13 final agreements, using the umbrella final agreement as
14 a guideline. Right now they are concentrating on
15 devolving implementation plans. This process is being
16 carried out with only those who have had an extensive amount
17 of negotiations on their band final agreement.

18 There still remain the other First
19 Nations. They still have to negotiate their band final
20 agreements, as well. The first four, I think, have been
21 used as a forefront to negotiate band final agreements
22 and, as such, they have negotiated self-government
23 agreement as a model. I imagine that their band final

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1 agreement to the negotiations will also be a model.

2 We are quite concerned that the
3 substance of negotiations, the things that are important
4 to the Kaska people, may not be a part of those models.

5 The Kaska people are not familiar with that band final
6 agreement; what the contents are. So, we are quite
7 concerned about what is being done without us being at
8 the table to raise any concerns and issues that should
9 be raised, so that our people do have an input into what
10 goes into these model agreements.

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I can see
12 your problem. You are not at the table, because it's not
13 your agreement. But, if it shows up as a model, then it
14 is, at least in part, your agreement, or to get your
15 agreement, you have to negotiate away the model, and that
16 is always hard.

17 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right. If
18 they do implement that, and if the government legislates
19 their band final agreement, I am afraid that there will
20 be little room for us to make any changes to that
21 legislation.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** The
23 Council of Yukon Indians is, doubtless, keeping you

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1 informed, but I suppose they have only limited jurisdiction
2 in trying to tell an individual First Nation or band what
3 they should put in their First Nation final agreement.

4 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right. We
5 have indicated to CYI and other First Nations that the
6 Kaska people will respect their form of band final
7 agreements, whatever they work out for their people. But,
8 we caution them that we would like to do the same for our
9 own people, and not to have these things predetermined
10 for our people. We want to have a meaningful say in the
11 development of any agreements that directly affect our
12 people, our land and our resources.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** To follow
14 that, and to follow the certain problems in negotiation,
15 I guess you will have to rely upon the Council of Yukon
16 Indians to get that message across: this is the one for
17 the "X" First Nation and not necessarily for the Kaska,
18 because nobody can speak for them, except themselves.

19 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right.
20 These agreements will have to be ratified. It has to be
21 taken back to the people. I think people have to be given
22 more credit than they have been given so far. It is a
23 process that will be determined by the people who will

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1 be most affected.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** If I may
3 change the subject a bit, assuming that the Indian Act
4 was going to be repealed -- as it sits now, was going to
5 be repealed -- in the next ten years, what would you see
6 in its place? I know that is a big question, because the
7 Indian Act has got all sorts of things in it, and this
8 might well go to another government agency, and this might
9 well go to a band, and this might well go to somebody else.
10 But, do you have any general comments on how to dismantle
11 the structure?

12 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** I think this Royal
13 Commission will have a lot of say on the recommendations
14 as to what happens to that statute. I am not a legal
15 person. I try to keep my interests in a general way.
16 But, the issue of the Indian Act has been in the works
17 for as long as I can remember. Some of our First Nations
18 agree that it protects their purpose, especially in
19 southern Canada. In the North, where there haven't been
20 settlement agreements, I think, to be governed by a foreign
21 government from Ottawa, the First Nations people could
22 probably have a better working relationship if there were
23 a system that was set up to deal only with aboriginal

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1 issues.

2 I mentioned in my presentation that the
3 land claims process was set up to define the role of Indian
4 people in the governments for the Yukon. I also indicated
5 that that will not cover everything. There are some areas
6 of the Indian Act which are subject to regulations within
7 that act which are not a part of the umbrella final
8 agreement. I am questioning the residual
9 responsibilities of Indian Affairs.

10 You have been to Whitehorse. They have
11 a brand new office up there. They are talking about
12 decentralizing, downsizing, and things like that. It
13 looks to me like they are pretty well entrenching
14 themselves to continue for the next fifty years. I don't
15 think our people are prepared to have them around that
16 long.

17 The Indian people have been saying all
18 along that they want to have more direct participation
19 in the things which directly affect them, on a
20 government-to-government basis. If the governments
21 really want to address the aboriginal issues in the
22 Canadian fabric, then they would do something about that.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** People

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1 have suggested to us that one way of proceeding would be
2 to get a more effective form of aboriginal self-government
3 -- and this might well come out of your First Nations final
4 agreement, which is likely to be negotiated shortly --
5 and that the Indian Act be broken up into 25 or 30 headings
6 -- all the subjects it covers -- and that it stay in place,
7 but any individual aboriginal self-government --
8 aboriginal government -- would be able to say, "We knock
9 out Item No. 12 and we will take that over. We will take
10 over the question of Indian wills and estates, and this
11 sort of thing. We will take over something else which
12 you have got covered in there. We will take this one.
13 We will take five years, or ten years, to knock off just
14 as many of those items as we want, as we are geared up
15 for it". Do you think that sort of a model works?

16 The reason it is put to me this way is
17 that some people say that some bands really want to keep
18 quite a bit of the Indian Act, because they feel comfortable
19 with that. Some of them want to get rid of, virtually,
20 all of it, and the faster the better. It is a matter of
21 their experience with it and their ability to take over
22 their own affairs.

23 What is your general reaction to piecing

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1 it up, and picking it off, or whatever?

2 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** The transition of
3 taking that apart, I think, would have to be done in that
4 manner, just to sit down and look at the statute. It should
5 be left up to the members, as to which type of articles
6 they may like to keep. I agree that the statute does
7 provide a certain limited protection for First Nations
8 people.

9 I think the land claims component of that
10 can enhance the life of aboriginal peoples in the
11 communities. If aboriginal people recommend to this panel
12 that the governments begin the specific negotiations to
13 dismantle the act, in accordance with that First Nations
14 experience with that act, then I would agree that it should
15 be done in that matter. But, as I have said, the umbrella
16 final agreement, which was set up for the Yukon, addresses
17 only a part of that.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That's
19 right. That act has got a large number of items in it,
20 impacting on different First Nations differently, across
21 different parts of Canada. It is going to take a little
22 while to dismantle that.

23 I have a last question, and then I will

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1 ask my colleague what questions she wishes to ask. This
2 has to do with the suggestion that there be an act
3 applicable only to the Yukon; the Indian Act should be
4 scrapped and an act applicable only to the Yukon. Are
5 you trying to put something together which would include
6 the people in B.C., as well?

7 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** The Yukon region.

8 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** The Yukon
9 region, and that now includes those B.C. bands.

10 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right.

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
12 right. That does it.

13 Another question which keeps coming up
14 for us is, what is the unit of aboriginal self-government?
15 Should it be the bands, or should it be tribal councils,
16 or should it be provincial or territorial, i.e. the Council
17 of Yukon Indians, as a First Nations government, or should
18 it be, on the prairies, all the people of Treaty No. 5,
19 let's say; Treaty Nation, as the term is used? I know
20 that there is no one answer to that, but how are you people
21 going about the business of deciding what is the unit of
22 government? Who should deliver the education services?
23 Who should deliver the health services when these are

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1 done by an aboriginal government?

2 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** It's the First
3 Nations' responsibility to do that.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** And that
5 is the band --

6 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** -- as
8 defined by the Indian Act.

9 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** They are the ones
10 who have set up the tribal council, and the tribal council
11 is accountable to First Nations.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Fair
13 enough. That is a fairly common response. Every once
14 in a while we get someone saying, "However we are going
15 to do it, we are not going to do it on the basis of the
16 bands. The bands are a creature of the Indian Act. We
17 want no part of them. We are going to set it up
18 differently."

19 You are saying, "We have the bands.
20 That's our unit now, and we'll build from there, with our
21 own tribal councils, or whatever."

22 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right. An
23 Indian community, to me, is a self-contained government

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1 in itself. There are unique relationships that are common
2 in communities such as this. A lot of people don't see
3 that. To me, those are the people that generate the agenda
4 for our national level. It is them that we are trying
5 to provide a service for and to do something in that
6 community.

7 There are social issues which need to
8 be addressed, and the governments are looking at this as
9 far as the end of their nose. They don't see the Indian
10 community like we do. Self-government, to us, is an Indian
11 community.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
13 you.

14 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I think
15 you have pretty much explained a lot of the things.

16 I was wondering about the umbrella
17 agreement and these sub-agreements, or whatever you might
18 call them, that the different nations are going to get
19 into. When you look at the umbrella agreement, and what
20 is contained in that umbrella agreement, is there anything
21 there, or is there something that is not there, that you
22 would like to see in your agreement?

23 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** One of the things

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1 in my presentation indicates that government policies
2 regarding self-government will be legislated separately
3 from the settlement agreement. That is part of the
4 umbrella final agreement.

5 Out of the settlement agreement, there
6 will probably be up to as many as five bills which will
7 be presented to the Cabinet and to the House of Commons.

8 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I can't
9 believe some of the things that I am hearing here, that
10 the land claims policy -- you cannot achieve
11 self-government from your land claims settlement.

12 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** No.

13 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That does
14 not make any sense to me. It seems to me that is one way
15 you could get self-government, through a settlement of
16 your claims. That is what it would be for, as I understand
17 it now.

18 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** Yes.

19 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That
20 would be the major concern, and that is why you are
21 hesitating. If it were changed in some way, then it would
22 serve your purposes?

23 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** Yes, it would.

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1 It's a fundamental change to the government. They have
2 to address fundamental issues, if they want to make
3 meaningful progress toward a better relationship between
4 the aboriginal peoples and the governments. These are
5 fundamental changes that we are seeking, not just a
6 band-aid job to try to address small issues. That won't
7 work any longer.

8 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Do you
9 see self-government, one day, as a community being
10 developed into sort of a self-sustaining kind of
11 self-government?

12 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** We have that now.
13 We have been lobbying over the last number of years.
14 Self-government is a buzzword. It's a word that
15 governments use to their advantage. As my presentation
16 said, it allows them to delay and not to address aboriginal
17 issues which they think will take away from their
18 responsibilities. Aboriginal peoples are going to tell
19 you, over and over again, that they want control over their
20 own lives and not to be governed, or not to be directed
21 by bureaucrats as to what is good for them or their
22 community. Those days are numbered.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** When you

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1 talked about replacing the act with something bilateral,
2 that you could have a policy that you could deal directly
3 with Indian Affairs --

4 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right, yes.

5 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That
6 means that they should be devolving administration and
7 the resources directly to the communities, instead of
8 channelling them through the government --

9 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right. The
10 Department of Indian Affairs acts as a buffer between the
11 First Nations and Ottawa. What we are implicating is that
12 that buffer be removed and allow First Nations to deal
13 directly.

14 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That
15 should be a part of your agreement.

16 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** That's right. The
17 settlement agreement does not recognize chiefs and
18 council. In place of that, they have some sort of
19 authority that is going to be made up of third parties
20 and other community members, and that will have more say
21 on what is going to happen on Indian lands. The chief
22 and council will no longer be the ones to decide for their
23 people what is good for them, for their own purposes.

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1 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
2 very much, Chief. I hope you didn't mind us asking a few
3 questions.

4 **CHIEF HAMMOND DICK:** No, not at all.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
6 very much.

7 We will take a coffee-break now for ten
8 minutes.

9

10 --- Short recess at 10:30 a.m.

11 --- Upon resuming at 10:50 a.m.

12

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** We will
14 pick-up with our next presentation. The presenter is the
15 Liard River Indian Reserve #3, the Band Manager, Mr. Ron
16 Blinn.

17 By all means, we are not that formal.

18 Just a moment, Mr. Blinn.

19 **ANN BAYNE:** I just wanted to make a
20 couple of suggestions for this afternoon. I am hoping
21 that more people will come this afternoon, especially our
22 elders and, for the comfort of our elders, I would suggest
23 maybe different chairs be brought in case they do come,

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1 and also an interpreter should be here in case our elders
2 are here and want to speak in their language.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All of
4 these may be beyond our width, but I will turn them over
5 to Bernie. If you get any success with the chairs I would
6 be absolutely delighted. I am sitting on the same. And,
7 in your community, I would be classed as an elder.

8 Mr. Blinn

9 **RON BLINN:** First of all I want to thank
10 the Commission for the opportunity to come here this
11 morning, and, apologize for not having a formal
12 presentation.

13 Because of the remoteness up here, the
14 distance which most of the people have to travel in order
15 to get anything done for some of these bands puts us on
16 the road a lot so, I got in late last night from Whitehorse.

17 However, some of the issues and concerns
18 which I would like to bring to the commissions attention,
19 probably in your travels you have heard them all before,
20 but they go down to the community level. It's the people
21 at the community level, or at that level which I am involved
22 with constantly and have been for years. This position
23 as band manager is just a recent transfer from the Kaska

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1 Tribal Council where I was involved with all of those
2 communities as well.

3 The housing situation is one of the
4 concerns I know which is brought to my attention. Some
5 of the problems which I see, is that housing policies,
6 housing allocations are allotted on a per capita basis.
7 The formula established in Ottawa does not meet the needs
8 of each unique community.

9 For example, in Liard we have been
10 allotted our housing units for this year with ideas we
11 should renovate existing housing which are presently in
12 the community. The question which I have is, "When do
13 we stop renovating these units and start building adequate
14 housing for the people." You can only renovate a house
15 so many times. Some of these conditions which the people
16 are living in, over crowded houses, some of them have
17 already been condemned by the people, no water, no sewer
18 services in some of the communities, especially the yard,
19 would be equivalent probably to some third world countries.

20 I know that a lot of people in Ottawa, in government do
21 an extensive amount of travelling in places like Thailand,
22 HongKong, Japan, and other places. I find it very
23 difficult sometime and I feel very uncomfortable when I

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1 see on the front page of the Royal Commission where the
2 Right Honourable Brian Dixon states, "The Royal Commission
3 should consider travelling extensively to aboriginal
4 communities throughout Canada." Aboriginal people do not
5 want to be studied. Rather, they want to meet the
6 commission and tell their stories in person, preferably
7 in the communities in which they live.

8 I had an experience where I made a
9 presentation to the Royal Commission on Health, and when
10 the preliminary report came out it was stated in there
11 they had actually visited some of the communities. What
12 they meant by visiting was they arrived by plane, stayed
13 at a hotel, had a meeting in a facility like this all day,
14 and then they would get in their vehicle or get on a plane
15 and leave. They would actually never see the communities
16 they were talking about or dealing with. I was able to
17 have the chairman of that commission spend a few days in
18 one of the communities to actually see some of the problems.

19 I think it created a better understanding with the people
20 that we were dealing with.

21 There seems to be monies available for
22 areas of drug and alcohol problems. In all the communities
23 we see the evidence of the use and abuse of alcohol and

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1 drugs. Alcohol and drugs are not really the problem in
2 these communities. They are symptomatic of the problems.
3 Problems such as inadequate housing, poor health
4 programs, the frustration which the community has to deal
5 with in these areas. Isolation factors, especially in
6 the north, contribute substantially to drug and alcohol
7 problems.

8 The high cost of food. Without getting
9 proper fruit and vegetables in some of these communities
10 children have nutritional problems. Families look at this
11 and feel as though they are not doing a job in raising
12 their family because they are not like other people. So
13 the frustrations again and the pressure and the confusion
14 result in partaking in alcohol.

15 Suicide is a problem. I find today it
16 is easy to have consultants go out and do needs assessments
17 and studies on a Canada wide basis. A couple of years
18 ago money was allotted for a suicide prevention program
19 where they came into the community and said they had been
20 given this money and you need to start working in this
21 area right away.

22 It just happened that the community
23 which I was working in had never had a known case of suicide.

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1 It is beyond me to understand why two weeks of intense
2 workshop on suicide prevention would be of any avail to
3 that community. What the community wanted to do is to
4 take that money and use it for another problem which was
5 substance abuse affecting some of the children in
6 community. But because of the policies at the Ottawa level
7 we could not do that. As a result, we did not receive
8 any money.

9 Again, the communities have to be
10 involved in determining what is going to take place in
11 those communities and what type of programming is needed.

12 I see money being given to thrid world countries like
13 grants and truck-loads of grain and things like that
14 constantly leave the country and yet I look at some of
15 the communities which I have travelled through. I
16 represent these people. I have concerns for these people.

17 I have worked in the field for seventeen to eighteen years
18 now and I have come know, love and respect, and admire
19 many of these people for the courage which they have been
20 able endure through all of this. It is a crisis situation
21 in many of these communities.

22 Environmentally, we have to wait three
23 to six months when we call medical services to come into

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1 the community to do such simple things as water testing.

2 It has only been recently that they have provided sample
3 kits so that CHRs and the communities can do their own
4 testing and send reports to medical services.

5 On the housing, we have a community where
6 one of our greatest resources is trees. I talked with
7 the chief at that community last night and he gave me
8 permission to bring this forth. They cut down their
9 timber. They stock-piled it. They dried it out to the
10 proper temperature, I guess, and they built these houses.

11 These K-lock logs and they had the frames set-up and they
12 were willing to build these houses in their community for
13 the people. When they contacted the Department of Indian
14 Affairs for the completion package of windows, doors,
15 insulation and so on, they were told that the outside frame
16 didn't meet building codes, and so therefore, what would
17 have to happen is they would have to build another house
18 within that frame and it would be too costly, so, we are
19 sorry, we can't help you people.

20 There is a similar situation where they
21 wanted to have a garden to grow vegetables. A community
22 garden. Fifty, sixty years ago this was a common thing
23 in that particular community, so they went and requested

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1 money to get a tractor and some fertilizer and some seeds
2 and I think the total amount of the proposal was \$8,000.

3 Before that proposal would be approved they had to get
4 a soil analysis team in to do the testing. They drilled
5 four or five holes, at a cost of \$17,000 at the time, just
6 to do these tests. The result was that the soil was not
7 suitable to grow food which they had been doing for years.

8 The frustrations of the community wondering why? We did
9 it before, why can't we do it now?

10 The frustrations which I hear the people
11 talking about when it comes to the policies with regard
12 to correcting the alcohol and drug problem. A young person
13 is picked-up for drinking, or impaired. Maybe there is
14 an assault on the officer, maybe there is resisting arrest,
15 whatever the case may be, that person is taken and put
16 into a correction centre in Whitehorse. From the day that
17 person enters that correction centre he has to become a
18 criminal in order to exist in that environment. So, he
19 learns fast and when that person gets out it is very easy
20 for them to go back out on the street and get involved
21 in crime again.

22 The cost involved in having a policeman
23 come from Watson Lake to Lower Post to answer a call, to

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1 take the individual, to put him in a cell overnight, to
2 feed him breakfast, to process him through the court
3 system, the cost is phenomenal. Communities are asking
4 for one-tenth of what it costs, just for policing alone,
5 to have programs like diversion programs which would reduce
6 the loss, not only in money to the government, but loss
7 in human potential. Good positive human potential which
8 is out there.

9 Fire protection in many of the
10 communities is inadequate, especially, in places like
11 Liard. We depend on fire equipment from Watson Lake if
12 we have a fire in Lower Post which is seventeen miles away.

13 By the time the fire equipment gets there the house could
14 be burnt down. People live with constant anxiety in these
15 situations, especially in the summer when it is so easy
16 for fires to take place.

17 The health transfer process is another
18 concern which some of the people have. Many of the
19 communities have written letters of intent asking if they
20 can transfer some of the programs over to the communities
21 such as the NNADAP program, the CHR program to come under
22 the administration. The policy is that no, you can't do
23 it that way, you have to do it total package. You have

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1 to take over your whole health programs. We neither have
2 the money, the resources, or anything else which deals
3 with those to set those up.

4 I sometimes am embarrassed for our own
5 people because of the neglect in these areas in these
6 communities. We hear it in the news and in the media
7 everyday of how we are to be a united Canada, and a caring
8 Canada, caring Canadians, and we are proud of our
9 accomplishments, and we are proud of our people. I
10 sometimes wonder how the people in Ottawa can decide what's
11 best for a community five thousand miles away when they
12 have never seen it or have never had the opportunity to
13 visit to see what is actually taking place. The
14 aboriginal community is unique.

15 We have applied for money to get
16 treatment facilities built in the Yukon for drug and
17 alcohol, family violence, healing centres, and we have
18 been assured that, sure, there is money there for capital
19 dollars to build it, but the big problem is there are no
20 O&M dollars. So, what has been offered? For the Yukon
21 people I know, at a recent meeting I was at, there was
22 enough money to build three treatment centres. Now, we
23 have fourteen First Nations in the Yukon sitting around

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1 a table and medical services approaches us and presents
2 this money and says, "Here you go", and to me, it is not
3 much different than taking three pork chops and throwing
4 them out to fourteen dogs who are there waiting. I'll
5 tell you, it's because of the need which is there.

6 Everybody is trying to get it for their own community and
7 it shouldn't be that way. It just shouldn't be that way.

8 Communities need to have adequate programs to meet the
9 needs their people.

10 It is extremely difficult. The Liard
11 Band, the closest service which we have is the hospital
12 in Watson Lake. We have no means of transportation if
13 something was to happen to one of the people. An accident,
14 an elder, if something was happening, how can we get them
15 to a hospital? The staff usually puts them into the back
16 seat of their car or somewhere in the trunk with the
17 flip-open door and get them to the hospital the best way
18 they can.

19 It was mentioned earlier, this is 1992.

20 This is not back in the twenties or thirties. What is
21 a vehicle today? It is a simple matter such as that, which
22 create the frustrations. It's not the big issues. It's
23 the little issues which the community themselves and the

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1 members know about and deal with everyday.

2 Again, I apologize for not having a
3 formal presentation, but I intend to prepare something
4 from all these issues and submit it to the commission like
5 I did with the Royal Commission on Health, and hope that
6 there can be a better and closer relationship with the
7 commission than with some of the other governments.

8 I am concerned. One community again was
9 just given the capital dollars for a bridge. The community
10 is so isolated that one bridge isn't going to make a big
11 difference. But yet, with that one bridge, they are going
12 from being isolated to semi-remote. That's fine, but in
13 that process, they loose something like \$60,000 per year
14 because of the isolation factor. It is like giving them
15 something on one hand and penalizing them on the other.

16

17 These are the frustrations that create
18 the alcohol and drug abuse problems that we see in the
19 communities today. It is the little issues. You are not
20 going to get the little issues from bigger communities
21 and from outside the First Nations communities, you are
22 going to get those issues brought forward right in the
23 community.

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1 If I have any recommendation at all --
2 commissions, or people from the government like yourselves
3 -- it would be that you come to the community and meet
4 with the people who have the concerns. It is not easy
5 for some of the people to get to Watson Lake from Liard.
6 They don't have transportation. It is very difficult
7 for the people to voice their concerns.

8 I think that is all I have to say at this
9 time. Thank you very much.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Could we
11 just ask you a question or two to improve our knowledge?

12 About how many people would live in Upper
13 Liard and how many people would live in Lower Post?

14 **RON BLINN:** I believe about 500,
15 together, with the two. I'll just check that. It's close
16 to 600 people. Considering the other communities like,
17 Fireside, Muncho Lake, Blue River there are this other
18 communities as well.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** They just
20 don't have even a truck that can be converted into a fire
21 truck by putting a pump on, or, a van that is dedicated,
22 is available, so you can take some seats out and put a
23 stretcher in and move people, not in a great way, but,

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- 1 a more or less
- 2 proper way. A good stretcher and a van sort of
- 3

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1 works.

2 **RON BLINN:** We are talking about that
3 right now and we have approached medical services. If
4 the band can come up with some money, and Indian Affairs
5 can come up with some money, then we will throw in a little,
6 and possibly on a joint effort can maybe provide some of
7 these needs. The problem always comes to the band. The
8 band doesn't always have the resources to kick in their
9 share and it seems like we are over the barrel, so as a
10 result, we don't get anything.

11 I think it is a responsibility of Health
12 and Welfare Canada to assist in meeting the health
13 requirements and health needs of native communities. I
14 feel saddened, but they have really neglected the
15 responsibility in many, many areas. Even basic
16 fundamental issues such as training in nutritional
17 awareness workshops, education workshops in terms of
18 prevention, health problems and so on.

19 If you live in the North, well, you are
20 way down on the bottom of the list. If we have enough
21 money left we will come to your community and do some
22 education workshops. It seems that many of the isolated
23 communities are affected by that.

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1 There are some health issues now, the
2 concern with aids, the concern with cancer detection and
3 prevention, to try to get enough money to bring in proper
4 resource people to do education workshops on, maybe, breast
5 examination for women, these types of things, it is
6 extremely difficult to do. There just isn't enough money.

7 And yet, these are important issues which I think need
8 to be addressed.

9 For example, the solvent abuse problem.
10 The CHR, myself and the doctors spent twelve hours one
11 night on the telephone trying to save this little guys
12 life, who was sixteen years old, because we couldn't fly
13 him out because of the weather. We just couldn't get a
14 plane in there. Somehow we managed to keep the little
15 guy alive. We brought him out early in the morning; flew
16 him into Vancouver. He can't walk today, and he has lost
17 everything but 20 per cent of his eyesight. It is a unique
18 situation in some of these northern communities.

19 Another case in point. A young girl who
20 had something lodged in her throat, needs to be transported
21 to hospital. The paramedics say, "That's fine, we'll take
22 a chopper in and the little girl doesn't need an escort
23 because we're going to have her put into the hospital."

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1 They take the little girl out to a hospital and when she
2 gets to the hospital the doctor dislodged what was in her
3 throat and said, "No problem, you can go." The nurse at
4 the station assumed this little girl was with another
5 native person who happened to be in the emergency room
6 and as a result didn't talk to the little girl.

7 The little girl is 300 miles from home,
8 she is ten years old, and it is assumed that she is with
9 this other person. I was called at ten o'clock at night
10 to go down, and when I went down, I found the little girl
11 out on the street with two little bottles of medicine in
12 her pocket. I informed them where the little girl was
13 found and they were all apologetic and so on and agreed
14 that they would keep her in the hospital until her parents
15 could be contacted to come and get her. I refused to accept
16 that and took the little girl home and gave her something
17 to eat and then we flew her into her community the next
18 day.

19 There is a break-down in communication
20 when it comes to health services in aboriginal communities.

21 There has to be an education process where aboriginal
22 people can be involved in educating hospital personnel
23 to the uniqueness and the needs of these communities and

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1 as well as on the other side.

2 We arranged to have emergency room staff
3 from that hospital fly into these communities to meet with
4 the people and just see what we are doing with them. Some
5 of them were just amazed, they couldn't believe it. They
6 said they didn't realize that this was the situation.
7 I know it does help bridge that gap.

8 We have a lot of attitude problems in
9 some of the places where we have tried to admit native
10 people in treatment centres or in detoxification units.

11 It is quite obvious when you stand there with a person
12 from one of the communities and you are trying to admit
13 that person in the detox and you happen to arrive at ten
14 after twelve and they say, "We are sorry, we are having
15 lunch right now, we can't admit the person, could you wait?"

16 We say, "Okay, we'll wait", and have a cigarette and
17 coffee. While you are waiting a person comes along who
18 isn't native, who rings the buzzer, and the same nurse
19 comes and says, "Oh, Mr. So-and-So, you are here. Would
20 you like to come in. We are having lunch right now, but
21 if you would like, you can have a bowl of soup in the lounge,
22 and when we are finished we will process you."

23 We are talking attitude problems here,

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1 in a lot of these places. It is these attitude problems
2 which have an affect on aboriginal people and something
3 has to be done. It has got to be a group effort. I see
4 this over and over again. I don't like the term "second
5 class citizens", but aboriginal people, we are second class
6 people, in a lot of these places.

7 You try to go into a hospital or dental
8 office, you are secondary. We are not treated as equal.

9 I believe it is a lack of education, I really do. A lack
10 of understanding and ignorance. Ignorance meaning lack
11 of understanding, education and knowledge. So, somehow
12 we need to have the recognition that aboriginal people
13 do have the knowledge, and the training, and the education
14 to go into these places, and to be able to have time in
15 doctor's protocol meetings or whatever to educate these
16 people in trying to help us.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I just
18 have one question I would like you to comment on, and that
19 has to do with housing. I am always puzzled by the fact
20 that I don't see the local people in the communities
21 building the houses. Now, I guess that is no longer true,
22 but it certainly used to be true. People from outside
23 used to come in and build houses and I scratch my head

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1 at say, "This doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me."

2 Perhaps it makes sense to somebody. Who are building
3 the houses in the communities now? Are the local people,
4 the people who are unemployed and need a job, are they
5 doing the building?

6 **RON BLINN:** Some are. In some of the
7 communities, yes, some of the native people are involved
8 in the actual construction of the building. But, in terms
9 of overseeing it, in terms of managing it, I don't see
10 a lot of that, myself.

11 I think because of the rigid policies
12 which are there, they don't have the qualifications, but
13 when they do get the qualifications to build a house, then
14 somebody changes the criteria and now the qualifications
15 are invalid, so they have to go back to school to learn
16 more. There is always somebody putting a barrier in the
17 way.

18 Like the community I mentioned with the
19 houses. Everybody could have a good house in some of these
20 communities. They could be built by the people. But,
21 the policies dictate what they can build and what they
22 can't. It is extremely difficult. I don't see the
23 reasoning behind it. Justice P. Seaton is quoted in his

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1 report that he doesn't see the logic behind it either.
2 It would make sense, the much needed work we need for these
3 people in these communities.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
5 like to make one -- just playing with words here a bit
6 -- but many of them, I think, have the qualifications.
7 They just don't have the credentials. They don't have
8 the paper which says that they are qualified. They
9 certainly have the qualifications to build the house,
10 because there is the house. This is the world of, you
11 aren't anybody unless you have a piece of paper. That's
12 the non-aboriginal world and this is being transferred
13 to aboriginal conditions where it fits very well.

14 **RON BLINN:** You see the same with CHRs
15 and NNADAP.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Just to
17 interject here. To reply to you interjection. We were
18 in Teslin yesterday and we had a couple of doctors talking
19 there and they said, "Well, the CHR is not suppose to be
20 all that well qualified compared with me, who has a medical
21 degree and there is a degree nurse there. But, when we
22 went out to this community and a patient came in we allowed
23 the CHR to do the asking of just how things were going,

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1 and we just didn't say word, we listened, and then we found
2 out what was going on (he was using his terminology now).

3 I got a totally different history, medical history of
4 the patient when I got it through the CHR then when I did
5 it myself, and I knew that I got a better one through
6 the CHR." Now, the question is, who's qualified under
7 those circumstances?

8 Sorry, I'm interjecting here, but it was
9 directly on point.

10 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you
11 for your presentation and I do hope you do a written one
12 and submit it so we will have it.

13 You have brought up a lot of very crucial
14 issues here and this is reality, I know, that you are
15 talking about. One of the things you brought up was
16 because commissioners don't come into communities, but
17 this commission is prepared to do that. All we need is
18 the invitation. When these hearings are being set-up in
19 a community, we want to make the hearings to suite the
20 people in the community. If it means that we have to go
21 and stay with the families to see first hand, that can
22 be arranged. Language is not to be a barrier. Nothing
23 is to stop these commissioners from hearing, and

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1 experiencing, and seeing the real issues. I want people
2 to know that, to understand that's what we are attempting
3 to do. That's what we want to do, so, we will know.

4 You say the North has been left out, and
5 surely, that has been the message that has been given in
6 the past. That's why we have to really concentrate a
7 little more on the North, because they have northern
8 communities like the one's you talk about, have been left
9 out in the past, and we have to deal with that this time.

10 Attitude problems. They are not unique
11 to here. I think that's across the country. We have heard
12 that message often. One as you say, it's because of
13 ignorance because they don't understand the issues of
14 aboriginal people. This is suppose to be an educations
15 process as well for the public so that they will have a
16 better understanding. We know racism stems from ignorance
17 of knowledge and that's a issue which we have to try to
18 deal with through this whole education process.

19 We are hear to listen, and hopefully
20 somewhere in the next two years, the people themselves
21 will come up with some kind of solution- oriented
22 recommendations. That's what we are looking for. We want
23 to hear from the people, the best way to correct what you

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1 are talking about. We want to hear that so that we can
2 somehow formulate recommendations that will be reflective
3 of what people are telling us.

4 This is our first round and the agenda
5 is wide open and we want to have these concerns in writing.
6 Maybe by the next round you will give us some constructive
7 ideas on the best way to deal with these issues. And I
8 know one way. You have already said it. It is that these
9 things happen because the people were not consulted.

10 It's pretty obvious that policies are
11 being made 5,000 miles from people. The Indian Act was
12 written for people which they didn't know anything about.

13 A lot of the consequences are the very things we are
14 talking about today. How are we going to correct that
15 and the best way to correct that. That's what we want
16 to hear.

17 I want to thank you for your
18 presentation.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
20 very much.

21 I invite representatives of the
22 Community Education Liaison Workers, Debbie Groat.

23 Welcome.

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1 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Thank you. Good morning
2 ladies and gentlemen and welcome panel to the North. My
3 name is Debbie Groat. I have lived in the North for most
4 of my life. I am of Kaska-Taltan(ph) and Scottish
5 ancestry. I am employed by the Liard Reserve No. 3 First
6 Nations. The position that I am presently employed in
7 is in the Community Education Liaison Coordinator.

8 My job is to be a liaison between the
9 parents, chief and council, students and teaching staff
10 of the schools. I work in schools in Lower Post, B.C.
11 and Watson Lake. The reason for this is that the school
12 in Lower Post, B.C. is from K to 7 and the high school
13 students from 8 to 12 are bused into Watson Lake. I assist
14 all students, parents and teaching staff in helping our
15 students to succeed in completing their education.

16 At this point in their lives as First
17 Nations people I feel in our community people are more
18 aware of the need for an education. We are trying to find
19 a way in which to keep our students from dropping out.
20 This is the most important task we have at this point.

21 With the drop-out rate of First Nations
22 students at 80 if not 90 per cent or higher nationwide,
23 we are at a very desperate point in our lives, I feel.

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1 The problem of students dropping out is with all people
2 throughout the nation. I feel there is going to have to
3 be a combined working relationship in order to make things
4 happen for our students.

5 Students will also will have to be a part
6 of the process. Students are individuals. They have
7 their own strengths and weaknesses and we have hear them
8 out. We are trying to find ways that will help our at-risk
9 students in our area. Due to limited funding and to
10 teaching staff it is going to mean a lot of changes and
11 planning in trying to make something work. At this point
12 we have students in our community who are all failing in
13 about two or three core subject areas.

14 In order for our students to succeed,
15 I feel they have to feel good about themselves. Their
16 culture is very important, and if it is recognized within
17 the system, I feel that they could successfully complete
18 their grades and go on.

19 It has been a very slow hard climb in
20 this area for First Nations to have native content in the
21 educations system. With our students lacking from
22 kindergarten on to high-school, and coming from small
23 communities, I find that our students are lacking in skills

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1 needed to continue on in their secondary education. We
2 have problems in our community of students not being able
3 to join the extra curricular activities because of the
4 busing schedules and again funding.

5 Children enroled into kindergarten
6 often do not have the basic skills needed for kindergarten.

7 I feel someday we will have a pre-school started in our
8 community so they will have a good start. A solid
9 foundation for them to continue on.

10 Having the professional help in our area
11 is very slow. If there is a problem that the teacher
12 and parents feel should be assessed, it is a very slow
13 process. This is another set-back for the student,
14 because of not having the program for the student readily
15 available.

16 I would like to give an example. We had
17 a student that the teacher and parents were aware there
18 was a problem. In contacting the district -- they have
19 to come up from the interior of B.C. -- now, at that point
20 they were in the process of changing -- the person who
21 was there at present was leaving and they were going to
22 be replaced -- it took months upon months. It was a
23 set-back and I see these students failing because they

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1 just don't have the programs set-up immediately if
2 possible.

3 The problem of not having parental
4 support is still there. We have parents who still shy
5 away from the schools. There is a desperate need for
6 communication between the teachers and First Nations
7 parents. This is a very, very important area. I find
8 that we don't have that communication in Watson Lake and
9 something has got to be done in order for our students
10 to succeed in this system in Watson Lake. There has to
11 be a working relationship with all key people involved
12 to have our students succeed in this fast-changing world.

13 I would also like to stress the
14 importance of support for all students, even at the
15 post-secondary level. We have students out there who
16 don't have support. They get very limited funding, of
17 course. They just get by, and if not, are struggling to
18 make ends meet.

19 I would like to end on that. I would
20 like to read this:

21 "Great spirit show us the way of wisdom and give us the
22 strength to follow it without
23 fear."

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1 Thank you.

2 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:**

3 Questions?

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** You

5 raised many issues and I'll just open up on two of them.

6 A pre-kindergarten, or operation-head-start, or
7 readiness, or whatever word we want to use for that type
8 of, well, when students from two cultures move into one
9 stream and the one culture is going to be the dominant
10 one and the other one is not going to be the dominant one
11 -- What moves have been taken by way of any pre-kindergarten
12 head-start or whatever --

13 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Within our community?

14 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Within
15 your community are there?

16 **DEBBIE GROAT:** At this point we don't
17 really have anything in place, but we have utilized the
18 day-care program in our band office where we had the
19 day-care worker there also do kind of like a pre-school
20 teaching where they were taught the basics like colours,
21 number and stuff like that. So, they had a bit of a start.

22 What I would like to see though is
23 something more thorough, I guess, in getting them ready

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1 for the kindergarten regular class.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Is it a
3 language problem? Do they enter kindergarten without an
4 knowledge of english and this has to be picked-up, or is
5 it another range of skills that they haven't run into
6 --

7 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Well, I would say a lack
8 of the language skills. It is very limited in the northern
9 communities. If you live outside Laird and you come back
10 you really realize those things. It's very, very limited
11 because people don't leave. They can't afford to leave
12 to begin with and it's just the way it is.

13 I would like to see something for the
14 younger students to start the process of attacking the
15 drop-out rate. We should have a good foundation. I would
16 like to see everybody treated equally and fairly.
17 Parental support is very important and I would like to
18 see that happening because they are their children.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** At what
20 age does the drop-out problem become acute and is it any
21 different between boys and girls?

22 **DEBBIE GROAT:** I can't give you that
23 rate at this point. But, I do know that around the grade

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1 10, say 14 - 15 year ages, is when we have our most
2 drop-outs.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** The other
4 question I wanted to raise was, parents shy away from
5 schools, was your phrase, and I understood it to mean in
6 Watson Lake, that the aboriginal parents did not feel that
7 they were very connected with the school in Watson Lake.
8 I may be putting words in you mouth but --

9 **DEBBIE GROAT:** I could say that, yes,
10 and also, I hear from teachers and school personnel that
11 if the parents are involved, most definitely there is going
12 to be more done in order for the students to succeed.

13 But, like I said, I have problems. In
14 speaking with parents they say they feel intimidated or
15 they don't speak at the level they are at, and that could
16 be easily done. We can all speak at any level to anyone.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I suppose
18 it is especially hard with the parents though in Lower
19 Post.

20 **DEBBIE GROAT:** We don't have too much
21 of a problem there with parents.

22 It almost seems like you go over and over
23 the mission school syndrome. Anywhere, it is there. It

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1 is there and in speaking with different parents it is there.

2 It is hard to bring them out. They already feel very
3 shy. It is really hard to try to get people to come out.

4 I feel that if we can work it with the teaching staff,
5 and to a certain point we are with my position, and Phoebe
6 Lewis's from Watson Lake. I still feel that we have to
7 have more done with the teaching staff in the school.

8 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:**

9 Approximately what percentage of the
10 teaching staff in the schools of Watson Lake are
11 aboriginal, and approximately what percentage of students
12 are aboriginal?

13 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Right off hand, we have
14 two native language teachers in both schools at this point
15 in time, and I don't know the exact percentage. There
16 are very, very few native people within the system here.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Roughly
18 what percentage of the students would be aboriginal?

19 **DEBBIE GROAT:** I would say we have 20
20 or 30 per cent.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Twenty,
22 thirty per cent, something in that order. Other than
23 language teachers, other than Kaska language teachers,

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1 there are very few aboriginal people on staff.

2 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Yes.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That
4 makes it tougher. There is no one place to start with
5 these, but it's not easy.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I just
7 have one question. You said students need to feel good
8 about themselves, and then you said, you need native
9 content in curriculum. Other than that, what is it going
10 to take to make the students feel good about themselves?
11 What do you think?

12 **DEBBIE GROAT:** We have always spoken
13 about the different ways in which to help them, like build
14 their self-esteem. A lot of the time, life-skills comes
15 into our conversations. In order to build their
16 self-esteem, they can focus on their strengths. A lot
17 of them don't realize what they are strong in.

18 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Who do
19 you suppose would facilitate the kinds of life-skills which
20 are needed?

21 **DEBBIE GROAT:** I would think it would
22 be combined because you are dealing with two different
23 cultures. You really have to address all students needs.

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1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** When you
2 talk about students who should feel good about themselves,
3 you are talking about aboriginal students, right?

4 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Yes, when I deal with
5 aboriginal students.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Do you
7 think the elders might have a role in teaching the students
8 some of the life-skills, or about themselves?

9 **DEBBIE GROAT:** It is done to a certain
10 extent here in Watson Lake. They have a cultural camp.
11 But, I do believe it would really benefit a lot of elders
12 as well. When you walk into the schools you see them.
13 It's almost like they don't belong. I could see where
14 they are coming from. We work in their too. It will be
15 slow.

16 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You also
17 mentioned something about the missions schools. A lot
18 of the parents of these students are a product of the
19 mission schools, similar to the residential schools?

20 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Yes.

21 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Their
22 perception, I suppose, of education is a lot different
23 then what it is for others.

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1 Thank you.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
3 very much.

4 **DEBBIE GROAT:** Thank you.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I'm now
6 going to invite the Mayor to make a presentation.

7 Before the Mayor makes his presentation,
8 I just want to announce that everyone is invited to stay
9 for lunch, and it will be served right here. Do not feel
10 as the clock approaches 12 that you need to leave. We
11 will all want to hear what his worship has to say.

12 Mayor Ravenhill.

13 **MAYOR BARRY RAVENHILL:** Thank you. I
14 would like to focus my presentation today on aboriginal
15 self-government as it affects municipalities and our local
16 bands.

17 I would like to take this time to thank
18 you for coming to Watson Lake to give us the opportunity
19 to express our views on aboriginal self-government. I
20 believe this agreement will finally enable the First
21 Nations to develop themselves as they see fit, and as their
22 right.

23 However, I am concerned with the

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1 relationship that will develop between First Nation
2 governments and municipal governments. As you are aware,
3 the Government of Canada, provincial and territorial
4 governments, and First Nations people have been
5 negotiating for many years in order to reach a successful
6 conclusion to the First Nations aspirations.

7 The obvious non-participant has been
8 municipal governments, in spite of the fact that we will
9 be on the front line with the results of most of the
10 agreements. We have been kept informed of the issues,
11 but we will not necessarily have input that may affect
12 the results. We are concerned that the final results will
13 be that we will no longer be a third level of government
14 in Canada in spite of the fact that we exist in all parts
15 of Canada and we are the most responsive level of government
16 in Canada.

17 We take care of the infrastructure which
18 keeps this country going. I do not believe that municipal
19 governments should be ignored or pushed to the side lines.

20 We have been told that the Yukon First
21 Nations would have the right to enact part of the
22 self-government agreement as they are prepared to accept
23 their responsibility. My question is, "If there is a

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1 decision made that will negatively affect the neighbouring
2 municipality, does that First Nation have to advise the
3 municipality of what they are planning to do?"

4 We try to have a five year plan of what
5 we will be doing, but in Yukon, some municipalities may
6 not exist if the Yukon First Nation people do not
7 participate. We find this situation very difficult to
8 accept and almost impossible to plan for.

9 We are encouraged by the progress which
10 has been made by all parties involved in these difficult
11 negotiations. We realize that the results will cause some
12 strain in our relationships as we adjust to the new reality.

13 But, we can overcome those difficulties if we can open
14 our minds to the aspirations of others in our community.

15 I think if we can view our actions as
16 affecting the whole community rather than as a First
17 Nations government and a municipal government, then we
18 will progress.

19 Once again, thank you for making
20 yourselves available to us and listening to our concerns.

21 First Nation self-government is very important to Yukon,
22 Canada, and of course, Yukon First Nations. We hope that
23 we will be able to live in harmony and mutual respect as

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1 a result.

2 There are a couple of other things. I
3 was just listening to Mr. Blinn and his presentation, and
4 it is not really part of what I had written down, but it
5 struck a chord.

6 When he was speaking about people
7 building houses without proper credentials. My opinion
8 is that it is something which is happening all across
9 Canada. We are adopting standards which we cannot afford
10 to live with. I think we have to kind of step back a little
11 bit and think about where we're going in some of these
12 things.

13 The other thing I would like to say to
14 the leaders of the First Nations and to the people
15 themselves here is, over the years they have been
16 negotiating, they have been negotiating with the
17 territorial, federal government, and try talking to us,
18 we live here too. We are a lot closer. We realize a lot
19 of the problems which the people have and we realize that
20 they have to be dealt with. We are here and we are able
21 and willing to try a help.

22 Thank you very much.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you

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1 very much Your Worship.

2 I think you raise a practical problem
3 that will emerge in many places if aboriginal
4 self-governments develop, as I'm sure they will. In many
5 areas they will assume responsibilities now assumed by
6 municipal governments, and school authorities as well,
7 but I'll just talk about municipal governments at the
8 moment.

9 And, that is going to require some
10 sitting down and sorting things out because of the fact
11 in many cases it won't make sense to duplicate the services.
12 In a small community you just need one road maintenance
13 operation. It could operate on the reserve and off the
14 reserve.

15 I have no doubt that these arrangements
16 will be worked out. I think it is important that everybody
17 take a common sense and rational view of these things
18 because otherwise the scarce resources won't be put to
19 the best use. Who knows in the fullness of time what may
20 develop, but as of now I can think of a number of instances
21 where it will just make all the sense in the world for
22 the band government and municipal government to just say,
23 "Okay now, how are we going to do this?" How are we going

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1 to put in a sewer and water system when we don't need two
2 sewage lagoons. I'm just using an example, and I don't
3 doubt that these arrangements will emerge. I really hope
4 that all of the people involved work a little harder than
5 they might otherwise do at the first to get over the
6 transition of problems.

7 We had a discussion of this kind at
8 Dreslin with the chief and mayor. They were just seeing
9 whether they could put this all together. They thought
10 they could when they were talking with us.

11 I think you raise a good point. I think
12 in the great of tradition of senior governments, and I
13 can say that since I worked with the senior government,
14 they tend to ignore the municipalities. When the
15 municipalities are the effective delivery arm of a whole
16 lot of programs, they may not be the financial arm, the
17 money may come from the province or the federal government,
18 but from the people's point of view it's the delivery which
19 counts and not where the dollars came from. Who is going
20 to deliver it and is it a good service? The municipalities
21 do that and we sometimes don't fully recognize it.

22 Thank you very much, Your Worship.

23 I think we'll take a break and see

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1 whether the lunch is available and then we will start with
2 Mr. George Smith, if he is available, and Mr. Steven
3 Jakesta, and anyone else who want to get into the game.

4

5 --- Lunch Recess at 11:42 a.m.

6 --- Upon resuming at 1:00 p.m.

7

8 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Good
9 afternoon. While the additional chairs are being set up
10 I will welcome you. A special welcome to the students
11 who are joining us. I will tell you a bit about who we
12 are.

13 We are two members of the Royal
14 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which is a Royal
15 Commission appointed by the federal government, last year,
16 charged with the responsibility of looking into relations
17 between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Canada,
18 under a whole series of headings; everything from
19 aboriginal self-government, to justice systems, to the
20 role of youth, the role of elders, the role of women, in
21 this relationship and in aboriginal society.

22 We have had presentations this morning.

23 We had a welcome from the Kaska Tribal Council and from

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1 Mayor Ravenhill, of Watson Lake. We had detailed
2 presentations from Chief Hammond Dick, of the Kaska Tribal
3 Council; from Ron Blinn, the Band Manager of the Liard
4 River Indian Reserve; from Debbie Groat, a community
5 education liaison worker, and by the Mayor, Barry
6 Ravenhill.

7 We are now going to move into other
8 presentations. Some of these will be from individuals,
9 and we invite anyone who wishes to make a presentation
10 to do so. It doesn't have to be written down. If you
11 would like to give us a message, I would invite you to
12 see the man in the short-sleeved shirt, under the blue
13 balloon, by the door.

14 I would invite Eileen Van Bibber to come
15 forward. Welcome.

16 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** I would like to
17 welcome the Royal Commission to Watson Lake.

18 My name is Eileen Van Bibber. I am a
19 land claims co-ordinator for the Liard Indian Band. This
20 is a brief presentation, on behalf of our members.

21 The Royal Commission Hearing, Watson
22 Lake Community Hall, May 28, 1992.

23 We are presenting six various proposals

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1 which we have been working on over several years and never
2 accomplished nothing.

3 No. 1 proposal, the Kaska Nation asks
4 for a building where craft and carvings will be made and
5 sold.

6 No. 2 proposal, the community
7 improvement of Upper Liard Village and Two and
8 Two-and-a-half Mile(ph) Village. We even got a CESO
9 representative from Victoria to come up to assist us with
10 the planning.

11 No. 3 proposal, equipment operator
12 proposal to train band members on Old Sawmill Road to Liard
13 River.

14 No. 4, Upper Liard streetscape. We ran
15 out of funding to continue the project.

16 No. 5, a proposal for job development
17 to build a cabin and cultural centre at Campbell River.

18 No. 6 is a Liard Community Hall proposal.
19 It is a proposal for funding to operate and use it for
20 an education centre and recreation. Presently there is
21 nothing down there.

22 We would like an answer and a source of
23 funding to assist the Liard First Nation. Presently there

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1 are too many alcohol and drug problems and not enough jobs
2 and training.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
4 like to ask you a few questions.

5 The acoustics in this room are not all
6 they should be. I will quickly summarize what Ms Van
7 Bibber has said.

8 They are speaking of six proposals,
9 which they have been working on over the years, and have
10 not accomplished what they would like to accomplish: a
11 Kaska Nation cultural centre, where crafts and carvings
12 could be sold; the community improvement of the Upper Liard
13 Village and Two and Two-and-a-half Mile Village; an
14 equipment operator proposal to train band members on the
15 Old Sawmill Road to Liard River; Upper Liard streetscape,
16 which is a project that, I gather, is partly completed;
17 a fifth proposal for job development to build a cabin and
18 cultural centre at Campbell River and, sixth, a Liard
19 Community Hall proposal, a proposal for funds to operate
20 and use it for an education centre and recreation.
21 Presently there are not appropriate facilities in Liard,
22 or Upper Liard.

23 May I start off by asking this. You

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1 sought some help from CESO representatives. Can you tell
2 me what a CESO representative is?

3 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** I forget his name,
4 but about 1987 there was a guy came up from Victoria to
5 assist --

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** But, it's
7 a Government of British Columbia fellow, is it?

8 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Yes.

9 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
10 right. I don't know what it means.

11 Canadian Executive Services
12 Organization.

13 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Yes.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Which one
15 of those would you think would be your top priority?

16 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** All of them.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All of
18 them. Which one is your bottom priority? All of them?

19 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** I don't have no
20 bottom priority for nothing, because we really do need
21 funding to maintain everything.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Who, in
23 your view, should the funding come from? I am not

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1 sufficiently familiar with the --

2 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** We tried various
3 grant departments, but we never seem to get no response.
4 They say, "Oh, wait until next year". How long are we
5 going to wait?

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Who have
7 you been asking?

8 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Oh, YTG; Government
9 of Canada. We even sent correspondence to Ottawa.
10 Sometimes we get ahold of the Native Council of Canada
11 for information, and the Assembly of First Nations, too,
12 but we're not moving ahead.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** The way
14 you see it, who should be helping you?

15 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** The government.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** The
17 government. The big outfit. Are you really looking at
18 Indian Affairs, or are you looking at the Yukon government
19 --

20 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** All sources.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** When you
22 ask everybody, then, obviously, nobody is responsible.

23 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** No.

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1 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Don't you
2 feel that someone is more responsible than the others?

3 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** DIA.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Pardon?

5 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** The Department of
6 Indian Affairs is responsible for Indians, but they don't
7 seem to help us.

8 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** You have
9 tried Indian Affairs for these items. You are operating
10 on behalf of the Liard Indian Band?

11 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Yes. I'm a land
12 claims co-ordinator for the band.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I am not
14 trying to put you on the spot, but does the band council
15 have any money for any of these projects?

16 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** No.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Have they
18 put any money, let's say, into the streetscape?

19 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Where would the band
20 get funding for streescapes?

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I haven't
22 any idea. I don't know whether they operate --

23 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** The band has

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1 outlived its funding.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** When you
3 say that the Upper Liard streetscape ran out of funding,
4 where did they get the first block?

5 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** We got the funding
6 through YTG. It was only so much, but we spent most of
7 it on blueprints, and consultants, and by then it's
8 finished.

9 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** So, you
10 got some money from the territorial government.

11 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Yes.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I wish I
13 could say that I could produce some money for you, from
14 Indian Affairs, the Yukon Territorial Government, or any
15 other source, but we can certainly look at it and, possibly,
16 offer some suggestions.

17 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Are the
18 bands here involved in the Pathways?

19 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** The Pathways?

20 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Yes,
21 Employment and Immigration. CEIC. They have a new
22 program which is out, called "Pathways".

23 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** But, it always has

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1 certain guidelines; some kind of proposal. It's too
2 short, or not long enough, and --

3 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Pathways
4 is a training program, but there was the NEDP program,
5 and those two proposals for funding were supposed to set
6 up boards in each province and territory, and community
7 representation, and they look at proposals. It is similar
8 to the kind that you are mentioning here.

9 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** They are always
10 telling us that they have no funding, that they ran out,
11 and stuff like that. Where do we go?

12 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Who ran
13 out? Pathways wouldn't have run out, I don't think. They
14 are just starting.

15 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** I heard of Pathways.

16 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** No?

17 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** No.

18 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I think
19 you should go and talk to your chief and ask him to start
20 asking questions about Pathways to see what is available
21 there. It is a national program and it is supposed to
22 be working right across Canada. They are supposed to have
23 aboriginal representation. They have boards, they get

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1 funding and they look at proposals. So, that is one area
2 that I would suggest you should, at least, check into and
3 explore; the Pathways program. I am surprised that one
4 of the other organizations didn't direct you to that
5 program.

6 Other than that, I see the frustration
7 which you are experiencing. When you have proposals for
8 several years, obviously, there is money coming and going,
9 and money being allocated, by some form of government,
10 for these kinds of developments, and you haven't been able
11 to access any. There is a problem somewhere.

12 All I can offer is that I know there is
13 that program, anyway.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I note in
15 the material that in 1987, 1988 and 1989 the Liard Community
16 Hall was renovated, but it hasn't been used because they
17 don't have equipment.

18 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** We don't have no
19 funding, no equipment --

20 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** How much
21 money are you talking about, for chairs, and that sort
22 of thing?

23 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** It's all listed

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1 there.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** The total
3 list. This is the operating cost.

4 For the equipment, you are looking for
5 about \$15,000. How was the hall operated before it was
6 renovated? Was there a recreation co-ordinator, or that
7 sort of thing then, or did the community sort of just run
8 it?

9 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Before the hall was
10 operated, but it wasn't fixed up right. But, right now
11 we completely renovated that hall. It's ready to go, but
12 we got no equipment, no co-ordinator to run it, and --

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Why do
14 you need more money to run a renovated hall than a
15 non-renovated hall?

16 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** It was a wreck, but
17 now it's been renovated to a proper standard and it's ready
18 to use.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
20 right. I'm not saying that a recreational co-ordinator
21 wouldn't be a good idea. I'm not arguing that at all.
22 I'm just saying that if you don't have one --

23 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** At least we could

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1 have the hall running. Get some equipment, and things
2 like that, to --

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Right.
4 But, all that needs is about \$15,000, to get some equipment,
5 some chairs and tables?

6 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Yes. But, you
7 can't let the hall run itself. You need someone to
8 co-ordinate it.

9 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** But, it
10 doesn't need to be a paid person, does it?

11 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Yes, it should be.
12 How is a person going to work for nothing?

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Because
14 you don't work all the time. You get half-a-dozen people.
15 Tell me how you worked the hall before it was renovated.
16 Did you have a paid person?

17 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** What did you say?

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I don't
19 think I understand what you are telling me. I thought
20 you were telling me that, before you renovated the hall,
21 you didn't have a paid --

22 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** We just used it for
23 meetings, and things like that, before. But, now we need

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1 recreation.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All

3 right. I can see that if you want to have a program, with
4 workshops and that sort of thing, then you need someone
5 to look after it. I agree with that. All right. I think
6 that I now have a grip on it. It's not so much to look
7 after the building, but to look after the program that
8 you need a co-ordinator.

9 **EILEEN VAN BIBBER:** Yes.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All

11 right. I think we have your story. Thank you very much.

12 I will invite Ann Bayne to come forward.

13 Welcome.

14 **ANN BAYNE:** Welcome. My name is Ann
15 Bayne. This is David.

16 **DAVID DIXON:** I am David Dixon.

17 **ANN BAYNE:** I would like to welcome the
18 aboriginal commission to Watson Lake. I would especially
19 like to welcome Viola. It's nice to see native people
20 sitting on panels, such as these, listening to native
21 issues.

22 I have a brief presentation on the issues
23 which affect people down here. I will start off with a

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1 brief history of our people; our Kaska First Nations
2 people.

3 Before the early 1800s our people lived
4 in the Yukon for approximately 50,000 years, before the
5 first coming of the non-native people to the country.
6 During this period the First Nations lived a very nomadic
7 lifestyle. They travelled all through this country.
8 They are very familiar as to how to survive in the
9 wilderness; in the harsh conditions of winter and summer.

10 They had a lifestyle which was balanced,
11 mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They
12 were very traditional. They lived spiritual principles.

13 They had a clan system; the Crowold(ph) clan system.
14 You knew who you were. You knew your responsibilities.
15 You knew what your responsibilities were to be when you
16 were a child. You knew what it meant to be a woman. You
17 knew what it meant to be a man. You knew your role in
18 the community. There was community closeness. They had
19 potlatches; sweats. They had their own doctors. They
20 had natural medicines. They had a political structure
21 that worked for our people. It was not perfect for our
22 First Nations people, however, we understood what was
23 happening. It was familiar to us.

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1 The first contact with the non-native
2 people came in the early 1800s. Our native people did
3 not know who these people were or what they were. They
4 were very strange. However, they trusted them and
5 accepted them. They guided them through the country,
6 taught them how to survive, in exchange for their guns,
7 knives, tea, sugar and other things that made life a little
8 easier for them. There were a lot of fur traders. Our
9 native people traded furs and, therefore, they made their
10 living on fur trading.

11 In the late 1896 to 1898 the goldrush
12 was on in Dawson City. Many more white people came into
13 this country looking for gold. Our native people could
14 not understand why the search for gold. Gold had little
15 value to our native people. They used to use it for stick
16 gambling, and threw it away. Copper had more value,
17 because you could make utensils and things that you could
18 use out of copper.

19 Our native people guided these people
20 on how to get to Dawson City. With the influx of more
21 whites came the disease to native people: small pox,
22 measles, TB, colds -- diseases that were foreign to us.
23 These diseases killed off many of our people.

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1 We were and still are a very distinct
2 society. Then, in the 1900s, the DIA gave the authority
3 to the mission school to change the native people; to change
4 the way the native people thought and behaved. That was
5 their chief weapon in assimilating native people.

6 An elder told me a story about how the
7 Indian agent at that time got his children to go to school.
8 He said he was trapping, living off the land, and that
9 the Department of Indian Affairs came to him, the Indian
10 agent, and told him that his kids had to go to school.

11 He said that he had to move to a community. The elder
12 said, "This is my land. I trap here. I live here. This
13 is how I know how to survive." They said, "Your kids have
14 to go to school down in Lower Post; a mission school".
15 He didn't want his children to go. He didn't want to move.

16 But, they said, "You don't care for your children". They
17 said, "What about if your children take the plane and the
18 plane crashes? What about if your children have to be driven
19 from way up here", because it was way up by Pelly Banks,
20 way up by Ross River. They said, "What about if they had
21 to travel in a vehicle and the vehicle rolled?" It was
22 very manipulating to make a move. They said, "If you move
23 to a community, we will take care of you. We will give

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1 you clothes. We will give you homes. We will take good
2 care of you." So, our elder, caring for his children very
3 much, trusted them, believed them, and moved into a
4 community.

5 You probably are well aware of the issues
6 we suffered because of the mission school. What they now
7 call it is "mission school syndrome". I have been, myself,
8 in the mission school. I am very familiar with what we
9 had to go through, what we had to face then, and what we
10 have to face now. It was very difficult in that school.
11 There was sexual abuse. You were punished for using your
12 language. You were made to feel ashamed of being Indian.
13 You cut your hair. Native people before then were very
14 proud of having long hair. They cut our hair. I would
15 say it was similar to what Hitler did to the Jews. They
16 de-humanized native people.

17 We were not allowed to speak to our
18 brothers. God forbid if you had an accident and wet your
19 bed at night. You were put to shame by wearing underwear
20 over your head and you were paraded around among your peers.
21 You were forced to eat your food. That was foreign to
22 us, again.

23 The parents who had their children taken

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1 away lost a lot of their parenting skills. Children didn't
2 learn how to parent, because they didn't have role models.
3 I, myself, struggled with parenting. I, myself,
4 struggled with alcohol. We have difficulty knowing what
5 normal is.

6 You are probably aware of the amendment
7 act of 1920. Before that, until the first world war, the
8 federal government always pretended that parents requested
9 Christian education for their children. The amendment
10 of 1920 pretense dropped by making school attendance
11 mandatory for native children. This amendment gave Ottawa
12 power to force the Indians to give up their status. The
13 object of the amendment was that there wouldn't be one
14 single Indian left.

15 In 1930 further amendments expanded the
16 DIA's powers to enforce attendance. Parents could be
17 fined or jailed. The federal government had more power
18 than the provices did with the non-native children.

19 After coming out of the mission school
20 they put us into the public schools here. You can well
21 imagine what it was like to be de-humanized; made to be
22 ashamed. You come out of a system like that and you are
23 expected to go into a public school. The non-native

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1 children had a "hay day" with the children that came out
2 of the mission school with their racial discrimination.
3 They called them "stupid, dumb Indians who didn't know
4 nothing".

5 The federal government has tried damn
6 hard to destroy the native culture. The churches and
7 federal government believed that our culture was barbaric
8 and savage. Even the missionaries, if you talk to them
9 today, still think they did a great service to their native
10 people by their mission schools. You hear blatant remarks
11 from people, making comments about the mission school,
12 and about the children who come out of the mission school,
13 still, today.

14 Our children were institutionalized.
15 You look at a jail system. You see how many native people
16 are in there. It's because of the institution. Society
17 does not want to give them a chance. It was like you were
18 in prison from the day you started kindergarten.

19 Maggie Hodginson did seminars
20 throughout Canada and she figured that 80 per cent of sexual
21 abuse happened in these mission schools. It is quite
22 evident in the Yukon that it has happened in the mission
23 school in Lower Post and in Whitehorse, at Codere(ph)

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1 Residence.

2 There is a lot of discrimination to
3 native people. The Canadian Human Rights Commission's
4 annual report in 1989 concluded that discrimination
5 against native people is at the top of the list of human
6 rights abuse in Canada, and it still is today.

7 We, the people, who have come out of the
8 mission schools, many of us, have punished ourselves.
9 We have punished ourselves through alcohol and drugs,
10 suicide, violence. We do not take it out on the
11 department, we take it within. We were always taught when
12 we were children to respect people. Respect is the
13 foundation of our culture. We showed respect. We have
14 given respect. We have not got it in return.

15 In 1923 the DIA banned potlatches;
16 banned all ceremonies. You were told you were going to
17 go to jail if you practised the culture. They started
18 registering Indians.

19 From April 1942 to December 1943 the
20 Alaska Highway came in. This is the fiftieth year
21 celebration of the Alaska Highway. It has brought good
22 things, but it has brought a lot of bad. There were 34,000
23 construction workers who came into the Yukon to build the

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1 Alaska Highway. The lifestyle was changing very rapidly
2 for native people. There was more alcohol; more racial
3 discrimination. Our people started working for money,
4 guiding them. There was more family breakdown. There
5 were more diseases: dysentery, hepatitis, mumps,
6 measles, polio. So, the highway brought a lot of grief
7 to our people.

8 In 1950 our Department of Indian Affairs
9 appointed the hereditary chief for the Liard Indian Band.
10 The hereditary chief has been in question in the
11 leadership of the Liard Indian Band for years. Our people,
12 our elders, say that there is no custom as a hereditary
13 chief. There is no custom. It is not the Athabaskan
14 custom to have a hereditary chief.

15 Our elders say that before the DIA came
16 the way that they had a chief -- they had one chief whom
17 they speak of. He wasn't doing his job and the people
18 got together, through consensus, and decided they needed
19 a new leader. By themselves, they appointed a new leader,
20 whose name was Old Chief. They talked very kindly of Old
21 Chief, because he treated his people equally. He
22 respected his people. He listened to his people. He
23 talked for his people and not against his people.

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1 In 1951 the DIA registered Indians in
2 the Yukon. The DIA allowed natives to remove names from
3 register, in other words, enfranchised. You had to remove
4 your name in order to vote. You had to remove your name
5 in order to go to public schools. You had to remove your
6 name in order to drink.

7 In 1961 the Department of Indian Affairs
8 amalgamated certain bands. They amalgamated the Nelson
9 River, Lower Post, Francis Lake and Pelly Lake to form
10 the Liard Indian Band. We are talking about 1961. Our
11 people were not experts in the English language at that
12 time. It was a foreign language. They did not understand
13 what was happening. I can probably bet that they were
14 manipulated to amalgamate these bands.

15 In 1965 the DIA appointed the present
16 hereditary chief of the Liard Indian Band. The leadership
17 question has been a longstanding issue. There have been
18 attempts made to change the leadership; to change from
19 a hereditary system to an elected system.

20 It was brought out in the 1989 General
21 Assembly the question of the leadership. At that assembly
22 a motion was passed to have election of councillors,
23 because our councillors are all appointed, however,

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1 nothing was done to resolve that.

2 In the 1990 General Assembly the issue
3 of the longstanding leadership question came up again.
4 Nothing was resolved. Nothing.

5 In 1991, at the General Assembly at
6 Venison Lake, the question came up again. At that assembly
7 the people voted unanimously to hold a referendum for
8 October 1991. The CYI chair would oversee and head-up
9 the referendum committee. However, in her attempts to
10 contact the leadership, she couldn't contact them, so she
11 abandoned her position.

12 Therefore, a meeting was held on
13 November 29, 1991, with the Liard membership at large to
14 see what steps we could take to proceed with the referendum.
15 The members selected two non-residents to be the
16 referendum committee. We selected these two
17 non-residents because of the impartiality to the issue,
18 and they would have no vested interest in the outcome of
19 the situation.

20 David and I contacted the Department of
21 Indian Affairs. We contacted them, first, in October and
22 asked them if they would recognize the results of the
23 referendum. They said that their hands were tied, that

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1 they couldn't get involved because it was internal. We
2 went back again, a couple of months later, and asked them
3 again to recognize the results of the referendum. They
4 said, yes, they would recognize the results of the
5 referendum, but they put very stringent criteria on us,
6 under the Indian Act, which governs native referendums.

7 The criteria was that we must have 51
8 per cent of all eligible registered voters voting in favour
9 of change. Those who were unable to make it to the poll
10 on April 30th, their vote was considered to be "No".

11 Where else do they have such stringent
12 criteria? Quebec is talking about separation. Do they
13 have this criteria?

14 The people went to the polls on April
15 30th, 1992. The question was: Should the Liard Indian
16 Band have an elected chief and council? The results were:
17 218 voted yes; 68 voted no; 1 rejected. We did not meet
18 the DIA requirement of 236 votes. We had 218. We did
19 this referendum with one arm tied behind our backs. We
20 asked, through letters and correspondence, for our chief
21 to become involved and be a part of making up the rules.
22 We invited him to each meeting that we held, because there
23 were several meetings held throughout. We had media

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1 attention. We made sure it was covered. I had interviews
2 with the media, explaining to the people what a referendum
3 was.

4 It was very difficult because only about
5 55 per cent of the eligible voting members live in the
6 Watson Lake area. The rest live in Whitehorse or outside
7 of Canada. We couldn't get addresses to mail to these
8 people living outside. I approached the band office.
9 I approached CYI and the DIA. We couldn't get any
10 addresses. They suggested that we have a fax vote.
11 Following the DIA, we had a fax vote on an advance poll.

12 The funds for this referendum were
13 raised by the people. Although it was a band issue, a
14 leadership issue, they were raised by the people through
15 fundraising events. The DIA would not fund it; the band
16 would not fund it.

17 After the results of that referendum,
18 we knew we did not reach the DIA requirement. They told
19 us that we had options. One of the options was that we
20 could hold another referendum. So, we held another
21 referendum. Yesterday was the advance poll for that.
22 June 4th was to be the final polling day.

23 The funding for the second one came,

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1 again, from the band; not from the band, but from the band
2 members. The people themselves have come up and raised
3 the money.

4 If the majority of people vote "Yes" on
5 the second referendum, we are prepared to go ahead and
6 have an elected chief and council. I phoned the DIA with
7 questions, but I did not get my questions answered. It
8 appears that they do not know what to do, either, in this
9 situation.

10 All we want, the Liard Band members, the
11 majority, is to have a choice in our leadership. We are
12 not against the individuals who are leading us. We are
13 not against the families. However, it is taken very
14 personally. We are against the system. It's not working
15 for our people. It is the system.

16 With talks of land claims
17 self-government, our people need to be kept up-to-date
18 and be involved with what is happening. Previous to this
19 we have never had any meetings. There is no accountability
20 to membership.

21 You hear about the Indian Act being
22 abolished. You look at our situation. With that
23 criteria, it should be abolished. Our first referendum

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1 should have been recognized, because of the wide majority.

2 But, they complain. They say, "Since when did the DIA
3 become involved in internal matters?" If the DIA did not
4 get involved and say they would recognize the results of
5 the referendum, I'll tell you what would happen. With
6 such a large majority, and the present leadership not
7 willing to move, you would have violence. I do not condone
8 violence, or encourage anybody to get involved in violent
9 behaviour, because it does not answer any questions.
10 There is animosity in the community between those who vote
11 "Yes" and those who vote "No".

12 The native people are not only harrassed
13 by the non-natives about their colour, their nationality,
14 their ethnic background, they are harrassed by their own
15 people. I am a direct descendent of the Pelly Banks First
16 Nation and I am very proud of that, but I do not like
17 remarks, such as, "Go back home". I am a First Nations
18 person and I will live where I choose to live.

19 It seems that if you speak out against
20 the system you are accused of interfering, or threatened
21 with your job, as I was. It was put in the paper that
22 I was interfering. I have a right to be involved. I am
23 a band member of the Liard Indian Band.

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1 I agree with open meetings. Meetings
2 should be held, but meetings where people don't have to
3 feel intimidated or put down for who they are.

4 There is a good thing that I see
5 happening with this issue. The good thing I see happening
6 through this process is that more people are getting
7 involved in their political affairs and starting to speak
8 out and not taking abuse from the non-native, or natives,
9 of their own kind. It has unified more people. People
10 are getting stronger.

11 The DIA has interefered with native
12 people's lives from day one. Our people are still bound
13 to the Indian Act. The natives here are stuck between
14 a rock and a hard place.

15 I say that the native people here are
16 not ready for land claims or self-government because of
17 our dysfunctions. In order to have land claims or
18 self-government, I really believe that we need healthier
19 people and healthier communities. I believe it should
20 be role modelled at the top, from our leadership. We
21 should have a leadership that is healthy, a leadership
22 that is in recovery, and sober.

23 As you can see, the people here have

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1 struggled. Some of the recommendations that I have are,
2 instead of panels to study native people, they should have
3 funding to help native people to start their healing
4 process, because of the long abuse. We need to talk of
5 our pain in order to let it go.

6 I was working for a project, a project
7 that has been long-needed in the Yukon. It was a project
8 called "Deninisididon(ph)". "Deninisididon" is a Kaska
9 word for "people waking up". It's a project of the Yukon
10 Indian Women's Association. It started in 1990.

11 The funding came from the CIC. The
12 mandate from CIC was that we go to three communities.
13 The three communities were Watson Lake, Perry
14 Crossing(ph), and Burwash Landing. The project had a
15 holistic approach to healing. We must heal ourselves
16 mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, thereby
17 what we call following a self-care plan, starting with
18 "self".

There are self-development workshops
19 that have been going to this community for the last two
20 years. I was a trainer, coming to this community, for
21 the last two years, delivering these workshops. Some of
22 the workshops that we have delivered were: self-esteem,
23 anger management, communications, adult children of

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1 alcoholics, cultural awareness, grieving, assertiveness,
2 self-care, and several other workshops.

3 The first phase of this project was to
4 work on self-development. The second phase was to go into
5 more of the social issues, like the mission school
6 syndrome, more into ACOA, sexual abuse, and those issues.
7 The goal for Deninisididon is to have healthier
8 communities.

9 At every CYI General Assembly there are
10 resolutions passed for social development in the
11 communities. However, Deninisididon struggled with
12 funding. We had to close our doors in April for six weeks
13 because we did not have funding. I believe that the
14 funding should come from the Department of Indian Affairs
15 to start healing the mess that they have created.

16 My views on the Liard Indian Band are
17 not the views of the staff of Deninisididon. They are
18 my personal views.

19 Another recommendation I would suggest
20 is native treatment centres. That not only covers alcohol
21 treatment, but other issues that we face, such as ACOA,
22 co-dependency, the mission schools and sexual abuse. I
23 went to a treatment centre in Powmakers(ph) in 1990. I

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1 dealt with my alcoholism, but I came back and had a lot
2 of other issues to face, because everything else came up
3 top for me. It was a struggle.

4 We badly need treatment centres that
5 will deal with these other issues, not just alcohol. You
6 are not better just because you deal with your alcohol
7 abuse.

8 Another recommendation I have is to
9 teach culture in our schools. We need more culture. They
10 should have sharing circles with our children. Children
11 should start talking about -- and not be afraid to talk
12 about -- their feelings. I see the Ross River
13 drummers here this morning. It brings me great pride to
14 see our young people practising our culture.

15 They should have more cross-cultural
16 workshops to inform both the natives and non-natives about
17 the issues and about native people's lives, because it
18 appears that a lot of the non-natives are very ignorant
19 to what native people have gone through.

20 Hammond was saying, "Look at the DIA
21 structure". You look at the DIA structure. You look at
22 CYI's structure. You can gather your own conclusions.

23 In closing, I would like to say that we,

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1 the native people, are a very unique people. There is
2 no other culture in the whole world like the native culture.
3 It is very distinct. I am very proud of my people here
4 who have gone into recovery and are maintaining their
5 sobriety.

6 I thank you.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
8 you. You have outlined a good number of issues. You also
9 made some comment about land claims and self-government.
10 What do you say to a proposition which says that a number
11 of these issues might be resolved if there was effective
12 self-government, based upon a land claims settlement for
13 the Kaska people? Then they would be, at least to a
14 considerable extent, operating their own schools, or they
15 could, and then culture could be taught in that way, and
16 native treatment centres could be operated and engage in
17 conversations with non-native school boards and other
18 people for cross-cultural workshops, and the like. You
19 get the idea of the case I am driving at. Furthermore,
20 it would probably solve all questions about hereditary
21 chiefs and elected chiefs, since those aspects of the
22 Indian Act would not apply, I am sure, to aboriginal
23 self-government. Is that a logical next step, or is it

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1 just too facile an answer to what you are saying?

2

3 **ANN BAYNE:** Yes, it is. It is too --
4 whatever the word was that you used.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Why do
6 you think it wouldn't work, if I can put it that way?

7 **ANN BAYNE:** I think the issue of the
8 leadership has to be resolved. People here are tired of
9 waiting. They are tired of waiting for research,
10 research, research; study, study, study; look into it,
11 look into it, look into it. It is too long. That's why
12 we are doing what we have to do. We are going to have
13 a second referendum and then we're going into elections.
14 We are not going to wait for the Department of Indian
15 Affairs, because we will wait forever.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That
17 sounds like good advice to your people, to go ahead with
18 a second referendum, if you think it could dispose of the
19 matter. On the narrow question of the referendum -- the
20 voters' list -- do you think you are able to establish
21 how many people of your nation are in the Yukon and British
22 Columbia, or, let's say, the Yukon, British Columbia and
23 the Northwest Territories, and how many are elsewhere in

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1 Canada or the world? I think you really have a case when
2 you say that somebody is running an election on a voters'
3 list with people who may well be in New York or in Hong
4 Kong. While it is reasonable to allow someone to have
5 a vote if they live in Watson Lake, or if they live in
6 the next province, or living at Lower Post, it is
7 unreasonable to say that they should have a vote if they
8 live in Toronto.

9 **ANN BAYNE:** That's right.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Somehow
11 you need to get a voters' list which allows the list to
12 be a real list. In a federal election, if I live in New
13 York I don't get a vote. In a Yukon territorial election,
14 if you live in Vancouver you don't get a vote.

15 While the Kaska Nation is not bounded
16 by the Canadian political boundaries, it is de facto
17 bounded by the southern Yukon, western Northwest
18 Territories, northern British Columbia, and that's pretty
19 well it. People who live in Toronto have sort of dropped
20 their contact with the Kaska Nation, except in a cultural
21 sense. But, from the point of view of having a voice in
22 the government, you wouldn't expect to have a voice in
23 the Government of the Yukon if you lived in Toronto.

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1 **ANN BAYNE:** That's right.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** It's a
3 little difficult to see why you should have a voice in
4 the government of the Kaska Nation. This doesn't mean
5 you stop being a Kaska and share in their language and
6 culture, their history, their myths, and all the things
7 which make us people. But, that is quite a different
8 thing, in saying that you should be participating in
9 government.

10 Do you have any way of knowing where
11 these people live? I know you said that you couldn't get
12 the voters' list --

13 **ANN BAYNE:** I couldn't get the
14 addresses, yes. They are from here, to the States, to
15 all through Canada. I don't keep track of where our people
16 go.

17 There is another interesting thing that
18 I would like to mention. On the second referendum, the
19 simple majority votes. Why couldn't they have that on
20 the first one?

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That's a
22 fair point. There are a couple of provisions in the Indian
23 Act which have this double referendum system for the sale

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1 of land from reserves. But, don't ask me to explain the
2 Indian Act.

3 **ANN BAYNE:** No.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I think
5 there is a general belief that the Indian Act ought to
6 be either repealed or changed in a major way, since it
7 isn't working.

8 We have been on our trail and we can't
9 find a friend of the Indian Act -- not one -- except a
10 few people who say, "Well, don't repeal it right away.
11 We have to work our way out of it." But, nobody says,
12 "We would like to see the Indian Act unchanged twenty years
13 from now". We haven't heard a sole say that and we don't
14 think we are likely to. We take your point.

15 You think that the next one will be on
16 a straight majority?

17 **ANN BAYNE:** Yes.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That may
19 resolve itself, then.

20 **ANN BAYNE:** I hope so.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
22 like to ask one or two more questions.

23 I chuckled when you said that animosity

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1 surrounded elections. That is not confined to aboriginal
2 society.

3 **ANN BAYNE:** I know.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I can
5 think of an election or two that I have been involved in.

6 I think I have, effectively, asked you
7 this question, but I will ask it again. Do you see the
8 negotiation by the Kaska Nation, whatever that may mean
9 for these purposes, or perhaps the Liard River Indian Band
10 -- and I am right in saying that is a band, is it?

11 **ANN BAYNE:** Yes.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** -- seeing
13 either the Kaska Nation or the Liard River Indian Band
14 negotiating a First Nations agreement under the agreement
15 in principle, now under the umbrella agreement? Do you
16 see that? Four or five are now negotiating that. Do you
17 see that as a likely outcome in the next short while?

18 **ANN BAYNE:** I wouldn't be able to tell
19 you that. I don't know. It could help, but I can't answer
20 that.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
22 right. I will stop and allow my colleague to get into
23 it.

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1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I want to
2 thank you for your presentation and the things that you
3 have raised here.

4 I don't have any questions for you. I
5 don't have any questions at all, but I want to say that
6 I think you have made some good, sound recommendations
7 here. I think they are recommendations that will be highly
8 supported by a lot of other communities across Canada.

9 When you say that you need funding to
10 start a healing process, and that the DIA should be
11 responsible, and that they have to heal the damage that
12 they have done, I think that is a statement which hits
13 it right head-on. I think that is a good recommendation.

14 The other one that you made on native
15 treatment centres, everybody wants native treatment
16 centres, for the very reasons that you expressed, as well
17 as teaching culture in our schools, as well as
18 cross-cultural relations. I think those are key. The
19 things that you recommended are very key recommendations
20 that are going to begin some form of a solution for our
21 people and the non-aboriginal people. Cross-cultural
22 relations are very, very important, which have been lacking
23 all along.

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1 Those are very sound recommendations.

2 I want to thank you again.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
4 like to ask one more question. This has to do with the
5 residential schools and that sad, sad portion of Canadian
6 history. Do you have any thoughts that you would like
7 to leave with us on what could be done about this, or what
8 should be done about it?

9 **ANN BAYNE:** About the residential
10 schools?

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Right.
12 Should the story get out more? Should there be an effort
13 to get the story out, or should there be an effort to say,
14 "Well, that is behind us. We will never forget it, but
15 it is behind us and we should now try to deal with the
16 casualties"? They are not mutually exclusive. It is not
17 either, or. Have you got a thought for us?

18 **ANN BAYNE:** With regard to the mission
19 schools, one of the things I recommended would be in part
20 of the treatment, but also community support sharing
21 circles, where people who have been to mission schools
22 would gather together and have a support group.

23 With regard to your question about

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1 making it public, yes, my opinion would be to make it public
2 and let the world know what the Department of Indian Affairs
3 and the missionaries have done to our people.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
5 very much. That was a very powerful and helpful
6 presentation.

7 I would now like to invite Mr. George
8 Smith.

9 We will just take a two-minute stretch.
10 It is getting a little warm in this room. --- Short recess
11 at 2:00 p.m.

12 --- Upon resuming at 2:10 p.m.

13 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER,**
14 **INTERPRETING FOR GEORGE SMITH:** We would like to talk to
15 you about our First Nations self-government, according
16 to our elders. There were some self-government issues
17 that were carried on by our elders a long time ago.

18 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

19 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** A long
20 time ago, before the coming of the white people, our people
21 used to meet together to develop our own self-government
22 system. He will talk on that again.

23 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

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1 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** A long
2 time ago, at these gatherings, when the people all met
3 together, they had a place where people, before they had
4 meetings, they prayed together on the decisions they were
5 going to make. They gathered to play together and to have
6 a lot of fun. They gathered to talk about the animals
7 and their different territories that they come from.

8 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

9 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** The Kaska
10 Nation is a very big nation. Our people have been
11 scattered all over. Because it is such a big nation, these
12 meetings were very important gatherings. The people came
13 together at least once a year.

14 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

15 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** At these
16 gatherings, our elders prepared our people. They knew
17 there was the coming of the white people, that they were
18 going to come, before it happened. The elders spoke to
19 our people and said, "Wherever you come from, look after
20 your land, because there are going to be a lot of white
21 people entering our country. You have to look after your
22 land for your kids."

23 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

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1 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They also
2 encouraged our people to look after our country in our
3 own ways. Before the coming of the white people we had
4 set ways to encourage our children and our people to
5 continue to live the ways of the old.

6 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

7 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** The
8 elders had spoken that when there are too many white people
9 living within our country, it is up to our people to start
10 to do some work together, with the white people, because
11 we have to learn how to work together. They also said
12 that we have to learn to work together to look after our
13 many resources of the land. One of our traditions in our
14 native culture is that we have to respect our land as well
15 as respecting everything in life.

16 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

17 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** A long
18 time ago, our elders met together about the resources.
19 We have not only the minerals and our animals. They said
20 a long time ago that white people had come into our country
21 and just about wiped out all the beaver, so they gathered
22 and spoke on how to care for our resources, like furs,
23 and things like that.

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1 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

2 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** A long
3 time ago, they met with the government people from Ottawa,
4 and that was the first time they heard about Ottawa, too.
5 So, they met with the government from Ottawa to talk about
6 these issues.

7 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

8 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Not very
9 long ago, Indian Affairs came and stated that they would
10 help the Indian people with taking care of the native
11 people. The elders believed that they just wanted our
12 land, so they weren't really participating with Indian
13 Affairs then.

14 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

15 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** One of
16 the things that really affected our elders was when Indian
17 Affairs had taken the children from the bush to put them
18 into a boarding school. They said it was since then that
19 our elders had mistrust the white people. They think it
20 was a terrible thing that they had done to our elders.

21 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

22 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** The
23 elders were very hurt by what Indian Affairs had done to

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1 our children. The parents were saying, "Why would they
2 do that? Why would they teach our children a different
3 culture?" Indian Affairs had said to them that it was
4 proper for them to learn English.

5 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

6 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** When they
7 put the children in school, we were not allowed to speak
8 our own language. We were told only to speak in English,
9 because the Indian language was not proper and it was bad
10 for you to do so. They encouraged the children and the
11 parents to speak only the white language and their own
12 white culture, because they believed that native culturer
13 was evil and bad.

14 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.) --

15 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They had
16 removed our people from the various camps they had, out
17 on the land, and moved them into little portions of land,
18 which they called "land set aside", or "reserved land",
19 just for native people. It was just a small, little area.

20 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

21 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** When they
22 were moved to the reserves, the Indian people didn't know
23 where they fit in. They couldn't speak the English

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1 language for a while. They didn't know the white culture
2 very well. They had absolutely nothing, so they started
3 drinking a lot of alcohol. They didn't know where their
4 children would fit in, because their children spent most
5 of their time at boarding school.

6 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

7 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** It was
8 very hard for our elders to learn the white customs. They
9 wondered why we had to learn all the culture of the other
10 person. Why couldn't the white people learn our culture,
11 because we helped them when they came into the country?
12 We helped them find their food, and helped them to survive.
13 They just wanted to know why it wasn't the other way
14 around, too, because, to them, trying to live in another
15 culture was very hard, especially because they didn't know
16 the language.

17 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

18 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Although
19 Indian Affairs didn't ask the Indian people how they should
20 write the Indian Act, they wrote the Indian Act on their
21 own behalf. They did not ask any of our people for their
22 input. They couldn't understand why Indian Affairs could
23 do that. They couldn't understand why we were put on a

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1 little reserve, or land set aside for the native people,
2 when all the land was supposed to belong to our elders.

3 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

4 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They
5 wanted to know, when they said "land set aside", that was
6 not reserved land. They wanted to know why it was like
7 that. They didn't understand what was the difference
8 between land set aside and reserved land.

9 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

10 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Under the
11 Indian Act, Indian Affairs had set specific goals for the
12 Indian people. What the elders and the Indian people are
13 saying today is that we would like to have a chance to
14 write our own policies, or our own programs.

15 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

16 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Under
17 that program is the housing program, that they are very
18 concerned about. They said, "How could we pay for our
19 own housing program when we don't even have jobs?"

20 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

21 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They are
22 saying that, under the program, there is some training
23 that they would like to see; training, specifically, that

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1 would interest the native people. They don't want this
2 training to be done between Indian Affairs and native First
3 Nations, but between the federal government and the First
4 Nations directly.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I didn't
6 understand the last point.

7 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They
8 wanted some training on interests that they would have.
9 They would like it to be a direct contact from the federal
10 government. I am sorry, not training, programs. Some
11 program development that Indian Affairs doesn't have to
12 be involved with. What we are saying is that the federal
13 government be involved with the First Nations directly.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
15 right.

16 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

17 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** I would
18 like to talk about my own First Nation. I am from the
19 Pelly Banks First Nation and I would like to say something
20 about that.

21 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

22 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Pelly
23 Banks was a very big community where I came from a long

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1 time ago. Since they have moved all our people away from
2 there, and now that they want to move back, Indian Affairs
3 has said that their community wouldn't be recognized.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** What
5 community is this?

6 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Pelly
7 Banks. It was a long time ago. In the 1940s or 1950s,
8 there were a lot of people still living there. It was
9 in about 1956. Then Indian Affairs moved the people away
10 from there. It's on the Campbell Highway. It's just at
11 the mouth of the Campbell Highway and the Ross River, or
12 the Pelly River. The people of Ross River had a community
13 there. There was a trading post there; a Hudson's Bay
14 trading post.

15 But, since Indian Affairs had moved the
16 people out of that community, they are not recognizing
17 that place as a community any more. They don't recognize
18 people from Pelly Banks any more.

19 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

20 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** This
21 concern was brought up at the First Nations Assembly last
22 year. Our First Nations leader had recognized that our
23 people did belong there, and they are recognized, our

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1 people of Pelly Banks. Even the Ross River Kaska-Dene
2 have supported them in saying that they are the people
3 of Pelly Banks.

4 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

5 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** We met
6 with Indian Affairs in Ross River about this issue last
7 month. We just stated to them our concern about our land.
8 We would like to move back to our land. Indian Affairs
9 was saying that they couldn't do that, because they don't
10 recognize that band.

11 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

12 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Indian
13 Affairs talked to them about the many policies that they
14 have in the development of new bands, but this is not a
15 new band that they were talking about.

16 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

17 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Because
18 the people of Pelly Banks were not registered as a nation
19 in 1940, when they had registration of native people,
20 because they didn't have anyone registered there, Indian
21 Affairs will not recognize the Pelly Banks people as a
22 nation. They just believe that Pelly Banks is a new
23 nation. It's not.

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1 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

2 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** When we
3 spoke to our elders about what Indian Affairs had said,
4 our elders were saying, "Why are Indian Affairs saying
5 this? This is our land. We have lived on this land for
6 many years; many centuries. Why are they saying they
7 cannot recognize us as people?"

8 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

9 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** He said
10 that as we speak to you today, I hope you would make
11 recommendations that you would recognize our Pelly Banks
12 as a nation. We hope that you will say something on our
13 behalf.

14 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

15 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:**
16 Policies. I'm not really familiar with the things he is
17 talking about. It's the policies that you would help with.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
19 right.

20 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

21 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They also
22 want your assistance because the policies which Indian
23 Affairs have at the moment are not very good for the Pelly

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1 Banks First Nation, because they are not recognized. They
2 have no --

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Could I
4 ask a question here? I am not quite sure I understand
5 the problem.

6 Are you -- the people from Pelly Banks,
7 if I have got the name right -- recognized as status
8 Indians?

9 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** You are
11 a part of the Ross River Band, and you want to be a separate
12 band.

13 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** No.
14 What they are saying is that they were a separate band.

15 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Right?

16 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They were
17 called the Pelly Banks Indian Band before. Then Indian
18 Affairs, because there were no more stores left, they had
19 moved the people from Pelly Banks to Ross River. What
20 the people want today, according to George, is that the
21 people from the Pelly Banks would like to move back into
22 their own country, to develop their own community.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** And be

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1 separately recognized as a separate band?

2 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes, the
3 band that was there before.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Yes.
5 You weren't enumerated in 1940, were you?

6 **GEORGE SMITH:** No.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** When they
8 did a census, if I may call it that -- an enumeration of
9 all the treaty Indians -- for some reason the Pelly Banks
10 Band was not on the list, or was regarded as a part of
11 the Ross River group. The error was made, at least. You
12 were lumped together and moved.

13 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** And now
15 you want to go back and be separate.

16 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** At that
17 time, he is saying that it was the Pelly Lake Band and
18 the Francis Lake Band that were recognized by Indian
19 Affairs. They were bands of people that were not
20 recognized by Indian Affairs today.

21 You see, my husband comes from the
22 Francis Lake area. He belongs to the Francis Lake Band.
23 His number was 67. Or, No. 7.

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1 I am from Pelly Banks, myself. I was
2 born at the mouth of Wolverine(ph) Lake. My Band No. was
3 21; Pelly Banks. Why aren't those bands recognized today?

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
5 say, "To whom is that question addressed?"

6 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That's
8 fair enough.

9 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Those are
10 the same people. They are concerned about their land,
11 because, traditionally, that's where a lot of our elders
12 came from. They are very concerned about everything.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
14 right. I'm sorry to have interrupted, but I was just
15 trying to sort that out in my mind.

16 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

17 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Where he
18 comes from, right now he works in Ross River, too. He
19 said that there they are having problems with some mining
20 people, or they have a lot of mining and development in
21 their area. They are talking with the miners now about
22 abandonment of the mines. What is going to happen with
23 the mines? What's going to happen with the clean-up?

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1 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

2 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** He says
3 that although they were close with the people at the mines,
4 as a First Nation, they don't have no money to pay for
5 their clean-ups, or for geologists and hydrologists. So,
6 they don't know what to do right now.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I'm going
8 to have to ask you to tell me what points you want to make,
9 because we have got people waiting. If you wouldn't mind
10 moving along, it would be helpful.

11 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** He is
12 almost finished.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** All
14 right.

15 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

16 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** He is
17 talking about both resources; the trees and the mining.
18 Because they don't have no funds to develop their
19 resources, they didn't know what to do.

20 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

21 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** One of
22 the first recommendations they want to make is that, as
23 nations-to-nations, they would like to start working with

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1 the federal government on some of these issues.

2 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

3 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They
4 would also like to start talking about the policies that
5 are good for the First Nations -- that reflect the needs
6 of the First Nations -- with the federal government, as
7 soon as possible.

8 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

9 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Another
10 issue is that they would like to talk about the resources;
11 the many resources that they have.

12 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

13 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** We would
14 also like to talk about our self-government. The
15 Constitution of Canada recognition, which they are
16 speaking of right now, they would like to be a part of
17 that; on self-government.

18 **GEORGE SMITH:** (Native language.)

19 **UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** He thanks
20 you very much for being here to listen to him. He said
21 that he hopes you will speak on their behalf.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
23 very much. I certainly appreciated that.

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1 I would like to invite Mr. Steven
2 Jakesta, of the Dease River Band Council, to come forward.

3 **STEVEN JAKESTA, Band Manager, Dease**

4 **River Band Council:** First of all, we would like to
5 introduce ourselves. We are Dease River Band members from
6 Good Hope Lake, B.C. My name is Steven Jakesta, and this
7 is our chief, Kevin Cardact(ph).

8 Our community is situated in northern
9 British Columbia. We would like to begin by stating that
10 we were not quite sure what kind of a presentation we should
11 give. We believe that all issues regarding native
12 concerns and endeavours are all of great significance and
13 of equal importance.

14 What we decided to present to the Royal
15 Commission are the immediate concerns we are facing within
16 our community and our homeland.

17 Our community has a population of
18 approximately 120 people, 99 per cent being native. For
19 years we have watched the Kassar(ph) asbestos mine, which
20 is forty kilometres west of our community, receive many
21 benefits, while none to our community or people.

22 From day one, with the start-up of the
23 mine, throughout the operation and now the shut-down of

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1 the mine, we have been treated like second-class citizens.
2 The asbestos was discovered by our hunters many years
3 prior to the white prospectors, who eventually sold their
4 claim to the corporation for mining. Throughout the life
5 and operation of the mine, our people have not received
6 any training or long-term employment opportunities.

7 The mine's earlier policy was to hire
8 foreigners, which they did. They brought in many people
9 from other countries. Kassar, back then, was known as
10 "Little Europe". They made us feel like aliens within
11 our homeland.

12 Now the mine is closing down. The 450
13 employees have found themselves without a job. The
14 provincial government immediately responded to the
15 situation facing the Kassar employees. The government
16 offered severance pay, moving allowance, training,
17 education, and has bought out mortgages and existing
18 business. They didn't recognize the immediate negative
19 ramifications that are facing our community when Kassar
20 is gone.

21 Although Kassar did not provide much
22 opportunity for employment or training, the town has
23 provided the community of Good Hope Lake with all the

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1 essential services. Within our community, we don't have
2 any of the essential services that most communities take
3 for granted. We need medical service, policing, postal
4 service, banking and a "helipad" infrastructure for
5 emergency response. We have in place a medical office,
6 with no equipment to address any kind of medical needs,
7 be they minor accidents or emergency situations.

8 We have met with various government
9 officials, and the response is still forthcoming. We
10 cannot wait. We need these services in place before Kassar
11 is totally gone. Even if Kassar re-opens, we won't have
12 an ambulance or another emergency support system to address
13 emergencies or critical situations. This is our immediate
14 and major concern for our community members.

15 Other concerns and issues which I would
16 like to address are: the lack of economic development
17 opportunities, resources management, and mining practices
18 within our homeland.

19 Economic development: Kassar has been
20 in operation since 1952. The mine has been the only
21 economic vehicle that has provided employment for our area.
22 Now the mine is closing down and there is no other economic
23 base for the area to rely on.

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1 The Dease River Indian Band has deep
2 concerns about the lack of employment and economic
3 activities within the community. We have opportunities
4 for future economic development, but we need financial
5 and government support, both from the provincial and
6 federal governments.

7 For example, we have a road maintenance
8 camp that, with renovations, could be brought up to
9 standards for use. This would be ideal for the road
10 contractor, who has a maintenance camp in Kassar, but now
11 has to relocate.

12 We have made it known that we are willing
13 to negotiate a lease with the Ministry of Highways, as
14 they are responsible for providing a maintenance camp for
15 their contractors. Instead, the Ministry of Highways has
16 purchased land, about 18 kilometres away from our
17 community, to establish a maintenance camp. The lack of
18 support demonstrated by the government will directly
19 affect our community, economy and structure.

20 Resource management: With regard to
21 resource management, our concern is the lack of input we
22 have as First Nations. The management and planning
23 procedures for our resources is done with the governments

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1 without our direct input. Within our homeland, there are
2 hundreds of square miles of natural resources that we need
3 to protect, enhance, and manage for the use of our people,
4 both now and for our future generations.

5 In the majority of the land, we are the
6 sole users and occupiers. The government, with its
7 various ministries, has studied and prepared management
8 plans in which we have had no input. The majority of the
9 management plans are not geared to meeting the First
10 Nations' needs or priorities. They have forced us to be
11 reactive instead of proactive. For instance, we have
12 watched where First Nations were forced to establish
13 roadblocks on logging roads to protect their interests.

14 In other instances, First Nations had
15 to fight for their fishing rights. There will be no
16 peaceful and acceptable resource harvesting for anyone
17 unless the First Nations are directly involved. What is
18 needed for the First Nations are the resources to carry
19 out resource inventory studies. We need to be a part of
20 the management and decision-making within our traditional
21 homeland.

22 Mining: For the past thirty years we
23 have seen numerous mining companies carve up our

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1 surrounding mountains, putting in roads and mines. We
2 have seen them working along our main creeks and our lakes.
3 They have invaded our backyards with their machinery and
4 mining equipment.

5 We do not oppose development. We need
6 to be a part of economic development within our traditional
7 territory. We need to maintain control on how, when and
8 where they use our backyards for their economic gains.

9 These issues are not primary concerns
10 with Kassar, specifically. We are saying that we have
11 been treated unfairly since day one: since the roads have
12 come in; since the corporation has come in. They have
13 left us out.

14 The history of the treatment of the mine,
15 and various government ministries in our part of the
16 country, has been a lack of any kind of program to make
17 sure that we were a part of development; part of the
18 decision-making process.

19 We have elders in our area who were
20 forced out of their trap-line cabins, because the ministry
21 wanted to make a park. They burnt down their cabins.
22 They destroyed their dogs. They didn't realize that was
23 the home of our elders. They lived their year-round.

StenoTran

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1 They were living their way of life. To us, that is not
2 a dead issue. This happened a few years ago and we want
3 to see compensation. There has to be compensation paid
4 to our elders.

5 With that, I would like to thank the
6 panel for hearing my presentation.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
8 very much. I suspect that some of these issues have been
9 around a while.

10 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** Exactly.

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** But some
12 of them are coming to the fore, in spades, now that the
13 Kassar mine is closing down.

14 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** That's right.

15 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Could I
16 ask you whether you have been in touch with the Department
17 of Indian and Native Affairs, or the Government of British
18 Columbia, on a couple of these issues?

19 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** Yes, we have. We are
20 in the Yukon region, and we work directly with the Yukon
21 region DIA. We have expressed our concerns and our needs
22 to them. They have passed that along. We have met with
23 other provincial and federal government officials, with

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1 no real commitment, or a sense that they are going to
2 address our needs immediately.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I don't
4 know whether I can offer any comment, but I will anyway.
5 If I had your problem on some of these issues -- and I
6 think of the highway maintenance building and activity
7 which you think you could get in your community, and it
8 looks like they're going to build a new one; they have
9 got some land and, possibly, one or two of these other
10 ones. What can be done for basic services now that Kassara
11 is closing down? If I had that problem, I would be in
12 touch with the deputy minister of the provincial government
13 department, Mr. Doug McArthur. I think it is worth a try,
14 because I know the man and I know he is sympathetic to
15 aboriginal concerns. I know that he has dealt with many
16 issues, not too different than this. I know that because
17 he was deputy minister of northern Saskatchewan in the
18 government which I was connected with, and he was recently
19 the deputy minister to Mr. Penikett.

20 I don't say that anything good will
21 happen, but I do say that it's well worth a try. I wouldn't
22 route it through Indian Affairs, if you are trying to get
23 the highways department of B.C. to do something, or if

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1 you are trying to get some basic services that were in
2 Kassar. This is not to suggest that I wouldn't try Indian
3 Affairs, but I would certainly go directly to Mr. Petter's
4 department and go to the deputy minister to see whether
5 you couldn't rattle a chain or two there.

6
7 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** We tried. It's not
8 from a lack of trying. Right now they are looking at
9 Kassar. Kassar is closing down and they are saying, "We
10 have got to address that issue". They are spending a lot
11 of resources. They are bringing people in for
12 counselling. They are providing training dollars and
13 education dollars. They are not looking 40 kilometres
14 up the road, saying, "This community is being directly
15 affected because of the closure of Kassar."

16 We wrote numerous letters and made
17 numerous telephone calls and they haven't changed their
18 plans.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I don't
20 want to be combative here, but you are probably not dealing
21 with the Department of Native Affairs when you are writing.

22 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** Yes, we have.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Are you?

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1 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** Yes.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I am not
3 being helpful, then. They probably wouldn't have much
4 responsibility for the Kassar close-down. That probably
5 comes under mining.

6 As I say, for what it is worth, I would
7 certainly have a try at McArthur.

8 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** Okay. Sure. Thank
9 you.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Do you
11 have anything further to add?

12 **STEVEN JAKESTA:** No, that about covers
13 it, for now. Thank you for letting me give my talk.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
15 for your excellent presentation.

16 At this time, I guess we have come to
17 the close of our scheduled day. I would like to take this
18 opportunity to invite any interested parties to come before
19 the Commission at this time to raise any issues which they
20 feel need raising.

21 Would anyone like to come to the
22 microphone to say a little piece? No takers? Going once,
23 going twice, three times. I guess not.

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1 Well, that brings us to the end of our
2 day here in Watson Lake. It has been a most interesting
3 and educational day for us here on the Commission. You
4 have a wonderful community here, one you can be very proud
5 of in its accomplishments to date, and one which will
6 hopefully continue to grow and flourish.

7 Thank you for your wonderful
8 hospitality, and the excellent lunch that was provided
9 for us. We have enjoyed our visit here very much, and
10 hope to see you all again soon.

11

12 --- Whereupon the hearing was ended at 3:35 p.m. on
13 Thursday, May 28, 1992.