COMMISSION ROYALE SUR LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

LOCATION/ENDROIT: **FORT SIMPSON, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**
DEH CHO HALL

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"for the record..."
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I N D E X

MAY 26, 1992

May 26, 1992 **Royal Commission on Aboriginal People**

Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories

--- Upon commencing at 9:10 a.m. on Tuesday, May 26, 1992

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Hello. I think we will begin our proceedings now. The student drummers group are just joining us. As soon as they have taken their place, we will have an opening prayer.

I am going to ask Elder for the Day, Mary Cazon, to give the opening prayer.

--- (Opening Prayer)

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much. We certainly enjoyed your presentation here and last night at the feast.

I think I will introduce my fellow Commissioners. My name is Allan Blakeney. I am one of the Commissioners of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I have with me Viola Robinson, on my left, who is also a Commissioner of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I will say a little more about Viola in a moment. We also have with us two Commissioners for the Day. On my left is Mary Cazon, whom you heard giving the opening prayer, and on my right is Gabe Cazon, who

will be with us for these hearings in Fort Simpson.

I want to explain that today's proceedings will be in the English language and they will be translated in the South Slave language by our translator, Jim Hope, who is over on the left. If you would like to hear the proceedings in South Slave, you can get one of these headsets which will be over there at the table. If some of the presenters make their presentations in South Slave, then I will certainly be using my headset in order to have it translated into English. So I tell you that they are over there on my left and that Jim Hope, who may be known to you, is doing the translating.

Jim asks me to say to the presenters that he would like them to speak fairly slowly and pause now and then so that he has an opportunity to translate. It is really not possible to translate if everyone speaks very rapidly and puts a lot of motion into what they say; there is no way anyone can do that. So, if you would, remember Jim's problems when you are making your presentation.

I first want to say how pleased we are

to be here in Fort Simpson and to thank the Chief, Chief Gerald Antoine, the Council of the Band, Mayor Michaud and the community for the warm welcome we have received.

We were out at the feast last night at that magnificent site, magnificent location. I was up at the monument, the papal monument commemorating the visit here in Fort Simpson of His Holiness the Pope in 1984. I was looking out on the confluence, the forks of the MacKenzie and the Liard Rivers, and it is just magnificent. The waters are flowing at such a rate, and you can see how fast it is flowing by seeing the miniature icebergs, the floating ice, whirling down the river; you have some idea of the size and power of the MacKenzie River.

I want to thank also the people who prepared the feast. I assume it is the women, but whoever in this community prepared that food, we certainly enjoyed it immensely.

I have already said thank you to the drummers who entertained us so well here this morning and last night. Certainly, last night they were getting everyone dancing, young and old alike. I saw one of the

Elders, she was wearing something purple, my wife says -- I don't know much about colours, but about that colour. She was reminding me of a dance of my youth called the "twist". She was certainly enjoying the dancing.

So we feel most warmly welcomed here in Fort Simpson.

I want to thank our community representative, Betty Hardisty, for making the arrangements here. It is a good deal more difficult than one thinks to make arrangements, bringing people together from outlying communities and making arrangements for all sorts of electronic gear that are not the normal course of life, either her life or mine, in order to deal with translations and other problems that go with a formal hearing.

I want to tell you a little bit about the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

You know what a royal commission is. When a government, in this case the federal government, feels that it needs more information on a problem or problems, feels that things are not going as well as they should and that somebody ought to gather in more

information and look at the problem overall and make some recommendations, then a government frequently appoints a royal commission.

That is what the Government of Canada has done. They have appointed a royal commission to look into relations between aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people in Canada.

This Royal Commission is a little bit different than some others. Many aboriginal people tell me that they have been studied many times and perhaps what they do not need is another study. This one is a bit different. This one has seven Commissioners, four of whom are aboriginal.

We have two Co-Chairs. One is Georges Erasmus, and that will be a name which will be not a strange name to you people here. As you know, Georges is a Dene from this part of the world, from the Northwest Territories. The other Co-Chair is René Dussault, and he is a Judge of the Quebec Court of Appeal.

A third Commissioner is Viola Robinson, who is sitting to my left and whom I have already introduced. She is a Micmac Indian who has just retired

as President of the Native Council of Canada. That is an organization that represents many off-reserve people of aboriginal origin, particularly in eastern Canada, but elsewhere as well.

Another Commissioner is Bertha Wilson. She is a woman who has lived in Ontario, but was born in Scotland. She is married to a United Church minister and she is famous for being the first woman in Canada to serve as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, our highest court. She has shown herself, in her judgments, to be sympathetic to aboriginal concerns.

Another is Paul Chartrand. Paul is a Métis born in Manitoba who lives in Winnipeg. He is a professor at the University of Manitoba, formerly head of the Department of Native Studies there. He has graduated from universities in Australia and also the University of Saskatchewan, which commends him, I may say.

Another is Mary Sillett. Mary is an Inuit woman from northern Labrador. She has been President of the Inuit Women's Association of Canada. She has been a Vice-President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

I am the seventh member. Some of you may know I was born in Nova Scotia, but lived most of my life in Saskatchewan. I was Premier of Saskatchewan for 11 years and I have retired from politics for four years. During the 28 years when I was in the Legislature in Saskatchewan I had many dealings with aboriginal people and their organizations. I think I gained some knowledge of their aims and aspirations.

Before I tell you what the Terms of Reference of the Commission are, I should tell you what all of these cameras are doing here. A National Film Board crew is here to record our proceedings on videotape. We hope to make a video of the proceedings of the Royal Commission, so that people will have some idea of what we did and, ultimately, why we made our recommendations. We think perhaps more people will watch the video than will read any report which we write. Reports of Royal Commissions are not bestsellers as a rule. We think that the National Film Board, who have a worldwide reputation for making documentaries, would be the best possible group we could get to record what we are doing and to make something of it, make it intelligible to people watching

a video.

I said that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was to look at relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. We are to do that, but we have been asked to look at some specific things -- a big, long list of specific things. I will try to go over it quickly.

We are to look at aboriginal self-government, what it means and how it could work.

We are to look at a land base, land claims and treaties, and they are fairly interconnected in parts of Canada.

We are to look at the Constitution of Canada. We have already made some comment on that, saying that we thought that there could be put into the Constitution an inherent right to self-government without upsetting the Constitution too much. That was something which was argued about a couple of years ago, but I am now very hopeful that an inherent right to self-government will find its way into this current package. The Royal Commission put out a reasoned commentary on that in February.

We are to look at the question -- and now I begin to talk like a constitutional lawyer -- of whether section 91(24), the one which says that the federal government has responsibility for Indians and lands reserved for Indians, means that they also have responsibility for Inuit -- I think that is fairly clear now because of legal judgments -- and Métis -- and that is not at all clear. We are hearing a number of reports of the federal government taking position saying that they are not responsible for many Indian issues, for Indians off reserves, and that is an issue arising frequently in our hearings.

We are asked to take a special look at the problems of aboriginal people who live in the north. With this in mind, we have been around at a number of northern locations. I have been at Iqaluit, Inuvik and Fort McPherson, and I am now here at Fort Simpson. Colleagues have been elsewhere, I know at Yellowknife and Whitehorse. We will be over in the Yukon, at Watson Lake and Teslin, this week. So we are having a look at problems in the north.

We are to look at the Indian Act. We

generally believe that the Indian Act should be either mightily changed or else repealed, but have a feeling that something must go in its place.

We are to look at social issues, how the life of aboriginal people might be improved socially, economically -- a viable economic base is very important -- and culturally, how aboriginal languages and cultures can be preserved and strengthened.

We are to look at educational issues. We are getting a strong thread that education is a very important aspect of achieving the aims and aspirations of aboriginal people.

We are to look at justice issues. We are getting a feeling that the justice system simply has not worked.

We are to look at the role of Elders, aboriginal women and aboriginal youth.

As you can see, that is a very, very tall order.

We have attempted to do this by the ordinary way of research and looking at the past reports. We have gone around to the provincial capitals; that is

including Yellowknife and Whitehorse last winter. We are now engaged in public hearings across Canada. We started at Winnipeg a month ago with the full Commission and we have now split up into small groups -- there are two of us here today -- and we are going to try to visit as many as 100 communities across Canada.

We are here for two simple things. We want to know what the communities think their problems are and what they think should be done about it and by whom. We are here to find out, therefore, what you think the problems of Fort Simpson and this area of the N.W.T. are and what you think should be done about them.

We are here primarily to listen. We have no message to tell you except that we will listen. We are trying to hear what you say; yes, what your problems are, but, yes too, what you think should be done about them.

With this in mind, we are here to have presentations today. I think we are going to start now by hearing from Chief Gerald Antoine of the Fort Simpson Dene Council, who so graciously greeted us at the airport yesterday.

CHIEF GERALD ANTOINE: First of all, I would like to thank the youth for being able to sit here today, to listen to what is going to be said and to hear what the mandate of the Commission is.

In this very room many years ago some of our people had gone through this residential school. This was a place where a chapel was utilized. I think that this is a place where a lot of confession has been made and I think today you will be hearing a lot more of this type of confession.

This is also a room where the Dene Chiefs met many years ago to declare themselves as a Dene nation. Hearing the young drummers this morning, I can say that I am proud to hear that the Dene nation still exists today.

One thing that I also wanted to say is to say that I am thankful that this Commission has chosen this community as one of the communities to be visited in this go-around. Historically, it seems this is the place where the action is, a place where two great rivers flow into each other.

Looking at this presently, the primary objective of this Commission is to attempt to forge a new

relationship between the First People and the newcomers. Therefore, your task, as you have described it, is to respect these two distinct perspectives of how they see the world around them.

I have had the opportunity of listening to many Elders from this community and the surrounding areas and also the support to attend various grade schools, including one of the United World Colleges, the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific on the Vancouver Island.

Shortly after completing this program, I began to get myself involved as a youth delegate in 1977. Since then I have been learning from both sides of the coin, figuratively speaking. Therefore, I would at this time like to present to you a perspective that I have developed thus far through these learnings.

The people that were here prior to any newcomers look upon themselves as Dene. The Dene language -- which some people refer to as North Slave, South Slave, Dogrib, Chippewyan, or the Cochin language -- in the eyes of the people here Dene is a word that describes people of a specific area. In this instance it refers to people of the river and of the land.

If you look at this area of this river and the land, geographically it comprises of the Deh Cho River Basin, as illustrated. Whatever happens within this ecological system affects us all. I believe one of Newton's laws is: whenever there is an action, there is a reaction. This is so in this particular Deh Cho River Basin. Whatever happens within this area affects us.

That explains why we are so environmentally concerned in a lot of different things we say, not only today, but in the past. Being a person of the land or the river, that is where our roots are. If you collect some of the previous transcripts of various testimonies of our Elders, you will see the perspective that I am referring to, that we are very environmentally conscious.

That is also the reason why I had drafted a letter to the federal government in regard to the proposed uranium mining that is occurring in the north part of Saskatchewan. That river system flows into our system here; so does W.C. Bennett Dam also the pulp mills out of Hinton and the other Alberta communities. There is also one of the largest pulp mills that is presently being

constructed. Even having this particular project boasted by the Canadian government as doing something very good to Canada financially, I think it is a drastic threat to our way of living here in Denende.

The people that refer to themselves as Dene, my people and I, are descendants of these people. The place that we are at here in this Deh Cho River Basin is known by my people as "checle" (ph.) -- "where two great rivers flow into each other".

The mandate you have in forging a new relationship, I believe you can also refer to as a lifetime commitment, a marriage. I think with our first marriage the federal government has got a relationship that they are obligated to respect, recognize and affirm. This marriage that I am referring to is Treaties 8 and 11.

The statements of Elders with regard to the treaty negotiations in 1898 and 1921 have raised clear signals of the sovereignty of the Dene. Their accounts of the negotiations and the oral agreements adopted speak clearly of a treaty negotiated to provide for peace and friendship.

Affidavits were signed in 1937 by people

who were present in the negotiation to substantiate the oral history recounted by the Elders today. These affidavits state clearly that nothing will be done or allowed to interfere with their way of making a living. This oral history, in effect, substantiates that the Dene never surrendered their sovereignty or their lands.

In conclusion, No. 4 on the Reasons for Judgment of the Honourable Mr. Justice W.G. Morrow, 6th of September, 1973, states also the following, that notwithstanding the language of the two treaties, there is sufficient doubt on the fact that aboriginal title was extinguished that such clear claim for title should be permitted to be put forward by the caveators.

We have been part of a paper here in the Deh Cho region. It is a position paper on the constitutional development of Denende. It has been referred to as the Lamothe-Hardisty Paper. In this position paper it addresses present concepts as unconstitutional when it is seen from the Dene oral version of the treaty, and it reads:

"In the light of these historical and legal realities, substantiated since 1982 by

section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, the present concepts of Crown lands and Commissioner lands in the Northwest Territories, as well as the NWT Act, the Indian Act and the Comprehensive Claims Policy, are considered to be unconstitutional in that they contravene the originally- negotiated relationship between the Dene and the Crown."

The application of the above concepts and legislation flows from that period of Canadian history prior to 1982, when Parliament was considered by Canadian law to be supreme. Since 1982, with Canada accepting aboriginal and treaty rights at a constitutional level, it does not make any logical or legal sense to maintain a policy which demands that these constitutional rights be ceded to the Crown, or to continue administrating the Indian Act and the NWT Act, which have the effect of denying treaty and aboriginal rights.

According to the Indian Act, an Indian is a ward of the Crown. The NWT Act imposes government process which changes the way Dene are organized and make governing decisions. These Acts contravene Treaties 8 and 11, as negotiated and agreed to orally.

In the testimonies that our Elders have made in the Berger Inquiry and in previous commissions and also the Paulette case, there is many things that our Elders have said in regard to this, saying that this is the area that has to be straightened out. Even today, when there is a need for houses in our community here -- if you look around the community there are quite a number of houses that need to be replaced.

There was a community health representative that had a couple of meetings with the homeless. I believe in the community here there is probably close to 100 people that are homeless. Even when you apply for certain housing programs, if you don't make enough money, you don't qualify; if you make too much money, you also don't qualify. Looking at the employment in our community here, we seem to be pushed aside in regard to employment.

So if you look at these three examples, we don't seem to be eligible for these three areas.

When I had a chance to speak to some of the Elders just recently, they have indicated that the things they were trying to do, whatever they were trying do positively, in a good way, they have always been given the runaround, they have always been given restrictive regulations that they say they have to follow.

This is an area that is of great concern to us. I believe this is the problem we are facing and I would like to indicate to the Commission that this is an area that the Commission should look into.

Some of the things that have occurred when we asked for certain things, the answer is, "Well, just leave it with me", but I think there is a degree of responsibility that we also have to do ourselves. Since this treaty is a partnership, we have to do this particular resolution together, and not to leave us out. Many times, there is things we have done where we have always been left out. I think we have learned not to be passive on these different situations, that we have to be aggressively involved and demand our right with this partnership.

To entrench the relationships inherent in the NWT Act would, in fact if not in law, negate the treaty as well as aboriginal rights. In effect, it would negate section 35 of the Canadian Constitution where the Dene of the NWT are concerned. It would mean that for Denende section 35 would not be based on the aboriginal culture, but on colonial legislation.

This is an area, I would also like to say, where the legislation that has been utilized is also one-sided in that, if there is going to be some administrative measures to be done, then we have to also be partners in this particular area.

I could go on to elaborate a little bit more, but there are going to be other presenters here that will most likely give you some examples of conflict situations and the various frustrations that do come out of these different situations. I will also be presenting, as the interim Vice-Chief of the Deh Cho Tribal Council, a position paper in the afternoon.

I also would like to state here that there are many transcripts that the Commission has to also review, and there are some of the things that I have

mentioned. But I guess the most in-depth piece of document that I can really recommend is the Judge Berger Inquiry. I believe this individual has gone to almost every Dene community in Denende and has gotten testimonies from Elders and young people and young leaders. I believe that many of the Elders have gone to the spiritual world. Therefore, I would like to recommend to the Commission that these transcripts be reviewed thoroughly.

With that I would like to conclude my first round of concerns.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much, Chief.

I think a few of us may want to ask a question or two, if you don't mind.

CHIEF GERALD ANTOINE: Sure.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I will start off.

I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I am trying to find out as closely as I can what you are saying. I think I heard you say that, if we were to move to self-government, then a self-government based upon geography in the western Arctic, one based upon the

Northwest Territory government on the west side -- let's assume that none of it is not there -- would not be what the Dene people would think of a self-government. The Dene people are saying that self-government means self-government by the Dene Bands or the Dene Tribal Councils or the Dene nation, perhaps including Métis, but not a government of the west side of the Northwest Territories.

I don't know whether I put my question, but I would like you to comment on that.

CHIEF GERALD ANTOINE: There has always been none of it, and there has always been Denende. The present administration is a branch of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. It is referred to as the Government of the Northwest Territories.

I guess the historical evolution of this particular administration has not had the consent of Dene people. The policies and legislation have not been involving Dene people. Presently, we do have some aboriginal people that are on the Legislative Assembly, but that does not mean that it is our government. This particular administration is enacted by the NWT Act.

Looking at the oral version of the treaty, if the Crown had followed their obligations, this particular administration wouldn't be here, but reality is that it is here.

There are some measures that they are doing to try to solicit views from various people which they refer to as "Northerners". This is something that is a concern to us, because we are not Northerners, we are Dene people. There are various assumptions that have been made and claims of various people representing Dene people.

I guess your question, Mr. Commissioner, in terms of self-government is that, if you look at the Dene people here, we have self- government here. We have major families which have occupied various areas along the river system.

Also, in this paper I will be bringing up this afternoon, the Lamothe-Hardisty Paper, it gives you some idea of what we are trying to ensure in our deliberations.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Then, I will wait until this afternoon to probe just what you think

self-government should look like judged from a Dene perspective.

Viola.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: Thank you.

I want to thank you for your presentation. I certainly hear your concerns about the environment. I think that is one that has been reflected, especially in these parts of the country, and they are very legitimate concerns.

I do want to say that we believe that, as a Commission, we have the capacity to come up with interim reports from time to time. We have the capacity to look at certain issues. There are some issues that don't have to wait until 1994, when we complete the hearings and come up with a final report. So there will be some we will be looking at spending a lot of time on.

Perhaps I could just say at this point that the organization of the Commission itself, it took us about six or seven months just to staff the Commission. We have a huge research department and we certainly don't want to reinvent the wheel, but we are certainly going

to be retrieving a lot of the documentation and studies that have been done in the past, done by the federal government, done by provincial and territorial governments, done by the First Nations and aboriginal organizations. So we don't want to go over what has already been done, and I am referring now to the Berger Inquiry.

We have spoken to Tom Berger. As a matter of fact, we had dinner with him in December. We will be calling on him from time to time, or anybody else that has had a major role in any of these studies, to enhance our work.

So, as I say, your comments are very well taken, and that is something that we can certainly make some advance on -- those kinds of things.

I do have a question, though. Listening to you, I understand what you are saying, but I didn't hear you say anything about the comprehensive claims, your negotiations with respect to your settlement. Could I just ask you if you would like to comment on that, or is that going to be this afternoon?

CHIEF GERALD ANTOINE: I could comment.

The position that our people had made last summer was to have us go back to the treaties, because that is where the conflicts of today, or most of them, will be resolved, with the resolution of this particular treaty.

The Comprehensive Land Claims Policy the federal government institutes is that one of the clauses is that you have to -- what is the word -- give up your aboriginal and treaty rights. This is one area that our people are really strong on, saying that we do not want to give up our treaty and aboriginal rights.

That is why I raised this concern that there are two versions of treaty. There is the Dene version of treaty and there is also the Crown's version of treaty. In both Treaties 8 and 11 it indicates that they had given up their land and their sovereignty.

One of the things I forgot to also mention with this concern is that, if you look at this geographic illustration of the Deh Cho River Basin, you know there is a lot of things that are conflicting on this particular perspective. There is the Saskatchewan

province, the Alberta province, the B.C. province and the Yukon Territory, and now none of it.

I just want to request from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to assist us in assuring protection during our deliberations of resolving this conflict, because, while we are trying to attempt to resolve this treaty question, there are other pending circumstances that are intruding into our area.

Looking at the remarks of a person that is supposed to protect aboriginal peoples, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, when the results of the boundary plebescite came in, he literally insulted us, saying that Denende is dead. This is a person that has been selected by the federal government to try to address effectively and also to protect and enhance and recognize the aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal people, which we are part of this particular group of people.

In this statement in the Globe & Mail he just literally laughed in our faces and said that this particular sovereign nation is dead. This is a person that is supposed to be working with us fairly. If you have people who are in that kind of position and should

be dealing with us fairly, and in the remarks in the media he says that, what kind of a trust relationship can you try to get with the federal government?

From this type of insecurity, I would like to request on behalf of my people to have the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples put some sort of protection that these types of intrusions will not affect our deliberations to resolve the conflict we have with the Crown in terms of the treaty, because we don't want to be going on and, in our backyard, having certain things occur which the federal government is responsible for.

So I would like to have the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples try to guarantee some sort of protection. I am not quite sure the exact phrases to use, but I just want to let the Commission know there is a threat to us. There has always been a threat to us, and our people have given us the mandate to go back to the treaties and resolve the situation from there. We would like to do that, but if there is certain things intruding on us, then there is a lot of different things that may result from this.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I wonder

if Mr. Gabe Cazon or Ms Mary Cazon wishes to ask any questions.

COMMISSIONER FOR THE DAY MARY CAZON: What we are mostly doing is living in the bush most of the time and are not in town to be at a meeting. But, every time we have a chance to be in town, there is a lot of things -- we don't like what is really going on, especially those people that are making their living in the bush, sometimes they ask for help and it is hard to get help. They get turned down most of the time. Even the house you have in the bush, we need some stuff for the house and stuff like that, in the bush. They turn you down because of the money you are making, if you make too much money and stuff like that. If you are broke, too, they can't give you a house because you are broke. If you make too much money, they can't give you a house because you are making too much money. A lot of things like that, they turn down people.

That is why a lot of people are willing to go back in the bush, just to try out themselves. Things are so expensive and stuff like that. It is pretty hard to go back in the bush unless you get help for that.

I haven't got much to say. I don't really go to the meetings too often. What I am thinking about is that we are just willing to do something about some people going back in the bush. That's all we are hoping for.

I don't know what he has got to say, but me, that's all I have got on my mind right this minute.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you, Commissioner Mary Cazon.

Commissioner Gabe Cazon, do you wish to make any comment?

COMMISSIONER FOR THE DAY GABE CAZON: I never went to a meeting. That's the first time I have ever seen so many people in one room, except church. I used to go to church and I used to meet a lot of people. To make a speech, I am not good at that, because I never went to a meeting. I don't know what is going on.

The only thing I know or remember is the old times, what my grandpa used to do, what my dad used to do, just the stories. I have never seen my grandfather, but there is a place out there they used to call Inuvik; now they call it Iqaluit. That's a big, big town, a big

settlement. That is where the people from the mountains used to meet one another. They used to meet people from the town here and trade stuff together.

My grandfather used to go up in the hills and in the bush too, and ship the furs out and bring the groceries in. Here was the place he used to bring it here and distribute it to the north. Simpson was a big place before. It was the same thing when the people from Nahanni used to come down and trade their furs here. It was the same thing. So Simpson was a big place; people used to call it a big town.

My grandfather was one of the -- there was two of them in Providence. They were the ones that brought the grants in to start the school in Fort Providence. I don't know what year it was, but I guess they have the record.

I went to school at Fort Providence myself. I came out of school in 1935. Even since 1935 until now, I have seen a lot of change. People in the bush now use a saw to saw wood, it is easier; they used to use axes. They had those white crosscut saws. In 1938 they had the first bucksaw, the Swede saw they called it.

Now they use power saws. For me, it is getting easier and easier to make a living.

In those days, people used to live healthy because they used to do a lot of work. They used to eat good and do a lot of work. Nowadays, when you go anywhere you don't walk. You just use a ski-doo, you use a truck. You don't get enough exercise. These people used to work.

There is another thing, too: Fort Simpson is the only town or the only settlement near the north that has got no fish and caribous. You have got to go north to get caribou. We used to live mostly on rabbits.

There used to be a lot of moose where we live and nowadays there is not a moose. But quite a bunch of people used to -- a bunch of people staying together, when they were shooting moose, they would shoot all that moose together. So they never had plenty. Sometimes they didn't have anything to eat, but they never had too much to eat. That is how they used to carry on until the white people came in.

Since my time I have seen a lot of changes

here, and it is getting worse and worse now.

My dad said when they first brought in the mail -- there was just a Hudson's Bay manager there. They used to pack the mail in their bags, and then, when the missionaries came in, there was more mail and they used dog teams, and finally they used planes. That is how it used to be around here.

Land claims and that, I never went to a meeting, so I don't know much about that.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

I think what Commissioner Gabe Cazon has said just dramatizes some of the major facts of the north, the very rapid change that has taken place in people's lifetimes. To think of a Swede saw as something new and new technology after Mr. Gabe Cazon left school, and now with planes and power saws and all the rest, that is one of the interesting and, in a sense, disrupting facts of life, that people have faced such enormous changes in technology in their lifetime, that it has been constantly a world of change.

Thank you very much, Chief. We are

going to hear from you later this afternoon. We will be asking a few questions about how you think self-government ought to work. Thanks a lot.

We are now going to hear a bit about the history of Fort Simpson from the Historical Society of Fort Simpson, Mr. Stephen Rolland, who has got a presentation.

STEPHEN ROLLAND: Distinguished Commissioners and distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, in a sense it is outrageous that I should be speaking to you on behalf of the Historical Society. I just want to put myself into perspective.

My roots are in the south. I have only lived in Fort Simpson for seven years, but I have worked with the Historical Society, which has been in existence for two years. I have been fortunate enough to have a lot of help from Elders, from people. If I know anything, it is thanks to them, and I want to make that point very, very clear.

The aims of the Fort Simpson Historical Society, basically, just in a sentence, are to help with the preservation of our local heritage, whether they be

buildings or objects, and perhaps have recognition for the fact that these heritage objects or buildings do exist.

With your permission, I would like to show a few slides. If it would be all right with you, I am going to set up the screen in back of you so you can move over here and watch.

--- (Slide Presentation)

The slides that I have, here, for the sake of our distinguished Commissioners, is Fort Simpson looking towards the junction of the two rivers, the Liard on the right, which is navigable down to Fort Nelson, and the Mackenzie on the left, which is navigable its entire length of 2,000 miles. The Mackenzie River also connects with almost the Alberta border.

The Commissioners may like to know that about 80 years ago it was possible to take a boat from Waterways, Alberta, which is quite close to Fort McMurray, and come up. It used to take about four days to go from Fort Smith to here by boat; it cost $36.

This is the area that Dene people have come to from time immemorial. I think this is the thing to remember.

May we have the next slide, please. This is a very poor picture, but it is where we were last night, taken just a month ago, in April. The dancing area where we were last night is also a traditional area where, from time immemorial -- I use those words again -- Dene people have met people from the mountains, people from as far away as Lac Cormack, who would be Dog Rib people, would come in the summer, I am told, to celebrate and to pray. This is where they did it, approximately where we were dancing last night.

Next, please. This is one of the very early buildings, and it is a reminder to you that Fort Simpson was occupied -- not occupied, but the Hudson's Bay Company came here in 1821. This building here was one of the warehouses. It was the first two-storey building. It doesn't exist any more. It is also a building that was built in the 1820s, I believe, and it is connected with Sir John Franklin. So it is connected with a very famous name.

Next. Here is the old Anglican Mission. None of these buildings exist any more. Old St. David is on the left, built in 1860. This is the Mission building

built originally in the 1860s but burned or hurt by fire at around the turn of the century. This is the old school, 1874, the first school here, the first white school.

Next. Another picture of the old Mission building. Once again, this was rebuilt in about 1900; the old school on the left, 1874.

Next. Just to remind you that these distinguished people were around in 1921. In the centre is Antoine Cho, who is the great- grandfather -- correct me if I am not right about this -- of our Chief Gerry Antoine. His other name, what people called him was "Makeko". The young gentleman here -- it is not so remote, even though this is around 1920-21. This young gentleman here, Charlie Chelo -- and correct me anyone if I am wrong -- passed away only a few years ago, a very few years ago. I remember him, and I am sure that some of the Elders here will remember many if not all of these people. I did not have that good fortune.

Next. I show you this because this is one of the buildings that exists today. It is one that has kindly been donated by the family. It is still lived in by the family that bought this house in 1928-29. It

is a beautiful, beautiful building located on the river bank. We have to move it away at the request of the family, and we are going to find, we hope, a place for it. It is a wonderful building.

I just want to say, picture this -- and maybe the old timers will remember, but this used to be whitewashed; the windows were blue. Otherwise, very little has been done to change it. I have a detail of the wonderful log work -- next -- that you can see. I just draw your attention to the detail of the log work here. It was at first chinked with, I understand, clay. It is now chinked with concrete; that is a newer addition. It is in very good condition and we hope to save it.

Next. I should have said on the last building that that building was built by Métis; it was not built by white people, it was built by local people, local lumber. The trees were cut down with axes close by here. This was built by Chief Louis Nowejian, who is the Chief at Jean Marie River. He built this. This is right overlooking the flats where we were dancing last night. It is a building that is empty at the moment. It used to belong to a dentist, and his dental chair is

sitting right here. So, distinguished guests, if you have dental problems, we are ready to serve you any time you wish.

This is another building that we would like very much to preserve. It was built in 1930; beautiful woodwork, well worth preserving. I have another detail of that. Here it is. It is just the detail. Here is, I think -- I am so close, I can't really see, but I think this is the dental chair. Anyhow, if you need dentistry, come and see us.

Next. This is a reminder -- this building is still up and it is a reminder of Fort Simpson's great importance as a farm community. There was an experimental farm here from quite an early time; by that, I mean the 1920s, and Elders will perhaps correct me if I am wrong. This was put up about 1925, and people still remember that inside there were cows, horses, chickens, hay up at the top. This is another building that we should be preserving. It reminds us of the importance of farming heritage here and perhaps the importance in the future of farming.

Next. A detail, once again, of this

barn. It is a wonderful building and, I will say, very much well worth preserving.

Next. Around Fort Simpson you can still find farm equipment. There it is. It is still there. This is a thing that we should be doing. We should, I hope, be gathering this farm equipment, getting it together, maybe have a small museum somewhere. I hope that the people here at Fort Simpson will support this sort of initiative, to gather this stuff together before it just rots and falls away.

Next. This is the old Anglican Mission. I showed you the old Anglican Mission at the very beginning. That was pulled down prior to 1930 and this was put up in its place. It replaced the old Mission, but the original logs from the older buildings were used in its construction. Here was the school, these three windows, the entrance to the school was here and there is still a number of men and ladies from this community who attended this school as children.

Unfortunately, it burned two years ago and had to be destroyed, had to be pulled down. But, while we were pulling it down, you can see the very fine log

work, or some of it; a real variety of log work was there. We have saved all of those logs and we will use them to help repair the old buildings we have. We will also make them available to other communities, if we have an excess, that need to repair old logs with hand-hewn logs.

Next. When we were pulling the building down, I told you that the building or the logs came from the old 1900s buildings. This is a newspaper, used as insulation, dated September 18, '97. Just for amusement -- and I do this purely tongue-in-cheek -- the article up at the top, maybe I can read it. Can anyone read that? "The Significance of the Quebec Elections".

Next. Some of you, ladies and gentlemen, will remember the old Wittington Hotel on the river bank. It still exists. It is still there. Wittington was a man who came up from the south. This was the dance hall. It was added about the same time -- this is about 1920, 1930. I understand -- and correct me if I am wrong -- that he had a little store here and a little restaurant as well.

Here is a another trader, Bud Alley, who came up from the south, and here is Bud Alley's house.

Look carefully at this. This house in here, this has disappeared, but the next view will show you how this looks today. This house exists and this house exists.

Next. Here they are today, not much changed. It is still there, the old hotel; the store in the middle has disappeared, but Bud Alley's home is still here, it is unoccupied.

Next. This was put purposely at the end. It is simply to say that this is Fort Simpson's oldest existing building. It was built in 1911, so it is about 80 years old. It was built originally over where the Hudson's Bay was, on Hudson's Bay land. It was pulled -- that is almost overlooking where we were dancing last night -- in 1921. It took six weeks to winch it with capstan using ox power. It took six weeks to move it, bit by bit, close to this vicinity. It was also moved again -- this is the oldest building in Fort Simpson. Here again, I think it would be worth trying to save this wonderful old building if it can be done.

I end by saying that not everything is old in Fort Simpson. Here is a modern Fort Simpson log house, I think a very imaginative and a very distinctive

log house out at Three Mile, built by a local builder, Mike Modest. I just want to say that log building, distinguished and imaginative log building, the skill for that has not been lost. I hope other builders and I hope that Mike Modest will continue building in Fort Simpson.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you, Mr. Rolland, and thank all the members of the Historical Society. I think recording the history of Fort Simpson on film, on slide, is certainly imaginative and important. It is surprising how fast these things get away from us and, therefore, how important it is to have the history of a historic community like this one recorded on slides, so that people who are now just coming to understand this land as theirs can enjoy its history and understand its heritage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Rolland, and all those who assisted you. Good luck in preserving some of the buildings which encapsule the history of Fort Simpson.

I will now ask Mr. Baptiste Cazon to join us.

BAPTISTE CAZON: What do I say?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Just tell us how your community is, what you think its problems are and how you think we should fix them.

BAPTISTE CAZON: There is too many problems, so that they are hard to discuss because we won't get anywhere with it anyway.

Thanks a lot, Mr. Commissioner, for the meeting. I didn't know there was a meeting -- this kind of a meeting.

The Indian way of living, the Indian way of everything, looking at it since way back, it is something complicated to discuss about, for the future of the aboriginal rights. It is only for a title to one group of Indians, the Treaty Indians; a handful of Treaty Indians across Canada, with Indians that reach out -- with a million population of Indians across Canada, the Treaty Indians.

I know the Indians from way back because I have been a Chief for quite a while. I have travelled across Canada to the various Indian meetings. Once upon a time I was in a Royal Commission over -- do the Indians want a reserve in this part of the country. I was on the

Royal Commission at the time that John Diefenbaker was Prime Minister, at that time. So I know quite a bit about these various things about the Indian problems.

It is very hard to say, but I don't understand how Indian self-governments -- it means that the Indian people will break into pieces by regions and regions. On top of that we were talking about borderlines between Eskimos and the Territories. We are in kind of a mess there. I have to tell the Commission that Treaties 8 and 11, the Territories -- that was by the Crown of England when we took the treaty, the mark on the map, and these are the borderlines for the time being.

The piece down there, the Gwich'in organization cut a big piece of land to form self-governments. That is going to be a mess. I don't know where they are going to get the money from -- taxation, the governments -- because the claims are going to claim some oil revenue; all the Treaty Indians across the Territories are going to have to claim. This is what the land claim is all about.

According to the way it is, the territorial governments are supported by the federal

government. They are pretty strong, but they are still short of money every now and then. It is just a handful of residents of the Territories who all are broken down into pieces who is going to be the government.

The way things are going, they were protected by the federal government, the Treaty Indians. We are not too bad off. But self-government, I don't know.

Since way back, the Dene nation, they took over their organization, changed the name and called them Dene governments, Dene nations, outside the First Nations, with one basic organization -- call us an organization to call a union brotherhood who got us at a national level, a national Indian brotherhood. If you stayed with that organization, it would have been all right.

But now, just the way it is now, all the organizations want to go to the moon. In July, my sister-in-law, and my brother were talking about the bush, complaining about -- there is a lot of things like that; everybody wants to go to the moon and they forget about the poor people who are in the vicinity.

Since way back, the Hudson's Bay made a bid of the poor Indians in here to make money. Then the governments signed a treaty; again, white people are getting out of us -- a bid to make money. Now, our own people, the various organizations across the Territories, are making a bid out to make money. What do we get out of it? Nothing.

I worry about the future years of the poor generation, the poor young people. The young people don't want to go back, they want to be united with the white people and get educated like white people and live like white people. Some will go back to the bush, for sure, some young people who go the same way, too, who go back in the bush, but it is very few that that will happen to. They want to get a good job and they want to live like the white people do. I am quite sure of that.

The young people need money to have education. Most of us people, we haven't got enough money to support our young generation to get a better education. This is the sad part: money to go into the bush or money to that.

I go into a meeting, the women

organizations were talking about the help for child birth, the help for a bigger welfare for those who need it, a better treatment from the government. They were talking about something very important. Here we have another big general meeting, we don't discuss something to help the poor people. I am going to fast.

They are talking about changes to the Indian Act. It up to the Indians in the reserve. The Indian leaders in the reserve, by now, they are sure pretty well educated enough on what is needed, because they are talking about land claims, the Indian Act, a big band here -- the Indian Act, everything like that, for the land claims.

A land claim, after you are not in a reserve, is very complicated for the government and the natives, how they are going to make land claims. That is a very hard thing to do. On top of that, they are talking about self-government.

The self-government, the way I see things, if you have got your own reserve, and as far as you look after your own affairs, you have got an education of your own and you look after your own affairs, as far

as the government provides you with money. But here, we are in a different place as Indians -- I will call that Dene, Dene people. What are we trying to do as a people on Dene Treaty? We should start with Indian problems first; let's iron out these things and then we are going to take care of the Dene people's right.

I don't know, it is very, very complicated. I understand, with those kind of -- I study, myself, but things are going a little bit out of the way; a little bit out of the way. What should have been done -- I was working with the Indian Brotherhood for quite a long time, and we were trying to get at the land questions. The treaty wasn't binding. The government thought we would give our land away for the treaty, that we would give our rights away for the treaty, but it wasn't. We realized old people said, no, there was a peace treaty. So we went to court and, through another government; it was a peace treaty. That is how far we are. Jim Walsh will be working after that. What happened with that court? What happened to that gift of the land back to the Indians?

We saw the Dene nation, they took over.

They traded for the land claims; they traded Dene debts for the land claims. This is a bad thing.

What the poor people are complaining about is that they need help. Those that don't work for wages, they need help. Right now, no work, and everything is going high: GST, the government taxations, whatever. They kind of say the Indians are not paying taxes. The tobacco manufacturers push everything to the one that smokes to pay taxes. We are the ones that are paying taxes. So down here, we are paying taxes. Paying taxes is not something bad. If we don't pay no taxation, we don't have no government.

If the Dene nation becomes a self-government, there is going to be taxations. Where are we going to get tax money? Where are we going to have tax money? The governments today are spending too much money. To build a nation, it isn't fun, broken-into-pieces nations. A handful of Indians should stick together. The land claims -- it is a land question to us, or was a land question.

Let's say, okay, that all they are passing is out there, a big track of oil or a gold mine

here or there. Let's say the government gives us 20 per cent or 25 per cent of our revenue to the Treaty Indians, and that oil is not going to -- let's say we deal through the government.

To better the Indians, I think that's about all.

Then you sit down and you got lots of money then, looking into the future. Okay, you want to become a government. What kind of a government? I don't even know what kind of a government they are talking about with self-government. Everybody is saying "self-government". The people say "self-government". What the hell do they want to be? What kind of government is that going to be?

At the time I was with the Commission, we had top people; the best lawyer you could have from Indian Affairs, the best professor you could find from the Northern Affairs. The top lawyer working with the Prime Minister, Nielsen, was with us.

Even the reserve, not for the Indians to get into a reserve, it was a hard thing to do after we would make -- all around the Territories, we sat

together, trying to make ways and means. For the government it was very, very hard, because sometimes for half an hour nobody would say a word; for something to come up, questions to come up, sometime half an hour. There were good people, there was a lot of people, but nobody could say a word. Once somebody would say a word, we would start then.

We made our recommendations to the government then of John Diefenbaker. He didn't stay too long. He was voted out somehow. The Commission report was to see just some percentage out of the revenues that go to the government, a little bit at the time, and not to have anything to do with reserve. That was the two things we came out with.

If the government wants to do things better, don't disturb the treaties, because the Crown -- it was built into the Canadian government, to surrender, to give the treaty, to deal with the Treaty Indian. Here is something wrong, because the Queen could do pretty well what she wants to do; she will know what is what.

If the political governments, in four years' time, are going to get elected again, they have

to please the Indians. That is where the treaty will mix up, all treaty broken into pieces. It is going worse and worse and worse now. Who is the Treaty Indian? Who has aboriginal rights? Who is Dene? It is all mixed-up people. But when I am talking the treaty, to deal with a treaty, a land claim treaty, deal with the Indian.

Our girls are married to the white people. Let's suppose we get classified as Treaty, and mamma left the treaty for the booze and don't want to come back -- you are not supposed to; a treaty, you are not supposed to play with -- I ask the Commission that everything has to go to the Supreme Court; everything has to.

What do we have Canadian Parliament for? Because this is going to be evolved in a treaty. Treaties have to be with the Queen and the Privy Council in Canada. Why are we going to kick the treaty around, fight all -- we still didn't give our country away. We got a percentage of the revenue given to the people; not to give it to the government people, to give it to every Treaty Indian who fight all the years, pass it to the Treaty Indians to better ourselves -- to better ourselves.

The pension, when you are getting a little pension money, it is a god-given -- pension money, you know, support. If you go in the bush, you can't sell a pelt because you are a pensioner. That kind of thing shouldn't be allowed at all. If a person wants to make a living, to go out and sell a few furs and things like that, it surely has nothing to do with the pensioners.

So pensioners, once they are tied up, if you get at least $1,000 or $2,000 a month, something like that, that would be all right. You cut them if they cost too much, but a god-given. I would say that our organization, they would give us no -- once there was a little money that came here for Elder's package, what happened to it? What happened to it? Nobody knows. We would get a little bit of it and the others are fighting among themselves, and all, we got to fight to get a little bit of it.

So anything they are going to give, I will say that that, in part, should have come -- they got real smart people. Their organization talks at national levels, saying; "Let's go to court first. Let's see how far the court will go". It brought us where we are now.

If the Queen transfers the treaty to a territorial government, why do we have to have something, even if it is going to happen -- the territorial government and these treaties, we should be there to see what is what.

If there is going to be a change there, we are going to get something out of that treaty. We are going to use our land, and then we want to get a percentage out of that land for the people, because we use that money for organizations, and I think there is going to be no use to talk about it, because it is given to the people by the government.

Now, if the treaty comes, then, it is the Métis people that gives the treaty; no federal responsibility person will come around to talk and discuss with the people. Problems come up. Some people would like to go and meet with a person responsible for the government to talk to here, but there isn't. Now we are trying to deal with the Prime Minister over the treaty and what are we doing there. It is a very, very hard thing to do because the Prime Minister is a very, very busy person. I know that. We are just talking about something, too many problems at the same time.

The land claim, to take the land away, that is the way the young people understand, that they are not to take the land away. These are the ones that first talk about the land questions. So a percentage, that is how far the Indians should go and then, after that, if the Indians have better help, but forget about the self-government.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

Any questions? No?

Thank you very much, Mr. Cazon.

We are running a little behind, so I think I will just do away with our coffee break and ask people to leave and pick up their tea or coffee -- and I think I may do the same in a moment.

I will ask Mayor Raymond Michaud.

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: Sorry I was unable to meet you guys at the airport yesterday.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thanks very much.

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: Thank you.

Sorry if I might seem a big disorganized. I am, being a government employee. I was under the

assumption I would be out of town today. I was advised I could stay. So I have had since this morning to prepare this 15-minute presentation, under pressure.

I would like to start with a few statements of interest, if you could bear with me for a minute. The first one comes out of a book. It is written by Bruce Trigger. He is a professor of anthropology. The book that I will be reading from is called "Natives and Newcomers".

In here he puts down:

"Since the 1960s Canadians have been challenged to come to terms with a new and rapidly-changing social reality. For almost three centuries, white North Americans had assumed that native peoples were doomed to be culturally assimilated or to perish as a superior European civilization spread inexorably across the continent. In accordance with such expectations, historians asserted that native

people had always been few in number and had so little impact on their environment that North America remained a virgin land at the time of European occupation. The evolutionary gulf that separated natives and newcomers was almost thought to make it difficult, if not impossible, for the former to adopt a civilized style of life; hence native people were treated a part of a vanishing past. They were seen as more akin to the forest in which they lived and the animals they hunted than as competitors for control of North America. This view also seemed to justify ignoring the political and economic developments that explained why, for over 150 years, native peoples had suffered from impoverishment, social

discrimination and a white tutelage that was often simultaneously neglected and oppressive. Yet today's reality reveals the errors of such views. Throughout, Canada's native people are increasing rapidly in number, renewing pride in their ancestral heritage and playing an evermore visible role in the nation's political, economic and cultural life. In opposition to the dominant white society, they have affirmed their lasting and important role as part of Canada's cultural mosaic, a development clearly noted by Pope John Paul II during his visit to this country in 1984. Such changes in the status of native people challenge traditional interpretations of the past and they require a more

objective understanding of the role played by native people in Canadian history. Historians generally acknowledge that their studies reveal as much about historians and their circumstances as they do about former times. The past as an object of historical investigation also becomes a hostage that can be used to serve the needs of the present. When historians champion diverse regional or sectarian causes, their bias contributes to a lively and colourful debate that often results in an improved understanding of the past. The situation is quite different, however, when over long periods most historians ignore important aspects of the past or adhere uncritically to a single viewpoint

that reinforces, rather than challenges, conventional stereotypes. The present work seeks to demonstrate that Canadian historical studies as a whole have suffered from the chronic failure of historians and anthropologists to regard native people as an integral part of Canadian society. By means of a case study dealing with New France and its Iroquoian neighbours, I wish also to consider what approaches must be employed if the roles played by native peoples are to be understood sufficiently to permit a more comprehensive and objective treatment of Canadian history. That, in turn, requires a reconsideration of the relationship between history and anthropology."

Another piece of paper I would like to take a quote from would be an address that was made by Chief Ted Moses; he was the Eastmain Band for James Bay. It is a statement he made on June the 13th of 1988 in Yellowknife. I am not going to read the whole statement, I am just going to read a small portion of it. In it he states:

"Almost everything I have to say today will be in the form of a warning and caution, but I want to be very clear on one thing: if we had to negotiate and sign the JBNQA again today, we would do it all over again. We think we made the right decision in signing. The JBNQA is a good agreement."

For those who don't understand, that is the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement.

"We made one mistake. We trusted the federal government to respect the spirit and intent of the agreement. Because of that we have had to fight for the very things that were recognized in the

agreement. Everything we have, we fought for. Promised programs and services, self-government rights and other benefits that were specified in the agreement were withheld, delayed or refused until we fought. Only the compensation payments themselves were provided without a struggle. The federal government did nothing on its own initiative. So one thing should be clearly understood: You are not dealing with a government that is acting in good faith. It is not that the government might try to cheat on its obligations -- it will most certainly make every effort to cheat you. The history of treaties in Canada is long and clouded with dishonesty. The old treaties were broken, and every single modern treaty has also been

broken. It is the longstanding policy of the federal government to break treaties. It is a technique of negotiation. During negotiations the federal government will try to minimize what it agrees to provide during implementation. The government will withhold delivery of agreed provisions. You will then be forced to negotiate again. This time you will be negotiating for implementation, trying to get the things you had originally agreed upon. This time the government will try again to minimize what it has to deliver. This is the case with every treaty Canada has ever signed for our people. In the case of the GCCQ, the present Minister of Indian Affairs has even broken a renegotiated implementation

> agreement. He now wants to renegotiate the James Bay Agreement for the third time. The Manitoba Flood Agreement has been broken, the COPE Agreement has been broken, the Northeastern Quebec Agreement has been broken. These are all modern treaties. I don't need to list the old treaties that were broken; there are too many."

This address by Ted Moses could be followed by a couple of more addresses in past conventions from other chiefs who almost come out with the same scenario.

Historically, in the area of Simpson in 1899 Treaties 8 and 11, as we are all aware, were signed. The government version of these treaties were treaties of surrender of aboriginal rights in exchange for reserves of one square mile per family of five and certain hunting, fishing and trapping rights. However, the Dene version is that this was a treaty of peace and friendship, and no agreement to surrender or take reserves, agreement to be bound by the Canadian law, plus assurance that the Dene

traditional life would continue.

In 1970 the Chiefs demanded a land settlement based on aboriginal rights. The government insisted the settlement must be under the terms of Treaties 8 and 11: one square mile per family of five. In 1973 the Chiefs take the government to court over the interpretation of Treaties 8 and 11 and satisfied Judge Morrow that they had a case that they did not give up their aboriginal rights.

The government subsequently agrees to include the Dene Métis under the Comprehensive Claims Policy. The NWT becomes the only place in Canada where the government is negotiating with Treaty Indians under the Comprehensive Claims Policy.

From 1975 through 1977, through the Berger Inquiry and other fora the settlement is defined to include political and cultural rights.

Government's failure to honour treaties or misinterpreting present treaties and policies causes a great deal of stress in a community like Simpson. The band seeking self-government is naturally frustrated with the government' games of politics and results in distrust

of all European-type governments, thus affecting we as the Village. The European misinterpretation of native aspirations causes distress of native self-government, thus also causing a local conflict.

The Village recently submitted a report on the constitutional development. Under the section "Aspirations: What do we want from the Constitution?" we stated that the people of Fort Simpson do not differ from those in the rest of the NWT. Our needs are reflective of the needs that will be found throughout. However, communities such as this best exemplify the diversity that is demanded of a constitution. If our needs are met, it is most likely the needs of the entire territory will be met.

In the village, we have a broad representation of all the races and cultures that will be in the new western territory. We understand all of the social, environmental and economic problems that exist because we have been dealing with them in our own way for years.

In this report we go on to state that we have absolutely no reservation in codifying in the

Constitution that the government should be responsible for this and the government should be responsible for that. Realizing that, on the most fundamental level, we are the government, it should be logical that we define our individual responsibilities at the same time we are defining the government's responsibility.

It may be of assistance to think of individual responsibilities as the rights of the population as a whole in the institution of the duly-elected government, the same way that individual rights are the responsibility of government. In all things there must be a balance.

We go on to also state that, as a municipal council, we have strong feelings on how the government in the new western territory should be structured. We believe there must be legislative, executive and judicial components or division of powers, and we agree that the thrust of government must be from the bottom up, rather than from the top down.

It is essential in this territory, as it is in any province or country, that there be a reasonably strong central government. If powers are too widely

divested or devolved, the result will be the creation of several city states. History has shown us on countless occasions that these systems do not work and that longevity and strength is achieved through single-mindedness and dedication to a common cause.

We would recommend that the central government be given the powers to establish minimum standards for the provision of essential services and a mandate to control all those issues that are outside the realm of local, regional or district concerns.

We must, however, voice again, in the strongest manner possible, our absolute rejection of the concept of guaranteed legislature representation for any group. We want a true and absolute democracy, and the guaranteed- representation clause should have no place in it.

The Council agrees with the interim report in the establishing of two levels of government. It is essential that there be a strong and authoritative central government whose mandate is to preside over all of those issues that do not adhere to local, regional or district boundaries.

While the establishment of minimum standards is vital to consistency, it is equally important that the central body be given the authority to ensure that those minimum standards are in fact met. There must be a regulatory role of the central government, and in order for that to exist it must be given tools to work with. Broad economic powers must rest with central body. They must have the economic force needed to provide territorial wide adherence to rules. They must have the ability to overrule local bodies if those bodies are not meeting the established minimum standards.

While the regional or district governments must be given the resources necessary to deliver the broad range of programs that will eventually be theirs, there must also exist a strong order of checks and balances that provides a central body with the ability to be the ultimate responsibility decision body.

I would like to end by reading an article written in the Canadian government 1960 Indian Policy. I won't get into the promises that were made in the policy. I just want to read this small article to end. It says: "To be an Indian is to be a man with all man's needs and

abilities. To be an Indian is also to be different. It is to speak different languages, draw different pictures, tell different tales and to rely on a set of values developed in a different world. Canada is richer for its Indian component, although there have been times when diversity seemed of little value to many Canadians. But to be a Canadian Indian today is to be someone different in another way. It is to be someone apart, apart in law, apart in the provision of government services and, too often, apart in a social context. To be an Indian is to lack power -- the power to act as owner of your lands, the power to spend your own money and, too often, the power to change your own condition. Not always, but too

often, to be an Indian is to be without -- without a job, a good house or running water, without knowledge, training or technical skill and, above all, without those feelings of dignity and self-confidence that a man must have if he is to walk with his head held high. All these conditions of the Indians are the product of history and have nothing to do with their abilities and capacities. Indian relations with other Canadians began with special treatment by government in society, and special treatment has been the rule since Europeans first settled in Canada. Special treatment has made the Indians a community disadvantaged and apart. Obviously, the course of history must be changed. To be an Indian

must be to be free -- free to develop Indian cultures in an environment of legal, social and economic equality with other Canadians."

For those of you who are not aware, I believe the first reservation was created for the simple fact that the natives were starving. It was built by the Jesuit priests who had money from France and decided to put the native people in one area so they could provide easily.

With this, I would like so say that we are compassionate with the plight of the natives, but we also must be realistic in the plight of the village's municipal government.

The only direction that we can give this Board is, they must deal with the issues, they must deal with clarifying article 35, clarifying Treaty 8, clarifying Treaty 11. The plight of cutting off funding because it is not convenient for the government to continue on debate is impractical. All it causes is local hardships that are unnecessary and prevent us from continuing on

to expand and to do what we are here to do, to make this country a great country to live in.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you, Your Worship.

You are aware there is a good deal of discussion about aboriginal self-government and about how government ought to be organized in the western half of the Northwest Territories.

I will make some assumptions now. It is not necessarily going to happen, but I will make some assumptions anyway: that the territories will split, that there will be a different kind of government in the eastern part and that we are then faced with how the western part should be governed. That is perhaps not a wild assumption.

I have been at Inuvik and Fort McPherson and hearing from Inuvialuit and Gwich'in and from non-aboriginal people, and I am getting some different signals. You may have been here this morning and hearing the Chief -- and I don't know whether I fairly understood the Chief, but suggesting that they would like to see government organized on the basis of the Dene nation,

perhaps including Métis -- I didn't press that point, but, I think, not including non-aboriginal people. I think that would probably go without saying. In this unit operated by the Dene, the Inuvialuit or the Gwich'in, they would exercise a fair number of the functions which are now exercised from Yellowknife.

How would that work in Fort Simpson?

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: Naturally the Village, being a European-type government, must insist that the Village Council is the governing body of the village. The Band Council governs the Band members; the Métis Council governs the Métis members. We, as a Village, govern all members, including Band, Métis, white, other, et cetera. The Chief and I will differ on this opinion, but so be it.

Until we deal with it in the courts of law, dealing through article 35, and the treaties are settled, this will always be a thorn in both the Chief's and my side. I think we have agreed to disagree on this particular item.

The past separation, we disagreed on for a number of reasons. The major reason I believe that this

area disagreed on is because the local treaty rights were not settled. The aboriginal rights in certain areas had conflicting land claims where the Inuit took certain areas. The federal government seemed to have funded the eastern Arctic far more than they did the western, which caused a conflict of doing study and survey. It was not a pretty scene. It was almost like the cart-before-the-horse type of scenario. I think the political things should have been settled before you started drawing lines.

The native and the Inuit had a line of agreement that I believe was something like 200 miles wide. It worked. The European government come in and say: "The line must be drawn in specific. Now we are dealing in inches instead of miles." That does not work, when you are dealing with what is mine and what is yours. That is where the political hassle came in.

How they are going to resolve this, I have no idea. The costs are estimated at $500 or $600 million. Territorially, we can't afford it, and I am sure that, federally, they must be considering that, too.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Assuming

the line in question is solved -- and the line isn't going to be very close to Fort Simpson, wherever it is drawn -- how would the government in this what I might call south end of the west side work? We have been up to the north end of the west side, if I may call it that, up in Inuvik and Fort McPherson, and heard from Inuvialuits and Gwich'ins and non-aboriginals. Now we are here, in the heart of the Dene country, if I might call it that, in this area, but with quite a few non-aboriginal people in this south part of the west side.

I am just looking for any help you can give us. I have got nothing to sell, I am just listening.

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: The way I would like to see the government run is, I would like to see the government with the present Legislative Assembly as is. I don't think we are big enough for party politics.

Under the Legislative Assembly, I would like to see regional councils. I don't really approve of a tribal council concept; I think it should be a regional tribal council if we are talking about governments that represent all.

Below the regional council, then it should be subdivided into municipal councils. We have areas like Trout Lake, Nahanni Butte, Jean Marie, that are majority native -- like vast majority native. Therefore, they could run their municipal governments as a band council, since it is basically the same amount of people.

A place like Simpson would be the village government. Under the village concept you would have your groups; you would have the Band and the Métis groups showing their representation and concerns from their members.

That is the way that I feel it should be.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: We were up at Red River and we were told they had a village or a municipal council and a Band Council and held the elections at the same time with all the same people. That solved a few of the problems, which might work in some of the outlying areas but will not work here in Simpson, obviously.

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: It could work

in Simpson. It is a democratic vote. If the Band Council wishes to run for the municipal council and campaign, it is very possible that could well happen. It has happened in Liard; the Chief is also the Mayor. So it is not an unforeseen possibility.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: This is something I am not familiar with when I ask this question. Do you think that the proposals in the Beatty Report, which I will call it, offer any assistance to us -- strength at two levels.

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: Yes.

I am wearing more than one hat in this one.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: All right. Don't feel you have to answer that. I don't want to push you on this.

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: Many areas in the Beatty Report make a lot of sense. Speaking now in the capacity of mayor, and mayor only, yes, the Beatty Report has some proposals in it that should have been done years ago. That is where the power from the bottom up would come in, that type of concept.

I think we are surveyed to death and we have way too many boards. If we dealt with our issues at a local level, it would simplify things.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thanks very much.

Any questions? No?

Thank you very much.

MAYOR RAYMOND MICHAUD: Thank you very much for your time.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: We certainly appreciate your presentation.

Ethel Lamothe.

Welcome, and please feel free to make any presentation you would like to make.

ETHEL LAMOTHE: Thank you.

I am really happy for this opportunity to speak, because this is the first time that native people have had an opportunity to speak to a commission across Canada. It is really an honour that I was able to get on the list from here.

At present I work with Social Services here in Simpson. I am a territorial government employee.

I just wanted to point out something. There are a lot of native people working for territorial and federal government and aren't able to speak because they just don't know whether they have the permission to speak. They do work for the government and see a lot of things that could be changed to the advantage of the native people, but there is no policy or anything in place that they would feel comfortable enough to speak. So I just wanted to mention that -- not that they have asked me, but, you know, it is an observation that I have made.

I wanted to go into some of my history. I had gone and taken training from CODI Institute in Nova Scotia back in 1974, and that was in economic development. I have worked with the Dene nation until 1986 in political development. I have also worked in the area of social development, when I was with the Dene nation. With the training that I have had I was able to get by in whatever work that I was doing, but I noticed there was a lack in those years on my part, because I hadn't gone after the cultural and spiritual development.

Since 1981, when I went in search of my

own recovery from a dysfunctional background, I really noticed that there was a definite need for that to make me a complete person. I needed the cultural aspect and the spiritual aspects. So, with that, that is what I have been doing on my own since then as an individual.

Working in the area of social development in the north when I was with the Dene nation I had the opportunity to travel throughout the western Arctic to all the Dene communities, to the 26 Dene communities. I was instrumental in doing community development workshops that dealt with healing of the community, but it was mainly focusing on the individual. It was dealing with individual healing. That was back in 1984 that I was doing that work, 1984, 1985 and 1986. It really amazed me at that time how receptive the native people were, through the idea of personal growth and development workshops, on dealing with their issues, addressing their issues by first beginning to work on themselves.

I will always be grateful for the work I had with the people I worked with at that time. We were a really strong team of people that worked for the Dene

nation, and I was able to really get to know a lot of the people up and down the valley. If I am ever stranded in any of those communities, I know I have a place to stay and I will be looked after.

That is the main point that I would like to make of our people up here, that they are very trusting. Although they have gone through a lot of hardships at the hands of development, they are still very trusting and respectful towards each other and are willing to work on their issues, given the opportunity and for someone there to show them this is how it could be done instead of leaving them like that and saying: "Work on your issues" and leaving the people alone the way that I see it happening up and down the valley, where our people are expected to heal on their own.

Everything has been stripped from them over the last couple of generations, it seems. Especially the young people my children's age, so many of them don't have the language or the bush skills. They don't know that much of the history of our people and of the land and where their ancestors had gone, and what were the circumstances surrounding the reason why the people had

travelled here, travelled there, migrated here and there. Thus there is that lack of knowing relationships of our people. That is a big concern for a lot of the older people in the area, that the younger people don't know relationships, where this young person would take up with this other, like, a male and female would take up with each other. They don't realize that they could be closely related, those sorts of things.

I know of an older woman of my mother's generation. She feels very, very tired of always telling her kids: "Don't go out with that one because they could be related to you" type of thing.

So it is really important, the relationship aspect.

I wanted to also talk about -- I kind of mentioned what some other problems are and how we can fix it. That is what I want to focus on now.

There are social issues that stem around treaty rights, lack of carrying out their treaty rights, I guess. There is health issues, there is housing issues, there is education issues, economic development and employment issues, family violence, alcohol and drugs,

and law, or justice I guess. There is the different perspectives of dealing with those.

At present we are dealing with all of those social issues from the European perspective. The native people haven't been listened to when they have been told that we would like to address these issues from the native perspective. I will give you an example. For instance, on justice, if there is a family problem the people would normally call on the RCMP, and the RCMP would say: "Well, we can't really do anything because we haven't laid a charge, or the individual doesn't want to lay a charge."

So they don't go and try to help out to resolve that issue, because they are so used to their own policy, as compared to traditionally, when there was a family problem people would go to the Chief or councillors and say: "This has arisen. There is something happening with this family. Can you check it?" Then they would meet, the councillors would meet, talk about it, and someone, one or two individuals, would talk to that individual.

Back in the fifties, when I was younger,

I remember seeing people going to my grandfather and then my grandfather would talk with the people. It could be for something like just drunkenness, you know, and causing a disturbance. My grandfather would go and talk with the individual and the families concerning that issue.

Today that is how native people tend to see the RCMP -- that they could at least mediate, could at least talk to the people, or if there is gossip that gets uncontrollable in the community over a certain thing, rather than just letting it go like some people have past, just to even talk to those people, just so that they wouldn't continue discussing, you know, and furthering that gossip. Then, the RCMP say: "No, we cannot do that. That is not our role and responsibility", and just let go, you know. No one else can talk to you, almost.

In the past that was some of the things that our own justice system used -- we had that in place where people would mediate, to try to make a living better for the people.

Going back to treaty rights -- I won't do treaty rights right away. I will do it last, because -- for whatever reason, I will do it last.

I wanted to mention some things, like the way the present territorial government is run, like the Legislative Assembly. I have said this too before, like, I question the term "consensus government". Even across Canada, when territorial government is referred to, I remember hearing over the TV and radio that it is consensus government. To me, that is not consensus government, because they have their own little cabinet versus the regular members. Even if the regular members don't agree with something and the cabinet passes it, it still goes ahead if there is a majority. Consensus would mean you put something on the floor and you discuss it until everyone comes to an agreement as to what it really means.

I really question that, because to me, as an aboriginal person, when Dene nation first started -- or, rather, Indian Brotherhood first started and then the Dene nation came into being out of that, that is how we ran it, with consensus government. That was the definition of consensus government at that time, where we would put something on the floor and people would address the issue, whether they agreed with it or not, until

everyone came to a common understanding. That was the power behind the Dene nation at that time.

I really think that we, as aboriginal people, need to maintain at least that aspect of consensus government, that it has only one meaning instead of, you know, using the definition used by the territorial government in its pursuit of its mandate.

There is that, and then I also wanted to mention the unions.

At present, in the Northwest Territories there is territorial government union and there is also the union of the federal government. There is also the Teachers' Association unions. Whatever it is that is decided by those unions, it is for those members first, and the rest of the common people, the ones that don't belong to any of those unions, are the lowest on the scale, and that is usually the native people out in the communities.

I had taken co-operative development in Nova Scotia at the CODI Institute, and I really agree with the background of unions. But, when it comes to the Northwest Territories and the work that is to be carried

out, supposed to be work done for the regular people, and then when unions get in the way of that, I really wonder about them.

Myself, I belong to the unions. So do other native people in the Northwest Territories that work for government. It is like a law unto itself, where you belong to it and you pay $1,200 a year on union dues. People represent you. And then, at the same time -- like, I come from the people, I see my people, I see all of the services that could be carried out for the people and it bothers me.

I think there is something wrong with that, where it is the benefits for the union members first. As a union person, that is taken care of first, and then, if only that little bit is taken care of, for me, as a union person, I do my job out there for the people. That is the way it is, because right now in the territories, with the GNWT, there is controversy over benefits which, for myself, as an individual person, I don't support. Given that option to strike or not, I will not strike. I will continue working for the people.

The other thing too is that the strength

of the Teachers' Association in the Northwest Territories, where next year there is going to be Grade 12 offered here in Fort Simpson, us parents would like to continue to have our kids finish school by the 20th of June; but, as it is, we are told that from now on we will have to keep our kids in school until the end of June because there is the Grade 12 departmentals that come up next year and that the teachers, some of them refused to stay on for that extra 10 days with their Grade 12s while the others are finished. So the union overrules the concerns of the regular parents, and here, you know, school has to stay on.

It is those types of little things. It may sound piddling, but it is of concern. It is all those little things that mount up to great big issues. The union comes from a western perspective, it does not come from a native perspective. So the question of perspective comes in again.

Another concern here -- other people have mentioned it -- was the oral history. We haven't had an opportunity, or people or resources available, to be able to record the oral histories. Although once the

oral histories are recorded, they will not be considered oral histories, because they will be written.

I also agree that the oral history versus the written treaty that was done is not according to the way the Dene people say it has gone. There is a controversy with the oral versus the written version, and that is the western perspective and the native perspective. We do need to record our oral history to document that.

An issue also from around here is the lands, lands of the Dene people. Back in the 1950s, when we had a Legislative Assembly member -- at that time they reported to Ottawa. This I had mentioned earlier on, in another presentation I had made earlier on for another group.

There were native people, Dene people and Métis people that had given their money to the representative from here, and that was the old man John Goodall. They had given him money because he travelled to Ottawa, so that he could register that land in their name. Then, years later, they found out all that land was registered in his name, and there went the local peoples' money and their land. Then that man, when he

moved away, sold all of that land and got rich on the land that was rightfully the land of the people here.

Not only that, but the catholic church had something to do with that too, because I know that a woman told me that she had given $300 to the RC Church at that time because they had said they owned a certain piece of land and then, later on, when a white entrepreneur came around and wanted that piece of land, that priest sold him the same piece of land and then gave that woman's money to Indian Affairs so she could get an Indian Affairs' house. So he was entrusted with her money for that land and yet he turned it on to somebody else and sold that same piece of land to someone else.

This is only in Fort Simpson. How many other people has that happened to?

Chief Antoine also mentioned housing. I would like to also mention, back in the fifties, when Indian Affairs first came into Simpson here; that was the first time they came and gave housing for treaty people, but the treaty people had to pay $300 for their house to the Indian agent at that time. The people were never given receipts or anything, and there was never any record

whether that Indian agent ever gave that money to the federal government, or if it was part of the deal with Indian Affairs.

Later, after the flats flooded and all the people got their log houses over in that area and around town, in order for them to move in there they had to pay Indian Affairs $500 for their house; and those were treaty people, and they had to pay for their houses.

From that understanding the people understood it was not just their house, that the land also came with it that their lots sit on. And years later we found that that was not so, that that land was still considered Indian Affairs land.

So where did that money go? Is there any official documentation somewhere of where that money went, or did it go to that person? And if that Indian Affairs person did take it, then there should be a case, you know, for fraud, because that is what it was, and the people were mistreated.

That is some of the negative things that the local people are carrying, not particularly towards those individuals, but also to white people in general.

This is my own statement. It is not from anyone else. Other people could differ if they want, but that is how I am seeing it.

We talk about the education. People had been to convent schools in Providence. My mother had gone to convent school in Providence and, at that time, she only spoke Slave and then she was taught French. She didn't stay long. Years later, in the early fifties, when I was four and a half, I was taken to a hostel. I only spoke Slave, and the language that they taught me was English. Plus I was not supposed to speak the Slave language. So when I came home, my mother understood Slave and French, and I understood primarily English; so there was that division within the family too. It was years later that I started speaking Slave again.

Today, there was a hostel -- this is an old hostel. What is going to happen here with the education system is that, although the region people weren't told and the local people weren't told, or never gave permission to the Department of Education, two hostels are going to be built here this summer to house residential

kids from outlying communities. Especially with all of the findings from residential schools and stuff and all the harm that has been done, the Yellowknife Department of Education is putting the two hostels here in Fort Simpson.

People had been asked: "Is it okay to put them behind the hostel here", and a lot of the people that were asked verbally were the ones saying "no", because that is a grave site. The Department of Education here said: "Well, we are doing tests -- we are going to drill some test holes." If that is my bones there, I don't think I would like a drill to go through my arm or my leg bone, even though I won't feel it. There is that disrespect, where they are going to drill to see if there is any graves there. Apparently, I do understand that may have been done, otherwise they wouldn't be putting the two hostels back here.

Local native people are not in support of that. The Band had written a letter, I do believe, and so did the Regional Council, and it is still being pushed down. That is how much authority local native people have, and it is dictated that -- our direction was

dictated from Yellowknife Department of Education. That is what the Divisional Board Director says, "We have no choice, it has to go in."

Going back to land claims, my understanding of the land claims process that began in the early seventies was that, because people were not happy with the lack of treaty rights -- they had no rights. People knew that there was a housing issue. In Simpson itself, houses had been developed for treaty people only about 1957, or late fifties, and that was only some homes, and the treaties had been signed since 1921.

That happened, and then after the flood in 1963, I do believe, homes were built, but that was to replace those damaged homes. Since then, no houses had been built, no help had been given to people that I know of.

That was an issue that we knew that we had rights as treaty people. There was to be some help in the area of housing, help in the area of health issues, in education at that time in the early seventies. I do believe there were less than a dozen people from the Northwest Territories of native descent, maybe even half

a dozen, that had finished Grade 12 and were into further education in southern institutes.

Then there was a big problem with alcohol and drugs. We didn't know whether it was covered under health or social services. As a result of that, basically what we were after was a recognition of the treaty rights and its implementation, 100 per cent implementation.

That was the beginning of the land claims scenario back in the early seventies, if I remember correctly, and then the idea that there was the resources that were leaving the territories, and us as aboriginal people, whose lands these resources were being taken out of, had no say in the environment issue or even like the social programming that could go along with, let's say, the oil development that was happening around the Norman Wells area and the social destruction that was resulting from that, plus the whole inquiry into the Norman Wells pipeline.

As a result, that was my perspective on the land claims issue.

I also wanted to expand on the cultural and spiritual aspects.

The cultural and social development of the people, from years of being told in residential schools that our way was bad and all the negative things that went long with our own way, our people didn't show -- I don't know how to say it. From years of being told that our way was bad, our people were really frightened of even talking to their own children openly about our own spiritual development. Instead, what has come out over the years as far as I can remember is that all of the Dene way was really bad; it was bad medicine, it was negative, it was of the devil, of Satan, of pagan, negative, negative, so much that today, for the ones of us that are in search of that have found it extremely difficult to even practise our own way.

It has been a struggle. For myself as an aboriginal person it has been a struggle, because even other native people from this community have mentioned even to my children -- their children speak with my children and say: "Don't go there, because they do sweet grass", that negative type of thing; they don't understand all of those and yet, at the same time, people go and eat the moose that eats the sweet grass and eats the willow and

eats the water plants and stuff like that.

From aboriginal people, their perspective on the Indian way is so negative that it is very difficult for the few native people that are trying to find their own way, their own spiritual growth development, to really do it openly. Even for myself, I am not a person to hide behind closed doors, and yet I kind of hesitate to even mention it, because of the negative response, and also to protect my children, so that other children won't say: "Your parents are practising sweet grass, which isn't very good."

I just wanted to mention that. Perhaps someone else will expand on it that is experienced in that.

I feel that the spiritual development, for myself as a person I have come around full circle, and coming around again, my own spiritual development is a personal commitment, and it is for me as an individual to pursue it and it is for me to assist my children in pursuing that -- that was part of my own personal growth and development, you know, going through my own healing cycle.

I did mention, talking about community

healing and individual healing. I just wanted to emphasize that it is an individual choice, but because of all the things that have been put in the way of the people from several generations. Myself, I didn't do it completely on my own; I got direction from other people that were strong in their own sense, that have been on their own healing cycle, and they guided me. Thus, I know that our very own people are going to need those guides there, someone there to kind of help them a bit along the way.

The federal and territorial governments, I feel, are actively working to remove our treaty and aboriginal rights. This has to stop. Many of those rights flow directly from our unique spiritual relationship with our land -- and there goes that spiritual development again. With a fair implementation of its treaty obligations to my people, the federal government is in a position to help create the environment in which we can take care of ourselves in a healthy way.

I am not talking about hand-outs. I understand our ancestors agreed to share these lands with subjects of the Crown in exchange for programs and

services. As Dene we are still honouring that agreement. I am saying that because a lot of non-treaty people feel that the treaty people are getting hand-outs and they don't understand the treaty obligation of the Crown to us.

Even myself, as a native person, for years I felt really intimidated and put down by the fact that, gee, I have treaty rights. I am supposed to have these treaty rights and I feel kind of guilty to exercise it. That has to do with personnel that federal government have, because when I am in Yellowknife and I do get my eyes tested and I go for my slip of paper that says I can have my free pair of glasses up to $100, I really feel low, you know, that I am crawling there and that I am begging them for it, because of the personnel that are in place and their attitudes towards the program they are supposed to be implementing.

Imagine how the other people, the ones that haven't had that much travel experience or education experience, feel when they have to go like that. No wonder our people have so many problems with addictions and different things like that. They are made to feel really shamed and guilty.

I also feel that we need control of the funds that are there to do programming for our people and that it be our people, the native peoples, that understand other native people fully, that have the empathy and compassion for helping people that do the program delivery. There is that part too, but there is also -- I question bureaucracy at senior levels. You look at bureaucracy at senior levels, and how many grassroots people are in there that are sitting there making policy, because out here in the field, like myself, as a civil servant I have to follow policy and I have no say over that. It comes right from headquarters to senior bureaucrats.

With that I would just like to just thank you for listening to me.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much, and there may well be some questions, so would you just hold for a minute.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I want to thank you for your excellent presentation.

I just want to say that you started out by talking about the lack of cultural and spiritual development and how important that is for healing and to

maybe address a lot of the social concerns you have raised. Certainly, I think, from the places that I have travelled just as we started out on this tour, in British Columbia and certainly in Manitoba and other areas, people are really raising this as a very important issue for future development, that is, one of spiritual and cultural development and the relationship between the people and the Elders of the communities.

I notice you also brought that up too, how the RCMP, their policy ways of dealing with issues certainly were a lot different from the way it was dealt with in the past. For instance, you made reference to your grandfather. Again, it seems to me there has to be that reconnection of the Elders and their knowledge back to today's aboriginal people.

That is one area I want to share with you that has been expressed right across the country, which seems to be a very key issue.

The other thing was language.

I want to say now that I am really quite shocked to learn about the attitude of cultural and spiritual development by some people at this time and age.

I can see that this was the trend back maybe 30, 40, 50 years ago, but certainly in this time and age, I don't think there is an excuse for anybody to be still carrying that kind of an attitude. That is something that I guess one of the roles for this Commission is -- to change attitude of society towards aboriginal people and their thinking.

Again, I guess that when you talked about attending convent schools, those weren't the residential type schools they talk about that did all the damage to our people back in the twenties and thirties and forties.

ETHEL LAMOTHE: Pardon me?

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: You talked about attending a hostel and your mother went to a convent school.

Are you talking about residential schools?

ETHEL LAMOTHE: Yes, that is residential schools.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: Of course, that is a big issue, too, that is always being raised. I think that is something that we probably might

be looking into fairly soon as one that can't be ignored and could be dealt with immediately.

Again, with hostels, I am surprised that those kinds of things are being forced on a community of people without consultation.

The other thing is, you mentioned treaties. That is another area we are looking into. Some of the round tables we are going to be holding to talk about urban issues, there is going to be a round table on treaties along, because everybody seems to be having problems with treaties right across the country.

I want to thank you for your presentation, and let you know that what you talked about there is very common with other places that we have been. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MARY CAZON: I was just thinking about all those things she was mentioning.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: The location of the hostels, some people in the village don't want them to come. Where do the Mayor, the Chief and the MLA stand? The normal thing is, if you don't like something the government and the NWT is doing, you get

to your MLA and say: "Look what they are doing to us."

ETHEL LAMOTHE: I understand the Chief did write a letter last fall concerning that; so did the Regional Council.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: All I can do is suggest it. If any government is doing something you don't like, particularly if you think the bureaucrats are doing it and not the politicians, go to your politicians because they certainly have some authority over the bureaucrats. You may not believe it, but it is true.

Thank you very much. I think we are going to have to break for lunch now. It is 12:40. One thirty is the best we can do, I think. We will try to be back here by 1:30.

--- Luncheon Recess at 12:40 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 1:40 p.m.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I think we will come to order. I will ask the Deh Cho Native Women to make a presentation. Welcome, and if you would introduce yourself and proceed as you wish.

ROSA WRIGHT: Though many people know

who I am, I would just like to introduce myself. I am Rosa Wright. I am the representative for the Deh Cho Region on the Native Women's Association for the N.W.T. I am making a presentation on behalf of the Deh Cho Women.

In my presentation, I will discuss several areas of concern to the native women, which are also of concern to the native men in our region. The areas of concern are as follows: The healing of our people and our communities, concentrating on the family unit, and what future do our children have coming from dysfunctional homes, living in a dysfunctional society, and how we could look at the positive things we can change for the future of our children.

The most exciting thing I can see ahead of us is that we are starting to utilize our Elders in our decision-making policies and in areas of concern and getting their advice. This is probably the most important thing for us, as native people, to be doing now.

I am also going to discuss how the justice system treats women unfairly, and also native people as a whole are not treated equally in the courts, even in our small community of Fort Simpson.

On my own personal level, I would like to address the aboriginal governing system. I think very little was spoken about the aboriginal governing system. I just recently completed eight months of a Native Studies university program, and I did a lot of concentration in the area of aboriginal government models and how we, as aboriginal people, can look at self-government working in our communities. That is an issue I would like to address on my own personal level.

I think it is time that the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories realize that they have oppressed the Dene people ever since they came here. Our people are oppressed. A lot of people don't see it as being oppressed but, when you study it, when you look at all the Royal Commissions, the Penner Report and all these reports that have gone around Canada and come up to the Northwest Territories, and we consistently give our concerns to people, give our advice -- we give out advice on how to make positive changes to meet the needs of the aboriginal people -- there are not very many reports that have given the aboriginal people any concrete initiatives and met the needs of the people.

We have the territorial government working for the Northwest Territories. It is a branch of Indian Affairs. It is not a real government. We do not have a real say in what is happening. Everything is brought back to Ottawa, and decisions are made in Ottawa.

I am looking at a lot of issues, and I think the one that really needs to be concentrated on is the healing of our people, the healing of our communities, and the healing of the family unit.

Since the Indian agents have come into our land, they have consistently split our families up, made policies to change our ways of life, and all these changes, these fast changes, have affected our people's lives in a very negative way. I think this Commission has to look at those negative changes and start concentrating on some positive changes for us as native people.

It is not our fault that we have all these social problems in our communities. It is not our fault that we can't help our communities deal with this. It is not our fault that our land is not ours to control.

I am not putting blame on anybody, but there are a lot of things that have been done in the past, and we have to look at a brighter future.

The Government of Canada as well as the Government of the Northwest Territories has to start realizing that they have done a lot of damage to our people and that they have to start listening to the concerns of the people and take these concerns very seriously. We are here to make changes for a positive future, especially for our children.

We have many social problems in our community. Because of the way society is going today, we can't do anything unless we have money. If we want programs in our community, we need money. If we want workshops in our community, we need money. If we want to do anything in our community, we need money. We don't get that money, so a lot of these things are put off.

We need our people in our communities to make decisions on how government policy is to affect our lives. Like Mary said, when she comes to town, it is hard to get help. According to the oral history and the treaties, the old people say the government promised

them grubstakes. That, to me, means they will take care of the people and that the people won't go hungry.

Right now, it is very hard for people to go and get assistance because they need receipts and they need to follow all these guidelines of the Government of the Northwest Territories. A lot of our people coming off the land can't get receipts for how much gas they spent out on the land. They can't tell the government how much moose or caribou and put a dollar figure on that. There are a lot of areas where the government policy is inconsistent with the aboriginal way of life, and those things have to be changed. Our Elders must give direction to the government on how to change those.

It is very unfortunate that all these changes have affected our lives. All our people want is to live our lives without the restrictions, without the present funding arrangements. All the funding arrangements that were promised to us through the treaty promises go to the territorial government and, once they get to the community level, we are not talking about dollars, we are talking about pennies. We can't do nothing up here with pennies. We need real dollars, and they do

not need to be funnelled through the territorial government.

The federal government has to start realizing that they made promises and that promises are to be kept.

Our form of government in the land of Denende is our Band Councils, our Chief and councillors. That is a form of aboriginal governing systems. Before the Europeans arrived, our government system was the Chiefs and their large families which are considered councils. We had many forms of committees.

We had medicine people responsible to take care of a lot of areas. We had people responsible to take care of hunting and trapping so that our people would not starve. We had people to take care of social issues so that, when something happened in their community, it was discussed within the whole community. Ethel mentioned consensus government this morning. That is how our government ran before the Europeans arrived. It was a consensus. Everybody had a say; everybody was allowed to give their opinions. The general decision-making was based upon everybody's concerns, not just the selected

few. Everybody's concerns were taken for granted, and good decisions were made.

When we are asking for a little change and a little recognition, especially for our Elders, we are not asking for much. We are just asking for some dignity and especially a future for our children.

In our communities right now we need a lot of healing. There is a lot of hurt. It is not hurt because we have grown up in dysfunctional homes. It is not hurt because we were abused. It is hurt because of the way we, as a people, have been treated for the past 500 years. Those issues have to come out and they have to be discussed. We have to be healed so that we are no longer classed as second-class citizens. We are the aboriginal people of this land, and we must be respected for that.

We have to concentrate on the healing of the whole family, not just one individual. We have to heal the whole family. In the area of abuse, the victim and the offender must be healed and all the family members that are affected by this one situation of abuse. For that, we need money to train our own people to do the

healing, to train our own people to do the counselling.

Our children are hurting. I am hurting because I see our children going to school every day with no food, children going to school without sleep because their parents have been up all night partying. This is not only for an aboriginal person. This is for all people in our society who do not take care of their children properly. I see it in every community.

Our children need to be protected. Our children cannot come up here and tell you why they are hurting, because they don't understand why. Half of them do not even know what it is to be in a good home, what it is to wake up every morning and have breakfast, or to go home to a hot lunch. A lot of our children have never experienced that.

We need community-based programs run by aboriginal people, decisions and policies made by aboriginal people. We need to utilize our Elders at all levels of government to guide us in our decision-making, especially where our environment is a concern.

We need equality among all aboriginal people, be it native men, native women, Métis, non-status,

Inuit. We need equality in all those areas.

In this area the Indian Act is very discriminating toward aboriginal women. It doesn't matter if they passed Bill C-31; it is still discriminating against me as a native woman and to my children who are girls. It is discriminating against them because it is splitting my family up, and I really totally disagree with that.

If the government was going to make changes and not discriminate against us as aboriginal women, then they should consider all women, not just the selected few.

I think each aboriginal government should be determined by a community. It should be determined by the aboriginal people of a community. They should also be able to determine their own jurisdictions. An example is that my Band Council should be able to determine its own membership. It should not be restricted by policies of Indian Affairs and by the Indian Act. If my Band Council wishes to have other people on their band membership, then they should be allowed to. I think that is very discriminating in the area where Bill C-31 is

concerned. It is a major issue to me as a native woman.

I think we also, as native and aboriginal people, must continue to support our people who continue to live a traditional way of life. Right now, it is very upsetting to me because of the changes in the way things are going for the trappers. All the traps have been changed. If they bring their old leg-hold traps in, they can get a few of those -- I don't know what other kind of traps they are called, but there is a new kind of trap that has just come out.

It is really funny because, during the treaty, the discussions were: Our people would not sign that treaty if their way of life was restricted. They signed that treaty based on, "We will sign this treaty if you do not make restrictions on our way of life", and trapping was a way of life for my people. This is a form of restriction for my people, and it is very discouraging to see that the government is again denying our people the way they want to live.

Our justice system must accommodate the aboriginal values and work with the aboriginal people to change the system to meet the needs of the aboriginal

people. Aboriginal governments on a regional level should be recognized as a support network for regions or collective groups, which would be our Band Councils and Métis associations.

I think the education program, which is a treaty right to treaty people, must always remain a right to all individuals, especially to treaty people. It should always remain a right to all individuals, whether they are rich or poor. Right now our educational system is discriminating against those who are less fortunate and who come from dysfunctional homes.

We have many children in the Northwest Territories who are Fetal Alcohol Syndrome children; yet, we do not have the special needs teachers we need to work with these children on an individual level.

The health care units in smaller communities, regardless of the size, should not be downgraded but should be increased so people could be treated on the same level as those that are treated in the south.

I find all the education programs and health services that we get in the Northwest Territories

are just a minor proportion of what services you get in the south. We should not be treated like that. We should be able to get the same treatment in the Northwest Territories as people would get in the south. I see no reason why we always have to travel south, even if it is because there is not enough money to pay for people to come up here and live.

You are spending more money sending us down south to go to treatment centres. They spent $2,000 sending me and my daughter to Edmonton to see a skin specialist. We were there for 15 minutes, and what she told me I already knew. She didn't do nothing for me or my daughter. That is a lot of money being wasted by the government.

I would like to make a little presentation from my own personal perspective, especially in the area of self-government and maybe give a little history behind what I learned during my schooling.

In 1763, the British government presented a Royal Proclamation. It stated that no British representative could enter into Indian lands without making compensation or treaty with the Indian people.

The indian agent, H.W. Harris, came to Fort Simpson in 1911, and treaty was not signed until 1921. The people of Fort Simpson have never been compensated for those 10 years that that Indian agent was here.

They made many promises to our people. I read the oral history of the Paulette et al case versus the Crown. In that the Elders have stated that they were promised a grubstake. They were promised the medicine chest. They were promised education. They were also promised no restrictions on hunting and trapping and their way of life.

Those promises have never been kept. I am kind of wondering what is going to happen to this Commission that you have going around right now listening to all our concerns and our ideas. I would kind of like to see some positive changes for native people come from this.

I also just wanted to make a point about Ethel Lamothe's presentation this morning, when she said native people who are government employees are treated sometimes differently. There is an issue I have which has been brought up with the Native Women on many occasions.

There is a government policy that, if a government employee wants to take a trip to a fish lake or to their summer camp, they are given $300 for this trip. This is a benefit. Yet, they are not entitled to their trip down south to Edmonton, which costs a lot more. It costs $400 or $500 to go from here to Edmonton, plus you get all kinds of other benefits added on to that trip to Edmonton. For a person going from Iqaluit to Edmonton, or from Inuvik to Edmonton, it costs $1,000 or more. Yet, if a person wants to go to a fish lake or cabin, it is only $300 they get. There is a lot of inequality, and a lot of aboriginal people are not satisfied with that policy.

That is just a policy I wanted to share with you, some of the things our people have to face on a daily basis.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

I would like to ask a couple of questions, and then I think my colleagues, Viola Robinson, Mary Cazon and Gabe Cazon, may want to ask a couple of questions.

You spoke of the desirability, how good it would be if there could be band-based consensus government to work on some of the problems which you have identified. What do you see as now limiting the bands from putting together some traditional methods of dealing with some health problems and some social and family issues, based upon the wisdom of the Elders and based upon treating the offender and the victim? You spoke of the way that aboriginal people used to deal with these issues. What limits the band from now doing that, at least so far as aboriginal people are concerned? What limits the community from doing that?

ROSA WRIGHT: The major thing I see as the downfall for aboriginal people, especially treaty people, is that the funding they get from Ottawa for these programs is given to the territorial government. This money pays for all the bureaucrats, their staff and everything in the government in Yellowknife. Then, when it gets to the community and is split up between how many communities in the Northwest Territories -- a lot of times we look at this money as treaty money because it is a treaty right. It is sifted to all people. It is not given

primarily for treaty people.

In the area of education, all our treaty monies are here, and we are educating everybody else's children, not only treaty children.

I think the major feeling of people across the territories right now is that there are too many bureaucrats in Yellowknife. There are too many government employees in Yellowknife that are taking a major piece of that funding.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I didn't make myself clear. I wasn't talking about education. Education costs a lot of money, and there is no way to run education without costing money, which has to come from Yellowknife or wherever.

What I was talking about was the traditional healing that would go on in a family, in a community -- not all over the territories, but in a family, in a community -- based upon the wisdom of the Elders. That used to work. It didn't cost any money then because there wasn't any money then. You had another basis for organization.

I am trying to get you to tell me what

has happened to aboriginal society that makes those things not work.

ROSA WRIGHT: I think money is a major issue in this area. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, our people made our clothing, they educated their own children, they healed their own people. We had our own form of medicine; we had our own form of medicine people.

In a group of people living in a small area, in Fort Simpson for example, they never used to live in communities; they used to live on the land. They would come together at certain times of the year to meet other people. In those groups they had distinguished people among them who were responsible for certain areas of ensuring daily decision-making in those areas -- in the social area, in the cultural area, in the educational area, in the spiritual area. They had certain people responsible for those areas.

Because we didn't have any form of money, people shared everything they had. They gave to the poor and they helped the sick and they helped the widows. They took children whose parents were no longer there; they

were custom adopted. If something happened, they were taken care of.

Because of the changes to our society and because money is so important for us to live in this community, we need a lot of money to feed our children on a daily basis. Money is very important right now, not as an aboriginal person but in this society. As a person, you need it to continue living.

Right now, if I were to set up a program where I would get the Elders to take on some of these responsibilities, I would pay those Elders and I would pay them damn good because a lot of them I could classify as professors from the university. They have more knowledge than anybody I know. They have to be respected for that knowledge, and we have to pay them for that knowledge. They need to live and they need to feed themselves. Maybe they have large families, and they need to feed their large families.

Government employees up here get paid a lot of money; they get a lot of fringe benefits. Our Band Councils get core funding, and they barely get enough money to pay our Chiefs. Our councillors only get paid

for council meetings. We have a lot of things we want to deal with, but it is hard to get people to deal with those things because they want to get paid.

I had people volunteering for the feast yesterday. Everybody wanted to get paid to cook. I really find that difficult for me to take. I guess I am going to have to change my ways as well, because it costs a lot of money to make things. To make a salad for a feast costs about $40 or $50, and I have to take that into consideration next time I do a feast.

I hope you can get what I am talking about. There is a lot of things we can do to help our people, but money is a big issue. I don't expect a lot of people to start doing things for nothing. When they see government people getting paid lots of money to do things in our community and we get all these people volunteering and not paying them, it is not really fair. And the same people get picked over and over and over to do the volunteer work because they are the only ones that will do it for nothing.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That's a familiar story, not only in aboriginal communities.

Commissioner Robinson.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I want to thank you for your presentation. I think you came out pretty clear on the kinds of concerns that you raise here. Again I will say what I said before. One that has been brought about again is the loss of your traditional cultural and spiritual values, and they are so important in the healing.

You talked about concentrating on your family units and dysfunctional homes and society, and you need to restore the spiritual values that aboriginal people always had before, and the unfairness.

You talked about a lot of things. It seems to me you are sort of condemning the Department of Indian Affairs and the Indian Act for imposing the kinds of policies on your people. We have heard this travelling throughout the country. It is just a repetition, "Get rid of the Indian Act; get rid of the Department of Indian Affairs; get rid of it; get rid of it."

I wonder, if I were to ask you if the Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs were removed tomorrow, what would you see replacing that, which

would make things better for your people?

ROSA WRIGHT: It would be my dream that aboriginal people got their own form of self-government, and that they themselves wrote out the Indian Act and how they wanted to be treated. I don't see anybody else writing it out on how we want to be treated.

If they had the consensus of the aboriginal people, then we wouldn't have all these problems. If our Chief could go down to Ottawa today and have input on changing the Indian Act, I'm sure we'd live a healthier life up here. We won't feel like we are second-class citizens. We will feel good about who we are.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: That's a good answer. I wonder if you think your form of self-government -- and there are certainly different models and forms people are talking about -- would involve all of your people's input. It would be like rewriting the Indian Act, or whatever. Do you see your form of self-government replacing the Indian Act?

ROSA WRIGHT: I guess if we did have an aboriginal government, I can see the Indian Act being

changed, but only by the aboriginal people.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER FOR THE DAY GABE CAZON: The people learned how to make a living just from your dad or from your grandparents. They always had kind of a teacher, a person who could do everything. There was one guy here and one at Providence. There certainly was a person here for all the people, not just the young people but for everybody.

There was a lot of dos and a lot of don'ts: Don't do this or you'll get hurt, you'll get killed. We had to listen. That is how the people used to live, by that rule.

COMMISSIONER FOR THE DAY MARY CAZON: Everything I heard Rosa saying -- there are a lot of things that you have to have money. Even me and my family, my old man Gabe, we are running a summer kids' camp for 11 years. I had my own camp for about 15 years. Whenever a person wants to get away from drinking, I get them out.

I have been doing that for a long time. The kids, if they want to get away for a weekend, I take them, and we support them with our own money.

If they do any damage to the skidoos or things like that, we pay it out of the trapping money we are making. When I come to town here, I talk about things like that. A lot of people don't know what we are talking about. Lots of these young kids, they know what we have in camp. All those skidoos around camp, all the tools we are working with, they are all paid by trapping.

When we first started, we asked for help. The only help they gave us is $150. How far can you go with $150? Even a can of tobacco is $60 now. That is why a lot of people are concerned about trapping. A trapper's life is really good, but everything is getting too high.

A lot of people want to go back in the bush, but there is no money for them to go back in the bush. Even one skidoo costs $4,000. Where could we get that money? We have a camp out there, and it is run by the family. We all get together and run it. The only

thing that is going to turn us down is when the job changes. Me and Gabe are going to keep hanging on to the culture we have been brought up with in my family.

I have been training since I was about 15 years old. Pretty near all the kids around school -- I like to help. Not only me, a lot of people like to help kids like that, but we need money to start a program like that.

Even now, we wanted to run it all together, natives and whites, all the people together. But we need money to start that program.

All these meetings that have been going on ever since man moved to Simpson -- I don't know what year. Pretty near every year a bunch of people go on a meeting. What are they talking about? Until now there is nothing done for us. It's the same thing over and over. I hope there will be a little change from now on from the meeting we are having here all together, and we are pretty well all understanding one another.

That's all I have to say. Thank you for listening.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank

you.

I wonder if I could ask the MP for the western Arctic, Ethel Blondin, to join us. She has been kind enough to come and listen and speak, so we would invite her to come forward and make a presentation.

ETHEL BLONDIN: I want to start out by saying that I am really happy and honoured that you would comply with my request to appear here. I want to give you the reasons as to why I thought it was important to be in this community to speak.

With all due respect, I really feel I have to say something in the aboriginal languages. I can't preach about preserving the aboriginal languages and culture, and speak in English.

(Through an Interpreter): I would like to talk to the Royal Commission. What I would like to talk to you about is: Here in Fort Simpson, the people in the Deh Cho region are the people who are the leaders for us, and politicians, Jim Antoine, the people who are elected to positions, when they speak I wanted to hear them. That is why I wanted to be here.

When I am here with you, I wanted to pick

up the news of the Royal Commission. I would like to pick up some news about what the Royal Commission is doing and to listen to the people. When you talk to the people, the Elders, the young people, the young girls, the youths, a lot of people that have gone through the Commission's inquiries, when they pick up results on these inquiries -- Georges Erasmus, one of the people on this Commission, when I talk to him, I would like to talk about what the Royal Commission is doing.

In the traditional Dene ways, when we talk, we all work on behalf of the Dene people, and the Dene people have gone through a lot of hardship. We are not the only people who have worked for ourselves; our ancestors have worked for us. They are not here among us today, but we still live by it and we still talk the same language, and the pride we still hold on to.

What I am talking about is the young people that are growing up right now. We have to think for the betterment of their future. How will they live on this land?

It is hard, sometimes, the way we see it as Dene people, we are not very much. There are other

people in different lands. There are also other people who have come from an aboriginal ancestry. We have to work for the betterment of the people. If we don't do that, the Dene languages will not be preserved. If we don't keep our traditional ways, and also the preservation of our land, our water and the things that you use to be strong. There are a lot of evil things coming in amongst our way of life here at Simpson.

I don't know when the last time I was here was, when they had the meeting in the community hall. I still remember it well. At the time, Jim Antoine was the Chief. He was our leader at the time. They had a meeting on alcohol. At that time, there were some resolutions made. What he said at the time, Jim Antoine said, "I am representing our people." A lot of times he said he has worked on behalf of the people.

It is hard for the native people and the people in their leadership positions. What I would like to tell the Chief is that that is why I wanted to be here for the Royal Commission. Also the young people. If we want to do good for them for the future, it is going to be hard.

One issue that is always talked about is the Constitution. This thing they are talking about, the Constitution, is good, but I think what we have to work towards is the betterment of people at the community level. The government is not for the betterment of the Dene people. There is money to be used there, but it is not going to the people.

I think the way to do better for the Dene people is to start at the community level, the people who are representing us in the government. We are talking about the leadership. We are not really in the white man's way. We are not really going that way.

The way I see it, the treaty people, when they work towards something, they have to be sincere about it and they have to move towards it. Other people, I don't think they work that way.

Our generations from thousands of years back, here in 1992, all people, our ancestors, our kids and our land, we still really cherish all that stuff. The Dene people, even when we travel far, always try that way of life. This is what I would like to say to you today. Here in Fort Simpson, I feel they are doing the work for

the betterment of the Dene people.

All these places -- here in Fort Simpson today there are also some people from Trout Lake who probably don't remember. The Chiefs from these committees are here today, and I would like to say thanks on behalf of these people. That is why I wanted to be here.

I have just basically said that I chose to come here because I feel it is so important for the Commission to know that I value what our people have to say.

This is a community that deserves to be heard. In a time when a country is hungering for leadership based on values, principles and vision, we have that here. These people are proof that people can do for themselves what no one else can or has been able to do for them.

We people of the Dene mind, we have come a long, long way. We have struggled so long and so hard. It has not been that long ago that our people experienced hunger -- and some still do; the cold and the hardship -- and many still do. It was for us, ourselves, that our ancestors and our people struggled.

We have something to share with Canada that I think the Royal Commission that was formed, that I support wholeheartedly because I feel you can do a lot of good work, have to hear -- not just the fancy academic words of people, but you have to hear the heart, and you have to see the soul of our people to really appreciate what we mean when we talk about the things that we care about. The things we care about are things that are difficult for other people to understand.

I came here years ago and attended a public meeting when Jim Antoine was still the Chief. At that time, it was a meeting on alcohol and about how to handle and provide options. I can remember things the Chief said that have remained with me throughout the years and have, in a sense, guided me. I see this community as the reflection of many aboriginal communities that struggle to do things for themselves. I see many changes.

I want you to know that it is important that these people be heard. I in no way want to think that what I have to say is any more important than anybody

else. The work I do for these people and the work I do for other people as well is a mere reflection of the guidance that has been provided over the years by the Elders who have come before us, many of whom are not with us.

There are many things we can talk about. We can talk about the Constitution. We can talk in academic, glowing terms about land claims. We can talk about taxation and the Indian Act, but I think one thing is fundamental that has held the Dene people together in these communities. It is that they put a high value on their language, their culture. These are gifts from generations because it is an oral tradition. Many of these languages were not written languages. These are gifts that have been passed on from one generation to another.

It is the love of the culture of the people; it is the love of their own history, their own heritage, that has spurred them to hang on through a lot of adversity, and even through the most difficult times when people were forbidden to practise their culture.

Through great forces of assimilation, after all these generations, people still speak their

language and still hang on to traditions that much of the world and much of Canada doesn't know about.

The other thing I think is fundamental to Dene people is that they are a sharing people. They are a giving people. Their people mean everything to them. Dene people can go anywhere in the world -- aboriginal people, basically -- but they never quite leave their home because their heart is always at home, and their soul sings with all the things their people have believed in for generations.

There is a connection there which is hard to break. That is why, when you go to the land claims table, you are not just talking about a law. You are not just talking about a certain technical aspect. You are talking about who those people fundamentally are. You are talking about something as fundamental as the love of the land those people have.

I heard recently from an Elder who said, "You cannot teach someone who has power, who has money, who has the resources, to love the land; it is something you do naturally. You can teach them about it, but you can't make them feel it." "These are the people", he said,

"who have the money, the power to make the decisions, to take the action, to destroy this world, to pollute the rivers, to cut down the trees, and to destroy Mother Earth. These are the people who perpetrate the sins against nature."

He said, "It is fundamental and real that our people, one generation after another, have given gifts to their descendants." We will try our best -- we are not as good at it, I think, as our ancestors were -- to give to these children that same respect for their language and culture, that same respect and love for the land. It is becoming increasingly difficult because there are pervasive forces at play that we have very little control over.

We live in a changing world. It is like swimming against the tide for many of us. It is very, very difficult. It is difficult especially when you are trying to translate a world view, something you believe in, something you value, that people simply do not understand or appreciate.

The one other thing I can tell you from my own experience is that it is not important how much

money you have. It is not important in the end how powerful you are. "In the end," my grandmother used to say, "we are all just people, and we all struggle together." I think we forget that, and it becomes our enemy. We forget that we are equals.

It is when one group thinks in an ethnocentric manner that they are better than another group, that their ways are better, that you will become good like them when you adopt their ways, that has caused a lot of destruction in native communities across this country. I guess it is appropriate to say that here because there are many stories that can be told in aboriginal communities that have nothing to do with the Constitution, but have everything to do with who a people are, how they think and what they value.

In terms of what we want for the future, I think we want no more than other groups across this country. We want our languages and our cultures to be preserved. People will say, "Why don't you preserve them? Why don't you do that?" It is very easy to say that when there has been so much damage done, so much erosion, and when there are such powerful forces at play that work

against you.

Take, for instance, the pervasive influence of television. We don't have the money to make it work for us. We don't have the resources, human and financial, to make it work for us. We would like to, but we don't have that. It is there, and it works against us every day -- against our langauge, our culture, against our principles, our vision. It is something that should work for us if we had the resources, but it doesn't.

Look at our new TV program, T.V.N.C. Native Communications Society of the Western Arctic doesn't have the money to produce its own programs. It borrows programs from other places. It should be able to come here and do stories on the young drummers, on the bush camps out here, on the alternative learning styles that exist, but it doesn't have that. So, many of the things that should work for us don't work for us at all.

The main institutions in this country don't reflect us. There are no aboriginal people appointed to the Bank of Canada. You will never see, I don't think, in our lifetime a President of CBC who is native. I don't see why not. Why can't we have the

President of Air Canada to be an Inuit person or a Dene person or a Métis person?

Those are the kinds of things that would seemingly empower us, that would give us an equal footing in some of the major financial and economic networks in this country. These are the kinds of things that are possible if people respect us, and if people say, "You are equal, and you can do it."

Why is there not a Supreme Court Justice that is aboriginal? I asked that question, and I got a funny response from Gérald Beaudoin from the Beaudoin-Dobbie Commission and Justice Dickson. They said, "If you got someone appointed, they would vote against women. It was men who voted against women in the Lavallé case." I said, "You are assuming it would be a man that would be appointed. Why would you assume that?" We don't think that way.

I guess I have a real bone of contention with the kinds of things that happen to men and women in modern society. I am frustrated because I believe in equality of people. I don't want to get tangled up in equality of the sexes because it is too complicated for

me. I am too simple a person for that.

For instance, I believe in partnership. I think we live in a challenging world, and I don't think aboriginal people can afford to isolate one another because they are either male or female. Neither can any other sector of society.

We live in a double income society. This lifestyle is economically crippling, and it is damaging on families, but it is reality. I believe in partnership.

This is a real problem for us to deal with -- issues that are outside our scope, but they come in and intervene in a negative way. The whole issue of the charter, individual versus collective rights, is something I feel really strongly about. But those are the things I will deal with in a formal presentation.

I am doing this extemporaneously; I am not doing this from a written script. I have notes.

I want you to know that I believe my language is every bit as important as the other two official languages of this country. I am a better person, I think, in the way I understand and work for my people because

I value my language and I value my culture, and I love my people.

I think it makes it real for me. Whatever I do, wherever I go, I remember my mission. My mission is based on simple things that people fail to understand because they tend to complicate it.

Distinct society, under the Constitution -- that is a whole other debate. Let me tell you this. I have no doubt in my mind whatsoever, from having been across this country and throughout places around the world, that aboriginal people do constitute a distinct people.

They do constitute something that is unique constitutionally and legally in this country. There is a legal and binding relationship that is unique to aboriginal people and the federal government, and it constitutes a fiduciary responsibility that the courts have supported. I really believe in my mind and my heart that, when we make laws in this country, they shouldn't be there to suppress those rights; they should be there to actualize them. That is why I think it is a good thing to have native judges. It may not be our system, but we

have a transition period to go through.

You talked about what we do in the interim if we have self-government. I should let you know that I intend to make a formal presentation, a written presentation, to the Committee at some point on the issue of the land claims policy, and on the issue of self-government and models thereof. In land claims I will deal with self-government, as well as extinguishment and taxation and issues like that. Right now I just want to make some broad comments about these issues.

When we talk about the environment, I don't think we talk about it in terms of some public policy or a department. We talk about it in terms of the things that are real to us. That is why it is hard for Mr. Corporate Citizen to understand where native people are coming from. It is not dollars and cents.

When we look at trees, we don't see paper. When we look at waterfalls, we don't see dams. When we look at rivers, we don't see industries of tourism. We might see some of those, but we don't solely see that. There is an appreciation of the inherent value, the intrinsic value, of what is there specifically.

I think, when we look at the issue of the environment, clean rivers are important to us. That is how simple it is. Clean water is important to us. We value the fact that our Elders have told us that everything in our ecosystem is alive, is living, and depends on one another to survive. If you destroy and sin against nature, one component, you break the link and you destroy everything in that whole ecosystem. That is why James Bay is important to the Crees.

What happens on Mother Earth is important for aboriginal people. We don't put ourselves on an island and isolate ourselves, because we know it is all one network, it all works together. You know something interesting? The world is beginning to realize that. They call it the Brundtland Commission, our common future. I guess we have always known that there are ways you treat the things you love that make them last for generation after generation.

That links me in with another really fundamental issue, and that is the issue of treaties. I wish those of us that work for our people had the vision of the people that went before us, had the enduring mind

to be able to come up with a permanence of phrase -- as long as the rivers flow, as long as the grass grows. All of those phrases are permanent.

There are things people have tried to destroy through various institutions of government for years, and they are still there. We still have a blanket of protection under those treaties that are permanent.

We have not been able to manufacture anything, I feel, that has been as good as that. In my lifetime, I hope I will do one thing that will stand for something -- and I don't know what that would be -- that would be maybe even one per cent as powerful as what our ancestors gave us. They gave us a vessel to travel in. They gave us the tools and the equipment. It is almost like they knew there was a path of destruction ahead, that it would be difficult.

It hasn't been easy, and it is not going to be easy. If we think, because we have the inherent right to self-government, that we have it licked, we have to look back 125 years and look at the amount of healing that is there which has to be done.

I listened to Ethel Lamothe this

morning. I listened with all the things I felt I understood about the way people live up here and the kind of hardships they endure. I heard things that maybe other people missed, or maybe I missed some things, but I heard her loud and clear about how it is that aboriginal peoples need guides, spiritual guides. Maybe it is something different for everybody, but we need a period of healing.

We are trying to get better and do better at the same time. It is very difficult. I think, also, the one enduring quality about aboriginal people, and Dene particularly because that is my experience, is their sense of humour, their sense of joy and their sense of laughter, their sense of music and their sense of dance. It is there; it is alive. After all these years, you see in our young people how wonderful it is to rekindle that spirit of hope, that spirit that made all the people clap yesterday because they are proud of their young people. They are a part of it, too, and the old people can see it. It is so important.

I think we can talk about education. On the environment, I will make practical suggestions. I think there should be a summer employment program

strictly for the environment in the north, because I think we can set a world-class example of how to keep clean communities, a clean environment, basically in places where people dwell and live and inhabit.

I also think we need an auditor general of the environment. I have been pushing for that because I feel that governments feel enormous pressure from industry, not just in our country but in other countries as well. I feel this is one position that can be severely compromised. An auditor general of the environment is something that would alleviate that pressure, would keep that position uncompromised and pure in a sense.

I also think we need to build in the north two world-class studies of excellence for the environment. I think people from all over the world can learn if we build something in the North, something that will help the world, not something that will destroy it. We can produce technology that other parts of the world will want to buy. It will make money too, but that's okay; it will still serve a positive purpose.

On education, I just want to say that it has not been a roaring success. There are a lot of

people working and trying really hard. I am a former educator, and I have questions in 1992: Why is it that the majority of our students are not graduating? They are putting all the effort in. It is not the fault of the people. There seems to be some kind of a miscue between the system and the people who should be providing learning. There is something missing there. There is a missing link, and I attribute it to a number of things.

How well can you learn when all is not well? How well can we have a living as a people when individuals need healing, when families, when communities need healing, when regions need to build for themselves things that no one else can build for them? I don't have the answers; I have the questions.

My feeling is that we have to take extraordinary measures because we need to achieve extraordinary things, because of the difficulty. I tell you that I have seen examples across this country.

In the Mohawk communities they have survival schools. I would like to see our system take a chance on us and provide for us the resources and funding to engage in such activities. We need our own survival

schools that will help us teach the language and the culture. It doesn't have to be an institute or a place; it can be a concept which can be transplanted in a number of different ways. We can be creative in how we come up with that solution, but it has to be done, and it has to be done by the people.

The other thing I think is important to remember with regard to health issues is that building hospitals and having all of the equipment and medicines are not necessarily the answers. I think we have to look at the whole issue of wellness, how people help heal themselves, how you bring together the people and those institutions.

I have a little bit of advice for the Royal Commission, if I might. I would like to see a national conference. I mentioned this to Justice Dickson when he first did a survey on forming a committee. I would like to see a national youth conference, co-sponsored by the Royal Commission -- well planned, well organized, very proactive and productive -- to come up with some suggestions for youths of the future and for our current day youth, how we can deal with some of the really tough

problems we have: substance abuse, the whole issue of AIDS, the high number of single parent families -- and I am not going to get into Murphy Brown, because somebody already dealt with that.

I also think one other fundamental favourite subject of mine is the role of Elders. It is so important in aboriginal communities to have Elders there that are well enough to be able to assist the communities in heading towards the future and guiding the communities. I think there is a role there for Elders. I believe in it. I think they can be the providers, the mentors, the guides we need through really tough times.

It is so evident, when we have problems in politics -- at least, I do -- and when the Chiefs go back to their Elders, speak with some of their old people, it is like a shot in the arm. You go back and are rejuvenated. There is a role for our senior citizens. We have to provide for them so they don't worry. We have to give them accommodation, and we have to give them the opportunity to share with us things that, once they are gone, we lose forever.

There is a special role for women too.

Because I am a woman, I just want to leave you with a quote I think is so appropriate. It is not an egotistical thing I say here when I talk about women. I think our men value us as women, and we value our men.

We have a partnership to do for our children and our senior citizens what no one else can do for us. I just think this is so important to think about. It is from an Ojibwa Elder -- and we can pirate other people's views because they are similar to ours. It says: "The woman is the foundation on which nations are built.

> She is the heart. If that heart is weak, the people are weak. If her heart is strong and her mind is clear, then the nation is strong and knows its purpose. The woman is the centre of everything."

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you for very much, Ms Blondin. We are delighted and pleased that you would agree to appear before us. If I may, I compliment you for sitting here all day listening to the people whom you represent and finding out what their views

and concerns are. That represents an elected member who understands some of the responsibilities that are on the shoulders of an elected member.

You have said many things. You have talked about white society. You have been fair and accurate when you have said that we have tended to believe that we should subdue the earth rather than live with the earth. The Brundtland Commission was telling us that that cannot be.

The upcoming world conference at Rio de Janeiro is going to say that cannot be and that, therefore, we white society must change our ways.

You have talked about treaties and about the fact that these are regarded by aboriginal people not as contracts or done deals, but as an outline of an ongoing relationship.

You have talked about the fact that all of these issues are not going to be solved at once, and that in the meantime aboriginal people will have to participate in the transition. For example, the justice system, while it may not be the justice system aboriginal people would wish, in the meantime aboriginal judges and

aboriginal control over that justice system would be a step in the right direction.

You have talked about what we are experiencing, the sense of joy and zest for life of so many aboriginal people, that it is characteristic of many aboriginal communities.

While non-aboriginal people in Canada have been a little slow on the uptake, I believe it is being appreciated that Canada is better because of the fact that we have many distinct peoples. I hope this Royal Commission will be able to reinforce that idea among Canadians. We want to listen, and we are listening. I don't know whether we are always hearing, but we are certainly listening. I don't know whether we are always understanding what is being told to us, but it is not for want of trying.

Canadians, officially at least, are beginning to realize how rich we are because of our diversity. I say "officially" because, while it is part of the language of people in high office, I am not sure it is fully understood by everyone, certainly by white Canadians. While I don't seek to speak for white

Canadians, I suppose I am as culturally arrogant and ethnocentric as most white Canadians.

We have felt that we knew best in the past. We know that this has been a wrong tactic, a wrong approach. We certainly do not know what the right approach is, but we do know that Canadians have much to learn about how we, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, can live together and get the best of out of the society of each.

The Royal Commission hopes to help Canadians learn in this process. We ourselves are certainly learning, and we have learned a good deal by listening to Ethel Blondin. So, my thanks to you.

ETHEL BLONDIN: Thank you very much. No questions?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I am not going to ask any questions. I am going to ask my colleagues to say what they wish to say.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I certainly don't have any questions, but I do want to thank you for your excellent presentation. I share everything that you say, and I want to tell you that we are certainly listening to the people. It would be nice if we could

get to all the communities to hear what people have to say, but certainly the North is one that we have to pay very close attention to in our mandate.

Some of these points that you have raised here, where maybe something can happen sooner, will be brought back for true consideration. We are taking all these and paying close attention to them.

I want to thank you for a very good presentation.

ETHEL BLONDIN: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I don't know whether our colleagues, Mary and Gabe Cazon, have any questions to ask.

COMMISSIONER FOR THE DAY GABE CAZON: I just want to thank you for what you have said.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

We will hear now from James Mercred.

JAMES MERCRED: The Northwest Territories is not just another "region" of Canada. In many respects its human, social and economic factors are unique. We are mostly underdeveloped with our communities

scattered throughout the region. Our lack of infrastructure and modern transportation systems helps to generate our high cost of living which is the highest in Canada.

Throughout the history of the Northwest and Hudson Bay Co., the Métis played a vital role in the historical development of the Northern Territories. During this time, when the Northern economy was based on the barter system, it was the Métis who were the hunters, traders and businessmen that made the economy work. It was we who provided the only transportation for the goods of the North to the southern and world markets. It was we who shaped this land with the blood, sweat and tears of generations of our forefathers. It was we who played a vital role in the political development of this land, and thousands of Métis graves scattered throughout the territories provide silent testimony to these facts.

And we, the Métis, are proud of our history, are determined to play an equally important role in the future of our territory. We will not be Canada's forgotten people.

We have gained the historical and

aboriginal right to deliberate and plan the future of this northern land and our role in Canada's Constitution. And we do so in respect of our aboriginal brothers, the Dene and the Inuit. But we do so in full belief of our constitutional entitlements to self-government and our rights of economic development -- rights which we will not idly stand by and let be forfeited to the benefit of others at the expense of ourselves. Policies must be established and enshrined in the Constitution that will protect traditional Métis rights, customs and cultural interests.

The preservation of a Métis cultural identity is an enormous challenge both for us, the Métis, and for the rest of Canada. To meet this challenge we will need enlightened government policies that are fair and are developed in an active partnership with the Métis nation of the Northwest Territories.

We believe that this change for the future can best be done through the establishment of Métis self-government. But self-government in itself is only two words in the English language. There are certain basic facts about aboriginal self-government that must be

clearly understood and accepted by all parties concerned. First, self-government should not be restrictive, but should provide for sufficient transfer of federal jurisdictions to ensure the success of Métis self-government initiatives. Second, at the same time that federal legislative jurisdictions are being turned over, federal development capital must also be made available to be used in ways that the Métis communities and their leaders consider appropriate. Furthermore, Métis self-government cannot be an appendix to the Indian Act, and it is important that the Métis shall identify its own membership.

Whatever the future resource development decisions may be, we have a serious concern that too many of our people are not benefiting from existing development. Most of our people live in remote non-urban settlements where conditions of daily life are sub-standard. Why has this disparity continued to exist?

There are no easy answers becAUse the problem is engrained in the physical characteristics of our northern landscape, the lack of education and skills and the social and administrative systems which operate

in the community. Thus, the important task of creating jobs does not alone solve the northern employment problems. The isolation and lack of communications leads to inadequate knowledge by people of what is going on and the inability to get to jobs even when they know about them. We must recognize that few people can move from isolation into the middle of rapid change and cope successfully. The massive social problems that impede economic development and job mobility must be addressed as a vital program in Métis self-government. What is required is a "multi-dimensional approach" to our future economic development in the Northwest Territories. People fine it difficult, if not impossible, to take advantage of opportunities through self-development when the family is living in a one-room shack, heated by a space heater or wood-burning stove and having no sanitary facilities.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the basic and vital process of Métis self-government must be based on people participation. It is an integral part of the complex process of economic and social development. Community groups and individuals would have to become

directly involved in planning and carrying out of development programs. Self-government in the North must be carried out in a way that the Métis economic, social and cultural values are not sacrificed to the other northern interests. This is our concept of our future role and the vital function of self-government and also in the future political development of the Northwest Territories. We have earned these rights and we shall never relinquish these rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Mercred.

We will hear now from Chief Antoine.

CHIEF GERALD ANTOINE: This presentation has been prepared for the Deh Cho Regional Council by René Lamothe and Betty Hardisty. This paper was prepared in the period of two months of consultation with Elders, Band Councils, Métis Locals and Municipal Councils of the Deh Cho Region.

The consultation was done by both René and Betty. The two people visited each community twice. The visits that had taken place in these two months were two visits. One was to generate discussions on the nature

of the Constitution and to provide the respective Councils with background reading and an overview of the existing constitutional revisions in Canada.

During the first visit the Councils were also advised that there were several Commissions presently operating in Canada which have a bearing on the Canadian Constitution. This is your Commission today. There is also the Unity Committee of the federal government, the AFN parallel process and the Constitutional Development Commission of the N.W.T.

The second visit was to listen to the Councils and the Elders to receive the direction that would provide the basis for this position paper.

Basically, in the Introduction the question is: What is the Constitution? It talks about people living in a society in specific ways. If you look at it from the Dene perspective, you will see that they lived in a specific way. Also looking at it from that particular perspective, they follow a code of conduct. They also recognize each other as individuals. They live together according to rules by which they discipline themselves for the good of all. I think in the comments

that were made in some of the presentations there were some specifics that they had touched on.

They lived according to their belief system. You will notice that at the opening of the meeting there was the prayer song that was sung. That illustrates that there is in our particular system a Creator out there. This particular paper touches on that in the Statement of Principles.

This particular document was to define a social contract which maps out the jurisdiction whereby society governs itself. There are some definitions in here that talk about the oral bilateral agreements, referred to as the treaties. I have touched on that in my earlier presentation. It also talks about the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It also talks about the unilateral colonial legislation that the Parliament of Great Britain is known for.

It also talks about the consultation, negotiations and compromises of what is going on with today's Constitution.

The following are general statements of positions by members of the Councils. There are three

types of distinct members.

The Métis Locals in Fort Simpson have indicated that they support the position of the Métis Nation. They have indicated the need for some form of guaranteed representation for Métis people.

The municipalities, the Hamlet Council and Fort Providence, recognize the Chiefs and Band Councils as the primary local government body. They indicated that the Providence Hamlet should operate under the direction of the Chief and Council.

The Village Council in Fort Simpson are opposed to this entire process and the division of the N.W.T. Their concern is that the cause of division will impinge on the municipal budget in future years.

The Treaty Dene Councils have all stated their intention to keep the treaty. As the former Chief, Jim Antoine, has stated, the Deh Cho has always been strong on the position of treaty. They have been very specific in a lot of their areas when we do meet as a regional caucus during the Dene leadership or Dene National Assemblies.

The Dene Treaty Councils will seek the recognition of a Dene government for Dene people under

section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982. The Dene have also indicated that they will continue to support the direction for self-government as given by the 1988 Hay River Dene National Assembly Motion No. 15, the Dene Motion, the Bellrock Motion and the motions of the Deh Cho Regional and Tribal Councils on self-government.

I know that you people have a tight schedule, but I think it is really important that these particular points are provided to you and to the listeners here in the room and also to the media.

There are probably two possible legal streams which may serve as the basis of the Denende Constitution. This first option is based on the continuation of the relationships which have been developed by the application of the N.W.T. Act in the North. That option would formalize the existing Government of the Northwest Territories.

The other option is based on the definition of aboriginal and treaty principles and the jurisdiction which would be entrenched in section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

As indicated in the summary statements

above, the majority of the Councils which make up the membership of the Deh Cho Region support the second option.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Are you able to give a copy of your brief to one of our people?

Thank you very much.

We would like now to hear from Chief Stanley Sanquez of the Jean Marie Dene Band.

Chief, would you introduce your people and then make your presentation as you wish.

CHIEF STANLEY SANQUEZ: Thank you, Allan.

My name is Chief Stan Sanquez of the Band of Jean Marie River. I brought a youth delegate with me who is presently going to school. I wanted her and their presentation to be heard as a youth delegate because they have great concerns about the future in our community.

I also asked political leaders. I always have to listen to them.

I would like to do my presentation now.

(Through an Interpreter):

Commissioners, let me say, we recorded the people that have been cheated before us, Jimmy Sanquez, and how up

to now we wanted to try to resolve things for ourselves, but now they are gone. Leaders from the Elders and the territorial government and federal government are still having a hard time with territorial government. Our people have to take a part if things are going to be resolved. I hope we hear from you again.

When we talk about self-government and recognition, when we talk about self-government, up to now we are still talking about land claims. You probably know we wanted to amend it. We wanted to amend that. They probably did not see it favourably, so they shut it down as well.

Up to now our Elders are still with us. The Elders who are with us, I thank them. If we didn't utilize them, we probably wouldn't be surviving. I am working as a Chief; if not, why should I be leader?

I hope you will write down the investigation of 91(24). At Edmonton Treaty Council we also talked about it, and that is also changing. The federal government are supposed to be working with us, but they have released all our concerns to the territorial government. We did not want that to happen, but it has

happened. What we wanted was an economic base, and we want control over what happened to our community up to now. The territorial government must be listening to us. We want participation, and we have to continue participating.

Sometimes in the communities we get contractors from outside the community. As far as education, when you played drums yesterday, I felt thankful from the bottom of my heart. When we played drums, I feel education is important. When I quit school, I felt it wasn't important. Now I want to go back to school. Before I didn't figure it was going to be that hard.

Also, in regard to the justice system, it doesn't work well for us. All our people are in jails. This goes to show that it doesn't work well for us. We have to participate in working on it. Lawyers and justice have to help us in rectifying it.

I don't feel the territorial government is working well. Section 35 of the Constitution says that we are supposed to be wards of the government, but I don't think territorial governments honour that. Benefits are another aspect of the Beatty Report.

Here in the Deh Cho Region it is very important for us. We are a small community. If the communities are going to do well, we have to be working on it.

When one of the people talked about the treaty, they said how we operate. We had our own language. We belonged to one board. It's not that way any more.

Also the Charter of Rights. When I talked to one of my Elders, what he says is funny. When we talk about the treaty, the supreme law that is true. For the future we still don't really know. Maybe that is why the Royal Commission is in our thoughts right now.

I also talk to Indian Affairs, and this is how I ask them questions. We in Jean Marie are still a band at Fort Simpson. We would like to govern ourselves in the future. Up to now, as far as our infrastructure, we have to work on it.

Often, when there is something that has to be done, we have to ask for monetary assistance. If we want something done, we have to ask for money. In Ottawa how they make policies in the Northwest Territories and how we live here, we find it hard. When they make policies,

we are the ones that suffer. These things have to be looked at.

We are treaty. In the past, when the treaty was made, this is something that was talked about but hasn't been honoured. There are a lot of things we have talked about.

I would like to ask a lot of questions, but this is as much as I would like to say. I thank you for being amongst us.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you, Chief. Does your youth delegate wish to add anything?

KERRY HARDISTY: My name is Kerry Hardisty, and I am from Jean Marie River. I am from the Linowejen School, and I am in Grade 9.

I speak on behalf of the students of Linowejen School. We at Jean Marie understand our history. We know enough about our government to know what is going on. We know we will not go back to the old ways. We know that we will continue to share our culture in the future with Canada.

What we don't know, however, is how well our rights will be protected and, more specifically, what

do we have for our rights? Will they be protected and, more specifically, what are our rights?

The following are our concerns: What self-government is. It needs to be looked at with the involvement of the youth, not only the Jean Marie youth but all over the N.W.T. who are concerned about the future.

The concerns are for the jobs. They are hard to get for the youth.

Also, we want to continue speaking our language and making traditional crafts such as canoes, snowshoes, jackets, slippers, gloves and other crafts.

A lot of children come from dysfunctional homes. We want them to be helped to stop the path of violence, which includes physical, spiritual, emotional and mental abuse.

We respect our Elders in our community because they are our link to our past, and we need them.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Excuse me, would you talk a little slower. The translator who is translating this into Slave is having trouble, I am told.

KERRY HARDISTY: When the residential

schools were still open, the children were taken from their families. It was a bad life for them because they couldn't speak their language or keep on with the culture that they were taught. We are glad that they are closed down because the aboriginal peoples need their culture and need to preserve it.

In conclusion, as a speaker for the youth of Jean Marie, let the Denende be a place where all people can live together equally. Let the history of the Dene be reflected on the aboriginal rights in the Canadian Constitution.

CHIEF STANLEY SANQUEZ: To finish this off, I wanted my youth to represent us. It was good this information package came on videotape, and I handed it over to the school to make a presentation to you, as Commissioners. That is why it took us three or four days to put things together.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much, and don't leave yet. I am sorry I didn't catch the name of your youth representative.

KERRY HARDISTY: My name is Kerry Hardisty.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

I would like to invite your Member of the Legislative Assembly, Jim Antoine, to make a presentation -- sometime Chief, sometime Member of the Legislature.

JIM ANTOINE: I would just like to welcome you, Allan Blakeney and Viola Robinson, to Fort Simpson, and all the other staff. I notice that a lot of the other staff are aboriginal people coming from different tribes in Canada. I would like to welcome you to our part of the country. I would like you to feel welcome, and I hope you have a good stay.

Before I begin, I also would like to thank the people who put on the feast for us last night. All the people who did the cooking and so forth, I would like to thank.

I especially want to say something about the young drummers that performed for the dance last night. I would like to thank you. I would just like to say that you, the young drummers, have learned something very valuable that you will have forever. It is very good to

see that, and I feel very good that our culture keeps going on.

With that, I would like to say that one of the things that we aboriginal people try to maintain in the North here is our culture and our language and our way of life. I have been elected last October as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Nahende. Nahende is composed of six communities in this southwestern portion of the Northwest Territories: Fort Simpson, Wrigley, Liard, Trout Lake, Nahanni Butte and Jean Marie River.

The people that I represent are status Indian, Métis people and non-aboriginal people, but the majority of the people I represent are made up of aboriginal people and the treaty people are the majority in my constituency here.

I have been a Chief on and off for about 13 years. I started back in 1974. When I was very young, I became a Chief, and I have experienced a lot of changes here in Fort Simpson.

The former Chief that spoke this morning, Baptiste Cazon, was the Chief prior to my becoming a Chief in 1974. I had worked with Baptiste for a few

years prior to my becoming a Chief, so I have been involved in politics in this part of the country since 1972.

During that time I have experienced a lot of different situations dealing with our rights as aboriginal people with the government.

A little bit of the history I would like to touch on before we cover the area of what you think the problems are up here.

In 1921, as the Chief this morning indicated, a Treaty No. 11 was signed here. At that time my great-grandfathers were involved in the signing, on my mother's and my father's side. At that time the Elders of the day deliberated for about four days before they signed any of the documents. When the treaties were being signed, we were warned that the government and the white people would eventually take over all our land. That was in 1921.

Through our oral history, as the former Chief indicated, it was a peace treaty. As we got into the early part of the 1970s, we were finding out that our treaty rights were not being recognized and honoured, so we undertook to initiate land claims talks and discussions.

We had a caveat put in place for 450,000 square miles, and the Supreme Court of the day ruled in the Northwest Territories that they did have aboriginal title to the land up here. But when that was appealed in the Courts of Appeal in Alberta, it was ruled on a technicality that you cannot put a caveat on land that was unpatented. So we lost on a technicality.

Today I am in a situation where I am sitting in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories with 23 other members of the North, and we are dealing with all kinds of different issues. There are many problems up here in the North today. It is not like in the provinces where treaty Indians are on reserves and then you have Métis people and non-status people in the cities.

There was a plebiscite on May 4, and a slight majority voted in favour of the boundary. On that I would just like to say that what will happen next, I guess, is that there will be a ratification vote by the Inuits. This boundary issue is tied in with their land claims.

What will happen will be that we are

having a session in June. At that time the same questions will be asked to the government, what their next step is going to be.

I think there is room to manoeuvre. The first thing that has to happen is that -- during the plebiscite issue there was a lot of concerns raised by the Dene on this side of the boundary, the Dog Ribs and the Chippewans, because that boundary cut off a lot of their traditional area. That problem is still there, and that has to be resolved.

I think what will probably happen is that there will be overlap agreements between the Inuits and the Dene along the boundary. That is one problem that will exist for a long time.

We have Dene people in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba whose traditional area goes into the Northwest Territories as well. That is a federal government problem right now, I think. That will have to be resolved by the federal government with the Inuits and the Dene of that area.

The Legislative Assembly had asked the government to put on a plebiscite. The plebiscite vote

is not binding, and the results will have to be discussed in the Legislative Assembly.

Right now the timetable is that within seven years, 1999, Nunavut will eventually become their own government. Between now and then we have seven years to deal with this problem.

On the west side we spent $1.3 million developing a Western Constitution. That still has to be further discussed. It went through a second phase and is in the discussion phase right now. So we still have a long way to go in dealing with how the west is going to look, and that is going to take a few years. As I say, it is going to take about seven years before Nunavut becomes a reality.

In this constituency here we have different types of communities. Fort Simpson is a village, and I would like to say something about that. The Dene people of the day, when community governments were established, were not involved in any of the discussions in the creation. It was imposed upon us by the government of the day back in the late sixties and early seventies when governments were set up. The Bands

of the day were not involved at all.

Simpson became a settlement and a hamlet and then it evolved into a village council. We have the Band Council here, and also there is a Métis Local here. So we have three different groups of people in this community, and it is a problem.

In the past, as a former Chief, the way we were able to work is that we agreed that there are areas where we could agree on and work together, and there is going to be a difference of opinion on other areas. But that shouldn't jeopardize other areas where we could co-operate, until the time something has to be done about it, and that hasn't happened yet. That is some of the work that is cut out for a community like Fort Simpson.

There are different options probably available, depending on how the Band wants to go from here. Other communities -- Fort Liard recently became a hamlet under the Municipal and Community Affairs Department of the territorial government. They have a hamlet status; they have a mayor and a council. They are a majority Dene community; however, they still have a hamlet.

Then we have four other communities in

this region -- Wrigley, Nahanni Butte, Jean Marie and Trout Lake -- that are not incorporated at all. There is a majority of Dene people there, and the Chief and Band Council function as a community government in these four communities. These communities do not want to incorporate. They want to have a clear idea of what it is they are getting involved in. They want to know what their treaty rights are and what their aboriginal rights are before they incorporate.

This has been going on for a number of years now. There are different forms of incorporation that the Department of MACA has developed called Charter Communities, where they could incorporate the Band and the MACA community government system. But it still isn't good enough for these communities, so it is still hasn't happened.

That is the climate that I exist in at the present time. Because they are incorporated, they don't get the full level of funding that, let's say, a hamlet council would get from the government in terms of development of their infrastructure, like their roads, culverts, and so forth, and municipal services. There

are municipal services, but they are not to the level if they were to incorporate. In fact, they were told that, if they incorporate, they will get a lot of money to run their communities.

There is a problem. The majority of people here are treaty people, and they have a treaty with the Crown. But the treaty promises, such as education and health and housing and these sorts of services -- the Band don't get them. It's a public government system, so everybody is in the same boat, let's say. The funding that the territorial government receives is a formal-type funding with the federal government. They receive money per capita for the population in the North; that is how the money is received in the North.

The problem here is that the treaty people want to know exactly what type of funding is available for them for education and housing, and so forth. That has always been a problem.

The feeling here is that, because the Bands don't control their own funding, the level of service is not as high as it could be because they are thrown in with everybody else.

That is one area that has to be cleared up within the territorial government, I feel, and with the federal government.

In terms of land claims, years ago when we started the land claims, the idea there was that the Dene version of a treaty was an oral version and, as far as we know, it was a peace treaty. What the federal government is saying is that the written version is totally different from our oral version. As a result of that, this court case I mentioned -- we put a caveat on the land. The intent was to try to prove that we had original title to our land. That did happen with the Supreme Court in the Northwest Territories.

When negotiations for land claims began, we started with a Liberal government and now it is a Conservative government, and the land claims policies have also changed.

To make a long story short, back in 1988, when we had to make a decision about whether we were going to go with the agreement-in-principle that was negotiated between the Dene-Métis Secretariat and the federal government on our behalf, this region took a strong stand

on their treaty and aboriginal rights. The people here have strong principles on their treaty and aboriginal rights, and we are still standing on them today. The reason for that is that the federal government's comprehensive claims policy of extinguishing your aboriginal rights and some of our treaty rights in exchange for the agreement-in-principle was something that our Elders have rejected.

The original intention of the negotiation to begin with was to try to enhance or strengthen our original treaty. In fact, by exchanging some of our treaty rights and all our aboriginal rights, titles and claims to all the lands and waters in Canada, it was too much to give up for the AIP claim.

What we wanted to do here was to go back to the government and try to renegotiate this particular area with the federal government, and the Minister of Indian Affairs refused us and walked away from us. As a result, we are left here. In the meantime, other groups that felt satisfied, like the Gwich'in, to go ahead to extinguish their aboriginal rights to the lands and waters in Canada and part of the treaty rights, went ahead and

negotiated their claim.

Right now, the Saulteaux Region is also negotiating based on the AIP of extinguishment. We have three other regions here -- the North Slave, the South Slave and the Deh Cho Region. We still haven't decided how we are going to do it, but the Chiefs in this region want to really concentrate on their treaties and see what it really means. We want to define a lot of the areas in the treaties because during negotiations the whole treaty was ignored. We thought the land claims itself would handle all the issues that we had concerns regarding the treaties, but that didn't happen.

Another thing about the comprehensive claims policy is that, when you are negotiating according to the policy, you cannot negotiate the political structures within the comprehensive claims policy. What happened in the AIP is that the powers of the Chief and Band Council are cut right out of the whole AIP package. Every time the negotiators wanted to discuss the political structure for the Dene people and the Métis people, the negotiators on the federal government side said, "We are not here to discuss that. You can talk all you want, but

we are not here to discuss it."

So a separate table had to be established in the North to deal with that, the constitutional development structure. That was supposed to be developed equally as negotiations went ahead.

However, that whole process fell apart. That is why the self-government component is very important for the Gwich'in and the Gwich'in claim and also in the Saulteaux claim and all the other claims. That is a very important component right now.

Because of the comprehensive claims policy we are not allowed to negotiate political structure for the Dene people. That has to be changed. The comprehensive claims policy has to change to include the political structures and also it has to do away with that extinguishment clause.

I think there are other ways of dealing with the extinguishment clause. There are different concepts that we are dealing with. There is the European concept of negotiations where, as a Dene people, we are connected right to the land. We are a real part of the land. Our roots are connected into the land. But if you

want to extinguish your aboriginal rights and title to it, then you are cutting off those roots. You are cutting us off from our land, and we are floating. The government then becomes our base, and any time there is a problem with the land, the government has the final say in settling that dispute.

So it is taken away. It is a real fundamental principle here we are talking about, and that has to be in there. You cannot disconnect us from our land. Our roots have to be in our land. Otherwise, you lose it. It is left up to policies and legislation to protect what you have.

There is one thing that I want to know, and maybe I will ask a question here. When I talk about these kinds of issues, you said in the beginning statement that this is going to take four years to conclude.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Not quite. Three.

JIM ANTOINE: Three. So you are listening to our concerns and our issues, and we are going to have to wait four years before we get any action?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I don't

know whether we can guarantee any action at all, nor are we restricted from giving interim reports. We did that with respect to the inherent right to self-government. We did that because it looked like the Beaudoin-Dobbie Committee was sort of stuck, and they adopted what we said they should do. It is there now. Whether it will find its way into the constitutional settlement I don't know.

We are not restricted to waiting until the end. But even when the end comes, all we can do is recommend. There have been lots of recommendations with respect to comprehensive land claims policies. I can think of Dr. Lloyd Barber, for example, who said that the federal government should get a different comprehensive land claims settlement. Coming out of Oka there was yet another recommendation that there be a different policy, and they haven't moved much. So I don't know whether our recommendation would necessarily change it.

JIM ANTOINE: Thank you for that explanation.

Some of these issues are on the table right now. There is a lot of concerns about the way negotiations go on between the federal government and

different aboriginal groups across the country. For us in this part of the country, we have been negotiating for many years, and that is the one issue that really is blocking the whole thing, this whole thing on this extinguishing clause. If that is not there, I think we may see some progress in that whole area, and maybe we could resolve some of the issues in this area.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: If I may interrupt again, we have a very small group looking into that precise issue of extinguishment. We have one professor and a couple of people looking into this, because it has come to our attention that this appears to be a roadblock.

The federal government believes that there is no way to get a settlement on a comprehensive land claim unless the aboriginal people will give up their claim to all the land and all the water -- and I am trying to put the federal government case now. The aboriginal people are saying, "You can't expect us to give up all our claims to land and water and aboriginal rights in exchange for given pieces of land, some of which have mineral rights and some of which don't and have hunting

rights here and there. That is not going to do the job. We are simply not going to give up all of our rights under our treaties which are ongoing arrangements and are not done deals," if I may put it that way.

We have two different mindsets coming into this, and we are trying to see whether there is a way around that.

JIM ANTOINE: I agree that there are two different mindsets with the federal government negotiators and where they are coming from and from the aboriginal point of view.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Just coming from different worlds.

JIM ANTOINE: That's right. That other mindset is coming from another world.

I think if they adopt our mindset, I think we would be all satisfied.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: They would probably say the same.

JIM ANTOINE: Basically, I wanted to mention these particular areas. As a new MLA, I am also just learning the ropes in Yellowknife, and it's kind of

a different area to be involved in.

I represent these six communities. One of my platforms was to try to resolve some of these treaty issues and try to do something with this comprehensive claims policy. So, I am right on my platform here and I am not out of line here.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much. I think we have a question or two.

I don't mean this to be an aggressive question, so I preface it with that. I have been up at Inuvik and I have been up at Fort McPherson and now I am here, and I can't find anyone who has much good to say about the Government of the Northwest Territories, and I have been in Inuvialuit and Gwich'in and Dene communities.

Is it entirely fair or entirely unfair for me to say that the people who tend to support the Government of the Northwest Territories are the non-aboriginal people in Fort Smith or Hay River or Inuvik and that the people who tend not to support it are people of aboriginal origin? I am speaking of the west side only. That is an unfair question to put to you, but I know that

you will simply not answer it if you feel that it is unfair.

JIM ANTOINE: I can't really answer that question because I could only speak for what I know.

I know that years ago, in the seventies, all the Dene said the territorial government wasn't our government. At that time we regarded this administration as an administration that was imposed upon us. We weren't involved in the development of this existing government right now. It has been imposed.

I have been appointed from out of the North. The early history of the Northwest Territories indicates that a lot of the people who were territorial councillors were appointed from outside the North. It has only been recently that 24 people were elected in the North. Within the last 10 years, the majority have been aboriginal people.

Another thing is the whole area of transfer agreements. For example, in the late sixties and early seventies, there were transfers of different programs from the federal government to the territorial government, such as education and housing and social services. In 1988 health was transferred. Now they are

dealing with the resources, the Northern Accord they call it. They are working on transferring the responsibility of the federal government to the Northwest Territories. In the earlier years, there was no involvement in that of aboriginal people. Treaty people were not involved in the transfer of education.

Previous to that, the Department of Indian Affairs was providing education for treaty Indians, and housing, et cetera. These transfers happened between the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories of the day and the federal government. So there was no involvement of local people at all in the transfers of these different programs.

As these programs were transferred, the infrastructure that is in place was developed. It seems as if those departments are in place now, and it is very difficult to get things out of them.

I don't know if that explains some of it. At one point the Dene had said that this territorial government was not their government. As more aboriginal people got involved, we said, "Let's try it out. Let's try out this administration." So it is in that stage.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That's fair enough. Certainly, the Government of the Northwest Territories 20 years ago was a colonial government. I think that is not an unfair way to describe it.

Now, 18 or 24 MLAs are aboriginal, but your public service is still overwhelmingly non-aboriginal. We are just curious to know whether, if I may use these terms, any feeling of ownership of that government is being felt by aboriginal people, or are they still feeling that it is not theirs, as they did 10 or 15 years ago? The answer is: It may be changing, but it isn't changed, if I may put it that way. Certainly, it is not regarded as your government yet, but it may or may not happen in the future.

JIM ANTOINE: Everybody sees the territorial government as Yellowknife, the big establishment in Yellowknife. Whatever happens over there, what decisions are made over there, affects everybody in the communities.

How it really should be is that the community governments should be the ones that decide for themselves what they want. It flows from the community

up into the regions and then into the government in Yellowknife; it is not the other way around.

I have been involved with the territorial government for many years, and I know that a lot of things are imposed from the top down. What has to happen here is that it has to come up from the communities.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I will just make a couple of comments.

First, I want to thank you for your presentation.

I would have thought, because your Legislative Assembly is comprised of a majority of aboriginal people, that you would be doing quite well. But from what I hear, I guess it's not all that great, as Mr. Blakeney has said.

I just want to have clear in my mind -- this comprehensive policy hasn't done much for anybody in Canada. The only one it has done anything for is in the North here. It certainly doesn't apply to us in the east or anywhere else, and there is a lot of problems with that.

As we mentioned before, other studies have been done. For instance, the Coolican did a major study on the comprehensive claims policy. I am just wondering what was your reaction to those kinds of recommendations that were in that report, or do you remember it? It was a few years back.

JIM ANTOINE: I was Chief in that day, and I thought some of the recommendations were very good. I know there was a lot of lobbying went on in Ottawa when it came out to try to get all of the different recommendations implemented. But, of course, it fell short.

The real fundamental issue of extinguishment was not changed very much at all.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I know you have a concern with the extinguishment clause, and I think that is a major concern with that policy. But the other thing is your treaty. You said that land claims ignored your treaty.

Did your treaty provide you with the rights, say, for hunting or fishing on land, or something like that, or resources or anything? As you know, they

were peace treaties.

JIM ANTOINE: According to those treaties -- and it was also a strong point in our oral understanding that we could hunt and fish any time, any place we wanted in the North.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: And nothing has happened in terms of negotiating what is in those treaties. You haven't been officially recognized as being a treaty area here, or anything.

I always thought that maybe your comprehensive claim was based on recognition of those treaties. Is it or not?

JIM ANTOINE: No. What happens is that in the sections in the agreement-in-principle, it specifically states that we will extinguish, cede and surrender all the lands and waters within Canada. At the same time, it also specifically states that we will be giving up the main section of Treaty No. 11 in exchange for the AIP, although the argument is that the AIP will also kind of cover the same ground. But it's a treaty made in 1921, made by our forefathers.

What we thought we would do is take it

and try to enhance it and try to incorporate our oral version of our treaty into it, but that didn't happen. It went beyond that.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I understand now what the issue is. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Antoine.

We are going to take a 10-minute break. I am sorry to make the students wait, but I think we need a little break. Then we will come right back to the students.

--- Short Recess at 4:10 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 4:25 p.m.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: We will now hear presentations from people who have been patiently waiting.

We have heard quite a bit about the problems of young people. I think we are particularly fortunate in having a representative of the Grade 10A students, Cheryl Sibbeston, to make a presentation. Welcome, Cheryl, and please feel free to proceed.

CHERYL SIBBESTON: Mr. Blakeney, Ms

Viola Robinson and members of the audience, my name is Cheryl Sibbeston. I am a representative of the alternative Grade 10 class, part of the federal government's Stay-in-School Initiative.

Our class of young adults is very happy to voice concerns we have as aboriginals living in the Northwest Territories.

The following four areas represent concerns that our class would like to make to the Royal Commission:

1. Education: Many people are failing in our northern schools. There is a very high drop-out rate, and it has been going on for a long time. We think new back-to-school programs should be initiated for people who didn't finish their schooling.

It is very difficult leaving a small community and going to school in a faraway location. Many students think that high schools, colleges and universities should be a lot closer to home. This would make it easier for people to attend. It would be nice if distant education was easier, so people from the communities wouldn't have to leave home to finish their

schooling.

There should also be support for younger parents with children to allow them child care and financial support while the parents attend school.

There should be more apprenticeship programs for the students that have academic problems. Many times workers come from the south for temporary jobs. Jobs that do exist in the North, such as construction of houses, should be filled by people from the community.

2. Alcohol: Alcohol is a major social problem in our community. There is much under-age drinking, bootlegging, fighting and abuse. Young children end up being the victims of this problem, and they don't have any place to go for safety.

New initiatives must be attempted in the communities to solve this problem.

3. Health Care: Native medicine should be encouraged in more hospitals around the North. There should be training for women to allow them to deliver babies in their own communities. If they could stay closer to their families, it would allow the families to stay closer together, instead of having the women away for many

weeks.

In the North there should be more native doctors and nurses. They would have more understanding of their patients. The placing of hospitals in larger communities like Fort Simpson should be encouraged.

4. Land Claims: We listen to the federal government talk about land claims and understand what they want to do, but we disagree with them. Aboriginals have lived on this land for 15,000 years, and the white man came 500 years ago. Now the government is trying to take away the land that we live off in exchange for money and a piece of land.

The government is trying to get aboriginals to exchange their aboriginal rights for money. Money doesn't buy happiness or respect.

We want to have control of our land and retain all rights to the land, including the rights of self-government.

Finally, we would like to thank you for coming to Fort Simpson, and we hope that you enjoyed the feast and drum dance last night.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much, Cheryl. I can assure you that we did enjoy the feast and the drummers and the dancing.

You raise some excellent points. What do you think makes it difficult for people to leave a community like Fort Simpson and go to Yellowknife or Whitehorse, for example, to get some training in the health field, let's say, as a diploma nurse? I don't know whether they have programs in those community colleges, but they probably do. What are the problems that present themselves to a student who is trying to get equipped to be a nurse in, say, the hospital here in Fort Simpson?

CHERYL SIBBESTON: Some of the students that do go out for school, the problem with their going away from their parents is that they don't have the money to go to school. They have to get part-time jobs out there, and they only get so much money to live on out there, so it's pretty hard to maintain a life they would have at home under their parents' care.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: So you think it is mainly a question of money. If they got more money -- grants, bursaries, and that sort of thing -- you

think they might go out more often?

CHERYL SIBBESTON: Yes. Also, some students that come from communities such as Fort Simpson -- the community isn't very big itself. If they go to other schools and they have to get this education from elsewhere, they are not -- like me, I am nervous right now. They are scared to be out there, away from their families.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Is there any distance education here? Does somebody run an education program through television here -- let's say, the community college at Yellowknife? They don't have courses through the television?

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I would like to thank you for your presentation, and I hope you make a copy of that available to us.

CHERYL SIBBESTON: It has already been given.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: You do have some solid recommendations, I think, as to what you would like to see. They sound pretty sound to me. Thank

you.

COMMISSIONER FOR THE DAY MARY CAZON: I thank you for what you have said on the stand. It is hard to get away from home. When you want to go to school away from home, it is hard. I know that.

The best thing for you to do is just to keep on with your schooling now, and your kids need education. Most life is too hard, so education would be the best way for the future times. So just hang on.

Thanks a lot.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

I will ask Chief Gerald Antoine to come forward again, this time on behalf of the Deh Cho Tribal Council.

CHIEF GERALD ANTOINE: Before we go to my presentation, I would like to make a brief presentation. We realize that the visiting Commissioners have been given something from the young drummers. We have two respected Commissioners of our own sitting alongside you. On behalf of the young people in the community, I would like to present them with a T-shirt of the young drummers as a

sign of their appreciation.

The other thing that I would like to request is that I would like to have another person to sit with me. I would like to call on René Lamothe.

I just want to introduce myself. Even though I am the Chief here in the community, we have nine communities that are around the Fort Simpson area, the area which we refer to as the Deh Cho Region. This particular Council, or group of people, are also part of the Dene Nation. Within the Dene Nation there are five regions.

When we had organized ourselves in the region, it is not for the sake of breaking away. We have five linguistic differences, and that was on the basis that we have organized ourselves in a regional capacity.

In the Deh Cho area we have nine communities. They are Wrigley, Nahanni Butte, Fort Liard, Jean Marie, Kakisa, Trout Lake, Hay River Reserve, Fort Simpson and Fort Providence.

The right of the individual to life and liberty is evident throughout many of the Dene teachings. So there is a lot of teachings that we do practise and

we would like to be recognized.

There is also the oral history on treaty and, as I have indicated earlier in my earlier remarks as Chief of the Fort Simpson Band, I have touched base on that and also the affidavits were signed in 1937 by the people who were present at the negotiation to substantiate oral history recounted by the Elders today. It states that nothing would be done or allowed to interfere with their way of making a living.

As you have been told by the Elders, even though they like to maintain their own way of life, there are a lot of obstacles that are placed in their pursuit to their way of doing things.

This position paper is clear of what the majority of the membership of the Deh Cho Regional Council have been saying. I have also touched in my earlier remarks on the present administration of NWT -- unconstitutional -- where I talked about the Crown lands, commissioner lands in NWT, the NWT Act and Indian Act and the comprehensive claims policy which are considered to be unconstitutional in that they contravene the original negotiated relationships between the Dene and the Crown.

So I just wanted to repeat that again.

There are 12 statements of principles that are based on statements of Elders and leaders with reference to the history of the people on the land and constitutional considerations. These principles are to be considered as representative of constitutional principles which flow naturally from aboriginal culture. They should not be considered to be complete.

One is people whom the Creator has provided with teachings to learn by.

Two, the universe, including our land, is the teachings of our Creator made manifest.

Three, we are required to seek the teachings of the Creator in all directions of our land and there are signs of various things of that nature in our land.

Four, the land is one of the teachers of the Creator and that is why I guess we consider ourselves of the land and of the river.

Five, the land provides the resources of our way of life and all the things that are provided on the land -- it is there for our use and not for us,

I guess, to profit on it, but to try to maintain a way of life.

Six, people must adapt to the teachings and resources as provided by the land and their Creator in a natural way, and you will notice that there are signs that do not go along with this teaching and there are a lot of results from that. There are a lot of symptoms that you see in some of our communities.

Number seven, people will govern themselves so that the land will be able to continue providing for future generations. If you look at what our Elders have been saying, it is that we don't only think for ourselves; and if you look at the business world, you are always thinking for yourself. I think that is why our people refer to these people as being very stingy.

There is an Elder in our community, the late Ted Trindel, who refers to that particular society as a dog-eat-dog world, and I think that is his concept of that. That is the reason why our people have always been thinking about future generations, and I think the Mohawks talked about the six generations. That is the same principle that we live with.

Number eight is the historical and land-based experiences of Dene. Culture will continue to provide for the social and political structures through which Denende will be governed. So you talk about self-government and with what is going on today about land uses and what we have done historically, it ties in with what we are talking about on self-government.

Number nine, Treaties 8 and 11 should be upheld as agreed to in the oral negotiations.

Ten, the rights and interests of aboriginal people should be defined by them within the evolving confines of aboriginal land-based customs.

Eleven, the rights of the land to provide for future generations should take precedence over the perceived need of the present.

Number twelve, aboriginal sessional rights should be retained by aboriginal people.

So this is the statement of the principles.

In this part of the paper here, it presents the following outline as a draft working paper to assist the Commission with its work. I guess this

presentation was done to the NWT Commission.

In Section 1, it talks about general and I think all these things that are in here -- it, I guess, refers to some of your earlier questions on self-government: How do you see roles of Elders, the youth, the leaders? How do women -- how they are involved with these different areas. It touches into some areas on this and, I guess, in the general statement, there are probably five parts to it and the Dene constitutes a nation born of a common heritage within a distinct territorial land base. As I have indicated in that illustration, that is the area and having a distinct culture, including laws, beliefs and languages.

The traditional Dene lands extend as follows as I have indicated, but it can be defined if necessary. The lands used by the Dene today based on our customary use extend as follows. The Dene culture is based primarily on the use of the lands defined above. Dene land use is based on tradition and the technologies and governed by Dene beliefs, customs and laws.

RENE LAMOTHE: I would just like to intervene here for a moment.

The draft that we presented to the Territorial Constitutional Commission did not define the land use specifically. It indicates that these could be defined in the working paper.

But for your information so that you will understand a little better, in this part of the country, each of the extended families of Dene people have their own traditional land base and, within that land base, they have jurisdictions over all matters pertaining to human life in relationship with the animals and the land and the Creator.

There are jurisdictions which extend beyond the families' land base; for example, wherein the Dene were required to negotiate with other families in other territories, in other land bases.

Two examples come to mind: marriage, for one. The extended family had to go outside their land base for marriage purposes and protection of the territory of the regional land bases or the national land bases, protection of territory, treaty-making and protection in war, if necessary, was not a jurisdiction of the family. That was a jurisdiction held by the families in common.

So I just wanted to emphasize the reality of specific land bases which were governed by extended families. They had jurisdiction over the social, the educational, the political, the economic aspects of their own territory.

CHIEF GERALD ANTOINE: In the paper following that, it also talked about organizational order and I think, as Rene indicated, it starts from the extended family.

There are also communities such as Fort Simpson here. There are also communities, due to circumstances -- communities have evolved.

Also, as I have indicated, the region that I represent -- there is, as I said, linguistic regional differences with the other Dene people.

We also talked about the leadership. In some of the discussions with the Elders, they have talked about how Elders could play a role. I think with our traditional way of doing things, it is that we always consult with our Elders. I think we are beginning to do more of that practice nowadays and I think because they have experienced a lot of things that we haven't

experienced and they have seen and been told by our ancestors a lot of historical contexts, that is very crucial in today's way of thinking and that since we -- I guess my generation has gone to school in the grade schools and we haven't really been exposed to that type of historical context or contents.

We have been more or less taken away from our family and, I guess, in a way we sacrifice something. That is why a lot of my generation are beginning to go back to the Elders to try to retain some of the basic principles and values that we govern ourselves with. It just touches base on certain things and there is also another paper that kind of goes after this paper, and I would like to present that also.

We talked about the Dene laws for men and women to have specific spheres of responsibilities and authority.

In the community Band, each extended family selects and appoints leaders to the Band Council and the Chief is elected by the membership of the Band by a secret ballot. The Elders of the Band recognize each other. The Elders meet in Council at the Band level.

These are some of the areas that have been provided by this particular round of consultation, and I think in a lot of our meetings a lot of these different things have come out, too.

We also look at the regional level how we could try to work things out and, basically, this particular level is to deal with the regional issues because there are some commonalities that we need to kind of resolve. That is on the basis in which we are meeting at the moment because of our commonalities and the things that we are faced with and things that we need to address collectively. That is the reason why we have been meeting collectively; and also at the national level, too.

What we have done here in our region is we have selected an individual to represent us on the Dene Nation level. Before it used to be only two Vice-Presidents, but now we are having a Vice-President for each of the five regions.

Last summer, at the Bellrock National Assembly, we had two days of workshops. There was quite a number of delegations and there were extra delegations that had attended the National Assembly. At that time,

they had discussed and provided some insights and directions as to a lot of these different areas, too.

We talked about objectives. It is to uphold the individual and collective rights and interests of the Dene. I guess at the national scale, in regard to the Constitution, there is a discussion that is going on between the Premiers and the aboriginal leaders in terms of the Charter of Rights and also collective rights. I think they are still trying to fine-tune this particular issue.

The other objective is to develop, discuss and promote policies for the good government of the Dene. The third is to conduct, foster and support programs and policies for the spiritual, economic, social and educational, health and other cultural benefits of the Dene. The fourth is to provide the Dene with a strong voice both nationally and internationally. Five is to co-operate with other nations of similar or friendly purposes while protecting the basic human rights of minorities. Six is to provide for the guardianship and management of the environment in a manner consistent with constitutional principles. So that is kind of almost a

general objective of self-government.

There is also jurisdictions that we talk about. For example, I will give you a difference. The jurisdiction for the Band Council is the area that goes as far as Redknife River and it goes along the Horn Plateau and it goes down to the Willow River, this side of the Willow River, and then down to Blackstone. That is the community jurisdiction of the Dene Band.

But in regard to municipality, I guess the jurisdiction is just a small area around the community here. So there are two differences of jurisdiction and I think that is still something that, I guess, I believe has to be resolved between the Band here and the municipal government.

The reason why the Band's jurisdiction is so large is because of the extended family within our band membership and each of the different areas of the extended family has lived in different areas. They have, I guess, been in that area for a number of thousands of years. For example, the Tanjes lived below Willow River and the Tonkas lived along the Willow River. There are also the Saulteaux and also the Clees that lived just a

few miles down the river. There are also the Antoines that live across the river here and the Grostites and the Cornailes at Six Miles. So all of these different areas -- they belong to the extended family and that is the jurisdiction. That is why the Band community jurisdiction is so vast.

I have also touched a little bit on the regional jurisdiction and the nine communities comprise this jurisdiction.

The national jurisdiction is -- as I have illustrated on the map, it talks about the Deh Cho River Basin and that is that area. In both areas, there is Treaty 8 and Treaty 11. It is almost identical. If you look at the maps of those two treaty areas, they are almost identical if you put them together.

RENE LAMOTHE: Just by way of interest, the Band's territory over which it has jurisdiction extends about 150 miles north and south and 200 miles east and west.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Let me ask you a few questions because I am not clear and some of this is nomenclature. It is just words and the use

of words.

In many places, we run into the aboriginal people who won't even talk of the word "Bands". They say, "That is a creation of the Indian Act and we want no part of it. We are talking about our community, but that is simply use of a word and it doesn't mean anything."

You are talking about the people who have always lived here. Whether the Indian Act calls them "Bands" or not, it doesn't matter. You have lived here and called yourself a community, or whatever, and, for convenience, you use the word "Band" which has been hallowed by the Indian Act, but fair enough.

I listened to you and then I listened to Mr. Mercred speaking for his father Joe. I listened to the Mayor and I asked myself: "How many schools should there be in Fort Simpson? Should there be one operated by the Dene Nation? Should there be another one operated by the Métis exercising their right to aboriginal self-government, which I heard expressed today? Should there be another one operated by the non-aboriginal community of whom there are perhaps 35 to 40 per cent,

whatever there are, in Fort Simpson?"

RENE LAMOTHE: Can we stop you there for a minute?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Right. Stop me right there. Straighten me out here.

RENE LAMOTHE: I was hoping to tell you a couple of stories; so maybe it is opportune at this time to do so.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: All right.

RENE LAMOTHE: I am from Cree extraction from Saskatchewan and northern Alberta on my mother's side. My mother's mother is Cree and my mother's father is Chippewa and from northern Manitoba. My own father is Québecois; that is okay anyway. So I qualify to be called a Métis according to the present definition.

I was raised, though, in a Cree way in terms of the discipline as a child. It was a Cree discipline and Cree discipline is to conform, to really conform to the group. Their whole discipline is based on that.

The belief system is based on the

concepts -- for example, if you live alone, you will die.

I married a Dene woman from Fort Simpson 22 years ago and we were married in Fort Smith. We lived in Yellowknife and then we moved down to where I am from. I was working in the Adult Education Centre there.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Where did you say that was?

RENE LAMOTHE: In Grouard, Alberta.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: All right.

RENE LAMOTHE: When I was working in Grouard, Alberta, I was hired by the Adult Education Centre to develop and implement a cultural education program and I worked very closely with an old man from the Sucker Creek Reserve. His name was Willie Okamow.

We were there for two years, about a year and a half, and then we were expecting our first child. We decided that we were going to come back to Fort Simpson. My wife wanted her children born here.

So the old man sent for me and he told me, "Look," he said, "when our people moved into this

country -- it is not long ago, five generations ago -- we almost starved. It is the land that taught our Elders how to live here because where we come from, we lived a different life.

So we have changed our way of life a lot in terms of how we are organized socially, how we make decisions politically, and some of our beliefs have changed. But we are still raising our children to live in tribal structures on the plains.

Your wife comes from this land. Her people know this land. Her whole way of life is adapted to this land. If you respect your wife, if you respect the land, then it is for you to change. It is for you to adapt. Learn from her how to raise children. Learn from her how to live with the land. Be respectful that way."

So we moved over here and it took 13 years before my wife's uncles -- the oldest one finally invited me for tea and told me, "We have been watching you and we want you to feel like you belong to our family now." They were waiting to see if I could learn to live alone because they know how the Cree are supposed to live. They

knew where I was from.

The Dene believe that if you cannot live alone, you will die because the animal the Dene live from in this part of the country is the moose. Very often you have to hunt it by yourself. You have to be gone a long time. You have to be alone in the bush. You need a special kind of mind to do that. The discipline is for that.

This is what is really the heart of aboriginal culture: a relationship with a specific part of the earth and what that earth provides, the nature in which it provides it.

As aboriginal people, we are called to adapt to the land that we choose to live in. There is a fundamental difference between our people's value system and the value system of European people. The European will change the structure of the land to fit them. We have to change ourselves to fit the land.

You asked us: "How many schools do we need in Fort Simpson?" I ask you: "What are we supposed to believe? What is the school system for?"

At present, we have an educational system which is designed to socialize our children into

an industrialized way of life. We are suggesting that doing that is removing, disconnecting us from the value base that we grow in, that we are supposed to grow in, that we will find our health in.

Still today we have a lot of older people in this town, in all of our communities, that when they have had enough of this town, when we can't handle it any more, they go in the bush. They go and heal themselves. They go and live the way we are supposed to on this part of the earth, and they become healthy again. They come back and they are just vigorous again. They are strong.

So it really comes down to that and this is something that I was hoping to be able to say to you. As the Royal Commission, you have to recognize that what this country has to do to really recognize and affirm aboriginal rights, it means you have to come to know what we know, to believe what we believe and to allow us to live it ourselves if you can't live it.

But you yourself as a people are looking for a way to live with the earth, but you still don't know what that means yet. We have generations and generations of stories from Elders and ancestors to teach us how to

live with this part of the earth, and you asked the Cree the same thing on the plains or the Haida on their islands. That is the reality that we are dealing with. We are dealing with belief systems.

You have heard it here several times: We are people of the land. That is what it means. It means we believe in the land and the land's gift of life so intimately that we will adapt ourselves to live according to the law that she provides.

When the Cree moved into the Boreal Forest -- I am a fifth generation descendent of those people -- within a year and a half they were starving. It is our custom and it is also the custom of the Dene that when you need to find out something new because you are confronted by your reality you have never been confronted by before, the traditional customary method of finding that new knowledge was to go out by yourself and fast, to go and put yourself into a physical state of being such that the spirit could teach you what you needed to know to survive through that. The ones who are gifted most easily for that are old people because we know from our traditions that the Creator's helpers pity the old people

more than anybody else because they have suffered on this land longer than anyone else.

So when that happened to my people five generations ago, it was the old people who were asked, "Go and fast. Find out what the earth requires for us to live here." So they did.

When they came back, all of them said -- mark these words. This is the way it is said: "The earth has taught us that in this part of her being, we have to live as Dene live because in this part of her being, that is how she can provide for us."

My people said, "There is no way. We are not going to do that. You always taught us, you old people, you are the ones who always taught us that if we live alone, we will die. Now you are telling us to go live by ourselves like those Dene people. No way. If we are going to die, we will stay together and we will die together."

It took them a month of discussions like that -- according to Willie Okamow, it took a month before they came to accept that they could still be together spiritually and in their own hearts if they were able to

communicate regularly with each other.

In the structure of our societies in those days, all the needs were met in societies. There was the Dog Society, the Eagle Society, the Women's Society, the Buffalo Society. These societies took care of the spiritual, the material, the economic needs of the people. Now they needed a society to communicate and so they made a new society of communicators. On that basis, they agreed to break up into small family groups and spread all over in the country.

So what kind of a school do we need? Well, what kind of people do we want to be? This is not to take away from anybody the right to be who they want to be, but consistently for over 100 years right here in Fort Simpson -- consistently -- the Dene have been denied the right to be the people they want to be through the educational system they want.

So it is not a question of saying other people can't have a school, but why can't the Dene have a school of their own if that is what they choose as well? Why can't the Dene be the people the Creator wants them to become?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That is fair enough. That suggests a pretty straight answer -- three schools -- and I am not denying that that is an appropriate arrangement.

RENE LAMOTHE: Well, maybe two, because the Métis are people of the land as well. I am Métis, certainly, if you want to look at it from a racist point of view.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I think these cultural designations are not based upon blood, whatever that may mean, but they are based upon --

RENE LAMOTHE: That is a good observation on your part -- on belief systems.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: -- belief systems and --

RENE LAMOTHE: So, basically, the real choices here are people who would be of the land and people who would be against the land, to put it in a really polarized, maybe obnoxious way.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Fair enough. We are not denying that we have been sent out to subjugate the earth. That is very much at the pillar

of, very much at the root of much of the much of religion which permeates the --

RENE LAMOTHE: Well, the Arimay peoples were a travelled people and when they were told to subjugate the earth, to subdue the earth, that wasn't a materialistic message; that was a spiritual message. When you conquer something spirituality, it means you learn how to live with it and leave it alone. But if you interpret it materially, then you have to consume it.

So maybe there has been a misinterpretation for rationalizing regions; I don't know.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: It has been one to prevail for at least since the renaissance or the industrial revolution at the very latest.

That is an interesting observation you make.

How would you comment, if I said, "Fine, but we have just been to Winnipeg three or four weeks ago. There were 35,000 aboriginal people in Winnipeg, more than are in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon combined. People of aboriginal origin is what I am saying. They have chosen, perhaps without very much real choice,

not to live on the land or by the land but in an urban setting, and they have either chosen that because they have changed their lifestyle or chosen that because the land will no longer support them even though they may wish it to.

Therefore, we must organize our governments and our education systems in order to allow them to pursue an urban lifestyle which they have found necessary, perhaps desirable, and, therefore, it is a dereliction of duty to offer education and a culture directed to people staying on the land when the land will no longer sustain them."

I am obviously putting that strongly and I don't mean to say it is my view. I am putting it as an argument.

RENE LAMOTHE: Sure.

I was talking specifically to my experience and to this part of the earth. If you want to talk to the realities of other aboriginal cultures in Canada, the primary, of course, is that you will have to talk with them.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Right.

RENE LAMOTHE: But as a Royal Commission, then, you will have to maintain that breadth of scope.

What works here for aboriginal people will not work for the Cree. It will not work in Winnipeg. They are the people living that experience. They have to find their own solutions.

That is as much as I could say, I guess.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That is a fair enough argument. In effect, you say, "If the Dene run a school here -- and I use that as symbolically to a transmission of culture -- and it is no longer suitable, at some time in the future, they will obviously change and adapt."

RENE LAMOTHE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: But in the meantime, they would believe that the schools and other instruments to transmit culture should be based upon their current relationship with the land.

RENE LAMOTHE: I am not saying even that all Dene would believe that. I am just saying that that is how I see it.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Right. All right.

RENE LAMOTHE: I am seeing that from my personal experience, but also from a lot of the comments that were made by older people that Betty and I had an opportunity to visit last winter.

There is another dimension to this reality that may be helpful to you in understanding, maybe, some of the needs of urban people. That is the spiritual dimension of aboriginal cosmology, if I can put it in those words for you. It sounds fancy, but I can't think of a shorter way of saying it that is as precise.

This is a reality that maybe you have to be aware of. The old people were really aware of it. Our younger people have lost touch with this part of our reality as aboriginal people.

The human condition is not only a material condition on this earth and the human commitments are not only between living people in this world right now. For example, our condition as human beings today is tied intimately and inextricably from relationships with people who are gone into the next world and the

commitments that they have made in our name and through them with the Creator.

One old fellow told us very clearly -- he said, "When my grandfather gave his hand to the white man, he put it out in front of everybody, including the one there." This is a sacred trust. He made a vow and he said, "I will keep this as long as the river flows." What he meant by that was, "Only God could change this agreement. I can't change it. The Dene people can't change that treaty any more; neither can the white man as far as the Dene are concerned in their belief system. To deny that belief system, to me, is to deny an aboriginal right.

So this relationship with a community of spiritual beings and many of -- like, you hear people talk about medicine people. That is a generic word that means people who have been able to develop and maintain a relationship with some of their ancestors who can communicate with them through prayer, who can hear their words as you and I hear each other's words. They communicate with each other and through their prayers they are able to help people.

These realities for some of our people have been lost. They have been lost either through personal fault or through oppression. Through whatever instrument it may have been, they have been lost, but I am learning from my own personal experiences that just because they are lost, it doesn't mean forever. There is still the instruments through which they can be rebuilt. Those relationships can be rebuilt. Each individual can do that for themselves through prayer and through fasting.

To me -- again, a personal reflection only -- my understanding is that that is an integral part of what it means to be aboriginal. "Ab origin" in Latin -- coming out of the first, coming out of the first experiences on the land. What did the land provide for? How did it provide for it and how are we able to structure ourselves accordingly based on the resources the land gave us -- aboriginal.

The land is a gift of the spirit. It is the teaching of the spirit made manifest. It is his words put in words. This is from our own Dene Elders. Stanley Isaiah told me this. The white man is given a book to find out what God wants. The Dene were told, "Look

to the land. That is God's word put into existence for us to learn his will."

If people don't want that tradition, then, as far as I am concerned, they should just benefit from the same benefits as ordinary Canadians. If you want to live in the city, five to nine and go to mass on Sunday or go to whatever church of your choice, then our -- these are personal beliefs and maybe I am offending some people in this hall; I don't know. That is not my intention, but I wanted to share this dimension of personal experiences with you because I think it would be helpful in terms of work with aboriginal people in the cities.

If you are going to base your decisions on the function of race alone, then you will have to call yourself the "Royal Commission on Race Relations". That is not the intent I don't think.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Don't be concerned about upsetting people, I don't think. They are on very sound ground.

There is a well known theologian by the name of Barry who says -- talking in a Christian context now about two books of revelation: one at the end of the

bible and the other, the earth which is revealing the divine purpose just as surely as any scriptural pronouncement.

But I will leave that aside and ask Viola whether she wants to make any comment.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: No, I don't think I have any comments.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much for your very, very interesting, helpful comments and I know that you will leave some of that material with us, Chief.

I wonder if I could ask Mr. Cook or Ms Cook of the Northwest Territories Council for Friendship Centres --

ABBIE CROOK: It is actually Abbie Crook.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Abbie Crook. Well, I got both of them wrong.

ABBIE CROOK: That is okay.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I got Northwest Territories right.

ABBIE BROOK: I can be either, I

suppose.

I would like to thank the Commissioners and the Elders and, of course, Fort Simpson for giving me an opportunity to speak here today.

I am here, first of all, I guess, on behalf of the Friendship Centres. I am the rep for the Northwest Territories at the national, and we also have our own Council of Friendship Centres at the territorial level.

I guess I can give a little bit of history. In the fifties is when they first started Friendship Centres in Winnipeg and in Vancouver and in the late sixties, the aboriginal people assumed control of a Friendship Centre movement. Today we have 99 Friendship Centres across Canada and 15 satellite centres.

In the Northwest Territories, we have eight Friendship Centres and our role as Friendship Centres in the north and across Canada are to provide -- I guess in the beginning, if I could just backtrack a little bit, they were established to assist the aboriginal people moving from reserves and rural areas to the urban centres and we began as drop-in centres for people who were coming

into the city. They were referred to agencies for employment or housing, et cetera.

Today, as Friendship Centres, we provide a major link between aboriginal people and the majority community, bridging the cultural gap between the two worlds and creating an environment of understanding and appreciation.

In the north, we provide training services like social services, advocacy, justice. We provide recreation programs. We provide cultural programs and by "cultural programs", I am talking about languages.

I am a Cree woman. My first language is Cree and I would like to thank Ethel for mentioning earlier on that they work with us. They accept us as one of them. Although I am not born in the Northwest Territories, I lived in the north most of my life. My children were born here. I have three sons who belong and live in this country.

I have a problem when I am classed as "others". I guess I can go into that later. I will just get back to the centres here.

One of the problems we experience as Friendship Centres, I guess, is we seem to be competing with the federal government in regard to cost of living allowance. The cost of living allowance is based on a south of 60 parallel here. So, as Friendship Centres, we experience a lot of hardships.

I think the federal government is well aware that Friendship Centres maximize -- for every dollar that we receive from the federal government, we maximize that by $4.

Aboriginal Friendship Centres are there for aboriginal people and should be maintained by aboriginal people. They are a volunteer board. We do hire people through programs and services. We also try to work with the federal government, I guess, in trying to co-operate towards working and making the transition in urban areas.

I come from a community called Hay River. The majority people there are non-aboriginal people. The aboriginal people there are a minority. Although they were there prior to the Europeans coming to Hay River, we are treated as second-class citizens in that community

in training, in education, in every area that you could think of.

Aboriginal people are experiencing hardships because we are labelled. They have refused to recognize that we are capable people. We are very capable of looking after ourselves, programs. We are very capable of delivering the services that are coming by.

I am especially concerned in Hay River with this two-level government that is being proposed within the boundary because of the make-up of the community. There are four aboriginal organizations, five including the Dene Reserve across: the hunters and trappers, the aboriginal women, West Point Dene Band and the Friendship Centre. We address these issues but are not heard at that community level.

So one of the recommendations I would like to make to the Commission is that they provide an ongoing funding base for Friendship Centres because I always believed that there is a need for them. The communities are now going -- they are urbanizing the communities even in the north. So there will always be a need for Friendship Centres.

We need more Friendship Centres to be developed in the north. We have one in Rankin Inlet, in the eastern Arctic and the rest are in the western region.

We have experienced cutbacks numerous times in the Friendship Centre Program and that should not be allowed to happen. We suffer as Friendship Centres. We suffer as people in cities as well as in the communities.

I am going to speak now as an individual. I am what you might call, by government standards, a born again Indian under Bill C-31. I do not accept that title. I will not accept it because my children cannot carry on under Bill C-31. I have three sons. They are not entitled to anything. Therefore, I am not entitled to anything.

It grieves me to see that government can strong-arm aboriginal people still today, and that is one example: Bill C-31.

I hear a lot about single parenting. It is questioned whether it is morally wrong or not. They don't get the support, but women are nurturers of life

and they should be looked at in that manner. It is not morally wrong in our culture, in my culture and I am a Cree.

I did feel the effects of a single mother. I did feel the effects of living in an institution, in a convent. I felt the effects of racism when I went to the city. I felt the effects when I visited institutions even in the Northwest Territories. I am talking about corrections. Ninety-nine per cent of the correction services in the north are filled with aboriginal people. Why?

The health care system is not good enough for our people, for the Elders. You talk about AIDS being a widespread disease. We are being thrown bandaid solutions to deal with it -- a little funding here and there -- but nothing really coming out of it.

What is happening for our youth in the communities? What is happening to our Elders in the communities? They are being housed in institutions. We are not allowed to bring them the food that they are used to eating. We have to abide by government policies. We have to have a health inspector to approve wild meat for

us to bring to the homes for the Elders. That is in my community.

For the young people, they are ashamed of who they are. Why? They have lost their identity? It is not that they have lost their identity. It is not being appreciated in the schools, in the community. I am sure it is appreciated at home.

We all need a healing process and we can't go back to what it was 50-60 years ago. We need funding to realize the healing process. We need funding to ensure that our culture is maintained and passed on. We need funding to ensure that there are skills involved in training our young people. I am talking on the land skills. I am talking survival skills which are of value.

When the kids go out on the land, they learn how to be patient. They learn how to understand. They learn how to appreciate themselves. They learn how to listen to an Elder. They learn.

I suppose I could go on and on, but I will stop here because I get really emotional when we talk about Elders and youths in the aboriginal communities.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

ABBIE CROOK: Just one more comment, if I may.

You hear a lot about distinct status. In Canada, there are two official languages: English and French. I would like to see an aboriginal language as an official language recognized in Canada.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Again, I want to assure you that you are certainly not alone in your comments, but everything you have said just reinforces a lot of the issues that have been raised by previous presenters.

The Friendship Centre case certainly has been made, particularly in the urban centres where we have been. There is a lot of concern there that they continue on because they do provide a good service to the urban people who leave their communities to go to the urban centres.

Of course, C-31 is another whole story that everybody is talking about and I guess there is no doubt in anyone's mind that certainly something has to be looked at there.

The health and the Elders, again, and the healing process -- again, I will say that it seems as though the same tone keeps coming out about the healing process, healing process. "If we are going to have self-government and if our communities are going to be healthy, we better get into a healing process before we get into anything else or we won't have anybody to govern."

Those have been some of the statements that some of the presenters have gone so far to make. So that point is very well taken and, of course, the relationship between the Elders and the role of the Elders within that healing process, particularly with the young, and language -- language being one of the priorities: the preservation of language and the revival and retention of language. Those views that you express are shared. I think they have been shared in the places where I have been and probably will be as we go along.

So I thank you for your presentation and you have just reinforced a lot of stuff we have already heard.

ABBIE CROOK: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

Wrigley Dene Band, Councillor Gabe Hardisty, please.

GABE HARDISTY (Through an Interpreter): I will do my presentation in Slave. I don't have anything written down. The way I was taught is to take your memories and speak your mind and speak from your heart, and that is how I was taught. Up until today, I am still living the way I was taught and I will do it in Slave.

I am thankful you and the Commission are here to listen to our concerns. Being Dene, we learn from our past and this is how we got this far.

Before the Europeans came here, we were the ancestors of the people that were here before the coming of the European. We still lived by that culture before the coming of the European people.

We live by the lakes and the rivers.

We learn when to fish. At certain times of the season, we learn how to fish and we used willows to make fish nets. This is how we fished for fish. These are the people we are from.

The people from the mountain are the people that went hunting. They hunted the moose, grizzly and right now there are still people from the mountain people amongst us.

We had our own government in the past. If we didn't have our own government, we wouldn't be here today. We thrived on moose.

Since the coming of the white people, there are a lot of things which have changed. When the Europeans came here, we had done a lot of hunting to help them supplement food that was brought in from down south. At the time, if we had abandoned a lot of the European people here, they would have probably frozen.

The people helped each other to go hunting in the past. The people who lived by the lakes and the people who came from the mountains -- people who lived at the lakes and the people who were living at the lakes didn't have enough food. The people

from the mountains would help each other. They still hold the same beliefs. This is where we come from. Up to now, we still hold the same beliefs.

Since the coming of the white people, we have had to learn the white way of being taught. It seems we have left our culture since going to white man's schools. Maybe we were being taught in schools the single need to European culture. In their belief, if we didn't know how to read or write, we wouldn't be able to survive. If we lived by the Dene way, all we would need is something to start a fire with and a knife.

These kinds of things are probably what the Royal Commission is going to be listening to. So if we told them about the way people used to live in the past, I think it would be good.

The federal government, when we talked to them -- they think we just came over here and started telling us what to do. We have the past and we still live by the same traditions as the past. I guess the Dene had government. That is why we still survived.

The way the European culture thinks is that they figure the Dene way too stupid to have a

government. They figure we are too stupid to do things on our own. I don't think so. If we were stupid, we would probably not have survived. We had Dene government before the coming. That is why we are still here. Since the European government was started, there is nothing that has gone right for us. That is why we want our own government.

Up to now, there are a lot of people suffering because of alcohol. We did not have alcohol. The federal government has brought in alcohol. There were a lot of people who died from alcohol. Maybe this was a way to make Dene people die.

We want to do better for our land. This is what we were talking about. There have been a lot of meetings since the beginning. Twenty years ago, if we brought everything that we wanted as government, if they looked at it, when Dene people say something, they don't think we are telling the truth.

If the territorial government is going to be government for Dene people, there are a lot of people who don't go to the government. A lot of ministers don't go to their communities to ask what the Dene people want.

People get appointed.

There have been ministers in Yellowknife and they seem to do just as they please. He wants somebody who will listen to us. Most of the people that were on at the time of the treaty signing are pretty well all dead, just about all dead. The people who are still alive, when they talk about the treaty, the federal government says they are lying.

I just wanted to say a few things.

I also have my uncle with me. He was around at the time of the treaty. Maybe he can enlighten us a little bit on how it happened at the time.

ELDER PAUL EKENALE: I was around when the treaty was signed. At the time the boat came in, the people said, "The treaty is here."

The person who interpreted for my dad was John A. MacPherson. My dad, Eli Antoche -- they were the people who were there. There weren't very many people who attended.

My dad said, "We are going to get money," but my dad said that we didn't want money. Although we didn't want money, they said they would give us money.

They asked at the time what they wanted, what we were getting money for. We were told at the time that the money was just to help with our living expenses. They had told the people at the time that we didn't want the money from the treaty.

They asked my dad to give him money three times. He replied at the time that if he was going to give us the money, about two or three years after that, they were going to be claiming a lot of our land. "This is what they want to give us money for." This is what my dad told them.

"Because of that, I am not going to take the money," but their reply was, "We are not going to be giving you money in turn for anything. We are just giving you money to help you." They did not say it was in compensation for anything else. My dad had told them again, "Because of trying to cease" -- they wanted to claim the animals and the land in the next twenty years or so. This is why they were getting the money. Again, he was told that this was not the case.

They had meetings for three days. My dad kept saying, "We aren't going to take the money."

They kept persisting.

What they were told by the treaty party at the time was that the money was just to help them along. It was just for peace and friendship is what the money was for. That is what they were told.

I am not telling a lie. If I am telling a lie and if the sun doesn't set in the opposite direction and the river doesn't flow down, I am not lying. This is what they were told.

Although they promised, "We are not going to take the land," my dad's reply was that they were told again, "The money is not in exchange for receiving anything."

Also, the Bishop was with the COR party. The Bishop also said -- they were the ones who said -- what the Bishop told my dad was, "They are telling the truth. They are not going to be stealing anything from you." That is what the Bishop told my dad. "If there are hardships, the money is going to be helpful for supplies and living expenses." Again, the Bishop kept telling them that they did not want to take the money. There were not a lot of people at the time.

So what the Bishop said was that what the treaty party told them was, "You are a representative of God as the Bishop. I am going to be taking the money." This is what my dad said at the time the Bishop told my dad -- not even to do it and not even 20 years after that, about 20 years.

They were having a hard time trapping and another ten years after that. There is another regulation on trapping up to now. They were trying to give us more money for the land. We did not want to take treaty all the way down to the delta, but we have been -- whoever has the treaty, they have to keep holding on to it. We did want medical at the time of the treaty.

If you want to know about what happened to the treaty, this is what I observed and this is what my dad has also told me. I am glad to talk to you about the treaty.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

I want first to ask you, Chief, whether you would ask your uncle: Was this the Treaty of 1921 that he is speaking of? You perhaps know that.

GABE HARDISTY: Yes, it was the 1921 Treaty that he was talking about.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Would you ask him whether I understood him right saying that not only the government negotiators but the Bishop had assured them that the money was just for friendship and to help out and did not involve transferring the land?

GABE HARDISTY: Yes, that's the way -- the Bishop is the one who was translating for that government negotiator. He says that this money was peace treaty. It is not for the land, but we found out -- it says in the government version of the treaty that we surrender the land.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Yes.

GABE HARDISTY: It took them six years to write that letter, that book, to make a wrong answer. So there is our version and there is the government version. So this is why most of our leaders are saying that they want to define our treaty, what it meant.

The Elders say -- my father-in-law here says that as long as we grab this treaty -- it sounds right. From the east to west, the river flows. He is not lying.

He is telling the truth that it wasn't to surrender our land. But in the time gone by and when the book came out, he said that we surrendered our land.

The Bishop was there. It was not the Bishop. It was the government who made that Bishop look like a Bishop. All Elders believe that the Bishop is a person who speaks words from God and doesn't lie. That is why they took the money. They tricked them into taking the money.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: Well, it is pretty clear to me.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: So you are saying that there wasn't a Bishop there, but it was someone dressed as a Bishop in order to deceive the Dene.

GABE HARDISTY: Yes.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much. That is an interesting and colourful story.

We will just take a two-minute breather here while we stretch. The day gets long.

--- Short recess at 6:05 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 6:10 p.m.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Would

people take their places so we may hear the next presenter. We are going to hear from Chief Berna Landry from Fort Providence.

Berna Landry of Fort Providence Band is speaking also, I think, for the Deh Cho Divisional Educational Board.

Chief Landry, welcome and we would like to hear your presentation.

CHIEF BERNA LANDRY (Through an Interpreter): Merci.

I am going to speak in my own language.

What Gabe has said is true. As Dene, we have gone through a hard life. Before Canada was born, we lived on this land. Before the white people, we had our own land with us which is the Dene land.

How the Dene made a livelihood, how the Dene lived -- we had our own way of living. Before the white people came upon our land, the Dene had a good lifestyle. This is what the Elders have said. They mostly raised their children in their own way.

Before the white people had come, the

Dene people shared and helped one another and so they lived well that way. After the white people came, landed on the shore, then the priests also arrived. As a result, they have taken our languages. That is what I believe according to what the Elders have shared.

A lot of the Elders have resided in convents. They were really abused in those situations. Even though they suffered a lot of abuse, they haven't lost their language. It must be because the Creator, God, has helped us. That is why we still have our language and speak in our own language.

The children we see today -- they don't understand the Elders and the Elders don't understand the young people. In my community where I am from, Fort Providence is like that, too. So it is very bad in that light.

It seems that we aren't living in a very good Dene lifestyle. It seems everything goes the white people's way in regard to the youth. As a result, why should it all be in that type of situation always in a light way of living?

The Elders say that we are not white

people. "Why do we try to conduct ourselves like them?" However, the divisional boards are starting to understand. The young people are no longer speaking their own language and they are no longer interested in the language. So they are saying, "We can begin to teach our children how to speak the Dene languages in the schools."

I also sit on the Deh Cho Divisional Board. I have sat on it for years now. Also, I have worked 12 years with the Elders. So it is only through using the Elders that we can teach our children to begin to speak their language again.

Some also say that it seems like we have lost our language. However, we can make laws to say that the white people that live amongst us should learn our own language. This is what they are suggesting. Even the teachers that teach children, they only live amongst us for two or three years. Then they leave.

They should learn our languages when they are amongst us. So the Board of Education has developed a paper to teach Dene languages to the children and have Dene instructors to teach their children. The

parents, the mother and the father, should also help to teach languages to their children.

So the federal government should respect our aboriginal Dene languages and they should also place it in the Constitution. We have existed as Dene this long. They have never called us human beings. Perhaps that is because we don't have a language.

This is all I have to present.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much, Chief Landry.

I will ask a question first and then some of my colleagues may well want to ask you a question.

When we were in Winnipeg, we saw a kindergarten there where children of ages 3 and 4 and 5 were learning the Ojibway language from Elders in the community, from women who spoke Ojibway. When I was up at Fort McPherson, I saw a school where I think the children would have been 4 or 5 also learning Gwich'in.

I was wondering whether in your school there have been any classes or arrangements made to teach the very young children, the 4 year olds and the 5 year olds, Slave or any other Dene language.

CHIEF BERNA LANDRY: Which children are you referring to?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Children in the school in Fort Providence.

CHIEF BERNA LANDRY: Yes, the ones at our beginning school to grade 9 are being taught the Dene language.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER FOR THE DAY GABE CAZON (Through an Interpreter): Whatever you are talking about, I understand what you are referring to in regard to our language.

They want us to begin to teach the young children. This community has a teacher for that. I have worked with children for about 11 years at summer camp. We have taught them a lot. They seem to be doing well.

I also suggested that they teach them how to talk Slave. Within two weeks, they go home. They go home and then they come back to us and what we have taught, they have forgotten within a two-week period.

If we teach a student the Dene language in the school, when they come home from school, their parents should also teach them and support the language teaching. If this is done, it would improve the situation. Students don't really like that and so a lot of students -- children want to learn their language, but it seems their parents, their mother and father, don't seem to support them.

They seem to want to learn more because I have taught a long time at the summer camp skinning beaver. We worked with them and they seemed to want to learn a lot. What we have taught them at the camp, when they go home, that teaching is not supported at home. So, in that way, it is difficult for the children. It is difficult in that situation.

I worked with the summer school for about 11 years. It could be hard. If their mom and dad are good teachers, if they are involved, helping them out -- but that is not the way it is and so it is hard.

That is about all. Thank you for whatever you said.

CHIEF BERNA LANDRY: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

I think some people thought they might be able to be here and may not, but I will just check down the list.

Chief Pat Martel...? Chief Steve Cochia...? Bill Lafferty...?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just wanted to say on record that there was a small letter that was sent to you and maybe you could just read it off on behalf of Chief Pat Martel in regard to his request.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you, Chief.

Yes, I have just been handed this letter and I think to get it on the record and so that everyone will know, I will read this.

Chief Pat Martel, of the Hay River Dene Band, meant to leave this with us and it is a letter to the Minister of Indian Affairs, Northern Development, at Ottawa.

"Dear Minister,

We request your assistance with establishing agreements with the government in the Northwest Territories regarding funding. The GNWT do not recognize our reserve within their policies. This is not a new problem. However, we are determined to resolve this situation with your department's assistance. We were informed the GNWT is providing the reserve with favours and not providing us with the equal services we should receive as a reserve. We have requested assistance from Indian and Northern Affairs in Yellowknife who tell us we should call Ottawa. We are told that the AFA agreements do not apply to us. We are told we should apply for hamlet status.

Mr. Minister, we request a senior official from your

department in Ottawa to assist in finding a solution. We require information, decisions and recommendations.

1. Should we be dealing directly with the federal government as a federal reserve? 'This is a legitimate question if we are a burden to the government of the NWT.'"

That is in quotes.

"2. What kind of agreement is possible with the GNWT and the programs that were transferred to them from the federal government?

We require your response to this letter as soon as possible. We are very frustrated at this time.

Sincerely, Pat Martel, Chief."

Then this is to us.

"The Hay River Dene Band requests the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to ensure appropriate steps are taken to

resolve the status of the Hay River Reserve within the Northwest Territories as outlined in the attached letter to the Minister of Indian Affairs."

I put that on the record and I add the comment that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is regrettably not able to ensure that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development takes any steps, but we can certainly pursue it on behalf of the Hay River Dene Band.

Bill Lafferty...? I don't think he is here.

We are now to our open forum.

Cindy Gilday, welcome and you are free to stand if you wish.

CINDY GILDAY: Thank you.

Elders, Commissioners, Chief Antoine, (Native language), thank you very much for having me here.

I have picked this community for a very special reason. I am from Fort Franklin up on Great Bear Lake. My father was Joe Kenney. My mother was Marianne

Kenney.

I had been working on behalf of a lot of native people concerned about the environment. I have been travelling a lot to all parts of the world concerned about the environment.

I have been to Washington where I saw a war memorial for Vietnam warriors. I have been in Germany where an old man showed me unmarked graves of people who were shovelled into the ground and covered by the Nazis.

I would like to ask you, Commissioners, to step outside this room and look behind this hostile. There you will see unmarked graves. There you will see that in the cemetery there are 398 people who have been buried; between 1916 and 1957, 150 youngsters from all settlements between the age 1 and 10 years old, (Native language); 248 adults: 97 from Fort Simpson; 20 from Fort Good Hope; 41 from Fort Norman; 39 from Fort Liard; 38 from Fort Providence; 6 from Fort Franklin; 6 from Fort Wrigley -- no names.

If you understand the significance of what Rene Lamothe was telling you in terms of Dene people

and the relationship that you inherited from your ancestors and the spiritual teachings, you will understand why no names on a grave is a very significant symbol of oppression, the ultimate symbol as far as the Dene are concerned.

Beneath that, beneath the last number, it says "Religious buried here," and it lists all the names of the nuns and the priests. They are also buried there.

In 1987, before the Pope came here, I came here after so many years of trying to look for my mother. I asked the Elders because I knew she came to this old hospital. Everybody remembers that old hospital, the white one that was down here. People from all over the north came here because of tuberculosis. A lot of relatives died during that time.

There are three grave yards in this town. I searched. Part of the story I was told by an Elder the year that I came first in 1987 -- because it took me that long to get around to accepting it emotionally to come to look for my mother's grave. The Elder told me that they didn't know who it was. It was either the government or the church or some administration took a

bulldozer and shovelled the graves underneath and part of this hostile is built on part of that grave yard.

I heard it from my own colleagues, too, because I went to a residential school with some people from here and I heard from my own colleagues as well that that had happened because of the experiences within this hostile.

Then I came back again and I asked more people and they said that there was a flood and something happened. They thought it was the village administration that did it. So finally I went back to Yellowknife and I officially inquired through the government system to find out who was responsible because I knew in my mind that it could not be the Dene people who would make such a decision. It was impossible. It indicated the lack of power people had on their own lands here.

I know that also because I was here during the Berger hearings and I saw the condition the people were in as well. So I know the fault lies within the government system, somewhere within the church, somewhere.

I started an official inquiry and I was

told that they didn't know. To this day, I don't know who did it.

But, Mr. Commissioner, I totally disagree with you when you say that this is a local, political problem because this is symbolic to what happened to a lot of our people across the country. We were shovelled into the ground like animals without any graves straight across this country, and I think a grieving day has to be given to the people of this nation.

They grieved over the 45 people that got killed in a mining accident. We are talking about 398 people who were shovelled into the ground here without any significant monument whatsoever. I think that kind of situation has to be ratified.

I also feel very strongly about it because I come from a tradition. At this time of the year, everybody in the community -- it is a cultural and a village thing that we do. Our community all goes to where the people are buried. You clean the grave yards. You visit your relatives wherever they are buried on your land, and our people know the land like the back of their hands, like you would know the corner of the city that you live

in.

Everybody visits the graves. They talk to their relatives. They pray together. It is very much of a survival spiritual condition that is very real for us, and I feel really supremely deprived myself that I cannot continue that practice as far as my immediate mother is concerned because I can't take my children to her grave. I think that that is a real tragedy and I think it is a real desecration.

That being said, I think something should be done about it and I have had some discussions with the Chief, but I think there is room for the government of the Northwest Territories and the government of Canada to do something significant as well.

It can be a very symbolic thing for a grieving time because you have to have that it in order to heal. There are wounds beneath the surface that need to be dealt with. You cannot cover them. They have to come up and they have to be dealt with.

There are other wounds beneath the surface that I would like to touch on -- very specific ones -- before I proceed any further.

My father was present at the treaty signing in Fort Norman in 1911 and 1921. You listened earlier to the Elder who recited exactly verbatim what was said at that time. It was very much the same what he witnessed, but he also remembered a time when our people went to Fort Norman, very much like Sidney Coo right here.

Our people from all over the land came together in Fort Norman to celebrate the summer, to find new partners, whatever the social thing is, to make political deals on land, to trade, all the things that native people were very organized with before the Europeans came to this continent.

He was there when they first witnessed the impact of white man's disease. After the first barge came, he said a week passed. He was 17 at that time. Older people started getting sick and the next thing you know, tent after tent people were dying. He spent a long time shovelling, making graves for people. There were so few of them left in the end that the people who survived, it is a miracle that they did because it was a major flew epidemic. But the transmission of it came by the river boat because there was very little contact between the

outside world and our people at that time -- wounds beneath the surface.

One more incident. We are trained as Dene from the time we are small to be responsible to pass on the things that we have witnessed, we have experienced onto our children.

One of the things that I saw in my time very recently which -- after so many years of witnessing a complete silent oppression, systematic silent oppression, the thing that really, really got me and a lot of Dene people angry is the fact that by the mere government policy and the comprehensive claim demanding that the Dene people extinguish their aboriginal rights, no other generation has ever been asked to do that.

Our treaties were signed by our grandfathers with a totally different understanding. Maybe we have been colonized to a point that we can't see beyond the written word to say, "Okay, we will do this," but I can't believe that.

For the government policy to separate our people the way they did in Detah, when the Gwich'in people walked out of the claims' meeting, was the ultimate

silent oppressive measure I have ever seen. It broke up our people.

I have worked with the Dene National Office since the early eighties and our people systematically stuck together. Regardless of how many times we disagreed on things, we worked it out on a consensus basis and yet that one policy statement was able to break up our people. That is what I will pass on to my children. It was not our people. It was not our fault. We were set up.

At this point, I will submit a written submission. I am just giving you some of the things that you cannot write without conveying the message. So I want to talk about survival issues.

I want to talk about the issues that I know the best about because I am the first indigenous person to sit on the Royal Conservation Union. It represents 119 countries concerned with conservation. They were instrumental in writing the Brundtland Commission and now in Caring for the Earth Report -- environment.

I would like to pay tribute at this time to all the native leaders across this country who have

been the major advocates for environmental things.

The first one, the Mackenzie Valley Inquiry -- it was the first time in this country, in Canada, where an inquiry was built around a concern over a river system. What will happen to the water? What will happen to the animals? What will happen to the people?

In environmental assessments, it is very, very difficult to push in the concerns of the people. The social and economic issues for the first time were addressed in a formal sense. In that, the Mackenzie Valley Inquiry kicked off what today is called an environmental assessment of any major developments.

Then you go on across the country from South Moresvy, White Dog Reserve, uranium mining in Saskatchewan, the James Bay Cree hydro dam, the Alaska/Yukon caribou issue, the pulp mills in northern Alberta.

All of these issues emerge as a direct concern of the native people for their lands and their waters, the animals and the way the people live on the land.

So when I go into the international

community and people talk about environmental issues as if they are new issues that just emerged the past five years, I know it is not true. I know that our people, aboriginal people across Canada should be commended for taking up the leadership to save the earth and the environment. The environmental issues are very, very complex in the north.

I want to point out a couple of things to you that I know you are aware of, but I also know you have a really good research section. So I will point them out to you.

One is that in the Canadian Environment Report, there is a special section on the Arctic, this report. This focuses purely on the north. It talks about cesium in caribou. It talks about toxified in fish. It talks about the water absorbing chemical pollutants from the air from the Soviet Union and from the European industrialized country. We are virtually a pollution sink for the industrialized world.

This is not an environmental concern, I have to tell you. This is an environmental alarm. Living in the kind of conditions we do, it is very hard

and I realize in our villages it is very hard to understand what an emergency we have, but we are in an emergency mode.

I went to a meeting in Geneva where on my way back I saw Betty at the airport. I told her about the meetings that I went to in Geneva. There are 36 councillors from 119 countries in this council that I sit on. I talked to a guy from Spain who said that the richest people are the people who have access to water because there they have to drill like minors into the side of the hill to get water.

Canada is probably the richest country in terms of fresh water resources, the seventh biggest deposit of fresh water in the world, and yet the industrialized community, the people who value the earth for the money they can get in their hands are systematically destroying our very essence of life, which is water.

The water situation is very, very critical. If you have not read -- and I will give you another reference -- Michael Keating's book called "The Last Drop" -- he is a Canadian author. His data is very good. You might use that as a reference, too. But the

water situation is so critical and I am really alarmed when I see our land claims' arrangement where there is no guarantee of access to water for our people.

You have a board that deals with water. We up here don't even have control over one drop of water. We don't have it. It is in Ottawa. Right now, legislatively, that control lies in Ottawa. The territorial government doesn't have it. They are only the second level of Indian Affairs. They don't have that kind of power.

A management board over water, I will tell you, is not going to get you water. The only people I know of who have guaranteed access to water right now in North America are some Indians in the U.S., in northern Washington State who own and have direct rights to complete water resources on their lands. They even have what they call environmental assessment powers that the U.S. government gives them. They can access it like most people. It is a very touchy process, but they can get it so that if a Japanese company wants to build a pulp mill at the mouth of their river, they can do something about it. But we in Canada, with the last vestiges of

fresh water, native people have no right now except donated control from the governments. Fifty per cent is not enough to make a difference to make your will work. There is no guarantee of water for aboriginal people in the north. That concerns me very much.

So, on this subject, I will write a little bit more about it, but there is only one more issue that I know a lot about in terms of water, and that is the pulp mills in northern Alberta.

There is a report that came out in 1990, a review panel that I sat on to review the pulp mills that the Japanese companies want to build on the river system that flows up here. The report recommended -- because even in the Berger hearings, Berger promised to do studies or the government promised to do studies and they were never carried out at all.

After that review was finished, the government did give some money to finally study the quality of fish and the quality of water up here, but that is all they are. They are studies.

I can tell you something about crack pulp mills that are being proposed in northern Alberta. I am

talking about seven crack pulp mills. On the international level, those are unacceptable. They are guaranteed contaminants for reproductive destruction on human health.

Who lives up here? Who eats the fish? Who hunts the animals? Who drinks the water? The Dene. You know, there are no other Dene groups in the world.

If our generation dies -- and there was a doctor from the U.S. in Chicago who I asked as part of the official review to be truthful with me as to what these things can do because you are talking about dumping tons of chemicals into the river system, persistent chemicals, chemicals that stick to the sediments, that collect -- it does not disintegrate. It collects in the sediment. It washes out into the delta. It sticks itself into the fish system and into the animal system.

He said to me, "You are looking at probably the end of the Dene Nation or the Dene as you know them perhaps in six generations at the rate that they are proposing to build the pulp mills." These are in the official records of the studies so you can access them.

We had 700 submissions during that hearing and a lot of the Indian communities in northern Alberta also came out. One of the testimonies I heard that I will never forget until the day I die is that when the scientists started to count the milligrams of chemicals that are going to go into the river, "It is just a drop in the bucket of a bathtub. What are you worried about?"

This old woman in Chippewa stood up and said, "When I can no longer drink my water, I cannot eat the muskrat, I can't eat the beaver and the birds are not stopping here any longer, what more studies do you want? We are at a critical stage."

I feel that the development of the pulp mills in northern Alberta is a very serious infraction against survival of the Dene. It is something that can be fixed, but they will not do it because it costs too much money, because they don't have to pay the price, because all that money goes back to Japan where the companies are. Some of the money is in Alberta. Some of the money goes to the federal government.

It is an issue that is urgent enough for

a serious investigation, I think. What is happening right now is not fast enough to fix the problem. Also, it is an issue that is only one of the small issues that needs to be dealt with on the international level, but also a major one for us for survival as Dene. We have to think about it.

So I will leave that to your good researchers. There have been three subsequent studies on that as well, too. If you ever want a really good witness on this issue, I recommend that you talk to Dr. David Schindler who is the head of the Zoology Department at the University of Alberta and a recognized international water scientist from Europe.

There are a lot of other survival issues, but I feel that this is probably the number one in importance because water is something you need to survive.

Language is another thing, but you have a lot of material on that. I need not expand on it, but I just want to share with you an observation I have about up here.

I live in Yellowknife. A lot of us from

all over the communities live in Yellowknife because that is where we can get work that we are trained to do.

I hear a lot of stories. From Satuay alone, we have 150 people living in Yellowknife. I hear a lot of stories about -- I cannot forget this one where one of my friends found an Elder wandering the streets of Yellowknife because she did not speak English. She was just brought into the hospital and she was lost and she didn't know what to do.

We don't have the services, regardless of how much we talk about the kind of service we get in the languages. From my personal perspective, it certainly does not compare to what the French people get up here, and they are only a handful and they all speak English. They are professional people. They don't need the service. We can't even access necessary services in health, in justice, in all the necessary parts of our people's lives. Essential services I am talking about.

One hundred and fifty of Satuay people live in Yellowknife. The French people are now talking about the second high school in Yellowknife. We can't even have a Slave program for our kids.

You will get enough of that. You have a lot of material on that and the injustice that exists in terms of service in aboriginal languages and the difference between that and the French and the English languages.

Land claims, treaties. (Sentence in native language.) There is also pretty good documentation from the first Treaty National Conference that was held between April 6th and 9th in Edmonton. I think that is the documentation where there are a lot of witnesses.

The spirit and the intent of the treaties were never followed by the government. That was repeated over and over and this is part of what you have heard today.

The difference between comprehensive claims policy and treaties: One is an Indian Affairs Department policy; the other is based on the Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties. It is an international treaty.

All these years -- ask Dene people -- we are trained from the time we are little not to create -- when you meet a stranger, you have to be polite. You have to make them feel at home. You try everything you

can not to alienate them. You try to be polite. That is the way we are trained. We are a gentle people. We are an academically-oriented people.

All these years, people are seducing us with public government concepts, seducing us with the idea that if we get elected and get into a government system that exists in Yellowknife that was set up for us for our good, then we are doing public service.

When we talk about Dene government guaranteed aboriginalcy, right away we are told, "You are racist. We don't want ethnic government." For a Dene, it is like being called stingy. That is the ultimate insult you can make to a Dene if you call them stingy because part of our culture is to share.

The treaties. I need not say any more except that the Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties says "pacta sunt servanda". It means that every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to which it must be performed by them in good faith. That, I thought, controlled every democratic government in the world and our people's biggest witness at the National Treaty Conference was that the spirit and the intent of the treaties were never carried

out. I feel I have to say something about that simply because my father was present at the signing of Treaty 11.

One more issue that I would like to talk about which is brought up over and over again is the whole dimension of culture, but I am going to take a different tact.

What it says is "metropolitan opera". I have been there. My daughter is a singer. A lot of her support has come from the Canadian Native Arts Foundation. I believe our people have some really fundamental human survival beliefs that can be shared with the rest of the world.

There is no reason why we can't use the modern forms of culture -- opera, dance, whatever form it is that is out there in the big world -- to train or teach the rest of the world about our beliefs that can save the earth. But the opportunities for people like my kids are not as good as white people who are raised in Toronto. I am going to point you to a reference.

Just recently in March, the Federal Task Force on professional training in the culture and the arts

was delivered and the Co-Chair for that is Peter White, who used to be the Prime Minister's principal Secretary, and the other one was Michele Rusiga. They delivered a report and for the first time in Canada in that report the three distinct societies in Canada were recognized officially on the books, but it says everything that needs to be said.

Canada supports Canadian ballet. It supports the symphonies. It supports incredible artistic endeavours in this country, but there is not a systematic support laid out for First Nations in Canada in this initiative, and I would like very much for you to use that reference.

A lot of the things that I have said are fairly negative, but I hope it is thought-provoking enough for you to pursue the line of thinking that is in there. But I do have a vision, too.

I have a vision that the people who spoke here today can continue to survive in the beliefs that have been passed on from our ancestors, because I think they are the right ones for us as Dene. The vision I have for my kids is that some day there will be a school in

Slave, that they can have the freedom of choice.

The vision I have is that my people have water rights in their land claims. The vision I have is that my people can pass on their values through the modern day arts that can teach the rest of the world about our values.

As always, you learn from your kids. You think everything just goes through them. My son is 15 years old. We were watching a television program, a news program, about conflict. He turned around and said to me, "Mom, you know, until we have peace, we are not going to save our environment." I turned around and read a quote to him. Somebody from the other side of the world was asked -- he is another Indian. He was asked about the environment, and he said, "How are you going to be non-violent to nature unless the principle of non-violence becomes a central ethos of human culture?" Non-violence is what I am talking about. His name was Mahatma Ghandi.

With that, thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much. You have given us many, many things to think about.

In deference to the people who are still waiting, I will not pick up on any of them because I might be tempted to engage in quite a long conversation. I will ask Viola --

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I just want to thank you for an excellent presentation. You have given us a lot of good information and thoughts, and we will be looking forward to your written presentation.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much.

Mr. Greg Newley.

GREG NEWLEY: Thank you, Commissioners, for giving me the opportunity to address this Commission.

My name is Greg Newley and I am a Dene from Fort Providence. I am presently living in Fort Liard.

I am coming to share with you today, as an individual Dene person, some experiences ranging from local politics to working for various aboriginal organizations throughout our region.

I can only hope that the concerns that have been tabled to you will result in some positive changes

for all aboriginal people and not become just a collection of transcripts which are collecting dust in some federal warehouses. I think many other Commissions have.

I have a number of concerns in respect of aboriginal and government relations, in particular issues which affect the Dene of the N.W.T.

I think self-government is a major concern of the Dene. I realize that we are gaining much support for implementing our inherent right to self-government within the Canadian Constitution. However, my concern is not with the long overdue support we receive from Canadians. My concern, I think, is the same as many other aboriginal people across Canada, and that is: How can we be given something that we have never extinguished? It is hard for me to rationalize this.

We have always maintained our inherent right to self-government, and this right, which our ancestors were born with and our children will inherit, will undoubtedly determine the relationships that we have with the rest of Canada.

I don't believe Canadians should be scared of this. We are willing to live with and work with

our Canadian brothers and sisters. This was promised in our treaties, and I am sure this will be respected as long as the sun shines and the rivers flow.

I think it is Canada's turn to put their trust in aboriginal peoples. We have done this with Canada, and it just hasn't worked. It is now time for us to rebuild our cultures, our languages, our beliefs and our philosophies. The time is now for aboriginal people to determine our own futures and to maintain the jurisdictions over our respective territories, as we have done previously before being discovered.

I think the time is now to build a lasting relationship between ourselves as decent and humane people. Our struggle for a fair and just land claim, I think, is also high on the agenda of the Dene. However, the present condition of extinguishment of some of our aboriginal and treaty rights is unacceptable.

The objective of providing certainty and clarity of rights to ownership and use of lands and resources can be established without extinguishment. As the six claiming groups expressed, in 1986 and 1990 respectively, certainty and clarity can be established

by negotiating and agreeing on management systems which will guide the use of development of the land and natural resources. That is one viable option.

If this could be determined, what reason is there for extinguishment, I ask.

Within the Introduction section of the comprehensive claims policy it states:

"Aboriginal peoples have always claimed a special relationship to the land as a basis for their cultural distinctiveness and special aboriginal status."

It goes on to say:

"The recognition of this relationship through the settlement of claims based on aboriginal title is a fundamental objective of aboriginal peoples. A fair and equitable resolution of such claims is also a major priority of the Government of Canada."

I ask you: Where is the fairness in extinguishment? Under the now defunct Dene-Métis claim,

where was the fairness in the aboriginal rights and title to subsurface resources when the Dene and their descendants relinquished approximately 99.15 per cent of their title to such resources? Where is the fairness in resource royalty-sharing where we would receive approximately 1.0 per cent of any benefits taken out from the grounds other than Dene-Métis lands? Where is the fairness in allowing industry to develop on our lands by way of general application?

If the government is truly sincere about fairness in treaty land claims and what it entails, I suggest that they begin to do so. To date, we have not seen this. I am very pessimistic as to whether this will ever occur.

The land claim agreements also include frameworks for self-government. Land claim agreements and self-government agreements must be consistent with each other.

Again, the Government of Canada has put the Dene in a Catch-22 situation. Within the claim there is a public government system, much to the disagreement of the Dene. In self-government framework agreements

there is a clause stating: The provisions of self-government agreements shall not be inconsistent with the provisions of settlement legislation or this agreement and, if there is, the agreement will prevail.

This tells me one thing -- that the Dene and other aboriginal people who do complete land claim agreements will never achieve self-government as we envision it.

The agreement allows for amendments, but do you honestly think that the Government of Canada will allow for changes which reflect the self-government aspirations of aboriginal peoples? I doubt it very much. The government is laughing all the way to the bank. They plan to negotiate our rights away while also achieving an agreement far in favour of themselves.

As far as I, as well as probably many other aboriginals, feel, any land claims agreement should not be inconsistent with the results of self-government negotiations and, if so, should be amended accordingly. Furthermore, self-government agreements must receive constitutional protection. As we see, it is provided for under section 35.1 of the Constitution Act.

The transfer of powers from the federal government to the G.N.W.T. is also a big concern of mine. I recall when the tripartite committee, consisting of the Dene, the G.N.W.T. and the federal government, was established to determine where monies allocated for Dene people were going within the G.N.W.T. budget. When it came down to uncovering the financial data, financial records were not provided or divulged.

The G.N.W.T. is supposed to administer these funds on our behalf, without our consent. Yet, they don't account for it? I find that hard to believe.

I think a possible scenario for the underlying problem was that our monies were being used to support programs for all residents. Yet, this was not supposed to happen.

The establishment of local governments continues to bewilder me. Certain powers were handed over which could have easily been administered by the majority aboriginal population and their particular governing systems.

The G.N.W.T. says it doesn't recognize Bands as legal entities. That confuses me. The other

day I was going over an Alcohol and Drug Contribution Agreement, and it says, "An agreement between the G.N.W.T. and the respective Band Council duly incorporated under the laws of the N.W.T." So they recognized us as legal entities; yet, they don't.

I think the G.N.W.T. should get its act together and make up its mind while fulfilling the aspirations of the people it represents.

Another example which is a result of devolution is the transfer of housing. This again has undermined the rights of aboriginal peoples. Within most communities in the North who are not on reserve, Bands receive lands reserved for Indians which are to be tax-free. Under the present criteria for obtaining a house, one must attain a title to the lands. So, if one wants to put a house on lands reserved, it will lose its tax-free status, and eventually there will be no more lands reserved for Indians.

This contradicts the purpose of Indian land status. It cleans them off the slate and basically makes them equal to any other lands within the communities. That's a pretty neat trick, I think. Both governments

hide behind the transfer -- "It's your responsibility;" "It's your responsibility." But what it boils down to is that it reminds me of the government's past mentality and aspirations of assimilating aboriginal people within the European society and the ways they do things.

There are many other issues which are equal in importance to those I have discussed -- issues such as education and justice; social issues; political development; health; and alcohol and drug abuse.

I am presently working for a Dene organization in one of the smaller communities in Deh Cho. I have recently met with our Alcohol and Drug Program Co-ordinators. It is peanuts that they have to work with. In order for community development to take place, we have to work in all the areas together in a concentrated effort, I believe. But if we don't have the resources to do so, that makes it very difficult.

I think, if adequate resources were given so that we could begin to heal our people and begin to shape the future which we see, that would make our other efforts a lot easier.

As I mentioned earlier, I don't want to

underestimate the importance of work in these areas. What I wanted to do was to convey to you some of the fundamental problems that we are faced with in our struggle to re-establish ourselves as competent, caring and reasonable peoples.

Another reason I have not gotten into those other issues as comprehensively as I would have liked to is that I only kind of made up my mind to come and address the Commission, and I appreciate the opportunity of doing so. I am also in town on other business and didn't know whether or not I would make it, and only started working on something last night. I thought I would address some of the issues that I have had some experience in and know that there are major concerns.

I also think that in the discussion of self-government and land claims we can include all of these other issues. Any aspect which affects our life, I think, should be dealt with. It is ridiculous to separate items. We have our little Indian Act over here; we have our land claims policies here; we have our self-government over here. That's not the way the Dene people are. The Dene people have always maintained a strong relationship with

the land and the way they do things.

Again, I feel that that is another concentrated effort by a government to break up the way that we live our lives.

With that in mind, I would again like to thank the Commission for giving me this opportunity. I might have gone over some things that were discussed earlier. As I said, I have been in town on other business as well, so I haven't been able to attend the full meetings here today.

I wish you success in your future meetings and consultations, and I hope to look forward to the implementation of the concerns that aboriginal people across the country have expressed to you.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Newley. You have raised a good number of issues. I would invite you and all others to consider those issues. The Commission will be around again, not necessarily in Fort Simpson but in this general area of the world. Even if we are not around, you can be in touch with us.

What we will be looking for the next time

around is suggestions as to how those issues should be addressed. We are not very well equipped to consider concerns because we don't know the solutions very well either. But I know that you people are certainly thinking about those things, and we will certainly welcome anything that you can say to us with respect to how to address those concerns.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: We don't want anybody to feel left out. If you feel you would like to make a more lengthy presentation, you can write a brief and submit it and it will be recorded. As Mr. Blakeney said, we will be back in this area once again.

The next time around, of course, we will be looking for solution-oriented presentations. This time it was wide open. Once we complete this round, we will probably put together what we have heard in this first round and maybe do a paper that will be more focused for people to review and get your reaction on.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

Mr. René Lamothe, please. Welcome back

a second time.

RENE LAMOTHE: Thank you for listening to me a second time. I was kind of caught off guard by Gerry the first time around.

I would like to share just a few things with you with reference to solutions, I am hoping.

The first most obvious one would be an interim report from yourselves addressed to the Prime Minister tomorrow morning, that you could fax him, and tell him that the comprehensive claims policy is considered unconstitutional. It contravenes section 35 of the Constitution. There is no reason why that should continue to be implemented by this government.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Your submission is that not only is the comprehensive claims policy unsatisfactory, but that it is unconstitutional as a breach of section 35, as a breach of either treaty rights or aboriginal rights, or both.

RENE LAMOTHE: And both.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: And both, just in case "or both" doesn't carry it.

RENE LAMOTHE: The second solution, of

course, is that the comprehensive claims policy in Canada cease, that it stop, and that it be immediately replaced by models of self-government to be defined by the specific cultural groups according to their own traditions. There is no need for a claims process.

What there is need of is a recognition of aboriginal government. What there is a need of is a formula for transfer payments, of funds, to those aboriginal governments so that they have the resources with which to govern themselves.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I don't want to interrupt, but let's take the B.C. situation where we have overlapping comprehensive claims and somebody is going to have to sort out what the nature of those claims is. Furthermore, someone is going to have to define aboriginal self-government to see whether it is land-based or some other kind of based.

RENE LAMOTHE: That is for each aboriginal group to do for themselves, according to their own tradition.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: But the land is not a land that they exclusively occupy. There

are other people there. We have to figure out what law applies to the non-aboriginals in a particular area.

I don't mean to throw conundrums at you.

RENE LAMOTHE: That's a valid observation. When you sew chaos, you reap the hurricane, don't you? You are the people who sewed the chaos.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That is not the way the whites see it.

RENE LAMOTHE: No, of course not, but maybe it is time they looked at it that way.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That may be, but many of them weren't around either. Didn't you tell me you were a Québecois?

RENE LAMOTHE: It is a valid problem for individuals to deal with. But the reality is that, historically, this country has consistently denied the history of aboriginal people and their relationship with their own lands. This country has historically assumed ownership of lands that are not theirs. It is time there was a little honesty in this relationship to begin with.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That is not going to be acknowledged, not there. You are not going

to get the good people of, to use your example, Quebec City to acknowledge the fact that Quebec City does not belong to anybody of French origin. That is going to be a tough sell.

RENE LAMOTHE: Each aboriginal area is going to have to deal with their historical relationships themselves.

Let's set aside the concept of land temporarily and look at the concept of self-government. Take it away from the concept of land and who owns what. That's the first element.

The people know who they are. They have their own order in society. They have their own bosses, their own authority, Chief or whatever. Rather than a land claims situation -- and, mind you, I was talking about comprehensive land claims. The specific claim, such as a legal lot in Quebec City or whatever, is a separate issue again.

There is room for a lot of development immediately in this country. If there is honesty and sincerity on the part of the federal government, there is room for movement immediately into providing for

self-government for all those aboriginal peoples living in their own customary areas.

We know that the motive which obstructs that movement on the part of the federal government is the land and the resources. Greg articulated that very clearly. They want certainty of ownership. This is the imposition of a value system that is really foreign to a lot of aboriginal people. Europeans believe that they own the land, and we believe that the land owns us. So that becomes a real serious bone of contention.

I think, even in this day and age, the federal government does recognize that there is not going to be aboriginal self-government without a land base. There has to be a land base.

This process that somebody spoke about, in terms of the environment and the land and the relationship in terms of options -- land claims approach to solutions, self-government approach to solution, assimilation approach to solutions -- when you look at the track record of the federal government, it is still very, very much in the mode of assimilation, very much so. In 1973 Judge Berger came down and said,

"There is sufficient doubt to indicate that aboriginal title wasn't ceded here in the valley." In 1974 agents from Indian Affairs came into the communities and went down all the valley to the 19 Dene communities and they said to each community, "Here is a million dollars; settle your land claim issue. Here is a million dollars, and we will get on with being Canadians." That happened in 1974.

In all the communities individually, the Chief said, "We have a commitment among ourselves as Chiefs in the valley that we will settle this collectively. Meet with us in Fort Providence in the summer." So the Indian agents went to Fort Providence in the summer of 1974 to the meeting of the Dene Assembly and offered $49 million. Somebody burst out laughing, and the guy said, "What's wrong?" He said, "Individually, as Band Councils, you offered us $19 million. Now that we are as a collective, you offer us $49 million. What is it really worth to you?"

The process of the last 20 years of negotiations toward the AIP and the implementation of the policy on comprehensive claims brought in the final agreement of the Dene Nation as a whole to a position where

they ceded, released and surrendered those parts of the treaty that didn't relate to -- and so on. They were very general and vague. I read them very carefully.

I was working as facilitator for the Chiefs in the last six months. I indicated to them that, if they signed it, they would be ceding all their treaty rights except the right to education. It doesn't matter. In the Northwest Territories all the white people get the same education benefits as Treaty people anyway.

It is interesting to note that in the Gwich'in claim which was settled as a regional group, it is spelled out clearly that they have ceded, released and surrendered their rights to hunt, fish and trap anywhere in the Western Arctic, that they are indirectly agreeing to abide by the N.W.T. government Department of Renewable Resources game ordinances.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Chief Joe Ross would not, I think, accept that interpretation, but I won't quarrel with you.

RENE LAMOTHE: It's not an interpretation; it's a quote from their agreement.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Except on

Gwich'in lands and except on the lands they are sharing with the Old Crow people. But I don't want to argue the Gwich'in Agreement with you.

RENE LAMOTHE: I am using that as an example to show how this policy of assimilation is still in place, what the federal government is calling the normalization of relationship with Indian peoples. It would turn Band Councils into municipalities.

There is work going on actively right now from the territorial Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. They are paying people to conduct workshops in Band Councils to convince them to incorporate as municipalities under the N.W.T. Act. This is the continuation of the implementation of the 1969 white paper which has been pretty well fully implemented in the Northwest Territories in the Western Arctic.

I am suggesting to the Royal Commission that, from my understanding of the work I have done with the Dene Nation, with the Chiefs in the negotiation process, with the research work that I have done on my own, I don't expect that the Dene people in this generation or the next are going to accept to release their treaty

and aboriginal rights, not in this region. I am suggesting that the comprehensive claims process should stop and that the assimilation process should stop and that proper funding, according to the treaty, should be made available to the Band Councils to operate their own programs and services.

Just moving on a bit, some of the questions you have been bringing out over the day -- I have been analyzing the structure of the wording behind them. The impression I have been getting from them, whether you intend it or not, whether you are aware of it or not, I want you to be aware of the impact you are having on people. I have checked it out with other people, and some of them say, "Yes, I am getting that impression, too."

The impression I am getting is that you are structuring your questions to identify: How long has our assimilation process come along and how much longer do we have to go before these people will finally be like me?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That's an interesting observation. I will examine the transcript.

I doubt very much whether they can bear that interpretation.

RENE LAMOTHE: I am glad you are going to examine your transcript. I want to add that what you have to do, in examining your transcripts, is identify the values you apply to the terms you are using.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: True.

RENE LAMOTHE: We use the same words, but we apply different values to them. We have to be very careful about that reality. If you are not, you end up talking two different languages.

You saw the NFB production on dancing around the table at the Constitutional talks?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I don't think I did.

RENE LAMOTHE: Oh, you have to see it. It's beautiful. Congratulations.

You see a Chief, an Elder from B.C. He is trying to explain to Prime Minister Trudeau what aboriginal rights are. He said, "Let me put it to you like this. My rights are in my land. They're everything, lock, stock and barrel." That's what he said. "It has

to do with the relationship with the land and the Creator." Prime Minister Trudeau's response was, "It doesn't do us very much good to bring God into this. Which mountain are you talking about? Is it one or is it two?" That was Mr. Trudeau's response -- totally insensitive.

This is a fundamental aspect of what is going to have to come out of this Commission, that you can hear what people are really saying, not just the surface words according to your own value. It's a hard task; I know it's a hard task.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: And I say this to you; I wouldn't necessarily say it to others. Do you think we will get the same kind of production from them this time?

RENE LAMOTHE: No.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Do you think you will be listening, knowing what my mindset is? Will you also be trying to -- since we are bridging here. Each of us is coming into the middle of the bridge, I hope.

RENE LAMOTHE: I come to you with an advantage over you. I come to you from my own culture,

having for about 27 years experienced your education system.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Of course. I wouldn't say that to someone who had not --

RENE LAMOTHE: I come to you from an oral tradition which you haven't been able to access. I read very well, and I read a lot. I read the documentation that substantiates the philosophy and the belief system behind the actions of your governments, and they have been to assimilate.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: At least the federal governments.

RENE LAMOTHE: Well, yes. The provincial governments don't want to spend money there. That's a federal responsibility as far as they are concerned.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: There is a lot of aboriginal people who are not treaty.

RENE LAMOTHE: I think I have made my point about a solution. Why wait four years? Why is the territorial administration still receiving the resources for treaty dollars?

Greg Newley made reference to the tripartite committee. I was the person hired by the Dene Nation to work for them on that committee, to do the research into the financial documentation that was provided by the territorial government. One of the budget lines in there was $450,000 used by treaty Dene people as tax rebates on property. I asked them, "How did you arrive at that figure?" They said, "$450,000 is 16 per cent of the tax rebates paid to people, if they pay their taxes on time. The Dene constitute 16 per cent of the population of the Northwest Territories, so their share is $450,000." I said, "So all the children of the Dene own property and paid taxes on it and got a rebate?" They had to scratch the whole line.

In fact, out of $345 million, we knocked about $300 million off their lists by those kinds of observations. They wouldn't give us the real documentation.

The funds to meet treaty obligations are funnelled through the territorial administration, and the territorial administration puts them into general revenue, and they administer it to everyone equally as northerners.

I was working as Program Director for the Dene Nation in 1979. We wanted to get $50,000 to set up a small Department of Education to do an analysis of education delivery among the Dene people. The Minister agreed. He came to Yellowknife with a cheque. He was going to give us the cheque. Mr. Ron Witt who was the Indian Affairs agent in the territories at the time coughed and said, "Well, there are some reservations about a native political organization getting an education program in the territorial government." So the Minister put the cheque away.

James Ross was just out of high school. He had been visiting with me, and I said to him, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am doing research on the Dene language." I said, "Do you have access to information in the territorial government?" He was doing it for them. He said, "Yes." I asked him, "Could you get me a list of the post-secondary school students?" "I'll try," he said. So he got one and he brought it to me. There were 306 people being funded to post-secondary education institutions by the territorial government -- their tuition, their travel, their room and board, their books

were being paid for. Five of them were aboriginal people; 301 were non-aboriginal people.

Ron Witt's two children were on that list. I phoned Indian Affairs and I said, "We need the $50,000." "I'm sorry, you can't have it." I said, "Well, then, I'm going to make this list public, and your Regional Director's two children are on the list." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Money voted by Treasury Board to Indian Affairs to meet treaty obligations is being used to educate high-paid bureaucrats in the territorial administration, and your Regional Director has two children on that pay list."

Ron Witt came to us with the cheque two days later. "Look what I've got for you," he said. "Sure, you did," I said.

We have a lot of experiences like that. So, I know where you are coming from more than you know where I am coming from because I have been dealing for survival with people from your culture. This is not to say anything negative or to put you down. It is just the reality of our experience in survival.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I do not

accept the idea -- I have spent my life in politics fighting the federal government. To suggest that they represent my culture is going a shade far, but I won't pursue that further.

RENE LAMOTHE: Let me ask you one more question -- an experience I had in 1984 with Stanley Isaiah.

Do you believe the earth is alive?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Is which?

RENE LAMOTHE: Alive.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Are you asking me that?

RENE LAMOTHE: Do you believe the earth is a living being with its own consciousness?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I would say "no" to that in the sense that the earth -- obviously, plants are alive.

RENE LAMOTHE: I am talking about the planet.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I am an animal, vegetable, mineral person.

RENE LAMOTHE: Do you believe you are alive?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Of course, I believe I am alive.

RENE LAMOTHE: Do you have the courage to put your hand out?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Yes, I can put my hand out.

RENE LAMOTHE: Can you make something grow there?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: No.

RENE LAMOTHE: The earth does. Maybe she is more alive than we are.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: That's a way to argue it.

RENE LAMOTHE: I leave it with you. There are differences, and we have to think about what we say to each other. That one from Stanley made me think a lot, and I grew a lot from it. So I share it with you in the hope that in the future, when you come back, we can understand each other even a little better.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I don't want to play verbal games with you.

RENE LAMOTHE: Those are not verbal

games. I am very sincere about that.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I mean the idea of the earth being alive.

RENE LAMOTHE: I am very sincere about that.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: We can all say we are sincere; I am not denying that for a moment. To say whether the earth is alive or whether it is an organism in the sense that it is the home of things that do reproduce themselves -- as I say, I suggest that that is a selection of words.

RENE LAMOTHE: Have you chosen to disregard my words?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: I beg your pardon?

RENE LAMOTHE: Have you chosen to disregard my words?

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Of course not.

RENE LAMOTHE: Then, think on them.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Well, I will. And would you read the transcript with a little

care and charity and see whether it still bears the interpretation which you have given it?

RENE LAMOTHE: I will.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

RENE LAMOTHE: You send me a copy.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Okay. Does anybody want to get into this little free-for-all here?

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: No, I came to listen.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Yes? Okay. She came to listen, she said.

Finally, I think we are going to call on Betty Hardisty.

BETTY HARDISTY (Through an Interpreter): I would like to say to the Commissioners here today that all the Chiefs that were here and the one Elder who was also here gave us a message. All the people that are gathered here for a meeting, it seems like it was an election. I am thankful to see and I am also thankful to have worked with you. Again, what happened

here, I would like to be thankful for.

I don't know if you want a translation, but I just wanted to thank the Commissioners, Allan Blakeney and Viola Robinson and Mary and Gabe. I am really proud of you. You did a great job; I will hire you next time -- I am just joking, I don't have the money anyway. So I am really pleased.

I just wanted to do a handshake that we learned from the Elders when we did interview the Elders for the NWT Commission, I would say, that this Elder, Fred Martel, gave to me after we interviewed him on the treaty. He had been at two treaties, Treaty 8 in Fort Resolution in 1899, I believe, and the other one in Hay River in 1921. So, after we completed our oral interview, he proceeded to tell me the significance of a handshake. So I will shake your hands and then I will tell you the significance after.

--- (A Short Pause)

What he did say was that he was teaching me how you shook hands in the Dene tradition. He said that you did it in the sight of God, or "Nahetzi" (ph.), as the Dene like to refer to him as; he said that you firmly

shake the other person's hand and look at the person right in his eye and from the heart really thank him, and at the same time you are thanking God, the Creator. So this way, it was like a threefold blessing type of thing and a thanksgiving.

So I thought that was a real marvellous gem that he passed on to us, and we had shared it with the other Commissioners. And I thought it would be really neat to share that with you also.

In regards to my submission, I just really appreciate this opportunity.

What I wanted to note was that about two weeks prior to this I had the opportunity to sub for a Slave aboriginal teacher in Grades 3 and 5. I just wanted to submit their wall murals on their understanding of the treaty. So behind me, between the windows, are the Grade 3s. They did some pictures that we found from that First Treaty Conference that someone was referring to earlier. So we had them colour that, and then they drew their own picture of what the treaty would have been like here. Then, behind you is the Grade 5s wall mural of the treaty, and then there are some captions of their

understanding. I asked them what they thought treaty was and I was really surprised that they knew quite a bit. We proceeded to get down their ideas and also had Jimmy Hope, our translator, translate it for us.

So I just wanted to present that, you know, to take note. I guess I think they did a great job, and two weeks wasn't enough.

The other note that really came clear was the fact that we were teaching children; in Grade 3 there is a Tumbah Antoine, I think he is between seven and eight years old, and there was in Grade 5 Seche Antoine, I think he might be 10 or 11 years old. We proceeded to note, again with the grade, the picture that Stephen Rolland had shown us about the treaty party and their -- I think it was their great-great-grandfather, and they were the fifth generation. So the children were really interested to know that.

So I just thought that it would be a good note that the children that were here earlier today were like the fifth generation from the signing of the treaty, and I just wanted to share that.

The other gem that I wanted to share with

you is another Elder we met, his name was Johnny Klondike, in Fort Liard. They are saying that the Dene have a sense of humour. He was saying that -- well, his story was sad -- he went on his own way at eight or nine and kind of lived amongst the white community, earning his own living. But he felt out of that he learned a lot of lessons that he was able to survive this long. So he was saying that he was working in a trading store and then these people used to conglomerate there and share jokes and just proceed to have a good time and laugh, and he said he wouldn't laugh. So, finally, the store manager or his boss took him aside and said: "Johnny, why don't you laugh?" He said: "Well, I think it is a sin to laugh."

For me, that was significant, because, to me, he was sharing a gem that it is all right to laugh and have a good time and it isn't a sin. So humour gets Dene people going through all the grief-ridden stages and it gets you going.

The other thing that I would like to bring about the grief, the other thing that people brought up was the grief of the 1928 flu epidemic. I would really like to agree with Cindy; it was really a note well taken

that our people need to acknowledge all the people who had died, they had died and passed on, and we hadn't acknowledged it. As a result there is a lot of social problems, and our people do need healing.

In regard to -- I think she is quoting something like 298 or something. But, in the flu epidemic of 1928, there were a lot of people that died, and questioning the Elders, a lot of the people start relating their stories and I believe that they are beginning to heal, because the more you talk about it, you heal.

I always thought that you need to acknowledge and find the spot in this community where people were put in mass grave. It is another work for this community to heal.

It is a regional issue. This community has always been regional, so they have had a lot of people that conglomerated here. I think it was the first election of the treaty and it is after that, a lot of Elders and a lot of people had passed on. To this date I don't think they have been acknowledged, or even their grave site noted.

So, in closing, last but not least, in

the most integral part of the Dene essence I would call it is Nahetzi, because no matter how difficulty our people go through and how poverty-ridden and whatnot, you always say the Elders say "Nahetzi yauk audi" (ph.).

So, with that note, I would just like to leave. Thank you. "Nahetzi yauk audi" means "God is the boss", or "The Creator is the boss", whatever interpretation you want to use.

Merci.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: Thank you.

I would just like to say a word in closing and ask Viola to add a word, and then we will ask Betty to give us a closing prayer.

I think we have had a great day here in Fort Simpson. It has been a long day, but a great day, certainly for me and for the others of us who are here. It is a historic community. It is a youthful and just magnificent location at the junction of the MacKenzie and the Liard. I took some photographs yesterday, or last evening, and some more today, and I will certainly remember this community, a lively and vibrant community, clearly,

from all of the comments we have heard. We were favoured by having a presentations by the MP Ethel Blondin and the MLA Jim Antoine.

I can't possibly sum up the day, but if I were thinking of one or two highlights, it would be a strong message of concern about treaty and aboriginal rights and the fact that these were being ignored by the government in Ottawa, and to the extent that it is the agent of the government of Ottawa, the government of the NWT.

If I may add one other thing, I would think that a message, not uniformly agreed to, but widely agreed to, is that public government's denial of treaty and aboriginal rights, or shall I rephrase it, the public government as currently structured, and perhaps in any way, I don't know that -- would be a denial of treaty and aboriginal rights, and what was appropriate was for an aboriginally-based government which would be in a position to pursue solutions to the social, educational, environmental and other problems being encountered by people in Fort Simpson and the surrounding area.

I won't attempt any more summation, but

saying that it was, in the whole, in its concentration, a powerful presentation of the position on behalf of the people of the southern, southwest Northwest Territories, if I may.

Viola.

COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON: I do want to express my thanks for your presentations. I think you have made some excellent presentations here today.

It has been a good day. All I can tell you is that what has been recorded here today is being worked on, and we have researchers and staff.

I wanted to tell you earlier too that the staff that we have there -- I don't know how many we have now, I guess close to 100, but over 60 per cent is aboriginal. That was one of the aims when we started out; we wanted to get as many aboriginal staff as we could, because we knew they were in Canada. So we found them and we have a good percentage of aboriginal staff, and they are from all over, right across the country, from one end to the other, from, I would say, the First Nation community, from the Métis community, from the Inuit community. So we have got a good mixture, and things are

working really well there.

So I want to thank you. I have been involved and worked for the last 16, 17 years as a leader myself. I have heard about your concerns and I have read about your concerns, but things like that is never the same until you go to a community and you hear from the people yourself. So no matter how much we think we know, you are always learning.

So I would like to thank you for your presentations and your hospitality.

COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY: It now falls to me to thank all those who extended hospitality to us, to the presenters, to the translators, particularly to Elders Mary Cazon and Gabe Cazon, our Commissioners for the Day, and to all who made us feel so welcome here in Fort Simpson. Thank you all.

Now, I will ask Betty, to whom I extend my thanks as well, to lead us in a closing prayer.

--- (Closing Prayer)

--- Whereupon the hearing concluded at 7:55 p.m.