

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

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

JUNE 9, 1992

NAME	PAGE
Presentation by Mayor Tom Maccagno Mayor of Lac La Biche, Alberta	14
Presentation by Gerald Thom Vice-President, Métis Nation of Alberta	32
Presentation by Joe Blyan Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	53
Presentation by Cliff Gladue	76
Presentation by Florence Boucher	93
Presentation by Madeline Rizzoli Alberta Trappers Association	105
Presentation by Ken Pruden Lac La Biche Canadian Native Friendship Centre	112
Presentation by Ray Fox Lac La Biche Canadian Native Friendship Centre	116
Presentation by Jennifer Scott Lac La Biche Community Living Association of Disabled People	132
Presentation by Diane Ludwig Native Education Committee of Lac La Biche	146
Presentation by Elaine Boucher Native Education Committee of Lac La Biche	147
Presentation by Margaret Gladue	156
Presentation par Reed Gauthier L'association Canadienne-française (Plamondon)	167
Presentation by Ted Langford Alberta Vocational College, Lac La Biche	185

I N D E X

JUNE 9, 1992

NAME	PAGE
Presentation by Tom Erasmus Alberta Mental Health Association	199
Presentation by Margaret Klopenberg Assistant Co-ordinator, Child Identification Program, North Central Alberta Crisis Intervention Association	215
Presentation by Christine Hoffman Chairman, North Central Alberta Crisis Intervention Association	215
Presentation by Peter Ponich Lac La Biche School District No. 51	236
Presentation by Michelle Lang Lac La Biche Mission Historical Society	250
Presentation by Frances Ebersbach	267
Presentation by Bob Major	277
Presentation by Bertha Clark	286

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Lac La Biche, Alberta

2 **--- Upon Commencing on Tuesday, June 9, 1992**

3 **at 9:00 a.m.**

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Ladies
5 and gentlemen, may we come to order. We will commence
6 our proceedings this morning with an opening prayer offered
7 by Mr. Robert Boucher.

8 **--- Opening Prayer**

9 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Welcome.
10 I will start by introducing my fellow Commissioners.
11 On my right is Mr. Paul Chartrand, a Commissioner with
12 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I will say
13 a little bit more about Mr. Chartrand later.

14 On my left is Mr. Robert Boucher who is
15 our Commissioner for the day and who is assisting us in
16 dealing with the issues which are raised here in Lac La
17 Biche before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.
18 We are very happy to have you, Mr. Boucher.

19 **COMMISSIONER ROBERT BOUCHER:** Thank
20 you.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I will
22 introduce Mr. Boucher a second time as the community

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 representative in organizing these Commission Hearings
2 at Lac La Biche. We enlisted the aid of a person in the
3 community who would be able to assist us generally in
4 knowing the community and in guiding the presentations
5 and Mr. Robert Boucher has performed that task very well
6 for us.

7 I will introduce members of the staff
8 of the Royal Commission. In addition to Mr. Boucher, Mr.
9 George Quintal acted as a community representative. He
10 will be known to some of you and he is the gentleman back
11 at the table.

12 I will introduce some of our Royal
13 Commissioner staff, the team leader, Mr. Bernie Wood is
14 back at the table on my left along the wall. He is our
15 team leader. Our assistant team leader is Laurie Fenner.
16 She is also back at the table on my left.

17 We have Mr. Dan Gaspé who is
18 Communications Director. He was sitting there a moment
19 ago, but he must be attending to his duties. He has long
20 blonde hair.

21 We have with us Anita Gordon-Murdoch who
22 is a Research Director on Treaty Issues. Anita is -- also

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I do not see her at this moment, but she was here. I was
2 talking with her a moment ago.

3 We also have Karen Collins, a policy
4 analyst.

5 You will see us with translation
6 equipment. People should feel free to make presentations
7 in English, French or Cree and we are able to have it
8 translated into the other language. You may get one of
9 these pieces of equipment, put these earpieces on and with
10 this small dial and if you dial one you get English, I
11 believe, if you dial two you get French, I believe, and
12 if you dial three you get Cree, I believe. I think all
13 of you will be sufficiently gifted in language to know
14 the difference between English, French and Cree when you
15 hear it.

16 We have a film camera, a video-camera
17 on my right and this video taping is being done by C.J.
18 Consulting, with the equipment provided by the Alberta
19 Vocational College here in Lac La Biche and organized by
20 the Aboriginal Communications Society.

21 With those bits of hardware I will now
22 take a little time to tell you something about the Royal

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. You may recall that
2 the Prime Minister a couple of years ago, just about two
3 years ago now, indicated that he would be appointing a
4 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, two years ago in
5 June of 1990. This was proceeded with in 1991. The Prime
6 Minister decided to select some person who would be widely
7 respected in Canada to lay out some terms and conditions,
8 a mandate for the Royal Commission and to recommend some
9 people who would serve no the Royal Commission. He chose
10 the Right Honourable Brian Dickson, who had just retired
11 as Chief Justice of Canada at that time and a person widely
12 respected in all communities of Canada.

13 Chief Justice Dickson set out some terms
14 of reference which are very broad indeed and recommended
15 seven names to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister
16 and the Cabinet accepted the recommendation, both as to
17 the mandate and as to the makeup of the Royal Commission.
18

19 There have been lots of Royal
20 Commissions on lots of issues and this in a sense is another
21 one. This one is a little different than some previous
22 ones, in the sense that of its seven members four are

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 aboriginal people. The members of the Commission are
2 Georges Erasmus, he is one of the co-Chairs. His name
3 will be known to you as the immediate past National Chief
4 of the Assembly of First Nations. He is from the Northwest
5 Territories. He is a Dene.

6 The other co-Chair is René Dussault and
7 he is from Quebec and he is a judge of the Quebec Court
8 of Appeal.

9 Other members include Viola Robinson.
10 She is from Nova Scotia. She is a Micmac Indian and the
11 immediate Past President of the Native Council of Canada.

12

13 A further member is Bertha Wilson.
14 Bertha is from Ontario, born in Scotland and took her legal
15 education in Nova Scotia, but has practised widely in
16 Ontario and was the first woman to be appointed to the
17 Supreme Court of Canada and is recently retired and joined
18 this Commission.

19 Another member is Mary Sillett. Mary
20 is an Inuit woman, an Inuk, one of the Inuit people from
21 northern Labrador. She is a younger woman, probably in
22 her thirties. She has been the President of the Inuit

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Women's Organization and a Vice-President of the Inuit
2 Tapirisat of Canada, the main Inuit organization.

3 A further member, a sixth one, is Paul
4 Chartrand who I introduced earlier. He is a Métis, born
5 in Manitoba, lives in Winnipeg, a professor at the
6 University of Manitoba, formerly head of the Department
7 of Native Studies at that university, a graduate in law
8 from a university in Australia and has a Master's of Law
9 from the University of Saskatchewan.

10 I am the seventh member. I was born in
11 Nova Scotia, but lived most of my life in Saskatchewan,
12 where I was in the legislature for 28 years and served
13 as Premier for 11 years. That's the Royal
14 Commission.

15 Our terms of reference are very broad
16 and very long. I won't try to read them all, but I will
17 take a little time to outline the general areas that they
18 cover.

19 We were asked to look at the history of
20 relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples
21 in Canada. We are to consider aboriginal self-government,
22 what it means, how it could be implemented. We are to

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 look at a land base, land claims and the meaning and legal
2 status of treaties. We are to look at the Constitution,
3 what it means when it talks about responsibility for
4 Indians and lands reserved for Indians. We are
5 particularly to look at the position of Métis people under
6 the Constitution. We are to look at the special problems
7 of people who live in the north. We are to look at the
8 Indian Act, how it has worked, whether it should survive
9 and, if so, in what form.

10 In more general terms, we are to look
11 at social issues, things that might improve the life of
12 aboriginal peoples on reserves, in the cities or wherever.

13 Economic issues. How to get a viable
14 economic base for many aboriginal communities.

15 Cultural issues. How to support and
16 encourage aboriginal languages.

17 Family structures, spirituality,
18 educational issues, particularly ways to help aboriginal
19 young people complete secondary and post-secondary
20 education and who should control these institutions.

21 Justice issues. Particularly ways in
22 which the whole criminal justice system doesn't seem to

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 work for aboriginal people.

2 Finally, we are to look at the special
3 role of aboriginal elders, aboriginal women and aboriginal
4 youth.

5 As you can see from what I've said that's
6 an impossible mandate, but we will select from it and see
7 what sensible recommendations we can make.

8 We are staffing up our Commission, have
9 staffed it up now since we have been in business now for
10 ten months. Most of our staff is aboriginal. This is
11 not primarily to provide jobs for aboriginal people, but
12 rather to see that the information we get, some of it at
13 least is seen through aboriginal eyes.

14 It is very easy to get the non-aboriginal
15 point of view in our society. You can hear it on the radio,
16 see it on the television or read it in any newspaper.
17 It is the world as seen from a non-aboriginal perspective.

18 We have to see whether we can get at least part of that
19 world interpreted to us through the eyes of aboriginal
20 people.

21 How do we go about this? After staffing
22 up, we went around last winter and visited in the provincial

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 capitals and saw whether we could get the provincial
2 governments onboard and see if we could pry out of their
3 files the information they had. There's no use
4 re-inventing the wheel and talked to the major aboriginal
5 organizations.

6 We then began to set up our research in
7 earnest and good researchers are hard to get. They always
8 take three or four months to depart from what they are
9 now doing or were doing, but we have now got ourselves
10 a pretty good research team.

11 We decided that in this series of
12 Hearings, which commenced in April and will end the end
13 of June, that we will go to many aboriginal communities,
14 split up into teams and go to 30 or 40 aboriginal
15 communities and see if we can get a reading on what
16 aboriginal people are saying are the problems and the
17 issues. That's why we are here in Lac La Biche. I have
18 been in Inuvik, Fort McPherson, Fort Simpson, Watson Lake,
19 Teslin and The Pas. Other of my colleagues have been up
20 and down the Labrador coast and in the eastern Arctic,
21 in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and still others have been
22 in British Columbia as the case may be. We are getting

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 a reading.

2 We started in Winnipeg more than two
3 months ago with a full Commission hearing the broadest
4 urban issues. We are now hearing from communities in every
5 part of Canada and we're listening. I want to emphasize
6 that our role here today is to listen.

7 We may argue a bit with the presenters
8 to see whether we can clarify their views, but we are not
9 trying to change anybody's opinion here now.

10 Over the summer and in September we will
11 consider what we have heard and see whether we can focus
12 up some questions. Out of all of this that we hear, what
13 issues have emerged? In the fall we will be at it again
14 in October, November and early December, seeing whether
15 we can get people to tell us not only what the problems
16 are, but what they think the solutions are because we are
17 anxious to get opinions from people as to what they think
18 the solutions are. Then in due course we will try to boil
19 all of this down into some sensible recommendations.

20 That's why we are here in Lac La Biche.

21 That's why we are here to listen to whomever wishes to
22 make a presentation to us. We'd like it if you could raise

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 a problem and what the solution is, but if you feel that
2 all you wish to do today is to raise the problem, that's
3 all right with us. We welcome views from anyone who feels
4 they can help us with the mandate which I outlined to you.

5

6 That's all I am going to say before
7 calling upon in a sense our hosts for some welcoming
8 remarks. I am going to ask my colleague Mr. Paul Chartrand
9 what he wishes to add.

10 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
11 you, Mr. Blakeney. I am the "other" Commissioner. Mr.
12 Blakeney is a well-known Canadian and particularly well
13 known in Saskatchewan, but in Alberta and these other parts
14 as well. We have been on the road for some time now and
15 I recall when we were in Nova Scotia even people were asking
16 about him there.

17 I am glad to be here. We arrived last
18 night and did have the chance to take a walk down to the
19 edge of Lac La Biche which is a beautiful place. The
20 weather is even co-operating. There are all sorts of
21 interesting things that happen on the road in Hearings
22 of this sort, one of them that I've noticed is that the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 bad weather has been following my party around anyway.

2 As Mr. Blakeney has indicated already,
3 we have split up into two and three groups and we do not
4 always travel with the same Commission members in a
5 particular group, that is we do some shifting around, but
6 I think the bad weather has managed to follow mine. I
7 was calling people at home in Winnipeg from Cape Breton
8 and they were telling me it was 27 degrees celsius; it
9 was snowing where I was. About two weeks later I was in
10 northern Manitoba and calling home. It's 30 degrees
11 celsius; it was snowing where I was. Yesterday I was
12 encouraged. There's a little cloud there this morning,
13 but I am delighted to see that the skies are nice and blue
14 here and perhaps northern Alberta is going to be the first
15 series of several days of nice spring-like weather. I
16 am looking forward to that.

17 While I was walking about town a bit,
18 I had occasion to walk by here, we were looking for the
19 hall. I also noticed some baseball parks on the premises
20 which interested me a lot of course. One of the things
21 I have done over the years is play the game of baseball,
22 including I remember quite a number of years ago, in the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 1970s, playing for the Calgary Giants. I think on one
2 occasion we even played in a little town in northern
3 Alberta. I don't remember the name now, but I travelled
4 to one of these parts. I don't remember many more details
5 than that.

6 Now that I'm a broken down old has been,
7 I only look at baseball parks, but my ears are still working
8 and that is what is going to be put to use here. As
9 Commissioner Blakeney has already indicated, we are here
10 to listen and I do not want to keep you. We are her to
11 listen to your opinions. Our task is to make policy
12 recommendations to the federal government. In order to
13 do that we want to hear from you. We want to hear from
14 aboriginal people. We want to hear what the issues are.
15 We want to hear from non-aboriginal peoples. We want
16 their views on all matters having to do with the relations
17 between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples in the
18 country, so that you will assist us in making good, sound,
19 workable recommendations to the federal government at the
20 end of our mandate.

21 Thank you very much for hosting us here.

22 I look forward to the Hearings.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
2 very much. I will add to Paul's comment about what a
3 delightful part of the world this is. I came up yesterday,
4 drove up from Saskatoon and got along the Yellowhead and
5 headed north. As I came north into this parkland country
6 and this rolling country, this mixed cattle and grain
7 country I thought again just how delightful this parkland
8 area of the prairies is.

9 I noted when I am in the Meadow Lake area
10 of northern Saskatchewan, a lot of country something like
11 this and it is just delightful. You people are very lucky
12 to live in a place where you've got a few lakes and trees.
13 I spent my life in Regina and we are a little short of
14 both lakes and trees.

15 I call upon one of the fortunate, Mayor
16 Tom Maccagno, the Mayor of Lac La Biche for some welcoming
17 remarks.

18 **MAYOR TOM MACCAGNO, MAYOR OF LAC LA**
19 **BICHE, ALBERTA:** Thank you, Mr. Commissioner. Mr.
20 Chartrand, Mr. Boucher, elders, ladies and gentlemen.

21 It is really an honour and a pleasure
22 for me to appear before you to speak a few words. In the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 short time I have and I realize there are time constraints
2 and there are others far more capable than I to identify
3 issues and concerns for you than I may, I would like to,
4 if I may, give you a thumbnail sketch on the history of
5 Lac La Biche. I think far too often when we try and deal
6 with problems, unless we, you might say, tap ourselves
7 into the roots of the past, it's almost impossible to solve
8 the problems of today because unless you know where you
9 are coming from, it's awfully hard to figure out where
10 you are going.

11 As far as Lac La Biche is concerned, I
12 can say -- I should start it this way and it will put it
13 into context. Welcome to Lac La Biche. Bienvenue à Lac
14 La Biche. "Tantsi". We are a trilingual community. We
15 are a multi-cultural community and that is very important
16 to keep in mind.

17 We are also one of the oldest settlements
18 in Alberta. In European terms, Lac La Biche was discovered
19 by the famous fur trader and explorer David Thompson of
20 the North West Company in 1798. He was followed a year
21 later by Peter Fiddler of the Hudson's Bay Company and,
22 as you well know, Mr. Commissioners, this was during the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 era of the fierce competition between the North West
2 Company and the Bay. It was a race, which eventually took
3 him to the Pacific coast and it must be borne in mind that
4 Lac La Biche and in particular Portage La Biche was a
5 crucial link in the first practical trans-Canada
6 transportation route.

7 The reason for this was that Portage La
8 Biche was the carry between the waters of the Beaver River
9 which forms part of the Churchill Basin, which empties
10 into Hudson Bay and Lac La Biche which is part of the
11 Athabasca/Mackenzie Basin which flows into the Arctic
12 Ocean.

13 Not only that, but when Thompson made
14 this discovery, or at least it is attributed to him, of
15 Portage La Biche, what he did is he found the gateway to
16 the fur rich southern Athabasca country. We are part of
17 the southern Athabasca country here.

18 What he ultimately did when he made this
19 important discovery, when he discovered this crucial link
20 between the two basins over a continental divide, Thompson
21 then went to you might say the headwaters of Athabasca
22 River near modern-day Jasper and then went over the great

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 divide by way of the Athabasca Pass which he discovered
2 in 1811 and from there he went down the Columbia River
3 from its source, you might say, to modern-day Astoria,
4 Oregon.

5 What he did is he perfected a
6 transportation route which took him from Montreal through
7 here via Portage La Biche right to the Pacific coast.
8 That was in active use for a period of 14 years, from 1811
9 to 1825. We can proudly say we were once the crossroads
10 of western Canada.

11 The missionaries later gave us the title
12 "l'entrepot du nord", which means warehouse of the north.
13 I think these are things that are important, not only
14 because of history, but also the symbolism that they
15 provide to us which we have yet to fully use.

16 There is something else I must tell you.
17 When Thompson came here he, you might say, discovered
18 the extreme limits of Rupert's Land because the old
19 Hudson's Bay domain of course was everything that drained
20 into Hudson Bay. So, when he crossed it for the North
21 West Company he knew he was outside of the domain of the
22 Hudson's Bay.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 But that triggered something else.
2 When Fiddler came in the following year, it was the first
3 Hudson's Bay post which was built outside of Rupert's Land.
4 All exciting stuff I think in terms of Canadian history,
5 but almost forgotten. All relegated to oblivion it would
6 appear.

7 But there's another factor that I think
8 we have to look at in all of this. Not only places and
9 sights and locations, but the peoples. May I bring
10 to your attention that among Thompson's voyageurs when
11 he first came here in 1798, his guide was named
12 Jean-Baptiste Ladareau. Some of his voyageurs were named
13 Lavallee, Nolan, Arsenault, Drouin. A short time later
14 he had other voyageurs who were then at Fort George, that's
15 modern day Elk Point, with the names of Cardinal, Ladoceur,
16 Desjalais.

17 When Fiddler came the subsequent year,
18 he was accompanied by men named Pruden, Inkster, Isbister
19 and what I can tell you is that you will find many of these
20 names today. They are the proud names of many of our Métis
21 families in this region. I think they clearly indicate
22 the stability of our Métis community in the Lac La Biche

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 region, almost 200 years old.

2 We speak of this stable community, but
3 again always, always we measure time in our terms, the
4 European calendar. But how old is Lac La Biche? I would
5 suggest to you no one really knows, but the archaeological
6 record tell us that Lac La Biche has been continuously
7 occupied by the aboriginal peoples for the past 10,000
8 years. I have evidence of this. This one here is the
9 oldest we have found yet. The tip is broken, but it doesn't
10 matter.

11 I have another piece here which is the
12 flintstone from a gun. Again, I have this part of a clay
13 pipe and you will notice it's embossed "Montreal". So,
14 I can still report in our deliberations that we have to
15 bear in mind that these early peoples were here not
16 hundreds, but millennia before we were. I think that has
17 to be kept in mind.

18 Indeed, the local legend as to how Lac
19 La Biche got its name is as follows and this all, of course,
20 would have happened long before the arrival of the white
21 man. I was related this story by an elder, that apparently
22 three native hunters approached the shores of Lac La Biche

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 in the fall from the southeast, near what we call "the
2 causeway". That's another story. They saw a herd of elk
3 watering and also noticed that in the sandbar or on the
4 sandbar there where whitefish, spawning whitefish, just
5 teeming with fish. They thought it would be a good place
6 to camp. They bestowed the named "Lowaskasusakahagan"
7 (ph) on the lake, which means "Lake of the Elk", which
8 originally appeared in some of the early historical maps
9 as Red Deer's Lake. In fact, it first appeared on Turner's
10 map of 1792, that's before Thompson came, so they knew
11 of Lac La Biche before they got here. Then it evolved
12 to where it is today, Lac La Biche, Lake of the Elk. It
13 all means the same.

14 There is something else that I think is
15 important. About 40 to 50 years after the first fur
16 traders came, the missionaries arrived in our region here.
17 The first one to my knowledge was Oblate missionary
18 Jean-Baptiste Thibeault. He was followed shortly
19 thereafter by the famous Methodist missionary Henry Birch
20 Steiner, an Ojibway Indian.

21 It's important to bear in mind that these
22 men came at the invitation of the Métis here. The

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 literature supports that.

2 I would like to comment briefly. I have
3 here an old publication, 1844. Even the title tells you
4 something. It says here, Mr. Commissioners, "Rapport sur
5 le mission du Diocese du Québec". Believe it or not, we
6 were once part of the Diocese of Quebec. You know, we
7 forget these things.

8 In here Father Thibeault tells us, and
9 I quote:

10 "Un vieux Canadien, âgé de 88 ans, appeleé Joseph Cardinal,
11 natif de St. Laurent, près de Montréal,
12 vint me prier de me rendre jusqu'au Lac
13 La Biche.

14 Imagine, this 88-year old voyageur named
15 Joseph Cardinal asked Father Thibeault to accompany him
16 to Lac La Biche from Cold Lake. Not bad. It goes on to
17 tell you what he found when he came here.

18 I have to move on here. In 1852 when
19 the famous missionary Father Lacombe came here, he tells
20 us that when he arrived there were a number of Métis
21 families camped on the shores of Lac La Biche, a number
22 of Métis and Cree families. He says here that he was not

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 yet versed in the Cree language, so he asked if thee was
2 anyone among the group who could translate his words.
3 He tell us here that an elderly bearded fellow stood up
4 and responded in French:

5 "Mon père, je suis bien capable. Je suis Canadien."

6 In 1852 he says that. This is the famous
7 Alexi Cardinal whom Father Lacombe bestowed the title "Mon
8 fidèle Alexis", "my faithful Alexi".

9 Members of the Commission, if I can leave
10 one message with you, simply this, are not some of the
11 events that I have related to you, are some of the
12 personages not the stuff of which national unity is made
13 of?

14 I can only speak for myself, but these
15 endless constitutional exercises, these figure eights,
16 from left to right and right to left, are we not blinding
17 ourselves with words in this endless debate, when we
18 should, I would submit, be submitting far more attention
19 to our national unity symbols, which I am confident would
20 help link us together because we need our symbols too.

21 It really troubles me when we have, for
22 example, the Lac La Biche Mission, a national historic

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 site and a provincial historic resort, which has recently
2 been described as a national treasure and yet there is
3 no funding. It's rather hollow words to say national
4 treasure. We have Portage La Biche, this crucial
5 link and yet not that long ago the Historic Sites and
6 Monuments Board of Canada said no, it's not worthy of
7 national designation. We have appealed that decision.
8 That's for another forum, that goes to the Minister, but
9 that's hard to accept when the same board designated the
10 Frog Portage in Saskatchewan and La Loche, which are also
11 important carries, but they leave out our symbol here in
12 modern-day Alberta. What purpose does that serve?

13 Oh yes, we discuss the letter of the
14 Constitution and the court is better trying to define the
15 spirit and intent of the Constitution, but I still would
16 submit that until we as a nation recognize that places
17 and the people who are involved and remembered in
18 connection with historic sites, national historic sites
19 such as Portage La Biche and the Lac La Biche Mission,
20 our part of our national patrimony, they clearly are, and
21 that makes them, I would submit, the responsibility of
22 both senior levels of the government, not volunteer

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 organizations and not local governments. We can assist.
2 We have a role to play. The responsibility is the senior
3 levels of government.

4 When I feel so strongly about this, I
5 am going to submit that the two-bit, approach and that's
6 all I can call it, of both senior levels of government
7 to historic preservation in our region is very, very steep.
8 It is the potential loss of our history. It is a loss
9 or the risk of losing part of our collective memory. You
10 can almost compare it to Alzheimer's disease because we
11 all know that with the loss of memory you invariably suffer
12 a loss of dignity. That's what we risk losing here. It's
13 all in the context of not 200 years, but 10,000 years.

14 What does our niggardly approach to
15 historic preservation do? We have this bizarre policy,
16 and that's the only label I can give it, where when we
17 do develop a site, whether it is in Saskatchewan or Alberta
18 or B.C., think about it, it's developed as a stand-alone
19 attraction. Batoche stands by itself. Lac La Biche
20 Mission stands by itself. Fort Langley stands by itself.
21 St. Boniface stands by itself and so on and so forth.
22 How absurd.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 In the past they were all linked. They
2 were all part of a network and I think that is what we
3 have to work on. We have to develop these linkages because
4 there would not have been a Lac La Biche Mission without
5 a Portage La Biche and, by the same token, when the first
6 road was constructed from the mission to Fort Pitt, just
7 over the Alberta/Saskatchewan border, that gave us a link
8 with the Carlton Trail, with the Winnipeg Trail and that
9 was part of the development of western Canada, but the
10 story is not told in those terms. So, it's a flawed story.

11 It's a flat story. It's a distorted story and I think
12 we really have to work on developing these linkages, which
13 will take us right to Montreal as indicated here.

14 A brief word I would like to share with
15 you on the aboriginal language policy. I have come to
16 learn that the elders are the keepers of the traditions
17 of the aboriginal peoples, not only in our region, but
18 I know everywhere. Yet, if today's generation loses their
19 native language, then not only the aboriginal peoples,
20 we as Canadians lose a body of collective wisdom and
21 knowledge beyond measure every time an elder passes away.

22 It's not the best comparison, but an elder in many respects

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I think can be fairly said to be a priceless volume in
2 this incredible encyclopedia of wisdom and knowledge and
3 we're going to lose it.

4 I see that here in Lac La Biche. It was
5 personally brought home to me some years ago when an elder
6 took me on a walk to show me a huge glacial uratic which
7 was in the shape of a reclining buffalo, not far from here.

8 I asked him about this and he said there was a legend
9 surround it. I said to please tell me the legend. He
10 gave me a very pained look and I'll never forget that.
11 It was obvious he wasn't going to tell me and at first
12 I was sort of hurt. Then it finally sunk in, the reason
13 he could not tell me is I didn't understand Cree and he
14 wanted to be faithful t the legend. He wanted to be able
15 to relate it to me accurately, precisely as it had been
16 related to him.

17 Unfortunately, he passed away a short
18 time after. Whether or not there is someone else who knows
19 the legend of this buffalo I don't know. All I am trying
20 to point out is that for me the lesson came home that the
21 way we are proceeding we risk the loss, an irrecoverable
22 loss of our history, of our culture, of our memory.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Over 3,000 years ago the Greek
2 philosopher Lisergus said, a nation that does not honour
3 its past has no future. I think we could do a lot more
4 in terms of honouring our past, our rich diverse past.

5 We are starting in our own little way
6 here in Lac La Biche. I am so proud to let you know that
7 this year will be the 30th anniversary of our Lac La Biche
8 Fish Derby and Pow-Wow. This year is a first in that the
9 Beaver Lake First Nation and the municipality have come
10 together to also sponsor a competition pow-wow. We are
11 informed by Chief Al Layman of Beaver Lake First Nation
12 that this is a first in Canada where a First Nation and
13 a municipality have gotten together. I say let's build
14 on that sort of thing. In conclusion, Mr.

15 Commissioners, let us honour our past, our true past, not
16 just one segment of it. Let us build on the historic and
17 cultural links that we may better know and better see each
18 other. Let us also be faithful in our role and
19 responsibility of being the keepers of the wisdom and the
20 knowledge of the older generations. I think we can be
21 of some help here to the aboriginal community.

22 Let us also be the caretakers of the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 beauty of our surroundings. You have alluded to the lake.
2 Without the lake we are nothing.

3 Let us also be faithful to the richness
4 and diversity of our cultural heritage. We owe it to
5 future generations. Thank you.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
7 you, Mr. Mayor, for that thoughtful and perceptive
8 presentation. You struck many responsive chords with me.

9 I have thought many of the same things as you do when
10 I drive across the United States and find every place where
11 Lewis and Clark put down their foot honoured and I can
12 follow their trail, but David Thompson I know has got a
13 river out there and it's part of the Fraser and I know
14 that he came from Montreal, but how he got there to the
15 Thompson River I'm not quite sure.

16 There are many other explorers and many
17 other people who made this land what it is who have not
18 been honoured institutionally as part of our nation. We
19 are only now beginning to link that history after contact
20 with the pre-history, that's the pre-written history of
21 aboriginal people.

22 I was on Sunday out at Wanascawan Park

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 in Saskatoon where they have archaeological digs because
2 that area has been occupied for 6,000 years by aboriginal
3 people and the record of their settlement is there for
4 6,000 years. We are not the product of 200 years or 250
5 years or 500.

6 Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

7 **MAYOR TOM MACCAGNO:** If I may, I would
8 like to leave with the Commission a copy of this publication
9 "Lac La Biche and the Early Fur Traders", which will give
10 you more information if you wish to pursue this. Thank
11 you very much.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** My fellow
13 Commissioners may wish to have a word with you as well.

14 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I would
15 like to make a few remarks to you, if you don't mind.
16 Mr. Maccagno, I too am anxious to take a very brief time
17 to thank you personally for your presentation here this
18 morning. I too am particularly impressed by your thoughts
19 on history, on Canadian history and on local history.
20 It's an area that has intrigued me, interested me and taken
21 up a fair bit of my time over the years, particularly the
22 last few years.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 When I delve into Canadian history,
2 western Canadian history, particularly Manitoba history,
3 often I find myself delving into my own history. When
4 you were talking about the traders, I remembered another
5 of the old traders in the 18th century, Peter Pengman,
6 whose son Bustoné Pengman was reputed to be one of the
7 four Métis chiefs in the early 19th century, along with
8 Cuthbert, Grant and the others. I happen to be a direct
9 descent of that family, among other Métis families and
10 I have a keen appreciation for the sense of history that
11 you brought to us here in your thoughts on the permanence
12 of the Métis people in this area.

13 Incidentally, I am told by the
14 publications that there is a mountain in the Rockies named
15 after Peter Pengman and I am resolved one day to try to
16 find it. I haven't done that yet.

17 I think it is an important issue that
18 you have brought to us, the point about history and the
19 lack of a history. I am equally impressed by your remarks.

20 It seems that very widely in different parts of the world,
21 one of the characteristics of a people who are subjugated
22 by another is the end result that they end up characterized

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 as a people without a history and you've pointed out the
2 consequences of that, the loss of identity and the
3 consequent loss of dignity. We are going to be indeed
4 quite anxious to assist in what way we can in crafting
5 our policies to do that.

6 I am particularly intrigued with the
7 principle that you urge us, I believe, if I understand
8 it, that in assessing the forward movement in the relations
9 between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples, you are
10 urging us I think that the adoption of a common historical
11 legacy can assist in merging the dreams for the future
12 of the aboriginal and the non-aboriginal people. It
13 certainly occurs to me that that is an important principle
14 that can inspire the Commission and its work and I thank
15 you very much for it.

16 **MAYOR TOM MACCAGNO:** Thank you very
17 much.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
19 you.

20 I would invite Gerald Thom,
21 Vice-President of the Métis Nation of Alberta to make a
22 presentation.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **GERALD THOM, VICE-PRESIDENT, MÉTIS**

2 **NATION OF ALBERTA:** Good morning, Commissioner Blakeney.

3 Good morning, Commissioner Chartrand, Senator Boucher
4 and all the presenters here today.

5 (Translation) I would like to welcome
6 you to Lac La Biche. Many times it has been talked about
7 how many times the Métis has helped out in the past in
8 the discovery of this land and the establishment of this
9 town. Many of our forefathers have suffered while they
10 were helping the white man to open up this western Canada.

11 Today that makes me very proud to relate
12 that to you today. I guess that has happened in the past,
13 but today things are a little bit different for the Métis,
14 who are starting to lose many things, our language. That
15 is just one of the things. (End of Translation)

16 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I wonder
17 if I might interrupt you for just a moment to say something
18 I should have said earlier.

19 These sets are available to anyone who
20 wishes to have them and they are back at the back right-hand
21 corner. Please feel free to get yourself a set, since
22 you probably will not wish to miss any of the presentations

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 which may be in a language with which you are not fully
2 familiar.

3 I am sorry to have interrupted you, Mr.
4 Thom. Please continue.

5 **GERALD THOM:** (Translation) Many
6 things that are talked about, the Métis are included in
7 the history. Canada, as I see it, the word Canada is a
8 part of our Cree language. Canada, as it is called, the
9 Indian people they named this country. Canada means to
10 us in the Cree language, Canada as I understand it is a
11 clean country, a clean country not just for the white,
12 but for the Indian and the Métis as well.

13 I am very happy today to be sitting here
14 with all of you. I too have travelled much and I still
15 do for the purposes of the Constitution. I am happy that
16 the Métis have been allowed this forum to talk about things
17 that are important to them. With the Constitution of 1982
18 to 1987, we were never really involved in that one. There
19 was no seat for us. We were not important. We were not
20 asked how we looked upon things. That is why now that
21 the Constitution is being talked about again we are, the
22 Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis National Council

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 are getting involved.

2 We have told the Prime Minister, the
3 Queen's representative, we too want a voice on how the
4 Métis is being governed and we also want to be involved
5 in Canada.

6 Our brothers, the Indian people, 1982
7 to 1987, they were given a seat to talk about the
8 Constitution and the special powers that they were given
9 were veto powers he calls it.

10 Prime Minister Mulroney and Minister Joe
11 Clark, now they have given us a seat to sit with them in
12 these constitutional issues about self-government and we
13 have also asked for a parallel process, so that some of
14 the things that are of concern to us we could talk about.

15 In the past that hasn't always happened.
16 Every time we wanted to talk about something when we got
17 something going, when we had something written, but how
18 we wanted things to happen for us. That has not always
19 happened, but things are changing.

20 I thank you for being here with us today,
21 Mayor Maccagno, the Mayor of Lac La Biche. I have sat
22 with him on the Mission Historical Society Board and I

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 have learned a lot from that on the role of the Métis and
2 the history of this land from 1700 until today. Things
3 are very different though, that in the past our
4 forefathers, many generations of them, many of those that
5 were named here, they helped in the opening up of this
6 country, not just for us the Métis, but also for the white
7 people, the white person.

8 Many times we helped each other to open
9 us this country and to bring also our religion to this
10 part of the country, to the Métis, to the Dene and to the
11 Indian people, to many of our people, that I know.

12 Things are a little bit different today.
13 Today our land works a little different in this Canada.
14 It was the Indian people that named this country "the
15 clean country", but for the people to get along with the
16 different races of people, to get along in this country.
17 Today the Métis Nation will not put forward a letter.

18 In the past I have seen, as a young boy
19 this Lac La Biche because I was born in this town. This
20 town and around for a 50-mile radius, I will say around
21 1960 we have been really suppressed as a people, the Métis
22 from this region. There was too much. We lost our land,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 not just our land, but all of Lac La Biche, this was all
2 Métis owned, river lots is what they were called, the lands.

3 I am sorry I didn't bring that information forward to
4 you today, the map identifying all of this from the 1800s,
5 the different acreages that the Métis owned from 1847.

6 I have some information where it is
7 written about this town and then almost in 1900, I should
8 say, I have another map where I see the Métis' land was
9 stolen from them within this town. Then, not from the
10 First World War -- yes, from the First World War then the
11 federal government they set up a system, the taxation
12 system to collect the taxes to pay for the price of war.

13 That taxation system was not really understood by the
14 Métis. It was never really explained what that taxation
15 system was, so as a result around 1947, I will say, another
16 map that I have seen, there the whites started to take
17 the land away from the Métis from within -- from around
18 this region, not just the town. But we did not lose all
19 of our land. Where I live now, the Lac La Biche Mission,
20 the Métis people still live there. They talk French, they
21 talk English and they also talk Cree, a trilingual
22 community.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I am very proud that I live there because
2 that language still lives and that language came from
3 Montreal in the 1700s, I imagine he is referring to French,
4 when the first Métis came to this country to come and help
5 the fur traders and the explorers. From there, from the
6 Owl River -- I am also very proud of those people there
7 because they are still occupying land that was left for
8 them by their forefathers. It is nice, I guess, to be
9 in a position where you can make change I guess. It is
10 nice now that the Métis is allowed to bring what he deems
11 important to the table to talk about, things from the past.
12 Those kinds of things we as leaders are asked to talk
13 about these things now as leaders, on how the payback should
14 work for the Métis and how we would like to progress towards
15 that goal. Some of those things we know about, but we
16 strive to make things better for our people.

17 Many things I see we as Métis people and
18 as well the treaty Indians, we are not very often together
19 on many issues. Jealousy comes into play. That kind of
20 thing really worries me, he says.

21 Now I shall talk English for the benefit
22 of those who don't understand. (End of Translation)

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 With that, ladies and gentlemen, I
2 welcome you, Mr. Blakeney, Commissioner Chartrand. We
3 have known each other for quite a number of years through
4 our travels and, Senator Boucher, I welcome all of you
5 to Lac La Biche, all your technicians, all of the presenters
6 here today.

7 I must add that it's nice to come from
8 a very diverse community and culture. I have had the
9 opportunity of travelling throughout Canada from
10 coast-to-coast and the last couple of years participating
11 in constitutional matters, constitutional hearings. I
12 would say I've never seen another community across Canada
13 that has such a diversity and richness of different
14 cultures.

15 We have the Cree, the French, the
16 Lebanese, the Italians, the Ukrainians and I can go on
17 and on and on. Welcome to Canada, gentlemen, on a much
18 smaller scale.

19 Today I will not be tabling any
20 documentation with you. I understand that the Royal
21 Commission will be travelling throughout Canada in the
22 next couple of years. The Métis Nation of Alberta will

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 be meeting you again tomorrow. I instructed all of my
2 Vice-Presidents to be in attendance in your Hearings
3 tomorrow, as our President is back in Ottawa dealing with
4 the First Ministers.

5 It saddens me today on the one hand to
6 welcome you to Lac La Biche which is both scenic and very
7 rich in different cultures, very rich in resources, very
8 rich in beautiful surroundings of lakes. I think you can
9 go in any direction within this community and you will
10 run into another lake within a few kilometres of the town
11 of Lac La Biche, which is still pristine, which is still
12 traditionally used by our people, the Métis people, whether
13 it be through the gathering of furs, whether it be through
14 commercial fishing, whether it be trying to set up private
15 businesses and tourism for our people.

16 We in Alberta I guess have a very unique
17 situation. In December of 1987 we have signed what was
18 called a framework agreement with the provincial
19 government, the first, I might add, of any aboriginal group
20 to sign any agreement with any government across Canada.

21 I am very proud to listen to the constitutional talks
22 and hear our Deputy-Premier brag about our self-government

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 agreement across Canada, whether it be in Vancouver or
2 whether it be in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

3 The first two years of that agreement
4 was an agreement to work together towards determining what
5 our wants and needs were, what I guess on how we interpreted
6 self-government for Métis people in the Province of
7 Alberta.

8 I must add the first two years was a very
9 educational experience. I myself, being a past government
10 employee, have seen only a small case of how the provincial
11 powers dealt with people, ordinary Albertans. In that
12 first two years I learned a great deal. I was allowed
13 to go inside of government and see how the government was
14 functioning and how it lacked to respond to the needs of
15 not only Métis people, but ordinary Albertans.

16 In December of 1989 we renewed that
17 agreement for an extended three years. We felt it was
18 a necessity to extend that agreement because we seen out
19 of the first two years not only educating ourselves and
20 the Métis communities of how government functions in the
21 departments, but also educating the ministers and the
22 Premier himself on what Métis people are all about.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Today I am pleased to tell you that there
2 is a lot of fruitfulness in that agreement. In some areas
3 we have penetrated the departments and actually taken over
4 some programs and transferred it down to the community
5 base, because our agreement is made to work from the bottom
6 up, not top down, as it has traditionally been. Community
7 initiatives and policies that affect our people,
8 especially in the northern parts of this province, are
9 brought to what is called the sub-committee. I am very
10 fortunate to be Chairman in this province of Forestry,
11 Lands and Wildlife. At that table I not only bring up
12 policy matters that affect our people in their daily lives
13 because I see governments traditionally sitting in their
14 glass towers, whether it be in Ottawa, whether it be in
15 the Province of Alberta or any other province and not
16 allowing our people to participate.

17 Governments never do come out to the
18 northern communities and say, "How is this policy that
19 we are going to establish within our provincial system
20 going to affect you?" whether it be in commercial fishing,
21 trapping, hunting, the gathering of resources. Now we
22 are able to bring those policy issues to the table and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 make amendments to policies and make the policies work
2 for us, the Métis people of this province.

3 It saddens me to a great deal, I am not
4 only coming from this community but participating in
5 numerous hearings, that only I would say 30 years ago our
6 people were very prosperous. We were involved in mixed
7 farming, the fur trade was healthy, commercial fishing
8 was healthy. Our people were self-sufficient,
9 self-reliant. They have joint ventured with other
10 Albertans of non-aboriginal descent and somewhere along
11 the line in the 1960s they introduced the welfare system,
12 the welfare system that devastated our people, that brought
13 our people down to their knees.

14 Gentlemen, 50 kilometres in any given
15 direction of Lac La Biche amongst aboriginal people we
16 have 80 per cent unemployment. Ninety per cent of those
17 aboriginal people are on welfare. It saddens me to see
18 that once a very proud people be brought down to its knees
19 in that nature.

20 I feel at this point in time we have made
21 some progress in different areas, although it is very hard
22 to bend the ears of politicians, whether it be federal

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 or provincial. There are still not only the politicians
2 that may want to listen to you and do something about it,
3 but then there is still the bureaucracy that you have to
4 go through to be listened to. It's a bureaucracy that
5 I must add is only in place to feed the machinery of the
6 provincial government, a bureaucracy that is not so
7 sensitive to native issues, aboriginal issues, not only
8 in this province but across the country.

9 I believe by working together and
10 bringing our issues to the table we can make great strides
11 in this country, as our forefathers were, the developers
12 of this country. We were nation builders. We hauled the
13 trade goods from Montreal down to Lac La Biche to the
14 Mission.

15 Two years ago Canada was fighting
16 amongst itself and the governments about free trade. I
17 sat back and I talked to some of my Senators and some other
18 people of my community and said, "Here we go. We're
19 re-inventing the wheel again". Canadians were very
20 unbalanced, were very torn apart by the issue of free trade
21 with the United States of America.

22 Commissioners, you only have to go back

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 200 years, when our forefathers were actually doing free
2 trade with the North West fur trade company and the Hudson
3 Bay Company. We were free traders.

4 I believe in order to attain our goals
5 we must not only support decentralization of powers from
6 the federal governments and the provincial governments,
7 but we must also have a say on what policies and issues
8 are brought up through decentralization.

9 As I see it here in Lac La Biche, we have
10 -- although my friend Mr. Maccagno talks about the
11 wonderful things and the history which is so important
12 in this community and other communities across Canada,
13 somehow or other we have to come to grips to deal with
14 racism and prejudice. It is alive and well right here
15 in Lac La Biche. It's breathing here.

16 The people I represent are the economic
17 base of this town and the surrounding district. We have
18 so many mini-bureaucracies to deal with that it is sad
19 that our people have to go and beg to get a contract for
20 employment or a contract with industry to get employment
21 for our people. I see that somewhat changing, so I think
22 it is going to be an evolution of time.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I myself may not see it. The Métis
2 Nation may not see it or its leaders may not see it in
3 the next 40 to 50 years. I think it is going to depend
4 on ordinary Albertans, ordinary Canadians to start
5 understanding the aboriginal people, to start
6 understanding the Métis people and its needs and its
7 aspirations. We want to share the richness of this
8 province, of this country. We want level playing fields.

9
10 I deal, as I mentioned earlier, I am
11 fortunate to chair Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, but you
12 take that whole department, the Forestry, Lands and
13 Wildlife, how can I effectively deal with that department
14 when I have one person working for me and I have a whole
15 department that probably employs 400 to 500 bureaucrats
16 in that department. All we ask, Commissioners, is a level
17 playing field. We are not asking the government for
18 everything. We are asking for opportunities for our
19 people.

20 I don't like using the term
21 "self-government" because other Canadians are offended
22 by the term self-government. I would rather use

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 self-reliance and other terms, I hear now governments,
2 both federal and provincial using them terms more than
3 we do.

4 We must have an economic base for our
5 people. Fortunately, our Premier has also had the
6 foresight to not only come out and speak for aboriginal
7 people left, front and centre, but he also brought in two
8 bills that fall under provincial legislation, Bill 34 and
9 35 that deals with the Métis lands in this province. We
10 are so fortunate in the Province of Alberta to have 1.2
11 million acres of land for all Métis people in this province.

12 We want those lands entrenched in the Canadian
13 Constitution. We want protection of those lands.

14 If you will recall, in my earlier
15 statements in my language, I stated back from the 1800s
16 this town and the surrounding area was all owned by Métis
17 people and through different taxation systems that our
18 people weren't aware of we lost all of that land. Now
19 at least we have land.

20 Also, besides what lands we have in the
21 Métis settlements, we have other communities in the north
22 and some are mixed, white and treaty Indian and Métis.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Some of them are predominantly Métis themselves. We have
2 to have the authority to negotiate with governments to
3 set aside lands for expansion of those communities.

4 Education. It is very important to not
5 only all Canadians, but I feel somewhere along the line
6 aboriginal people fell off that educational track, not
7 because they wanted to do so. Some of it was intentionally
8 put in place where a lot of our students weren't given
9 the individual attention that they did deserve like any
10 other Canadian. I can go back to my school years in the
11 town of Lac La Biche.

12 Fortunately, I left this community to
13 educate myself and bring back my knowledge to this
14 community and the people I represent. We must have more
15 say in the educational systems that are put in place.
16 We must be allowed as well to have our own institutions
17 like our treaty Indian brothers and sisters, to practice
18 our culture, to teach our language to our young people
19 which is so rich, which is so diverse. We must have a
20 say in transfers of powers, because those powers touch
21 all areas we talk about, whether it be social, whether
22 it be economics, whether it be something that deals with

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

2 The loss of our culture, I believe, was
3 lost when they introduced that welfare system in this town.

4 I firmly believe that. I am dealing, Commissioners, with
5 three and four generations of my people on welfare. Now
6 there is a dependency and it's sad. It's sad to see that
7 happen because what I am saying, Commissioners, is we are
8 the economic base of this town. We are the economic base
9 of this community. We employ the blue collar workers.
10 We employ the bureaucracy. We must be allowed to run some
11 of our own systems. We must be allowed, like we have been
12 in the last two years in the constitutional hearings, to
13 bring back to the table some of our knowledge. After all,
14 the white governments were brought in by Europeans over
15 300 years ago.

16 The governments I believe failed
17 miserably in the delivery of their programs to aboriginal
18 people, especially the Métis who were lost -- who lost
19 powers in the 1920s, who lost their way of responsibility,
20 whether it be from the federal government. We are no
21 longer now a political football between the federal and
22 provincial powers. We are there negotiating. We are

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 there bringing our wisdom. We are there bringing retired
2 Métis professors, which was missing in the last go around.
3 The educational component of the constitutional hearings
4 from 1982 to 1987 was lost. It was never included. We
5 have included that now.

6 I must add it took us, the Métis Nation
7 of Alberta, two years of hard lobbying with Mr. Getty to
8 lobby on our behalf to the federal government to exonerate
9 Louis Riel, which I believe, gentlemen, was away before
10 his time. If you go back, when he did form the Province
11 of Manitoba and brought Manitoba into Confederation, he
12 did fight for the rights of the English to speak English,
13 the French to speak French. He fought for the Métis to
14 speak Michif. He spoke of the treaty Indians to be allowed
15 to have a treaty. Today now, we are at some form of
16 self-government here in this province. Communities
17 through the democracy system are allowed to bring up to
18 the tables of government what affects them, whether it
19 be policy or transfers of authority of some programs that
20 the government failed miserably to deliver to our people.

21

22 What we are saying, Commissioners, is

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 give us the chance to screw up. The governments of the
2 day and the past 300 years have screwed up terribly in
3 this country. We need some healing power. We need to
4 rewrite some history.

5 When I was going to school as a teenager,
6 taking social studies, I was reading history books that
7 were telling me that my fore-fathers were heathens, were
8 drunkards, were traitors. I was taught that. Not only
9 that, but the history books were printed in the United
10 States of America. Today I see that changing. Canada
11 is now implementing and writing their own books about
12 history. We must rewrite the history of this country.

13 I must add as well, in the school system
14 here we are fortunate to have a parent advisory council
15 to assist the educators of this community to bring back
16 the Cree language and the Métis culture, but it has to
17 go a lot further. With that I leave you with those words,
18 Commissioners, and I am sure I will be appearing before
19 you a lot more in the next two years. Thank you.

20 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
21 you, Mr. Thom.

22 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I want to

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 take a very brief moment to thank you for your presentation.
2 You brought before us quite a number of issues and we
3 do not have the time in this forum to deal with all of
4 them, important as they are. I was particularly intrigued
5 by your reference to the maps and the lots from the
6 mid-nineteenth century and so on, as well as to the
7 reference to the 1987 agreement.

8 It occurs to me that those are among some
9 of the issues that our research staff ought to be getting
10 together with your association in working to assist us
11 in the development of our mandate. We hope that you will
12 be able to work with the Commission in doing that, in
13 assisting us by providing us with these documents.

14 I think you and the other organizations
15 have been informed of the intervenor program that we have
16 to assist in that respect. Thank you very much.

17 **GERALD THOM:** Thank you.

18 I must add I will try to make those maps
19 available for you tomorrow in Edmonton and table them with
20 you.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
22 very much.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I wish to underline what Commissioner
2 Chartrand said. I might have mentioned at the outset,
3 for organizations that are national or provincial or
4 regional or tribal or who represent more than one person
5 or one group and if you wish to make a presentation, do
6 some research and make a presentation to the Royal
7 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, there may under certain
8 circumstances be funds available to assist you to do your
9 research.

10 We, regrettably, cannot do it for every
11 individual who comes forward. We simply can't handle the
12 numbers, but for organizations, aboriginal and
13 non-aboriginal, who may wish to do some research, we have
14 a system set up where you can apply and see if you can
15 get some funds and it is administered by the Hon. David
16 Crombie, who is separate and apart from the Royal
17 Commission, who used to be a federal minister and, indeed,
18 a federal Minister of Indian and Northern or whatever it
19 was called at that time. The details with respect to it
20 are available back at the table on my left which gives
21 the rules for intervenor funding, as we call it.

22 We will hear one more presentation and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 then I think we will break for coffee. It will be the
2 Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement. Joe Blyan.

3 Welcome, Mr. Blyan.

4 **JOE BLYAN, BUFFALO LAKE MÉTIS**

5 **SETTLEMENT:** Thank you, Mr. Blakeney and Paul. I had the
6 opportunity of meeting Paul yesterday when he dropped by
7 our settlement and, of course, a long time friend of mine,
8 Robert Boucher. Ladies and gentlemen.

9 I am going to qualify myself, first of
10 all, perhaps in making a presentation here this morning
11 and that is to say I've been involved with the Métis native
12 movement for some time. Of course, with the Métis Nation
13 which was previously the Métis Association of Alberta,
14 I was the Vice-President about five times over I think
15 under about five different Presidents, so in speaking of
16 the Métis Association I guess I qualify in speaking for
17 the Métis people to some degree. Of course, I was with
18 communications for many years, I believe all together seven
19 years I provided the news and comments throughout northern
20 Alberta.

21 Going on with that, with the Friendship
22 Centres, I think I was a National President at one time

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 of the Friendship Centres. I want to add one thing that
2 I certainly enjoyed some years ago when I was commissioned
3 to the Crime and Justice Commission established by native
4 people across Canada and I had the opportunity to travel
5 across the country and seeing different parts of the
6 country, and I might add different native groups, right
7 from Halifax to Vancouver.

8 I really enjoyed some of the comments
9 that were made here this morning, the opening comments
10 by the mayor and the Vice-President from this area, Gerald
11 Thom.

12 I wanted, maybe because it has been
13 pretty hectic this morning and everybody was serious, I
14 wanted to maybe comment on something here. A friend of
15 mine that I know very well from Fost, Alberta told me one
16 time, he said, "I grew up as a halfbreed," he said. Then,
17 later on he became a non-status. Finally, checking
18 through his history, then he says "I signed up for Bill
19 C-31," he said, "and that was the third move I made," he
20 said.

21 Just recently I saw him and now he's a
22 treaty Indian from one of the bands. He said, "I'm

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 confused," he said. He says, "First I was a Métis, then
2 a non-status," and now he says that he's Bill C-31 and
3 now he's a treaty Indian. It's very confusing.

4 I think that's the point I want to make
5 this morning with our friends here, those that are
6 attending and I am referring to both because we live in
7 a multicultural nation here in Lac La Biche and I too am
8 rather confused about these different statuses that we
9 have been giving each other for some time. Throughout
10 the constitutional process in the early years, Mr.
11 Blakeney, I am sure you will remember that, you were
12 involved in it and most of us were involved in it and being
13 native, of course, and aboriginal in North America here
14 we come in all colours. I remember just one time, as you
15 know, Larry de Mille, as you know, for all intents and
16 purposes he looks white and there's no mistake about me
17 being an Indian. He was asked what is a Métis person and
18 he said that he can't be any blacker than Joe Blyan and
19 any whiter than Larry de Mille, so in between there some
20 place.

21 Us halfbreeds, Métis people, come in all
22 colours. Certainly we come with the culture and the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 tradition that goes along with it. Mr. Blakeney, just
2 to mention, I was born in Pearceland, Saskatchewan. Two
3 famous people came from there, one is a seven time rodeo
4 champ from our there, Mel Coleman, and yours truly, so
5 that's the two famous people. I say this because maybe
6 in some ways too, and jokingly, that has been our problem.

7 We have never recognized our famous people across the
8 country. I have been reading in the history books
9 throughout the years in school and talked about the famous
10 people that the white people had and I said, "How come
11 we don't have any famous Indian people?" We did. We did
12 have some famous Indian people and I think some of the
13 guys were referring to that today.

14 The first transportation groups of
15 people, who ran transportation in western Canada, were
16 Métis people and Indian people. Who else would be packing
17 all that stuff they were bringing down east out here.

18 Mr. Chartrand, I think you mentioned that earlier, that
19 the voyageurs, we were the guys. We were the pack horses.

20 We didn't use no wheels, but we were packing that stuff.

21 Other things that I guess bothers me
22 throughout this whole process since I've been around, I

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 just turned 50 the other day, about a month ago and I
2 certainly qualify. Nobody can call me a young punk any
3 more. I've been around and I've seen, I've been very much
4 of a participant in the native movements. I think the
5 native movements, in my opinion, have scattered themselves
6 somewhat. At one time I remember when the national
7 organization was Métis and Indian, treaty and Indian.
8 We dealt with the problems as they came along. All of
9 a sudden we got all kinds of diverse groups across the
10 country.

11 I also had the opportunity to travel
12 across the country and see other groups of people that
13 represented themselves and it was interesting to know that
14 we didn't all think the same way, we didn't -- although
15 we were aboriginal groups, we started to bargain for our
16 position.

17 I grew up adjacent to a reserve and I
18 went to a white school. I never went to what they would
19 call a residential school or a native school in my life.

20 I have always been going to non-native schools and I
21 learned a lot. I learned a lot, but when it came down
22 to socializing, I had to go down to the native side and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 so forth. Growing up in Pearceland, Saskatchewan, we had
2 our share of native groups, treaty Indians as well as Métis
3 groups as well as non-native groups. That kind of
4 experience in my life was good for me because I don't have
5 a problem today.

6 As far as I am concerned, there is
7 aboriginal groups. I think what I see happening across
8 the country, we are fighting for status, not so much as
9 an aboriginal group. I see that happening.

10 When we talk about fighting for native
11 groups, one group is fighting for treaties, one group is
12 fighting for Bill C-31 and another one is fighting for
13 non-status and on and on and on. Personally, I'm an
14 aboriginal Indian. I have a Métis status, but I'm an
15 aboriginal Indian and that's the way I've looked at myself
16 throughout my life. I couldn't be anything else because
17 even though I participate with all groups and I think that
18 is what Canada is all about and also I notice that I guess
19 the great influence by the white groups is that we still
20 have a cowboy and Indian mentality in western Canada and
21 it's not really all that bad. It's still a good thing
22 because we don't discriminate as much as once before, but

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 it still happens in our country.

2 One of the things I clearly remember when
3 I was a kid, a little boy growing up in northern
4 Saskatchewan is I had the opportunity to see some of the
5 oldtimers. I listened to them when they were talking.
6 It didn't make sense to me, but later on in the years when
7 I thought about their comments and their statements, you
8 know, we'd talk about history and the way it was written.

9 My grandfather, I remember him saying that there were
10 three kinds of groups. He said there were three different
11 groups when the treaties were signed. He said there were
12 the people who wanted to sign the treaty. There was the
13 people who wanted to sign the script and then there were
14 the people who called themselves independents.

15 There were aboriginal people, they were
16 either Métis or aboriginal groups, but they didn't want
17 nothing to do with either the script or the treaty and
18 they were called "ho to beemsuage" in Cree, meaning
19 independent. Even today we argue that point in western
20 Canada here. I am sure that is what happened to me because
21 if I had a nosebleed, there goes my French status because
22 that's how much French there would be in me. I'm

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 supposedly of French background. My father is the
2 Frenchman in our family and my mother is a reserve treaty
3 Indian from a reserve in Saskatchewan.

4 As I was mentioning earlier with my
5 friend in Fost, Alberta, I sometimes am confused about
6 the whole issue across the country, why we think we are
7 so damned different from each other. Yet, I have never
8 seen the Métis people and the treaty Indians sitting down
9 and having a conversation and deal with this issue, instead
10 of having some non-native people sit in the middle to
11 moderate or co-ordinate this effort. I think we should.

12 Any other time, any other time than
13 politically in our lives, I don't have a problem with either
14 groups. I can go any place in the community and converse
15 and associate with them. As a matter of fact, my wife
16 is treaty and we don't have a problem. When it comes to
17 the organizations that's when we have a problem. When
18 it comes to the Indian association, the Métis Nation, they
19 seem to be calling the shots and I must be a little bit
20 critical here this morning. I think these organizations
21 have got to pull their socks together and make sure that
22 they are discussing that.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I notice my representative is sitting
2 back there while I am making these comments here. I wanted
3 to poke him in the back and say get to the point. This
4 is where we have to deal with it, right in the communities.
5 We don't have a problem with our treaty brothers out here.
6 It's only when the organizations get together that we
7 have a problem, culturally, socially, language and the
8 whole thing. It has been my experience and that's the
9 way I see it.

10 Of course, you have a right as a Métis
11 person and, throughout my lifetime, like I said, we come
12 in all colours and we come in all sizes and it has been
13 that way. We've had a wonderful life. We've competed.

14 As far as a Métis person, I've competed all my life and
15 I must say at 50 years old I have never been on welfare,
16 as opposed to other people saying we're down and outers.

17 I'm not a down and outer. I've been fighting for myself
18 and trying to maintain my dignity and my pride and that's
19 the way I've lived. I'm afraid a lot of people are not
20 able to do that, but I think that's what we are looking
21 at. That's what I look at and that's what I encourage.

22 That's the type of life I encourage to the people who

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 live in the settlement.

2 I want to go back a little bit to the
3 settlement way of life. Even now, as I sit on council
4 of the settlement here in Buffalo Lake, we are not seeing
5 eye to eye with the Métis Nation and I don't know whose
6 problem it is, whether it is our problem or the Métis
7 Nation. I suppose I will have a political argument on
8 that a little later on. Right now, unless we get together,
9 we are not going to be able to resolve some of these
10 problems.

11 As you people are travelling across the
12 country, I am positive you hear all kinds of comments coming
13 from various groups of people because we live in different
14 kinds of areas. Like, Lac La Biche here, we are a melting
15 pot of nations. We've got Frenchmen, we've got Scotsmen,
16 we've got Irish, we've got English, we've got Ukrainians
17 and we've got the Métis, the treaties, the whole work.
18 I mean, how do you live in a country like this without
19 coming to grips with it from time-to-time.

20 I had an opportunity some time ago and
21 I usually criticize my fellow neighbour, the non-native,
22 and I say to him, I was speaking at a high school graduation

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and they asked me how I felt and how should they prepare
2 themselves for the future. I said that the white guy,
3 he can't help but be prejudice. He can't help but
4 discriminate, unless you understand him, unless you
5 understand his culture and his background and where he's
6 coming from. His whole culture, his whole tradition is
7 based on discrimination and that's not being bad. That's
8 just saying it like it is. I've seen that, even as we
9 study.

10 I grew up thinking that native people
11 were not contributors at all because in their textbook
12 there was nothing in there about native people and every
13 time we talked about it we lived in tents and we hunted
14 buffalo. Hell, there ain't no buffalo today and they still
15 do that. I think that's the sad thing we are looking at.
16 We have to look at the education system.

17 We talk a lot about the education system,
18 but we very seldom change anything. I am also very
19 critical of a lot of things anyway because, what the heck,
20 you have to say your piece and many years ago we used to
21 have the residential schools. Christ, they're doing it
22 better now. They just built us a whole big school out

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 here called AVC, and that's a residential school taking
2 all the native people, the family and all. They don't
3 take the kids any more. They take the mother and the dad
4 and they send them in there.

5 You know, these types of schools should
6 be taken over by our own people. I might be getting that
7 guy upset here -- where did he go, from the AVC -- but
8 that's true. Unless we speak out, unless we speak out
9 and participate in these kinds of functions and then we
10 will see what's happening.

11 The settlements, as I said earlier were
12 once perhaps a small success in the Métis Nations here
13 in Alberta. We now have these settlements, there are eight
14 of them throughout the country and we lost two of them
15 here, Touch Wood and Wolf Lake. Hopefully, some day we
16 can argue with the government and get them back. We lost
17 those and one of the previous speakers said through
18 taxation and through various other things. I think it's
19 time now that you often hear this, the leaders saying the
20 grassroots. Well, the grassroots has to speak, the
21 grassroots has to come forward and say here's what it's
22 all about. I think until then we are not going to be able

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 to make any headway.

2 Losing that kind of a piece of property
3 is a serious thing happening in Alberta, but also I'd like
4 to maybe say that we occupy about 1.2 million acres of
5 property in Alberta. Like somebody said earlier, we'd
6 like to build the infrastructure there, but we certainly
7 don't have enough resources to do it with. Lac La Biche
8 can't complain, because they got us by the short hairs
9 here because this is our town. This is where we come
10 shopping, the same with Boyle and Smokey Lake and in our
11 case Buffalo Lake, those are our shopping areas, but we
12 are saying now let's get back, let's negotiate, let's let
13 the people sit down together and start negotiating the
14 economic process.

15 To me, local government is economics,
16 there is no other way. I can act just as much as a Métis,
17 as an Indian, an aboriginal with a million dollars in my
18 back pocket as I could with a dollar in my back pocket,
19 so there is really not much difference. Just because I've
20 got a million dollars, that don't make me white. That
21 still makes me an aboriginal Indian here in northern
22 Alberta.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Participation is probably the most
2 important thing here and I wish there was more people here.
3 I wish there would have been more encouragement from our
4 local leadership and so forth to participate and that would
5 have been nice, to listen to other people make a
6 presentation.

7 I must make a comment on this, our mayor
8 mentioned this morning they discovered Rupert's Land.
9 White folks always say that, they discovered everything.
10 I wonder where we were when they were discovering that?
11 They've got to stop talking like that. They've got to
12 stop thinking they discovered us. We were here. It's
13 things like that that make people thing, hey, Geez, you
14 guys were lost, weren't you. They were the ones who were
15 lost. It was here when they got here. They didn't
16 discover nothing.

17 I think we have to do one thing and that
18 is we have to get all of these different groups of native
19 people and it's us native people that have to get together.

20 I don't need no white person sitting in the middle there
21 trying to determine what I should tell my treaty brothers.

22 In fact, I am married to one. We can talk about it in

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 the nighttime. We don't have to talk about it sitting
2 there and having somebody in the middle talking to us.
3 I believe in the future when we have meetings here and
4 we want to discuss native issues, it should be native people
5 talking to each other and then present the results to the
6 government.

7 I have never seen, in the history of my
8 50 years, the Indian people, the treaty Indians and the
9 Métis people sit down someplace and have a meeting
10 together, never. I have never seen them sit down and have
11 a meeting and have a meaningful meeting exchanging new
12 ideas and how they should deal with the government.

13 Rather, our treaty brothers will run to
14 the Indian -- put a meeting for us so we can talk to our
15 halfbreed brother. Forget it. I ain't talking to you
16 unless we sit together and that's the only way we can
17 resolve this problem is by sitting together and resolving
18 the problem with you and I. I have always done that all
19 my life, whether it was in the bar, in the restaurant or
20 in the jail, it didn't matter, I dealt with them. Whatever
21 time we are going to deal with serious matters, oh, we've
22 got to get an intervenor here, somebody who can monitor

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 this process between you and I. I think unless we learn
2 that, we ain't going to go anyplace and that's what is
3 happening today.

4 Ladies and gentlemen, I said I was going
5 to make this brief and I wanted to make a presentation
6 on behalf of the settlements. We're doing well. We are
7 not doing the best, but we are doing well. We are trying
8 to do our best in dealing with the governments, with our
9 people, with the Métis Nations and so forth. I like to
10 think we are doing not a bad job. We've got a long ways
11 to go. I really sincerely hope that the Commission, which
12 made the point to come to Lac La Biche to listen to us
13 and I know there are other presenters here today and I
14 know you are going to hear some fine points here, but Lac
15 La Biche is our community. It is not a white community.
16 It is not a European community. It's an aboriginal
17 community and somebody was showing artifacts here, yes,
18 we can show you some graves here that are 200 and 300 years
19 old. They are here someplace. Our forefathers were
20 buried here.

21 But saying that does not make anything
22 better. I think it now what you guys want to hear and,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 hopefully, when you guys are finished with this Commission
2 that it will change things, that it will make a better
3 way of life. As you know, all over the world people are
4 killing each other. There are wars all over the world
5 and who is to say it can't happen here in Canada. Who
6 is to say we won't fight each other again like we once
7 did, unless this thing is resolved, then we can have a
8 better way of life.

9 I believe that Métis people, native
10 people, have come a long ways. I have a friend Bertha
11 sitting here. I remember when I first got involved about
12 20 or 21 years ago I got involved in the Métis Association
13 and she was here and she's still here, participating.
14 I wish a lot more people would come forward and participate.
15 Perhaps that the role of the organization to participate
16 more.

17 I also want to mention to you guys that
18 in your travels, please try to make a point that somewhere
19 down the line all different status groups must sit down
20 together and determine where they are going. Right now,
21 like I said in Edmonton, we've got two or three
22 organizations. What is a guy supposed to do? When you

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 get turned down at the other one, I notice this about native
2 people in Edmonton, when they get turned down by the Métis
3 Nation they run down to the non-status group and they keep
4 running until they run out of organizations. That's not
5 good. That's no good. I think it has to be stopped and
6 we have to look at it where we can all deal as one group
7 of people because I remember I spent some time in jail
8 and I'm not afraid to admit that. Christ, half of the
9 Indian nation in western Canada was in jail and that's
10 a fact. The reason is they never did bother asking me
11 whether I was a non-status, a Bill C-31 or Métis . They
12 threw me in. They never bothered asking me. The judge
13 never bothered asking me. They threw us in.

14 When it becomes convenient for them,
15 we're all Indians. When it becomes convenient for them,
16 they will divide us and conquer and that's what is
17 happening. Unless we wake up to the fact, unless we wake
18 up to the fact and deal with it ourselves. I don't want
19 to have to go and see somebody else to go and talk to Beaver
20 Lake. I think I should be able to talk to the Beaver Lake
21 Chief without having to have somebody intervening in the
22 middle and resolve our problems there. That should be

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 happening right here in this community. It should be
2 happening right across the country.

3 Before I conclude here, ladies and
4 gentlemen, just to show and go down in history that I am
5 capable of speaking my own language, I am going to close
6 my comments in Cree.

7 (Translation) Commissioners, I am not
8 really happy with the way things are going right now.
9 However, all the different judgments that are put upon
10 us, we can talk to one another as we once did, like our
11 forefathers did, but now we are dependent on a white to
12 sit between us in order for us to talk. That is not right.

13 I am a Métis, that is true, but that is
14 the way I was raised. I am an Indian though, I am not
15 a white man. If I am Métis that label was put on me by
16 the white folks, but I am an Indian and I have walked with
17 my Indian brother and I know his medicine, I know his
18 strengths, his movements and because I was Métis I have
19 not forgotten that.

20 I am thankful that I was able to
21 participate here today and if that was of any help to anyone
22 then I am happy. It will happen again that we will sit

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 again in the future and it will be nice, but we tend to
2 forget some of these things, he says, but we are not poor.
3 It is just that we get stupid from time-to-time. (End
4 of Translation)

5 I had to say that. It is true, ladies
6 and gentlemen.

7 I would like to thank you guys. I know
8 you guys have a lot of other presenters to listen to.
9 It's a real pleasure. I wanted to get this off my chest
10 for a long time and I know that I represent the Métis
11 settlements, but I don't represent all Métis settlements.
12 I represent the Buffalo Lake and I think it is nice that
13 we were invited. I would like to thank you people for
14 inviting me down. I am looking forward to other presenters
15 here today and, hopefully, -- I wish you guys well. I
16 wish you well and to come back when this Commission is
17 all done, when all has been said and done, that we will
18 be able to read that there is strong, strong, very serious
19 recommendations to the Government of Canada.

20 Also, Canada has to admit, it has been
21 embarrassing for the Canadian government the way it has
22 been treating its native people. I think the time is now.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 It's the 1990s. We are going into another century. I
2 think we will see a different change. If we don't, I will
3 probably talk to you at the next Royal Commission they
4 set up. Thank you very much.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thanks
6 very much, Mr. Blyan. We may well want to make an odd
7 comment or two which you may feel impelled to reply to.
8 All I can say is thank you very much and do sit down.
9 We perhaps won't detain you, but I don't know what my
10 colleagues may want to say. They may have picked up some
11 of the Cree that I didn't, but I think we didn't get a
12 full translation, judging from some of the reactions at
13 the side.

14 Thank you very much. I certainly
15 appreciated that forthright presentation and we certainly
16 take the point and many, as you put it, for many issues,
17 let me put it that way, the concerns of aboriginal people
18 are the concerns of all aboriginal people and they are
19 not nicely divided into Métis and non-status and status
20 and as the case may be.

21 We certainly take that point to heart,
22 as you put it.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
2 you. Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Blyan. I am
3 not going to ask any questions. I would have been pleased
4 if you were back there or up here, but you are up here
5 now, so I am happy about that.

6 Let me make a few very brief remarks,
7 if I may. I want to begin by thanking you, among other
8 things, for having emphasized a wonderful characteristic
9 of the aboriginal people, that of humour, which you have
10 interspersed throughout your presentation. I wonder if
11 you would think that I am somewhat one of those in between
12 that you described in the spectrum of identification
13 earlier on in your piece?

14 On that same issue, I wonder if you heard
15 what is said to be an old reference to the Métis people
16 which went something like this. It is supposed to have
17 happened in this part of the country, at least according
18 to what I read about it, that the Scots person was hanging
19 around here and looking around and trying to learn about
20 the local people and in this particular place he noticed
21 in the corner a very loud, boisterous group and so he asked
22 a local, "Who are those people over there?"

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 The answer came, "Those are the Métis.
2 They are the one and a half men," and that's the term
3 that he used, the one and a half men; half Indian, half
4 French and half devil. So, in fact, I believe that is
5 the title chosen by Murray Dobbin for a book that he wrote
6 about the Métis people and I think it includes, if I
7 remember correctly, quite a bit about local Alberta
8 history.

9 I want to thank you, as I said, for your
10 presentation. There are too many important issues there
11 to comment about or to enter into a debate. Commissioner
12 Blakeney has already referred to the importance of the
13 common vision of aboriginal people that you have urged
14 upon us as very important and also the matter of the effects
15 on the person identity of the subjugation of aboriginal
16 peoples and the effects of outside naming and of the outside
17 influences on the identity of aboriginal people.

18 So, for those and all the other important
19 points you brought before us, thank you very much.

20 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
21 you.

22 We will have a break of ten minutes or

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 so for some refreshments, some tea and coffee at the back.

2 Then we will gather and have Mr. Cliff Gladue.

3 **--- Short Recess at 11:00 a.m.**

4 **--- Upon Resuming at 11:20 a.m.**

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** We will
6 resume. I would ask Mr. Cliff Gladue to come forward.
7 Welcome, Mr. Gladue.

8 **CLIFF GLADUE:** Thank you, sir.

9 I would like to begin by thanking
10 Commissioner Blakeney and Commissioner Chartrand and
11 Senator Boucher for allowing me to make this presentation.
12 First, I would just like to introduce myself a bit. I
13 work for the Native Counselling Services of Alberta. I
14 don't represent them. I represent myself today.

15 I have also been involved with the Métis
16 Association of Alberta in the capacity of Treasurer,
17 Constitution Chairman, Finance Chairman and Education
18 Chairman and I am originally from the Fishing Lake Métis
19 Settlement and I have worked as an administrator and a
20 councillor and different other capacities at the
21 settlement level. I am also one of the original founding
22 members of the Métis National Council when I was involved

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 with the Métis Association of Alberta.

2 I have been involved since I was 17 years
3 old with the native movement, the Métis movement in
4 particular. I am involved with various native
5 organizations right at the moment. I would like to
6 point out that I have already made a written presentation,
7 sent a written presentation to the Royal Commission and
8 they acknowledged my presentation on February 25th, 1992
9 from Jerome Berthialette, Commission Secretary.

10 What I would like to do today is just
11 briefly expand on the principles and parameters of
12 aboriginal self-government which I sent to the Royal
13 Commission earlier this year. I would just like to add
14 that I read your booklet and I am impressed with what has
15 been presented by the Royal Commission so far. I like
16 approach No. 4 which is a general recognition clause with
17 a treaty process. I think a lot of people that have been
18 involved with the process realize what we are going through
19 is a modern treaty-making process with all three groups.
20 I would say that that is what is required under section
21 35(6) that is being proposed for greater certainty in
22 subsection (1), existing treaty rights includes rights

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 under existing or future treaties, including
2 self-government agreements, so identified by parties as
3 self-government agreement.

4 I guess I was really happy that these
5 principles and parameters are things that could be
6 incorporated into a self-government agreement. I see
7 three self-government agreements being negotiated with
8 federal and provincial government; one, that the treaty
9 self-government agreement; the Inuit self-government
10 agreement and the Métis self-government agreement. I
11 propose that the principles be incorporated into a Métis
12 self-government agreement, which includes a land base,
13 of course, and the right to membership on the land base
14 and that a form of local government which is democratic
15 and recognizes aboriginal rights be instituted on this
16 land base, and that the aboriginal land base not be taxed
17 by any level of government, except as per agreement amongst
18 the aboriginal governments, to provide adequate services
19 to their aboriginal populations.

20 That all the resources beneath the
21 aboriginal land bases be for the benefit of the people
22 of the aboriginal communities and/or institutions thereby

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 created, and that the traditional rights of hunting,
2 trapping, fishing and gathering be guaranteed to all
3 aboriginal peoples on their lands, on all unoccupied Crown
4 lands and with owner's consent on private lands.

5 And that there be a tripartite
6 agreements which are enforceable to cover social and
7 economic development. These are funds that would be
8 guaranteed to the aboriginal people by the federal and/or
9 provincial governments to make this possible.

10 That aboriginal government's funding be
11 guaranteed to the aboriginal peoples outside of a land
12 base to adequately allow for their housing, education and
13 health care and other social and economic development,
14 such as housing organizations, economic development and
15 so on. These are the principles that I think
16 are quite important.

17 Some of the parameters that I would like
18 to touch on are the board and executive have to be elected
19 by individual members of these land bases, not appointed
20 because the current agreement that is signed by the Alberta
21 government and the Métis settlements is not really
22 democratic because the executive is not elected by the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 people. They don't have an annual meeting. There is no
2 settlement constitutions which are approved by the
3 majority of the Métis people. I know this because I have
4 followed the negotiations between the Alberta government
5 and the Métis people.

6 I would say that what is required is
7 aboriginal land bases and institutions, constitutions and
8 by-laws which would be negotiated by a process which allows
9 for approval of three-quarters of its membership, whether
10 currently living on the land base or off. This new law
11 should be ratified by individual members. If it is a
12 treaty, then it is three-quarters of the treaty. If it
13 is Métis, then it is three-quarters of the Métis. If it
14 is Inuit agreements, then it is three-quarters of the
15 Inuit.

16 These constitutions and by-laws of the
17 said aboriginal land bases should have interchangeable
18 membership upon the requisite legal paperwork being
19 properly ratified by the parties concerned. Since we are
20 all aboriginal, if I decide to marry a treaty, I should
21 have a choice or she should have a choice of either living
22 on my land base or I on her land base and this would be

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 possible through interchangeable membership.

2 That private non-profitable aboriginal
3 organizations already in existence will be modified and/or
4 expanded to allow for the training of aboriginal
5 professionals to staff the aboriginal land bases and
6 institutions. We need education to prosper. There is
7 a lot of nepotism on these settlements and which creates
8 a situation which is not good. I would say that the answer
9 to that problem is to have aboriginal professionals staff
10 the new institutions or land bases. This way the people
11 are hired on qualifications, not because you are related
12 to the chief or to the Chairman of the Council.

13 We need to start immediately, that the
14 aboriginal training staff development agreements should
15 be negotiated upon proclamations of the principles and
16 parameters by the appropriate federal and/or provincial
17 governments and the aboriginal land bases and
18 institutions' representatives.

19 That adequate funds would be made
20 available to the aboriginal land bases and institutions
21 by the federal and provincial governments, to plan,
22 develop, implement and evaluate their progress.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 According to these principles and parameters and any others
2 which might be negotiated by the appropriate parties, in
3 the meaning what should happen is experts should be made
4 available to assist our local government initiatives to
5 help our local governments plan, develop, implement and
6 evaluate their local government plans.

7 That aboriginal institutions would
8 service all three aboriginal groups together, will have
9 board member appointments by the appropriate
10 representative organizations. Since there are
11 institutions outside of a land base, outside of a reserve
12 or a Métis settlement, would service all three aboriginal
13 groups, non-aboriginal also.

14 That the appropriate institutions
15 should appoint the board members. The way it is, there
16 are sort of semi, quasi-political. If the institutions
17 are to service their members properly, they have to be
18 accountable and report to their membership and the local
19 government plans or the institution on the outside of a
20 land base, their plans have to dovetail with the local
21 government plans of those people that they represent.
22 Otherwise, they are just going in two different directions

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and they are not really servicing the needs of the people.
2 They are basically servicing their own needs, but not
3 really the needs of the people that they are servicing.

4
5 That aboriginal land bases and
6 institutions separate their political activities from
7 their program activities and will require an adequate
8 accountability and reporting process. In other words,
9 the political arm will get reports from their institutions
10 program heads and no more. The way it is right now, a
11 lot of Métis and native organizations that I know of, the
12 politicians don't know how to keep their noses away from
13 the program areas. They try to tell the staff what they
14 should or should not do. This is not good.

15 Once an aboriginal land base institution
16 membership is established are the members then free to
17 opt in or out of the various levels of aboriginal land
18 bases institutions with appropriate legal paperwork and
19 is free to elect his or her representatives on the
20 aboriginal land base and/or institutions thereby
21 developed. In other words, what we have to do is make
22 sure that a democratic system is instituted on the land

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 bases and for the aboriginal institutions, but a person
2 has to be elected by a majority of the electors; one person,
3 one vote.

4 That aboriginal government authorities
5 will be divided in towards for election purposes. One
6 of the problems that we have on Métis settlements and I
7 noticed in native reserves is that some people are not
8 represented. If you are not related to the Chief or his
9 family or the ruling party at the time, you don't get
10 nothing. This kind of stuff has to stop. It has to be
11 -- you have to cut the large family rule, although the
12 majority rules, but I think if you put things in towards
13 then those people that are left out usually will be
14 represented because you are not just operating by a large
15 family majority, but you are actually operating by a
16 majority within a ward.

17 Those are some of the comments that I
18 wanted to make. I am in no way insinuating that the current
19 negotiations or the current agreements that are in place
20 are not good. I think they are good, but they can be made
21 better. What I am suggesting is they can be made better
22 by including a democratic process and by including

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 aboriginal rights.

2 A couple of people mentioned two
3 agreements; one, the Métis Settlements Agreements, the
4 Métis Settlements Act and, two, the framework process.
5 One thing they haven't told you is the government which
6 they are dealing with does not have the authority to be
7 able to negotiate aboriginal rights. What they have done
8 is negotiated programs which service these aboriginal
9 rights, but in order for these to be recognized -- they
10 have to be recognized and they have to be guaranteed yearly
11 because one of the problems with the Métis Settlements
12 Agreement is that they basically have seven years -- it's
13 a 17-year agreement. They basically have seven years to
14 make money with the \$3 million per year per settlement
15 that they are getting. If they don't, then they are not
16 going to get very much matching dollars because the last
17 ten years, the first five-year period of the last ten years
18 is a three-to-one matching grant from the Alberta
19 government and the last five-year period is a one-to-one
20 matching grant. They basically have seven years to be
21 able to make it and then what happens if they don't. That's
22 a serious question.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I think what is required is something
2 to be instituted in the federal Constitution which is the
3 highest law of the land which guarantees monies to these
4 local governments yearly, so that I am sure a lot of
5 entrepreneurs have taken more than seven years to be able
6 to learn the principles that are necessary in order to
7 be able to have viable organizations and money-making
8 organizations and companies, whereas we are given seven
9 years. I don't think that is really fair.

10 It might be fair to some that are already
11 quite cognizant of all the principles that are necessary
12 to do this, but I think for the majority of us that are
13 not it's not really fair. I think we should be given a
14 longer period of time and our rights should be recognized
15 in the Constitution so that we can take whatever time is
16 necessary in order to ensure that we are successful, in
17 not only local government, but also in the businesses that
18 are going to crop up to service these aboriginal
19 governments.

20 The same with the Métis Association
21 Agreement. It's not federally recognized. I think it
22 has to be looked at and it has to also be ratified by the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 federal government. It also has to recognize Métis
2 aboriginal rights, instead of just looking at programs
3 which service those aboriginal rights.

4 That is basically my presentation. If
5 you have any questions, I will be more than happy to answer
6 them.

7 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
8 you, Mr. Gladue. I would like to ask you one quick and
9 direct question and then make a general comment.

10 Respecting the matter of taxes, the
11 question is designed to attempt to clarify the point.
12 You made some reference to limiting taxes to aboriginal
13 local governments. I wonder if you would elaborate the
14 nature of the arrangements that you contemplate in this
15 respect. Are you referring to taxes assessed on property
16 only, that is my assumption, but I wonder if you would
17 elaborate on that point a bit?

18 **CLIFF GLADUE:** No, I was not limiting
19 it to taxes on the land per se. I was relating to all
20 taxes.

21 From what I understand, the tax system
22 to the treaty Indians right now it limits it to a land

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 base and to the earnings derived from the land base, but
2 this is not accorded or afforded to the Métis land base.

3 I would say this should be the same for the Métis land
4 base also.

5 If you want to expand that, what we are
6 really talking about is an aboriginal government, say a
7 Métis government model, then you have to expand that
8 outside of the land base also and, from what I understand,
9 the federal government has negotiated agreements which
10 are called urban reserves, where they have recognized land
11 or given land to existing reserves inside cities. I think
12 Regina or Saskatoon is one of those cities, from what I
13 understand.

14 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Can I ask
15 about that point, are you referring to reserve lands around
16 which cities have grown or are you referring to something
17 else?

18 **CLIFF GLADUE:** No. I am referring to
19 any land or aboriginal government agreements that may be
20 negotiated have to take this into consideration, in order
21 for the aboriginal land base to be able to grow and use
22 its own taxes to create employment and services for its

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 peoples and those institutions that are outside of a land
2 base, in order for them to be able to grow and service
3 its membership.

4 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** That
5 definitely is news to me. I look forward to hearing more
6 from you and the organizations you are with on that point.

7 What is the basis for the support of the
8 public services then in your model that you are
9 anticipating? What would support the delivery of public
10 services?

11 **CLIFF GLADUE:** The taxes, if any, that
12 are instituted within the land bases and institutions would
13 be paid to that government. That government would then
14 in turn take the taxes and provide as services, but that
15 would not be the only source of its income.

16 the other income would come from the
17 agreement, self-government or otherwise, that would be
18 negotiated between the federal and provincial governments.

19 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** What
20 about services that are delivered generally to people,
21 regardless of where they are? For example, national
22 communications, roads and railways and aircraft and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 national communications and international services, how
2 would they be subsidized or paid for?

3 **CLIFF GLADUE:** They would have to be
4 done in the same way. You are talking about native --

5 **CLIFF GLADUE:** In respect of the people
6 on your land base, if they are not contributing to the
7 cost of those national services who is? That's the point
8 that I don't understand.

9 **CLIFF GLADUE:** Are you talking about a
10 national aboriginal --

11 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Defence,
12 for example, sort of an obvious point. Who pays for the
13 national defence with respect to the people living on that
14 land base? I thought you were excluding payment of all
15 taxes.

16 **CLIFF GLADUE:** No. What I was saying
17 was that it would exclude the taxes if it was not negotiated
18 with the aboriginal government to provide services to its
19 people. I didn't say that all taxes would be excluded.

20 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** That's
21 the point I wanted to clarify and I thank you for that.

22 I have no other questions. I appreciate

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 the significant nature of the other points you have
2 referred to us. I think it is apparent from any person
3 who studies the issue that any change in the exercise of
4 governmental powers necessarily brings stress and anxiety
5 and I think there would be general agreement that some
6 responsibility has to accompany the exercise of power,
7 but we have those difficult questions to face, to whom
8 are people to be responsible and by what means. You have
9 brought some of the aspects of these issues before us today
10 and I thank you for it.

11 **CLIFF GLADUE:** Thank you.

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

14 Just a question about -- I noted the
15 points that you were making and some of them suggested
16 things that should be in an agreement, if I may put it
17 that way, and others suggested things that the aboriginal
18 community should change within itself, if I may put it
19 that way.

20 I take it you would agree with me that
21 arrangements with respect to whether or not there is
22 nepotism in appointments and whether or not politicians

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 interfere with program delivery are not things that can
2 be adequately dealt with in any agreement, but indicate
3 weaknesses in the aboriginal governmental system as it
4 now exists. I could point out equal weaknesses in the
5 non-aboriginal governmental systems. These are not
6 confined to aboriginal government.

7 I wanted to ask you whether I understood
8 this, that these were, you might say, admonitions to
9 aboriginal people that when they set up their governments
10 these are problems they have to watch for, as opposed to
11 anything that would be in any agreement between an
12 aboriginal community and a federal or provincial
13 government?

14 **CLIFF GLADUE:** Basically, I think I have
15 addressed the issues and I have suggested ways that this
16 might be curbed or lessened. I suggested that native
17 communities be divided into wards and that any Constitution
18 or any agreement that is to be negotiated should be approved
19 by three-quarters of the membership, individual
20 membership.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
22 very much.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **CLIFF GLADUE:** Thank you.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I will
3 now invite Florence Boucher to make a presentation.
4 Welcome.

5 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Good morning,
6 Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Florence
7 Boucher and I live at Eleanor Lake. It's a small parcel
8 of land, two quarters of land which was given to the
9 squatters, like me, in 1975. I am nervous.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Take your
11 time. Don't be nervous. If you are speaking softly that
12 is all right because people have headsets and they can
13 put them on and pick up your voice.

14 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Before getting my
15 status under Bill C-31, I classified myself as a Métis
16 person because it gave me a voice. I thought by applying
17 and receiving my status I would have the same benefits
18 as other status Indians. Under this system I don't have
19 equal rights and, in fact, I have less identity than before.

20 Under the Indian Act, women have always
21 been discriminated against. Women have always played a
22 major role in the community. We have children, raise them,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 teach them values and we are often the backbone of the
2 family unit. Because Indian women have not been
3 recognized under the Indian Act for so long, the end result
4 is the break down of many aboriginal families, leaving
5 a trail of poverty, broken homes and every social problem
6 imaginable.

7 At a previous conference, I want to bring
8 this up, I was told by a lady lawyer that I was a domestic
9 Indian and that my name could be stricken off at any time
10 from the Band list. So, can anyone tell me what a domestic
11 Indian is, what does it mean? Does this mean I am a tame
12 Indian?

13 I would like to talk a little bit about
14 land. I would like to see the federal government set aside
15 a green zone or Crown land for Bill C-31s, a land base
16 we can call home. Of course the reserves at present could
17 possibly house us, the Bill C-31 minority aboriginal
18 people, but refuses to. How much difference could it
19 possibly make? By the way, I am a Bill C-31 and I was
20 a born treaty from the Beaver Lake Band which is just a
21 few miles south of here.

22 I will probably have a resting place when

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 the time comes, but why should I be accepted to be buried
2 on reserve land after I die, when I could also enjoy sharing
3 all the services that are being kept away from me today.

4

5 I also want to bring up something about
6 education. Why do some people, like Bill
7 C-31 people, have funding for education and other Bill
8 C-31s have no funding? I would like to see all Bill C-31
9 status Indians, whether they are living on or off the
10 reserve, have the same funding available. My
11 grandchildren are status Indians and live with my husband
12 and I off the reserve, which affects their education fees.
13 We have to pay just like anybody else. This takes away
14 my choice on where they can attend school.

15 Leaving a reserve school to attend a
16 public school often creates problems because the level
17 of education in reserve schools is lower than public
18 standards, which makes the child discouraged and often
19 feels ashamed to go on. Funding should be more readily
20 available for resource people, guidance counsellors and
21 other professional services in the public schools for
22 status Indian children. This may be a positive step in

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 resolving suspensions, expulsions and drop-out rates and
2 lessen young offenders, young juveniles, which I have in
3 my family. There is a lot of this with the native children.

4 I just added a little comment here. I
5 am sorry to say but Lac La Biche School Division and area
6 don't have a qualified Indian teacher. Sure they have
7 liaison workers and sure they have native counsellors,
8 but not a native teacher, but that is to say I know of
9 one -- how can I say that. I know of one person that is
10 a teacher there, a qualified teacher, but in no way wants
11 to be native. What I would like to see is native teachers
12 that can say they are native people and would like to teach
13 their culture to other children.

14 I have something to say on medical. I
15 can appreciate the fact that since receiving my status
16 under Bill C-31 I have medical coverage, but do Bill C-31s
17 get the blame for over-spending, I am sure not only in
18 this area? Do I foresee my coverage being cut off in the
19 future because of Bill C-31?

20 I was born a status Indian under the
21 Indian Act. When I got married in 1970 I lost my status
22 under the same Act. I surely didn't marry no white man.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 My husband is blacker than any coloured person you can
2 see. He won't be too impressed when he hears this, but
3 because of this law I had to change my Indian status
4 identity to a non-status what. This is when I joined the
5 Métis Association. When the opportunity came to regain
6 my status under the new law in 1985 I chose my original
7 identity back at that time, thinking I would be accepted
8 by my own Band, which never happened.

9 Regaining my status, along with others,
10 the legislation has created chaos. The Government of
11 Canada has told me who I am and once again have made a
12 decision amongst aboriginal people. Instead, we should
13 be working towards unity, but I don't think there is unity,
14 but the colour is there.

15 I was born an Indian, as you can see,
16 and no matter how the government changes the laws I will
17 always be an Indian. I added a little recommendation here.

18 A recommendation is I would like to see the chief and
19 council to meet with the Bill C-31s and inform us where
20 we stand as far as our rights go.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
22 very much. This raises an issue which we hear about

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 frequently, the problems arising from the operations of
2 Bill C-31. They are very real problems.

3 I would I think ask do you feel that the
4 problem lies with the terms of Bill C-31, what the law
5 says, or the way that the chiefs and councils are reacting
6 to new Indians, if I may call them that, a new status,
7 or with the government policy which says in effect there
8 are new status Indians, C-31 Indians, but that doesn't
9 mean we are going to provide extra land or extra resources
10 for your Band.

11 You can say that the root of the problem
12 is in one, two or three different places. How do you see
13 it?

14 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** It was kind of a long
15 question.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Right.
17 Where do you see the problem coming from?

18 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Right now I see it
19 coming from the Beaver Lake Chief and Council. I know
20 they are really against Bill C-31s. They have I guess
21 no use for them and I heard somebody else saying here as
22 long as you are related you are okay.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 The Chief, Al Layman, is my first cousin.
2 I was a Layman, so that doesn't work. So, you can be
3 related all you want, but as long as you married out you
4 are kind of an alien. You can't even pick up your \$5 that
5 you get once a year from the Band office. Mine has to
6 come from Ottawa. Ottawa has to spend a secretary -- they
7 spend more money sending me this little cheque for \$5,
8 but they won't give it to me at treaty days on the reserve
9 ever since I got it. They spend the stamp, an envelope,
10 the person who is making this cheque. What's \$5? That's
11 how much Beaver Lake is against Bill C-31s.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:**

13 Commissioner Chartrand.

14 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you
15 for your presentation. I will perhaps ask one or two
16 questions and make one or two comments.

17 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Not hard ones.

18 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Maybe I
19 will make one or two comments. Could I, though, ask about
20 the term that you use. You said that a lawyer had talked
21 to you and I didn't quite understand the term that was
22 used. Would you

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 mind --

2 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** I was attending --
3 Russell can probably clarify what kind of a meeting it
4 was. I am not quite sure. It wasn't a conference, but
5 it had to do with Bill C-31s when they were -- at least
6 four years ago I think, but I am not quite sure.

7 Anyway, at that time I took a
8 presentation there and the lawyer Beaver Lake had at the
9 time is the one that told me that I was a domestic Indian
10 and that I could be stricken off the Band list at any time.

11 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** That's
12 the term I thought I heard. All I can say is this, the
13 term has no particular legal meaning. It may be that
14 someone in trying to explain the meaning of the Act makes
15 up, coins or uses that expression to try to clarify the
16 existing provisions, but the term itself is not a term
17 of art. It has no particular legal meaning that I am aware
18 of.

19 I could add too that there are many open
20 questions in this field. As you have indicated, the law
21 has been changed recently, in 1985, it is new and partly
22 for that reason the law is unclear, so it's not possible

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 for anyone to give you a confident opinion on the meaning
2 of much of this legislation.

3 That's not of much assistance, but
4 that's the way it is in a very large part in this particular
5 field.

6 You have talked to us about the many
7 difficulties associated with people being defined by
8 outsiders, in this case being defined by the Indian Act.

9 We are not going to come up in short order with complete
10 answers to all of this, but it is certainly very helpful
11 for us to get presentations like yours where you make
12 absolutely clear the difficulties that we are able to read
13 about. I want to say to you that your attendance here
14 today and your presentation is indeed very helpful. I
15 thank you for it.

16 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** May I bring up
17 another thing?

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Sure.

19 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** I wanted to bring out
20 something that I feel like I have been kind of discriminated
21 all along. I can't have a home on the reserve, but even
22 where I live I am discriminated on because me and my husband

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 both work. We don't qualify for this housing program that
2 they offer and it's just awful.

3 Everybody out there is having new homes,
4 running water and things like that, which I don't.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Out
6 there?

7 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Out at Eleanor Lake.

8 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Is that
9 on the reserve?

10 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** No. It's just, like
11 I said, the provincial government gave this parcel of land
12 to squatters.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** This half
14 section you spoke about?

15 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Yes, in 1975.

16 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** There is
17 one small point and I wondered if I might add it. I would
18 like to clarify this issue of the five-dollar bill. My
19 understanding is that the government is legally bound to
20 make these payments to people who are members of the treaty
21 group. My question is this to you, once you have been
22 reinstated and I understand you have been reinstated not

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 only as a "status Indian", quote/unquote, but also a Band
2 member. Is that right? Do I follow that?

3 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Yes.

4 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Once
5 having been reinstated, do you now receive that \$5 treaty
6 payment?

7 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** Like I said, I
8 receive it in the mail in November sometimes and which
9 they receive theirs in June.

10 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** So the
11 government then stripped people of the recognition of their
12 treaty status by the Indian Act and subsequently restores
13 it. I wanted to check that fact because it is quite
14 important and that's one area of the law that is very fuzzy,
15 that nobody can give you a firm answer about. But, as
16 I say, it's helpful to have you come out and help us sort
17 these facts out. Thank you.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I might
19 make one little comment. My experience isn't broad, but
20 such as it is, it's unusual for someone to be reinstated
21 as status and then reinstated as a member of the Band and
22 not be able to pick up their money at the Band office.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 That's an odd combination, be reinstated as status, but
2 not back on the Band roll, that I understand you get it
3 through the mail. But to be back on the Band roll,
4 reinstated as a member of the Band and not picking it up
5 at the Band office, that's an unusual situation, in my
6 limited experience.

7 **FLORENCE BOUCHER:** I would like to thank
8 you very much for listening to me.

9 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
10 you.

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
12 like to make a little comment. We are keeping a record
13 of all the proceedings of the Royal Commission. It is
14 of great assistance if presenters could leave a written
15 presentation with the staff. The staff are down there
16 at the table at the wall in the middle of the room, Bernie
17 Wood and Karen Collins and Laurie Fenner. Thank you.

18 We are now going to amend our agenda a
19 little bit to meet some scheduling problems that people
20 have. I will invite a presentation from the Alberta
21 Trappers Association, Madeline Rizzoli.

22 **MADELINE RIZZOLI, ALBERTA TRAPPERS**

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **ASSOCIATION:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am
2 submitting this brief on behalf of our President who is
3 unable to attend. I don't know if this brief is in order
4 at this meeting, but a lot of Indian and native Métis and
5 so on do a lot of trapping. I will continue with my brief.

6 Trapping and the wild fur industry has
7 been a part of our history and a way of life since long
8 before this land became a country. Today it still offers
9 a way of life, a means of generating income and pride in
10 a person's life that very few other occupations offer.

11 In remote communities, trapping has and
12 will be an ongoing occupation which residents can rely
13 on year after year. For a lot of people it gives them
14 a purpose in life and something they can look forward to
15 and be proud of. In areas of high unemployment, it is
16 a necessary industry which helps immensely in combatting
17 boredom and helps to eliminate the problems that arise
18 when people have too much idle time, such as the pitfalls
19 of alcohol and drug abuse.

20 The Alberta Trappers Association has
21 become very involved with the sale and handling of wild
22 fur pelts at our provincial office in Westlock, Alberta,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 also at the federal and world level through our involvement
2 with the Wild Fur Council of North America. We feel that
3 great progress has been made in representing our industry
4 to the general public through school programs and public
5 meetings. However, there is an area that we need help
6 in and we need it now. The European Economic Council
7 has passed a bill banning the import of wild furs from
8 countries still using the foothold trap, effective January
9 1st, 1995. Progress has been made in Canada in developing
10 new trapping devices and Canada is considered a leader
11 in new trapping technology. However, no devices have been
12 proved and tested that will completely eliminate the
13 foothold trap. We need more time to develop and test new
14 equipment and to retrain our trappers in ways that foothold
15 traps can still be used in a way which the public will
16 perceive as humane.

17 The problem is that a lot of people
18 making laws and regulations have no idea of what the real
19 world is all about when you are looking at it from the
20 bush.

21 In conclusion, we need our federal
22 government to take a firm stand against the European

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Economic Council. We need their commitment that the
2 livelihood and way of life of the trappers in our
3 communities can continue. If a complete ban of leghold
4 traps is put in place, the result will be a catastrophe,
5 resulting in social and economic problems beyond
6 imagination. Thank you.

7 If there are any questions, I may be
8 limited to my answering capacity because I am doing this
9 on behalf of the President, but if there is I might try.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
11 you, Mrs. Rizzoli.

12 I don't think I can speak for the federal
13 government on this, but I think they think that they can't
14 change the mind of the European Economic Council. I think
15 they think that they tried it with respect to seals and
16 that they didn't get anywhere and that industry is gone.
17 They feel that their best course of action is to see if
18 they could get introduced traps which are not leghold
19 traps. They are, as you know, pushing the Conibear trap
20 which is not a leghold trap. It's a different kind of
21 trap.

22 I think they think that they can take

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and make a stand as strong as they like and nothing is
2 going to happen. I mean, the Europeans are just going
3 to say fine, take a strong stand if you like, but our
4 position is that after 1995 we won't accept furs that are
5 trapped in a leghold trap. I don't know whether the
6 federal government is right, but they may well be right,
7 in the sense that they feel that they just can't change
8 the European mind on this. If this is so, then we've got
9 ourselves a problem and we have to ask whether we can use
10 a Conibear trap or some other kind of non-leghold trap
11 and what time is needed. They may be able to negotiate
12 another year or something, but what's your guess as to
13 the feeling of trappers with respect to other traps besides
14 leghold, say the Conibear?

15 **MADELINE RIZZOLI:** Yes, the Conibear is
16 a very good trap, very effective, instant kill most of
17 the time, but there are areas where it cannot be used.
18 Apparently there are some people in Canada that are
19 inventing, if you will new traps. more humane. They are
20 supposed to be padded around the jaws, so that the animal
21 doesn't get hurt too badly. It could recover very easily
22 if it should escape, but those things haven't been really

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 tested yet and they are being tested.

2 From what I understand, Canada is making
3 real improvements in traps as to being humane. There are
4 certain things, like squirrels, for instance, I don't see
5 that you would be able to catch them in a Conibear trap.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Maybe a
7 small one?

8 **MADELINE RIZZOLI:** Yes, maybe a small
9 one, but I don't know. Anyway, as far as I am concerned
10 and I think I speak for the rest of the trappers and I
11 belong to the membership, but I think that the government
12 should give it a little bit of consideration. We can't
13 let those other people monopolize an industry that has
14 been at the core of Canada. The industry was one of the
15 first in Canada, was it not. Trapping was the thing.
16 The Indians were trapping before the white man got here
17 and it's a renewable resource which is every year if it
18 is well managed, like the trappers on their trapline manage
19 their trapline very well, with the help of the government
20 naturally, they put quotas and stuff. I think that the
21 government should really reconsider, at least give us a
22 little bit of leeway. Thank you, unless there are other

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 questions.

2 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I have a
3 quite comment, if I may. If the issue is perceived as
4 cruelty to animals, I note that such organizations as you
5 have referred to have focused their attention not on
6 turkeys or on hogs or on chickens or other species, but
7 other species that run in the wilds. I understand very
8 well the points you have made. You started by saying that
9 trapping is a part of our history and it so happens it's
10 a part of my history too. My father and many others before
11 him were trappers. As you can probably guess, I am not,
12 so that has gone by the boards, but I am very sensitive
13 to the issue that you have raised before us. I cannot
14 say that I have any ready answers. It seems that you and
15 your organization are definitely working on such answers.

16 **MADELINE RIZZOLI:** You know, trappers
17 don't try to be cruel to animals. We like the animals,
18 but if there are too many of a certain species they die
19 out and, believe me, nature is much more cruel than what
20 the trapper ever does.

21 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** You are
22 preaching to the converted here, in my case at least.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **MADELINE RIZZOLI:** We have seen coyotes
2 and wolves dying of mange and they are naked in the winter.
3 Can you imagine that, and they don't have the strength
4 to even go and find something to eat, they just lay by
5 a tree and die. Lots of them are like that.

6 You take rats or anything like that, when
7 there are too many, they just die, that's all. They just
8 die.

9 If the trappers were left to do their
10 thing, they would manage because trappers on the whole
11 that's their livelihood, so they have to be careful how
12 they look after their industry. They cannot abuse it and
13 really I don't think there are too many people that like
14 to be mean to animals.

15 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Again,
16 thank you very much.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
18 you.

19 Next is the Canadian Native Friendship
20 Centre. Welcome. I see some familiar faces around here.

21 **KEN PRUDEN, LAC LA BICHE CANADIAN NATIVE**
22 **FRIENDSHIP CENTRE:** I would like to say good morning to

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 everybody, including the members of the Royal Commission
2 and their staff. My name is Ken Pruden, I am here on behalf
3 of the Canadian Native Friendship Centre. I will go
4 through a quick mission statement for the Friendship Centre
5 here.

6 The Lac La Biche Canadian Native
7 Friendship Centre provides a focus of activities to: No.
8 1, assist native people in the adjustment process to urban
9 society.

10 No. 2, build effective working
11 relationships for native people between the native and
12 non-native society in addressing native issues, and, No.
13 3, preserve and promote aboriginal culture in a
14 non-sectarian and politically non-partisan manner.
15 That's a hard thing to do.

16 Our Friendship Centre here in Lac La
17 Biche has been in operation since 1986 and we were supposed
18 to become a core funded organization, but the funds were
19 cut off when the Friendship Centres, the new and developing
20 Friendship Centres they are addressed as, and although
21 we are not a political organization, we are mostly involved
22 in the service sector, but sometimes it is darned hard

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 to stay out of politics.

2 We become involved in issues of
3 education, housing and all the way down the line. Now
4 when we go for funding, some people say that there is
5 duplication of services. We feel that although maybe
6 social development or the school system hires a native
7 staff, that native staff and the students that they deal
8 with and the clients, or whatever you have, they are not
9 as free to express themselves in there. I feel an
10 organization such as ours, we have people that is voted
11 in to a board by the community and they represent the
12 boards, whereas most education boards from the school,
13 native education boards from the school are appointed and
14 are usually friends of people that appoint them. We all
15 know that. I feel that is one very important aspect of
16 the Native Friendship Centres that they serve.

17 We also promote culture, retention of
18 our language, so hopefully in 10 or 20 years' time there
19 is somebody around that can talk the languages that are
20 pertinent to their area.

21 Another thing the Friendship Centre is
22 trying to do is bridging the gap, as I read in my mission

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 statement, that we are bringing people from one level to
2 another, to adapt from one lifestyle to another.

3 That's a hell of a big undertaking and
4 the Canadian government hasn't been able to do it. I don't
5 imagine we will be able to be successful overnight also,
6 but our long-term goals are to help the native people become
7 self-sufficient, so we don't have to have all of these
8 organizations.

9 Basically, that's what I have to say.
10 I would like to ask the Royal Commission to definitely
11 have a look. Our proposals are all over in government
12 and so I didn't bother bringing one today. There are
13 probably some in the garbage cans outside here.

14 Anyway, that is my main point I would
15 like to stress. It seems like the government, in their
16 wisdom or lack thereof, can cut programs right across the
17 board and they don't know what they are cutting off. In
18 the Town of Lac La Biche, as our mayor and the
19 Vice-President of our Métis Association have stated, we
20 are a multicultural town. We have to deal with these
21 issues. A service organization like the Canadian
22 Friendship Centre is one of the good mediums to achieve

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 that goal.

2 In talking about cutting off funds and
3 this and that, I will get my friend Ray Fox here, who is
4 also the President of the Multimedia Society of Alberta
5 -- he's with the Alberta Multimedia Society and he's the
6 President of the Canadian organization, they have also
7 been through that suffering. It seems like when the native
8 people are starting to communicate good or maybe too well,
9 they have the plug pulled from under them. They have to
10 go into operation on a very minor percentage of what they
11 should be. There are monies definitely spent in other
12 areas that could probably be well spent in native
13 retention, especially through the communications of native
14 culture.

15 That's my presentation right now. I
16 won't give you numbers. We have all those other numbers,
17 like the Lac La Biche Canadian Native Friendship Society
18 definitely meets all the criteria as set out to become
19 a fully core funded centre, probably more than even some
20 that are in existence, but that's not my decision to make.

21

22 I would like to thank you for your ear.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I hope somewhere down the line you could make a
2 recommendation that organizations such as ours are
3 definitely needed. Thank you.

4 **RAY FOX, LAC LA BICHE CANADIAN NATIVE**
5 **FRIENDSHIP CENTRE:** Thanks, Ken.

6 My name is Ray Fox and I would like to
7 first and foremost extend my appreciation to the Friendship
8 Centre for asking me to sit up here at the table as well
9 and to Mr. Boucher, Mr. Blakeney and, of course, Mr.
10 Chartrand I would like to as well throw in my two cents
11 worth into the welcoming committee here. We really
12 appreciate the fact that you are able to come to Lac La
13 Biche and hear what we have to say as well because we would
14 like to be part of the process.

15 What I have to talk about, essentially,
16 is as you travel around this country I am sure you and
17 your fellow Commissioners, you are going to be getting
18 I think a lot of advice and perhaps you are also going
19 to be getting a lot of questions and you are going to be
20 getting a lot of different observations, comments and
21 suggestions from different people.

22 I like to think that you are going to

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 be hearing words such as "understanding". You are going
2 to hear words like "language", "culture" and retention
3 thereof. You are going to hear words like "education",
4 "racism", "working together", "traditions" and so on.
5 I want to present to you a rather simple and maybe
6 simplistic solution as an answer to some of those problems
7 and that is communication. Communication is the very
8 essence of all that is important to understanding. It
9 is also, of course, important for language and cultural
10 retention, for education or anything that affects
11 aboriginal people in Canada today.

12 If aboriginal people are given the
13 opportunity to maintain and control their own
14 communications system, they are quite capable of not only
15 protecting, but in fact enhancing and promoting their
16 languages and their cultures to the betterment of
17 understanding by all cultures. After all, communications
18 is sharing and I do believe that in all cultures would
19 benefit from the support of an aboriginal communications
20 system.

21 As you know I am sure, that aboriginal
22 people since time immemorial almost have been bombarded

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 with another people's reality. Television shows you the
2 John Wayne's of the world and I don't have to go into that,
3 the Lone Ranger and what have you, but it's somebody else's
4 reality. It's not ours. It's not of our making.

5 We need the opportunity to be able to
6 do our own. I sincerely believe, and anyone can tell you,
7 that in order to be successful any government or, in fact,
8 any people cannot be successful or autonomous without a
9 sound communication policy or system. In fact, if you
10 look at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the whole
11 basis of its existence is to protect, enhance and promote
12 Canadian culture, although I sometimes wonder about its
13 purpose when they spend millions of taxpayer's dollars
14 buying American programming that is in most cases available
15 free of charge on the next channel. I don't know what
16 that has got to do with Canadian culture, but nevertheless
17 they do that.

18 Support of the established aboriginal
19 communications infrastructure is an absolute must if
20 aboriginal people are to realize any growth or progress
21 as a distinct and thriving cultural entity in this or any
22 other country. It is no accident, gentlemen, that I appear

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 here with the Canadian Native Friendship Centre because
2 I think that a communications system has got to be
3 non-political. It has got to be at arm's length and it
4 has to be protected from politicians or it simply will
5 not work.

6 I can give you some very good examples.
7 The recent constitutional talks here in Canada that have
8 been going on across the country, you may have heard of
9 the term "parallel process", or at least I hope you've
10 heard of the term "parallel process". Well, about \$10
11 million roughly, and that's just an estimation on my part,
12 was spent on the parallel talks. To the best of my
13 knowledge, not a nickel of that went to any native
14 communication organization in Canada.

15 Tell me, how in the hell are we going
16 to consult with our people, how are we going to ask our
17 people what they think if we don't even have the time or
18 the decency to properly put a communications structure
19 into place? It's just not possible.

20 It's a sad fact, but I sit here today
21 as the President of the National Aboriginal Communications
22 Society and I am in touch with the 21 native groups that

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 are across the country in various forms of communication
2 and media production and I can tell you that in sincerity
3 I have little knowledge, if any, as I say, that was spent
4 in the communication industry to promote anything that
5 has got to do with aboriginal people. I don't understand
6 that at all.

7 There has to be a free and independent
8 press or media and it has to be, as I mentioned, at arm's
9 length from any political organization. The importance
10 as well, gentlemen, particularly as it relates to cultural
11 retention and language, and I think this is something you
12 are probably going to hear a lot of and I'll just throw
13 my two cents worth in as well, there are no words in my
14 language for such things as abortion, AIDS, constitution,
15 effluent, PCBs, enzymes and I can go on and on. I can
16 go through the whole -- as a matter of fact, I did an
17 interesting experiment just not that long ago. I made
18 a presentation to the University of Alberta, their native
19 studies class and I took a random copy of the Globe and
20 Mail and I read an article from that Globe and Mail, roughly
21 180 words in that article. Almost 50 of those words in
22 that article don't have an aboriginal equivalent.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 That's not the problem. The real
2 problem is if you have a particular belief and you are
3 asked to translate a word from one culture to another,
4 your belief goes into your translation. For example,
5 abortion -- I can say miscarriage quite easily because
6 that's a natural function. I can say premature birth,
7 I can say stillborn birth. I can say all of those words
8 in Cree, but I cannot say abortion.

9 Therefore, if I am pro or anti-abortion,
10 my translation will be just that. It will be an either
11 anti or pro translation of the word abortion.

12 AIDS, identically the same thing. I can
13 translate AIDS and spread homophobia galore or I can
14 translate AIDS and tell my young people that they are going
15 to be dying from a disease if they are not careful. I
16 can do it both ways. I can make it a joke. It can be
17 funny to some people, but not to the people who are
18 suffering from it. There is no word to say that.

19 I had an interesting situation arise
20 here recently, as a matter of fact by almost coincidence,
21 the translator who is working with the Commission today
22 was at that time a part of my staff and was translating

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 for us some news stories. This is when the pulpmill was
2 being announced just down the road a ways here. We began
3 to search for words such as effluent and such as enzymes
4 and whatever else gets put into the river systems and the
5 lakes in this country and we couldn't find any.

6 So, we had a meeting about this. I said
7 what is the bottom line, what are they? We went through
8 a couple of different processes and came to the conclusion
9 that they are poison. That's what they are.

10 I got a phone call after we had done a
11 couple of news stories from somebody in charge I guess
12 at the mill and said, "Your translator whenever he is
13 translating he is always saying poison and he's scaring
14 the people." I said yes, that's possible. He said, "Can
15 you tell him to use a different word." I said, "Well,
16 sure I can, but you've got to give me that different word."
17 I haven't heard from him since.

18 You see, to us and the beluga whales it's
19 still poison. That's the problem with not having a
20 communications structure that is supported by aboriginal
21 government, non-aboriginal government. We have to have
22 a means to communicate. Without that, it's all for naught.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I sincerely and truly believe that if
2 there is a strong and independent aboriginal press,
3 aboriginal culture, aboriginal language will look after
4 itself, there is no question in my mind.

5 Once again I thank you and I would like
6 to thank the Friendship Centre for allowing me to a part
7 of this proceeding. Thank you.

8 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
9 you, Mr. Fox, and thank you, Mr. Pruden.

10 I would like to ask a question to one
11 or other of you or both. This really has to do with the
12 basic problem of funding. Non-aboriginal society has
13 really been set up in many ways to run a core government
14 with 100 per cent tax money and then to offer grants to
15 a large number of organizations which are part of their
16 funding. You can look at the pattern of governmental
17 funding and so much of it falls into that category.

18 Schools are funded partly by taxes that
19 a board levies and partly by grants from another
20 organization and the board is never fully dependent upon
21 the grant. Municipalities are never fully dependent upon
22 the grants they get from federal and provincial

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 governments. You can go right down the line. Even the
2 CBC is not fully dependent on all the money they get from
3 the federal government.

4 This has given or seems to give these
5 people a little running room that organizations which are
6 100 per cent dependent on grants don't appear to have.

7 One of the problems with a number of
8 organizations, Friendship Centres are one, is they don't
9 have many independent sources of money. They have some,
10 but not as many as one would like and that's true of the
11 native communications organizations. There is no
12 necessary reason why they should have, it's just the
13 mindset of governments that has to be tackled.

14 How do you think, Mr. Pruden, how do you
15 think Friendship Centres should be financed?

16 **KEN PRUDEN:** I think they should be
17 financed the same way all the government in Canada is.
18 You know what a renter and a landlord is and I take that
19 back to the aboriginal. I didn't want to get political,
20 but we have to to explain this. The land of Canada was
21 here and there were treaties signed with the aboriginal
22 peoples. Those treaties have not been kept and, as a

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 result, the native organizations, the aboriginal
2 organizations, have not been able to develop at the rate
3 of the people who came across and discovered us.

4 Nobody brought that oil with them here,
5 nobody brought that gold or anything with them over here.

6 They came with just themselves and the society, the
7 difference in the white culture and the native culture
8 enabled the white society to dominate the aboriginal people
9 of our country. I think the aboriginal people are more
10 or less begging for some of their own money.

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I take it
12 then that you feel they should still get the money from
13 government, but on the basis of another argument, that
14 is it's part payment for resources?

15 **KEN PRUDEN:** Our Centre itself and the
16 trend within the native friendship centre organizations
17 is to come up with a plan of so long where they can become
18 self-sufficient and that's all we are asking. We ain't
19 asking for a never-ending funnel of money. This is where
20 the communications comes in.

21 People have different ways of
22 understanding things. It's just like you ask for core

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 funding. Well, you are asking for money for time
2 immemorial if you want to call it.

3 I could tell you a little joke that might
4 explain. The Lone Ranger after he went through one rescue
5 mission he rode into town real fast on his horse to go
6 and get a drink at a tavern. Old Silver was sweating pretty
7 good and Tonto comes behind him and it's funny but his
8 horse wasn't sweating. The Lone Ranger asked him, "Tonto,
9 can you fan my horse?" So, here was Tonto running around
10 and around the horse. This other white chap walks into
11 the bar and he said, "Hey, who left their 'injun' running."

12 That's a misunderstanding.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I don't
14 know what to say after that one.

15 I didn't mean to imply that Friendship
16 Centres shouldn't necessarily get money from time
17 immemorial into the future. I have just finished working
18 for a university and it was paying me and it is going to
19 ask for money into the future forever, so far as the
20 university is concerned. There is no necessary reason
21 why ever organization out there should be self-supporting,
22 I am not saying that, not for a moment.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **KEN PRUDEN:** Basically, what that joke
2 was trying to say is that why should the aboriginals always
3 have to take the back seat.

4 **RAY FOX:** I am sorry, Mr. Blakeney, but
5 I would like to also respond, if I may.

6 As I mentioned a little bit earlier about
7 the CBC and its role and function, if in fact I could get
8 a Treasury Board allotment of \$857 million I wouldn't
9 bother the government all that much either per year. But
10 the problem is that with the communications industry at
11 least we are having the same kind of difficulty with our
12 own political people, that's where the problem lies.

13 It's not so much in who should be
14 responsible for communications or who should be funding
15 communications. That part is not of absolute relevance.

16 The more important part is the aboriginal communicators,
17 i.e. us, should be allowed to develop our own policy as
18 we see how we fit into Canadian society, that's the problem.

19 Then, from there -- and you see the problem again, if
20 I may underscore that, the Department of Communications,
21 as you know, has a Broadcast Act, the CRTC has something
22 to do with our mandate and what have you, the Secretary

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 of State has something to do with us, Indian Affairs has
2 something to do with us. So, we've got all of these
3 different bodies that we are answerable to and we are only
4 one organization that should be fulfilling one function,
5 one role.

6 But we've got problems in communications
7 in getting people to understand what it is that we are
8 trying to do. For example, if we want to become
9 self-sufficient, we've got radio stations and television
10 stations and newspapers across the country who are jumping
11 up and down and complaining that we are unfair competition.

12 We've got those kinds of problems and, of course, they
13 complain to the CRTC and the CRTC comes down on us and
14 says "You guys shouldn't be doing that". So, around and
15 around we go. There is no consistent policy and there
16 is no protection for aboriginal languages that I know of
17 in the Broadcast Act for example.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I take
19 your point and I take it as a strong point, that with all
20 its warts the best protection for the societies we have
21 developed is an independent voice in communications,
22 newspapers and radio and television and that we haven't

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 found any particularly good ways to make them work, except
2 as in the case of the CBC to fund them and to tell them
3 to do their thing and then the government that funds them
4 complains bitterly, but fair enough, that's the best we
5 can do.

6 So far as the native communications
7 organizations, it's not clear where they should be getting
8 their funding, whether it should be coming from the federal
9 government or the provincial governments or from the native
10 governments. So far there has been no real acknowledgment
11 of who is responsible, although everybody acknowledges
12 that it's somebody's responsibility.

13 **RAY FOX:** Exactly. Beyond that, while
14 we are on the subject, a lot of politicians, I believe,
15 think that it's our job to be doing communications. I
16 think that's what this \$10 million fiasco is all about.
17

18 I acknowledge that. Justifiably it is
19 our job, but not without the support. It's like arguing
20 that we have to go and build schools and hospitals, the
21 same idea. It's fine ideology, but --

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Yes.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you
2 very much to you, Mr. Pruden and Mr. Fox, for your
3 presentation. Ray, I can say that it is with particular
4 pleasure that I welcome an individual who shares with me
5 a fondness for the music of the late great Hank Williams.

6 **RAY FOX:** Thank you.

7 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** And in
8 particular someone who has an important role in spreading
9 Hank Williams' music.

10 In addition to the important issues
11 common to both of your presentations Mr. Blakeney discussed
12 with you, I note that there are others. One that impressed
13 me in particular was your submissions respecting
14 difficulties in translating, in this particular case from
15 Cree to English and so on. We have heard submissions
16 dealing with that issue in other places and in other
17 contexts as well, so we are indeed aware of the difficulties
18 and we look forward to working with people like your
19 organization and other organizations to assist us in trying
20 to come up with some workable recommendations to the
21 federal government on these important issues.

22 Thank you again to both of you.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **KEN PRUDEN:** Thank you.

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

4 Our last presentation before lunch will
5 be from the Lac La Biche Community Living Association.
6 Welcome.

7 **JENNIFER SCOTT, LAC LA BICHE COMMUNITY**
8 **LIVING ASSOCIATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE:** Thank you for
9 having me here today. I am excited about the opportunity
10 to share some of the concerns that the disabled persons
11 in the community have with you.

12 The Community Living Association of
13 Disabled People is a non-profit organization, guided by
14 a volunteer board of directors. The mandate is to provide
15 services to adults with disabilities in order to assist
16 them to become contributing and participating members of
17 our communities.

18 The association is primarily funded
19 through Social Services, but it is a very bare-bones budget
20 and one dependent upon the communities to fundraise for
21 it as well.

22 We offer two non-facility based

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 programs. One is an Outreach Program which is designed
2 to assist people with disabilities acquire skills which
3 will allow them to live more independently and to assist
4 them access the recreational and educational options which
5 are available to everyone in the community.

6 Our second program is a supported
7 employment program which assists people with disabilities
8 in vocational areas, such as acquiring job skills, job
9 preparation, searching for and acquiring jobs, as well
10 as providing on-the-job training and support to both
11 employer and the employee.

12 Both of our programs strive to use the
13 resources already present in the community and to integrate
14 people with disabilities into community activities. We
15 work with 21 individuals in our district, 11 of them are
16 of native descent.

17 Thirteen per cent of the Canadian
18 population has been labelled as having a disability and
19 in our area alone there is over 800 people on the Assured
20 Income for the Severely Handicapped or the AISH Program.

21 There are more people out there who could use services
22 like ours. Out of the 800, we are only able to provide

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 services to 21. We are very limited by our funding and
2 resources in that it has to come back to the communities
3 to work with people who have disabilities.

4 Within the population of people with
5 disabilities and their families and caregivers there are
6 a number of areas of concerns that our organization has
7 identified and is constantly working with. These include
8 the enforced povertization of people who have one or more
9 disabilities, the lack of services within our particular
10 district and community support for both the individual
11 and their families.

12 Having a disability often affects your
13 ability to find and maintain a job, as well as the type
14 of job and the pay level you would be receiving. If you
15 are physically disabled, you are often automatically
16 eliminated from any physical labour for very obvious
17 reasons. You must have a high level of education to obtain
18 a job, but this isn't always possible just because you
19 are not physically -- or because you are physically
20 challenged doesn't automatically mean that you are
21 equipped or enjoying doing a job that is primarily
22 paperwork.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 If you are developmentally disabled, you
2 may not be suitable for positions which require a lot of
3 paperwork or that require you to have a large amount of
4 flexible skills, but you are quite capable of doing work
5 in which a lot of repetition is required. Unfortunately,
6 though, the repetitive jobs are often the low paying
7 minimum wage positions.

8 Having a disability also means that you
9 require specialized medical treatment and supplies which
10 are extremely expensive. If an individuals is on AISH,
11 the medical costs are covered for them, but if the
12 individual should choose to work, the medical benefits
13 are affected and they would have to earn a lot more money
14 than average in order just to make ends meet and cover
15 these costs.

16 If an individual chooses to save money
17 for a rainy day on the AISH Program, their AISH may be
18 affected if you don't spend all the money you receive.

19 The government expects you to contribute
20 as much as you can to the cost of paying for your special
21 needs due to your disability, but you have not chosen to
22 have this disability. In our system currently, a disabled

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 person pays physically, mentally, emotionally and
2 financially for being disabled.

3 There was a story in the Edmonton Journal
4 not that long about a women who inherited \$500 when her
5 mother died. She was on AISH and because she received
6 that money, her money from the government for that month
7 was reduced by \$500. The system is just not fair and there
8 has got to be some way to change the fact that if you have
9 a disability on the most part you are going to live in
10 poverty your entire life.

11 In the Lac La Biche district there is
12 a definite lack of services and resources for individuals
13 to utilize. Many of the individuals we work with desperate
14 need professional counselling and guidance and other
15 services, but they are unable to pay for private services
16 and there are no other options that we have been able to
17 access for them.

18 Recently I had the experience of dealing
19 with a developmentally disabled woman who had become both
20 suicidal and homicidal. Her primary language is Cree and
21 due to her psychological stress at the time she was not
22 able to comprehend my English, I was not able to comprehend

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 her Cree. I phoned all over the community trying to find
2 somebody to please come and help me, even if they could
3 just translate the Cree for me I could help them with what
4 to say in order to understand what this woman was feeling,
5 but I couldn't find any intervention people who were
6 willing to come out who spoke Cree. Actually I couldn't
7 find any intervention people to come out other than
8 ourselves.

9 The feeling in the community was this
10 woman is disabled, she's mentally disabled and I won't
11 be able to understand her and I won't be able to communicate
12 with her. This woman works on approximately an eight-year
13 old level and people communicate with eight-year old
14 children every day, but when it was an adult they were
15 unwilling to help.

16 There are some wonderful people working
17 in the area. The needs of the community are so great that
18 these people are always extremely overworked. Workers
19 in the social and human services fields in our area are
20 unable to do much prevention to assist communities build
21 healthy communities, as they are so overwhelmed dealing
22 with crises.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 We need to stop being an intervention
2 community and start being a prevention community. Our
3 staff at our association is trained to assist people to
4 acquire independent living skills, but most of our time
5 is spent dealing with sexual abuse, physical abuse,
6 suicide, threats of homicide and assisting people through
7 the court system. That's not what we are there to do,
8 but there are no other areas in the community that fills
9 that gap.

10 With more resources available, our
11 agency, as well as many other agencies in town, could start
12 focusing on individuals before they hit a state of crises,
13 instead of creating a temporary solution or a band-aid
14 when the crises hit.

15 Having a child with a disability is also
16 a very challenging task, although it can also be rewarding.

17 If the disability is a developmental one, it often means
18 that the parents are responsible for the person for their
19 entire lives. With other children they become more
20 independent as they age and usually leave home in their
21 late teens and early twenties. The child who is
22 developmentally disabled may remain in the home and require

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 a constant level of care for as long as the parents are
2 able to cope.

3 When a child is born who is disabled,
4 the parents needs to go through a period of mourning for
5 the loss of the perfect child they dreamt they would have.
6 They often have no one to talk about these emotions with
7 and feel very guilty for thinking in the way that they
8 are because they feel they should be grateful that at least
9 they have a child.

10 As the child grows the caregiver is often
11 frustrated because the child does not catch on as quickly
12 or is physically unable to perform some tasks and this
13 frustration, coupled with the strain of being the primary
14 caregiver day in and day out can lead to high stress levels.
15

16 Statistically, the divorce rate or
17 separation rates for parents with disabilities is much
18 higher than the average. Siblings too are often resentful
19 of the disabled child as they seem to get all of mom or
20 dad's attention and the non-disabled child feels left out.
21 They also suffer guilt feelings from feeling these
22 emotions.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 With all of these additional stresses
2 for families with exceptional children they need
3 additional support from their community, neighbours and
4 relatives. Although it is now widely believed by people
5 who have been educated in this area or have personal
6 experience that individuals who are disabled belong in
7 the community and have the same rights to participate and
8 belong as everyone else, this has not gotten back to the
9 communities. Many families who keep their child at home
10 find the child then an embarrassment and they lock them
11 away or hide them when people come over. We need to educate
12 people so that they understand that everyone has the right
13 to belong.

14 Our program strives to get people with
15 disabilities into the community and as time has progressed
16 our community is becoming more open. There are no programs
17 in our area that help or assist children under 18 or their
18 families and it is another lacking resource.

19 The dream of our agency is to see
20 everyone, regardless of ability, living together in our
21 communities and participating and sharing together. As
22 more programs like ours come into being, the more exposure

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 everyone will have to discover what wonderful and unique
2 individuals there are in this world. Society will stop
3 wearing blinders and ignoring those individuals they
4 choose not to see and will start to accept everyone, but
5 this must come from the communities themselves.

6 Organizations like ours can provide
7 educational opportunities, but acceptance must come from
8 the community.

9 These problems are experienced by not
10 only the Town of Lac La Biche, but it's predominant in
11 all of the settlements and the reserves we go out and help.
12 We are trying desperately to try and get support groups
13 within each of the individual communities within our area,
14 but there seems to be a real lack of knowledge and a lack
15 of acceptance. I feel it is a real issue for people who
16 have disabilities who are also aboriginal.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
18 very much.

19 What you say of Lac La Biche is common
20 to many communities, but perhaps it is just a bit more
21 so here, perhaps because of the distance from Lac La Biche
22 to other centres where there may be more support services

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 available, who knows, but I will ask a couple of questions
2 if I may. They are very simple questions.

3 You said there are 800 people possibly
4 who might be said to be disabled in the Lac La Biche area
5 and you are able to serve how many did you say?

6 **JENNIFER SCOTT:** Twenty-one.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:**
8 Twenty-one, I thought I heard you right.

9 **JENNIFER SCOTT:** The 800 only includes
10 people who are receiving social assistance because they
11 are disabled. There are more who are disabled and
12 supporting themselves.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** You
14 referred to a program that I didn't understand, the AISH
15 Program.

16 **JENNIFER SCOTT:** It's Assured Income
17 for the Severely Handicapped. It's a financial program
18 for people who have disabilities.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** And it's
20 the Government of Alberta?

21 **JENNIFER SCOTT:** Yes.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** You will

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 have to forgive us, but almost all the provinces have
2 different names for similar programs and they all develop
3 acronyms.

4 What you are essentially suggesting, if
5 I may say so, and it's a chicken or the egg situation,
6 you need more money to deliver services, but to some extent
7 the need for money is not perceived because the public
8 is not fully aware of the potential of disabled people
9 and they therefore think bad luck, but nothing can be done.

10 **JENNIFER SCOTT:** We, as any other
11 non-profit group, will always need more money, but I think
12 that's not going to be a reality. I think communities
13 have to start taking the responsibility for themselves.
14 Myself, as a member of the community, I need to befriend
15 somebody who is disabled, maybe support the mother and
16 if she's going through some very difficult times or if
17 she's getting very frustrated because she hasn't had a
18 break from this child for six weeks straight, I will
19 volunteer an afternoon of my time.

20 I think the biggest solution is getting
21 the public aware that they can help and getting communities
22 involved in taking responsibility.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Commissioner Chartrand.

2 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I merely
3 want to thank you, Jennifer Scott, for your presentation.
4 You have made your points and you have made them very
5 clearly. I have no questions to ask, other than those
6 already canvassed by Mr. Blakeney. Thank you very much.

7 **JENNIFER SCOTT:** Thank you very much for
8 having me.

9 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank you
10 very much.

11 We will now break for lunch. Lunch will
12 be served in this room. Everyone is invited to attend.
13 There will be no charge and we invite you all to come
14 and discuss informally with ourselves and yourselves some
15 of the issues we are canvassing here this morning and this
16 afternoon. Thanks and bon appetite.

17 **--- Luncheon Recess at 12:57 p.m.**

18 **--- Upon Resuming at 2:00 p.m.**

19 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Good
20 afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I want to welcome you
21 to the afternoon session of this sitting of the Royal
22 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples which began this morning,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 so I extend a particular welcome to those of you who may
2 not have been in attendance here with us this morning.

3 We have before us a list of presenters
4 that has been prepared by our staff and we will be hearing
5 from these presenters in order. We are scheduled to go
6 until 5:30 this afternoon. I think that is a goal more
7 than anything else. In my experience so far on the trail,
8 as it were, we have not been successful in reaching it,
9 but we try. So, I would urge all those making
10 presentations to keep those sorts of considerations in
11 mind. We do want to give you the time you need to make
12 your presentation.

13 I call on the first organization, the
14 representatives of the first organization, the Native
15 Education Committee of Lac La Biche, represented by Diane
16 Ludwig and Elaine Boucher.

17 Welcome and please begin whenever you
18 feel ready to do so. Press the button and when the red
19 light is on you are in business.

20 **DIANE LUDWIG, NATIVE EDUCATION**

21 **COMMITTEE OF LAC LA BICHE:** I would like to welcome Mr.
22 Chartrand and Mr. Blakeney and Robert Boucher here and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 to all the people who are with us today. Also, I would
2 like to thank Elaine for being here with me.

3 First of all, I will speak a little bit
4 about myself. I was born and raised in a little northern
5 town in Saskatchewan by the name of Buffalo Narrows. I
6 have been in Alberta now for the past 27 years and I've
7 sat on a lot of native boards, such as the Friendship
8 Centre, Native Women and I've worked for Social Services
9 as a home liaison worker there, native counselling as a
10 court worker and I now work for the School Division here
11 in Lac La Biche as a home liaison worker.

12 I also sat on the advisory committee for
13 the printing of a book called "The Art of the Neheawak".
14

15 Native youth have always had a special
16 place in my heart because I feel they have so much to offer.
17 They have so much love to show to people who care for
18 them. We need more native people working in the
19 educational field, such as native teachers, principals
20 and school board members. I will let Elaine do a little
21 bit and introduce herself.

22 **ELAINE BOUCHER, NATIVE EDUCATION**

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMITTEE OF LAC LA BICHE:** Good afternoon, ladies and
2 gentlemen, Mr. Chartrand, Mr. Blakeney and Mr. Boucher.

3 My name is Elaine Boucher. I am the native liaison worker
4 for the Dr. Swift Junior High School here in Lac La Biche.

5 I have worked quite closely with many of the native people
6 in the area through my previous positions in the community
7 health field, the Métis Association of Alberta, now the
8 Métis Nation, the Aboriginal Multimedia Society of Alberta
9 and our local newspaper, the Lac La Biche Post. So, I
10 am very aware of a lot of the concerns that native people
11 have in this area.

12 As I said, I am a native home liaison
13 worker through the native education project and today will
14 be discussing educational concerns the aboriginal people
15 and myself may have.

16 **DIANE LUDWIG:** I will begin with the
17 presentation. What we have here is educational issues
18 concerning aboriginal students in Lac La Biche and area.

19 The first one is orientation to new staff on native
20 culture. I feel that the teachers and whoever is working
21 with native people should have a look at the native culture
22 if they are going to be working with native students.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I feel that they should have a professional development
2 day for that issue.

3 More youth programs in the area. I feel
4 they should have a youth centre with a full time youth
5 worker, activities for the students after school hours,
6 as I feel we are working there from 8:30 in the morning
7 until four o'clock in the afternoon, what happens to these
8 students after we have left. I think this is where a lot
9 of trouble starts with the youth in this area. There is
10 nobody there for them after hours.

11 I also feel they should have educational
12 field trips. The history of the native people and I have
13 an example here, Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump, Batoche,
14 I feel there is so much for them to see and to learn out
15 there and they are not getting it.

16 Then I also feel parents are their
17 children's role models and discipline must start at home.
18 Workshops on parenting skills, if and when desired,
19 pro-parenting campaigns, advertisements on both the local
20 radio station and in the newspaper, I feel if we can all
21 work together the drop-out rate in both junior and senior
22 high schools will see a change.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 We are very well aware that native people
2 take pride in their art work and find this to be a way
3 to express themselves. I feel that art programs which
4 could result in students taking their art work on tour;
5 they should also have native tutors in the schools as I
6 find that native students feel more secure when they are
7 with native people working within the school area.

8 There should be more native resources
9 in the schools. I also feel that instilling pride and
10 confidence in the students and doing everything possible
11 to keep up their enthusiasm throughout the school years.

12 More and immediate support services to
13 students who may be suffering in situations such as drug
14 and alcohol abuse, physical, sexual, mental abuse and
15 finally family violence. Funding for Métis and native
16 students to further their education, such as
17 post-secondary institutions or other different areas.
18 More post-secondary programs should be made available for
19 student, professional programs like in nursing and
20 education. I guess the one I really feel strongly about
21 is the hiring of a co-ordinator for the native education
22 project.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 The opportunity to give these native
2 students cultural exchanges for this will enable them to
3 learn more, formally and socially. This is my
4 presentation to you. Thank you.

5 **ELAINE BOUCHER:** I will add a few
6 comments, if you don't mind. For the post-secondary
7 programs, we are discussing the programs in this area.
8 We have a college here, AVC. They have the
9 para-professional programs, but we are looking at
10 something like education and nursing because, as it was
11 stated earlier by Florence Boucher, she was talking about
12 no native teachers in our schools here which is a reason,
13 I am almost sure, that some of these native students are
14 dropping out of school because they do need that support
15 where they will feel comfortable with their own native
16 people teaching them.

17 I see that the drop-out rate in the
18 junior high school might be as a result of this because
19 some of these students might feel intimidated by going
20 into the classroom and so they skip. I see it every day.

21 I am out there chasing them, telling them that their
22 education is important and they have to stay in school.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I was telling Florence as well that one
2 of my goals in life was to be a teacher. I knew I had
3 good marks in school. I feel that I personally have done
4 very well for myself, but there was -- at that time the
5 teachers did tell me I did do well in school, but I felt
6 they should have encouraged me more and maybe I could have
7 been one of those teachers today. My goal will be to help
8 these native students now to let them know that there is
9 somebody like myself in these schools willing to help them
10 and to let them know that they could go on further with
11 their education and become teachers, become nurses, become
12 lawyers, doctors, do more for themselves and that's what
13 we need in the schools here. If we could start here in
14 our community with these programs here.

15 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
16 you, both of you, for your presentations.

17 I would like to begin by asking if my
18 co-Commissioners have any remarks or questions they would
19 like to make?

20 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Can you
21 tell me how far along to getting a teacher's certificate
22 or a nurses' diploma you can get at the local college here

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 in Lac La Biche?

2 **ELAINE BOUCHER:** What they have here is
3 a community health representative program and that I have
4 taken myself. I did graduate. The places I am qualified
5 to work are on Indian reserves as a community health rep
6 and at the local health unit, which I have done, but then
7 again the money involved I feel wasn't enough, especially
8 if you have a family. I feel I had the capabilities and
9 do have them to go on and do better for myself.

10 If they had programs like nursing and
11 teaching here it could be done, many of our native people
12 would do it.

13 In teaching they have the teacher's aid
14 program, they have a social work program. It's a two-year
15 program and I am sure Mr. Langford, I see here is here
16 and somebody from AVC will be telling more about the
17 programs available. They have the rehab program,
18 different trades. There are various ones, but these are
19 para-professional programs. We want professional
20 programs in there, so that we could do better in the
21 community.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I will

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 ask some of these when Mr. Langford when he comes forward.

2

3 We were over in The Pas and Keewatin
4 College offers a nurses' diploma program there. That may
5 be a special effort. I think what I am really asking is
6 can you get everything but one year or everything but two
7 years in getting a nursing diploma or a teaching
8 certificate here or are they all para-professional which
9 cannot be built upon? I hope I make myself clear. In
10 some places one can take let's say a para-professional
11 will which be accepted as the first year of a three-year
12 nursing diploma.

13 **ELAINE BOUCHER:** Right.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Or a
15 teacher's -- I can give you a Saskatchewan example for
16 that, you can get in La Ronge that which will amount to
17 at least one year for a B.Ed. at either the University
18 of Regina or the University of Saskatchewan. Have they
19 got build-on programs here?

20 **ELAINE BOUCHER:** They do. I am sure
21 there are a few, but not in teaching.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Not in

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 teaching.

2 **ELAINE BOUCHER:** Definitely not.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I will
4 ask one final question. Of the items you mentioned,
5 orientation for new teachers, youth services, educational
6 field trips, parenting skills classes, the stressing of
7 artwork, the needing of native tutors, funding for
8 post-secondary education outside the community, a
9 co-ordinator for native education project and the like,
10 if you were going to pick one or two of those as priorities
11 and that's always an unfair question, but I will ask it
12 anyway, where do you think the emphasis should be?

13 **DIANE LUDWIG:** That's a very hard
14 question to answer, but I think if we had the hiring of
15 a co-ordinator for the native education project, I feel
16 that this co-ordinator could probably put everything in
17 place that we do need in this area.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
19 you.

20 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I have
21 two very quick questions, if I may. The first one is a
22 straight-forward question. Are there any scholarships

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 available for young say Métis or other aboriginal students
2 based on academic merit when they graduate from the local
3 high school?

4 **ELAINE BOUCHER:** We have another person
5 who should be here from the high school. I am not sure
6 of what is available at the high school.

7 I was speaking with some of the people
8 through the Métis Nation and they were hoping through the
9 annual assembly that is coming in August that there will
10 be funding available for the Métis students in the very
11 near future. I know there is funding as well as you do
12 for the treaty Indians, but for Métis, as myself, there
13 isn't a lot available.

14 We could go through student loans, but
15 then we have to consider paying it back as well if we have
16 the money afterwards. I am sure we could get a job, that
17 is our goal, after the training. Then, a lot of us don't
18 come from rich families and student loans aren't always
19 the first thing you would turn to, but it is available
20 for us. If we could get funding for the Métis it would
21 help a lot.

22 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 for that. You said you are aware of something as well
2 as I am or perhaps we are, but I want to say for myself
3 anyway that nothing about my knowledge should be assumed.
4 That is certainly one of the reasons I am here at least
5 is to learn from people such as yourselves.

6 I want to thank you both for your
7 presentations and I want everyone here to know that Diane
8 Ludwig and Elaine Boucher kept well within their allotted
9 time and I congratulate you.

10 **ELAINE BOUCHER:** Thank you.

11 **DIANE LUDWIG:** Thank you.

12 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** We will
13 hear next from Margaret Gladue.

14 **MARGARET GLADUE:** Good afternoon,
15 gentlemen, and ladies present. My presentation concerns
16 the Eleanor Lake area. My husband was raised in Eleanor
17 Lake and we recently moved back there as he has been ill
18 for the past five years. He wanted to move home and so
19 we did.

20 We would have moved back a long time ago
21 when he first got ill, but interference from different
22 government agencies had kept us away, by pulling our

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 permits, our building permits, power line permits, any
2 kind of permit we applied for they were shelved for us
3 and I had to go and fight for them again.

4 You see, the land he was raised on
5 happens to be Crown land and another minus for us, it's
6 lake area Crown land. So, as you can see, what I have
7 been fighting is I've been fighting different government
8 agencies. We have tried to solve the problem. We have
9 files and I am not kidding you they are at least a foot
10 deep, that's how big our files are. Carl Surrendie
11 from the Métis Association has been working with me on
12 this and we have been exchanging different letters between
13 the different departments. This has brought us to a place
14 with Forestry especially harassing us constantly because
15 we are on Crown land, as I emphasize again. I am not alone
16 on Crown land. The Métis people were all raised on Crown
17 land and there are still thousands of families in Alberta
18 on Crown land.

19 We cannot subdivide our land when our
20 children grow up to give them a little piece of our land
21 beside us. We don't own the land and on our leases it
22 says that we have one residence only. When we try to say

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 this is our family and go about it, we have no one to stop
2 the government from telling us we cannot have our children
3 live next door to us and which is the traditional way of
4 life of the Métis people, your grandchildren are kept near
5 you so that you can teach them your ways.

6 The money that has been spent on one
7 lease alone, mine, is an enormous amount to try to get
8 me to give up and leave, not me and my husband and children,
9 but I said his ancestors are buried just around the corner
10 of the lake from us, his grandfather and his two
11 grandmothers. There is a graveyard in our area there.

12 We have tried to get this land. I have
13 worked through the land co-op to get the land around the
14 lake for the people in the area that have been living there
15 since the days when they all lived at over what they call
16 Kuskill. From those times their families have moved
17 backwards and forwards and eventually coming back to the
18 area. We negotiated with Alberta Housing to get land back
19 that they had bought from the Co-op, subdivided and then
20 we had to sell them back to the people to pay for the
21 improvements. This land that they went and cleared
22 themselves and living there with their families.

StenoTran

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Now, those little parcels of land they
2 will own, but we are across the way and we have no way
3 to negotiate with the government. We have tried. I have
4 sent several documents and files. We are not getting
5 anywhere.

6 The Métis people that are in the area
7 are at the mercy of departments such as land managers and
8 Forestry. We are not alone in these circumstances. I
9 have contacted people in different areas in this province
10 who are living on Crown land and the same complication
11 arises. I have been told they can never own their own land.
12 Therefore, this is something the Métis people have as
13 a tradition, a place to live. We never even had squatters
14 rights. There is a farmer that had squatters rights not
15 far from where we live. The land is now privately owned
16 and which our graveyard is on too, and church.

17 There are thousands of Métis people in
18 northern Alberta. You draw a line around the Al-Pac
19 perimeter, the lease they have and within this line that
20 goes around the perimeter is all the land we ask for, just
21 the line, not the whole thing in the perimeter, to own
22 our own land and be proud of what we have. We can't take

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 that to the bank. We can't take our leases to the bank
2 and ask for a mortgage to better our homes or anything.

3 I have some letters from trappers. I've
4 grown up with trappers in the northern area. They also
5 have told me that them too, because they are on Crown land
6 they are the same as me, living there and letting oil
7 companies come in and cut lines on their lands. I've
8 talked with lots of people and I've compiled a lot of
9 statistics.

10 We have very little rights. If they
11 need to come in on our land, tomorrow if they decide they
12 want my land for a campsite because I'm on the lakeshore,
13 the only opening on that lake, the only road to that lake,
14 what can I do? I'll have to leave and leave the family
15 place.

16 These residences are not only for our
17 families, they are historical sites. They are the sites
18 that we were raised on.

19 I will read you one or two letters here
20 just to kind of let you know what we have been going through.

21 I wrote a letter to LeRoy Fjordbotten. It says:

22 "Dear Sir:

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I am writing to you in regards to
2 the miscellaneous lease I have at Eleanor Lake. I have
3 been in contact with several branches
4 of your departments in regards to
5 camping in front of our house. Forestry
6 will not put up day use signs, so we have
7 campers here day and night, no privacy.

8 We have sometimes up to 65 motorhomes
9 and campers here. There are no
10 facilities for camping and we end up
11 cleaning up the garbage.

12 As for the pollution in the lake, with so many campers
13 we are helpless. I am now considering
14 a lawsuit for compensation for cleaning
15 up and loss of privacy.

16 I have been in contact with your Deputy Minister and
17 in regards to this letter I have had no
18 results, also your land manager, no help
19 there either. So, I have contacted the
20 Métis Association and I have been
21 instructed to contact you on this matter
22 before I got to a

StenoTran

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 lawsuit."

2 I have a reply from him. It says:

3 "Thank you for your letter. I sympathize with you
4 regarding your concerns to the camping
5 activity in front of your house. I note
6 that one of the conditions of your
7 miscellaneous permit for a residence
8 site is that you allow public access to
9 the lake at all times. This condition
10 was signed and agreed to by you prior
11 to reinstatement of your permit."

12 which they had pulled from us once:

13 "To minimize the continued impact of random camping
14 to your residence, I would suggest that
15 you fence the boundary of your permit
16 area overlooking the lakeshore, no
17 trespassing signs.

18 To review the camping and other land use concerns in
19 the Eleanor Lake area, a regional
20 integrated decision for the area is
21 being developed. I understand you will
22 be one of the planning team members."

StenoTran

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I never heard of it when he did write
2 to me, but I checked into it and I got a call from public
3 lands. They met twice and they dissolved it, whereas we
4 could not come to any guaranteed solution. Every
5 department that was there, Parks and Rec, Forestry, Public
6 Lands, not one of them had a cent to help build a campsite
7 there and the I.D. district was there too. They had no
8 money. Nobody had any money, but yet they had all that
9 money to spend writing letters, sending out their different
10 departments from Edmonton, from all over the place. They
11 had money to send them, but not to solve that one little
12 problem and that's all over the place.

13 Random camping is destroying our native
14 grounds, our heritage and our future for our kids. That
15 is my presentation.

16 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Mrs.
17 Gladue, I want to thank you for your presentation.
18 Historically, the Métis have been referred to, among other
19 things, as the road allowance people and at least in my
20 experience so far in our Hearings this is the first
21 presentation that has brought a contemporary dimension
22 to that issue. Indeed, it seems to me from your

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 presentation that there are quite a number of cross-cutting
2 issues here, but I would ask now if my co-Commissioners
3 have any questions or comments.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
5 like to ask whether or not the suggestion of the Minister
6 to fence your lease is a sensible one? I don't know the
7 grounds.

8 **MARGARET GLADUE:** We put up a fence
9 three times and three times it was torn down by random
10 campers hooking it to their bumpers. We have put signs
11 up and they are working. They said day use signs would
12 not work and I put "No camping beyond this point" and they
13 come in and turn around and leave us alone. Forestry says
14 they won't work, those signs, "We can't put them up. They
15 won't work."

16 But through the years -- I've been
17 working on this five years and I keep finding little
18 discrepancies in the background, as if there is something
19 there, so I kept checking. I keep finding this one name
20 keeps coming up and I happened to find out that this guy
21 is related to one of the heads of government and he wanted
22 to build a campsite in my area. So, there is where most

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 of the trouble originated from and why they won't put up
2 no camping signs, day use only.

3 When I signed the lease I phoned, I said
4 what does this mean, public access. They said the local
5 people get their drinking water, I said yes, and he said
6 there is the beach there in front of your house and I said,
7 yes, they come and swim there. That's what it means.

8 I went around the other way to explain
9 another thing and I said what if I was to put a campsite
10 there, there would be no camping on that 100 foot line,
11 that is one of the regulations of the campsite, so why
12 are they forcing me to put campers in front of my house
13 and let them in and I have no privacy, nothing, and neither
14 has the local people in our area. They come there and
15 get their water, drinking water and the campers come over,
16 "Oh, you drink that water?" They have for hundreds of
17 years. So, there is a lot of conflict in the area and
18 I live right in front of it, so it doesn't help.

19 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I want to
20 thank you again. There are a number of important issues
21 here. Many of them are solutions or ideas to proceed
22 forward towards a solution rest upon facts and you can

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 be assured that we have heard your presentation and it
2 is recorded and it appears to me to be related to a number
3 of issues that we will be dealing with. We thank you for
4 having made your point. You made it clearly and it has
5 been of assistance to us. Thank you.

6 I also want to say that Margaret Gladue
7 has kept well within her allotted time and I thank you.

8
9 I wish to invite now to make a
10 presentation to us l'Association canadienne-française and
11 my understanding is that the presentation is to be made
12 en français.

13 Alors, for those of you would like
14 translation, I understand that translation is available
15 through the earphones and if some of you have just come
16 in this afternoon, I understood those are available at
17 the back of the room.

18 I wonder, sir, if I could ask two things,
19 one if you would be indulgent and wait a moment or two
20 while we give people the opportunity to get some listening
21 devices for themselves and may I check, Reed Gauthier is
22 it?

JUNE 9, 1992

ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

1 REED GAUTHIER, L'ASSOCIATION

2 CANADIENNE-FRANCAISE, PLAMONDON: Oui.

3 COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Merci
4 bien.

5 REED GAUTHIER: I will also answer
6 questions in English.

7 COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Thank
8 you. We will wait a moment.

9 --- Short Pause

10 COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Those who
11 wish an English translation, you will turn the dial on
12 the device to channel 2.

13 J'invite maintenant M. Gauthier pour sa
14 présentation pour l'Association canadienne-française,
15 Plamondon.

16 REED GAUTHIER: Bonjour. J'aimerais
17 premièrement souhaiter la bienvenue à la Commission royale
18 sur les peuples autochtones.

19 Je suis représentant de l'Association
20 canadienne-frnçaise de la région Plamondon, Lac La Biche.

21 Nous avons une association qui a un "membership" de 550
22 personnes, 550 "membership" et puis aujourd'hui,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 j'aimerais surtout apporter l'inquiétude que nous avons.

2

3 La chose qui nous inquiète beaucoup et
4 que nous supportons, c'est la cause d'appuyer le concept
5 des trois peuples fondateurs au Canada, celui des peuples
6 autochtones, celui des francophones et celui des
7 anglophones. Et en plus, nous supportons toujours le
8 multiculturalisme.

9 Aujourd'hui, ce qui nous inquiète
10 beaucoup, c'est que nous avons vu en société beaucoup de
11 change, des changements qui sont apportés quand même assez
12 vite. Nous avons vu que les gens qui sont en politique,
13 qui semblent comprendre très bien le processus par lequel
14 les choses vont changer, mais ce qui nous inquiète
15 beaucoup, c'est que les masses ne semblent pas comprendre
16 ce processus et on risque peut-être, sans le savoir,
17 avancer trop vite sans être capable d'éduquer les masses.

18 Je suis professeur d'école. J'ai 20 ans
19 d'expérience. J'ai cinq ans d'expérience comme
20 conseiller personnel dans deux différentes écoles à
21 demi-temps, et puis je m'inquiète beaucoup quand je vois
22 un peuple tel que les autochtones, un peuple, une culture

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 qui est totalement dépourvue de pouvoir.

2 Et par cela, je veux dire que qu'est-ce
3 qui est en train d'arriver, c'est que -- puis ça arrive,
4 ça fait depuis longtemps, j'ose à dire -- c'est que nous
5 avons d'une façon ou d'une autre, on sait exactement
6 pourquoi que c'est arrivé, c'est qu'une culture, c'est
7 quelque chose de vivant. C'est très vivant. C'est un
8 organisme.

9 Et quelque chose de vivant doit être
10 nourri, supporté et appuyé. Et qu'est-ce que nous avons
11 vu dans les -- depuis le début, c'est que la culture des
12 autochtones n'a pas été supportée.

13 On l'a laissé mourir. On l'a laissé
14 dans un état dormant où les Indiens n'ont pas été capables
15 d'évoluer comme autres cultures. Alors, qu'est-ce qui
16 arrive à présent, c'est que on est perdu, on est des oiseaux
17 sans ailes. On est dépourvu de pouvoir.

18 Et pour faire les gens comprendre, c'est
19 parfois nécessaire de parler en parabole, telle que moi
20 j'aime à apporter toujours l'histoire de Nakariem (ph),
21 dans laquelle vient plusieurs poissons, mais surtout qu'on
22 a des petits poissons et des gros poissons.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Et en vivant dans cette même
2 aquarium-là, tes petits poissons doivent être protégés.
3 Sinon, les gros poissons les mangent et c'est la fin.
4 Le petit poisson, lui, est reculé dans un coin, incapable,
5 incapable de s'aventurer, incapable de prendre des
6 risques. Il vit dans la peur, et il n'est pas capable
7 de grandir.

8 Alors, l'importance c'est que on soit
9 capable de donner aux autochtones quelque chose qui va
10 leur donner du pouvoir, le pouvoir de s'autodéterminer.
11 C'est très important, ça.

12 Mais la masse canadienne semble avoir
13 très peur de donner ce pouvoir à une minorité, ou à aucune
14 minorité, parce qu'on parle -- on n'a pas compris en
15 société, on n'a pas compris que l'égalité, ça ne veut pas
16 dire la justice. Les gens pensent -- semblent penser que
17 égalité égale justice ou qu'ils pensent égalité veut dire
18 pareille.

19 Alors, lorsqu'on a commencé au dès
20 début, si il y a de l'injustice, si on n'est pas pareille,
21 on peut pas continuer avec ce concept d'égalité. Les
22 politiciens semblent s'amuser avec ce concept, à

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 promouvoir le concept d'égalité pour tout le monde,
2 l'égalité, l'égalité avec l'égalité.

3 Moi je suis père de famille et je sais
4 bien que dans ma famille, mes enfants ne sont pas pareilles.
5 Ils sont très différents. Les cultures sont très
6 différentes.

7 Et comme valeur fondamentale dans la
8 spiritualité des peuples autochtones, vous avez devant
9 moi le logo des Indiens, et je le reconnais très bien,
10 celui du feu au centre du cercle, celui où chaque membre
11 du groupe est égal, est la même distance au feu, la patte
12 de l'ourson au centre qui démontre la force du groupe.

13 Alors, la spiritualité autochtone est
14 basée fortement sur la force du groupe. Tandis que nous
15 autres, l'homme blanc, notre société, c'est
16 l'individualisme qui survit. C'est le plus fort mange
17 mange le plus faible. Alors lorsque vous avez une culture
18 qui entre en contact avec des valeurs telles que la nôtre,
19 c'est très facile à comprendre que lorsque nous avons
20 divisé les Indiens, c'est très faciles de les conquérir.
21 C'est qu'il n'y a là plus de force.

22 Et la spiritualité indienne est

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 tellement importante que même aujourd'hui, nous avons des
2 gens dans l'environnement qui nous disent que si nous ne
3 retournons pas fermement comme religion aux valeurs
4 spirituelles des Indiens, c'est que cette terre ne survivra
5 pas. C'est que nous avons pris beaucoup plus de cette
6 terre de qu'est-ce qu'on est voulant de remettre à cette
7 terre.

8 Et ce sont des valeurs que les Indiens,
9 les peuples autochtones ont toujours eues, et vont toujours
10 observer, mais que nous, les Blancs, nous avons jamais
11 comprises, et que peut-être un jour, ça va être très
12 important que nous comprenons cette spiritualité-là,
13 comment importante qu'elle est.

14 C'est peut-être spiritualité-là qui va
15 sauver notre terre. Que si on n'y retourne pas fermement,
16 même presque comme un culte ou une religion. Alors, je
17 tiens -- je tiens à dire aujourd'hui que nous avons vu
18 beaucoup de souffrance dans le peuple autochtone, parce
19 que ce sont des gens qui n'ont jamais pu faire les
20 décisions, prendre en main leurs responsabilités. C'est
21 toujours d'autres qui ont dû leur dire qu'est-ce qui était
22 bon pour eux-autres, sans comprendre votre spiritualité.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Et aujourd'hui, je m'excuse que cette
2 -- je pourrais même dire c'est presque affreux qu'est-ce
3 que nous avons pas compris, qu'est-ce que nous avons fait
4 dans le passé, mais que c'est très important aujourd'hui
5 que les Indiens soient capables de reprendre certains
6 pouvoirs et j'oserais même dire, je dis certains pouvoirs
7 parce que ces pouvoirs-là vont évoluer. Lorsque vous avez
8 la permission de commencer à vous autodéterminer, vous
9 êtes capables de dire qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire.

10 Et après qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire, on
11 va être surpris de voir qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire. C'est
12 que on doit retrouver la confiance. On doit remettre dans
13 les mains aux gens qui appartiennent cette responsabilité,
14 le droit de s'autodéterminer.

15 Et un pays est juste aussi fort que tous
16 ses cultures. Les cultures, c'est comme une famille.
17 Une famille est juste aussi forte que chaque membre de
18 cette famille. Il me semble, moi, que jusqu'à date, c'est
19 que les politiciens ont joué les minorités les unes contre
20 les autres.

21 Et parce qu'on joue une minorité contre
22 l'autre, on est capable de conquérir toute dans la grande

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 espérance que l'égalité sera grande chose importante.

2 Faut être égal. Faut traiter tout le monde égal.

3 Bien, ce concept-là, là, on doit

4 commencer à éduquer le monde pour leur faire comprendre

5 que l'égalité, ce n'est pas la justice. L'égalité, ça

6 veut pas dire que tout le monde est pareille. L'égalité

7 veut pas dire que toutes les cultures sont pareilles.

8 C'est qu'il y a beaucoup de différences

9 ces cultures-là. Et parce qu'elles sont différentes, il

10 faut que le gouvernement s'en occupe dans différentes

11 façons. On ne peut pas continuer sous prétexte des

12 qualités d'égalité et puis de penser que les choses vont

13 devenir égales.

14 Le grand objectif, je crois, c'est que

15 on veut tout le monde rejoinde le grand potentiel, chaque

16 culture arrive à son potentiel. Mais cela ne sera pas

17 le même potentiel. Cela ne sera pas le même objectif.

18 Cela va être différent pour chaque culture selon leur

19 définition de réussite, selon leur définition de succès.

20 Alors, il faut que le gouvernement, il

21 faut que cette Commission se rende compte que la masse

22 ne comprend pas le problème et qu'il y a beaucoup de

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 préjugisme dans les écoles. Où je travaille, on se moque
2 à tous les jours d'une culture à l'autre, et on dit, "c'est
3 rien, c'est rien". C'est toujours là et ça fait toujours
4 mal. Et si on continue à essayer de cacher le bobo, il
5 risque seulement de s'augmenter.

6 Pour avoir un Canada fort, il faut que
7 les minorités aient le pouvoir de se déterminer,
8 autodéterminer. Il n'y a pas de danger là-dedans. C'est
9 tout simplement, dans ma famille, si chaque membre est
10 de santé, ça veut dire que ma famille va être plus forte.

11 Si comme parent, si comme père, je me réjouis que un de
12 mes enfants ait moins effort que l'autre, et que je joue
13 un enfant contre l'autre enfant, je risque de démolir ma
14 famille. Je risque de créer le désaccord dans ma famille.

15 C'est la même chose, aujourd'hui, si je
16 disais qu'un homme qui est marié qui enlève tout le pouvoir
17 à sa femme et qui dit, "toi, t'as pas le droit de conduire
18 l'auto. Toi, t'as pas le droit d'écrire des chèques, toi,
19 t'as pas le droit de faire ceci, toi, t'as pas le droit
20 de faire ça", comment est-ce qu'on peut avoir un équipe
21 de gens qui ont de la force quand ils n'ont pas le même
22 pouvoir.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Un autre parabole pour ceux qui sont
2 peut-être un peu plus vieux. Vous savez ce qu'est un team
3 de chevaux. On ne peut pas en avoir un gros puis un petit
4 qui tirent ensemble. Le gros va tout simplement reculer
5 le petit dans le voyage.

6 C'est la même chose en société. Il faut
7 comprendre, qu'on soit capable de se regarder égal, avec
8 le même respect. Et c'est pour ça que la culture indienne,
9 avec votre logo, il y a beaucoup d'égalité dans cette
10 culture-là. La force était toujours dans l'unité du
11 groupe. C'était le groupe qui prenait soin du groupe.

12 Dans notre culture, nous-autres, c'est
13 toujours la force dans cette affaire lignaire où le plus
14 fort mange le plus petit. Alors, il faut réellement
15 comprendre que si on continue, le plus gros mange le plus
16 petit, c'est qu'on risque dans le Canada, dans tout le
17 monde c'est-à-dire, que si on prend pas avantage de toutes
18 les ressources humaines que nous avons là, comme minorité
19 ou quoi que ce soit, on risque de perdre tellement.

20 C'est là notre force. Notre force,
21 c'est dans l'égalité, l'égalité de pouvoir, et non des
22 gens dépourvus de pouvoir. Un oiseau qui n'a pas d'ailes,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 ne vole pas. On dit au Canada, partout dans le monde,
2 ne soignez pas les ours dans le parc. Laissez-les vivre
3 par eux-mêmes. Laissez-les survivre. Est-ce que ça ne
4 s'applique pas aussi aux gens? Il faut trouver les moyens,
5 il faut trouver des façons que ces gens-là retrouvent une
6 façon de survivre, sans qu'on leur donne manger à tous
7 les jours.

8 Mais je ne parle pas des peuples
9 autochtones, nécessairement. Je parle, là, d'aucune
10 minorité, où on est devenu dépendent, comme l'Association
11 canadienne-française bien souvent, on est devenu
12 dépendent, d'octrois et toute sorte de choses. Sans ça,
13 on n'est pas capable de survivre.

14 Alors, le point que je veux mettre, c'est
15 que l'Association supporte avec beaucoup d'intérêt la
16 position des peuples autochtones envers leur gouvernement
17 responsable de leurs affaires.

18 Je ne sais pas au juste comment ça va
19 se faire, mais il faut au moins mettre sur pied, à présent,
20 des structures où les gens, les autochtones vont être
21 capables de se donner le pouvoir, je vais dire le mot
22 anglais, "to empower themselves" à faire, qu'ils soient

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 capables de gérer leurs affaires.

2 Je suis ouvert à aucune question en
3 anglais et j'aimerais bien répondre aux questions si vous
4 en avez.

5 Merci beaucoup.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Is the
7 microphone on, sir? Press the button down at the base.

8 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Je
9 commence en vous remerciant, Monsieur Gauthier. Vous nous
10 avez invités de vous adresser des questions en anglais.

11 I will start by saying that I am keenly
12 sensitive to the important points that you have brought
13 before us. As you have indicated, equality, that which
14 has been adopted, in a watchword of many.

15 Indeed, it has many faces. That
16 equality does not mean justice, many of those who seek
17 to apply equality everywhere are not attuned to these many
18 faces and, for example, the distinctions made in notions
19 between distributive and corrective justice and many other
20 aspects which I will not debate here with you, but I simply
21 want to say this by way of assuring you that they are
22 important issues that are to receive our careful

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 consideration.

2 I would like to turn now to the
3 co-Commissioners to inquire if they have any particular
4 questions or comments?

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
6 like to thank Mr. Gauthier for that presentation and to
7 say that he has put into a relatively brief presentation
8 the very essence of the challenge faced by the Royal
9 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

10 I essentially agree with what I think
11 he was telling us, that no government or no group will
12 solve the problems of another group, that this will come
13 out of the empowerment of the group themselves. This does
14 not mean that no government or no dominant group can assist
15 the other group. Indeed, it means just the very reverse.

16 **REED GAUTHIER:** That's right.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That it
18 is the role of governments and the dominant group to assist
19 other groups to empower themselves so that they can take
20 command of their own destiny in so far as any of us can
21 in a society where we have many overlaps and that it is
22 the fact that the dominant white society has been, for

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 100 years, unwilling to allow aboriginal people to make
2 the decisions which would empower themselves, preserve
3 their language and culture, preserve their spirituality
4 that has brought us to our current state and that the Royal
5 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is called upon to address
6 that issue and see what can be done to redress the injury
7 which has been imposed upon aboriginal society, so that
8 all of our societies can live here in equality, which does
9 not mean sameness, and all of us equally able to empower
10 our own group with as much group emphasis or as little
11 group emphasis as our culture calls for.

12 I thought that was a very perceptive
13 presentation and for which I thank you.

14 **REED GAUTHIER:** Thank you very much, Mr.
15 Blakeney.

16 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
17 you, Mr. Gauthier.

18 **REED GAUTHIER:** Are there any other
19 questions?

20 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** No, no
21 particular question, but I was going to say that your
22 presentation permits me to emphasize a point that many

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Canadians are not aware of and I thank you for that. The
2 particular point I have in mind is the way in which Canada
3 in former times has systematically operated for the
4 destruction of the cultures of aboriginal peoples.

5 **REED GAUTHIER:** That's right.

6 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** For
7 example, by legislating prohibitions that directly
8 prohibited cultural practices, having to do with a wide
9 spectrum of different things, from the forms of marriage
10 through to the practice of religion and other cultural
11 practices, through to provisions that directly breached
12 what are now regarded as sacred civil rights, such as the
13 freedom of association and other such rights which were
14 prohibited in legislation.

15 Again, you have provided us with this
16 useful opportunity and as Mr. Blakeney has said you have
17 made a brief yet very perceptive presentation. It has
18 been and will be of assistance to us. Thank you very much.
19 Do you have any final comments?

20 **REED GAUTHIER:** Yes, Mr. Chartrand, the
21 thing that worries me the most at the present time is that
22 in society we have been able to advance many concepts at

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 the present time, sexual harassment and things like that
2 that has only come about in the last few years, cultural
3 deprivation. All of a sudden we are sort of blooming with
4 all kinds of new things and I don't think the people are
5 able to assimilate fast enough all the implications of
6 these things.

7 The thing that concerns me the most is
8 that as a schoolteacher I feel all of a sudden that what
9 I know and what the politicians know is we have created
10 a system, a process by which too many Canadians don't
11 understand. All of a sudden we find a lot of anger behind
12 what a lot of people are saying and doing and this scares
13 me because it is parallel to the French Revolution, where
14 you had 2 per cent or 3 per cent of the population that
15 was controlling the rest of the population because they
16 were educated and the masses were uneducated and they were
17 overtaxed. We are creating the same kind of system whereby
18 nowadays we are talking about 2, 3, 4 or 5 per cent of
19 the population that understands the political process and
20 you've got the mass out there that doesn't understand what
21 is going on.

22 The risk is this, one of these days the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 mass -- and we can already start feeling the anger behind
2 what is happening and you start wondering where is that
3 anger coming from. That's because maybe we are moving
4 very, very fast, we are advancing our society very fast.
5 We are on the rush. We don't live forever and what is
6 happening is there is a big lag there. We have got to
7 take time to start re-educating our people or talking to
8 them in parables so that they understand what is going
9 on, because the risk is if we get the masses upset and
10 angered, well, we can see right now what is happening in
11 the United States and this is flaring up every once in
12 a while in Canada and we can see it in our schools.

13 That those people who are dis-empowered
14 can easily re-empower themselves by ganging up and causing
15 the rest of the masses to get angry at those who are
16 empowering themselves with power. So, I don't know, but
17 I am leaving you with that, that the government has a
18 responsibility to see to it that the masses understand
19 where we are going and to take time to understand -- to
20 make people realize and understand these concepts that
21 we are bringing forth and which we are assuming everybody
22 understands but don't. That could easily backfire on us

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 sooner or later. Thank you very much.

2 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
3 you.

4 Next on my list I see the Alberta
5 Vocational Centre. Is there a representative here from
6 the Centre?

7 Welcome, sir, and I wonder if I might
8 ask you at the beginning for the purposes of our record
9 keeping if you would please identify and also I will repeat
10 to you and the others what Mr. Blakeney said this morning,
11 that if any presenters have written submissions or
12 materials then we invite you to leave them with our staff.
13 Thank you. Please begin whenever you wish.

14 **TED LANGFORD, ALBERTA VOCATIONAL**
15 **COLLEGE, LAC LA BICHE:** Thank you very much, Commissioner
16 Chartrand, Commissioner Blakeney and local Commissioner
17 Robert Boucher.

18 My name is Ted Langford. I am the
19 President of the Alberta Vocational College centred here
20 in Lac La Biche. I am pleased to welcome you to our
21 community and to this part of Alberta and honoured that
22 I have the opportunity to speak briefly to the Royal

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

2 I have provided you simply with a
3 calendar of programs that the Alberta Vocational College
4 offers at the campus here in Lac La Biche and in a number
5 of other settings here in northeastern Alberta and a very
6 brief submission which I shall not read, but I will speak
7 to shortly.

8 I would like to summarize some of the
9 content of the submission and perhaps I have one little
10 story to tell. The Alberta Vocational College came about
11 because of an interest in promoting the human resources
12 here in northeastern Alberta. It began with a federal
13 initiative called New Start. There were New Start
14 programs in a number of provinces in Canada and Alberta
15 New Start was centred in northeastern Alberta.

16 Of particular interest was the value of
17 training and education for the local population and
18 specifically with and for native people. As Alberta New
19 Start was developing its programs and looking at doing
20 it in a number of ways they were looking at research methods
21 of determining what kinds and in what ways education could
22 best be provided and experimented and worked with a number

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 of different initiatives. Those involved training people
2 in home communities, relocating people, doing training
3 in larger centres.

4 They, unfortunately, ran short of
5 funding and the board of directors chose, when they were
6 not able to get additional funds from the federal
7 government, to discontinue some of the programming here
8 at the centre that was established in Lac La Biche. The
9 result of that was a good deal of disappointment and some
10 of that anger that Reed Gauthier just referred to. Many
11 of the native people of the region said no, we don't want
12 this to stop, it should continue and there was a sit-in
13 and a good deal of lobbying and discussion followed that.

14 It resulted in the establishment of a local native
15 organization which looked at a number of issues besides
16 education. That organization is called Alberta Petepon.

17 Through their efforts and the
18 forerunner, Alberta New Start, when the funding for
19 educational programs through Alberta New Start and Alberta
20 Petepon discontinued, I think the point had been made and
21 the provincial government chose to establish a training
22 institution here in Lac La Biche and a continuation of

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 some of the efforts and the work that had been done through
2 Alberta New Start by reopening the facility as a provincial
3 college.

4 AVC, the Alberta Vocational College, has
5 been in existence to this day and 1993 will see the college
6 having a 25-year history. Much of that is based upon the
7 commitment of native people towards education and their
8 willingness to stand up and say so.

9 AVC has developed since it became a
10 provincial institution back in 1973 a number of programming
11 initiatives. They are described in the calendar, but I
12 would best summarize them as the primary focus is on
13 upgrading of academic skills. The majority of the
14 students or a good half of the students are in adult
15 upgrading programs. The rest of the programs are a variety
16 of skill training programs that generally relate to
17 economic or social needs of the region.

18 Now, if I might, I will tell my story.

19 With that kind of a beginning, those of us who were
20 involved with AVC in the early years were very much aware
21 of the input, the knowledge and certainly that past
22 commitment of native people to education and in our efforts

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 to proceed and plan programming in the administration of
2 the college we thought we were doing quite a fine job.

3 One day one of my staff members came back
4 to me and said there are several of the native leaders
5 of the area who were having lunch in one of the local
6 restaurants and I happened to bump into them and they
7 wondered what was the problem with the college, it didn't
8 seem to be meeting the needs of native people.

9 Our first reaction was to get a bit
10 defensive and say given this history and our knowledge
11 and what we are doing how can that be? Second thoughts
12 led us to decide that perhaps it was true, perhaps it was
13 real, perhaps it was a perception problem, but in the early
14 1980s we undertook a major review of what people in the
15 communities thought about the college and the programming
16 that was being provided.

17 The net result of that was that while
18 the programs that we were offering were valued and needed,
19 there wasn't consultation. There hadn't been much of an
20 information flow. The understandings were being lost and
21 it took us about a year or two to sit down and just try
22 to understand what this meant, not only for the college

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 itself, but the ongoing and evolutionary process that
2 education of all people go through and particularly when
3 there is a community commitment towards it.

4 Since that time, the college has
5 carefully attempted and I have to say "attempted" because
6 we have not always succeeded, carefully attempted with
7 regards to the needs of the native communities and the
8 people of the area to maintain an open door, a line of
9 communication, a whole process of liaison that involves
10 liaison people being established in the college to work
11 through the elected councils and the established agencies
12 of the region.

13 We have done a number of things. Most
14 of the programs have advisory committees. A large number
15 of the people on the advisory committees to the programs
16 have representation from aboriginal groups or communities.
17 We have established formal liaison employees whose job
18 it is to work with and constantly with native communities
19 and organizations. In addition, we have recognized that
20 we have to always continue to try to listen. That means
21 attending meetings. It means responding to inquiries or
22 concerns when they are raised and, most of all, not taking

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 anything for granted or being complacent. We have not
2 always succeeded and there are times when we have failed.

3

4 In particular, I think out of this 25
5 years of experience there are a number of considerations
6 and understandings that we have arrived at that I would
7 just like to repeat from the presentation that I have
8 provided to you. First of all, we have understood that
9 native leaders, and particularly the elders, highly value
10 education as a means of developing their people and
11 communities.

12 Secondly, education and training is seen
13 as the primary factor in bringing about improved economic
14 and social conditions for aboriginal people.

15 Thirdly, this one took us a little time
16 to learn, but a student's education must be broad enough
17 so that the student is seen in the context of his family
18 and his community.

19 When an adult returns to school, the
20 learning that he is exposed to does impact his family and
21 his community, or her community.

22 Fourthly, a holistic approach to

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 education and training prepare the student to deal with
2 a world of uncertainty and rapid change. We find now that
3 many employers are less concerned about the technical
4 skills, but are more concerned about a person's ability
5 to think, a person's attitude on how he or she works with
6 other people. In many cases they say that we can teach
7 the technical skills. We want a well-rounded person who
8 has a number of abilities and can respond to change.

9 Next, and certainly it was mentioned by
10 Elaine earlier, the value and benefit of positive role
11 models is critical to the development of our youth in both
12 native and non-native communities. Our children need
13 examples. Our communities need leaders.

14 Training programs, where possible,
15 should incorporate a practical or field placement
16 component to ensure curriculum relevance and to provide
17 students with a taste of that real world.

18 Finally, and this is the lesson that we
19 learned when we did the review, that training initiatives
20 best succeed when there is collaboration, co-operation
21 and partnerships established between educational
22 institutions, the communities and the agencies and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 certainly business and the private sector industry world
2 has to be involved as well.

3 As the educational institution
4 operating out of the Lac La Biche area has grown and
5 matured, I would say that so have many of the communities
6 and the people we have dealt with. It's unusual now for
7 us to find where a training program would have been
8 required, or requested of us five years ago. It was simply
9 a question of clarifying the needs and proceeding to
10 deliver the program. Now many communities and
11 organizations are asking us to be one of three bidders.
12 Communities are much more certain of what they want, what
13 they need and what their educational aspirations are.
14 This is happily a sign of growth and maturity, but it
15 requires training institutions and governments who are
16 involved in supporting these to mature and grow with the
17 native peoples and communities as they grow.

18 I thank you for being able to present
19 and share these ideas. I understand there will be some
20 questions because Elaine has set me up here.

21 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
22 you, Mr. Langford.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I think with the statement that
2 ownership and commitment are the keys to success that you
3 will find little disagreement in the country. However,
4 I would like to begin by asking Mr. Boucher and Mr. Blakeney
5 if they would like to ask questions or make comments?

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I will
7 ask do you see the Alberta Vocational College developing
8 so that it might offer the initial instruction or first
9 year instruction or something equivalent that may be
10 required for some of the professional degrees, diplomas,
11 that we referred to earlier? Thus, a step to a degree
12 in education for a teacher or for a diploma nurse or as
13 the case may be?

14 I think from the earlier discussion you
15 picked up the flavour of my question.

16 **TED LANGFORD:** There are a number of
17 programs, professional programs in which we have as a
18 college talked to the Alberta post-secondary department
19 of advanced education regarding putting training like that
20 in place. The current system in Alberta has I guess
21 a number of limitations it attaches to different kinds
22 of colleges, technical institutes and our college, as I

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 mentioned earlier, has had a primary focus on the academic
2 upgrading and the skill training has mainly been at the
3 certificate or diploma level and, as Elaine mentioned,
4 at the para-professional.

5 There is an interesting experiment with
6 another Alberta Vocational College at Lesser Slave Lake
7 where that college has, rather than on its own initiative,
8 say, teacher education for the first two years, has put
9 in place a brokerage arrangement where they get the
10 University of Alberta to come and do that programming in
11 their community. That is something that we are going to
12 be exploring and would certainly see as being probably
13 the preferable way to providing professional training in
14 rural areas.

15 The two limitations to it are, one,
16 funding. It takes dollars to do that and, secondly, on
17 occasion, depending upon where, there is a question of
18 the logistics. Are there enough people, I should say a
19 reasonably large number of people to do it. Those are
20 things that we will be exploring and, in fact, this current
21 year we have also been contacted by the University of
22 Athabasca to look at combinations of home study, summer

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 session and then even teleconferencing to see if some of
2 those needs could be met.

3 Currently, the Alberta system does not
4 make that an easy thing to achieve, but nonetheless there
5 are some innovative models that we will be exploring.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
7 you. I may say that some of the -- almost totally parallel
8 problems that you have just outlined have been approached
9 in other provinces and, essentially, when we wanted to
10 deliver teacher training services in northern Saskatchewan
11 we got the two universities to combine, that is the
12 University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan,
13 to have a combined team to put in a service at La Ronge
14 which would be accepted as a first year or whatever at
15 either of the other two universities. This avoided the
16 problem of attempting to staff up an isolated community
17 college to deliver a program which was going to satisfy
18 two universities. We let them grapple with that problem
19 themselves, but deliver it at La Ronge.

20 **TED LANGFORD:** I think with the high
21 costs of running institutions that governments are going
22 to be forced to find new and innovative ways to deliver

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 education on the terms of the learner, as opposed to the
2 provider and --

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** By moving
4 the instructor, as opposed to the student, in many
5 instances.

6 **TED LANGFORD:** Yes. Some of us
7 teachers are slow learners though. Those are some of my
8 former students.

9 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
10 you.

11 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
12 you, Mr. Langford.

13 There is one issue which has arisen and
14 arises again and again regarding not only programs such
15 as yours, but other programs and that is distilling the
16 question more narrowly as I go along. What is education
17 for? How do I make education relevant and in this
18 particular case I suppose, and I think you have touched
19 upon this, how do we provide people with the vocational
20 training that is relevant for the kinds of circumstances
21 that these people are expected to apply this particular
22 training.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 My question is this: What role does
2 your institution and by your institution I mean to include
3 such advisory groups as you have talked about, what role
4 do you have in deciding the content of the curriculum,
5 I mean the substantive content? What is it that gets
6 taught in various programs? That is, I assume that in
7 some places the government Department of Education has
8 a monopoly or a quasi-monopoly on the point. So, my
9 question is who makes the decisions about what will be
10 taught to the individuals and what role does your
11 institution have in the process?

12 **TED LANGFORD:** In many of the
13 skill-training programs offered in our college, the actual
14 decisions on the curriculum are formally approved and
15 sanctioned by our administration. Often the approval for
16 the funding would require that there be a provincial
17 approval. Often if we are looking for additional funding
18 we have to indicate what's in the curriculum, but in many
19 cases the actual determination is done by our own
20 administration and the major process that we use is that
21 of establishing well-balanced advisory committees that
22 involve a combination of staff, knowledgeable people who

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 are current in the employment or business or industry field
2 for which the training is intended and a very valuable
3 source we find also is former students.

4 If a graduate of ours is working in a
5 field of study in which we did the training, that graduate
6 will often be the best one to tell us, "Well, half of what
7 you taught me is of no value". So, it's a combination
8 of those three and then we look at the detailed curriculum
9 through our own staff and through our administration.

10 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you
11 for that answer, Mr. Langford. Again, thank you and I
12 applaud the fact that you too have assisted us in trying
13 to play catch-up in the tight program that we have. Thanks
14 again.

15 **TED LANGFORD:** Thank you.

16 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I would
17 like now to call upon Mr. Erasmus from the Alberta Mental
18 Health Association.

19 **TOM ERASMUS, ALBERTA MENTAL HEALTH**
20 **ASSOCIATION:** First of all, thank you, Mr. Chartrand and
21 Mr. Blakeney and Mr. Boucher for hearing my presentation.
22 I would like to commend you on taking on such an important

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 task as addressing the needs of our aboriginal people
2 across this country.

3 I would also like to thank the local
4 organizers for allowing me to come and present today.

5 The first thing I want to say to
6 yourselves and everybody in the crowd, I assure everybody
7 that I am an employee of Alberta Mental Health and not
8 a patient from one of our clinics. So, hopefully, what
9 I am going to say has some merit to it.

10 I would like to begin by briefly
11 describing the work that I do. I have two portfolios with
12 Alberta Mental Health. First of all, my main duties are
13 as a community development worker in the northeast region.
14 I also represent this region in trying to bring structure
15 and a parallel of services to native peoples across this
16 province.

17 I should also add that in doing so we
18 are very new at that game as an agency for the province.

19 I am also a co-ordinator of native
20 services for the northeast region and this focus is to
21 bring the expertise that we have from our mental health
22 clinics in partnership with our native communities and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 to have balance in delivering that service.

2 I would also like to add that the main
3 focus from the community development initiative is to
4 prevent mental illness in our native communities and to
5 promote wellness. I would like to underline the next point
6 in bringing that service to the communities is that it
7 is the gatekeepers of that program, our steering committee
8 members from the respective native communities, as well
9 as we do have a minority of agency personnel represented
10 and that is to bring unity to service and so, hopefully,
11 within our steering committee we can also be addressing
12 educational issues as well as understanding one another
13 better.

14 One of the biases and perhaps
15 frustrations that I have when I hear and listen to many
16 of the native issues that are being discussed across this
17 country, they are all very important, but in my opinion
18 one of the more important issues is the mental health of
19 aboriginal people across this country. I do not hear a
20 national agenda to do that.

21 Many of our native communities are in
22 a transitional period as native people address their issues

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and want more control over their lives. There is greater
2 awareness in their communities to deal with the holistic
3 person, the holistic needs of families and the holistic
4 needs of communities.

5 Some of the communities that are having
6 more success than others in addressing their mental health
7 issues are those communities that have gone back to the
8 grassroots and traditional approaches to dealing with the
9 mental well being and wellness of their people. They have
10 utilized their traditional ways and customs and have taken
11 from the outside what they need and have utilized it very
12 wisely.

13 However, I would not want to leave the
14 impression here that at the community level mental health
15 issues are being addressed in their entirety because there
16 are a lot of mental health issues in our communities and
17 they are more rampant than others. I will describe some
18 of those later.

19 The purpose of my presentation today is
20 to ask this Commission to recognize an advocate for
21 positive change in delivering mental health services to
22 our native communities, to promote the healing process

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 in respect to communities so native people can heal and
2 then go on with the other more important issues, to
3 recognize the importance of the development of appropriate
4 resources and the partnerships that are needed to be
5 developed between non-native human services and our native
6 communities.

7 I would also like to add that in
8 addressing mental health issues in communities the average
9 Canadian looks at depressed, suicidal, self-destructive
10 people, but I believe the focus must be taken where we
11 look at the children when they are this high. In my
12 opinion that is where suicidal prevention starts and I
13 don't believe that education is out there to recognize
14 that.

15 I would like to qualify the reason that
16 I asked this Commission to recognize the presentation and
17 I suggest some of the following direction be taken: (a)
18 that mentorship programs be implemented into the national
19 system as well as into the provincial systems. Mentorship
20 programs mean the following, where appropriate mental
21 health professionals first of all are trained to be
22 cognizant of culture, language and traditional practices.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1

2 Through this process, partnerships are
3 developed, whereas the expertise of these people is
4 utilized to train, assist and monitor and coach native
5 people in their own communities so that the native people
6 can do things for themselves. These appropriate people
7 would not enter communities and leave quickly. Their
8 services would be phased out as the community developed.

9 This whole process would be guided by elder councils and
10 appropriate community resources.

11 It is my opinion, and I share this
12 opinion with many of my colleagues, that too many dollars
13 in the area of mental health are leaving native communities
14 to private practice and consultants. The focus is to
15 mainly deal with individuals. Therefore, the service does
16 not address the environment in those particular
17 communities.

18 I would also suggest, (b), that a
19 community development training program be offered to
20 native communities as to how to bring resources, expertise,
21 program management together to create harmony and balance
22 in our communities. I believe that in itself is a trade.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 It's an area of expertise as to how you bring people
2 together, how you bring groups of people together to work
3 together in harmony.

4 I don't believe that education, economic
5 development, recreation, health, job creation and all of
6 these programs can work in isolation of one another and
7 sometimes that happens in our native communities.

8 I would like to share with you an
9 experience that I just had last week. I was one of six
10 facilitators at a national conference in Vancouver where
11 we trained community health representatives in the area
12 of mental health. There were some 120 people in our
13 session. The vast majority of the issues that these people
14 had was grieving and tragic loss. Also statistics such
15 as suicide rates being six times higher than the national
16 average for native people, alcohol and drug abuse being
17 dominant because of these and it is very frightening to
18 know that the most affected group of native people,
19 affected by suicide, is boys 15 to 20 years old.

20 All of these issues were talked about
21 through discussion and sharing the experiences that each
22 person had. We did an exercise with all 120 people and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 we asked everyone in the room to share an experience in
2 the last four to six months of a tragic loss that they
3 had, whether it be family, whether it be community, whether
4 it be peers or people that were very significant to them
5 in their everyday lives, whether it be in their community
6 or not. Out of the 120 there was not one person that didn't
7 have that type of loss.

8 Coming out of the conference, all of the
9 CHRs in their evaluations spoke of the need for more
10 training in their communities. I would like to suggest
11 that that training be made readily available not only for
12 CHRs, but for school counsellors, for parents because the
13 real mental health therapists are your grassroots people
14 in the communities.

15 In order for the healing process to take
16 place, people must heal themselves. I think as any
17 aboriginal person in a capacity to deal with other people
18 has to look at themselves first.

19 There is a model that we have at mental
20 health that each and everyone of us has to have three
21 aspects in our lives in order for us to have self-esteem
22 and these are not in any particular order; significance,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 affection and security. If a child does not have one of
2 the three, then they are out of balance and many of our
3 native children do not feel affection in many of the systems
4 that are made readily available to them.

5 Another statistic that was given to me
6 in Vancouver was that there is a particular Indian
7 community that had 26 private consultants coming in, doing
8 work and leaving, 26 at one time out of a population of
9 approximately 5,000 people. I think if we were to look
10 at the expertise those 26 people would have and turn it
11 into more preventative training, facilitating and
12 co-ordinated efforts, then native people would get a much,
13 much bigger bang for their dollar and could, therefore,
14 gain control over the issues or policies that are made
15 for them, not in partnership with.

16 I would also ask this Commission to look
17 at recruitment processes for native people to become
18 involved in agencies and perhaps loosen some of those bolts
19 that are there as far as recruiting native people into
20 systems where they can not only be trained in the various
21 communities, but be part of the decision makers for those
22 particular agencies.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 That is my presentation. I hope this
2 Commission will recognize some of the points that I have
3 made and, hopefully, they can be addressed so that mental
4 health needs will be met more significantly in our
5 respective communities. Thank you.

6 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
7 you, Mr. Erasmus.

8 I will begin by asking the other
9 Commissioners if they have questions or comments before
10 I do.

11 **COMMISSIONER ROBERT BOUCHER:** How long
12 has this been going on for, Tom, your organization?

13 **TOM ERASMUS:** The program that I am
14 involved in has been going for two years. I started on
15 April Fool's Day 1990.

16 **COMMISSIONER ROBERT BOUCHER:** Thank
17 you.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
19 you, Mr. Erasmus, and I would like to make a comment and
20 then ask a question. My question is going to be for a
21 little bit more information on the membership program and
22 just what it is.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 My comment is one which I thought you
2 might be interested in. When we were last week or the
3 week before in Teslin in the Yukon, we had a presentation
4 from the Yukon Medical Association, an interesting
5 presentation. They deal with the issue of mental health.

6

7 They said, firstly, for hard psychiatric
8 problems, schizophrenia, they don't see very much
9 difference between native and non-native rates or the way
10 they go at them. They should be dealt with as they are
11 now being dealt with.

12 But for the psychological problems, for
13 the stress, for the depression, unless it is very much
14 clinically caused by schizophrenia or the like, they see
15 a great deal of difference in the way that these matters
16 should be dealt with. They said and it would be
17 interesting I think to get the submission which they have
18 made to other organizations, they have it in print, they
19 said, "In our opinion what is most needed for the mental
20 health and the physical health of aboriginal people in
21 the Yukon," with that qualification about hard psychiatry,
22 "is greater control over their own lives."

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 We don't need any medical hardware.
2 We don't need any -- they just went down the list of things
3 that they did not need, ahead of, as they said,
4 self-government, self-determination, something to involve
5 people much more in their lives. This is very interesting
6 coming from general practitioners who usually talk about
7 the CAT scanners and the like. These people were saying
8 enough of that. We've got enough hardware. This is the
9 problem. I thought that might be interesting to you
10 because everything you have said would reinforce that view,
11 that what is needed is an ability for aboriginal people,
12 for native people to get a greater control over their own
13 destiny and many of these problems will solve themselves.
14 You are clearly directing yourself to that and they talked
15 about a mentorship program as a way of, as I took it,
16 training people in the communities.

17 Would you like to expand on that a little
18 bit more for me?

19 **TOM ERASMUS:** First of all, some people
20 might have trouble with the terminology, but that is the
21 terminology being used right now. The mentorship
22 program to the knowledge that I have of it is where a mental

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 health therapist in a particular area would work with
2 appropriate numbers that they could handle and that there
3 would be an assessment done on the mental health needs
4 of those particular areas and that in partnership with
5 the community leaders, elders, those community level
6 people working on it would come up and design a training
7 package that would be made available to those particular
8 communities and just get right at the problem.

9 There would be some training. There
10 would be some going out back into the community to put
11 into practice some of the training you have taken. The
12 mental health therapist would be involved in monitoring
13 and assisting people with the various skills needed to
14 perhaps look at assessment and how do you assess mental
15 illness, what are some of the things that you look for
16 in suicidal ideation, those types of things.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
18 you.

19 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Mr.
20 Erasmus, I will begin by reminding myself that there is
21 a very well known Canadian writer, I think her name is
22 Lucy Maude Montgomery, who writes about kindred spirits.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I find I am finding quite a number of kindred spirits
2 in my travels on these Hearings across the country. This
3 morning we had a presenter here who was a kindred spirit
4 in the sense that he was a Hank Williams fan and during
5 lunch I had the opportunity to talk to some other people
6 and it appears that we might share another passion, that
7 of baseball. I understand you are a baseball pitcher,
8 so indeed I just want to take the opportunity to say that
9 it is particularly pleasing to make your acquaintance.

10 With respect to your presentation, I
11 have one question and it has to do with the scope of the
12 services that your organization offers. Let me try to
13 explain the question.

14 I read somewhere not so very long ago
15 about the mental health problems that many prisoners
16 serving sentences in federal and other institutions have.

17 I am concerned to investigate the kind and availability
18 of services provided for them, so I am wondering about
19 this. If there is an individual in community "A" and
20 community "A" being a community in northeastern Alberta
21 that your association works with, this individual is
22 convicted of an offence and goes to prison and this

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 individual is known to have the need for mental health
2 services of the sort that you offer. The question is are
3 you involved in the provision of services to this
4 individual or are these individuals divorced from your
5 reach in such a case, or do you know about the availability
6 of services to them?

7 **TOM ERASMUS:** I am not very
8 knowledgeable about services to people as you have just
9 described.

10 I also would like to add that the focus
11 of my work is to get at the prevention aspect of preventing
12 mental illness before it starts. However, in doing so
13 though there is no doubt that we come across situations
14 where a person must become involved in trying to refer.
15

16 The only avenue I can take to try to
17 attempt to answer that is that, first of all, in an area
18 such as ours it is difficult in having access to a lot
19 or sufficient mental health therapist services. So, a
20 lot of times a person that you describe coming out of this
21 region would probably just fall through the cracks. The
22 availability of dollars is not there for appropriate

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 services in regions such as ours is a highly significant
2 concern. That's why I would be advocating that the mental
3 health systems look at taking more of a teaching role for
4 mental health therapists, as opposed to direct clinical
5 services.

6 I am not sure if I have touched on what
7 you are getting at.

8 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Yes, you
9 have answered it quite well. Thank you.

10 I must say that the matter of trying to
11 attempt to prevent these difficulties before they arise
12 and the other things that you have brought to our attention
13 regarding the suicide rate amongst young people are matters
14 that must necessarily disturb all well-intentioned
15 Canadians.

16 We thank you for bringing these to our
17 attention and you can be sure that they will have to be
18 addressed by us so far as they come within the terms of
19 our mandate. Again, thank you very much, Mr. Erasmus.

20 **TOM ERASMUS:** Thank you.

21 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** What I
22 would like to suggest now is that we take about a

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 four-minute break and resume proceedings after that time.

2 Thank you.

3 **--- Short Recess at 3:45 p.m.**

4 **--- Upon Resuming at 3:55 p.m.**

5 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** We will
6 commence the second half of this afternoon's session of
7 the Hearing of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

8

9 Ladies and gentlemen, we are resuming
10 proceedings. I am inviting now the representatives of
11 the North Central Alberta Crisis Intervention Association.
12 Would you please come forward.

13 May I ask if you would, please, for the
14 record, also identify yourselves so we have that. I invite
15 you to begin whenever you are comfortable and ready to
16 do so.

17 **MARGARET KLOPENBERG, ASSISTANT**
18 **CO-ORDINATOR, CHILD IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM, NORTH CENTRAL**
19 **ALBERTA CRISIS INTERVENTION ASSOCIATION:** I am Margaret
20 Klopenberg. I am Assistant Co-ordinator for the Child
21 Identification Program with our Crisis Association.

22 **CHRISTINE HOFFMAN, CHAIRMAN, NORTH**

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **CENTRAL ALBERTA CRISIS INTERVENTION ASSOCIATION:** I am
2 Christine Hoffman. I am the Chairman of the Crisis
3 Association and I am also an instructor at the Alberta
4 Vocational College and I teach the Community Health
5 Representative Program which you have heard quite a bit
6 about from Elaine and also from Tom Erasmus and our
7 President.

8 I want to give you a little bit of
9 background about our organization because we are not an
10 agency. We are a non-profit organization. It was
11 incorporated in 1985 and we are non-profit charitable
12 registered organization as well.

13 I came to Lac La Biche going on seven
14 years ago and I was kind of lucky in a way because I came
15 to this community with very open eyes and a very open mind.
16 It didn't take me very long to realize that there were
17 a number of ethnic groups in the community, that there
18 were some divisions in the community that I personally
19 felt bothered by.

20 My role as an instructor at the college,
21 I teach mostly native students, but some non-native
22 students. My career in nursing has been varied. I worked

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 in outpost nursing in northern Quebec, northern Ontario
2 and southern Alberta -- or I should say northeastern
3 Alberta and so I've had a very good, I think, overview
4 certainly of the emotional and social needs of the native
5 people and the non-native people.

6 I have been very fortunate to be in a
7 position where I am teaching CHR's now and being the Chairman
8 of the Crisis Association I am really lucky because I have
9 an opportunity not only to identify some of the needs,
10 but I also have a chance to teach some of the people who
11 are the caregivers who can go out into those communities,
12 not only in Lac La Biche, but in other areas. So, I am
13 really lucky because I am identifying a lot of the needs
14 in our own community. I go into the classroom and I try
15 and teach some of those people like Elaine who go back
16 into the native communities and I try to tell them to look
17 at the community's needs and not to impose their needs
18 on the community, but try and find out what the needs of
19 the people are.

20 The other day we had a new member in our
21 Crisis Association and she sat at the table and all of
22 a sudden she said spontaneously, this is like the United

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Nations and then she looked and put her hand in front of
2 her mouths and said, "Oops, I shouldn't have said that".
3

4 I smiled because I felt very good because
5 that's exactly how we are. We are a United Nations at
6 our table when we have a board meeting. We have
7 representation not only of the people in Lac La Biche,
8 but we seek out representation from Kikino, Caslan,
9 Plamondon, from Beaver Lake, Heart Lake. Some of those
10 communities are a little bit far away from us, so that
11 when they come to a meeting late at night it's difficult.

12 I am excited to say that after seven
13 years we have accomplished many things and I've handed
14 you our objectives and our goals. Those were written about
15 1986-87. If you look through them, you will see that one
16 of the first goals that we had was to educate the public
17 about the nature of family violence in the region and how
18 it affects our community.

19 I think it is very important to realize
20 that family violence is an issue that affects every single
21 one of us. It doesn't matter what background you come
22 from, what your ethnic background is, it affects all of

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 us.

2 What we have tried to do in our community
3 is again we don't impose our own ideas. We try and find
4 out what the community needs are and we try and bring
5 educational materials to the community. In the past
6 couple of years we have brought four major theatre
7 productions to Lac La Biche. Some of them were touring
8 across the country. One group was actually touring in
9 Europe. Two of them were French-Canadian groups that came
10 from Quebec and, in fact, two presentations were from the
11 same group, the Theatre Asma group from Sherwood Park.

12 They dealt with issues such as equality
13 in the workplace. They dealt with family violence issues,
14 such as child abuse, suicide prevention and I am very
15 pleased to say the last production was just in November
16 and we had a full house at AVC. We ended up having a 58
17 per cent response to our survey and we ended up getting
18 some responses to our concerns that sort of corroborated
19 some of the things that we are looking at doing.

20 We promote interagency network. It's
21 just a phrase that we use. So often, when you are dealing
22 with family violence issues it's sort of the in thing to

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 deal with family violence. Seven years ago when I became
2 the Chairperson and I did it really by accident, I wanted
3 to be an anonymous go-for kind of volunteer, I never dreamed
4 I would be sitting in front of a Royal Commission.

5 I am excited to say that when we did this
6 proposal, when we first submitted it to FCSS for funding,
7 we looked at it and we said what are we going to do with
8 this program. I had never been a board member and I had
9 never been a chairperson, so I didn't have the tools that
10 other people would have had. I looked around me and I
11 said who should we have on this board. I asked for the
12 grassroots people.

13 One of the things that I tell my board
14 members is we have to be as tall as the grass. You don't
15 want to be a pyramid, so that each and every one of us
16 is only accessible, but that when people need help that
17 any one of us who is associated to the board can reach
18 out and help.

19 It took a little while because my board
20 members were people like me who had never been board members
21 and they said, "I don't know anything, I can't do anything,
22 I'm not an important person". I am pleased to say that

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 those non-important people have carried us for the last
2 seven years. We are not funded by the government. We
3 are not funded by any agency, but we have been raising
4 our own money, mostly through bingos, through donations
5 from service clubs and through a lot of hard work. These
6 people are the grassroots people in the community and they
7 are truly a United Nations group of people.

8 The reason I came today was because I
9 wanted to share with you that you don't need to have money
10 to make things work. Sometimes I get very upset and angry
11 because I see organizations that have a lot of money and
12 they are not getting anything done or they are getting
13 very little done.

14 I think what we need to start looking
15 at is sharing our resources, looking at the different kinds
16 of people we are because we have a gift to give each other.

17 I truly believe this, this is not rhetoric, I truly believe
18 it because I've seen it happen and I've seen it work.

19 Lac La Biche in our organization has had
20 some miracles happening. A year ago we were \$2,000 in
21 the hole. We went to the bank and we asked for an
22 overdraft, with no collateral, with no money coming in

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and they gave it to us. I am pleased to say our bank account
2 yesterday had about \$5,000 in the black. That came from
3 hard work. It came from us working together as
4 individuals, putting down some of the barriers that we
5 often put up against each other.

6 We don't look at each other and say are
7 you native, are you a Muslim, are you whatever. We look
8 at each other and say we have a job to be done. I really
9 like your logo. We are looking for one. We won't steal
10 yours, but we are looking for one and that's exactly how
11 we are. We look in the centre and we say what is the
12 problem. We look at the solutions and we are living proof
13 that you can do it and you don't need a lot of money to
14 do it.

15 One of the things that we felt when we
16 started working was that we needed a support group for
17 women. It was interesting, the men said that now that
18 you have a support group for the women, what are you going
19 to do for us? That's a dicey situation because it's harder
20 to get a support group for me than it is for women.

21 We ran it for three years. Initially
22 we didn't have a very good response. Finally, we had a

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 great response and, unfortunately, we didn't have a place
2 to live, so we ended up in FCSS for a little while, then
3 the Friendship Centre gave us a place, then the radio
4 station, CFWE and Ray Fox, who is a wonderful person and
5 a wonderful mentor, gave us a place to live.

6 The bottom line is it didn't matter where
7 our house was. What was important was who was in the house.

8 So, we've moved around a lot. Right now the office is
9 sort of in my house and a few other members are keeping
10 files as well. It didn't really matter that we didn't
11 have a building because what we had was a dream and we
12 still have a dream and we are moving forward all the time.

13 We ran a support group for three years
14 and then the college had a support group that they started
15 and we said, fine, run it because we are not trying to
16 be an agency. We want to be a catalyst and a facilitator
17 for change. We want to use existing resources, so that
18 we are not building another empire

19 Just recently I went to a policing
20 conference in Lac La Biche and I met one of the native
21 counsellor supervisors. I was thrilled to hear that he
22 wants to run a men's support group and a men's anger group,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 so once again we are back on track because we have been
2 trying for a couple of years to get a program going,
3 realizing though that when a man is an abuser that we are
4 not qualified to take care of those kinds of issues, though
5 we have dealt with individual male abusers. Just
6 recently I met a women who had been abused for a long period
7 of time and finally after a number of years asked for some
8 help. I am happy to say that this man has not abused her
9 for the last year, which is a miracle. We spent some time
10 with that man and we tried to talk with him and listen
11 to him.

12 Mr. Chartrand, you said something about
13 the offender's program, if there is anything there. To
14 me that is a very near and dear subject because I think
15 that when a man abuses there is a problem there that he
16 was a victim before he was an abuser. I think we need
17 to look at issues that are going to deal with this man
18 not just as an offender, but also as a victim.

19 One of the things that we are looking
20 at is setting up a support program, so that when he is
21 arrested, when he is in jail there is someone there for
22 him. I use that case in point where I dealt with this

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 one particular man. I was hoping that I would get a very
2 violent abuser who would want to talk to me and I did.
3 I spent about four months talking to him and talking to
4 him and talking to him and I gave him my phone number which
5 is something you are not supposed to do and I tried to
6 see if I could help him. I learned a lot from him. I
7 learned about his pain. I learned about his anger and
8 I learned about his frustration. All that did was it made
9 me realize that I wasn't qualified to set up a program;
10 that we need money, we need qualified people to do the
11 work.

12 Tom Erasmus talked about the fact that
13 we maybe should spend more money on training instead of
14 just taking care of the problem. I wholeheartedly agree
15 with him because I think we need to look at the solution,
16 not at putting out the fire.

17 I also have on my goals and objectives
18 that we need to provide programs that will provide
19 self-esteem. I think in order to get self-esteem you have
20 to have a job, you have to feel that you are worthy and
21 you have to have the support of the people who really care
22 about you, that you are not labelled, whether you are native

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 or non-native doesn't matter. The bottom line is that
2 you don't want to be labelled a loser. I think certainly
3 with the people I have worked with a lot of people have
4 looked them and called them losers and they are not losers.
5 They are redeemable, they are recyclable as human beings.
6 I think we need to focus more on the source of the pain,
7 rather than trying to put out the pain.

8 One of the things that we are working
9 on right now, I am going to be meeting with NADC, the
10 Northern Alberta Development Council and I have talked
11 to a number of people about looking at getting employment
12 programs dealing with women who are abused. I felt very
13 frustrated because there was no housing for them, there
14 were not jobs for them, so when you tell a woman who is
15 being abused "leave your husband because he's going to
16 kill you," where does she go when she has five children,
17 no food in the house, no job and no future.

18 I started to realize, like everyone
19 else, that there is more to it than just doing counselling
20 for this person. We need to find some viable solutions.
21 We are looking at a program that is in its very early
22 stages. It's in a dream state right now, but I felt very

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 good yesterday when I talked to one of the senior
2 counsellors because he thought the idea was good. We are
3 looking at possibly setting up a pilot project where we
4 set up a building where we end up having job training in
5 the building, where not only do they get training at AVC
6 or the opportunity core, but they have a place to keep
7 on working after, where you have counselling services,
8 daycare and the support system right in the building.

9 It's so they don't have to sit and wait
10 in an office for four and five hours, feeling very
11 frustrated because often they have a lack of knowledge
12 as to how the system works. They walk out the door and
13 they are no better off than then were when they came in.
14 I know because I get calls from these people. They are
15 angry, they're frustrated and often times they give up
16 because it's just too hard.

17 We need to look at a different approach.
18 We need to help these people who are having difficulty.
19 A lot of times it's the lack of education, a lot of times
20 it's a lack of understanding of the system. It breaks
21 my heart every time I get a call because I don't have the
22 manpower, I don't have the money to help them, but I do

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 have the will and the desire and I have a good group of
2 volunteers who are doing the same thing.

3 I feel very strongly that we need to be
4 heard as a crisis association because I think we are a
5 good role model for other organizations to do what we are
6 doing.

7 We talked about a 24-hour crisis line.
8 Everybody was really keen on a crisis line and then I
9 started looking at it and there's no support system there.
10 Most of our agencies are over-taxed and overworked.
11 Their employees cannot handle working 24-hour days, so
12 one of the things that we are looking at right now and
13 we are just getting it off the ground is a Red Cross victim
14 assistance program. I stumbled on that by accident. We
15 talked about two years ago about doing this. At a
16 conference again I happened to meet the right person and
17 she said bingo, we want to talk to you.

18 We are now looking at setting up a branch
19 office in Lac La Biche to deal with fire victims and
20 satellite offices around the area, again staffed by
21 volunteers trained by the branch office with very little
22 money. Again what it is is using people power. It's going

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 to cost us \$100 per response kit. It's not going to be
2 a lot of money. We are not going to be going to the
3 government. We are not going to the town office. We will
4 be raising the money through our agencies, our service
5 clubs, but we are going to be helping a lot of victims.

6 Initially we did what everyone else did.

7 We hauled clothes and we did a band-aid service. Now
8 with this Red Cross program it's one more step in the right
9 direction, so that when someone burns himself out of his
10 house, that they are not going to be sitting there in the
11 middle of the street wondering who is going to take care
12 of them. We want to pick them up right away.

13 You are probably familiar with the push
14 right now for police-based/community-based victim
15 assistance programs. We are also looking at that right
16 now, so that we will be taking care of crime victims, fire
17 victims and then we will have some time to take care of
18 some of the other humans needs that we need to do. I think
19 it is really important that we don't get caught up in the
20 fact that we don't have dollars. We have power. We have
21 people.

22 Other people have talked about

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 empowering people. I think we have to listen to the
2 grassroots people because they do have the solutions and
3 we have to empower them by listening to them and give them
4 some support when they are putting programs together.

5 We have been operating for seven years
6 on a hope and a prayer and we are doing it. We are operating
7 and we are looking at the idea of becoming self-sufficient.
8 We are not asking for handouts. We don't want handouts,
9 but we certainly feel that we need to look at some other
10 programs, like sexual assault programs, abuser programs.

11 We don't have nearly enough of those programs. They are
12 not being funded. The ones that are out there are not
13 being funded and I think if we are looking at offender
14 programs we need to look at a support system before they
15 become an offender and when they are an offender how do
16 we help them stay out of jail so that they don't end up
17 offending again.

18 A few things I would like to say in
19 conclusion is that we have done a few programs and I have
20 given you a copy of our child I.D. program. Again, this
21 is a program that we don't pay any money for. Child Find
22 Alberta has given us all of the materials that we give

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 out to families. It's free. It costs us absolutely
2 nothing. The RCMP provides us with the ink and we provide
3 the manpower.

4 These are just some examples of the
5 programs that we have done that cost nothing. One of the
6 things I would like to suggest to the Commission, and we
7 talked about this in the policing conference, is that what
8 we need is a directory, just like the Office of Provincial
9 Family Violence has one for initiatives for family
10 violence. We need directories of information, of programs
11 that are free or programs that are inexpensive that can
12 be adapted to any community. I think it is very
13 important that we start resourcing and accessing resources
14 that are not costing money. I think we need to do that
15 more than we are right now. It takes a lot of time to
16 network. I have a full-time job and this is my part-time
17 volunteer job. It takes many hours and my volunteers are
18 spending a lot of hours gathering material. I think
19 certainly the government could assist us in putting some
20 of these programs together in a manual that could be
21 distributed all over the province.

22 I would like to thank you for your time

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and your patience. I know you have had a long day. Thank
2 you.

3 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
4 you. I would like first to ask your colleague if you have
5 any additional comments to make?

6 **MARGARET KLOPENBERG:** No, I don't.

7 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I would
8 then like to ask my co-Commissioners if they have comments
9 or questions?

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** It's a
11 very comprehensive list of areas which you have tackled
12 with a minimum of resources and a maximum of zeal by the
13 sound of it. I am indeed impressed. There are just so
14 many points that I might raise with you.

15 I will ask is there in northern Alberta
16 a sort of a directory of programs to which you referred,
17 the sort of thing which in some cities operates under
18 various names like Community Switchboard and items like
19 that where it is just a 1-800 number that someone can call
20 and say "I've got this problem. Have you any idea who
21 might help me, what agency might help me?" Do you know
22 whether one of those operates?

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **CHRISTINE HOFFMAN:** Actually, I am
2 always looking for new pamphlets and resources. There
3 are some resource materials out there. Unfortunately,
4 it is not as comprehensive as I'd like to see it.
5 Certainly, things like Child Find, the St. John Ambulance
6 Lifesaver course, a lot of these things come our
7 sporadically, so there's a big blitz on it and you hear
8 about it and then you hear nothing.

9 I would like to see us have funding even
10 to put some of the resource material that we have gathered
11 because it wouldn't cost a lot of money. It costs a little
12 bit of money to type it and Xerox it. It doesn't have
13 to be a fancy, glossy booklet. There are a number of
14 booklets out there, but everyone is missing another piece
15 to it.

16 Certainly, the Office of the Prevention
17 of Family Violence has done a really terrific job in dealing
18 with family violence issues, but there are a lot of other
19 areas that are support programs that really need to be
20 addressed and these are cost-effective programs that
21 really should be in a book.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** One last

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 comment or a question, you indicated that you have been
2 successful in setting up a men's support group. Did I
3 --

4 **CHRISTINE HOFFMAN:** No. We were
5 successful in setting up a woman's support group and we
6 have had other people taking it over. Just the other day
7 actually I talked to someone who is interested in doing
8 that, native counselling. I told him that I would like
9 to work with him as a board because we feel very strongly
10 that that is needed here in Lac La Biche and in the region.

11
12 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** As you
13 know, it would be almost a miracle had you been successful,
14 since the number of people who have been successful,
15 particularly in a community of this size of getting a men's
16 support group it would be very heavy sledging, as you know,
17 very heavy sledging.

18 **CHRISTINE HOFFMAN:** The men want it.
19 It's quite interesting, I've had men come to me -- people
20 said the men aren't going to come. Well, they have come
21 to me and some of them have talked to me individually about
22 their pain and their suffering. They want it. It's just

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 that we were afraid that we didn't have the qualifications
2 and we certainly didn't have a place and we didn't have
3 the money. I wasn't worried about getting the clients
4 because they are there. They are just waiting for someone
5 to start it.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** That they
7 would come forward and say they want it is a credit to
8 you because they must have a great deal of confidence in
9 your approach to this non-judgmental, helpful approach
10 because it is not often that this success is achieved.

11 **CHRISTINE HOFFMAN:** It's very painful.
12 I think it is harder for men than it is for the women
13 because I think historically men are not used to expressing
14 their pain. I think our attitude is very much that we
15 don't care if you are a man or a woman or child, you are
16 human and if you have pain you have the right to be heard.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
18 you.

19 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I want to
20 thank you. I have little to add with respect to your
21 presentation that I think has already been characterized
22 as not only informative, but inspirational.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 You have indicated earlier that in
2 addition to the materials that you have passed to us that
3 you will also be sending a written submission later on,
4 so I want to ensure that you are able to do that, able
5 to find the contact numbers, the telephone numbers, the
6 fax numbers, addresses that you need. Our staff is here
7 and people are here to assist you in that regard.

8 Finally, may I ask if you are passing
9 this on to the Commission or to me personally. If it is
10 to me personally, I will pass it on to my daughter. Is
11 this mine to keep?

12 **CHRISTINE HOFFMAN:** Yes, it is yours to
13 keep. In fact, we also have a little wise owl that we
14 will give you for your daughter too.

15 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
16 you.

17 **CHRISTINE HOFFMAN:** Thank you to both
18 of you.

19 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I would
20 now like to invite the representative of the Lac La Biche
21 School Division, Peter Ponich, to make a presentation.

22 **PETER PONICH, SUPERINTENDENT OF**

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **SCHOOLS, LAC LA BICHE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 51:** Good
2 afternoon. First of all, I take this opportunity to thank
3 the Commissioners as a group for the opportunity represent
4 at least a partial statement with respect to education.
5 Some of the other issues will also be pulled into some
6 of the statements that I make.

7 I would extend my appreciation to Mabel
8 House for staying a little longer than she intended to
9 hear me out this afternoon.

10 The Lac La Biche School Division is
11 located in northeastern Alberta and serves a geographical
12 area which includes the communities of Caslan, Buffalo
13 Lake Settlement, Plamondon, Wandering River, the Owl
14 River/Big Bay area, Rich Lake, Kikino Métis Settlement
15 and the Town of Lac La Biche and District. This spans
16 an approximate radius of 50 miles.

17 The Beaver Lake and Heart Lake
18 Reservations have coterminous boundaries with the
19 Division. The Division provides educational programs at
20 the ECS to Grade 12 levels, to 2,400 students through eight
21 schools.

22 Students come from a variety of racial

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and cultural backgrounds with the largest student group
2 being of native ancestry. native students make up
3 approximately 55 per cent of the student population in
4 the Town of Lac La Biche schools, 92 per cent in the Caslan
5 school and 100 per cent in the Kikino school. Just one
6 word about the Kikino school, the Kikino school is located
7 on a Métis settlement and because of the settlement council
8 and its residents of the settlement, the board did
9 construct a new school that opened two years ago.

10 The Lac La Biche region is characterized
11 is by a high level of social and economic diversity. Due
12 to a lack of job opportunity, many of the families with
13 school-age students live at or below the poverty level
14 with a large number of our students being considered to
15 be economically and socially deprived. An abnormal number
16 of our parents are either seasonally employed, unemployed
17 and/or supported through Social Services or other
18 community agencies.

19 Recent statistics reveal that 20.2 per
20 cent of the local population of 8,635 are dependent on
21 social assistance. This figure, when compared with the
22 provincial dependency level of 6 per cent, places our

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 region at 336 per cent above the provincial average. Not
2 only does Lac La Biche carry the highest per capital Social
3 Services caseload in the province; it also has the highest
4 per capita live birth in the province.

5 Education issues are of particular
6 concern to educators, parents and the community. Coupled
7 with socio-economic problems, many of our students
8 represent serious personal, emotional, behavioural and
9 attendance problems; often times associated with alcohol
10 and/or substance abuse. The J.A. Williams High School
11 in particular, has a significant number of early school
12 leavers. On an annual basis the drop-out rate ranges from
13 15 to 20 per cent.

14 The majority of early school leavers
15 indicate that they left because they had no interest in
16 school, went to work, would have failed, were a
17 non-achiever, had family related problems and/or were poor
18 attenders. An analysis shows that the early school
19 leavers are predominantly native, Grade 10, 15 to 16 years
20 old, enrolled in the integrated occupational program and,
21 surprisingly, the majority of them are males.

22 Achievement-wise, native students

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 graduating from the J.A. Williams High School are on an
2 'evolutionary' incline. In 1988, 25 of 93 students were
3 native. In 1989 25 of 89, 28 per cent. In 1990, 26 of
4 82, 32 per cent. In 1991, 28 of 83, 34 per cent. In 1992,
5 19 of 56, 34 per cent.

6 To date, the school Division has
7 attempted to address educational issues through a variety
8 of approaches. These include the native education project
9 direction with a focus on Cree language and culture in
10 the classroom, co-operative education, work experience,
11 Integrated Occupational Programs and guidance/counselling
12 programs. "Bridging" programs with local support
13 agencies inclusive of Social Services, the health unit,
14 the probation office, AADAC, Mental Health Services, Métis
15 Settlement Councils, the Native Education Advisory
16 Committees and the local law enforcement office are
17 on-going attempts to alleviate and/or remedy youth related
18 personal and educational problems.

19 Generally speaking, improvement over
20 time has been noted as witnessed by an increasing number
21 of native graduates. This success, however, is not in
22 itself significant when one considers the numbers of

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 students who have not met with success in our schools.

2 Whether we be educators, parents, high
3 interest groups or people from any and all walks of life,
4 we all recognize that in order to succeed in the adult
5 society we must find success in our upbringing and our
6 educational lives. Often times, our youth fail to
7 recognize, as perhaps their parents did, the need for
8 education. To take a quote from an early school leaver:
9 "If I knew then what I know now, I would have never left
10 school".

11 The task before the school Division,
12 Albertans and the nation is one of building a recognition,
13 an independence and a self-reliance early in one's life.
14 This in itself is no simple task. National, provincial
15 and local programs must be initiated and/or expanded that
16 will be directed at local employment opportunities for
17 natives.

18 Criteria for job opportunity should take
19 into consideration on-the-job incentive training
20 programs. Programs need to be bridged with and/or through
21 Social Services which would recognize an increasing
22 dependence on access to the labour market and a decreasing

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 dependence on Social Service assistance.

2 Until programs are directed at
3 individual and family independence, siblings will not,
4 in their upbringing, be modelled with the aspiration and
5 determination for a personal independent, self-reliant
6 lifestyle.

7 Coupled with this direction, avenues
8 must be found that would encourage, rekindle and/or
9 maintain the dignity of the native as an individual who
10 possesses a distinct cultural identity; an identity which
11 has its place in today's mosaic society. It is the belief
12 that until avenues are found that will enhance the
13 self-worth and self-esteem of our native society through
14 participatory, democratic, self-reliant, meaningful and
15 active involvement in the broader society, native students
16 will not be "at home" or comfortable in our schools.

17 I will list a number of tasks we see as
18 educators and these are certainly an initial list.

19 To inculcate the development of a pride
20 in the language and culture of the student.

21 To ensure native culture and values are
22 reflected in programs and services developed for native

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 students.

2 To feature native role models in a
3 variety of career opportunities.

4 To provide students with a better
5 understanding of the value of education.

6 To bridge the gap between the home and
7 the school in efforts to build an "our school" feeling.

8 To in-service teachers for an
9 understanding of the native culture and the native student.

10 To provide adequate and appropriate
11 support services to students.

12 To build, in conjunction with the home
13 and the parent and the native community a trust and respect
14 for the school and education.

15 To increasingly incorporate in-school
16 and school-related activities directed at the self-worth,
17 self-esteem and success of the student.

18 To actively employ increasing numbers
19 of native teachers and support staff.

20 To increasingly involve native parents
21 in educational-related leadership and decision-making
22 opportunities.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 To encourage native students to
2 completely secondary education.

3 To encourage access, through federal
4 and/or provincial funding incentives, to post-secondary
5 educational institutions inclusive of colleges,
6 universities and/or technological institutions.

7 To ensure the return of native community
8 graduates to their respective communities for job
9 placement opportunity upon graduation.

10 That to me is a very key factor because
11 a lot of times our students don't want to leave the
12 community. If they do they know they are coming back to
13 some kind of a job opportunity.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to present
15 this to you.

16 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
17 you, sir. I will begin by asking the co-Commissioners
18 if they have comments or questions.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
20 you, Mr. Ponich.

21 We had earlier a reference today to the
22 employment of native teachers and support staff. I know

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 just how difficult it is to recruit and keep native
2 teachers, many of whom find attractive opportunities for
3 service in aboriginal organizations and the like. I've
4 watched in some organizations with which I have been
5 associated.

6 Can you tell me what sort of success you
7 have had in increasing the number of native teachers and
8 support staff?

9 **PETER PONICH:** With respect to support
10 staff, that's the easier question to answer. At the
11 community level, for example, at the Kikino school because
12 the school is situated and located right within the
13 settlement limits, all of the support staff employees are
14 of native ancestry. They come from the settlement.

15 In the Caslan school I believe that is
16 also true, up to 100 per cent, with the exception of the
17 custodian.

18 In the Lac La Biche schools, each one
19 of the schools has at least one or more native support
20 staff members. For the most part the majority of which
21 are in the Cree language and/or home liaison roles through
22 the Native Education Project direction.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Teachers is a very difficult situation
2 with respect to recruitment. We have on occasion been
3 able to attract teachers from Saskatchewan and/or
4 Manitoba. I have had one native teacher that was under
5 an interim permit teaching with us last year and who is
6 going on to further university.

7 I see this particular aspect being sort
8 of improving for the Lac La Biche area and the improvement
9 will come over time and it will come through our own local
10 graduates who will go out and get their teaching
11 certificates and come back to teach with us.

12 Those whom we have been able to recruit
13 before would stay a maximum of one year and have left back
14 to their home communities.

15 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Do you
16 have any wisdom to offer on what steps might be taken to
17 increase the retention rate of native teachers in schools
18 like Lac La Biche? Without putting too fine a point on
19 it and I am not aiming this at Lac La Biche, I am thinking
20 of communities like this, do you feel that the teachers
21 think that the environment is not congenial? I don't mean
22 that they are overtly discriminated against or anything

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 like that, but not congenial or that they have other
2 opportunities that they would like to pursue because this,
3 I am attempting to say, is not confined to Lac La Biche.
4 I have watched it in Saskatchewan. I have watched the
5 teachers graduate at the Indian Federated College in
6 significant numbers and they just seem to disappear into
7 space.

8 **PETER PONICH:** Where do they go because
9 I can't get them here.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I am just
11 looking for any comments you might have.

12 **PETER PONICH:** I really don't have --
13 in our attempts to attract and keep, maintain on staff
14 the native teacher the same kind of thing I think has
15 happened as you witnessed through Saskatchewan.

16 I don't think there is a ready answer.
17 I am not sure if it's a matter of belonging within and
18 to the particular school aspect or it's a belonging to
19 a particular community, or if it's a loneliness for the
20 community back home, but as I have indicated before, I
21 do think the resolution, the longer-term resolution to
22 holding a native teacher in the classroom in one of our

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 schools will be through our own graduate as a local product
2 who will then come back and work with their own communities
3 and our students.

4 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
5 you.

6 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
7 you, Mr. Ponich. It is not possible, of course, in this
8 forum to give your written presentation the close scrutiny
9 that it requires and deserves.

10 I wonder if I might ask about one
11 particular matter however. On page 2 under Item III you
12 refer to a number of initiatives which I take it the school
13 division is attempting to deal with, the difficulties that
14 it perceives. I note that the Canadian school system
15 generally has received some serious criticism recently
16 from apparently well-researched quarters. One of them
17 is the teacher-training institution.

18 I note that so far as I can see in this
19 quick skim in this particular segment of your paper that
20 there is no reference to dealings with the universities.

21 Do you believe that one amongst the others that you have
22 listed of the difficulties might have to do with

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 teacher-training programs?

2 Some of the critics, for example, have
3 suggested that there is not enough so-called on-the-job
4 training for teachers. One commentator suggested that
5 the average factory worker, let's say who was involved
6 in producing canned pineapples, gets more on-the-job
7 training than a teacher dealing with the lives of children,
8 that sort of criticism.

9 My question then is a general one. Is
10 there a perception that there is a difficulty in this
11 particular area, that relating to teacher training, the
12 preparedness of teachers to teach generally and perhaps
13 more particularly in a place like Lac La Biche in the
14 circumstances that you have outlined for us?

15 **PETER PONICH:** I think my response to
16 that would be certainly a confirmation of the fact that
17 as Superintendent I have witnessed many fresh, young
18 graduates come out of the system and in the initial stages
19 of their teaching career encounter serious difficulties
20 and yet I know and realize that these people have a great
21 amount of potential.

22 I do not believe that the universities

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 provide the teacher and equip the teacher with any level
2 of readiness, other than being able to plan and to be able
3 to put forth a lesson, forgetting the aspect of dealing
4 with students on a day in and day out basis and not relating
5 it significantly through classroom management techniques.

6 Furthermore, inasmuch as they may relate to a variety
7 of different nationalities, races, cultures and the
8 beliefs that these people may have and the way we must
9 treat them as teachers within the classroom.

10 At the university level we turn out
11 teachers for teaching, without giving much thought to the
12 communities that they might be teaching in as distinct
13 societies.

14 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
15 you, sir, for that response. We have heard from other
16 students, we have heard from students in universities and
17 I look forward to hearing from the people who run the
18 universities and have their views on the matter. I do
19 thank you for your valuable contribution today.

20 I now invite Michelle Lang from the Lac
21 La Biche Mission Historical Society to address us.
22 Michelle Lang, please.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **MICHELLE LANG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAC**

2 **LA BICHE MISSION HISTORICAL SOCIETY:** I am the Executive
3 Director of the Lac La Biche Mission Historical Society.

4 The Lac La Biche Mission is a national historic site.

5 I have been asked to speak to this Royal
6 Commission to attempt to place the issue of aboriginal
7 rights in the Lac La Biche area within an historical
8 context. I must stress that I am not an historian. My
9 graduate degree is in historic preservation however.

10 The primary mandate of the Lac La Biche
11 Mission Historical Society is education, particularly in
12 history and cultural awareness. In the mid-1800s the
13 Oblate missionaries were invited to Lac La Biche by the
14 Métis people. Similarly, I was invited here today as
15 Executive Director of the Mission and I thank you very
16 much for asking me to participate.

17 The aboriginal people have a very proud
18 heritage in the Lac La Biche region, a heritage in which
19 the entire community takes pride. In relation to the
20 Mission, it is the Métis people who played a particularly
21 important role. Many of the Métis families were involved
22 in the fur trade in the Mission era are still common Lac

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 La Biche names today, Ladouceur, Desjarlais, Cardinal.

2 The Métis of Lac La Biche were prominent
3 furtraders in the 19th century. Wherever there was an
4 economic opportunity, the Métis were actively involved,
5 much to the dismay at times of both the Hudson Bay and
6 the North West Company because these people were very
7 astute businessmen and worked very hard to do better than
8 both of these companies.

9 The missionaries were invited by the
10 Métis to Lac La Biche to provide both religious instruction
11 and education, but in the 19th century education was a
12 two-way street. The missionaries came here with very
13 little knowledge of the area. They relied on the
14 aboriginal people for their very survival until they were
15 able to become established here and learn the ways of this
16 very harsh land. In turn, the missionaries taught basic
17 industrial skills to the aboriginal peoples, such as
18 agriculture and milling. By as early as the 1860s, the
19 missionaries were also teaching reading and writing in
20 three languages, Cree, French and English here in Lac La
21 Biche.

22 The missionaries also brought the first

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 printing press to Alberta. They printed in many
2 languages, including Montangais and Cree.

3 Rupert Ross argues in "Dancing With a
4 Ghost - Exploring Indian Reality" that we have never
5 perceived the gulf that divides the two cultures, native
6 and non-native and, as a result, we have never tried to
7 bridge it. Perhaps he is right, but during the 19th
8 century it appears that the missionaries and the Métis
9 people of Lac La Biche may have recognized this gulf and
10 bridged it to some extent.

11 Both the missionaries and the Métis
12 played an active role in the economic and educational life
13 of the entire community. Education travelled both ways
14 between these cultures. The two groups were willing and
15 able to learn from one another. The Métis, for example,
16 had their own legal system which governed the people in
17 relation to horses, grazing rights and hay. The Métis
18 were assisted by the missionaries in developing this system
19 to some extent.

20 It appears from this history that there
21 was a balance of power in Lac La Biche for a period of
22 time. It was only when the economy changed that this more

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 equal and balanced position between natives and
2 non-natives changed, as the Lac La Biche Mission played
3 a less important role in the economic life of the community,
4 the educational role of the Mission was also altered.

5 By the early 20th century the
6 missionaries limited their activity to the education only
7 of children. They no longer played an educational role
8 in the greater community. This alteration led to a more
9 patriarchal and thus unequal and unbalanced educational
10 system.

11 The economic situation had also changed
12 for the Métis people. The Métis of Lac La Biche,
13 surprisingly perhaps, had been actively involved in the
14 buffalo robe trade, but after the extermination of the
15 buffalo around 1875 they were no longer able to rely on
16 this source of income. Eventually, this loss of
17 livelihood led to the creation of a more dependent class
18 and we are still affected by these changes which leads
19 us to aboriginal issues today.

20 It is clear from our history that as long
21 as there was a balance of power and as long as aboriginal
22 people were able to make a meaningful contribution to the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 life of the community, the aboriginal people were a strong,
2 independent people.

3 There are important lessons to be
4 learned from the past. The preservation of this history
5 is threatened however, especially in relation to
6 aboriginal people because aboriginal history is primarily
7 an oral history much of it has already been lost in fact.

8 We cannot learn from the past if we do not know or indeed
9 experience the past.

10 But how will we preserve the past for
11 the education and experience of future generations? We
12 have symbols of national unity right here in our own
13 community, including Portage La Biche and the Lac La Biche
14 Mission, referred to by independent researchers as a
15 national historic treasure and I would certainly concur
16 with that and in surrounding communities as well symbols
17 representing both native and non-native peoples.

18 We must work together to preserve these
19 symbols and just as we must create linkages between our
20 cultures, we must also create linkages between these
21 symbols if we are to be effective in presenting our history.

22

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Historic trade routes are the natural
2 linkages which are still to be developed. It is essential
3 to effectively preserve and present our historic resources
4 in order to learn from them.

5 Getting back to this Royal Commission,
6 what can we learn from the history of aboriginal peoples
7 in Lac La Biche and how can the lessons be applied by this
8 Commission? From the history of the contact between
9 native and non-native people over time here in Lac La Biche,
10 it's apparent that today we need to move towards a balance
11 of power, towards social justice, but I must ask is
12 self-government the answer. How will self-government be
13 achieved and what about the economics of self-government?
14 Who will pay for this complex and expensive, possibly
15 expensive undertaking?

16 Unless aboriginal people can again
17 achieve economic independence, we will never achieve a
18 balanced equal society. Yes, governmental reform is
19 essential to lead to a more equal representation of all
20 people, including aboriginal people and women, but it is
21 still a long road to understanding. Perhaps we need to
22 look more closely at alternative methods of reform,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 including Senate reform. Self-government is no guarantee
2 of equality and it does not appear to be a move towards
3 the unity of this country.

4 I raise this simply as a point of
5 discussion. To achieve unity I feel that we must work
6 together, that we must continue to communicate as did the
7 people of Lac La Biche in the mid-1800s. Education is
8 an essential part of the move towards unity. To attain
9 economic independence it appears that aboriginal people
10 require and desire education and training at all levels,
11 including practicals and field placements in the
12 communities.

13 But aboriginal people must also be
14 involved in the decision-making in identifying their own
15 needs and in delivering their own programs. We must move
16 away from the patriarchal or paternalistic approach of
17 our more recent past. We have much to learn from one
18 another. I would argue that the early missionaries of
19 Lac La Biche recognized this fact, but we have since lost
20 this basis of communication. Again to quote Rupert Ross
21 from "Dancing With a Ghost - Exploring Indian Reality":
22 "We must both deal with our unresolved feelings of grief,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 anger and guilt before we can recognize
2 that the future is our common challenge.

3 It is essential that we start explaining ourselves to
4 each other so that we can make choices
5 for the future, together and separately,
6 based on an accurate perception of the
7 two realities. Perhaps then we can
8 begin to leave the pattern of the recent
9 past behind."

10 In conclusion, I wish to underscore
11 three major points. First, natives and non-natives have
12 effectively lived and worked together in Lac La Biche in
13 the past, but these two cultures moved from a co-operative
14 to a paternalistic relationship as the economy changed
15 for both cultures.

16 Second, to learn from the past it must
17 be preserved and presented effectively.

18 Finally, today we must strive together
19 toward building a Canadian culture which celebrates
20 elements of all cultures. We must continue to communicate
21 with one another toward an understanding because I think
22 we have more than the traditional two solitudes in Canada,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 French and English. We can no longer ignore a third
2 solitude, the aboriginal peoples.

3 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you
4 for that, Michelle Lang.

5 As time goes on later in the day,
6 sometimes it's good to have just a little job to assist
7 in sharpening the senses, so my contribution is going to
8 be to begin by making comments before I ask the other
9 Commissioners and that's not terribly radical.

10 I was interested in your references to
11 the Rupert Ross book. I brought it along on this trip
12 to read, so I was interested in those references. It's
13 not in my briefcase, but elsewhere in the luggage and I'm
14 reading it. I will be reading it on this trip.

15 I was interested too in your references
16 to the Métis people and in particular to the way that you
17 pronounced the term. Across the west and across Canada
18 there are different pronunciations and the one that you
19 use is one that I have heard here spoken and I have heard
20 spoken by people from Alberta before. One probably more
21 common one in Canada is Métis.

22 I can tell you a humorous anecdote

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 regarding that. I saw a letter addressed to a Métis
2 organization not so very long ago on which the spelling
3 went this way, Métis as it M-A-Y as in Mayflower and T-E-A
4 and the Boston Tea Party. People do have a lot to learn
5 about the Métis people.

6 From my experience I know that the old
7 way, which is still used in a lot of places contemporarily,
8 varies between Michif and Michis and from scholarship I
9 note that the ancient writing had an "f" at the end as
10 opposed to an "s" which accounts for those pronunciations,
11 but I hurriedly add that the pronunciation and even
12 self-reference varies from place-to-place, depending upon
13 the local cultural antecedents and I think I suspect why
14 some people were humoured by what I said, but I won't put
15 any more on that because some people don't know what I
16 am talking about and I'll leave it at that.

17 The last point I think I would like to
18 make, two more, very brief, you referred to evidence of
19 self-government by the Métis people in the area in the
20 19th century. I would urge you to provide the Commission,
21 at least provide me with that evidence. It is very much
22 needed evidence and on that point I would ask if you would

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 be kind enough to leave a copy of your paper with the staff
2 here.

3 **MICHELLE LANG:** I would prefer to send
4 it. I didn't go and look at the actual page numbers for
5 my references, so I will send it as soon as I look those
6 up. I have them in my files and I just need to dig through.

7 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** All
8 right.

9 **MICHELLE LANG:** However, with relation
10 to the Métis people here, Juliette Champagne who is an
11 historian and now living in Edmonton wrote her thesis on
12 the Métis of Lac La Biche, her Master's thesis, and it's
13 quite an excellent work I believe. She is currently
14 writing a narrative history for the Mission as well and
15 that's why I have been fortunate to come into contact with
16 her work.

17 I can probably get you a copy of that
18 thesis if you are interested. She talks about that
19 self-government in the early years.

20 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** That's an
21 M.A. in history?

22 **MICHELLE LANG:** Yes, an M.A. in history.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in history in the
2 same area.

3 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Which
4 university?

5 **MICHELLE LANG:** The University of
6 Alberta. I am not sure where her thesis came out of.
7 I would be glad to get you a copy.

8 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** That's
9 the question because I can then find it if I know what
10 university her M.A. was granted at, but you don't know
11 that.

12 **MICHELLE LANG:** Unfortunately, I didn't
13 bring it with me. Would you like me to obtain a copy of
14 that for you?

15 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I would
16 be delighted if you would be kind enough to do that.

17 **MICHELLE LANG:** I would be glad to do
18 that. I will send it on to you.

19 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I
20 appreciate that very much and now I will ask my fellow
21 Commissioners if they would like to put some questions
22 or make comments.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I would
2 just like to make a couple of comments. There is no
3 question that sometime in the last century, sometime
4 between 1850 and 1875 I think, it would be a fair guess
5 that the Government of Canada adopted new and different
6 policies which were much more assimilationist, much more
7 designed to make aboriginal people part of the Canadian
8 mainstream and for whatever reasons and however misguided
9 they were, they were pursued with some vigour in the Indian
10 Act and other evidences are clear.

11 I sometimes ask myself whether these
12 arose because of what is essentially a characteristic of
13 white society then and even more so now I suggest, to judge
14 based upon economic performance and the belief that native
15 communities would not be able successfully to exist
16 economically unless they became part of the mainstream.

17 You asked the question what about the economics of
18 self-government, the same sort of question that white
19 society asks and it is a very valid question. I think
20 we should not assume that self-government cannot operate
21 effectively, even if there are very substantial government
22 grants. It can.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I look at the provinces of Prince Edward
2 Island and Newfoundland and they have a very considerable
3 amount of running room in deciding their own fate and they
4 get 50 per cent or more of their money from the federal
5 government one way or another. Nonetheless, they have
6 some sort of an independent tax base, some sort of an
7 independent basis for operating a government, so that they
8 are not totally dependent upon the strings which are
9 ultimately tied to any grant.

10 The question which I suppose I direct
11 to you quite unfairly, just directed to the world in general
12 in a sense is, where do we see a basis whereby the aboriginal
13 people, let us say of the Lac La Biche area could find
14 an economic base for self-determination, aboriginal
15 self-government, whatever you wish to call it in the Lac
16 La Biche area? There is I think a significant amount of
17 economic activity in which aboriginal people participate.

18 In your judgment is it enough to support an aboriginal
19 self-government, acknowledging the fact, recognizing the
20 fact that self-government can operate with very massive
21 government grants?

22 **MICHELLE LANG:** That's a good question.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 This community does have some real economic challenges
2 overall and certainly we are working hard to diversify
3 our economy and I am involved in that to some extent at
4 the Lac La Biche Mission which is being developed not only
5 as an educational facility or institution, but also as
6 a tourism generator in this area. That's one of the ways
7 we hope to diversify our economy.

8 I guess what I would say is in a community
9 like Lac La Biche there are economic challenges for
10 everyone. I wouldn't say that those challenges are any
11 greater or any less for the aboriginal people than they
12 are for anyone else.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I will
14 ask a narrow subset question on that. Do you see any reason
15 why aboriginal people would or would not participate in
16 any economic activity generated by the Mission or the
17 tourist industry which may develop around it?

18 **MICHELLE LANG:** The only limitation
19 would be perhaps in education and training. One of the
20 things that we do at the Mission, and I think we do it
21 well, is a great deal of training. We have a lot of
22 placements through things like the Alberta Opportunity

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Corp. and section 25 which is a work for unemployment kind
2 of program. We work very hard with placements on those
3 programs, to train people and, in fact, we are also working
4 with the Métis Association of Alberta who are trying to
5 set up a program for archival, museum, historic sites kind
6 of studies and they want to place people with this as well.
7 They are just developing that program now.

8 I would say there is a lot of in-house
9 training that could be done in relation to something like
10 the Mission and I am only speaking in relation to the
11 Mission here to overcome that particular limitation, but
12 there still has to be a certain level of literacy, at least
13 a basic level of literacy, depending on the area that the
14 people would be working in again in relation to the Mission
15 because we also have a lot of trades- related programs
16 there.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
18 you. You have been very helpful.

19 **MICHELLE LANG:** Thank you.

20 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
21 you.

22 I have been handed an updated list

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 regarding the remaining presenters. I want to read that
2 short list in order to ensure that no one has been missed
3 and that we hear from everyone who wishes to make a
4 presentation. I have three individual presentations on
5 this updated list, Frances Ebersbach, Bob Major and Bertha
6 Clark.

7 If you are here and you are representing
8 an organization or you wish to make an individual
9 presentation and your name has not been mentioned, I would
10 ask that you talk to our staff and get your name on the
11 list.

12 Having said that, I now invite our next
13 presenter, Frances Ebersbach.

14 **FRANCES EBERSBACH:** Good afternoon,
15 gentlemen. I wish to thank Mr. Chartrand, Mr. Allan
16 Blakeney and Mr. Boucher for allowing me to make this
17 presentation. Above all, I would like to thank the
18 organizers of this Commission meeting and my most heartfelt
19 thanks goes out to George Quintal who but for him I would
20 not be here today. Thank you, George.

21 My names is Frances Ebersbach, I was born
22 a Ladoucer at Lac La Biche Mission in September of 1930.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I have been in the workforce since I was 15 years old
2 and followed my education as well. I also was a foster
3 parent for some 25 years, having fostered over 100 children
4 in my home. I adopted several of those children and I
5 have worked as a waitress, dishwasher, social worker,
6 nurse's aid. I have done everything for a living,
7 providing it was not outside of the law. I have also been
8 a commercial fisherman for several years and cattle ranched
9 up in Lac La Biche Mission.

10 These are the concerns I have. I am now
11 retired because my doctor made me retire after my heart
12 operation, otherwise I would still be working. These
13 concerns came to me over my phone in my home and so I thought
14 I would present six short concerns that I have to deal
15 with people and you should see my phone bill sometimes.

16

17 Unemployment and unemployment benefits
18 is the first one on the list. Many of our single people
19 and married young people are out of work in this area and
20 are living in the most despairing poverty, which sometimes
21 leads them to commit theft to feed themselves and/or their
22 families. They look for work but usually to no avail.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Sometimes they hear of work and go to apply, only to find
2 that someone from the outside has been already hired.

3 Some of the apply for unemployment
4 insurance if they qualify, that is when the tragic story
5 of bureaucratic red tape begins. It takes anywhere from
6 three months to six months for the benefits to begin.
7 The report cards come, they start arriving about six weeks
8 after the application. Then they call and usually are
9 told your cheque is in the mail. They wait for the cheque,
10 but the mail doesn't bring it. They call again. They
11 are told that your file is in Winnipeg or Ottawa. They
12 are given a number to call. They try that number, but
13 never seem to be able to talk to anyone that knows anything.
14 I have a possible solution which I will leave for the
15 questions later on on this one.

16 The next problem I usually get is the
17 policies of Social Services are too tight for the single,
18 unemployed people and the single parents with one child.
19 The single, unemployed person can only get assistance
20 for two months. If they have not successfully gained
21 employment, then they have nothing to live on. It is
22 either stealing to feed themselves again or go back home

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 to the senior parents. The senior parents who have paid
2 taxes all their lives now have to support their grown
3 children. The senior parents are not the welfare office.
4 Some of them can barely make ends meet. They get
5 debt-ridden because they have to support their grown
6 children. The single parent with one child has to
7 work. Yes, they put their child in a subsidized daycare
8 home and the parent pays a certain amount and the government
9 pays a certain amount. In the long run this is causing
10 problems, wasted money and the child suffers. It rarely
11 sees its parent and when it does see its parent, the parent
12 is usually too tired and cannot fulfil the role of a loving,
13 caring parent.

14 What have we caused here: a possible
15 child neglect and/or abuse and the child may be come a
16 behaviour problem later on, on which Tom Erasmus elaborated
17 earlier today. This is a serious problem in this area.

18 The social worker, most of the time,
19 never puts the client at ease when they talk to him or
20 her, but treat them with contempt. They insult the
21 clients, blame the clients for their own mistakes, and
22 act as though the money comes from their pockets. The

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 social worker is probably overworked, but they do not have
2 to be that nasty. I have also possible solutions for that
3 and which I will save for later on.

4 My third concern is the Métis living off
5 the settlements. The Métis people living on settlements
6 have land they can use, decent housing and money to
7 implement programs and other things in their settlement.

8 Sometime ago I heard our Premier of Alberta, Mr. Getty,
9 on TV saying that so many millions of dollars was going
10 to be allotted for all the Métis of Alberta. He said all
11 the Métis of Alberta.

12 The money is probably doing some good
13 for the Métis on the settlements, but what about the Métis
14 people that cannot live on the settlements. They are still
15 Albertans, they are still Métis, yet to get land they have
16 to make big mortgage payments. Most of them have no decent
17 housing. I know some people today that don't have running
18 water in their homes. They work and struggle in poverty
19 for years and are still struggling. They have been studied
20 and turned every which way for years and nothing ever comes
21 of it. The money spent on these studies is a total waste.
22 It should be spent on the people who live off the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 settlements.

2 My fourth concern is the mill at
3 Prosperity, Al-Pac. The local people of this area are
4 not working, at least not very many of them are working
5 in that mill. The Al-Pac representatives painted a rosy
6 picture one year or so ago of what work was going to be
7 given to the locals, yet I have seen people taking courses
8 last year for jobs that they were going to get and they
9 are still working for that call from their union. Al-Pac
10 representatives and union representatives have lied to
11 the people and also admitted that they would get called
12 in a year or so and yet I have met people from far away
13 places working in that mill.

14 My fifth concern is the police and
15 justice system in this town. Our police detachment is
16 understaffed and some of our police force members are too
17 rough with their prisoners. They should be in the boxing
18 ring or in the wrestling rings instead of being police
19 officers. They beat up on the prisoners in the police
20 station after the arrest and most times the beatings were
21 not needed. The prisoners do not resist arrest and yet
22 he or she comes out of that police station all bruised

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 up. I've seen this because they have come to me for help.

2

3 The crime rate is very high in our
4 community, I say this is due to drug and alcohol abuse,
5 poverty and lack of employment.

6 The sixth and the last of my issues is
7 the Mission Historical Society. It's my final concern,
8 but nevertheless my most important. Five ladies started
9 the site years ago, ladies that were born and raised there,
10 as their parents and grandparents were. These ladies
11 worked slowly and very diligently to get their project
12 going. After a few years the rumour of big bucks coming
13 in in the future was mentioned. What happens, the
14 outsiders began taking over our Mission and finally did
15 take it over. The grassroots people are not even consulted
16 about plans for the Mission and rumour has it that the
17 Mission is in the process of changing. In the end, it
18 will not be the serene, quiet attitude that it used to
19 be.

20 I am 61 years old and I remember we have
21 always had a ball diamond and a make-shift skating rink
22 at the Mission for recreation purposes. As I say, the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 people who started working on the Mission improved the
2 ball diamond with their own money and voluntary work.
3 Now the rink is torn down and the ball diamond is still
4 there, but we cannot use it unless we pay an arm and a
5 leg for it. The recreation grounds have always been used
6 freely in the past, so after these ladies and their families
7 worked so hard voluntarily to improve all these things
8 I mentioned, they are pushed out, we the grassroots peoples
9 of the Mission have no say.

10 When we tried to voice our concerns we
11 were told to get out because we were troublemakers.

12 I am going to finish this off arising
13 out of Michelle Lang's presentation. I have one comment.
14 The history of the Mission is not lost. We, the children
15 and grandchildren of the pioneers of the Mission are
16 walking history books. Why don't they ask us. We have
17 been taught by our ancestors about the history of the
18 Mission and we didn't forget because we've got it written
19 down.

20 Thank you very much, gentlemen.

21 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you
22 very much and I will begin again by asking my fellow

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 Commissioners for comments or questions.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I will
3 ask number one, what is your solution to the delay in
4 receiving unemployment benefits?

5 **FRANCES EBERSBACH:** The solution could
6 be that the government create more long-term training
7 programs at AVC and work programs for the unemployed.
8 Pay the people a decent wage so that they can live, so
9 that they can eat on these training and work programs.
10 We have a good college here. It should
11 be expanded for these types of programs. The Opportunity
12 course should be made larger. It can only take ten
13 students at a time now. It should be brought up to maybe
14 20 or 25.

15 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Excuse
16 me, what course?

17 **FRANCES EBERSBACH:** The Opportunity
18 course. It's a good centre, but, like I say, it can only
19 take up to ten students at a time to train for work.

20 Make the training programs a little bit
21 easier to work with and learn. Hire more counsellors to
22 work on a closer basis with the young people, to help them

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 become proud of their achievements. They would stick to
2 their jobs if they did.

3 As for employment benefits, well, the
4 red tape should be done away with. There should be a limit
5 of no longer than six weeks of waiting for that first cheque
6 to come because it is needed.

7 Also, the number of weeks required to
8 qualify for unemployment insurance should be reduced to
9 12 instead of 21.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** Thank
11 you.

12 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you
13 very much for bringing up a number of issues. A number
14 of them appear to recur here and there.

15 I was interested that you are
16 acquiescing in your solution to the matter of a waiting
17 period for unemployment benefits. There are some
18 countries where there is no such thing as a waiting period.

19 **FRANCES EBERSBACH:** I have seen it
20 happen and I see it every day because my phone is full
21 of people wanting me to work on their claims.

22 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Again,

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 thank you very much.

2 **FRANCES EBERSBACH:** You are welcome.

3 Thank you for hearing me.

4 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I invite
5 now Mr. Bob Major.

6 **BOB MAJOR:** Good afternoon, gentlemen.

7 I hope your brief stay here will be a pleasurable one.

8 I come to you today as a person who was
9 raised in this community and you are probably well aware
10 of the social and economic problems that are prevalent
11 in this area, more so than other areas. I am a parent
12 of four children and my concerns today are basically on
13 education.

14 Particularly in this area I have yet to
15 see a curriculum geared towards our native and Métis kids
16 in regards to the history of northern Alberta and
17 languages. I realize they offer Cree courses in school
18 to our children and it's a step forward, but I still believe
19 that our native heritage, our native history has got to
20 be taught to these children so they can know where they
21 come from, who they are and where they come from.

22 You just heard from a lady who has a lot

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 of experience and a lot of heritage and a lot of knowledge
2 of this area that could be utilized and that's a suggestion.

3 We have teachers who aren't committed
4 to native learning and are not educated to the social and
5 economic problems of areas such as Lac La Biche, with high
6 rates of unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse and so on
7 and so forth.

8 This problem I believe is a result of
9 the reputation Lac La Biche and area have got. It was
10 well documented probably ten years ago as being the most
11 violent town in Canada. What first-rate professional
12 wants to associate themselves with a reputation like that?

13

14 We have a hard time bringing first-rate
15 people in and it's something that has got to be looked
16 at. We have to, basically, as a community pull our socks
17 up and make ourselves reputable to be able to bring these
18 people in, but as such we don't have these professionals
19 here, these first-rate professionals.

20 You have also got a problem on the
21 reserves here of teachers in unwanted positions.
22 Favourable schools that they want to teach in have full

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 staffs and they take second choice. To a lot of these
2 teachers, reserves, Métis colonies are second choice and
3 as soon as they can get out of these schools they are gone,
4 reference to Mr. Ponich. The length of stay in schools
5 in the surrounding area is about a year.

6 You've got a program in this area called
7 the Integrated Occupational Program, IOP, that was
8 mentioned. It has got 95 per cent native content and these
9 native kids are frustrated when they are told or directed
10 into a program like this. I was educated in this area.

11 I graduated from the high school here. I know what these
12 kids are thinking. I know what these kids are frustrated
13 about because I've had teachers and counsellors and the
14 professionals tell me don't bother with matriculation.
15 Go and get your diploma.

16 I chose to get my matriculation because
17 I didn't think it was that hard and it wasn't to me.
18 Basically I guess I defied the odds, but you have a lot
19 of talented young kids out there today that are still
20 running into these roadblocks. They need to know, we need
21 to develop as native people, Commissions, avenues where
22 we can show these kids that getting a proper education

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 is the most important thing you can do in these times.

2 Today Mr. Blakeney referred to being
3 judged on economic performance. Native kids nowadays in
4 these northern communities make one trip off the reserve
5 or the settlement or the colony and are in culture shock
6 as soon as they come out. They are out for two weeks,
7 they get their paycheque and they run home. They can't
8 deal with the pressures of mainstream society.

9 We have got to look at remedying these
10 problems. I've had this discussion many times, where,
11 pardon me for saying it, the native has been made a social
12 cripple by the government of this country -- don't worry,
13 we'll take care of you. If you can't find a job there's
14 Social Services, or you've got enough weeks for UIC, out
15 of sight, out of mind. Yes, we've got natives in this
16 land, yes a majority of them are proud of who they are,
17 but we are taking care of the problems.

18 We as native people want our children
19 educated. We want them to be successful, but getting to
20 these points is a hardship every day of their lives it
21 seems.

22 I've got some suggestions, I don't know

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 if any of them are relevant, but I will let you know what
2 I think as soon as I am finished here.

3 We, as a people, need to know that we
4 are a part of this country. I was thinking a minute ago,
5 they've got a problem in the States where the black people
6 and the white people are seeming to agree on segregation
7 again, where two cultures can't mix they might as well
8 split, be re-educated and then come back to maybe make
9 a go of it in these times. I don't want to see anything
10 like that happen.

11 In this community we are a diversified
12 ethnic melting pot. We have all sorts of people here and
13 we shouldn't have any problems in today's society in
14 getting along, but it happens. I want to see my children
15 graduate, be able to go on to some secondary school. If
16 not, to realize their potential for maybe an apprenticeship
17 program or whatever, but just as long as that opportunity
18 is there in the end.

19 I am employed by a contracting firm here
20 and as you have heard it's seasonal. I work when I can,
21 I struggle on when I can't. Like I said, I want to see
22 all of these native kids grow to see their own potential

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 and people see the potential in them and utilize it. Thank
2 you.

3 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
4 you, Mr. Major.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** You have
6 obviously given some thought to some of these issues and
7 we are happy to get your thoughts if you are prepared to
8 offer them to us. What do you think this community and
9 this province and this country should do to encourage
10 native young people to hang in there at school, as you
11 suggested would be desirable?

12 **BOB MAJOR:** I don't want to seem biased
13 or have it turned into a racial thing. I want to see all
14 young people develop an opportunity of any type.

15 In specifics, an emphasis has got to be
16 made today on showing kids, native kids, Métis kids who
17 they are and where they've come from, which requires a
18 certain part of their curriculum to deal with their history
19 and their heritage.

20 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** The
21 school system always has a little bit of a problem because
22 they are effectively --

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **BOB MAJOR:** Their hands are tied by
2 economics today, I realize that.

3 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** And
4 educating people to take part in a mainstream society,
5 so they have to emphasize some of the values of the
6 mainstream.

7 **BOB MAJOR:** That's where our basic
8 education of today comes. We have a lady here, Frances
9 Ebersbach, who is rich in knowledge of the Métis way.
10 I've know her all my life and she volunteered a great many
11 hours to this town and events in it.

12 If she was given a chance to meet with
13 our Native Education Committee maybe we could work out
14 a volunteer basis so that some of our kids or most of our
15 kids could take advantage of that knowledge.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I don't
17 mean to suggest that there isn't lots of room for, as I
18 think there is, lots of room for emphasizing native history
19 and native culture and native languages to give a sense,
20 as you say, of who they are because that is necessary for
21 all of us.

22 **BOB MAJOR:** I will give you an example

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 of my own life, Mr. Blakeney. While I was growing up,
2 my stepfather recently told me, approximately four or five
3 years ago, that he didn't want to teach me my native tongue.
4 He didn't want me going through life with a native accent
5 and having to prove myself that much more to mainstream
6 society.

7 In a sense, he thought my native language
8 and my native heritage would be a detriment to me. I don't
9 believe that any child should lose any part of their
10 heritage nor their language.

11 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** If I may
12 make a comment, that was a point of view which a lot of
13 people held once, not only with respect to natives, but
14 with respect to any other minority language. They felt
15 that mainstream society was so prejudice and so biased
16 that unless you spoke English just the same way as Mrs.
17 A. did, whoever she is and not with any touch of German,
18 Ukrainian, Cree or anything, you were in trouble. I hope
19 we've gone beyond that, I really do.

20 I think of it in my own family, not in
21 this country, but my mother grew up in Wales and her family
22 spoke Welsh in the home, but when she went to school they

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 wouldn't teach her Welsh because it was going to be a
2 detriment because the English would insist that if you
3 spoke English with a Welsh accent you were to be looked
4 down upon, which is still true, by the way, in England,
5 so she didn't.

6 Her sister's children didn't who live
7 in Wales, but now the next generation are all learning
8 Welsh again. I hope we can skip at least one generation
9 and realize that all of us must preserve our culture.

10 **BOB MAJOR:** I think all of us are looking
11 for our heritage again and it's nice to see in respect
12 to natives the missionary school is a thing of the past,
13 but I still believe there is a lot of work to be done before
14 we get to the point where we are all capable, knowledgeable
15 and willing to benefit from today's more than ample
16 opportunity society. We all as a people can do that.

17 As for myself, my opportunities are
18 limited today, but like I said, I want and I hope to see
19 the opportunities for my children be unlimited.

20 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
21 you, Mr. Major. You've raised quite a number of important
22 issues. Some of them keep recurring before us and I'm

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 sure that we will hear quite a number of them, if not all
2 of them, repeated to us again. I think that only indicates
3 in some way the importance of these issues. I am firmly
4 of the view that they are extremely important, particularly
5 insofar as they have to do with our attempts to make
6 recommendations designed to make things significantly
7 better for young people.

8 I simply want to add to what Mr. Blakeney
9 has said and to thank you for your presentation.

10 **BOB MAJOR:** I would like to thank the
11 organizers and you gentlemen for taking the time to listen.
12 Thank you.

13 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** I now
14 call upon Bertha Clark to make her presentation.
15 According to the list I have, that will be the last formal
16 presentation before the open forum.

17 Welcome and please begin whenever you
18 are ready.

19 **BERTHA CLARK:** Thank you.

20 We welcome you to our beautiful, sunny
21 Alberta, Commissioners Blakeney, Chartrand and my
22 long-time friend Robert Boucher.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I do not have a written format because
2 I was not prepared. I had very short notice to be here.
3 I am wearing two hats. I am representing the Athabasca
4 Native Friendship Centre which just very recently has
5 developed. I am not going to go into that too much because
6 the Lac La Biche Friendship Centre made their format
7 regarding Friendship Centres and we are under the same
8 circumstances as Lac La Biche as far as the Friendship
9 Centres go.

10 There is no money because the federal
11 government does not believe in giving core funding to new
12 and developing Friendship Centres. However, our
13 provincial government did come to our rescue and gave us
14 a small amount of money and we now have a very small --
15 which we call a referral centre just to get established
16 because Athabasca is in great need of such an
17 establishment.

18 All of our workers are on a volunteer
19 basis. We are just starting to open the centre five and
20 a half days a week from 10:00 to 5:00 which is all on a
21 volunteer basis and I think for a start we have real good
22 representation of volunteers.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I don't know but when I see money flying
2 around the country, especially to the other parts of the
3 world and we as native people still have to struggle and
4 fight for funding, I hardly think that is very appropriate
5 for a country as large and as prosperous as Canada, or
6 as Canada was, I should say.

7 We cannot totally depend on bingos for
8 funding. I myself am not a bingo player and I know our
9 native people love to play bingo, but we shouldn't be
10 expected to rely totally on bingos for our funding nor
11 lottos, casinos, because those are all volunteers. To
12 me that is taking parents away from home because they are
13 on a volunteer basis.

14 I think while we are out volunteering
15 for bingos and lottos, we are losing our families. Our
16 children, the older children are usually babysitting and,
17 consequently, it is a hardship on that oldest child. The
18 child as soon as they are old enough they run away from
19 home because they do not want to babysit any longer.

20 I am a mother of seven children and a
21 grandmother of 13 grandchildren. Today I am really
22 concerned about my children as parents. They have a

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 terrible and challenge and fear for their children in
2 today's world. I don't know how we are going to prevent
3 the crime, the assault towards young children, even to
4 the age of three months, five months, 15 years or whatever.

5 I think this society as it is is a disaster. I do blame,
6 as far as I can see in my own mind, that it all stems from
7 alcohol and drugs.

8 We do have a lot of institutions that
9 are built after a crime has been done, after a person is
10 so devastated with alcohol or drugs, but we do not have
11 enough help with prevention programs. We do not have,
12 such as for the young people, sports. I will give that
13 as an example, because everything today is so competitive.

14 If you are not good in hockey or baseball, you're on the
15 street while your older brother or younger sister is out
16 on the professional athletic field because everything is
17 geared to competition and high goals for being
18 professionals.

19 To me, the people at the grass-roots
20 level should really be fighting for activities for the
21 children at the grassroots level. That is all I have
22 to say on that subject because I could go on forever and

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I know you are getting tired.

2 The Constitution -- my head just about
3 bursts out wide open, there has been so much time spent
4 on it and I am not even sure if we are going to accomplish
5 anything in Canada. I am really confused. Sometimes I
6 wish my dad was here because he was very wise towards these
7 kind of politics, even though he did not go to school.

8 The other very important one as far as
9 children goes, the native foster child. The native foster
10 children are taken into homes whether they are native or
11 otherwise, which is mostly otherwise and out of the
12 communities. These young children when they reach the
13 age of 18 and are possibly still going to school, their
14 foster parents are no longer responsible for them. These
15 young people have no place to go. I know of one instance
16 where this young girl wanted to continue school and she
17 had absolutely nothing. She went to Social Services, she
18 was in Grade 12, to finish her education. She sort of
19 slipped on her grades and Social Services told her because
20 she didn't completely all her subjects they could not help
21 her for the next year to complete her Grade 12.

22 Consequently, what happens, the girl

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 gets discouraged, she starts getting late for school, she
2 drops out of school and is possibly on the street and
3 becomes pregnant. So, what have we accomplished.

4 We fought to get this young girl through
5 education, but we were not successful.

6 Last winter I was on the Commission for
7 National Health and Welfare on child care. I did not give
8 my background, which I will do now before I do this. I
9 was Provincial President for the Native Women's
10 Organization in Alberta for 15 years. I was also the first
11 native woman to be the National President of the Native
12 Women's Association of Canada, so I have a lot of background
13 on not really political issues but family issues.

14 Since I have stepped down into the late
15 1970s I see all these problems coming back again because
16 the young people are not being organized. They should
17 be here today, not me, so this is what I am trying to say.

18 How can we get the young people to come out and speak
19 for themselves? It's going to be their world, that's what
20 I tell my children.

21 I think this is what we really have to
22 concentrate on and possibly the Commission will throughout

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 hearing all of these different concerns, if there are
2 others when you finish your tours that something will come
3 out so that we can in the future get our young people to
4 come forth.

5 Discrimination of women, I was very
6 involved in International Women's Year and the "Why Not"
7 year. I was called a women's liberator, but I am not a
8 women's liberator. I love to have my doors opened for
9 me and my chair pulled back, which I didn't have today,
10 however I'm here and especially in governments. I have
11 a daughter who is working on a contract basis. She has
12 worked for the federal government for three years now only
13 on a contract basis. She is totally eligible and qualified
14 to be a civil servant, but why isn't she. I think the
15 federal government has a good program for putting our
16 native boys and girls in these contract situations and
17 I tell you they are given a pretty bad time in their various
18 positions, even though they are qualified.

19 Especially a woman because I am speaking
20 for my daughter and I am not going to say what department
21 she works in, but she has a male supervisor or manager
22 and she is totally overworked. Now she is going to be

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 phasing out of the position the end of June. A new position
2 is coming up and whether it's going to be a native person
3 hired or not, but they have just developed this program
4 that whoever comes in new, who she has to train, is going
5 to receive \$3,000 a year more than what she has been
6 getting. She is quitting her job because she is going
7 to go to Saskatoon Native College.

8 I am going to say a bit about myself
9 because I am definitely a Métis and I am lefthanded, which
10 I was discriminated for also all my life. The thing is,
11 my grandparents and my dad came from Manitoba. They came
12 all across the prairies with their horses and cattle and
13 settled in Saskatchewan. They came into the St. Paul area.
14 Although I was born in the Peace River country, my roots
15 are here in this area. My dad freighted from St. Paul
16 to Athabasca, Athabasca to the old Mission. I even took
17 him before his death to go see the old barn at the old
18 Mission and I have something dear to me at the old Mission
19 as well as a Métis person because my dad told me about
20 it.

21 Then he went on to Athabasca, where he
22 and my mom were married in 1911. Her grandmother was there

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 in the 1800s. We hear of people coming into the community
2 saying you can't get a job here because you just moved
3 here. They don't realize that our roots have been here
4 for years. It's the same as the people in Lac La Biche
5 who are not getting jobs at the Al-Pac site. Why aren't
6 they? Why aren't the native people getting jobs?

7 They have little training sessions here
8 in Lac La Biche and they trained our native women to be
9 camp attendants, so they could go and work at Al-Pac, yet
10 we have immigrants who are not some of them even Canadians
11 because I belong to the same union and they are not
12 Canadians. They are all foreigners and they've got the
13 jobs and they don't take training. They don't take the
14 training, yet our native women who are perfect
15 housekeepers, clean in every way, they know how to make
16 beds, they know how to wash floors, they had to take the
17 training before they could work out at the site. It was
18 a way to get them into work, otherwise they would never
19 have gotten into the union.

20 I want to ask a question. When your
21 Commission is finished, I noticed you don't have that
22 much longer to go, are we going to get reports and the

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 results of what the recommendations are from this
2 Commission?

3 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** We are
4 developing our plans for communicating with the public,
5 with the people who talked with us and the organizations.
6 They include such things as not only the publication of
7 a final report, but the publication of interim reports
8 as well.

9 I am given to understand that our
10 communications people are making plans to disseminate
11 those reports as widely as possible. We have an 1-800
12 line, telephone lines. In fact, we have two or three with
13 translations in Cree, in French, English, Inuktitut,
14 Ojibway and if the Commission is tardy in coming back and
15 making available the things that we produce to you, then
16 you are urged to telephone and make a special request for
17 these documents, but we are indeed anxious to do as you
18 have asked, to come back and provide for communities the
19 result of the Hearings and the result of our research on
20 all of these issues.

21 I am going to ask Mr. Blakeney if he would
22 like to add, correct or delete from any of that.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I think
2 I agree with what Commissioner Chartrand has said. The
3 final reports will certainly be public. They will be
4 undoubtedly little reports and big reports. There will
5 be a little report of a hundred or two hundred pages and
6 there will be big reports of huge sizes. It is likely
7 that we will find a way to send at least the summary
8 recommendations very broadly and I am sure they will get
9 to Lac La Biche, but I don't know to whom.

10 **BERTHA CLARK:** One last thing before I
11 leave. I was in the Royal Canadian Air Force during
12 wartime and when I came home my dad lived on a colony,
13 my parents lived on -- they called them colonies then which
14 are the Métis settlements now. My parents were very hard
15 up. We were a family of 14 and I wanted to help my dad
16 who was getting older, to put my gratuities into the farm
17 to assist him financially and go into partnership with
18 him. I was told because I was a woman I could not. That
19 was discrimination against women. At that time the human
20 rights and all the discrimination acts were not put in
21 place and so I just walked away, which I should not have
22 done.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 These are the kinds of issues which I
2 think the native women are still faced with in that they
3 are discriminated.

4 When I was working with the women's
5 organization as more or less a social group, we had good
6 co-operation from the Métis Association at that time and
7 the Indian Association. We said to them you do the
8 political things and you back us up and they did 100 per
9 cent and we were working very well. I would like to see
10 this thing happen again because I keep up with the movements
11 of the native organizations right across Canada. I don't
12 see this happening today exactly. I don't know what they
13 are going to do.

14 Thank you very much for your time and
15 to the organizers I am glad to be here and say my little
16 concerns. Thank you.

17 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank you
18 very much. I think you have done something quite
19 interesting. You have ended up as the last presenter
20 asking us the questions and that's fine and that's entirely
21 as it should be.

22 Is there anything else?

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** I might
2 add a comment from the husband of a left-handed wife.

3 **BERTHA CLARK:** You didn't know which way
4 to dodge, did you? Thank you very much.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALLAN BLAKENEY:** You might
6 want to tell your daughter to think about whether or not
7 she leaves her job with the federal government. My
8 daughter was on one of those contracts for just over four
9 years before she finally got an opportunity to bid on a
10 permanent job. She finally has got a permanent job with
11 the federal government, but four years of being on contract
12 which is going to be terminated at the end of the year
13 and maybe renewed and maybe for six months and on and on
14 and on.

15 Some good things can occasionally come
16 from it. As I say, it went for longer than four years
17 that I heard about it all.

18 **BERTHA CLARK:** I am glad you are aware
19 of what is happening. Thank you.

20 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Ladies
21 and gentlemen, I have been advised that there will be food.
22 I think on the menu is the leftovers from the delightful

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 lunch that we had. This will be available after the close
2 of the proceedings here.

3 Before that, however, we wish to turn
4 to the matter of the open forum and I want to assure you
5 that there were no ulterior motives in my mentioning the
6 one event before the other. We have an open forum on the
7 agenda and the question is who will step up and initiate
8 the open forum for the time that is remaining.

9 I suppose for our purposes we need you
10 to --

11 **TED LANGFORD:** I was going to say that
12 in listening to -- I was only here for part of the day
13 and listening to the wide range of comments and questions
14 that were presented and the exchange between the
15 Commissions and the presenters, I am not sure what there
16 is left to say. I find myself wondering at your capacity
17 to listen to this kind of a presentation and of the
18 sincerity and the heart-felt comments and obviously for
19 you to maintain your level of interest and I guess
20 commitment is quite admirable.

21 I, for one, would like to thank you for
22 coming to our community and it is very much appreciated.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
2 you, sir. I think I interpret that as a community
3 initiated move to terminate the proceedings.

4 I want then to take a brief moment to
5 wrap up. I believe we have another individual?

6 **KEN PRUDEN:** I wanted to mention one
7 fact for the people around here. I never saw on the agenda
8 anywhere and I have on a suit of a firefighter. When there
9 is a fire on and it's an emergency, a big fire, all of
10 the native people get put in the front line. As soon as
11 there is a nice little job, where you can have steady work
12 on an ongoing basis, there is people from out of town who
13 come in. I am just wondering if you guys would consider
14 perhaps looking into the situation.

15 Maybe the firefighters don't know about
16 this meeting today, but I would just like to mention that
17 it's a very, very important point to the native people
18 of the area, one of their primary jobs besides trapping
19 and stuff like that and in the not too distant past and
20 still right now they are used quite extensively for
21 fighting fires. We only get to go out to the bad ones.

22

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
2 you, sir, for bringing in that important point to our
3 attention.

4 We have another individual.

5 **GEORGE QUINTAL:** Ken was saying about
6 the firefighters. We did have somebody on our agenda that
7 was going to talk about the issue, but apparently he didn't
8 show up today. He could have been picked up for the fire
9 as apparently a lot of the firefighters were picked up
10 today.

11 What I would like to say is I would like
12 to thank everybody for coming out and if there is anything
13 to talk to about the issues of the Royal Commission coming
14 in and I would like to thank the Royal Commission for coming
15 in and also Mr. Boucher for being so patient all day in
16 sitting there. Thank you very much.

17 **COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND:** Thank
18 you.

19 I will then as my final duties as Chair
20 for this afternoon make some concluding remarks. You will
21 notice that I took on these duties kicking and squealing
22 from Mr. Blakeney who Chaired the morning session.

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 I want to express publicly our thanks
2 to the many people who are responsible for the smooth
3 organization and smooth functioning of the Hearings that
4 we had here in Lac La Biche today. In particular, I would
5 like to thank Mr. Robert Boucher, the Commissioner of the
6 day.

7 I would like to thank also Mr. George
8 Quintal, the community representative for these particular
9 Hearings. I would like to add that I express my sincere
10 condolences with respect to the tragic events and I am
11 sure I speak for the other members of the Commission as
12 well.

13 I want to thank also Mr. Russell
14 Whitford, the interpreter, all the other people involved
15 with the media and communications. I want to thank the
16 caterers, Mr. Elmer Hoffman and company. I want to thank
17 anyone that I might have missed. I want to thank
18 particularly all the presenters today who made very
19 interesting and important presentations on matters dealing
20 with our mandate. We do not come here offering quick
21 solutions to anything, but we do offer our attention and
22 our resources and what we can do is do the best that we

JUNE 9, 1992

**ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

1 can to make the sort of recommendations that we believe
2 are workable and because we are working with you that you
3 believe will be workable and that will go some way in making
4 this a better Canada for not only ourselves but for our
5 children and their children.

6 In closing, I will ask Mr. Commissioner
7 Robert Boucher if he would like to make any closing
8 comments.

9 **COMMISSIONER BOUCHER:** I would like to
10 thank the Commissioners for being here today, also Mr.
11 Quintal and all the communications people, also all the
12 people that came in and make a presentation today. Thanks
13 very much.

14 **--- Adjournment at 6:00 p.m.**

15