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High Level, Alberta
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2 --- Whereupon the Hearing commenced on Thursday,

3 October 19, 1992 at 9:24 a.m.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Good morning,
5 everybody.

6 Before moving to our agenda, I would like
7 to ask Roy Meneen to say the prayer.

8 **OPENING PRAYER BY ROY MENEEN**

9 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** First of all,
10 I would like to welcome everyone and say how happy we are
11 that you have been able to come to meet with us during
12 this day of hearings.

13 As you know, we have started our second
14 round of hearings this week in Alberta. We were in Slave
15 Lake on Tuesday. Yesterday, we visited some communities,
16 the Faust communities. We also visited the East Prairies
17 Métis Settlement.

18 We are particularly happy to be here this
19 morning in High Level to hear about your concerns and also
20 ideas to solutions to problems that may exist and certainly
21 exist in your community.

22 As you know, this Commission, the Royal
23 Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, was created a year ago

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1 by the Government of Canada under the advice of the former
2 Chief Justice of Canada, Brian Dickson, who was asked to
3 consult extensively with the various aboriginal peoples
4 across the country and come up with a mandate for the
5 Commission and also recommendations for the membership
6 of the Commission.

7 There are seven Commissioners. We are
8 not all here this morning. The Commission is made up of
9 four aboriginal Commissioners and three non-aboriginal
10 Commissioners. I am one of the Co-Chairs of the Royal
11 Commission. My name is René Dussault. I am a judge with
12 the Court of Appeal for the Province of Quebec.

13 I have with me this morning on my left
14 Viola Robinson who is a Micmac from Nova Scotia. Before
15 being appointed to this Commission, she acted as President
16 of the Native Council of Canada.

17 We have also a Commissioner of the Day,
18 Barb Beaulieu. The idea of sitting with a Commissioner
19 from the community was a successful one during the first
20 round of our hearings. First, it enables us to get a better
21 understanding of the community, the possibility to make
22 sure that we ask questions that are relevant; in fact,
23 that we are able to get as much as possible from the dialogue

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1 that we want to have with the presenters.

2 The format is very informal. You should
3 feel free to express yourself in the Cree language. We
4 have simultaneous translation available. You should also
5 feel free to do so in a way that is easy for you. We want,
6 in fact, to have a good discussion.

7 The fact that we have a full-fledged
8 Commissioner of the Day who will be working with us for
9 the day -- we will have an exchange about what we will
10 have heard. We are going to test some of our thinking
11 in a debriefing session with our Commissioners of the Day
12 to make sure that we get a good understanding of what was
13 told to us during the day.

14 So we are three Commissioners, two of
15 us are Commissioners appointed by the Government of Canada,
16 Viola Robinson and myself. There are two other panels
17 sitting in other parts of the country exactly at the same
18 time as we do here in High Level. The reason for the
19 Commission breaking into panels is that we want to meet
20 as many people and visit as many communities as possible.

21

22 We, of course, exchange notes.

23 Everything that is said during those hearings is put in

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1 a transcript and is available to all the Commissioners.

2 I have mentioned that my Co-Chair is Georges Erasmus,
3 the former Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. Also,
4 we have an Inuk Commissioner, Mary Sillett, from Labrador
5 and we have a Métis Commissioner, Paul Chartrand, who is
6 teaching at the University of Winnipeg.

7 The two other non-aboriginal
8 Commissioners are Bertha Wilson who, prior to being
9 appointed to this Commission, was a retired judge from
10 the Supreme Court of Canada. Madam Wilson has written
11 many opinions on aboriginal rights in this country. We
12 also have Allan Blakeney as part of the team. Allan
13 Blakeney was Premier of Saskatchewan for more than a
14 decade.

15 So the seven Commissioners are
16 criss-crossing the country. We plan to do this four times.

17 We have started a major consultative process, public
18 participation process last April in Winnipeg and we were
19 on the road for two and a half months. We visited over
20 36 communities. We have met with more than 850 presenters.

21 We visited also organizations like hospitals, schools.

22 We went to see the high school people and also at the
23 primary school level.

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1 We want to hear as many youth people as
2 possible. We realize that often it is easier if we go
3 to them and meet with them at the school than having them
4 to participate in the hearing, though we are always hoping
5 to get young aboriginals and also non-aboriginals to come
6 to speak to us about their hopes for the future. A lot
7 of the work we are doing concerns the future of the young
8 people, of young aboriginals in this country.

9 We were given a very wide mandate. We
10 have a 16-point mandate that deals with almost everything
11 that touches the lives and living conditions of aboriginal
12 people in this country. We have to look at more political
13 questions like self-government, the questions of land
14 base. We also have to look at how to bring economic
15 development in the various communities.

16 We have to examine the social issues in
17 the areas such as justice, education, health, social
18 services. We have to look at problems and solutions for
19 problems such as alcoholism, drug abuses, AIDs, the family
20 violence situation that exists too often. We also have
21 to give a careful look at the maintenance, the protection
22 and the affirmation of aboriginal languages and cultures.

23

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1 One of the things that came out of our
2 first round of hearings is that the maintenance and
3 affirmation of cultures and language is key to most other
4 aspects of aboriginal life. We were told that the loss
5 of identity was too often the cause for bringing young
6 people to the jails.

7 The difficulty of aboriginal people to
8 bridge from where they were to where they want to go into
9 the future is also a major problem and the maintenance
10 of cultures and language, the revival of culture as seen
11 by all aboriginal peoples, whether Métis, Indians or Inuit
12 as a fundamental element for improving the situations and
13 giving hope to young people. People want to be given
14 choices. They want to be able to live in their community,
15 but also to go into the mainstream community. They don't
16 want to lose their soul and their identity in doing so,
17 and that is a strong message that has been sent to us.

18 We were told also that self-government
19 is certainly important for maintaining and affirming the
20 cultures and making this possible, but that we should be
21 careful not to overlook some of the major social issues
22 in the areas of health, social services and so on. This
23 is very important in order to bring the strength to the

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1 communities to forge ahead and to move towards greater
2 control of their community's affairs and of their lives.

3 We, as any Commission, have started two
4 kinds of process. The first one is this participation
5 process and we want to establish a dialogue, and that is
6 the reason that, contrary to most Commissions, we are going
7 to have four rounds of hearings. The reason is that we
8 want to frame the issues first and that is the reason why
9 we published this document out of the first round of
10 hearings that ended at the end of June.

11 We are in the process with the various
12 people to identify what the priorities are and the major
13 questions that should be answered. As we enter in this
14 second round of hearings, if possible, we hope that the
15 presenters will be able to turn their mind from the problems
16 to ideas as to what solutions could be brought to cure
17 many difficult situations to bring improvements to the
18 situations.

19 We are going to have two other rounds
20 of hearings in the first part of 1993 and we plan to come
21 up with our final report in 1994. So we hope that the
22 Commission will have done its work within three years of
23 its creation. We were created, again, in late summer 1991.

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Along side of this process, we have started a major research program, a more scholarly and academic research-oriented program. We are trying to build our research program around four theme areas: governance, all questions relating to governance; land and economy; social and cultural affairs; and the north.

We are going to look at these various areas through different perspectives: the historical perspective; the women's perspective; the youth perspective; and the urban perspective. Urban issues are something that is becoming more and more important for aboriginal people because more and more aboriginal people move to the cities to find jobs and for various reasons. There are social problems in larger cities that have to be dealt with and tackled differently than it has been in the past because this is a reality that will only increase.

We hope that at the end of the day the Commission will be able to take the information that will come from our presenters in a day like this one from the hearings, from these four rounds of hearings and blend

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1 it with the information that will come from the research
2 stream. This is always a challenge for any commission
3 to put grassroots information together with
4 research-oriented information and to blend it in a single
5 discourse.

6 We hope that when you will be reading
7 our reports that you will recognize yourself by the choice
8 of our words, by the way we are going to express ourselves.

9 So we hope to do more than just using the best quotable
10 quote from the hearings, but we hope that your thinking
11 will go into the flesh and blood of the Commission and
12 will be reflected in the writing of the Commission.

13 In closing, I would like to say that we
14 realize that the mandate of the Commission is very, very
15 large. We realize that now that the Referendum is over,
16 it will put additional pressure on the Commission to come
17 up with solutions, practical solutions, because we have
18 realized that many, many people in many, many communities
19 have put a lot of hope in the work of the Commission.

20 We are certainly one of the important
21 vehicles to bring to the various governments in this
22 country an idea as to how the relationship between
23 aboriginal peoples and non-aboriginal peoples in Canada

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1 should be revised and established on principles such as
2 respect, self-sufficiency, autonomy.

3 We hope that this report will change as
4 many living conditions as possible in as many communities
5 as possible. We hope that this report will help government
6 to avoid bad policies that have been brought on too often
7 in the past. I have in mind the residential school
8 policies. I have in mind various relocation policies
9 where people were displaced and suffering difficulty
10 consequences.

11 So I would like to say in closing that
12 the Commission will be efficient as long as people will
13 put effort in it and will participate with the Commission.
14 The seven Commissioners can't do all the job. We will
15 be strong and we will have recommendations that will be
16 persuasive for the various governments if we are seen to
17 be getting the involvement and participation of both
18 aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

19 With this in mind, I would like to thank
20 you again for coming and meeting with us and I think we
21 will be ready now to move to ask our first presenters to
22 come to the table and make the presentation. Thank you
23 very much.

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1 We have the Mayor of High Level with us.

2 **IRWIN PACKHAM:** Good morning.

3 On behalf of the Town Council, myself,
4 the Mayor, I would like to welcome the Commission here
5 today.

6 I must say that previous to your opening
7 remarks, sir, I was not aware of the complexity of the
8 issues that the Commission has been going through in the
9 last year. I must say that it is very awakening for myself
10 and probably many other people, but I would commend --
11 I think that the only route to go is starting from the
12 grassroots and going up because I don't think you can bring
13 it down from top-line government down to lower levels and
14 say, "This is the way it is."

15 I must commend the Commission in doing
16 what they are doing. It is a very complex issue and it
17 is going to take time. I guess what all of us have to
18 do is accept that time length and I am sure, with all the
19 issues that you have mentioned, that the Commission is
20 going to have a very strong mandate to the government.

21 With that, I would like to welcome
22 everyone here and say welcome to High Level and our great
23 weather.

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1 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
2 much.

3 Now I would like to ask our first
4 presenter, the Action North Recovery Centre, to come and
5 make the presentation.

6 **JOHN LOFTUS:** My name is John Loftus and
7 I am the Director at Action North.

8 Action North Recovery Centre is a
9 residential alcohol and drug treatment centre. Our
10 program consists of a 35-day women's program, a 35-day
11 men's program and a 35-day family program.

12 Over 90 per cent of our clientele are
13 aboriginal. Last year we ran our program at 160 per cent
14 capacity and have a waiting list up to five months ahead
15 of ongoing programs.

16 Our staff consists mostly of aboriginal
17 people who are recovering alcoholics and are from this
18 area. Many of them started their recovery at Action North
19 and were trained there as well.

20 Through this contact, we have been given
21 a very clear picture of the issues and special difficulties
22 of aboriginal people in the north through our staff and
23 through the clientele that we deal with.

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1 Because of the intensity of our program,
2 many personal issues are brought up by our clientele in
3 the areas of sexual abuse, residential school, family
4 violence. We find this very frustrating due to the lack
5 of resources. For example, there are no psychologists,
6 therapists in the area or in the small communities that
7 they come from.

8 This has forced us to do some therapy
9 work in our centre, but it is not our mandate or our
10 profession. It is sort of like if you were a nurse and
11 someone came to you bleeding and there were no doctors
12 around. You would have to do what you can do.

13 Lack of funding. Last year, our budget
14 was over \$800,000 of which only \$400,000 came from our
15 funding source, AADAC. The rest of the funds came from
16 out-of-province billing projects, outside workshops and
17 a lot of begging to different agencies. This is a
18 continual fight and is an ongoing distraction from our
19 main focus.

20 Lack of training and trained people.
21 Over the last two years, we have been applying to Canada
22 Manpower for funding and training projects, of which we
23 meet all the criteria and have jobs waiting to be filled

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1 by these people. We have met every criteria that Manpower
2 has asked for on these strategic plans.

3 One of Canada Manpower's answers
4 -- and this is what we run into in a lot of things -- is
5 that it costs too much as compared to training in the south
6 and things do cost more up here.

7 The Detox centre. This is, again,
8 something we have been working on for at least the last
9 five years. There is a definite need in this area. Over
10 2,000 people have been arrested for drunk and disorderly
11 in the last year. The jail in town here is being used
12 as a dry-out centre and it is a tax on the police force.
13 They could be used in other areas. This is more than
14 the City of Lethbridge with over 20,000 times the
15 population of High Level.

16 Our community is in crisis. People are
17 dying unnecessarily. Women and children are being
18 tortured and abused and the few social agencies that we
19 have, with the limited budgets that we have, are burning
20 themselves out trying to make a dent. I think we need
21 a lot of help in order to help people help themselves.

22 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
23 much for your presentation. If you could stay with us

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1 for a few minutes, we have some questions for you.

2 I understand that the role of your centre
3 is a crucial one and I would like to know: When was your
4 centre created or how long have you been in existence?

5 **JOHN LOFTUS:** The society was formed 20
6 years ago and the centre has been active for the last 12
7 years. We have had the building for the last 12 years.

8 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** If you look
9 back 12 years ago, what is your assessment of the problem
10 with alcohol and drug abuses? Is this on the increase
11 and to what extent -- what is your feeling?

12 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I have only been in this
13 community four and a half years and I don't know whether
14 I could really assess whether the problem has increased
15 or decreased in the community. I know that the demand
16 has increased steadily.

17 Like I say, sometimes we have up to a
18 five-month waiting list. We are running way over our
19 capacity of what we can handle. There is a great demand
20 for use of the centre.

21 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I understand
22 that your centre is open to both aboriginal and
23 non-aboriginal people.

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1 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** As far as the
3 demand that you have, what is the breakdown between the
4 aboriginal and non-aboriginal people?

5 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I would say over 90 per
6 cent of the demand is from aboriginal people.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Ninety per
8 cent?

9 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You are
11 dealing with the crisis, of course, but you have certainly
12 given thought to the sources of the problems. Of course,
13 as a Commission, we are interested in working on both
14 aspects. It is important for people who have a crisis
15 in their life to have a shelter and to have treatment and
16 help, to receive help. Also, as a Commission, we are
17 interested in going to the root of the problems.

18 Has your centre given thought to
19 preventive measures? For example, to be more concrete,
20 have you established some link with the schools, with the
21 high school students for information, preventative
22 information?

23 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, we have lots of

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1 communication with the different agencies and, again, what
2 I see is that probably the major problem is the lack of
3 training for everyone involved. A lot of the people that
4 we have to work with, the resources we have to work with,
5 are constantly changing. As soon as we start building
6 up a dialogue with an agency, then people move, people
7 change, and it is just continually getting to know and
8 getting to work with an agency and then they are gone.

9 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You are
10 talking about your personnel. There was a large turnover
11 in your personnel.

12 **JOHN LOFTUS:** No, not in our personnel,
13 but in with the personnel that we -- the agencies that
14 we work with: the resource people right in the
15 communities; the addiction counsellors and that who work
16 in the communities that refer people to us. They are
17 constantly changing and it has a lot to do with stress
18 and burn-out. They just can't keep up to their demand
19 due to lack of support.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So on the
21 preventive side of things, what do you feel is the most
22 lacking to prevent -- for example, there are situations
23 of family violence. That is one thing, but there are also

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1 situations of drug and alcohol abuse by young people.
2 That is different, though everything could be related.

3 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I still believe that the
4 more trained people there are in the communities from those
5 communities working with their own people in prevention,
6 all the way through, the more that things can happen.
7 I think a lot of times we are quick to bring people in
8 from the outside. That seems to be one of the things that
9 happens here in the north and bring them into the small
10 communities and they are just as quick to leave. There
11 just doesn't seem to be any consistency.

12 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What kind of
13 personnel do you have? Are they mostly social services,
14 health-related or in the agencies that you are working
15 with?

16 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

17 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Are they
18 aboriginal people working in those --

19 **JOHN LOFTUS:** It switches from time to
20 time. That is why I say a lot of times other people are
21 brought in and it just doesn't seem to work.

22 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Viola, please.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you

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1 for your presentation.

2 In our first round of hearings and going
3 around to communities, that certainly is a priority with
4 the people from the communities themselves with respect
5 to social problems with alcohol and drug abuse and
6 certainly family violence and sexual abuse and all these
7 family breakdowns are a very major concern in most
8 aboriginal communities right across the country.

9 People from the community themselves
10 place a very high emphasis on that problem and I know that
11 there is some move to try to address the problems, one
12 of them being the implementation of rehab centres or
13 institutions like you have and usually supported by NNADAP.
14 I guess that is what you are saying.

15 However, when you talk about the lack
16 of resource within the community itself, that seems to
17 be the problem here. The people themselves -- they need
18 somebody of their own to work with them and to establish
19 themselves and to gain the confidence. That is happening
20 in some parts of the country and it has been very
21 successful.

22 I don't know; you are falling behind here
23 somewhere in comparison to other parts of the country and

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1 I don't know why. Maybe it is because of the remoteness
2 or the distance of, like you say, CEICs. Their excuse
3 is that it is too costly, but I don't know if that is a
4 legitimate or a valid excuse for them to make.

5 But that is a very serious issue and I
6 don't know really how we can, as a Commission -- what is
7 it, do you think, that needs to be done here to correct
8 the situation?

9 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I think one of the basic
10 things is the more awareness, the more things like this
11 where these things can be brought out and the population
12 in the south get to see and get to hear what we are missing
13 up here.

14 If people are in crisis in some of these
15 communities here, for people who have been in an abusive
16 situation, it is very hard to get them to start looking
17 after themselves; but if you compound that by, if anytime
18 they want to do something for themselves, they have to
19 go to Edmonton to get it down or get something for
20 themselves, it just compounds it even more. It makes it
21 that much more harder for people to get in recovery or
22 get help for themselves.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** It seems

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1 to me -- I hear you saying that there is a lack of
2 professionalism within the community themselves due,
3 maybe, to a lack of education.

4 So is education the problem?

5 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, I can see education
6 would be a big problem.

7 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Access to
8 education and professionals and to encourage them to come
9 back and to work within their communities. Does that seem
10 to be part of the problem?

11 **JOHN LOFTUS:** And I think support.
12 There have been situations where we have been able to access
13 professional people to come up here to work with us and
14 it has been a continual fight to get -- for example, medical
15 services would rather pay individual's plane fares and
16 therapists to go down to Edmonton to get help than they
17 would to pay for a therapist to come up here and work with
18 lots of people at the same time which, in the end, is
19 cheaper. But there is somehow a thought there that if
20 people have to go down, then the demand will be less and
21 it will cost less in the end.

22 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So some
23 of the responsibility, then, must be medical services.

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1 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes. In the past, we
2 have done a lot of good work up here bringing in therapists
3 from the outside. For example, we have unpaid bills from
4 medical services that are almost a year old, money that
5 we had to pay for therapists at that time. That is the
6 kind of fight that we constantly have in this community.

7 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** How is
8 this governed? Who governs your activities or your
9 complex? It is governed by who?

10 **JOHN LOFTUS:** We are a private society
11 made up of volunteers and stuff in the community. Our
12 main funding source has been AADAC.

13 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** No, but
14 I mean: Who does the decision making?

15 **JOHN LOFTUS:** The Board.

16 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So who
17 comprises of the Board?

18 **JOHN LOFTUS:** The Board is made up of
19 aboriginal people, a doctor, a nurse, a bank manager, about
20 four or five band members from the surrounding bands.

21 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I understand
22 that you have beds. In your short brief, you mentioned
23 that you are a residential alcohol and drug treatment

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1 centre. So people can stay overnight.

2 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, people come in and
3 stay for the full 35-day program.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thirty-five
5 days.

6 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Up to 35 days.

8

9 How many beds do you have?

10 **JOHN LOFTUS:** We have 32 beds, 15 of
11 which we are funded for, but we have been running at 27
12 to 28 persons per day.

13 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** And there
14 is no follow-up once they are released.

15 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, they do come back for
16 a follow-up.

17 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** There is.

18 **JOHN LOFTUS:** We first started an
19 all-women's program last September and we have had four
20 of them over this last year. At the end of the last one,
21 we had 10 women come back from the first one that are still
22 sober. So we started men's programs and in November we
23 will be doing our first family program, and that is bringing

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1 in five or six families for the full 35 days and working
2 with them.

3 We switched from a system where it was
4 totally rotating. As people leave, you bring people in
5 and now we run in 35-day blocks, 35-day all women and then
6 a 35-day all men and then a 35-day family program, one
7 after the other, and then we start the cycle over again.

8 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** But you
9 have a long waiting list, though.

10 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes. We are booking now
11 for February and March.

12 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** What
13 about crisis situations?

14 **JOHN LOFTUS:** In crisis situations, we
15 are stuck. We try to accommodate that, but there is only
16 so much we can do. We have developed this program over
17 the last four and half years from the other type and we
18 have found this to be a lot more successful and have a
19 lot more effect.

20 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Are there
21 alcohol and drug counsellors for the communities, for the
22 people outside of your --

23 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Pardon me?

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1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Are there
2 alcohol and drug types of counsellors for the community
3 or for the people outside of your --

4 **JOHN LOFTUS:** That was one of the things
5 that we are after this training project for. There has
6 been a lot of funding available through NNADAP in the
7 different communities, in the area, and it hasn't been
8 used basically because there was nobody to fill the
9 positions in a lot of cases. It is just money that has
10 been sent back every year.

11 That was one of the reasons why we went
12 after that training project in order to train counsellors
13 from the community, and we had it set up that four would
14 come from this community, two from this community and
15 whatnot, and hopefully that they could go back into those
16 communities; and if they got their training with us, that
17 we would be able to work together better as well because
18 we would have a common language.

19 Like I say, it has just been going around
20 and around.

21 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
22 So you say the major problem was lack of training.

23 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

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1 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

2 And it would cost too much to have them come up.

3 What kind of solutions or
4 recommendations do you see you could do in order to get
5 this, to have the training come here instead of sending
6 people out?

7 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Again, I think it is the
8 training and the education because it is a constant thing
9 I hear, not just only -- sometimes I have tunnel vision
10 because I am so involved in the field I am in, but I see
11 it with a lot of the bands and that trying to get management
12 training projects together, nursing-aid training
13 projects, a lot of different things.

14 It is a constant struggle to try to get
15 the money to support those type of things. I know that
16 they are just wrapping up a social work program. That,
17 again, has been another one that has been in a constant
18 struggle and fight to get the funding that they need to
19 deliver their program.

20 I think sometimes it is fine for people
21 sitting in Ottawa or Edmonton, or whatever, to say that
22 that is too much per person per day for training, but when
23 they have to look at the costs involved in doing things

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1 in the north, it is lot more to deal with.

2 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

3 Have you sat and figured out how much it would cost to
4 bring the program here compared to sending students out?

5 **JOHN LOFTUS:** For one thing, there is
6 a lot more involved than that. I think it would be pretty
7 hard to send all those people down to the south to train
8 and probably -- for things that I have compared, it would
9 cost more to send them down, back and forth, to do the
10 training because you would have to provide housing and
11 everything down there.

12 Again, it takes away from the community.

13 Like I referred to the aboriginal social work program
14 that has been going on here, most of the students are --
15 well, they are all from here. They are taking their
16 training here. They are doing their practicums right here
17 in the community in working with the agencies, and it just
18 helps to build up the whole area. It keeps them here.

19 A lot of times when you send people out
20 for training, once they are trained, they stay where they
21 are. They don't come back. But I believe if you train
22 people here, then there is more opportunity for the ones
23 who stay.

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1 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What kind of
2 training are we talking about? Is it a kind of in-house
3 training or are we talking about sending people to the
4 south to get degrees, social worker degrees or whatever,
5 or is it a tailor-made program?

6 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I think it is a lot of
7 tailor-made things. I think in the beginning, the first
8 steps, like the social work program, it is a two-year
9 certificate program. Yes, they are not BSWs, but it is
10 a start and the same with addiction counsellors with people
11 taking management programs, nursing-aid programs.

12 You have to start somewhere and I think
13 you start with getting people up to a certain level and
14 then eventually working up to the professional level from
15 there.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I just want to
17 understand. These programs are delivered by who in the
18 south? You are saying that people have to go south,
19 students have to go south to get that kind of training.
20 Are they given by colleges?

21 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Colleges, institutions,
22 that type of thing, but mainly those programs can be brought
23 here just as easy as they are delivered on there. There

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1 is a lot of demand up here for that, lots of it.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So, again, I
3 understand that the funding is a problem, but also to get
4 aboriginal students ready to move to the south for a year
5 to get the training and come back -- I understand that
6 that this is a problem as such also.

7 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

8 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** To what
9 extent? And that is the reason why I was asking you at
10 the beginning: Do you visit the high schools to try to
11 explain what it is all about and convince more young
12 aboriginal people to get involved and put the effort to
13 get the training? Do you do those kinds of things with
14 this in mind in a concrete fashion?

15 **JOHN LOFTUS:** As I say, again, I guess
16 I am kind of in a tunnel thing and I have more than enough
17 demand from people, past clients that want to get involved.
18 On our own this year, we are sending six people down for
19 training who are from this community.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So there is no
21 lack of people available wanting to do so.

22 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Exactly.

23 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So it is more

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1 a matter of making it happen through the relevant funding,
2 but you have people who would be ready to move south to
3 get the training and come back into the community.

4 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I am not sure of that.
5 I have a long list of people who would like to get the
6 training right here because most of the people I work with
7 have families in place already, and it would be very hard
8 for them to pull away. Because of the nature of the
9 communities here, I think people have a hard time -- a
10 lot of the people I have worked with, the biggest place
11 they have ever been has been Peace River and the idea of
12 moving to Edmonton really scares them and really is a hard
13 thing for them to imagine.

14 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
15 I think that I would agree with John, too. We need the
16 programs to be brought up to us. One of the reasons that
17 I didn't get into a post-secondary education until a few
18 years ago was that I didn't want to move either. I wanted
19 to remain in my community and get my schooling here.

20 So when the aboriginal social work
21 program came up, I applied for it and it has been really
22 far better plus I have the support of my family and of
23 the communities here and the friends are from here. I

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1 think that is what we miss if we go out, that support that
2 we need.

3 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I think the examples, as
4 well -- like I say, this social work program has been
5 working with -- doing their practicums and all the agencies
6 in town. They act as role models. A lot of people know
7 what they are doing and see what they are doing. A lot
8 of the youths see what they are doing and they are doing
9 it right here.

10 A lot of the agencies in the community
11 that may not have that much contact with aboriginal people
12 on that level are getting to see what can be done, and
13 it has really opened up a lot of doors. I think a lot
14 more of that could happen in all areas.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What could be
16 done from your point of view and who should be convinced
17 of that to make it possible to move those programs from
18 south to north?

19 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Again, I think the more
20 awareness, the more support we can get from
21 --

22 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** But my
23 question is: If these programs are given in colleges that

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1 do not exist here, what would be the format? We have been
2 told, sitting on many reserves, for example, by young
3 people, "Well, if you bring a university to our reserve,
4 we are going to go to the university." That is a practical
5 problem because some of it is possible to a certain extent,
6 but it is not always possible.

7 Is there a structure -- for example,
8 there is the AVC College. We heard from them; they
9 presented us a brief in Slave Lake and we know that they
10 have a circuit. Is there an institution existing here
11 in High Level that could receive that program and
12 administer the program?

13 **JOHN LOFTUS:** We do have a college here,
14 but it has been mostly doing, I think, secretarial-type
15 courses and mechanical course, or something. I am not
16 sure. I think it has basically been handling more of the
17 rural non-Native clientele more than aboriginal-specific
18 type programs. There have been a lot of them designed
19 over the last few years that people have been working for.

20

21 Like I say, there have been different
22 management programs and things that people have been going
23 after to bring in here and it seems like we run into walls

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1 all the time.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Again, we are
3 trying to see solutions and obviously, when there is an
4 institution that is pushing for getting the program, it
5 does help. But if an organization like yours pushes for
6 getting the program but is alone, as you are not going
7 to administer the program yourself, it seems to me that
8 it makes it a bit more difficult.

9 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So we are just
11 trying to see what should be done and how it should be
12 done to give us more possibility that things like that
13 happen and occur.

14 So far you have been discussing with the
15 colleges south. With whom have you been discussing the
16 possibility of bringing this north? With the province?
17

18 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, I have tried mainly
19 the different -- for instance, like I say, trying to get
20 Manpower to support us; trying to get Northern Development
21 Council to have some money for training; trying to get
22 social services and every agency that I can to give some
23 support for it.

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1 There are different programs that come
2 out every once in a while, but they put such a narrow margin
3 on what fits. It seems like you can get half the support
4 from this one program because you fit in its criteria and
5 if you try to get support from another program, because
6 you fit in the other program, they won't accept you. It
7 is just goes around and around.

8 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

9 The program that you are trying to get up here, it is
10 for training for drug and alcohol.

11 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, addiction counsellor
12 training.

13 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

14 It is not being offered by any college or institution.

15 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Part of it is delivered
16 by Neechi Institute in St. Albert. So people can go down
17 there for it, but there is a lot missing in between there.
18 That is just a basic training program. In order to work
19 in this field, you need a lot more than just the basic
20 training. That is what has been designed into the program
21 up here.

22 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

23 So is that why it has been hard for you to get the support

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1 of, say, Fairview College?

2 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Fairview College has been
3 very supportive in doing part of it. They are more than
4 willing to do the upgrading part of it for us, of course,
5 for a fee.

6 Again, I guess it is getting the support
7 from the system money-wise and support-wise for it. I
8 guess ours is just a very small part of it. Being in this
9 community, I see that there are a lot of areas where the
10 same thing is happening. It is not just -- like I said,
11 I can get very narrow-minded because I am so involved in
12 my field, but in the broad spectrum I see it happening
13 to everyone.

14 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** If a
15 program was designed to suit the need that you are talking
16 about there and if funding were made available, who would
17 give that program? Who would do the training?

18 **JOHN LOFTUS:** It would be a combination
19 of -- you see, the program has been designed. It was
20 designed and it used a combination of bringing Neechi up
21 to do their part of it, bringing in different therapists
22 and different specialists to different parts of it.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** All

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1 right. I see now. That is interesting.

2 I was involved once in some similar kind
3 of a situation where we tried to get a health program,
4 some training and bringing in different clients or
5 different students and it had to be funded three ways and
6 it is hard to get that. Part of it was funded by Indian
7 Affairs. Part of it was funded by CEIC and part of it
8 was funded by Medical Services. So it was three different
9 funders going.

10 So sometimes you have to do that. You
11 have to get that networking, but you do need a lot of
12 political support for that and if you have the bands on
13 your side or some political body, they can go to bat for
14 you and can bring this networking together and get these
15 people together and try to work out a solution. It might
16 be possible, but it takes time and it takes a lot of work
17 and, certainly, it is not one for one individual to take
18 on because it just wouldn't be.

19 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

20 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You have
21 the support of the communities and the political bodies.

22 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** It is

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1 difficult.

2 This social work program that is going
3 on now, this two-year program, how many students are taking
4 that?

5 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I believe there are 18.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** And they
7 are all aboriginal from around here.

8 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** When is
10 that going to be finished?

11 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
12 December of 1992.

13 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** December
14 of this year.

15 So do you have plans for these students?
16 Hopefully, they will be part of your solution.

17 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, I hope so too. We
18 have had a lot of them in our centre doing their practicums
19 in our centre. Once again --

20 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I just
21 hope the communities themselves will have the resource
22 to be able to use them.

23 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Yes, I think a lot of them

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1 already have in employment in place for when they are done.
2 That just shows -- I think they started with 21 and they
3 have 18.

4 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That's
5 good for after two years.

6 **JOHN LOFTUS:** If that program would have
7 been delivered in Grand Prairie or Peace River -- if they
8 would have had to go to Edmonton for it, I think they would
9 have been lucky to have half.

10 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You
11 wouldn't get the same thing.

12 **JOHN LOFTUS:** Probably out of the half,
13 half of them would have got employment down there. So
14 you would have ended up three or four people, maybe, to
15 come back to the community.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Is this a
17 one-event program or is it going to be renewed?

18 **JOHN LOFTUS:** You see, I am not involved
19 with it. The expert is over here.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** All right.

21 **JOHN LOFTUS:** I was just using that as
22 an example as to what can be done in this community.

23 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** All right. We

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1 have kept you long enough. We really appreciate you
2 presenting your brief and answering our questions. Thank
3 you very much.

4 Could the High Level Native Friendship
5 Centre come up to present their brief.

6 Good morning.

7 **ARVIN LANDRY:** Good morning.

8 My name is Arvin Landry. I am the Youth
9 Worker at the Friendship Centre.

10 **LEONA SHANDRUK:** Good morning, Mr.
11 Chairman and Madam Chairman.

12 I am Leona Shandruk from the Friendship
13 Centre. I am the Executive Director there.

14 We handed our a brochure and you probably
15 have that on your table there. I believe you are going
16 to be visiting our centre this afternoon and we certainly
17 welcome you.

18 The only concern that I would like to
19 address at this time is that as you are making your tours
20 across Canada or Alberta, we would hope that you would
21 keep in mind that you would be supporting all the Friendship
22 Centres across the nation.

23 There is a great need for our centres.

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1 I know some of the aboriginal people -- we are trying
2 to bridge the gap between the non-aboriginal and the
3 aboriginal people and we are hoping that we can stay in
4 existence for a long time.

5 We understand that there may be -- they
6 were talking to us about self-sufficiency. We are
7 concerned about our existing grants and if the
8 Commissioners could keep in mind to give us a continued
9 support, we would appreciate that.

10 Arvin Landry is my Youth Worker. As you
11 know, in most communities, there are a lot of youth
12 problems. Arvin has been doing a great job. He has been
13 with us since May and he is an aboriginal person from the
14 Territories, and we are really pleased. I have asked him
15 to come along to submit his report.

16 Arvin, please.

17 **ARVIN LANDRY:** Thank you, Boss.

18 You have a copy of my little write-up
19 we had for a Youth Committee meeting. Unfortunately, that
20 Youth Committee that was in place has folded.

21 The programs I have at the Youth Centre
22 right now -- we are experimenting with a sports cards trade
23 show because a lot of youths from High Level, boys and

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1 girls, and from the local reserves do collect cards. I
2 have experimented with this through the summer and it was
3 successful and I hope this one will be as successful as
4 that.

5 I have had youth dances at the Friendship
6 Centre and the Youth Centre and one here at the Legion
7 with the Army Cadets, which I am involved with. They are
8 all successful, too.

9 The youth work that I do is geared for
10 the Native kids mostly than non-Natives, and I kind of
11 feel that is wrong. That is why I got involved with the
12 Army Cadets because the Army Cadets does involve Natives
13 and non-Natives and it involves the community centre a
14 bit, not as much though.

15 The Army Cadets are here in High Level.
16 I am a training officer with that and I use the Friendship
17 Centre as a main focal point and where I can get a contact
18 with. So I am getting the Friendship Centre name involved
19 in other community organizations here in High Level and
20 in Fort Vermilion.

21 Of the 49 cadets we have registered this
22 year, there is 15 Native cadets and out of the total 49,
23 we have a regular of 30 cadets who come here. These are

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1 youths between the ages of 12 and 18.

2 The Native cadets who are involved are
3 from the local reserves, some of them, Meander River,
4 Assumption, Boyer River and Bonnechere River, I think,
5 but I am not sure.

6 The cadet organization just about folded
7 last year because there were only five at the last
8 inspection they had here. This year, with some elbow
9 grease and hard work, we got 49 cadets registered. Thanks
10 to the hard work from the other cadet officers who are
11 involved with the Army Cadets, they have got this program
12 off the ground and running.

13 One of the things one of the Board
14 members at the Friendship Centre stressed to me is that
15 I tend to turn my back on the people east of here, like
16 John Dor and Tallcree and stuff like that. I didn't
17 realize that because I do deal with Meander and Assumption.
18 With cadets going to Fort Vermilion, that gets those
19 reserves involved and we do have one cadet from Tallcree
20 and two from John Dor involved in Army Cadets in Fort
21 Vermilion.

22 Thanks to the Fort Vermilion School
23 Board Division, they loan us a school bus to transport

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1 the kids from Fort Vermilion to here and the cadets from
2 here to Fort Vermilion for our regular meetings, and we
3 meet every Thursday.

4 Our Youth Centre is located behind the
5 Friendship Centre which is across the street from the
6 Shell. The Youth Centre is primarily used for the youth
7 and is being used right now by the Beavers and Boy Scouts.
8 They meet regularly there every week.

9 Other activities we have there are video
10 games, pool table, ping pong, darts, air hockey and various
11 board games.

12 When the Youth Committee first started,
13 there was lots of community involvement. Everybody was
14 gung-ho about it and we opened a Youth Centre on May 29th
15 of this year. We had a free dance. We had one of the
16 DJs donate their, time which we thank them for, for the
17 dance and that was successful.

18 However, as time went on, we saw that
19 the community was slowly dropping back from the youth
20 organization and they didn't get involved with the Youth
21 Centre. Through the summer, the number of kids that
22 attended the Youth Centre for their use dropped drastically
23 from about 20 to 2 youths coming to the Youth Centre.

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1 Just last week, actually, myself and a
2 Youth Worker from the Community Centre went to the high
3 schools and did a little tour and did our own little
4 census-type thing of the youths that know of the Youth
5 Centre and the activities. The feedback we got from that
6 is that the Youth Centre was for the younger kids, and
7 actually it is for the older kids, too.

8 I have a younger brother and a younger
9 sister who live here in High Level and they feel there
10 is nothing to do but hang out at the arcades, and I kind
11 of take that onto myself to get programs at the Youth Centre
12 going and I am just waiting for approval from my boss on
13 programs that I would like to get going in November.
14 Hopefully that will get some of the youths involved in
15 the Youth Centre.

16 Just to get back to the cadets, cadets
17 is a good way for youths to get involved in the community
18 and expose them to the outside world. I, myself, was a
19 cadet for four years from the age of 12 to 15. I got in
20 trouble, but I wasn't charged because I was under age.

21 The scare tactic that was used by the
22 constable was, "Get involved with the Army Cadets and you
23 won't be charged." So I got involved in cadets and I have

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1 no regrets since joining the cadets. I have learned lots
2 myself and, even today as a training officer with the cades,
3 I am still learning more.

4 The cadets themselves can go to camps
5 across Canada, learn leadership skills, life skills and
6 other skills they might not normally learn at home or at
7 school. That is about it.

8 **LEONA SHANDRUK:** Mr. Chairman, there is
9 great concern about our youth today and with the Friendship
10 Centres that are in existence, we have a budget that we
11 have to follow. The only other budget we can access for
12 these type of programs -- we are limited for youth
13 activities. We were hoping that hopefully we can get more
14 of a funding source from somewhere so that we can help
15 the Youth Committees and the youth clubs in the communities
16 to help some of the youth for the existing program.

17 That was one of the problems with this
18 High Level Youth Club. They didn't have any grants in
19 place and they were utilizing our centre. Most of the
20 people involved on that committee were people who were
21 volunteering their time who were already committed to other
22 programs.

23 So, again, the youth problem -- I am not

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1 sure if you are going to be hearing any more briefs on
2 this or presentations on the youth, but there are a lot
3 of problems with the youth. There is nothing for them
4 to do and we are just starting in the Friendship Centre
5 to look at some of the youth.

6 The Alberta Friendship Centre movement
7 -- they have youth delegates now attending the Board
8 meetings which I think is a very good idea. I believe
9 we really have to look at our youth and the Friendship
10 Centres are asking for some input, some help as to how
11 we can really get a viable youth program. Again, this
12 funding is always one of the major concerns.

13 Thank you.

14 **ARVIN LANDRY:** I just have something to
15 add. Other programs we have at the Youth Centre are family
16 dances where the whole family can get involved and also
17 community dances where we get the drummers from the local
18 reserves: John Dor, Tallcree, Meander, Assumption and
19 even the Hay River Reserve. They come down and drum for
20 the community and we have that at the Friendship Centre.
21 Other things we have too are teen dances that are
22 successful.

23 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very

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1 much for presenting your views and hopes for the future.

2 I would like maybe to start with asking
3 you about the kind of staff you have at the centre. How
4 many staff do you have, full-time or part-time staff?

5 **LEONA SHANDRUK:** We are a four-person
6 centre, four staff. That is including myself as well.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You said at the
8 outset that the centre was open to both aboriginal and
9 non-aboriginal people.

10 Could you tell us a bit more about
11 non-aboriginal people? Do they participate in the
12 activities of the centre? For the Youth Program, do you
13 have some young non-aboriginal people going to your dances
14 or things like that?

15 **ARVIN LANDRY:** Yes, they are. The
16 thing I get from the younger kids, the Native and the
17 Mennonites -- they tend to clash, but I haven't seen that
18 since I have been here. You hear that a lot on the
19 reserves, but I have never seen it.

20 A lot of the kids who come from the
21 reserve are involved with the other cultures from around
22 here at the Youth Centre through dances and through
23 tournaments we might have at the Youth Centre.

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1 So there are non-Aboriginal people
2 involved at the Youth Centre.

3 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Can you tell
4 us a bit more about the recreation or sport facilities
5 that are available for young people in High Level? Do
6 you feel that they are adequate or whatever?

7 As you have mentioned, it is very
8 important to keep young people busy doing positive things
9 and participating in groups. So you could tell us a bit
10 more about what your assessment is of the facilities, the
11 recreation facilities?

12 **ARVIN LANDRY:** As for recreation, we
13 have gym times at the local high school and elementary
14 school, Monday nights for the older people and Wednesday
15 nights for the youths.

16 The number of youths attending our youth
17 gym night is increasing. Last night, in fact, we had 28
18 students there and we played floor hockey and some
19 volleyball and some basketball. As for co-ed, that is
20 mostly for the older people and we have the people from
21 Action North who once in a while show up, people from the
22 community, Native and non-Native. We get the prison camp
23 out at Footner Lake involved with our co-ed night, too.

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1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I thank
2 you for your presentation and I want to assure you that
3 in all of the hearings that I have attended, the Friendship
4 Centre has been well represented. They are very involved
5 in our hearings and we do include them every way possible
6 to facilitate and to hear their problems. So I think the
7 Friendship Centres are here for a while and, certainly,
8 we will give it a lot of support.

9 The other thing I wanted to alert you
10 to is the fact that youth is one of our mandates here.
11 There is a big concern about youth. Youth have always
12 felt left out in any of the deliberations that go on about
13 the future of aboriginal people. It is always done by
14 organizations and have a tendency, maybe unintentionally,
15 to leave out youth and the youth are starting to make --
16 their voice is starting to be heard and there is a big
17 concern there.

18 So certainly one of the priorities of
19 our mandate is to hear the youth and we are doing some
20 research with youth for youth as well in our research
21 component of the work of the Commission. So it is
22 interesting.

23 I am encouraged to hear what you have

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1 been able to do here and it sounds very positive.
2 Certainly I want to wish you luck in what you are doing
3 particular. You are competing with such things as the
4 arcade activities. That is a big competition because that
5 is where youth want to go all the time.

6 So I want to tell you that certainly
7 anything that is being said is being recorded here, and
8 I am sure what you have had to say will be brought out
9 in our recordings and reports as such. Certainly the Youth
10 Coordinator will be interested to hear what you are doing
11 here.

12 So I want to tell you that we certainly
13 are in support of the kinds of things that you are talking
14 about. So I thank you.

15 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

16 I just want to add something on the youth. There are
17 young youth drummers from Assumption and Meander River
18 Reserves and John Dor Prairie Young Drummers. That is
19 what they are called. We have them involved in our
20 community dances regularly today, our community round
21 dances. So there are the older drummers and the younger
22 drummers both getting involved.

23 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** All right.

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1 Thank you very much.

2 I think we are going to break for ten
3 minutes for coffee and we will resume and start again,
4 let's say, at five to eleven.

5 Thank you.

6 --- Short recess at 10:45 a.m.

7 --- Upon resuming at 11:02 a.m.

8 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** We are ready
9 to get started, please.

10 I would like to ask Mr. Clarence Fournier
11 from the Beaver First Nation to come and join us at the
12 table and make the presentation.

13 Good morning.

14 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Good morning.

15 My name is Clarence Fournier. I am a
16 Council member for Beaver First Nation and a portfolio
17 holder for education.

18 What I would like to speak on today are
19 the problems band members have when trying to continue
20 their education.

21 Our Band just recently took over the
22 post-secondary portion of education and as we do not have
23 any personnel in place to look after this program, I have

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1 been handling it. At the present time, we have 10 students
2 attending post-secondary courses.

3 We also have many members wanting to go
4 into upgrading classes in order to qualify for
5 post-secondary schooling. This is where the biggest
6 program arises. The Band does not receive any funding
7 to support these students. They are told to see Canada
8 Employment and Immigration Centre or go to Alberta
9 Vocational Training for their support or any type of
10 training allowance. AVT will not help students living
11 on reserve and going to school on reserve. So that leaves
12 CEIC. CEIC has limited seats available. Then, again,
13 that is only a solution for a handful of our students.

14 Fairview College was running an
15 upgrading class out in Boyer River, one of our reserves,
16 but the students were having such difficulty with student
17 allowances that the classes were cancelled this year.
18 This closure had little to do with the demand for services.

19 It is so annoying to see that it is easier to obtain funding
20 to attend the upgrading classes if you move off reserve,
21 which is almost the only way to access AVT support.

22 Moving off reserve creates many problems
23 of its own. More often than not, there are children

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1 involved. They are uprooted and often have to change
2 schools. Then, depending on how strict the band services
3 are, the parent has to look for monies for school supplies,
4 et cetera.

5 Housing is not easy to find in the
6 surrounding towns and rent is extremely high. The extra
7 pressure and strain on the students to live on his or her
8 training allowance often proves to be too much and, with
9 that, he or she could possibly drop out. This is labelled
10 as a failure, but I wonder just who had failed. Were these
11 students able to stay in his or her home, not disrupt the
12 children's life and schooling, there would be much less
13 pressure and the students would be able to concentrate
14 on his or her schooling.

15 Education is the key to the future and
16 especially so in Indian country. With the trend of
17 self-government come many opportunities for our people.
18 These job opportunities need training and bands cannot
19 afford to wait much longer to ensure their own people are
20 qualified for the positions of authority. To me, this
21 is what self-government is all about: Native people
22 working for their own people in every capacity. This
23 includes lawyers, teachers, administrators and the list

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1 could go on.

2 Every step of education, from
3 kindergarten to the university level, is very important.
4 It is just one of our treaty rights. Education must be
5 made a priority by our leaders, and our band members that
6 wish to enrol in any type of course should be supported
7 by the Council.

8 In order to fully support these
9 students, there must be funding. This funding should be
10 available for all types of education. The chain cannot
11 be broken, skipping from secondary to post-secondary and
12 leaving most of our members in the hole between. This
13 hole is called in need of upgrading. I am sure we are
14 not the only band that sees this as a big problem.
15 Hopefully, if enough people voice their concerns, action
16 will be taken to remove this obstacle.

17 Another concern I would like to address
18 is the lack of post-secondary courses being offered
19 locally. As a member of the High Level Tribal Council,
20 I worked with the other bands in the area to bring a social
21 work program into High Level. At the time, this program
22 was a pilot project with the expectation of more programs
23 to follow. A survey had been conducted and judging by

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1 the response, there were four major areas of study that
2 our people would like to pursue. These were social work,
3 education, business administration and health careers.

4 At the time of this hearing, the
5 aboriginal social work program is going into its last two
6 months of classes. Although the program was costly in
7 some ways, the student support has not been any higher
8 and the students were able to stay within their home area.

9
10 With that, as leaders and government
11 agencies involved, we must work together to bring these
12 post-secondary courses to our people.

13 Thank you.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
15 much.

16 As a start, could you tell me what the
17 size of your Band, the membership is?

18 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** The general
19 membership of our Band is 253, I believe, and on-reserve
20 population of 237.

21 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** On reserve.

22 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Our general
23 population is 553. Our on-reserve population is 237.

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1 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** When you say
2 that you recently took over the post-secondary portion
3 of education, what does this mean in fact?

4 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We recently took
5 over the post-secondary student support where allowances
6 go to the students and tuition fees. In the past, we had
7 two bands together. It was Tallcree and Boyer, Beaver
8 First Nation. We shared one counsellor between the two
9 bands because of our population and the student base wasn't
10 really there.

11 Since Tallcree went AFA with their
12 education, we had to take over our own post-secondary.

13 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You don't
14 administer an education program.

15 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** No, we don't
16 administer it.

17 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** It is for the
18 support.

19 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Only the support.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Previously,
21 this was in the hands of who? Who was responsible for
22 that?

23 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Tallcree and our

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1 Band had taken over the post-secondary because our student
2 support wasn't there. So they combined and then they had
3 the student numbers there and it was administered by
4 Tallcree.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I understand
6 that -- and you are stressing it certainly quite properly
7 -- education is really the key to the future.

8 In our discussion paper that we
9 published following our first round of hearings, we are
10 asking some questions and I would like to read the first
11 question because we really feel that in addition to the
12 money problem there is a problem of the value that is given
13 to getting education, value that is given to education
14 by the parents, by the community, by the leadership also.
15 You have mentioned that in your brief.

16 We hope to get some answers as to how
17 to trigger, how to convince young people of the importance
18 of getting post-secondary training, additional education.

19 In some instances, money, of course, is very important
20 and support programs. When young people move to the south,
21 if there is no support program and follow-up, very often
22 they drop out because there is an adjustment problem and
23 it is difficult.

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1 I will read this Question 27 again. It
2 goes like this:

3 "What action is required to ensure that Aboriginal youth
4 pursue and obtain technical and
5 professional levels of education?

6 How can parents instill high
7 aspirations in their children?

8 What is the responsibility of
9 communities and those in

10 leadership positions? What

11 adaptations in education systems
12 are necessary? Most important,

13 how do Aboriginal youth envision
14 their future and how do they

15 propose to prepare themselves for
16 the responsibility ahead of them

17 with the implementation of
18 self-government?"

19 Having in mind not only governmental techniques,
20 administration, management, but also on the surfaces.

21 If there is to be control on education, on health services
22 and social services and so on, there is an urgent need

23 of professional need in those fields working in the

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1 communities.

2 So, in your brief, you mention mostly
3 a problem of money, of allocations and the fact that people
4 have to go out to the AVC, for example. Allocations are
5 not available within the reserve.

6 I would like to understand what it means
7 if one of your people goes to the AVC College in Slave
8 Lake. That person would be eligible for allocation. We
9 were told that those allocations were not what they should
10 be. Also, that there were housing problems when you move
11 to Slave Lake. We had the students who came and presented
12 us a brief.

13 But I want to understand what you mean
14 when you are saying it is not available for people on the
15 reserve because the schooling is not done on the reserve.

16 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** No, it is not.
17 What I was talking about was a general upgrading. We had
18 a class on reserve and through a lot of hard work, we had
19 gotten that class through Fairview College to put it on
20 the reserve and our students from our reserve could not
21 access AVT funding.

22 If they were to come to High Level or
23 another place away from their home community, they can

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1 qualify for AVT funding.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I just want to
3 understand because I asked you at the outset what the role
4 of the reserve was when you said that you recently took
5 over the post-secondary portion of education. Your answer
6 was that it is on the financing side of things.

7 So is there a program delivered on the
8 reserve?

9 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** No, we have no
10 programs delivered on the reserve at present, either in
11 upgrading or post-secondary. What we administer is only
12 the student support which is allowances and tuition fees
13 for students to go off our reserve to these institutions.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** When you say
15 that there was a class on the reserve, was this an upgrading
16 --

17 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** It was just a
18 general upgrading.

19 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** It was not a
20 post-secondary training.

21 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** No, it wasn't.

22 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** But, again, on
23 a reserve where there are 237 people, it seems that it

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1 is most likely that young people will have to go outside
2 the reserve to get their post-secondary training, whether
3 to become a nurse's assistant or a nurse, in whatever field.
4 Then they will get the allocation that is available.
5 It might not be enough and we were told that, but I just
6 wan to understand the problem.

7 Are you telling us that there should be
8 post-secondary training on the reserve?

9 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** No, I am not really
10 saying that there should be post secondary training on
11 reserve. I will say it right out. We should have
12 post-secondary training locally, say, High Level. That
13 is local. That is close. You are not very far away from
14 your family, instead of sending our students to, say,
15 Edmonton, Grand Prairie. They uproot everybody and end
16 up with social problems.

17 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** There is no
18 post-secondary school in High Level.

19 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** No, there is not.
20 Well, there is Fairview College. They have the capacity
21 of handling post-secondary courses there, but they have
22 to broker it in through another university or college.
23 Right now, the way Fairview College is, they only have

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1 general courses there like secretarial. John talked a
2 little bit about it earlier.

3 What they can do is broker in
4 post-secondary courses where our people could attend
5 Fairview College here in High Level.

6 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Where do the
7 young people from your reserve go to do the high school?

8 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We have high school
9 board in our reserve and it is from K to 12. It is right
10 beside the reserve.

11 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So it is not
12 far from the reserve.

13 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** The high school
14 thing -- it is really local. They bus our students there
15 and we have no problem with anything now to go to high
16 school. What I am talking about is those people who didn't
17 have the opportunity to go to high school or just drop
18 out and now they want to get back into the education field
19 and learn a little bit more.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Having in mind
21 the importance of education, do you know how many young
22 people from your reserve who graduate from high school
23 go somewhere to get post-secondary training?

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1 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Yes, that's right.

2 A few years ago, we had a large number of graduates, the
3 biggest graduate class there. We had six students who
4 graduated from Grade 12.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What did they
6 do after?

7 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** There are some
8 going to school in other places. We have one student right
9 now in Grand Prairie, one student in Fort Nelson. She
10 is working on her teacher's certificate and one in nursing.
11 They go after the careers that they want, but the problem
12 is that they have to go other places.

13 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Are there jobs
14 that they could take if they were coming back afterwards
15 to your community?

16 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** There are jobs
17 available at our Band office, but right now, the way the
18 situation is, we have to rely on outside people to do our
19 work for us; whereas, if our own students were qualified,
20 they could have those jobs. Most of the jobs are filled
21 by non-treaty Indians or non-Native people.

22 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Because you
23 don't have enough of young people who get the training

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1 or they don't come back.

2 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** That is what the
3 trend was for a while, but it seems like most of the young
4 people want to come back and work for their own people.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** They want to
6 come back.

7 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Well, that is what
8 it seems like.

9 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Yes.
10 So if there isn't enough of those young
11 people, it is because there isn't enough going to get the
12 training.

13 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** That's right.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** That is
15 exactly the problem that this question tries to address.
16 How can we make it possible? It is one thing to say,
17 "It is difficult because it means having to go south,"
18 and obviously one of the solutions is to bring more
19 post-secondary training to the north, but we know that
20 it will not be possible in all the -- the training for
21 the nurses, for example. Before we get a nursing program
22 in High Level, it might be a few years and what will happen
23 in between?

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1 So what kind of solution would be needed
2 to make it possible for young men or women to go and become
3 a nurse or in other health professions knowing that there
4 will be jobs for him or her in the community afterward?

5 We feel that if there is no action taken soon with the
6 number of young people coming out of the secondary schools,
7 the problem will get bigger and bigger, the social
8 problems. There is no reason that these jobs have to be
9 done by non-aboriginal people.

10 So that is the thinking we would like
11 to have with you, the discussion. We feel that it might
12 be many small things. We know that there is a lack of
13 support programs. But, again, when young people think
14 about the future, it might be worth it to move and do the
15 training when you know that you could come back and you
16 have a choice to come back to your community and do the
17 job.

18 So what are your views on that? The
19 leadership has a responsibility also.

20 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Yes, the leadership
21 has a responsibility to go ahead. With the devolution
22 of Indian Affairs, there are a lot of programs that were
23 turned over to bands. But in some cases, when they were

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1 turned over to bands, it was basically cut probably. The
2 bands would probably get about 60 per cent of the money
3 before.

4 When Indian Affairs was handling these
5 programs, they were getting the full-force funding per
6 PY. Then when the bands took over it, they were probably
7 cut drastically. With the big cut there, they didn't --
8 you can hire a fully qualified person for, say, band
9 administrators. So you just have to get one that is within
10 your budget. Also, Indian Affairs funding to reserves
11 is based on per capita.

12 So if we don't have people living on
13 reserve -- we have a small reserve with 237 people living
14 on reserve. That is what we get funded for. With a meagre
15 budget like that, what can you afford really or what kind
16 of personnel can you afford?

17 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

18 I think also that another problem for post-secondary
19 students is that there is a lot of us who have families
20 already established and we have done the upgrading to go
21 to school into post-secondary education. It is just that
22 to take our family and move again, it is a big problem.
23 We have heard it with John's program, the Action North

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1 Centre, this morning and most likely we will be -- I know
2 for sure we will be hearing it again.

3 I think that is why we say that we should
4 have programs brought up north. This year, is our first
5 year that we are really getting into post-secondary
6 education for any of the students up in this area and Indian
7 Affairs capped the post-secondary education funding
8 without any consideration. Down south, they have probably
9 accessed a lot of it, but up north we are just getting
10 into it. That creates a problem for us up here.

11 Also, what I hear Clarence saying is that
12 there are two problems. One is funding and the other one
13 is education. The education -- why couldn't we bring the
14 education to us up here? The funding is cut. So we are
15 all scrambling for dollars that aren't there.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Certainly, to
17 a greater extent, this could and should be done. However,
18 again, what I am saying is that before there be a nursing
19 school, for example, in this community, it might be a few
20 years and what happens for the young generation?

21 I understand that one of the problems
22 is that when people start to work, as a family, it makes
23 it very, very difficult to think of moving south to get

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1 the training and even moving to the AVC College.

2 Again, my question is: For young people
3 who are just completing high school, what could be done
4 to make it possible for at least some of them to go and
5 get the training? We can't expect that there will be a
6 cure-all solution all together. It will be by instalment.
7 Meanwhile, things have to progress and be possible to
8 make possible.

9 For example, we made many hearings in
10 the Baffin Island and the Northwest Territories and there
11 is not a single Inuit nurse and all the jobs are held by
12 nurses coming from the south. So, at one point, we have
13 to break that circle, that situation. We know it is not
14 easy, but that is exactly what we are trying to see in
15 putting that question that I just read. We feel that it
16 might be small things.

17 The importance that the community
18 attaches to education, to getting some of its own, getting
19 the training and coming back to hold the jobs, that the
20 parents, that the leadership and also, of course, the money
21 and the support programs -- it could be many things.

22 So that is what we want to discuss with
23 you on this aspect because we are afraid that it is still

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1 taking ten years to get real post-secondary education up
2 north. Meanwhile, there will be many, many people who
3 will have missed the boat and their life is at stake.

4 Viola, please.

5 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you
6 for your presentation.

7 I think what you are talking about here
8 is a situation that is similar to a lot of aboriginal people
9 in the communities. Often times, it is easier for us in
10 the south because the institutions are closer to our
11 reserves and that.

12 The one that you are addressing here
13 mostly is upgrading and that has been a serious problem
14 because we have had a lot of high drop-out rates where
15 young people drop out and then when they finally decide
16 they need their education, by that time they are an adult.
17 So you can't go to high school under the normal criteria
18 and CEIC did offer upgrading courses for these kinds of
19 needs before.

20 I am not even sure -- I know in some parts
21 of the country, CEIC doesn't even offer upgrading any more
22 and the institutions that do offer it Indian Affairs don't
23 fund or at least you are restricted with your funding.

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1 With your taking over the administration
2 of your post-secondary -- do you have ample budget to cover
3 all your post-secondary students or are you underfunded
4 as it is?

5 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Like I said about
6 students out living on reserve, our budget in
7 post-secondary would not cover a full year for the students
8 that we have.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So you
10 don't have enough as it is.

11 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We don't have
12 enough money.

13 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Even if
14 you had the flexibility to pay for some of this.

15 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Right now, we have
16 a waiting list of people who want to go to post-secondary
17 --

18 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** And you
19 don't have enough.

20 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** And we don't have
21 enough.

22 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** All
23 right. That's one problem. I think that is a clear

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1 problem right across Canada. It is the cut-back in
2 education by the Department of Indian Affairs that has
3 created this -- where students now want to go to
4 post-secondary schools, the money is just not there and
5 now the bands are delivering these services and it doesn't
6 matter how flexible they are with their criteria. They
7 don't have the same kinds of funds that Indian Affairs
8 had when they were administering it.

9 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** I want to say
10 another thing. With the take-over of our post-secondary
11 education, that is just the support portion of it.

12 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Yes, I
13 realize that.

14 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** But also what comes
15 with taking that over, Indian Affairs has the guidelines
16 set by Indian Affairs, not by our own people.

17 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You can't
18 set your own guidelines.

19 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** If we can set our
20 own guidelines, we would be farther ahead also.

21 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** And you
22 can't do that.

23 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We cannot do that.

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1 We have to follow the guidelines of Indian Affairs.

2 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You still
3 have to follow those.

4 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** They say, "Get your
5 people educated," and what they will do -- we follow under
6 the guidelines and the funding is not all there. Like
7 I said, we have a waiting list that are students are willing
8 and ready to go to school.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** There are
10 some areas in Canada where some bands have changed some
11 of their guidelines, despite what Indian Affairs says.

12 However, the situation here is with the
13 upgrading and it is these adult students and it is the
14 students who want to go back and get their upgrading so
15 that they can get into some form of post-secondary
16 education or training or whatever.

17 The other thing you say is that once they
18 leave the reserve, then AVT will support them. That means
19 that they can get support from AVT itself once they leave
20 the reserve.

21 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** They can qualify
22 for AVT funding once they are off the reserve.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** To take

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1 the upgrading.

2 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Yes, but upgrading
3 has to be off reserve.

4 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That's a
5 very --

6 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** That is one of the
7 things that possibly could be changed.

8 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That is
9 one of the things that we have been -- I just don't know
10 how we are going to resolve that as a Commission. We hear
11 this over and over and we know it. I have lived a part
12 of this situation and it is this whole thing that you need
13 your upgrading. It doesn't matter where you live, but
14 it is the policy.

15 So I just don't know what we could do,
16 how we can break down that kind of situation, particularly
17 up here in the north. I can see that in other areas, there
18 is sometimes a way to get around that for upgrading. There
19 was a time that they would provide -- if there were enough
20 students, if you had enough people who would be interested
21 in this, it could be brought. The course could be brought
22 to the community, the upgrading.

23 Where do the kids go to elementary

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1 school?

2 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** At Rocky Lane and
3 it is right beside one of our reserves.

4 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
5 Who controls the elementary, the junior high and the high
6 school?

7 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We haven't taken
8 over the tuition agreement. Indian Affairs would control
9 that portion, I guess. What we control, basically, is
10 just, again, school supplies to go to school and then Indian
11 Affairs control the tuition which we are negotiating to
12 take over.

13 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
14 So you go with their guidelines.

15 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We have to go with
16 their guidelines.

17 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
18 How much input do you have in designing or supporting
19 your school?

20 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Basically none.

21 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
22 Is there any changes for this?

23 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We are not even

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1 allowed to vote for trustees and about 1/3 of the population
2 of our children go there and it is a school with a little
3 over 300.

4 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

5 I didn't hear the first part.

6 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** We can't even vote
7 for provincial trustees. It is a public school.

8 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

9 Why is that --

10 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** It is just in the
11 rules somewhere.

12 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

13 -- when your students go to this school.

14 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Our students go
15 there, yes. I am not trying to run the school now because
16 it is one of the best schools in the country, but the control
17 we have over the school is zilch. Maybe after we control
18 our tuition agreement with the school division, maybe then
19 we will have some say, but other than that, we are just
20 the population.

21 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

22 If you are going to have post-secondary education and
23 if you are going to start somewhere, then you could start

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1 in the school at elementary, at junior high and at high
2 school in order for students to go on for post-secondary
3 education or for educating themselves into universities
4 and colleges.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I just want to
6 understand. You have said that you are not allowed or
7 entitled to vote for the making up of the school board.

8 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** That is right.
9 They invited us to a meeting, but we are just there to
10 be spectators, I guess. We cannot vote.

11 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** There are
12 elections for the trustees.

13 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Yes.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** And you are not
15 allowed to vote?

16 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** No.

17 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Is this the
18 provincial Education Act?

19 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** I think it is the
20 provincial Education Act.

21 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** We have never
22 heard that before. So we are going to check that. I must
23 say that I am surprised.

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1 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** Like I said, we have
2 1/3 of the student population going there and we have no
3 voice on who the trustee can be.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
5 much for being with us and sharing your thoughts and putting
6 education as a top priority. We realize that there is
7 much work to do to make it a real thing and we hope that
8 your work will be successful and, as a Commission, we are
9 certainly going to do our best to address this issue in
10 the most concrete fashion.

11 Thank you.

12 **CLARENCE FOURNIER:** I also would like
13 to thank you for giving me this opportunity to address
14 the Commission. So thank you.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I would like
16 to call the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement, the
17 representative to come to make the presentation.

18 Good morning.

19 **JOHN CRISP:** Good morning. Thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman and Members of the Panel. My name is John
21 Crisp.

22 I have to apologize on behalf of our
23 Council. They were called to a meeting in Edmonton this

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1 evening and due to travelling time, they had to leave.

2 So, as the administrator of the settlement, I am
3 representing them.

4 It gives us great pleasure to welcome
5 you to our home area of Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement.

6 We are honoured that you chose to come.

7 The modern history of our area dates back
8 to the days when the boats put in at Carcajou on the Peace
9 River and carts brought goods up to Key River which is
10 just south of here.

11 Over the years, the colony has grown and
12 been transformed into the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement,
13 currently boasting nearly 800 people.

14 If I can pause there for one moment, this
15 is not in our brief, but we are having difficulties with
16 the federal census who refuses to acknowledge that there
17 is such a thing as the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement.

18 They are only recognizing the hamlet of Paddle Prairie
19 and putting our other population into a hamlet south of
20 us called Keg River, and we are having some difficulty
21 appealing the census results on which some of our grants
22 will obviously be based if we can get them.

23 Our main industries are farming, oil and

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1 gas, logging, heavy construction and the building of a
2 better way of life for our people.

3 Since November 1990, we have been
4 established as a local government responsible for our own
5 destiny and operations. We are now grappling with this
6 enormous task trying to get in place the services and
7 facilities necessary for the good functioning of our
8 community to bring us to a comparable level with other
9 municipalities of similar populations and needs in
10 Alberta, of course. However, we still seem to have quite
11 a ways to go yet.

12 Our main issues include health needs,
13 provincial grants, access, school expansion, road
14 maintenance and construction, and government interface.
15 In this brief, we have essentially chosen to focus on
16 two issues: health and education.

17 The health issue background. The
18 Paddle Prairie Settlement stretches almost 30 miles along
19 the Mackenzie Highway and is the same across. With the
20 populations of Key River and Carcajou, there is almost
21 1,000 people living here, all of whom have been promised
22 by the provincial government that they can have equal
23 access to health services as any other Albertan.

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1 But people have to travel to see a
2 physician, dentist, et cetera, all our other needs. The
3 health unit supplies home care visits and a nurse for two
4 days a week to the hamlet of Paddle Prairie. Arrangements
5 are made between Manning and High Level to provide some
6 service to Keg River and Carcajou.

7 The Health Unit, Mental Health and
8 Social Services have offered to increase their services
9 if given adequate accommodation. In a very preliminary
10 discussion with the North West Regional Health staff in
11 High Level, there appears to be some willingness to offer
12 more services if space and funding allow.

13 We, together with Action North in High
14 Level, applied for training funds for a comprehensive
15 Addiction Counsellors training program and were rejected,
16 to our surprise, by the way, by Canadian Manpower in Grand
17 Prairie.

18 All of this leaves us with some confusion
19 and a very fragmented health delivery system. Needless
20 to say, this means extra cost for our people in travel,
21 often accommodation and meals and often loss of pay. That
22 is while they have to leave their jobs to travel to Grand
23 Prairie or Edmonton. We think this is discrimination.

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1 There are certainly communities with
2 much small populations than ours and much less isolated
3 that have far more in health services. Even within our
4 own area, both Rainbow, Assumption and La Crete have much
5 better facilities and services than ourselves. Our
6 requests are sent into the Health Centre and Health
7 Services.

8 We have been advised that Health
9 Services would be more willing to attend Paddle Prairie
10 if there was a facility to work out of. Likewise,
11 residents would be better serviced if there was a central
12 place that they knew always had those services. We are
13 faced with insufficient space to meet even our own office
14 needs, let alone the needs of agencies that could provide
15 services to us.

16 The Health Unit presently rents one
17 office within our administration building and Social
18 Services shares an office with the Gas Co-op for their
19 occasional visits. Needless to say, Health and Gas Co-op
20 don't quite go together, but they have to share anyways.

21 We would like to group all the
22 health-related services into one facility, including the
23 Health Unit, Social Services, Mental Health, Addiction

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1 Counselling, visiting specialists, physicians, if we can
2 get one to visit, Family and Community Social Services
3 and AADAC and any other service that would be supplied.

4 The Centre in Rainbow Lake has impressed
5 us the most as being very comprehensive although we perhaps
6 would have more services than they currently have.

7 We request the Commission's assistance
8 in lobbying the province for a Health Centre to house these
9 projected health services. We would be prepared to
10 consider a joint venture. By that we are talking of
11 contribution to capital construction costs.

12 Health Services. Starting with the
13 most requested, the services from the Health Unit, which
14 is from High Level. Something I did not mention here that
15 we are trying to straighten out is that with the
16 non-recognition of Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement, our
17 boundaries don't seem to be on any map. There are not
18 in any of the provincial maps in terms of health services.

19 This is something that the Boundaries Commission is
20 currently, we hope, looking at and addressing our needs.

21

22 It has been suggested by the doctors in
23 High Level and some staff from the Health Unit that our

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1 day-to-day medical needs would best be served by a nurse's
2 station. This would give immediate care to the many young
3 families, children's problems and daily non-critical needs
4 of the population. The more serious cases would be
5 referred to a physician or hospital. Such a service would
6 probably operate from three to five days a week and include
7 home care visits. This person could live on or near the
8 settlement.

9 Social Services would be encouraged to
10 staff an office here for at least one day a week.
11 Currently, people have to travel to obtain these services,
12 yet so often it is these same people who have the greatest
13 difficulty in travelling. That you are very much aware
14 of.

15 Mental health would be of great help to
16 us with perhaps bi-weekly visits and the crisis line
17 system.

18 Although denied funding by Canada
19 Manpower, we have proceeded with training two Addiction
20 Counsellors, might I add, with great support and
21 co-operation from Action North who you heard from this
22 morning. We much appreciate their enormous help to us
23 due to the need in our own community. This will be a

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1 full-time service staffed by local people. They are
2 members of the settlement, actually.

3 The FCSS is presently a shared service
4 with the High Level regional FCSS, the Family Community
5 Support Services, and provides programs to all ages. It
6 gives an information service, assists seniors and others
7 in need with various things such as filling out their forms
8 and accessing provincial federal programs. This is a
9 full-time service and operated by a local director.

10 The dental visits would be very welcome
11 if, perhaps, the University of Alberta program could be
12 brought here once a month, for example. For the panel's
13 benefit, they do have a unit in High Level.

14 Other visiting specialists,
15 physiotherapists and others would form a very
16 comprehensive medical service to Paddle Prairie, Keg River
17 and Carcajou area.

18 We understand some of the difficulties
19 in attracting these services and, therefore, we are part
20 of the Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee of
21 the High Level area. We are doing our best to pursue these
22 services.

23 We request the Commission's help in

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1 fully accessing these services as it seems our own efforts
2 are not being that effective. We are convinced they are
3 needed and the best advice we can get agrees. Maybe a
4 comprehensive needs assessment would also assist.

5 We have asked the Health people here to
6 give us a comprehensive medical needs assessment, but they
7 say, "Well, you are not in our area." So, at the moment,
8 we are struggling with these issues.

9 In conclusion, the mandate of the
10 Commission is, in our view, to help communities such as
11 ours obtain services from various provincial departments
12 that would greatly help even up the delivery of health
13 care to our area.

14 We are not asking for more health
15 services and facilities than other Albertans, but we do
16 want a comparable level to others in somewhat similar
17 circumstances. We are convinced that to obtain and keep
18 these services, our hospital and other health needs
19 boundaries needs to be aligned with the North West Regional
20 Health District and a Health Centre to be constructed to
21 give adequate service for those services under one roof.

22

23 The second issue that we would like to

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1 focus on is education which I understand you have had
2 several people talk about already.

3 The Paddle Prairie School has
4 successfully sought to expand their grades and curriculum
5 from kindergarten right through to grade 12 as of this
6 school year. Although Alberta Education has approved the
7 expansion of these grades, they did not approve the
8 classroom space and additional curriculum requirements.

9 Coupled with this is the increasing
10 school population as people move into the area. In our
11 case, it is young people moving back into the settlement
12 as more housing is being made available. At present, we
13 have insufficient space to efficiently teach 106 students.

14 I should note that our school population
15 in three years is projected to reach 140 students with
16 about 100 students also going to the Keg River School.
17 We are having a difficult time with space.

18 A number of our students, when reaching
19 the high school age, prefer to leave Paddle Prairie for
20 other school jurisdictions in the cities or even at Manning
21 or High Level just to obtain access to better equipped
22 facilities. There seems no reason why we could not offer
23 some of these programs.

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1 This underlines the lack of any hands-on
2 programs for the students. Our is essentially an academic
3 only program, not by choice, but because there are no
4 facilities. Unfortunately, most of our graduates, upon
5 leaving school, do not go into the academic streams right
6 away. Most never do by the way. Some will eventually
7 return to school in adult life, but the majority prefer
8 the trades or starting their own businesses. Therefore,
9 the school would clearly like to offer industrial arts,
10 home economics and perhaps other skills.

11 We need to equip our students with the
12 skills they actually need to enter the workforce here at
13 Paddle Prairie, and we feel very strongly about this issue.
14 Some of the oil companies have even expressed an interest
15 in equipping classrooms for us. They have also indicated
16 a willingness to bring their staff in to help us learn
17 some of the oil trade so that our people could become
18 operators in the oil and gas fields around this area.

19 We have an immediate need for 3 high
20 school classrooms, an industrial arts room and a home
21 economics room. These are estimated to need about 6,000
22 square feet of space. We feel that the building could
23 be expanded and the oil companies would help us with the

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1 equipment. The costs might be as follows, and we mention
2 the costs. These, by the way, mostly would be picked up
3 by Alberta Education if they ever approve the project.

4 Our request is that we feel that with
5 the grades already approved and in place, Alberta Education
6 should be planning on classroom construction. Therefore,
7 we request the Commission to assist us in obtaining the
8 necessary classroom space, fully equipped preferably, of
9 course.

10 There is also the possibility of sharing
11 the home economics and industrial arts room with the Key
12 River School which, incidentally, is made up of over 60
13 per cent of the people from the settlement.

14 We are working towards building a viable
15 community which includes education. We strongly feel that
16 with the settlement increasing in population and taking
17 shape as a responsible, local government that the school
18 should be giving us graduates equipped for the local
19 workplace.

20 The third item -- we just mention it
21 briefly -- is provincial grants access. We have been given
22 self-government and we are thankful, by the way -- we are
23 not complaining -- but hampered in this by not being able

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1 to access provincial grants.

2 The province claims that the funds being
3 given to settlements are in lieu of grants, whilst the
4 settlements are claiming that the funds under the accord
5 provision are a settlement for dropping the lawsuit against
6 the province. Regardless of the arguments, we are caught
7 trying to upgrade our housing, roads, water, sewer and
8 other services, run our local government, yet denied the
9 grants normally enjoyed by other local governments.

10 We request the Commission to assist us
11 in obtaining access to these grants, especially
12 infrastructure grants. By infrastructure, we mean water
13 and sewer applications and roads.

14 Thank you for your attention to this.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
16 much for presenting us with a very careful and detailed
17 brief on the need of your community, your settlement.

18 We are pretty much aware of the unique
19 situation that exists in the province of Alberta as far
20 as the Métis Settlements are concerned, the Métis
21 Settlement recognized under the Métis Settlement Act and
22 the agreement that took place and the fact that since
23 November 1, 1990, you have been acting as your own local

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1 government.

2 We understand that there are still
3 difficulties of interpretation as to the agreement itself,
4 as you say on the last page of your document about
5 provincial grants. Your understanding is that the
6 agreement that provided for the money for a 17-year period
7 was given in exchange for dropping off the land claim court
8 case and you should not be cut off from getting the regular
9 grants as other local governments. Obviously, this is
10 a very specific situation.

11 As a Commission, we are going to look
12 at it, but I would like to say at the outset that our role
13 is not to get involved in particular disputes, whether
14 specific land claims that are all over the country. We
15 try to avoid it and it is not our mandate to really get
16 in and help to settle those disputes. It might be useful
17 that we do it, but if we were to do that, we would certainly
18 be distracted from executing our main mandate and that
19 is very wide, indeed.

20 So what we hope to do in education and
21 the health services and in other areas is really, from
22 a good understanding of what the problems are at the
23 grassroots level, to come up with proposals that would

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1 be beneficial for many, many communities, including the
2 Métis settlements.

3 We recognize that this is a unique
4 situation because you are dealing with the provincial
5 government and you have a home base that has been recognized
6 since 1934 through the various Métis settlements, when
7 the first Act was adopted, and we understand that there
8 is something different here than what exists in the other
9 provinces, certainly, as far as the Métis people are
10 concerned. It is a unique situation where a land base
11 for aboriginal groups was given by the province and not
12 by the federal government and the relationship is more
13 with the province.

14 So what you are telling us in your brief
15 is that you would hope that we might be of some help in
16 you getting proper services in the health sector, in the
17 education sector and also on this larger question of the
18 grants, availability of grants.

19 As you will understand, it is difficult
20 to -- we are meeting with people from the provincial
21 government because we know that our mandate, even if we
22 are a federally-appointed Commission, is so wide and the
23 topics in our mandate -- some of the areas are within the

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1 provincial jurisdictions and we know that some or many
2 of our recommendations at the end will have an impact on
3 the provinces. This is a rather unusual situation for
4 a federally-appointed Commission and that is the reason
5 why, from the start, we have met with most of the Premiers
6 and ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs within
7 the provinces to try to establish as good a contact as
8 possible.

9 So we are going to look at the situation
10 of the Métis settlements but, again, on a more general
11 basis. We are not in a situation where we will look at
12 each of the eight Métis settlements and deal with the
13 specifics involved in each of them. We hope that the data
14 that we are collecting will help us to come with
15 recommendations that will have a strong influence on the
16 level of services that will be available and the access
17 to services that will be available to you and your community
18 in the health sector in particular. The delivery of
19 services is a very important aspect and how it is done
20 and how it could be done to better serve the people.

21 Of course, we are aware that most of the
22 time part of the problem is the money available, but, again,
23 we hope that we will be able to address those issues in

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1 a general fashion and in a way that will have a strong
2 impact at the community level.

3 So this being said, I would like to get
4 your reaction on this and to move to some additional
5 questions.

6 **JOHN CRISP:** Certainly. Thank you very
7 much. You obviously have a fair understanding and grasp
8 of our situation in Alberta. That was a very good summary.

9 Being so far separated from the other
10 seven settlements, we tend to try to solve our own problems.

11 I think one of the fundamental difficulties that we are
12 facing, which is fundamental to these two issues, is that
13 even though there is a recognition on behalf of the
14 provincial government, or at least one department of that
15 government, that the Métis settlement exists, that is not
16 recognized by other departments. They seem to miss us
17 from the map, as it were, although we have been around
18 since 1938 under the Métis Veteran Act.

19 With education and health, we are
20 struggling with our community being recognized as an
21 important community of having these people to be serviced.

22 I think that even if you do group Paddle Prairie in with
23 the other seven, there has to be some recognition of the

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1 uniqueness of our geographic location, let alone other
2 considerations.

3 We do have 800 people, despite what the
4 federal census tell us. We have gone house to house.
5 We know how many people are there. There are 796 to be
6 precise and we do know that we have these needs. We are
7 just having a lot of difficulty convincing people.

8 Perhaps I will just leave it open to
9 questions.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** There is a
11 General Council that will group all the eight Métis
12 settlements and on behalf of the eight settlements on many
13 aspects with the provincial government.

14 So I suppose that these concerns have
15 been conveyed to the General Council. I want to know the
16 kind of relationship you have. You participate in this
17 Council as a Métis settlements, as one of the eight Métis
18 settlements. What role do you see of the General Council
19 toward helping you to achieve your goals?

20 **JOHN CRISP:** Our understanding at the
21 moment is that the General Council is not primarily
22 involved in any of the issues that we currently address,
23 transportation being an exception. That is the

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1 maintenance of roads.

2 The other issues are, in many ways,
3 supposedly part of the transition and, thus, handled by
4 a provincial department that is being set up called the
5 Métis Transition Commission.

6 In practice, however, it is our strong
7 suspicion that we are somewhat on our own. At least that
8 appears to be the way it is. We have to lobby on our own
9 and try to obtain these services.

10 Where the Commission has been helpful
11 is in, I suppose, putting some weight behind interviews
12 and phone calls that we have had with various provincial
13 people, but the effectiveness of that is quite limited.
14 We appear to be largely on our own and any advances we
15 have made have been a lot of it on our own initiative.

16 Again, I think that is more a question
17 of geography than anything else and accident in geography,
18 if you will.

19 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** If I
20 understand you correctly, you have been in touch with the
21 Education Department -- did you discuss those problems
22 with the Municipal Affairs Department that is with one
23 interlocutor or did you have to go to Education for

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1 education help or health, and so on?

2 **JOHN CRISP:** Yes, we have. Relative to
3 education, we are covered here by the Northlands School
4 Division which covers any unorganized area of Alberta.
5 We have approached them. We thought we were making some
6 progress; at least the Principal thought he was making
7 some progress. One of the Assistant Superintendents out
8 of Peace River is also strongly related to Paddle Prairie
9 and we thought we had good sympathy, et cetera, and whatever
10 the words are, but nothing has happened. We find that
11 we are a number, whatever it is, down at the bottom of
12 the waiting list. It is not a high priority at all.

13 They allowed us to expand the grades to
14 go up to and including high school now. We have up to
15 grade 12. This is their first year, but then denying us
16 the teaching staff and the curriculum and the facilities.
17 It is a catch 22. It is a real problem. We just don't
18 seem to be getting any progress.

19 The person who was hired to be the
20 Superintendent for building to look after some of these
21 things -- that position has been closed out. We understand
22 there was a budget cut by the province which leaves us
23 frustrated. We don't have the space, but essentially the

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1 philosophy of the thing is that we are not equipping our
2 people to stay there. We are giving them the English 10,
3 20, 30, these kind of courses, but the kids are not
4 finishing them. It is not equipping them for the kind
5 of work that they have to do, the work that is available
6 in our area.

7 Most of our people are involved in either
8 logging or oil or gas or construction trades, heavy
9 equipment. That is where they are involved. We can't
10 even give them that kind of education. We can't give them
11 any industrial arts education. They have to go outside
12 to get that. We don't think that is reasonable.

13 For a modest sum of money, we feel that
14 we could have some of that practical training in our own
15 settlement. That is what we are arguing for.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You mentioned
17 that you approached some of the companies or industries.
18 Is that with no avail? It would seem that it is in their
19 interest to participate in that.

20 **JOHN CRISP:** Very positive. They are
21 supportive. They have offered to supply equipment. They
22 have offered to give donations. Their bond company has
23 put it in writing that they will equip an industrial arts

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1 classroom and help us with the same. So they have been
2 very supportive and we are very appreciative of their
3 -- I am talking of Petro Canada, Alberta Energy, Nova.
4 They are being very supportive.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** But this is not
6 sufficient to get the Department of Education to move.

7 **JOHN CRISP:** Seemingly.

8 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What about the
9 Health Services? What have you done?

10 **JOHN CRISP:** With Health Services, we
11 are in the process of attempting to convince the Boundaries
12 Commission that we should be recognized and put on the
13 health map, as it were, and be part of the health district
14 of High Level which covers the north west corner of the
15 province.

16 In an informal discussion with the
17 director of the North West Health -- whatever their correct
18 title is -- they have informed us that they would accept
19 us into their area if the Boundaries Commission so ruled
20 and they would support our application to the Boundaries
21 Commission, which is the Minister, essentially, of Health
22 in this province.

23 We have with their help looked at some

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1 of the services that other communities are enjoying in
2 our area and, needless to say, we are asking, "Why not
3 us?" We get a nurse two days a week. We need somebody
4 who can do a little more than just regular nursing or
5 counselling and we need more hours.

6 In informal discussions, they have --
7 it is not at the board level. It is strictly at the
8 administrative level which has no weight of course. He
9 has indicated that they will be willing to discuss quite
10 seriously as a board more services to us if we were
11 accepted.

12 We have also asked, because of the size
13 of our population -- if we get a board position, we will
14 have some say in what health services we receive. So we
15 have made efforts and attempts. It is very slow and at
16 the moment we are frustrated. We don't seem to be winning.
17 I think eventually we will, but it is very long.

18 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I have
19 nothing to add, except to say thank you for your
20 presentation.

21 **JOHN CRISP:** You are familiar with our
22 problems.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I

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1 understand your frustration with what you are dealing with,
2 but I don't have any specific questions for you.

3 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

4 I was going to ask: Where are you covered, then, under
5 your health? Who is covering you? Not North Western
6 Health Services Board, are they?

7 **JOHN CRISP:** Theoretically, in hospital
8 matters, we are under the Manning Hospital District. We
9 have no connections. There is no contact. It is strictly
10 a theoretical exercise. We understand the history is that
11 they needed the population in order for some financial
12 structure years ago in order to fund some hospital
13 construction or something of some years ago. That is our
14 understanding. But in actual practice, the provincial
15 map shows an empty blank where Paddle Prairie Settlement
16 happens to be.

17 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

18 A lot of the problems that you are saying is just a matter
19 of housing these programs on your reserve.

20 **JOHN CRISP:** We feel that that is a major
21 issue. We don't have the space. We had even offered that
22 if we could obtain some%100'100

23

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1 For funding to build a building, would they consider
2 renting the building from us to help pay back the money
3 that we would borrow from the bank so we are able to build
4 such a building.

5 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

6 But you are denied access to grants.

7 **JOHN CRISP:** As correctly said by your
8 Chairman, it is probably tied up in legislative material
9 and so on and the General Council -- all eight settlements,
10 they are trying very hard to break this deadlock, of course.

11

12 However, for example, other local
13 governments, whether it be a hospital or a school or a
14 municipality in the province of Alberta, they have access
15 to the Alberta Municipal Finance Corporation which
16 essentially is the loaning to local governments of Canada
17 Pension monies and other funds from the federal government
18 at lower rates in the banks.

19 At the moment, we are denied access to
20 those funds. In other words, we are not on the same level
21 as other local governments. They said we are a local
22 government, but why not treat us as one? Why not give
23 us the benefits that other local governments enjoy? And

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1 health building would be one of them, yes.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** My
3 understanding is that they feel the money that has put
4 into the agreement does cover those aspects and that it
5 will be a double coverage and that is the way the argument
6 goes.

7 I understand that this is certainly the
8 role of the General Council, to try to sort this out with
9 the Government of Alberta.

10 **JOHN CRISP:** It is one of their roles.
11 The Transition Commission also has a major role in this.
12 But on top of this is not just grants. It is accessing
13 provincial programs. For example, I mentioned borrowing
14 funds from the province. That, surely, should be part
15 of our right as a local government. Our needs are
16 minuscule compared to the funds that the City of Calgary
17 or the City of Edmonton would borrow from exactly the same
18 funding. It is not a grant. It is just a fairly low
19 interest loan system, guarantee by the province. It is
20 our difficult.

21 This health centre, for example, to
22 address your question, we went to the local banking
23 institutions. We tried the banks here both for health

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1 and for teacherages -- that is to construct teacherages
2 such, for example, as what we have at Assumption, that
3 type of thing. Their first question was, "How can we
4 guarantee repayment?" They cannot put a lien on the
5 settlement. We own the land. So we are denied the sort
6 of more normal banking institution funding. So how can
7 we borrow money? We don't have enough to put up a building.

8 At the moment, we are denied access to
9 the provincial funding grants -- not grants, but through
10 the loans. In fact, I just had a talk just two days ago
11 with a Vice-President of AMFC. "Is there any way that
12 even if they deny the settlements as a group, could they
13 give us an exception as a local government just by
14 ourselves? Would they accept us? It is a catch 22, I
15 suppose.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** That is a
17 problem we are going to look at because it does exist also
18 for the reserve.

19 **JOHN CRISP:** Exactly.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** As the land is
21 old, in the fee simple for the community. So it makes
22 all kinds of difficulties to get a loan with the banks
23 and so on. This is certainly an issue that we are going

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1 to look at carefully. It is one of the major problems
2 that flows from that kind of system.

3 I think that is as far as we can go this
4 morning in this discussion. We are certainly, as I
5 mentioned to you earlier, going to have a careful look
6 at the particular situation, the specific situation of
7 the Métis settlement in Alberta and we hope that we will
8 be able to come up with ideas of solutions that would be
9 seen as acceptable both by the governments and by you people
10 which will make life easier in the future.

11 **JOHN CRISP:** Thank you.

12 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
13 much for sharing your thoughts with us.

14 We are going to adjourn the hearings
15 until 1:15 when we will start the hearings this afternoon
16 with the Fairview College presentation.

17 Thank you very much.

18 --- Luncheon recess at 12:23 p.m.

19 --- Upon resuming at 1:33 p.m.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Just before we
21 proceed with the presentation of the Fairview College
22 representatives, I would like to give five minutes to
23 Father Charles Deharveng to address the Commission.

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1 **FATHER CHARLES DEHARVENG:** Thank you,
2 Mr. Dussault. Merci beaucoup. C'est bien aimable de
3 votre part.

4 I came north in 1946 in the eastern
5 Arctic. I spent 35 years there. The only Native language
6 I knew was Inuktitut. I know many Indian groups and so
7 forth. They would like to broach the subject of
8 self-government.

9 Since many years, the churches in Canada
10 have been pushing the politicians towards self-government
11 for all our Native people. That is a major solution to
12 many of the problems to have the Native people dealing
13 with their own problems and presenting their own solutions.
14

15 I am rather older than many people here.
16 I spent most of my life in the north, many more years
17 than some of you. So this is the solution I see that you
18 Native people have to say what solution is to your problems.
19

20 How to go about it? I would say, let's
21 start at the local level. That is where to begin because
22 you have so many differences in Canada. Today, the news
23 told us that the Iroquois people want their own confederacy

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1 to be succeeding from the Assembly of First Nations. That
2 is their privilege.

3 To my own knowledge, the Iroquois people
4 were the only substantial group of Natives who want a formal
5 form of self-government before the coming of other
6 immigrants into the northern part of the American continent.
7 Self-government certainly was not known on a large scale
8 in the Inuktitut country. There were small groups of three
9 or four or five families and the best hunter could be the
10 leader. Those who were poor were what you would call
11 slaves and so forth, but there was no large form of
12 self-government.

13 You could go on and on across Canada and
14 you would see that there is a huge difference. You know
15 that. You have been travelling across Canada. You see
16 that.

17 So, as an old-timer in northern Canada,
18 I would say, "Go ahead. Get it. You need it. You deserve
19 it, but respect one another." So my hope and prayer is
20 that there would be more unity between the various Native
21 groups.

22 Now, the Inuits, of course, have another
23 problem similar to the Indian groups. They have so many

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1 different Indian cultures, so many different languages,
2 but when you start to split and fight one another, I think
3 it is the wrong track. So I would hope that all the Indian
4 groups across Canada would agree on some common points,
5 that you have differences. Sure, you do.

6 Like the news today, the Iroquois are
7 separating from the Assembly of First Nations. That is
8 okay. It is up to them, but it doesn't help the common
9 cause if you want to make progress on a nation-wide basis.
10 I hope that you won't fight one another, that you help
11 one another.

12 In this local area, for example, we got
13 three Indian languages. You have the southern Slavey
14 dialect. You have the Beaver group and you have the Cree,
15 and we now have one from southern Alberta, different
16 languages. You have even some Iroquois from the Rocky
17 Mountains, and so forth.

18 So my suggestion is that to invite the
19 various Indian groups to make peace with one another --
20 this is the Peace River country. The peace was signed
21 at Peace Point between the Cree, the Chip and the Slavey
22 and the Beaver joined that, too. Maybe we need another
23 Peace Point in the Peace River country.

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1 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
2 much for your message and giving it to us from your life
3 experience. It is mostly appreciated.

4 Now I am calling Mr. Bob Fix, Director
5 of the Fairview College, High Level Northern Campus, to
6 come to make the presentation.

7 **BOB FIX:** Thank you.

8 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Good
9 afternoon.

10 **BOB FIX:** This gentleman accompanying
11 me is Norman Champagne who is our aboriginal counsellor
12 for contract training programs and a prominent player in
13 our program designs.

14 I would first like to thank the Members
15 of the Commission and the local community facilitators
16 for inviting Fairview College to make a presentation here
17 today.

18 Fairview College commends and is fully
19 supportive of the aboriginal peoples right to equality,
20 dignity and full participation in economic prosperity and
21 political life. The college supports the aboriginal
22 peoples taken charge of their own educational direction.

23 The college, as an active participant

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1 in aboriginal education over the past 16 years, has learned
2 much from our experience. We have learned that the
3 educational process must be a true partnership between
4 the college and the communities that we serve. Further,
5 educational programs must be sensitive to the cultural
6 needs of these particular communities. Above all else,
7 educational programs must have value to their communities.

8 In the past, educational programs have
9 been driven by agendas that have not necessarily served
10 the aboriginal community. Attempts at planned change fail
11 when there is not a true partnership in the design and
12 implementation of such programs. The federal government
13 must act as an equal partner in the process that in time
14 will allow aboriginal communities to control their own
15 destinies.

16 Fairview College Northern Region is
17 actively involved in such partnerships at the moment and
18 feels the same sense of frustration as the Native
19 communities do when dealing with the mixed and varied
20 levels of government agencies. Such fragmentation of
21 agendas must be resolved by senior government. The best
22 and most innovative of educational programs are constantly
23 aborted without the guiding hand of senior government and

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1 the mutual trust amongst partners.

2 We have included a detailed presentation
3 for your consideration and I see that they have been passed
4 amongst you. It is our framework for change prepared by
5 both Norman and myself and I would just like to highlight
6 quickly some of the pages.

7 We would like to put forward for
8 consideration that in the future the federal government
9 and senior governments must prepare an action that is
10 strategized with reference to the following
11 understandings.

12 We must first be particularly sensitive
13 to local variabilities in communities and in regions.
14 Government must respect these variations amongst local
15 communities and this must be reflected in their respective
16 educational and economic initiatives.

17 Communities vary in terms of leadership,
18 community resources and priorities. We must be cognizant
19 of this when we are designing and implementing programs
20 and planning change. That is why they must be a player.
21 They must be a real player in the partnership.

22 When we discuss the nature of change,
23 government action should be sensitive to the desire for

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1 change. Changes should be applicable to local variability
2 and be more than superficial. It must be more than
3 rhetoric, more than just superficial designs. We have
4 to reach below the agendas of organizations and get to
5 the real meat of the matter, the need for change, and that
6 need must be fully endorsed and supported by the partners.

7 When discussing the nature of
8 government, government action should be sensitive to the
9 fact that government has become the recipient of
10 perceptions. Whether real or otherwise, these are the
11 perceptions that people hold. The government can be
12 unresponsive to local variability as policies and
13 regulations are more utilitarian in outlook and they are
14 perceived as being insensitive to the local client group.

15 In addition to this thought, the
16 government must be receptive when the partners in
17 implementing change and planning change are trying to bring
18 this to their particular agencies, that a guideline for
19 operation or parameter that is laid down is totally out
20 of congruence with local needs.

21 We talk about treating aboriginal
22 communities and their respective institutions like
23 bureaucracies. So much of the change that has come to

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1 us to this date is top down. It is a bureaucratic model.
2 It simply does not work in a partnership or what we call
3 the wholistic community. These strategies generally
4 disaffect the quality in the relationship between the
5 leaders and their people.

6 We ask the people to do things that by
7 kinship and by culture they are not able to accomplish
8 by calling people to meetings without understanding how
9 and where meetings are put together and the value that
10 communication has and how you can impose on the players
11 artificial constraints, artificial deadlines.

12 We are particularly concerned, in the
13 near term, that people will be sacrificing quality programs
14 for quantity of programs; that high profile, quick fix
15 entrepreneurial schemes can, in fact, undermine long-term
16 planned objectives.

17 We are often saying and finding in the
18 communities that we deal with that we are dealing with
19 five or six different branches of government each with
20 five or six different agendas; the creation of small-time
21 or local community-drawn economic units responsible for
22 economic development and CEIC and we have overlapping
23 agendas. Sometimes you feel like you are having a third

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1 meeting with the same group of people and you end up
2 competing for dollars and programs. It is very difficult
3 to create a partnership on this understanding. I guess
4 we could say that less is more and try to reduce the overlap
5 and also to reduce the misleading information that reaches
6 us from these agencies sometimes.

7 Given the aforementioned views, we would
8 like to make the following suggestions in our brief
9 framework for change:

10 We would suggest that government provide
11 the conditions, namely economic, to encourage the
12 development of partnerships between regionally-based
13 post-secondary institutions in aboriginal communities.
14 It is very difficult at this time to create a nourishing
15 and nurturing environment for post-secondary programs.

16 Funding is extremely limited. There is
17 absolutely zero development dollars and yet we are
18 continually asked for post-secondary training. It is not
19 that we are short of innovative ideas because we have some
20 very innovative programs which are beginning in January,
21 but it is very difficult to get these programs off the
22 ground. Programs have to start late. The window of
23 opportunity is lost.

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1 We have a number of students who have
2 been waiting six or seven months to get into post-secondary
3 programs and they are already academically suited. They
4 require no upgrading and the programs are held in obedience
5 until another agenda from another agency is cleared.

6 We would like to suggest further that
7 the government encourage educational institutions to
8 develop unified educational plans. Here, again, we are
9 saying that long-term goals require long-term training.
10 We need to take a look at the long-term and educational
11 post-secondary institutions need to be encouraged.

12 We are no longer suggesting, especially
13 Fairview College, that we be the guiding partner. We are
14 saying, "We would like to be the partner and to take the
15 input of the communities, but we would like to see some
16 form of encouragement." As you all know, we are already
17 being asked to slim our treasuries down and service the
18 same number of students. Surely, we do not wish to inflict
19 this scenario on aboriginal education only to stumble upon
20 the same problems that educational institutions are facing
21 throughout the province now.

22 Government should also encourage
23 educational institutions, such as ours, to develop and

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1 use information to better assess how well they are
2 achieving the intended outcomes.

3 Measurement. It is one thing to suggest
4 innovative ideas, but we also need time and energy to
5 develop the effective tools for measuring success. In
6 some cases, we need to say, "We cannot accomplish within
7 the given time frame the project, but we need another six
8 months." Often times -- and I think Norman can attest
9 to this -- we have projects and students -- we do the best
10 academic assessment we can. We have programs that are
11 mandated to require students to have grade 12 math and
12 English and even though some of these students have
13 attained some secondary schooling, we are finding that
14 their operational levels are far below post-secondary
15 entrance requirements and that through the usage of
16 transitional programs and applied upgrading throughout
17 the programs, we need to be given wider parameters to accept
18 students in for a longer period of time if necessary.

19 One-year certificate programs and
20 two-year diploma programs are sometimes not long enough
21 to allow these students to develop to their full potential.

22 We would also like to encourage the
23 government to look for ways of funding for innovative and

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1 practical ideas, but we underline the word "innovative"
2 here because this is a time for innovation.

3 We would hope that the government would
4 actively assist the aboriginal communities in developing
5 sound post-secondary initiatives that are site-specific.

6 The statistics are very clear not only for northern
7 Alberta, but for all of rural Alberta that, in fact, less
8 than 50 per cent of high school graduates from rural areas
9 actually succeed past Christmas time.

10 Coupling to this severe cultural shock
11 or severe cultural transition, lack of support, it is very
12 difficult for students to succeed in an urban environment.

13 We are saying, "Location is important." We are
14 constantly hearing from our client groups that they would
15 like programs in their communities and we are saying that
16 post-secondary institutions can and should deliver
17 programs in communities. It is as if we have followed
18 the same mistakes in the south of removing community
19 schools and therefore removing the heart of the community.

20 If we have programs that are
21 site-specific, that are in community areas, we increase
22 the level of family support, community support. We have
23 access to the Elders. We have access to the teachers and

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1 this maximizes the student's potential for success. This
2 is what we are concerned with. It is that success factor.

3 Finally, we would like the government
4 to assist the aboriginal communities in developing quality
5 control for educational initiatives.

6 Thank you.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you

8 **BOB FIX:** Do you have any further
9 questions?

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Yes.

11 First of all, could you tell us a bit
12 more about Fairview College, itself? It is delivering
13 post-secondary programs.

14 **BOB FIX:** Yes.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Is it located
16 in High Level?

17 **BOB FIX:** Right. Fairview College, as
18 an institution, was headquartered originally in Fairview,
19 Alberta as a trades and agricultural institution. It has
20 since branched into business administration, office
21 administration and specialty trades programs.

22 We became a partnership in various
23 consortiums throughout northern Alberta with the AVCs and

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1 the community consortiums. We have since specialized in
2 both post-secondary academic programs and trades. It is
3 very difficult for us, very cost-intensive to deliver
4 trades programs. We are searching for facilities, but
5 we have been involved in many of the northern communities
6 with carpentry, electronics, agricultural concerns, beef
7 production programs, turf grass, golf course management.

8
9 We are now developing rather unique
10 programs in Business Administration/Native Management
11 Studies, a speciality, and office administrative programs.
12 We are also undertaking to initiate a program for the
13 Little Red River Cree Nation which will provide upgrading
14 and northern teaching assistants training to help
15 alleviate the problem of high teacher turnover in the
16 communities and beginning to get the local people empowered
17 to become their own teachers.

18 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** How many
19 students do you have in your programs and what is the
20 proportion of aboriginal students?

21 **BOB FIX:** I would say that we have
22 upwards of 60-65 per cent aboriginals. We also -- I
23 neglected to mention -- have developed over the long-term

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1 speciality in literacy and upgrading. Here, again, this
2 is the basis for most of our results and program design
3 in that we have found that the upgrading is a very
4 intensive, one-on-one type relationship program, yet for
5 others, we can use different models. So we are developing
6 different models.

7 We are also endeavouring to include
8 study skills to help the students become more proficient
9 learners. We are also endeavouring to develop a model
10 in High Level and in Paddle Prairie which will be more
11 like a regular school situation because many of these
12 students will continue on in post-secondary situations
13 and their learning will not be delivered in a one-on-one
14 format. So we are trying to bridge the gap, provide a
15 transitional program for them.

16 We are involved in up to 13 different
17 communities in the northern region. So I would say the
18 total number of students is between 500 and 600 in all.

19 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** The students
20 who are from aboriginal communities -- they are coming
21 to High Level to have those programs?

22 **BOB FIX:** The upgrading and literacy
23 programs are site-specific. We base them in the

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1 communities. We are also endeavouring to base this new
2 post-secondary model for teaching assistants in Fox Lake,
3 Garden River and John Dor. We are trying to make the
4 programs site-specific.

5 If we draw everyone into a central
6 location, we just simply recreate the problems of the major
7 institutions. For our Business Admin/Native Management
8 Studies Program, in January, we will be starting in High
9 Level simply because of the requirements of the equipment.
10 It is more cost-effective at this point to deliver the
11 one-year interim project here, but we would be encouraged
12 to offer it back in the sites.

13 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Are you part
14 of the Alberta educational system?

15 **BOB FIX:** That's right. We are fully
16 certificated and accredited.

17 Our specialities are trades and
18 agriculture and post-secondary Office Admin and Business
19 Administration.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** When you speak
21 about the importance of the federal government's
22 involvement in the designing of the programs, how would
23 this work? You are under the provincial Education Act.

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1 **BOB FIX:** Right, exactly. The
2 accreditation for the program is provincial in
3 jurisdiction. However, the funding for student's
4 assistance and allowance packages are the mandate of the
5 federal government.

6 What we find -- and CEIC has been fully
7 co-operative in many instances, but as we are getting into
8 more and more innovative programs, we are sometimes finding
9 ourselves a full year in the development of a concept and
10 in full partnership -- CEIC has also been a partner with
11 us -- and then turning to find out at the 11th hour that
12 the funding is withheld and a mandate is given.

13 For example, we have been fighting with
14 this last project that suddenly 80 per cent of our students
15 be guaranteed employment and that our client groups testify
16 to that, that they would attest that, "We will place 80
17 per cent of our students at work." This is a very difficult
18 query to make of any educational institution. So we
19 respond by saying, "Do you wish us to add to the cost of
20 the program by becoming a placement office?" or, "You can
21 see that in our programs we have provided more support,
22 counsellor support, teaching support, equipment support.
23 Would you like us now to make our program less

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1 cost-effective? How would you like us to respond to that?"

2 At the moment, we are sort of just suspended in mid-air
3 waiting for a January start date for a project that was
4 intended in September.

5 So we are saying that, in this way, I
6 firmly believe that the federal government would see the
7 value of the project as it is, that it is the result of
8 a full partnership and that it is best to expedite the
9 process because I find myself placed in the position of
10 having to say to our clients, "I am sorry, we can't start
11 because we now have a new rule that we have to live with.

12 Can you live with it? Can you guarantee that your people
13 will have 80 per cent placement with their already
14 stretched meagre resources?" Yet, on the next hand, I
15 will receive a letter from a client saying that we have
16 identified 100 positions that need to be filled.

17 It is there, but to ask for that
18 commitment, within the proper cultural context, is not
19 right for one. The second thing is that it is asking an
20 educational institution to assume a role that is not
21 desirous to get into, and it is quite right that we are
22 asked to monitor some of these programs and we will readily
23 give them the follow-up information and, by ourselves,

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1 we do extend an informal loan of our services to help our
2 students get placed. It is an ulterior motive in itself,
3 but to be mandated at the 11th hour to have to live up
4 to this requirement, which has never been discussed before,
5 we find it a bit confusing and frustrating, as our students
6 and our clients must surely feel it as well.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I just want to
8 understand. You are a provincial institution, but are
9 you telling me that you have been mandated by the federal
10 government to play this placement role?

11 **BOB FIX:** To play the placement role is
12 the condition that is set or to guarantee placement is
13 the condition that is set on the funding from the federal
14 government. In other words --

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** On funding for
16 allocation for support for students.

17 **BOB FIX:** That's right.

18 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So they will
19 not fund students who would not have been guaranteed a
20 job.

21 **BOB FIX:** Right. It is the very use of
22 the word "guarantee" that is problematic.

23 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That

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1 funding that you are talking about where the requirement
2 is to guarantee a job -- is that through CEIC funding?

3 **BOB FIX:** That's right. What we are
4 concerned with is the arbitrariness of the decision. We
5 like to study long and hard, but when this is produced
6 at the last minute, we question the validity of the request.

7
8 The program dollars are provided by the
9 provincial government. We need to place people, get them
10 ready, hire the right people, put them through the
11 candidates process and have all the partners empowered
12 to pass the selection of teachers.

13 Here we have a program -- this is just
14 a typical example -- that was to have started in September,
15 a very meaningful and very valid program. Now it is in
16 obeyance until we get the funding from CEIC.

17 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Which
18 part of your program is CEIC funding? Is it the upgrading
19 literacy part or the training?

20 **BOB FIX:** We have some seats and it has
21 been a declining situation over the number of years here.
22 The seats are in fact a student allowance, to allow the
23 student to have their cost of living paid for by CEIC.

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1 That is CEIC's commitment to the program. The program
2 dollars in some cases will come from us and in other cases
3 the whole program will be carried by CEIC.

4 In this particular instance with Native
5 Management Studies, this interim project which was created
6 as a result of the difficulty of mounting a major program
7 from the clients, which has a full upgrading and a full
8 Business Administration Program perhaps leading to a
9 diploma, has been pushed from year to year to year.

10 In this term, we are hoping to pick up
11 on these students who have been selected and who are ready
12 to go and are holding. This project is 100 per cent funded
13 by CEIC. The one thing that it will lead to -- and what
14 we are pointing out to you in our paper. The development
15 of this pilot program will lead to permanent college
16 programs and become more cost-effective over time in that
17 once these programs are in effect, the students will know
18 they will be there and will be able to plan for them in
19 their high school years.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Your college
21 has a Board of Trustees.

22 **BOB FIX:** We have a Board of Governors.
23 We have a northern representative on that Board.

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1 We also have advisory groups in place
2 in some communities to help us guide curriculum and needs.
3 We also have some partnerships in other communities where
4 we meet and discuss their needs, and in other cases we
5 respond to direct requests. We have a joint Planning
6 Committee that then goes over these requests. It takes
7 a look at our budget and decides where we focus our
8 resources.

9 We have many representatives from
10 agencies that sit on that group. We are now undertaking
11 some changes to make it a more democratic and sensitive
12 process in that we believe, first of all, that it is very
13 uncomfortable for certain people to sit at these groups
14 that are very large, very official. Although we try to
15 keep them light, they are still ponderous groups and we
16 believe that the interests of some client members are not
17 being served by that larger forum. We would like to focus
18 and have smaller Advisory Committees that have equal weight
19 on that grouping.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Are there many
21 aboriginal people on the Board?

22 **BOB FIX:** Yes, we have quite a few in
23 that we have representatives from the various First Nations

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1 or Band Councils. They are educational directors. We
2 also have a representative from High Level on our local
3 Advisory Committee who is Native and very vocal.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** One of the
5 things that strikes me in your presentation is the emphasis
6 between the post-secondary training, whether in trade or
7 Business Administration, and the market, the workplace.

8
9 On the one hand, you are stressing the
10 importance to be relevant not only culturally, but also
11 in terms of filling the needs. On the other hand, you
12 feel -- and I understand that -- constrained by the
13 requirement made to you by the federal government to have
14 jobs guaranteed.

15 I would like for you to expand on your
16 experience because too often educational institutions take
17 the students and say, "Our role is to give them the training
18 and so much the better if they find a job after." There
19 is a kind of divorce between the institution and the needs
20 of the market.

21 So I hear two things from what you are
22 telling me. On the one hand, you are keen and saying,
23 "Well, we want to do things that are relevant and programs

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1 that are relevant and that would be useful and efficient."

2 On the other hand, you feel constrained by conditions
3 and maybe they are too stringent conditions.

4 Could you expand on that?

5 **BOB FIX:** Yes, it would be my pleasure.

6

7 To go back to the beginning, we have a
8 very high illiteracy rate up here of 38 point something
9 per cent which, by the standards of the province as a whole,
10 is bordering on catastrophic.

11 When we approach funding agencies to
12 plead for seats, when you are pleading for someone who
13 is starting their education anew, returning after several
14 years of absence or returning after a disastrous school
15 experience, when we try to get a perspective on that, we
16 are faced with the situation, on the one hand, which may
17 be a student who will take several years before they are
18 ready for competitive employment. We are facing many
19 unknowns: the student's ability to progress through the
20 system; their family life situation; self-esteem. We try
21 to make our programs more wholistic to embrace and to
22 reinforce these values.

23 At this point, it is very difficult for

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1 us to say, "Yes, this fellow or this woman will turn around
2 a few years from now and be fully productive in two years."

3 Sometimes the agencies that we make these reports to are
4 not cognizant of the fact that their operational level
5 is very low and it is going to take some time to help these
6 people build towards their careers.

7 On the other hand, to address the issue
8 that you very rightly and very correctly have raised, we
9 would trust that the faculty of the college and the wisdom
10 of the client when they come to us with a specific need
11 -- and we are very aware of some of the changing statistics;
12 that, in effect, in more than 60 per cent of our provincial
13 economy is driven by small business.

14 We are not returning to our clients
15 saying, "You do wish us to train 30 Business Administration
16 students to run your offices, but we would rather that
17 you train carpenters. So we are going to train them as
18 carpenters." We are certainly not going to that extreme.

19 What we are saying is, "We are doing our
20 research in the area. We are certainly aware of national
21 statistics and provincial statistics and we take them into
22 account. We have been training these positions in this
23 community for some time." People say, "Well, surely, all

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1 these people can't get jobs." Well, they almost always
2 do and we are saying that some of these programs now have
3 to become a permanent part of our stable.

4 I don't know how many years it would take
5 of Office Administration and Business Administration to
6 successfully fill all the positions in the north because
7 we find that we developed a rather innovative program in
8 High Level. It was funded by the North West Trades and
9 Employment initiative.

10 We specifically designed a program
11 that was in advanced computer operation for offices and
12 it was targeted at people who had been out of the workforce
13 for a number of years for whatever reason: to raise a
14 family; to get married; to try another work field. It
15 was targeted specifically to these people. There were
16 agencies and groups in the community saying, "You don't
17 need that many people." We train them over the summer
18 and had 100 per cent employment placement.

19 We have averaged around 80 per cent
20 placement for Office Admin students and we can't, to my
21 feeling, turn out enough. The particular conditions of
22 the north -- there is a high degree of transition.

23 We say to some people who will say,

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1 "There are too many people in this community for that job."
2 It is not our right or our prerogative to say to students
3 who come to us, "I am sorry, you can't have that program
4 because you live there; but if you lived in the next
5 community, you could have it." We are saying that we have
6 to be cognizant of the fact that sometimes community
7 members need to be more mobile.

8 So there are many criteria that need to
9 be taken into effect here. We do trust the judgment of
10 our clients. When they say they need 100 people trained
11 to catch up, we believe that. However, we will also take
12 a look at as much hard, tangible information as we have
13 because I do have to respond that we sometimes have Advisory
14 Committees who wish to train certain trades or skill areas
15 that are very cost-intensive, but the limitations for
16 employment are very small. It is very difficult to tell
17 these people, "I am sorry, we can't offer that program
18 in your area. It just does not have a strong enough
19 employment base."

20 What we are saying is that, by and large,
21 when we make a program recommendation, we have done our
22 homework for the client and for the college because we
23 would do a tremendous disservice to offer a program for

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1 our own gratification in one that the students were
2 continually frustrated getting placement. The free
3 market system would come and visit us.

4 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** When you
5 approach agencies for financial support for your programs,
6 you say "agencies". Now, I know one is CEIC. Is that
7 the only federal support that you get for your institution?

8 **BOB FIX:** We have a pilot project in the
9 High Level area that is entitled "Community Futures" and
10 --

11 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That is
12 CEIC, too.

13 **BOB FIX:** That is CEIC as well. We have
14 visited with the Northern Development people. Sometimes,
15 unfortunately, the criteria for funding -- it is just too
16 difficult for us to meet.

17 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You get
18 provincial support, though, some provincial support.

19 **BOB FIX:** We have an outright funding
20 base from the province which carries 90 per cent of the
21 funding for our adult upgrading and literacy programming,
22 but there is no funding for student allowance.

23 We have dealt rather successfully in

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1 many areas because we have been allowed to go into a
2 partnership -- for example, in Assumption where there are
3 just not enough seats -- and we have adopted a full
4 partnership stance in saying, "We will become a part of
5 what you are doing and in return lend our expertise and
6 our teaching staff because we can undertake to fund a
7 teaching position and perhaps help train your local
8 teachers as well while we are there."

9 So this has allowed us to maintain our
10 enrolment and to stay a very real presence in the community.

11 However, when we get to a really severely disadvantaged
12 community, there may be -- for example, when we are talking
13 about sometimes misleading information, we have been told
14 that there is a serious decline in seats to be applied
15 to this particular upgrading type of student or this
16 particular literacy student, only to find out in a few
17 months that there are in fact 40 seats and it is going
18 to be given as a contract and somebody is going to try
19 to meet this demand.

20 Now, we are certainly in favour of
21 someone being able to come along with a more cost-effective
22 program which may, in turn, give us more students because
23 we had no access to those seats and to that funding in

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1 the first place or have been withheld that help. So we
2 are saying, "This may help us in the long run and so we
3 are going to watch. We are not just going to stamp our
4 feet and pout. We are going to watch and see how this
5 develops and if we are all benefactors, that's fine."

6 But in other areas, it is heartrending
7 to sit there and say -- to go to a community, a get to
8 know you night, and have 25 students there who need support
9 who are begging us to come into the area even though there
10 is a program already in existence by another funding
11 institution and another private contract saying, "Come
12 back; come back; come back. We need you. We need your
13 style of teaching," which is very cost-intensive, and then
14 not to be able to get that financial support.

15 We have gone out on a limb this past year.
16 We have gone in and put teachers in communities, even
17 though enrolment numbers are very small, and we are trying
18 to come up with innovative solutions to get the students
19 in the evening sessions. It is a terrible think to ask
20 a person to leave a well paying job to take a gamble on
21 five years of education and we are saying, "We realize
22 that. So work and come to see us in the evening if you
23 can."

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1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank
2 you.

3 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
4 much for coming and sharing with us your thoughts and your
5 concerns. We certainly hope to come up with ideas and
6 solutions that will take into account those concerns.

7 Thank you.

8 **BOB FIX:** Thank you.

9 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I now would
10 like to ask Mr. Mike Cardinal from the Native Counselling
11 of Alberta to join us at the table.

12 Good afternoon.

13 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Good afternoon, sir.

14 I would like to thank the Royal
15 Commission for inviting me here today as well as the
16 facilitators.

17 My position with Native Counselling
18 Services is the area Supervisor. I have six staff up here
19 that work under me in various programs. I will give you
20 a bit of a rundown as to what Native Counselling is and
21 what our positions up here are.

22 Native Counselling Services is a
23 private, non-profit, non-political organization that has

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1 no religious affiliations. It is registered under the
2 Societies Act of Alberta and provides all of its services
3 free of charge to the public. As of March 1992, Native
4 Counselling Services of Alberta employed approximately
5 160 full-time staff throughout Alberta. The majority of
6 our employees are of Native origin or of Native ancestry.

7 The grassroots of Native Counselling
8 Services of Alberta dates back to 1963 when our founder,
9 Dr. Chester Cunningham, began attending courts and noticed
10 a growing need for court work services and just by virtue
11 of the number of Native people who were going through the
12 courts at that time. These concerns were brought forward
13 by a provincial court judge who was sitting in the area
14 at the time. By 1969, demands for a Native Court Worker
15 were province-wide, especially in northern Alberta.

16 In January of 1970, the Native Court
17 Worker Service Program was established under the
18 administrative supervision of the Métis Association of
19 Alberta and served Edmonton and the northern regions.
20 In 1971, the program name was changed to Native Counselling
21 Services of Alberta, as it is today, and began to operate
22 all over Alberta.

23 Native Counselling's mission is to

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1 ensure that Alberta's Native people receive fair and
2 equitable treatment by respecting their unique differences
3 and utilizing a wholistic approach in the development of
4 the individual, the family and the community. We support
5 the spirit of self-determination that has evolved among
6 Alberta's Native people and, therefore, we offer our
7 expertise to facilitate community-owned programs and
8 services that lend to the development of individuals,
9 families and the communities.

10 Native Counselling provides in excess
11 of 20 different programs throughout Alberta. In High
12 Level, our services include: the Criminal Court Worker
13 Program; the Family Court Worker Program; the Probation
14 and Parole Programs; Fine Option Program is a part of those
15 two aforementioned programs; and two separate Youth
16 Programs running in Meander River and Assumption.

17 Criminal Court Workers ensure clients
18 understand their legal rights and responsibilities by
19 providing clients with assistance, information and
20 counselling. Family Court Workers provide services
21 similar to Criminal Court Workers, only in the family court
22 system the emphasis is on families, parents and children
23 in order to prevent future delinquency and breakdown

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1 through the family counselling. The Fine Option Program
2 offers community work as an alternative to jail for those
3 offenders who cannot or will not pay their fines.

4 The Parole Program offers direct
5 supervision of Native individuals on parole or mandatory
6 supervision, as referred by Correctional Services of
7 Canada. The Probation Program is intended to provide
8 greater flexibility in order to meet the special needs
9 of Native individuals on probation. The Youth Programs
10 offer crime prevention, human resource development,
11 alcohol/drug education and recreational and cultural
12 programs. Services also include supervision and support
13 services and summer wilderness camps.

14 Some of the most common problem areas
15 for Native people are in the areas of legal education.
16 Sometimes the client does not understand that he or she
17 has broken the law. Another area would be the lack of
18 familiarity with the legal process. In some instances,
19 our clients do not always understand what is expected of
20 them or what their legal obligations are in the courtroom.

21 One other primary problem area that
22 Native people run into is the lack of understanding of
23 what legal services are available to them. We find that

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1 more often than not, a Native person goes to court without
2 the understanding of the legal processes and is usually
3 unrepresented in the courts before the judge. In more
4 severe cases, the individual may not realize why he or
5 she was even brought to court in the first place.

6 Sometimes the problems can be as severe
7 as language barriers, where interpreters are required to
8 explain to the client in her or her own language what is
9 actually going on and why they are in court, and that type
10 of a problem.

11 What Native Counselling attempts to do
12 is to increase the understanding of and information
13 available to Native people about the legal system. We
14 also attempt to increase the understanding of and
15 information available to members of the legal system about
16 special circumstances surrounding Native involvement with
17 the legal system. Finally, we attempt to increase the
18 understanding of and information available to the general
19 community about Natives and the legal system.

20 As a representative of Native
21 Counselling Services, I would like to thank the Royal
22 Commission for allowing me this opportunity to speak here
23 this afternoon.

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1 Are there any questions?

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
3 much for your presentation.

4 As you just said, your organization --
5 you are from the High Level branch of the Native Counselling
6 Services of Alberta and this organization is spread across
7 the province.

8 **MIKE CARDINAL:** That's correct. Our
9 main office is in Edmonton. We have offices in the Calgary
10 area, Lethbridge, Brocket, Lac la Biche, Slave Lake, Fort
11 McMurray, Fort Chipewyan. High Level is the area office
12 up here. We have offices in Peace River, Grand Prairie
13 and so on and so forth. Mainly the larger centres have
14 offices. We are a sub-office of Slave Lake.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** And you are a
16 non-profit organization.

17 **MIKE CARDINAL:** We are totally
18 non-profit.

19 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So you are
20 funded by who?

21 **MIKE CARDINAL:** The Solicitor General
22 funds the majority of our programs. We also get donations
23 from the Law Society of Alberta.

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1 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So the bulk of
2 your core funding comes from the Department of the
3 Solicitor General, the federal department.

4 **MIKE CARDINAL:** That's correct. Our
5 Probation and Parole Programs are funded wholly by the
6 Solicitor General and negotiations for funding in those
7 areas are done directly with the Solicitor General as we
8 are contracted by the Solicitor General to provide these
9 programs to the communities up here.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You have 160
11 full --

12 **MIKE CARDINAL:** It fluctuates.

13 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Yes, I
14 understand that.

15 I suppose you have aboriginal people on
16 your staff.

17 **MIKE CARDINAL:** I would say -- and this
18 would be a guesstimate -- that between 80 and 90 per cent
19 of the employees that work for Native Counselling are of
20 aboriginal ancestry or either are Métis or treaty Indian.

21 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You provide
22 your services free of charge to the general public. So
23 do you provide services also for non-aboriginal people.

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1 **MIKE CARDINAL:** That's correct. Up
2 here, we have found that there is a need for services for
3 people, just everyday, ordinary people who come off the
4 street. They could be white, Native, non-Native. It
5 doesn't matter. There is a need for the services and we
6 provide that service to anyone who comes through our door.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Can you tell
8 me: How does somebody become one of your clients? Do
9 you have to be contacted by the person or do you contact
10 the person? How does it work?

11 **MIKE CARDINAL:** It can work either way.
12 If we know of a situation, if we have a referral from
13 the Attorney General's Department, if we have a referral
14 through them, we can pick up this client before he or she
15 has the opportunity to contact us. If the Attorney General
16 sees that there is a problem, we act on that beforehand
17 and approach the client ourselves.

18 However, the majority of our clients
19 that we receive are either referred to us by either the
20 Alberta Attorney General or the courts or just anyone who
21 requires assistance comes in and our offices are open five
22 days a week, basically. They come in and we do our best
23 to give them the help that they need.

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1 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So I suppose
2 that you have had an opportunity to participate in the
3 work of the Cawsey Commission here in Alberta. Did you?

4 **MIKE CARDINAL:** I didn't personally.
5 The organization did give -- when Chief Justice Cawsey
6 was up, the outgoing area Supervisor here was Pat Pantelan
7 and she assisted where she could.

8 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Did you submit
9 a brief to this commission? Did your organization submit
10 a brief?

11 **MIKE CARDINAL:** I do believe Dr. Chester
12 Cunningham did submit a brief to the Cawsey Report, yes.

13 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** If so, I think
14 it would be interesting for us to be given a copy of that
15 brief.

16 **MIKE CARDINAL:** I don't have that, but
17 I can possibly --

18 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** If you could
19 and maybe send it to our office in Ottawa, we would
20 certainly appreciate it.

21 **MIKE CARDINAL:** I certainly could.

22 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Again, the
23 Cawsey Commission was specifically dealing with the

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1 justice system within the province and that is your main
2 focus.

3 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Yes.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I suppose it
5 will enable us to maybe better understand, though I realize
6 that a few years have passed since this commission was
7 operating, but it might be useful for us to receive a copy
8 of that.

9 **MIKE CARDINAL:** I will see what I can
10 do.

11 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Is there any
12 assessment of your work? I suppose an organization like
13 yours has made an assessment of the areas where you feel
14 you are most useful to aboriginal peoples who have to face
15 a situation where they have to go to court and they have
16 been in touch with the justice system.

17 It would be good to understand what the
18 -- you are telling us who you are and what you are doing,
19 but if we could have some of your thinking about what you
20 see as problems within the justice system and the
21 administration of the system, that would be of assistance
22 to this Commission.

23 As you know, justice is one of the 16

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1 points of our mandate and we are going to spend a lot of
2 time and energy on this particular aspect of our mandate.

3 **MIKE CARDINAL:** This morning I had an
4 opportunity to speak with Justice Cook who is up visiting
5 here for the second sitting of the Court of Queen's Bench
6 and he and I were in discussion about the way sentences
7 are being panhandled down here in the court system.

8 We entertained the thoughts about
9 perhaps facilitating a Youth Justice Committee or an
10 Advisory Board Committee where they are a more than one
11 person panel who sit in judgment of an accused person.

12 Justice Cook, in his own words, said that
13 he feels his hands are tied when he sits on the bench with
14 the very limited resources that he has to him in passing
15 judgment on an accused; whereas, he would like to see it
16 facilitated that an Advisory Committee sit and counsel
17 in passing judgment on an accused person, rather than this,
18 "I am the judge. You come in" attitude that most people
19 have where it is usually the judge and the lawyers who
20 have contact and the accused, more or less, just stands
21 and is informed at the end of all that is said.

22 We thought that perhaps this Advisory
23 Committee, as it is set up in Wabasca-Desmarais, would

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1 include members of the Native community. Mainly the
2 Elders in the Native community would sit on this Advisory
3 Committee and pass judgment on the accused. I think that
4 is one thing that is missing in the way the judicial system
5 is set up in the north here. I think that is one thing
6 that is missing from our court system.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Again, I
8 understand that you are from this particular branch of
9 your organization, but maybe you could send a message to
10 the whole organization that our Commission would certainly
11 be very interested in receiving a brief on the justice
12 system from their point of view and experience.

13 **MIKE CARDINAL:** All right.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** We are going
15 to come back to Alberta for other hearings. So that could
16 be arranged for the presentation of such a brief.

17 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Again, I will speak with
18 my superiors and with --

19 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** For the whole
20 province. We feel that that would be useful and
21 interesting if they could --

22 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Justice Cook is the
23 supervisor of all Court of Queen's Bench judges in the

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1 northern district and I think his input is vitally
2 important and I think it is well respected. I am sure
3 that if I could prey upon him to produce documents as such,
4 I think that would be quite feasible.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** This
6 Commission is going to hold a round table on the justice
7 issue in Ottawa the last week of November. We are bringing
8 together people from all horizons to discuss the
9 opportunity of parallel justice systems and to discuss
10 whether the present system -- what the problems are with
11 the present system, but more, whether it can be adapted.

12 There have been many commissions that
13 have made recommendations. There was the Cawsey
14 Commission here. We have the Manitoba Justice Inquiry
15 Commission, Marshall Commission in Nova Scotia, and so
16 on, and we want to start where the others left off. So
17 we are just sending the message that we would certainly
18 be very much interested if your organization,
19 province-wide, could prepare a brief for the Commission
20 which could be submitted in the third round of our hearings.

21 **MIKE CARDINAL:** I will certainly put
22 that to my superiors.

23 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** All right.

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1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I don't
2 have too many questions. I am quite familiar with the
3 program. It has been there for a couple of decades, going
4 on three decades now, I guess, since your program has been
5 operating.

6 Do you feel that -- I had a question in
7 my mind and I just sort of lost my thought. Is it a program
8 that is working sufficiently? What do you see in the
9 future for this program? Is it one you think that can
10 continue and have the support of the people who it is
11 working for?

12 Some programs, when they are working,
13 they get threatened with cut off or restraint or
14 termination or something through policies. How has this
15 program been?

16 **MIKE CARDINAL:** This program has been
17 subject to revision from within the structure. It is
18 always changing. So there is very little complacency.

19 Last year, our funders demanded an
20 internal audit be done throughout the province to ensure
21 that the program delivery was up to standard.

22 So, yes, we are always under scrutiny
23 by our funders to deliver the program as to standard.

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1 As I said before, internally we struggle to do that. We
2 are never complacent with the way the program is working.
3 We always try to change it a little to best benefit our
4 client than what the demand is in these areas.

5 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I know
6 you explained the funding. It is a jointly-funded
7 program. Federal and provincial?

8 **MIKE CARDINAL:** We get no federal
9 funding. It is strictly provincial funding.

10 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Strictly
11 provincial.

12 I wondered about that because in other
13 areas it was 75/25 cost-shared, but the 75 was coming from
14 feds. Alberta, I think, was the opposite. It was 75
15 provincial and 25 federal. So now it is completely
16 province. So you are at the whim of the provincial
17 government to continue your program.

18 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Each year, especially
19 in the Probation and Parole Programs, our contract is
20 renewed and subject for renewal. If at any point the
21 government feels that we are not doing a sufficient enough
22 job, they can take that program away from us and give it
23 back to the Community Correction Solicitor General Program

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1 and they will commence with the delivery of the program
2 up here and we will cease to have that program.

3 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** What kind
4 of training is given for your workers?

5 **MIKE CARDINAL:** The majority of it is
6 on-the-job training. We have people who have expertise
7 in each area and new hired employees have to learn under
8 these people. Each office has someone who is highly
9 trained in their field and if there is someone hired new
10 in the field, it is part of that person's job to train
11 the new hire.

12 We have extensive training facilities
13 set up in Edmonton where once a month we travel down to
14 the city, Edmonton, our central office, and we are subject
15 to training there as well.

16 To be hired with Native Counselling
17 Services, it is not necessary that you have previous
18 experience. That isn't the approach Native Counselling
19 takes. Native Counselling's philosophy is that we can
20 take this person from, let's say, the Assumption community.

21 We can train him or her and that person is trained in
22 that field. If the program is ever turned over to the
23 bands at a later date, then they have people on reserve

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1 who have been trained to do the job and can deliver that
2 program to standard.

3 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Do your
4 workers work with correctional institutions?

5 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Yes. We actually have
6 a Liaison Program set up in Bowden which is a provincial
7 institution. The Probation and Parole Programs also work
8 in conjunction with the correctional institutions. We
9 are working back and forth in terms of the Temporary Absence
10 Program, Parole Program. That is all intertwined with
11 it.

12 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank
13 you.

14 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**
15 Do you work closely with the Correctional Services here
16 in High Level, too, in the provincial building?

17 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Yes, we work hand in
18 hand with Correctional Services here in High Level. We
19 rely heavily on their support. They have professionally
20 trained people who we rely on heavily if we run into problem
21 areas in dealing with policy or what have you.

22 Our office -- we enjoy a very good
23 working relationship with the Corrections Office here and

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1 we also work quite closely with the Peace River office
2 which is the main office. High Level is the sub-office
3 and Peace River is the main office for Corrections up here.

4 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

5 The policy that you follow -- that is the provincial
6 guidelines?

7 **MIKE CARDINAL:** The policy guidelines
8 for probation is provincial. For parole, it is federal
9 policies that we follow.

10 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

11 How do you find that working? Has it been working well?

12 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Like I say, our policies
13 have been subject to revision. Their policies are
14 changing constantly. It is more difficult just to keep
15 up with the changes than it is to deal with the existing
16 policy.

17 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Just a last
18 question. We know that there are many, many young
19 aboriginal people who end up in jail, provincial jails
20 in particular, but also in penitentiaries.

21 From your experience, what do you feel
22 is the single factor or the most important factor that
23 makes this happen? With all the contacts you have with

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1 the young aboriginal people who have to have their day
2 in court and who are prosecuted for various kinds of
3 offences, you are working on probation. You are working
4 on the correctional services side of things also.

5 What do you feel is the main reason for
6 bringing so many young aboriginal people to crown the jails
7 within the province?

8 **MIKE CARDINAL:** There are numerous
9 reasons as to why these people -- in the areas that I work
10 in, I think the major reason is family breakdown. Either
11 the mother or the father is withdrawn or sometimes both
12 of them are withdrawn from the situation and the child
13 is left either on his own or on her own and dealing with
14 day-to-day problems from a very young age.

15 I see that that type of family breakdown
16 is one of the major problems that we have up here in dealing
17 with the young offenders.

18 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What about
19 unemployment?

20 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Of course. There are
21 numerous other factors. Like you mentioned, there is
22 unemployment. There is also the very isolated areas where
23 people can't get out to the larger centres. With the lack

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1 of employment, there is also some sort of standard that
2 they have to fall back on, and that being social services.

3 I think there is a growing attitude up here of the social
4 service mentality sort of thing where, "We don't have to
5 go and get a job. We can just stay home because somebody
6 will take care of us." I think that is brought home more
7 and more.

8 The lack of education -- sometimes the
9 parents don't always push education on their children.
10 They don't force the kids to go to school because it is
11 more or less left up to them to make that decision on their
12 own. We find that that is one of the bigger problems that
13 the people we deal with have.

14 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

15 Do you deal with those problems, too? I see that you
16 say that you have family counselling.

17 **MIKE CARDINAL:** We have family support
18 and family court workers. We work fairly closely with
19 Social Services.

20 Our main objective in the Family Support
21 Program is to keep the family together, keep the family
22 united. That is our sole purpose with the Family Support
23 Program.

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1 We provide counselling where we can and
2 where it is necessary to refer these people to other
3 agencies, we also do that as well. We refer them to an
4 agency with the expertise and, more often than not, we
5 find that there are areas where we are just simply not
6 qualified to handle and we make the referral to the other
7 agencies who are more suited to handle their needs.

8 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
9 much for coming and sharing with us your concerns.

10 **MIKE CARDINAL:** Thank you very much for
11 inviting me.

12 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Our next
13 presentations is the Aboriginal Social Work Students.
14 So you should feel free to come as many as you wish.

15 Good afternoon.

16 **LAURA DAHDONA:** Good afternoon,
17 distinguished panel.

18 I am Laura Dahdona. I am a
19 representative of the Aboriginal Social Work Program and
20 I have some students here with me. Mary Francis is from
21 Beaver First Nation. Matthew Nanooch is from Little Red
22 River Nation and Judy Alook is from Tallcree. William
23 Pelech is a Coordinator.

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1 The Aboriginal Social Work Program is
2 a two-year program offered through Grant MacEwan Community
3 College. It was designed and sponsored by the High Level
4 Tribal Council.

5 The High Level Tribal Council is made
6 up of the four surrounding bands: the Dene-Tha Band,
7 Beaver First Nation, Tallcree Tribal Government, and
8 Little Red River Cree Nation. It was designed for
9 aboriginal students to train and work in their own
10 communities upon completion.

11 The program began in August of 1990 with
12 26 students of which 18 are still enroled. The program
13 is completed in December of this year with a two-year
14 diploma. Students have drawn upon the aboriginal content
15 to strengthen their cultural identity. The program has
16 helped us to know who we are.

17 Some of the problems and barriers
18 students have encountered in this area are: funding,
19 accessibility and culturally-appropriate curriculum.

20 First, I will talk about funding. As
21 we are all aware, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has
22 capped post-secondary education to bands. As a result,
23 some students are denied funding or are told to wait.

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1 Shortage of funds have lead to delays
2 in students receiving their monthly training allowance.

3 The capping of funding was raised without consideration
4 to the higher cost of delivering post-secondary education
5 in this region.

6 It seems unfair that the funding was
7 capped when we are just beginning to access post-secondary
8 education in this area.

9 Another problem is accessibility.
10 Prior to this program, students had to relocate hundreds
11 of miles to get post-secondary education. It was too far
12 from the support of families and communities.

13 To this point, only two students have
14 completed post-secondary education from the Dene-Tha Band
15 alone. With this program, we will have four more.

16 There are people in this area who would
17 like to further educate themselves. For example, teachers
18 aide to teachers, community health representatives to
19 nurses.

20 How can we talk about self-government
21 when we depend on outside professionals who lack knowledge
22 of our culture and traditions?

23 Commissioner Liard in 1899 said, "The

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1 government will provide schools to teach your children
2 to read and write and to do other things like the white
3 man and their children." We, as Native students, have
4 been forced to deny a part of ourselves in order to succeed
5 in the non-Native education system. That's why it is
6 essential that we have culturally-appropriate curriculums
7 in any post-secondary education.

8 When we began our program, we had no
9 cultural content. During the second year, it became a
10 daily part of our lives.

11 Recommendations. With more people
12 going into post secondary education, we would like to
13 eliminate or lessen the problems we have encountered:
14 that future programs with cultural content like teachers
15 programs, nursing programs, in this area; that Indian and
16 Northern Affairs Canada review the cost and needs of
17 post-secondary education students to increase the budgets
18 or uncap funding altogether so that access is not denied
19 to students who need it; that the Government of Canada
20 provide adequate resources to the four bands to set up
21 a post-secondary education committee made up of aboriginal
22 professionals which would ensure culturally-appropriate
23 content is incorporated into all educational programs.

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1 The education of Indian people was
2 promised in the treaty-making process. Without the
3 government resolving these issues, it is a violation of
4 our treaty rights.

5 Thank you.

6 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you.

7 Are there other speakers?

8 **JUDY ALOOK:** We have another
9 recommendation and that is --

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Could you
11 speak closer to the microphone.

12 **JUDY ALOOK:** There is another
13 recommendation that we thought we should put in, too.

14 This one goes: The non-Native
15 objectives for the Indians at the time of the treaties
16 was to successfully assimilate the Indian through
17 non-Native education. The non-Natives are not reaching
18 this objective because of bureaucrats in office in Ottawa.
19 They decide what to do, where to make cuts. If they want
20 Natives to be self-sufficient, cut out all middle men,
21 organizations, such as Indian Affairs; deal one on one
22 with Native people; don't hold back funding.

23 Funding in regards to education.

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1 Education is the key to success, but we cannot obtain proper
2 education without adequate funding. Without education,
3 we as Natives will always depend on non-Native hand-outs.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you.

5 Just for my information, as the social
6 work students, you are part of the 18 students who were
7 mentioned earlier this morning in another context with
8 another presenter when we discussed the existence of that
9 program. This is a two-year program.

10 **LAURA DAHDONA:** Yes, it is.

11 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Are you all in
12 the second year of the program?

13 **LAURA DAHDONA:** We will be graduating
14 December 20th. We are finished December 20th.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** You are just
16 finishing.

17 **LAURA DAHDONA:** Yes.

18 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** So you are in
19 good company.

20 Again, your own assessment of this
21 program, as you just mentioned, this is a program that
22 should be -- you have been through this program now. You
23 are about to complete it.

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1 Do you feel that this program should be
2 repeated for another group of students? What kind of
3 improvement are you recommending to this program?

4 **LAURA DAHDONA:** We just said in our
5 brief to have culturally-appropriate curriculum in there.

6 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** The way it was
7 set up --

8 **LAURA DAHDONA:** It didn't have any
9 cultural content at all.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** None at all.

11 **LAURA DAHDONA:** None at all. That was
12 at the beginning.

13 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** To get this
14 cultural content, did you give some ideas as to what would
15 be needed to those responsible for the program? You are
16 certainly the ones -- you have been the programs -- who
17 know better what improvements should be made on the content
18 of the program itself.

19 When you say there should be a cultural
20 content, did you put down somewhere what you mean by it?

21 **JUDY ALOOK:** For myself, the program
22 itself was really good, but the only thing that we had
23 learned towards the beginning of our second year was

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1 becoming to identify who we were as Native people. With
2 the previous years of schooling that we have had, we were
3 told that we are not Native people. We are not Indians
4 in that we had to learn the white man's education.

5 In this way, with some Native identity
6 that we can identify with, we will become stronger. Like
7 I said, it is not individually thinking of ourselves, but
8 as a community, as a whole, and we are thinking about our
9 children as well.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Did you all get
11 a job after December, after the program? Are you all going
12 to be employed or what is the situation?

13 **LAURA DAHDONA:** When I started, I was
14 given a letter of education leave. So, as far as
15 employment, that is to be seen yet.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** In fact, my
17 question is: Is this a program that leads to employment?
18 Somebody told us before this morning that most of the
19 students will have jobs.

20 **WILLIAM PELECH:** For myself, yes, I will
21 be going back and working for my band and I will be working
22 in my own community. That is Garden River.

23 So the course here has helped me to be

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1 able to access all the agencies that exist in High Level
2 and I think that is where it is helped me. Before, when
3 I was working for the band, I didn't know how to access
4 the agencies and what the policies and mandates that they
5 had. So this program has really helped.

6 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Were you all
7 working for a band before going to this program?

8 **MARY FRANCIS:** For myself, I didn't have
9 any job. For myself, the way I look at it, I wanted to
10 help my people in some ways and I didn't have any job lined
11 up or anything when I first started.

12 What I would like to say is that what
13 I have seen and what I have learned from this is -- the
14 year that I got into the Social Work Program, I applied
15 to go back to upgrading. So I had two choices to go to.
16 I applied for this Social Work Program and I applied for
17 upgrading. I was accepted on both of them.

18 Then, when I found out that I was
19 accepted to this Social Work Program, I grabbed this one.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Yes.

21 **MARY FRANCIS:** For our tradition, that
22 is nothing new to me. But I noticed right from the
23 beginning that there were a lot of students that had

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1 difficulties with their identity and their culture. I
2 noticed they happened to practice it which I did practice
3 because I was going beside to Elders. So I knew my steps
4 with those.

5 However, getting into the program here,
6 it does relay something new to me and I would like to mention
7 that after 40 years, going back to school was something
8 very, very different. When I first started, I often said
9 -- I acted just like a little kid, just following the
10 instructors, for which I was grateful.

11 Those are all the comments I have.

12 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
13 much.

14 **LAURA DAHDONA:** I was just given a note
15 here. It says here:

16 "There is a great demand for social work in our communities
17 and surrounding areas. We know
18 where the problems stem from and
19 how we can help our people when we
20 go back to work for our bands."

21 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank
22 you. I want to thank you for your presentation as well
23 as congratulate you for the work that you have done and

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1 that you are going to graduate. I am sure your communities
2 will all be very proud of you and maybe you will set a
3 precedent here for some further programs that might be
4 initiated using this one as a model.

5 This is a Social Work Program, a
6 two-year program. Was that a full-time program, five days
7 a week?

8 **LAURA DAHDONA:** Yes.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** What I am
10 wondering is: Do any of the students that you are aware
11 of that might aspire to go further with your education
12 beyond -- this is like a beginning. Maybe they might want
13 to get into a professional, say, health-related
14 profession.

15 **MARY FRANCIS:** I am one of the students
16 -- I don't know about the other students, but I am going
17 further on for my Bachelors Degree in Social Work. As
18 far as I know, I know the bands are working towards taking
19 over their own child welfare programs and this is one of
20 the interest areas that I am working towards.

21 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That is
22 good to know. That is certainly encouraging because I
23 think you are all going in the right direction and I hope

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1 that what you have done will motivate others to pursue
2 something along the same lines.

3 I know where I come from they have taken
4 over the Micmac child and welfare in Nova Scotia and we
5 had a degree program, a regular Bachelor of Social Work
6 Degree Program that was initiated by Dalhousie University
7 and they graduated with their degrees in Bachelor of Social
8 Work. That was a five-year program, but the difference
9 was that it took five years because they had to work and
10 go to school both and they were all adult because they
11 were already working for the services. So it can be done.

12

13 So I just want to encourage you and wish
14 you much success. Thank you.

15 **LAURA DAHDONA:** Thank you.

16 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

17 I would just like to say that there was a survey being
18 done for the need for a Bachelor of Social Work Program
19 up in this area.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What was the
21 result of this survey? Are you aware?

22 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

23 Not yet, no. We haven't received anything yet. William

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1 might answer.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Was it done by
3 the government or the university?

4 **WILLIAM PELECH:** I believe Advanced
5 Education with the Province of Alberta had requested a
6 study to be done and Dr. Kim Zaff from the University of
7 Calgary, School of Social Work, was the one responsible
8 for gathering information across northern Alberta as to
9 the number of potential students that could be in a Bachelor
10 of Social Work Program.

11 As you may be aware, Alberta lags far
12 behind other provinces in terms of certainly Bachelor
13 Degree programs available in the north, particularly in
14 Social Work. When you look at what is happening in British
15 Columbia and Saskatchewan and Manitoba, we are many, many
16 years behind in terms of providing a Bachelor program to
17 the north.

18 It has in many ways made the development
19 of programs here much slower. In fact, this program here
20 was initiated by the Tribal Council in 1988 because they
21 were beginning to discuss the need for the development
22 of a child welfare programs in each community. At that
23 point, the Tribal Council decided that before they could

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1 develop and bring in programs, they would have to have
2 people trained. So that was when the discussions began
3 and in 1990 the program started.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you.

5 I would like to congratulate all of you
6 and wish you the best of luck in the pursuit of your careers.

7 It has certainly been useful that you have come and shared
8 with us your experience and also that you have put some
9 of the recommendations to us. We are certainly going to
10 look at it carefully and I hope that our recommendations
11 will help to move this concern about the necessity of social
12 work in the northern part of Alberta further.

13 Thank you very much.

14 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Just
15 before you go, if you don't mind, when I was speaking
16 before, I wanted to mention your recommendation -- the
17 importance of a culture component to any program. I didn't
18 hear it this morning, but we have heard it a lot throughout
19 the hearings: the importance of a cultural component to
20 any education system as a whole. That is one of the things
21 that we keep hearing, the loss of culture and the loss
22 of language and the identity.

23 Certainly, those recommendations -- we

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1 want to assure you and other presenters as well that when
2 recommendations are given to us in writing, they are not
3 ignored. They are taken and they are passed on to our
4 researchers and that. So they are all being considered
5 and that one keeps coming back. The more it comes back,
6 the more clout it has, but that is one that is always
7 mentioned over and over again: the importance of culture
8 in education.

9 So thank you.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Before calling
11 the Band of High Level Tribal Council, I would like to
12 declare a short break for coffee and we are going to start
13 again in 15 minutes. Thank you.

14 --- Short recess at 3:08 p.m.

15 --- Upon resuming at 3:27 p.m.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Could we get
17 started, please.

18 I would like to ask the Band members of
19 the High Level Tribal Council to come and join us at the
20 table.

21 Just before hearing the Tribal Council,
22 we are going to first hear Ralph Richard from the Native
23 Employment Services.

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1 **RALPH RICHARD:** Good afternoon.

2 I have to apologize for not being here
3 this morning. I had another commitment and I did cut my
4 field trip short and so I am here.

5 My name is Ralph Richard. I am the
6 Regional Manager with Native Employment Services here at
7 High Level. I just hired a new worker here last week.
8 It is a combined. It is Secretary/Counsellor and her name
9 is Valerie Courtereille from this area.

10 We have six offices in the province.
11 Our head office is in Edmonton. We have an office in
12 Calgary, Lethbridge, Grand Centre and we opened a new
13 office here last month in Lac la Biche and High Level.

14 Native Outreach, as it as called,
15 started up in 1973 -- I believe it was April of 1973 --
16 through the Métis Association of Alberta at the time.
17 I believe they have changed their name to Métis Nation
18 now.

19 We were funded through the federal
20 government at the time and due to government cutbacks of
21 all the Outreach Programs they had going at the time, they
22 shut us down in 1979. I had my office in -- I started
23 with the Outreach Program in High Level here in 1976,

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1 September the 1st.

2 So I had to move out of the Canada
3 Employment Centre because we were no longer funded through
4 them. Two days later, the provincial government picked
5 us up and we have been operating since.

6 Our job description involves helping
7 Native people and also non-Native people. We don't turn
8 anyone away from our office. It is concerning employment
9 or any kind of training opportunities or what have you.

10 We work with all the bands and all the
11 agencies in the area. It is always passing out information
12 in regards to employment. For instance, last week I set
13 up a meeting in High Level here -- it was the 22nd, Thursday
14 -- with Nova Corporation from Calgary concerning all their
15 employment from December 1992 until April of 1993.

16 So I got on the phone -- it was all done
17 by telephone -- and I contacted all the bands concerning
18 this very important meeting to be held in High Level, at
19 the Stardust. So people flew in from Calgary and I picked
20 them up at the airport, these two gentlemen, and we started
21 our meeting, but I was a little disappointed with the
22 turn-out. This one person showed up from the Little Red
23 River Band and she was very grateful that she did to gather

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1 all this information.

2 But I am not stopping there. I have
3 information that I could pass on to the bands who didn't
4 make it to the meeting. I have a book so thick of all
5 the pipelines that are going to be coming up this winter.
6 Basically, they are all in the southern area, south of
7 the province. There are two pipelines around Fort
8 McMurray and the Slave Lake area.

9 We do work with most of the pipeline
10 companies in the province, the bigger ones, and also with
11 the union Pipelines. The job I am talking about, the union
12 jobs -- we have a big meeting with the union companies
13 here, I believe, on November the 9th in Calgary and we
14 are going to negotiate with the unions to hire our -- trying
15 to get some of our non-Native people to join these unions
16 because it is so hard. Up in our area, there isn't that
17 much work. I do work with the companies in Rainbow Lake
18 and Zama Lake, but right now the work is very, very slow.

19 Our programs also consist of -- we work
20 with all the colleges and the universities concerning their
21 training opportunities. With heavy equipment, we work
22 with the Keyano College in Fort McMurray and Fairview
23 College in High Level here. We work very closely with

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1 them.

2 We belong to all the inter-agency
3 committees in High Level here and also the one in Assumption
4 and Fort Vermilion. So we attend these meetings as much
5 as possible and share information with all areas.

6 Our office only consists of two people.
7 Actually, we should be more people in the office because
8 we have the biggest area in the whole program. Our area
9 covers from Peace River to the Alberta north west border
10 and from Rainbow Lake to Red Earth.

11 That is a pretty vast area to cover for
12 two people and I basically do all the employer visits or
13 presentations because there has to be somebody in the
14 office at all times.

15 As far as I know, our sponsor says that
16 we are doing an excellent job. There is no future cutbacks
17 or whatever. In fact, we have expanded, I think, because
18 we have a big pulp mill in the Lac la Biche area, Athabasca
19 area and we will be working with them very closely.

20 I work with Diashowa here in Peace River.
21 We had quite a few people working there when the plant
22 was being built and after the plant was built, we had
23 referred a people and I think there were two or three who

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1 got on permanently.

2 So we never stopped referring people to
3 employment or any kind of training opportunities. We do
4 career counselling.

5 We are starting up a basic job readiness
6 program, but it will be offered in the bigger offices to
7 start with and hopefully in the near future we could operate
8 from High Level.

9 Our clientele, the aboriginal people,
10 we find that the lack of education is the biggest factor.

11

12 We were hoping to open a new office in
13 the Grand Prairie area, but it is still under study. So
14 maybe in the future there might be one. We are just running
15 on a budget, too. We are just given so many dollars a
16 year to run it, but I kind of think there is a need for
17 an office as such in that area.

18 We also work with the other Outreach
19 Programs in the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan and
20 B.C. We keep a steady contact with them. There are always
21 people who want to relocate to different areas for jobs
22 and so forth. So that is how we work together.

23 We work with the Corrections. I was

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1 down to the Peace River Correctional Institution last week.

2 I did a presentation there and there was a very good
3 turnout and I have been having phone calls since by their
4 Native liaison there to come back and do another
5 presentation.

6 We are open to all organizations if they
7 want to use our services. I think the biggest referrals
8 we get are from Alberta Social Services in High Level here.

9 So we work very closely with them. If the bands want
10 to share their social workers with us, we would be more
11 than happy to work with them.

12 If there are any questions that you would
13 like to ask, I will try to answer them to my best. I came
14 rather unprepared. I didn't bring anything on paper, but
15 I will just use whatever is upstairs here.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
17 much for coming to meet with us.

18 I think your role is a very important
19 one because, if I understand your role properly, you are
20 a kind of honest broker between, of course, would-be
21 employers and aboriginal people who would like to get --

22 **RALPH RICHARD:** Exactly. That is what
23 we have been told. We are sort of between the aboriginal

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1 people and the white society.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** But, also, you
3 are in close contact with the educational institutions,
4 the colleges.

5 You have mentioned that the principal
6 factor that was giving some difficulty in matching the
7 aspiration for jobs and the actual getting of the jobs
8 was the education factor.

9 This being said, you have been on that
10 kind of work for many years now and my question is: Do
11 you feel that things are improving? Do you see a movement
12 toward getting more jobs for aboriginal people from those
13 employers, whether forestry or oil and gas? What is the
14 progress that was made and is there a gap between the
15 professional training and manpower training and the jobs
16 that are available, or is it more basic education? Could
17 you expand a bit on that?

18 **RALPH RICHARD:** Generally, I will go
19 back to the first question.

20 There has definitely an improvement in
21 the program. We had people coming back to us and saying,
22 "You got us started on this training or this job or whatever
23 and, in fact, some of them today have their own businesses

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1 just by getting them started."

2 There is definitely an education gap
3 there. That is why we keep constantly referring them to
4 education. If it is not upgrading, maybe it is just
5 on-the-job training. We have people coming to our office
6 saying that -- they walk into the Canada Employment Centre
7 and they are just a little too shy to speak to a counsellor.

8 I, myself, speak Cree. I wish I could
9 speak other languages, but I speak the Cree language and
10 my secretary does. So when they come to us, they feel
11 more open to ask about employment or any kind of training
12 opportunities. They don't seem to shy away when they come
13 to our office or if it is on the street, I will talk with
14 them.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** One of the
16 questions this Commission has is this: We realize that
17 very often, even if the employers are aboriginal people
18 -- let's say an hotel or other organizations -- it does
19 not necessarily mean that there are more aboriginal
20 employees in their businesses. This was quite striking
21 when we had public hearings on the James Bay area in Quebec
22 where, because of the James Bay Convention, there has been
23 a lot of economic activity. There are air companies like

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1 Air Creebec, for example, who still don't have pursers
2 or air hostesses that are Cree.

3 Very often, we keep asking -- we want
4 to know because there is a tendency to think that if the
5 employers would be aboriginal, it would help and normally
6 it should.

7 Are you aware of this situation here in
8 this area and do you have some personal views on that?

9 **RALPH RICHARD:** Yes. Aboriginal
10 employers, to my point of view, work much better with the
11 aboriginal people and the non-aboriginal employers, in
12 some cases, there is prejudice. You can definitely see
13 that.

14 I have some cases which I am not going
15 to bring up here, but there are some cases where they would
16 not hire from our department because there was one person
17 who didn't turn out, and that really hurts me. I feel
18 it.

19 I don't really know the answer there.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** We know it is
21 more difficult to act on attitudes and mentalities of the
22 people, but, as you know, there are agencies, human rights
23 agencies, in all the provinces whose role is exactly to

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1 look at those situations.

2 **RALPH RICHARD:** There is one case we had
3 a turn at the human rights concerning an employer not from
4 this area, from the south, from the Peace River area.
5 It has been settled anyway and there was an apology made.

6 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** From your
7 knowledge of this area, what would be the sectors where
8 it would be possible to get jobs for young people if they
9 had a relevant education?

10 **RALPH RICHARD:** Yes, I think that is a
11 definite thing, if they had the education. Basically,
12 in some cases where the client wants to obtain this job
13 and they don't have the education, well, of course, they
14 go and get it and then they are mentioned to go back to
15 adult upgrading and further yourself, and then they
16 hesitate there. They say, "Well, it takes too much time,"
17 but that is not the point. You are never too old to go
18 back to school like one lady said here this afternoon.

19 I know with the more education training
20 you have, the employer will definitely look at you and
21 take your resume and take it from there because it has
22 happened in cases. We had a non-Native and a Native person
23 apply for the same job and it is just that the Native person

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1 had a little more qualifications and they were hired.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I imagine you
3 can identify the sectors or areas where, if there was more
4 education, there would be jobs available.

5 **RALPH RICHARD:** Definitely.

6 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Do you stress
7 those areas to the public institutions that are responsible
8 for education?

9 **RALPH RICHARD:** Yes, we do. We stress
10 that quite clearly. To us, education is a big factor in
11 life, if it is in regards to employment or what have you,
12 because nowadays the more education you have, the better
13 job you could obtain.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** That's true,
15 but I tried to be a bit more concrete to say if, in your
16 job, you could have an input on the programs that are the
17 upgrading or the manpower training programs that would
18 be tailored to meet the needs of the jobs that are out
19 there and that could go to aboriginal people.

20 I understand that the economy has not
21 been very strong in the last few years, but are there areas
22 where you know there would be jobs if the training was
23 adequate?

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1 **RALPH RICHARD:** Yes, there are.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Which ones?

3 **RALPH RICHARD:** For instance, the RCMP.

4 They had a program going in Edmonton here. Out of 40
5 people, they interviewed 40 people and there was 10
6 positions. There, again, we had two people from our area
7 who had sent their resumes -- in fact, they went right
8 to the city and they were told that they didn't have enough
9 education.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** What about the
11 private sector? Are you aware of jobs that would be
12 available in the oil and gas industry or forestry industry
13 if the education was there?

14 **RALPH RICHARD:** That's right. As I
15 said before, Nova Corporation is one of the biggest
16 pipeline companies in the country. They said again that
17 they have positions there that could be filled by Native
18 people if they had the training. The same with Alberta
19 Forest Services. That relates to Alberta Transportation,
20 those companies that we work with.

21 **COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU:**

22 Is that just basic education upgrading? Is that
23 post-secondary education?

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1 **RALPH RICHARD:** It calls for a
2 university degree. It is not just a basic education.

3 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You act
4 more like a referral service, then, do you?

5 **RALPH RICHARD:** Yes.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Do you
7 have access to -- for instance, you said that you are still
8 doing the Outreach work, the Outreach Program that was
9 sponsored by CEIC. You are still doing the same kinds
10 of things, but only funded provincially; right?

11 **RALPH RICHARD:** Right. We are doing
12 basically the same thing, although we changed -- as you
13 will notice on my business card there, it has been four
14 years since the name has been changed from Native Outreach
15 to Native Employment Services. But basically we are doing
16 exactly the same thing.

17 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So you
18 still work closely with CEIC.

19 **RALPH RICHARD:** Definitely.

20 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So any
21 programs that come out with respect to training or
22 upgrading or whatever you have access to.

23 **RALPH RICHARD:** Definitely. We work

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1 very closely with Canada Employment Centre. In Slave
2 Lake, we get the job listings and in Peace River.

3 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** The other
4 thing about these different corporations or the large
5 corporations, like Nova and all the others there that you
6 mentioned -- they tell you, "If Native people had the
7 education, we would hire them," and a lot of those require
8 maybe a university education or at least technical
9 education.

10 They must have jobs there that don't
11 require that much education, though.

12 **RALPH RICHARD:** I imagine they have
13 jobs, I guess, but we are talking about jobs for highly
14 skilled people. Of course, if you get a better job,
15 definitely your pay is going to be higher because this
16 is what a lot of our clients are looking at, too.

17 They don't want to go to work for just
18 \$6 an hour or \$10 an hour. They want to work for a good
19 salary. In order to get a good salary, really, you have
20 to have some good training to get that job.

21 For instance, with Nova, their policy
22 states with all the pipelines that they have to hire 10
23 per cent Native people regardless if they are in the union

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1 or not. But, basically, if the pipeline is close to your
2 district -- for instance, if it was in the Manning area
3 or Rainbow Lake -- then we would punch into it.

4 It is pretty hard for us way down here
5 to work with them in the southern part of the province,
6 but our other officers will be working with them. That
7 is still not stopping me from trying to get our people
8 from down here if they want to relocate to obtain the job.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Have you
10 ever approached any of these large corporations or pulp
11 companies or whatever for scholarships or some kind of
12 financial assistance to help train your people or get the
13 education that is required?

14 **RALPH RICHARD:** Yes. Nova has a
15 scholarship for aboriginal people.

16 The biggest problem we run into is
17 funding for our clients. We use Canada Employment Centre
18 in the province, but there are some programs that they
19 don't sponsor. So that's our biggest problem, too:
20 funding. Our funding is just for the immediate staff,
21 for the training.

22 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** The
23 province, I suppose, is aware of that.

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1 **RALPH RICHARD:** Yes.

2 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** And they
3 are not receptive to looking at funding, putting more money
4 into education or anything like that.

5 **RALPH RICHARD:** They do fund some
6 programs, as I say, but the ones that some of our clients
7 ask for, there is just no money whatsoever. I ask them,
8 "How about your band or the Métis Settlement?" Of course,
9 there are some programs that they can't sponsor, too.
10 So that is where our clients sit, but we go to all angles
11 to try to get any kind of funding.

12 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Right.
13 Thank you.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
15 much for your presentation and it was very informative
16 for the Commission. Thank you.

17 **RALPH RICHARD:** Thank you very much.

18 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** May I ask the
19 Tribal Council of High Level to join us at the table.
20 I think we have representatives from the Beaver First
21 Nation, the Dene Tha Band, Little Red River Cree Tribe
22 and Tallcree Tribal Government. I would like to ask the
23 representatives to come to the table, please.

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1 --- (A Short Pause)

2 **BERNARD MENEEN:** Good afternoon.

3 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Good
4 afternoon.

5 **BERNARD MENEEN:** First off, on behalf
6 of the Tribal Council, I would like to first welcome you
7 and I would like to say to you that it is an honour being
8 here.

9 I am Chief Bernie Meneen, High Level
10 Tribal Council Chairman. I will start off here to my left.
11 We have Elder Narcisse Moberly from Tallcree First
12 Nations. We have with us Chief Harry Chonkolay, a very
13 distinguished Chief of over 50 years for Dene Tha Council.
14 Also, to my left is Chief Johnson Sewepegaham of Little
15 Red River Cree Nation. To my right is Mr. Harry Cardinal
16 who has been working with us. Next to him is, again, an
17 Elder from Tallcree First Nations, past Chief of Tallcree
18 First Nations for a number of years, Francis Meneen. Next
19 to him is another Elder, Gabe Meneen from Tallcree First
20 Nations and today representing Boyer River, Councillor
21 Cliff Kazony.

22 I don't know how you want us to start.

23 I think we would like to know who you are.

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1 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** As you know,
2 the Royal Commission is made up of seven Commissioners,
3 four aboriginal Commissioners and three non-aboriginal
4 Commissioners. We have started a very extensive public
5 consultation process. We started last April a first round
6 of hearings where we have been in all the provinces and
7 the two territories.

8 We just started on Tuesday, the day after
9 the Referendum, this second round of our hearings and we
10 have published this document "Framing the Issues" which
11 is a summing up of what we have heard during the first
12 round and we are also raising some of the questions that
13 flow from these hearings.

14 The Commissioners work in panels.
15 There are three panels today in different areas of the
16 country. One is in Ontario; another one is in Saskatchewan
17 and we are here in High Level. The reason for this is
18 that we want to meet as many communities as possible and
19 also as many people as possible.

20 Everything that is said is recorded and
21 so what is said before the other panel is known to us and
22 vice-versa. So the Commission is working really with an
23 understanding of all the briefs that are made to the three

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1 various panels.

2 I am here today with Viola Robinson who
3 is a Micmac from Nova Scotia who, before getting appointed
4 to this Commission, was the President of the Native Council
5 of Canada.

6 I am a Co-Chair of the Commission with
7 Georges Erasmus. My name is René Dussault. I am a judge
8 with the Court of Appeal for the Province of Quebec and
9 we have a Commissioner of the Day who is with us today.

10

11 The idea of a Commissioner of the Day
12 is one that has proved to be very successful in the first
13 round of our hearings because, for us, it is very useful
14 to have somebody who knows the community with who we could
15 exchange and also could ask questions to the presenters.

16 So Barb Beaulieu is a full-fledged Commissioner for the
17 Day and, as you might have noticed, she is putting questions
18 and helping us to get the most out of the hearings.

19 The way you want to proceed is really
20 yours. We might start by hearing your statements and then
21 we will be looking forward to entering into a dialogue.

22 Thank you.

23 **BERNARD MENEEN:** All right. Thank you.

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1 How much time do we have? The reason
2 I am asking that is that we have two formal presentations
3 that we will be making and there is no doubt in my mind
4 that there ought to be some dialogue.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Yes. We have
6 foreseen in the agenda an hour and a half.

7 **BERNARD MENEEN:** That should be plenty.

8
9 I will have Chief Johnson Sewepegham
10 from Little Red Cree Nations to start and then I will be
11 making mine. Then I think what we want to do also in the
12 time available is to have maybe the Elders, if they wish
13 to speak, we will be giving them time also. Also, Chief
14 Harry Chonkolay will be making his presentation.

15 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** As you know,
16 just a last point, we have the translation in Cree and
17 Slavey. So you should feel free to use whatever language
18 you wish to use.

19 Thank you.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you.

21 **JOHNSON SEWEPEGAHAM:** I would also like
22 to thank the Commission for taking the time and the
23 opportunity to come to one of our communities, if we can

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1 put like that. On behalf of the Little Red River Cree
2 Nation, we extend our appreciation to you people for giving
3 us the opportunity to voice some of the concerns that we
4 have.

5 The Little Red River Cree Nation makes
6 up over 2,000 members scattered in the communities of
7 Garden River, Fox Lake and John Dor Prairie. Since this
8 is a joint presentation, the Tallcree Nation makes up over
9 600 members scattered also in three communities.

10 In making this presentation, I am sure
11 that we will also be speaking for the other First Nations,
12 even though, in the first part of our presentation, their
13 names are not included, but I am sure we will be speaking
14 for some of their concerns, too.

15 This is a joint presentation by the
16 people of the Tallcree and Little Red River Cree Nations.

17 We come before this Royal Commission as the Chiefs of
18 two nations which have a common history: Landbase,
19 cultural and spiritual identity and shared apprehension
20 about our ability to survive as a people and as Nations
21 in the face of overwhelming violations of our rights to
22 peaceful use and enjoyment of our lands.

23 As Members of the Commission are aware,

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1 our Nations are signatory to Treaty 8 between the Crown
2 and the several First Nations of this area. From our
3 perspective, the promises and commitments entered into
4 as part of the execution of Treaty 8 between our Nations
5 and the Crown in right of Canada provide the sole legitimate
6 framework for examination of the subsequent history of
7 relations between our peoples, the Canadian government
8 and Canadian society as a whole.

9 When viewed within this framework, we
10 believe this history discloses as its primary theme the
11 relenting intent of the Crown in its several forms to deny
12 their obligations under treaty, to disregard our rights
13 and interests, to subjugate our peoples, and to disallow
14 our legitimate rights to self-determination and
15 self-government. We believe that our current state, as
16 a people and as Nations, is the direct result of the Crown's
17 failure to honour its commitments under treaty and the
18 Crown's denial of their obligations to protect and
19 safeguard our rights and interests as Indian peoples as
20 affirmed under the treaty.

21 No process has been available to enable
22 us to address these matters. As leaders for our two
23 Nations, we call upon the Crown to enter into dialogue

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1 with our peoples about the need to redress the wrongs done
2 to us and restore the honour of the Crown.

3 Over the last five years, our two First
4 Nations, acting in concert with the other First Nations
5 which have entered into treaty with the Crown, repeatedly
6 advised the governments of Canada and the several
7 governments of the provinces of Canada that any discussions
8 must be grounded in respect for, and a commitment to honour,
9 the obligations and promises contained in the treaties.

10 Today we stand before you and reaffirm
11 this declaration regarding the need for a comprehensive
12 bilateral process of treaty review between the Crown in
13 right of Canada and the several First Nations which entered
14 into treaty with the Crown. From our perspective, such
15 a bilateral process of treaty making has been recognized
16 as crucially important by the Crown since framing of the
17 Royal Proclamation of 1763.

18 If the Royal Commission is truly
19 interested in furthering resolution of the injustices
20 committed against our Nations in the name of the Crown,
21 then you must join us in calling upon the Crown in right
22 of Canada to return to the relationship between our peoples
23 as intended by the treaty and enter into a comprehensive

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1 bilateral process of treaty review with each First Nation
2 on a Nation-to-Nation basis. Only this type of bilateral
3 Nation-to-Nation dialogue will be capable of resolving
4 our differences and restoring the honour of the Crown.

5 In calling for such a bilateral process,
6 we are demanding that the Crown in right of Canada do no
7 less than it did in negotiating treaty with our Nation-deal
8 with us face to face and government to government.

9 Our first non-Indian relationships
10 involving these lands were with the Hudsons Bay Company
11 who came into our lands seeking fur for European markets.

12 Examination of this relationship disclosed that our
13 Nations and the Bay traders developed what amounted to
14 a social contract under which our people retained
15 proprietary rights to harvest the resources of this land
16 and the Bay obtained an almost exclusive right to purchase
17 finished furs and other products; for example, firewood,
18 meats. Within the context of this social contract, First
19 Nation people remained free to govern themselves and their
20 affairs and European traders did not intrude into the
21 cultural fabric of our Nations.

22 This relationship and the social contact
23 that it secured came to an end when the Hudsons Bay sold

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1 its interest to the Crown in the Ruperts Land Agreement.

2

3 By the late 1800s, our people were
4 convinced that a new social contract was needed. They
5 concluded that the social contract should be contained
6 in a treaty relationship with the Crown.

7 Treaty 8, which is the product of that
8 consensus, is a unique document for it reflects all of
9 the elements which our Nations saw as necessary to
10 underpinning the new social contract. The new social
11 contract with the Crown contained the following elements:

12 One, Indian peoples would be free to use
13 their traditional lands and their resources as they always
14 have. They would be free to govern the use of these lands
15 and its resources.

16 Two, our Nations agreed that the Crown
17 would have the responsibility of managing use of resources
18 and land in a manner that would protect and allow for
19 continuing Indian use of these resources.

20 Three, Indians would not be forced onto
21 reserves and would be able, except for those lands shared
22 for settlement purposes, to continue to have the right
23 to live upon an utilize their traditional land.

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1 Four, the Crown would provide under
2 treaty, education, health, welfare and economic rights
3 and other rights.

4 That then is our perspective of Treaty
5 8.

6 The treaty is a solemn agreement between
7 our Nations and the Crown. It establishes in perpetuity
8 these four elements of a Nation-to-Nation relationship
9 concerning governance and administration over the use of
10 our traditional lands and territories.

11 Thank you.

12 **BERNARD MENEEN:** Thank you.

13 Again, as I said, it is also a pleasure
14 and an honour to be here today. Mind you, it was the 11th
15 hour in putting these papers together. As you all know,
16 we were caught up in the whole constitutional smozzle that
17 was going on.

18 I guess my presentation is more based
19 from the treaty itself, the Treaty 8, and the size of the
20 treaty.

21 We didn't have a map, but I think we were
22 going to get Lawrence to more or less bring out that map
23 so that we can have a view of the size of the treaty that

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1 we are talking about. Maybe Lawrence could grab that map.
2 This is just to give you an idea of what we are talking
3 about when I get into my presentation because it will give
4 you a better vision.

5 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Do we have a
6 small map?

7 **BERNARD MENEEN:** You have a small map.
8 I just like putting Lawrence to work. I guess
9 geographically you have a perspective. So I will start
10 into my formal presentation.

11 We appear before your Commission as
12 Chiefs who are part of the Grand Council of Treaty #8.
13 I am taking this opportunity to talk to you and your
14 Commission in my position as Chairman of the treaty Review
15 Process for Treaty 8 and welcome you again to our territory.

16 Treaty 8 covers a large geographic area
17 as you just saw there on the map. It is hundreds of
18 thousands of square miles, covering all of northern
19 Alberta, part of the Northwest Territories, part of north
20 eastern British Columbia and north western Saskatchewan.

21 The Dene, Cree and Saulteaux First
22 Nations who signed and occupied the lands found within
23 the region first signed Treaty #8 in 1899. The

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1 signing of Adhesions to Treaty 8 commenced in 1900. It
2 is a process which still has not been completed for there
3 remain First Nation peoples in our region who have yet
4 to sign Adhesions to Treaty #8.

5 Our Nations presently occupy
6 approximately 50 communities located throughout the lands
7 covered by Treaty #8. Our First Nations citizens who
8 number approximately 50,000 and continue to use their
9 Nations' traditional territories located beyond their
10 immediate communities to supplement and augment their
11 livelihood.

12 In the majority of our communities, the
13 languages of our Dene, Cree and Saulteaux Nations remain
14 the first language spoken and used by our Citizens.

15 We very much regret that you are not able
16 to visit each of our communities so that you might meet
17 our First Nation citizens in their homes and communities.

18 Such a visit would allow you to see the diversity found
19 within our traditional territories.

20 You would see not only the kinds of
21 challenges which face our peoples, but, perhaps more
22 importantly, you would see many opportunities which could
23 be available for the future of our citizens and of our

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1 Nations.

2 When our Nations signed treaty, our
3 First Nation citizens made their livelihood from their
4 lands and waters found within their traditional
5 territories. Our lands, forests, waters and the resources
6 found on our territories provided all that we needed for
7 our survival.

8 They provided the environment which
9 enabled us to develop our laws, our values, our beliefs,
10 our languages, our cultures, our traditions and our
11 societies. We were truly blessed by our Creator, for he
12 placed all around us all the things necessary to nurture
13 and fulfil the needs of our nations.

14 Our environment produced and sustained
15 proud Nations -- Nations who learned to value life,
16 freedom, independence and human dignity. Our traditional
17 lands provided us with enduring strength. Our lands and
18 water nurtured the rich and diverse traditions of our
19 Nations and to this day provide the nourishment which our
20 Nations and our peoples require. It is our traditional
21 lands and territories which enable us to look to the future
22 with hope and confidence.

23 If you were to travel throughout the area

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1 covered by our treaty, you would be struck by how large,
2 how expansive, how beautiful, how clean our traditional
3 territories are. If you travelled and visited our
4 communities, you would meet First Nation citizens who,
5 within their lifetime, greeted, fed and helped the first
6 white settlers who arrived to live on our lands and
7 territories. Our traditional lands and territories have
8 been able to accommodate and sustain there newcomers as
9 it sustained us for centuries.

10 As you fly over our lands and
11 territories, try to appreciate, try to comprehend the vast
12 wealth and riches that are being produced from them.

13 Our Treaty 8 lands contain the largest
14 known deposits of heavy oil in the world and I am talking
15 about the Fort McMurray tarsands. They contain amounts
16 of oil which surpass the known quantities of oil in all
17 of Saudi Arabia.

18 In addition, our Treaty 8 lands and
19 territories possess some of the largest producing pools
20 of conventional oil and gas anywhere in the world. Travel
21 but a mere 60 miles from this place where we are sitting
22 right now and go and see the number of oil and gas wells
23 which exist in this region alone.

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1 Our Treaty 8 territory possesses
2 enormous wealth in its forests. They sustain large and
3 growing modern forest industries.

4 Our Treaty 8 lands and territories
5 possess deposits of gold, zinc, iron ore and other
6 minerals. They sustain modern mining industries which
7 add to the wealth and health of Canada.

8 Our Treaty 8 lands and territories
9 possess huge bodies of waters, some of which provide the
10 sources of some of the largest hydro electric energy in
11 Canada. Think of the industries, the jobs, the business
12 opportunities which they sustain in addition to those found
13 in the fishing, tourism and recreation industries.

14 The lands and territories of Treaty 8
15 possess some of the richest and the best agricultural lands
16 to be found anywhere in Canada. Again, think of the
17 industries that those lands sustain and the jobs and
18 business opportunities that they create.

19 As you examine these industries,
20 identify the number of jobs that they generate; identify
21 the number of business opportunities which they generate;
22 calculate the wealth they have produced and continue to
23 produce on a daily basis. Then tell us why these lands

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1 and territories could not sustain the costs of governing
2 our First Nations.

3 Tell us why these lands can no longer
4 support the costs of educating and training our First
5 Nation citizens or of meeting the cost of providing
6 adequate housing, health and social care for our First
7 Nation citizens.

8 Tell us why these lands and territories
9 cannot provide full employment, business opportunities
10 for our First Nation citizens. Tell us why, explain to
11 us why our traditional lands and territories can no longer
12 sustain our Nations. Tell us why they can no longer
13 nurture the needs of our First Nation citizens.

14 The issue of our treaty relationships.
15 You may very well find that the problem lies not within
16 the capacity of our lands to sustain us, but, rather, in
17 the relationships outside of our Treaties which you have
18 created.

19 You may find them reflected within your
20 Constitution. You may find that it is your Constitution
21 which has removed our connection and our relationship to
22 our lands and territories. You may find that your
23 Constitution transfers the ownership and benefits of the

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1 lands and resources which our traditional territories
2 contained to other governments without any recognition
3 of the rights or obligations which our Nations have to
4 these lands and territories. You may find that it is your
5 Constitution which stands between our Nations and their
6 traditional lands and territories. If that is so, then
7 the redress we seek must be found within the Constitution,
8 not outside of it.

9 We say that a solution can be found and
10 that a solution is integral to our treaty relationship.
11 It is a relationship which is recognized and affirmed in
12 the Constitution and, as such, provides us with a
13 constitutional process or remedy which can be readily
14 utilized.

15 We are a treaty peoples. Our Nations
16 entered into a treaty relationship with your Crown, with
17 your sovereign. We agreed to share our lands and
18 territories with the Crown. We did not sell or give up
19 our rights to our lands and territories. We agreed to
20 share our custodial responsibility for the land with the
21 Crown. We did not abdicate it to the Crown.

22 We agreed to maintain peace and
23 friendship among ourselves and with the Crown. Peace and

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1 friendship can only be nurtured through processes which
2 allow treaty partners to talk and resolve any differences
3 through negotiations and good will.

4 The unique and special relationship
5 which is evidenced by the existence of our treaty places
6 upon both partners a duty to take whatever steps are
7 necessary toward creating mechanisms or processes for
8 resolving difficulties and differences which from time
9 to time will arise in the course of such a relationship.

10 Such a duty is recognized and affirmed
11 in section 35 and section 25 of the Canadian Constitution.

12 Such a duty is clearly recognized by the Royal
13 Proclamation. Such a duty was recognized by the Supreme
14 Court in Sioux case where it stated clearly that the treaty
15 process can be used for any purpose deemed appropriate.

16 Such a duty was accepted by the federal government in
17 its offer in the Charlottetown Accord, to create a
18 bilateral process for resolving longstanding problems.

19 The acceptance of that duty by the
20 federal government is independent of the Charlottetown
21 Agreement. It is a duty which arises from the unique and
22 special relationship of the Crown and our Nations.

23 We, therefore, call upon your Commission

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1 to convey clearly and quickly to the federal government
2 our desire to enter into treaty bilateral discussions for
3 the purpose of implementing our inherent right to
4 self-government as recognized and affirmed in our existing
5 treaty and covered as recognized and affirmed by section
6 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

7 We seek urgent action aimed at
8 commencing the task of addressing and resolving the many
9 outstanding issues which have arisen in our treaty
10 relationship. We want to make clear our position that
11 treaty framework is a framework we wish to utilize for
12 redressing the many inequities which presently exist.
13 We want the results of that process recognized, affirmed
14 and protected by the Canadian Constitution. We believe
15 that it is possible for that to occur, even in the absence
16 of further formal constitutional conferences. Thank you.

17 With us, we have, again, our Elder and
18 past Chief, Francis Meneen. He has with him the Treaty
19 8, but what I am going to do is have Harold explain the
20 significance of Harry's uniform.

21 **HAROLD CARDINAL:** I guess the first
22 thing I wanted to do was refer you to matters in reference
23 both to the treaty and to the specific reference to the

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1 issue of the recognition of the inherent right to
2 self-government, as our people believe is affirmed and
3 recognized in the treaties.

4 First, because we come from an oral
5 tradition, our people have maintained a process of
6 transferring information from one generation onto the next
7 as fully as is possible. In addition to our own people's
8 understanding of the treaty process, one of the things
9 that have sustained our people and helped to keep
10 refreshing their memory of the treaty agreements that they
11 signed were the parchments that were left with them at
12 the time of the treaty.

13 These treaty parchments kept in a metal
14 encasing or a copy of one of these parchments is what our
15 Elder Meneen has brought and wanted to show you to
16 demonstrate that our people's memory and our people's
17 recollection of the treaty is still very fresh.

18 He said that that is the agreement.
19 What that symbolizes is the agreement that we entered into,
20 an agreement that your government has honoured more in
21 breach than in fulfillment.

22 In looking at that parchment, one of the
23 things that we will put on the record as you examine that

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1 parchment is part of the story that goes with that because
2 that obviously represents the offer that was brought by
3 the Commissioners to our people.

4 The second element of that is that there
5 were two commitments made by the Commissioners when the
6 treaty negotiations were completed. One is that the
7 changes that were brought or that were agreed to as a result
8 of the negotiations were to be recorded and a copy of a
9 parchment form was supposed to be kept in perpetuity by
10 the Crown's representatives. To our knowledge, we don't
11 know if that has been done and whether the changes that
12 were negotiated to the offer that was brought were ever
13 fully recorded.

14 The second item that I wanted to bring
15 to your attention was the uniform that is worn by Chief
16 Harry Chonkolay of the Dene Tha Band. You will note that
17 that uniform is the one that is described in the terms
18 of the Treaties that would be supplied to our people.
19 You may, I am sure, through other exposure you have had
20 to aboriginal people, be somewhat familiar with the two
21 row Wampum story of the whole Haudenosaunee people.

22 For us in this part of the country, the
23 uniform represents the two row Wampum because if you look

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1 at the yellow stripes, those, according to our people,
2 symbolize the commitment of Her Majesty to ensure that
3 her laws would respect the laws of our nation and that
4 the red coats that were present at the treaty would be
5 there to enforce our laws and would be there with the
6 authority of Her Majesty to stand behind our nationhood.

7 If you look at the red stripes that are
8 on the trousers of that uniform, for our people, they
9 symbolize the commitment of Her Majesty to have available
10 her Armed Forces to protect our Nations from any attack
11 or from anything which threatened their security and their
12 integrity.

13 If you look at the brass buttons that
14 are on the uniform which have an imprint of the Crown,
15 it was for our people an understanding that the sovereignty
16 of our Nations and the sovereignty of the Crown would
17 crystallize in these uniforms so that the sovereignty and
18 the integrity of our nations would be respected as part
19 of the treaty process.

20 We wanted to bring this particular
21 interpretation because it is one which our peoples have
22 not had too much of an opportunity to express. When we
23 say that the treaty-making process reaffirmed our

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1 nationhood, recognized our nationhood, recognized our
2 inherent right to self-government, it is the uniforms for
3 us that are evidence of that recognition.

4 **BERNARD MENEEN:** I guess that pretty
5 well ends our formal presentation. If there are any
6 questions to the presentation, we will try to answer them.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** First of all,
8 I would like, again, to say how happy we are to be in your
9 territory, in the Treaty 8 territory, and to have this
10 hearing, in particular in High Level.

11 We, as Commissioners, are well aware of
12 the distinction that should be made between treaty people
13 and other Indians and, also, of course, of the importance
14 that is attached to the treaty.

15 We realized that these documents
16 -- and it is always good and meaningful to see them as
17 they were, not only printed in books. We are well aware
18 that these documents have been ill-treated and, more often
19 than not, not respected from the perspective of those who
20 signed these documents among the aboriginal peoples. That
21 is the reason why we plan to have a thorough and special
22 look at the various treaties.

23 The research component of the Commission

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1 on the treaties will be a very major one. We are going
2 to have a major study for nine categories of treaties or
3 ten categories of treaties and we are going also to look
4 -- we know that the interpretation of those treaties has
5 been a problem so far not only because of the oral tradition
6 and the difficulty with the rules of evidence that are
7 in existence in our legal system, but also because of the
8 fact that there have been different understandings or there
9 seems to have been different understandings not
10 necessarily at the start, but with the years that went
11 by. It is quite obvious to us that the understanding that
12 governments have had on the treaties has deferred greatly
13 from the original understanding as seen by, certainly,
14 the aboriginal signatories of the treaties.

15 We are, of course, well aware that the
16 discussions that took place on the constitutional revision
17 process during the last year on the recognition of the
18 inherent right of government -- that these discussions
19 have been certainly helpful to make the general public
20 understand better the situation of aboriginal people
21 across the country. However, we still feel that the treaty
22 situation is not one that is as well understood as it should
23 be across the country.

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1 Coming myself from the eastern part of
2 Canada, of course, people are aware that there were
3 pre-Confederation treaties and these were also valid and
4 important treaties. However, I don't think that the
5 general public is aware as it should be of the numbered
6 treaties that were signed at the turn of the century by
7 Canada.

8 This is a concern for the Commission
9 because the understanding of the situation starts there.
10 Of course, if the reality is not understood properly,
11 it makes it difficult for people to understand why you
12 feel that those treaties are solemn and that they contain
13 pledges that are sacred.

14 So we feel that there is a lot of work
15 to be done on the public education side as far as the
16 treaties are concerned. We are also conscious that on
17 the research side, that there is a lot of work that has
18 to be done by the Commission. We have hired people who
19 are well learned on the treaty questions and we plan to
20 work with the treaty people who are involved.

21 We have mentioned that it might be useful
22 for the Commission to have a national round table on
23 treaties. We are going to have some national round tables.

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1 We have had one on the urban situation of aboriginal people
2 here in Edmonton last June. We are going to have one on
3 the justice system in Ottawa at the end of November.

4 We are thinking about the possibility
5 of having a round table on the treaties, but very soon
6 we realized that this would be one of the most complex
7 round tables and we felt that we had to hear more
8 representations through these public hearings and also
9 to be more learned about the situation before really
10 developing with those concerns -- that means you and others
11 -- the concept of such a round table to make sure that
12 it would be both useful for public education and useful
13 for getting a much deeper understanding of what is involved
14 and what is at stake in those treaties.

15 This being said, we realize that we are
16 in a different situation than we were a week ago before
17 the Referendum. Of course, this Commission was created
18 along with this constitutional revision process. We did
19 our work because we felt that our mandate was a fundamental
20 one and we knew that at some point we had to establish,
21 to line up somehow with the constitutional process, but
22 this did not distract us from performing our mandate as
23 it was given to us.

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1 Obviously, now that we know the result
2 of the Referendum, we are pretty much aware that this
3 Commission is certainly one of the major tools that exists
4 to come up with a picture that would be understandable
5 by the aboriginal peoples' concerns, but also by the larger
6 public and to come up with recommendations and proposals
7 that would have a fair chance of being implemented, first,
8 by the federal government. We are a federally-appointed
9 Commission, a Royal Commission, but we also know that in
10 some areas our recommendations will have an impact on the
11 provinces.

12 Certainly, the fact that the Métis
13 people are part of our mandate or that the Inuit people
14 are part of our mandate means that we are not only concerned
15 as normally a federal commission is concerned with Indian
16 people governed by the Indian Act, but the scope of our
17 mandate is much broader than what has been done in the
18 past.

19 As I said this morning, we hope that we
20 will be able to come up with solutions that will show how
21 self-government will work or at least to give some possible
22 models of work. The way we are addressing our mandate
23 is from the bottom up and not from the top down. Obviously,

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1 we feel that ti is an advantage. When you deal with a
2 Constitution, you deal with higher principles and you have
3 to start from the top.

4 This is unescapable somehow but,
5 certainly, one of the advantages of a Commission like ours
6 is really to start from the bottom and to build from there.

7 That is the reason why we wanted so much to visit as many
8 communities as possible, as many people in their area to
9 get as good a grasp as possible of the situation, of the
10 thinking of the people.

11 We do not want to hear only the
12 politicians, but, as you might have seen today, we want
13 also to hear from all kinds of people from all walks of
14 life to get their ideas as to what could be done to improve
15 the living conditions.

16 So it is with this in mind that we are
17 proud and happy to meet with the Tribal Council, your Tribal
18 Council for Treaty 8, and we hope that this is only the
19 start of a dialogue that will continue in the coming two
20 years.

21 So I felt that it was important that I
22 share with you some of the feelings that the Commission
23 has towards addressing the treaty issues. We would like,

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1 of course, to discuss with you the way we are going to
2 do it.

3 In your brief, you say that it is your
4 understanding that self-government is a treaty right and,
5 of course, that section 35 of the Constitutional Act of
6 1982 recognized the existing treaty rights. So it is your
7 understanding that self-government is already entrenched
8 into the Constitution or the recognition of the existence
9 of your right is entrenched into the Constitution. It
10 is certainly an assumption that we are going to work with.

11 Of course, I think you are all aware that
12 the Supreme Court of Canada has not had yet to come down
13 with an interpretation of what is involved in section 35;
14 in particular, whether the inherent right of
15 self-government is involved in section 35.

16 As we said in the commentary that we have
17 published mid-February just before the report of the
18 Beaudoin-Dobbie Parliamentary Committee, we made it quite
19 clear that the source of the right should be recognized,
20 as it is, an inherent right to self-government. Of course,
21 this would have to be exercised within the Canadian context
22 and we understand that even without the constitutional
23 proposals or the accord that was made in Charlottetown.

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1 There is certainly room for this Commission to work under
2 the present Constitution and to come up with ideas of
3 solutions and proposals.

4 This being said, the work remains to be
5 done and we are aware that in the coming two years we won't
6 be able to do much more than to set a direction and to
7 propose a vision of the relationship that will go back
8 and also be looking forward, but it will go back to the
9 past and bridge it to the future a vision of the
10 relationship that has existed between aboriginal peoples
11 and the people of Canada, generally speaking.

12 Again, certainly, the treaty is a very
13 important component of that relationship and for those
14 who sign the treaty. I understand very well that this
15 is the basis for the relationship.

16 So, this being said, I would like now
17 to maybe ask you -- we have heard from the public hearings
18 we have made already that treaty people would like to see
19 their rights, the treaty rights, as being portable, for
20 example.

21 When we had this round table on urban
22 issues, there were conflicting views expressed during that
23 round table, but treaty people were there. They took the

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1 position that their people, when they move outside the
2 reserve and go to the cities, should retain their treaty
3 rights, be it education rights or others.

4 We understand that the system as it is
5 now is built around the reserve and that treaty rights
6 are exercised on the reserves, but they are not seen by
7 the governments as portable when your people move outside
8 the reserve. This is certainly something we will want
9 to look very carefully at.

10 I am giving this as an example, but there
11 are many other examples that should be given and that is
12 the reason why we have started a major research program.

13 We plan to start a major research program on the treaties
14 hoping that this will give rise to a round table where
15 all the information will be discussed publicly with those
16 involved in order to, at the end, help the Commission to
17 come up with proposals that would be acceptable to
18 aboriginal peoples and treaty peoples, but also that would
19 have a chance of being understood by the larger society
20 and, first of and foremost, by the Canadian government.

21 So I don't know if you would like to react
22 to what I have said. I thought it was a useful way to
23 start the discussion.

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1 Thank you.

2 **BERNARD MENEEN:** Thank you, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Maybe I will
5 ask Viola Robinson to complete --

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I just
7 want to thank you for your eloquent presentation. I am
8 one that you don't have to convince of what you are trying
9 to say here because I happen to be fighting the same kinds
10 of issues all my life.

11 I think that the treaties are a very
12 important part of our mandate and we have come under a
13 lot of pressure, especially in the prairies, from the
14 treaty nations. They want to be able to be included with
15 close co-operation in dealing with the treaties.

16 In our work with respect to what the
17 Co-Chair has said on the research, it is something that
18 we want to do and we are still trying to find out the best
19 way to do that. I think this is probably where you can
20 be helpful: to give us some ideas or suggestions. Are
21 we going the right way in doing our work with the treaties?

22 Myself, I never could understand. Your
23 treaties are so new. They are not even 100 years old and

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1 yet you have had all this trouble with governments. I
2 just don't know where the problem is or why they fail to
3 set up a process to deal with you, why they hesitate to
4 do so.

5 I know why we haven't from where I come
6 from because our treaties are dated way back before
7 Confederation and we had to go to the courts, to the Supreme
8 Court of Canada even to get our treaties affirmed. Even
9 after doing that, we still ran into barriers. But with
10 these treaties here, there is no reason why the government
11 cannot get into some kind of process to deal with you.
12 I have always been appalled at why that hasn't happened.

13 There is just one clarification I wanted
14 before we move, I think. You talked about a treaty review
15 process and you are the Chair of the treaty review process.
16 What is the treaty review process? Is it still going
17 on now?

18 **BERNARD MENEEN:** Yes. It is under the
19 Grand Council of Treaty 8 and we have been doing and this
20 is our second year. What we are looking at -- we started
21 off with going to our Elders because the uniqueness of
22 Treaty 8 is the fact, especially with the Adhesions being
23 signed off, that we still have Elders who are alive and

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1 who were there in the early 1900s.

2 So what we have been doing is, first off,
3 interviewing our Elders and documenting their
4 understanding of what the treaty was supposed to be, not
5 what is written. So that process -- we are on our second
6 year now.

7 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Does that
8 process include that whole vast area? You have people
9 from all parts of that --

10 **BERNARD MENEEN:** Exactly. Last year --

11 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Treaty 8.

12 **BERNARD MENEEN:** Yes, Treaty 8. We
13 have been to Fort St. John, Slave Lake, Fort McMurray.
14 We have yet to move into the Northwest Territories and
15 also north western Saskatchewan.

16 But, yes, the process is under way.
17 Maybe what I am going to do here is have Harold elaborate
18 a little more on the type of work that we are doing there.
19 Then I have a couple of questions that I want to ask and
20 probably Chief Johnson would do that also.

21 All right, Harold.

22 **HAROLD CARDINAL:** Before dealing with
23 some of the activities that have been part of the treaty

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1 review process, I would like to comment very briefly on
2 the description that you have presented in terms of the
3 work undertaken by the Royal Commission.

4 It seems to me that one of the things
5 that is lacking from your description is any examination
6 of the fundamental presumptions that exist in law and in
7 government policy with respect to Crown/Indian relations.

8 Until these fundamental presumptions
9 are dealt with, it is not going to be possible to resolve
10 the issues of Indian people under treaty in this region
11 and, I might add, anywhere else in the country.

12 If we look at one item, one that I would
13 categorize as a fundamental presumption, I would ask what
14 your Commission is doing in fully examining the doctrine
15 of discovery which was reaffirmed as current law by the
16 Supreme Court of Canada. It seems to me that if the law
17 presumes and, hence, governments presume that by no more
18 than having stumbled onto our territory, they gain
19 sovereign ownership and jurisdiction and, as a result,
20 that it is first our European nations rather than First
21 Nations that have sovereign ownership of the land and
22 territory.

23 It seems to me that that colours any kind

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1 of subsequent discussion because if we talk about a treaty
2 relationship, it seems to me that part of the problem is
3 that there has been a four-tongue approach that governments
4 have, to put it kindly, tolerated the interpretation of
5 the treaty-making process as being a nation-to-nation
6 interaction between the Crown and the Indian nations in
7 this country, while operating from a very narrow base where
8 they presume, both in their policy and their law, that
9 the only things that Indians have a right to talk about
10 in the treaty process are some vague, wildlife, harvesting
11 rights that they may have to land, over their lands and
12 territories, and whatever personal use that they might
13 have.

14 If you were to really assist very closely
15 the presumptions that are there, the rights that are
16 attributed to what is vaguely called aboriginal and treaty
17 rights in the Constitution are far less than the rights
18 that one would have under an agreement to lease, for
19 example.

20 So because you have such a fundamental
21 difference, when our people talk about owning the land,
22 they talk about it in a sovereign context. When they talk
23 about a treaty relationship, it is about sharing a

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1 sovereignty, the exercise of sovereign powers with
2 European representatives or European governments.

3 It seems to me that because of the
4 operating presumptions that are found in the Doctrine of
5 Discovery, we have the unfortunate situation that we saw
6 during the last round of constitutional discussions where
7 white governments were embarrassed at the thought that
8 aboriginal peoples might want to say they are distinct
9 people, that they form distinct societies in this country.
10 That is because those presumptions effect the attitude
11 -- you want to educate the Canadian public.

12 However, as long as you have the Doctrine
13 of Discovery as your fundamental basis or approach, then
14 the only thing you can teach the Canadian public are racist
15 doctrines because the Doctrine of Discovery at its core
16 is a racist doctrine of law because it says that our people
17 did not exist either as individuals or as nations; that
18 our people had no sovereign rights to their territory.

19 So if all you are doing is reconfirming
20 those racist presumptions, then that is all you can teach
21 the Canadian public. In our view, that isn't creating
22 an understanding if all you are doing is reinforcing the
23 racist presumptions of Canadian laws and policies in this

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1 country.

2 So, as a first comment, it seems to me
3 that the beginning point is not research into the treaties
4 themselves, but into the necessity of creating a new
5 paradigm which will enable Canadians and aboriginal people
6 to view themselves from a perspective that recognizes the
7 inherent dignity of our nations and our people. Until
8 you do that, whether you are talking about Indians in the
9 Maritimes, Indians in Quebec, Indians in Ontario, Indians
10 in the Prairies, Indians in British Columbia, you are going
11 to run into the same problems.

12 So I just wanted to offer that
13 observation in terms of the research mandate that you are
14 talking about. It may well be -- because I know you have
15 some of the best scholars available to you -- that some
16 of your scholars are already looking at this area and,
17 if they are, we would strongly encourage you to highlight
18 the work that those people are undertaking and perhaps
19 to involve our nations in that work.

20 The second point that I wanted to touch
21 on was one that you raised with respect to the Métis people
22 who are part and parcel of your mandate.

23 As you probably are aware, the proposed

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1 Charlottetown Accord, to a large extent, excluded Métis
2 people and Métis lands from the application of the inherent
3 right provisions which were part and parcel of that
4 proposal. The reason for that exclusion -- and I think
5 it is 95(e) in those proposals. I don't know if you are
6 allowed to peak into them now that they have been so soundly
7 defeated across the country. However, 95(e) brings out
8 a point that I wanted to bring to your attention largely
9 because that has not been recognized, I think, adequately
10 in the public discussions that have involved Métis people
11 in this province.

12 That is: In Alberta, the Métis people
13 were the first aboriginal group in the country to negotiate
14 a bilateral constitutionally-entrenched agreement with
15 the Government of Alberta to protect their lands and to
16 protect what they felt was important to them. That is
17 not an option that has been given to us as treaty people
18 and our people feel very alienated. They feel very
19 strongly that their right to follow a similar procedure
20 and enter into a similar bilateral or an analogous
21 bilateral process with the federal government should be
22 respected.

23 I think our people would want to

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1 emphasize and ask you to convey that feeling that, more
2 and more, as we look at the relative position of treaty
3 people in the prairies and our own specifically, we are
4 getting left further and further behind by other aboriginal
5 groups in this country in terms of being successful in
6 getting the governments of this country to respond to,
7 to deal with in a serious fashion the concerns that we
8 have as treaty peoples.

9 If you look at the Métis bilateral
10 constitutional agreements, we look at that as something
11 beyond what has been available to our people at this point.

12 We look at British Columbia dealing with the non-status
13 people and we note in British Columbia that there is a
14 Treaty Commission that has been set up to negotiate new
15 treaties in that area, but there is no similar mechanism
16 available to us in Treaty 8, no Treaty Commission or no
17 treaty mechanism through which we could talk to our people
18 or through which we could talk to the Crown, the Canadian
19 Government or any other government as far as that is
20 concerned.

21 We look to the province of Saskatchewan
22 and see a Treaty Commissioner and an office that has been
23 set up to address some of the issues that the treaty people

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1 in that province have. In this province, in our treaty
2 area in particular, we have no such mechanism available
3 through which we could discuss our concerns with the
4 federal government or any other government.

5 We go to the province of Ontario and we
6 find not only the existence of Indian Rights Commission.

7 We also are aware of the fact that in that province there
8 is a mechanism and an agreement that has been negotiated
9 between the First Nations and the Government of Ontario
10 that allows those people to not only begin the process
11 of discussing the implementation of the inherent right
12 to self-government, but, as well, provides the mechanism
13 for those First Nations to interface with the governments
14 to begin addressing their concerns.

15 We look in the Northwest Territories.

16 We find with the Inuit people that they are well on their
17 way to setting up their Nunavut, to setting up their
18 jurisdiction over their lands and territories because of
19 mechanisms that they have to address their issues. We
20 find no such mechanism for our treaty people in this
21 province, in this region.

22 We look in the Yukon and we see the claims
23 negotiations, the mechanism that is there that allows the

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1 First Nations, the first peoples of that territory to
2 address their concerns. We, as treaty people in this
3 region, have no such mechanism. The most that we can point
4 to with pride is that we occasionally meet with a Regional
5 Director of Indian Affairs to discuss treaty matters, but,
6 certainly, no kind of formal mechanism.

7 I raise these points because I think it
8 has become rather fashionable from time to time to create
9 the impression that our treaty people are the most coddled
10 of all aboriginal groups, that they are the ones who receive
11 the most attention of government. Our experience as
12 treaty people in this region -- and I dare say in this
13 province -- we can find no facts. We can find no examples
14 that would sustain that kind of methodology.

15 It is that sense of alienation, I think,
16 that we want to convey very strongly because, even if we
17 look at the constitutional process, we are, as treaty
18 people, in the unfortunate position, as I said, of being
19 the last of all aboriginal groups because now you have
20 a court decision that says, "An organization representing
21 the Native women in this province are entitled to
22 representation in future constitutional discussions."
23 We have no such recognition for our treaty First Nations

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1 to be represented at constitutional discussions or any
2 other forum.

3 We are, in fact, the last and the least
4 recognized of any aboriginal group across the country and
5 we think it is high time that that be redressed and that
6 our issues, that our concerns be dealt with as quickly
7 a possible.

8 There was a third comment that I wanted
9 to make and that is your reference to the round table
10 discussion that you had on urban matters. I guess one
11 of the things that our leaders become sensitive about is
12 the perception that seems to be nurtured, perhaps
13 unwittingly, from too many quarters, that our leaders
14 oppose or that our leaders are so selfish that they do
15 not want to share the resources that are available to their
16 citizens on their reserves with anyone who lives off the
17 reserve, be it Indian woman or be it citizens who live
18 in urban centres.

19 I think it is time that that kind of
20 poisonous methodology be lanced so that we can get on with
21 the discussions that need to be done because, certainly,
22 if on one hand you are trying to destroy the credibility
23 of our leaders, the integrity of Indian positions by

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1 constantly reinforcing false accusations, then that is
2 a self-defeating process because if you destroy the
3 credibility of our leadership and our people, then who
4 are you going to resolve the problems with in the final
5 analysis.

6 The reason why I wanted to focus on the
7 urban situation is because I think that that probably --
8 and it may be that the research done by your Commission
9 in this area would be most helpful -- is an area that
10 requires careful attention and careful understanding.

11 First of all, we would not agree that
12 there is a disagreement amongst ourselves as to whether
13 Indian people living in urban areas ought to or ought not
14 to receive or enjoy any rights that they have as treaty
15 people.

16 The treaty people's position
17 historically -- you can go back and look at all of the
18 briefs that were submitted to all of the Parliamentary
19 Committees, to all of the Standing Committees, to the
20 government from this province from the 1950s, indeed from
21 1948 and maybe even before then, and you will find a
22 consistency in the position of our leaders of our people
23 that is still maintained by our leadership today.

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1 That consistency is simply this: that
2 Indian people, that treaty people, whether they live on
3 or off the reserve, are entitled to enjoy the benefits
4 of their treaty. No position has been clear and no
5 position has been restated more often than that position
6 by our treaty people. The difficulty that is there is
7 not a treaty problem. It is not an Indian problem. It
8 is a governmental problem because there are two things
9 that are integral to the government position which creates
10 difficulties.

11 The first is their policy pronouncements
12 that only those Indians who live on reserves should receive
13 services from the federal government, and I think you
14 should pay very close attention to the words that are used
15 by the federal government. It is services, not rights.

16 The reason why those words are so
17 carefully used by the federal government is, quite simply,
18 from the fact that the federal government recognizes no
19 treaty obligations in the service areas, whether we talk
20 about education, whether we talk about welfare, whether
21 we talk about health services, and you can go on completely.

22 The federal government position has been
23 very clear and it has been consistent since 1969. They

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1 have said, "These are not treaty rights." We have said,
2 "They are treaty rights." When we point to the fact that
3 services are extended to us on the basis of our treaty,
4 from our perspective, they say, "We will agree to disagree.
5 We will have a gentleman's agreement. We will agree to
6 disagree. You take your services on the basis that you
7 want and we will extend them on the basis that we want."

8
9 What that means, in a very simple
10 fashion, is that they say, "We give you all of these
11 services not because you are treaty people, not because
12 we have treaty obligations to you, but simply because you
13 are poor." That is a social policy position that
14 recognizes the indigence requirements of our people.

15 So they rationalize a policy and they
16 say, "These services are being extended to Indians on
17 reserves because they are poor," that they have the right
18 to determine who can or who ought not to receive those
19 services.

20 So that methodology, that policy
21 position has been somehow translated in the last while
22 into a statement which says, "If urban people, if Indians
23 living off reserves or even if women are not receiving

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1 services, it is because the bands don't want to give them
2 the services." That is destructive methodology and that
3 is, I think, the furthest from the truth that can exist
4 anywhere and I think it is time that your Commission begin
5 to lance those kind of problems because all they do is
6 create unnecessary conflict between our people.

7 I think there are a number of other areas
8 that one could touch on that basis and I would ask, I guess,
9 as a PR favour from your Commission a recognition for the
10 First Nations in this province who have been since the
11 late 1960s probably the most malign First Nations in the
12 country in terms of being accused of insensitivity to the
13 situation of Indian women or of females in this country.

14 There should be a recognition of the fact
15 that in this province this is the only province in all
16 of the country that has, as one of its mainstream political
17 leaders, a woman who was elected through two terms to head
18 the Indian Association of Alberta. No other group, at
19 least no other mainstream Indian group across the country,
20 can take credit for that kind of position. But beyond
21 that, this is the only province in the country that has
22 a 50/50 representation on its executive, 50 per cent male
23 and 50 per cent female. Three of the leaders in the Indian

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1 Association of Alberta are female on the executive and
2 three are male.

3 I think that, for me, as an individual,
4 is an important step on the part of our leadership and
5 on the part of people to recognize the importance and to
6 accentuate the importance of the accord to their woman
7 or to Indian woman in this province.

8 I would hope that that simple fact would
9 be recognized more widely than it has been because
10 sometimes it appears, because that is not consistent with
11 the methodology that is being developed, that somehow it
12 is embarrassing to admit that Indian First Nations in
13 Alberta are the first nations anywhere in the country to
14 elect and select a female person to head their political
15 voice.

16 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
17 much for these very interesting remarks and comments.

18 Very briefly, because time is running,
19 I would like to say that the first questions that you have
20 raised about the fundamentals involved in the presumptions
21 that are there -- you raise the fact that these fundamentals
22 are more important than nuts and bolts issues of each of
23 the treaties.

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1 I must say that we share that entirely
2 at the Commission. On the legal aspects, we have started
3 to look on something that goes deep to the existing paradox,
4 and we realize that what could be most important in our
5 work and more lasting in terms of effects are addressing
6 these fundamental questions, more than some administrative
7 and technical and that move from one decade to another.

8
9 We hope to be able to do both in a large
10 extent, but there has to be a priority for this Commission
11 as we want to set a new direction. It is to do our job
12 on those fundamental issues because, otherwise, we know
13 that if the assumptions are wrong from the start, that
14 there will be no useful dialogue by the parties. You
15 appreciate that these are engrained and not easy, but we
16 have certainly started to do that on the legal side and
17 also elsewhere on other aspects.

18 We realize that some of the provinces
19 in Canada have moved toward installing a Treaty Commission
20 in B.C. and some mechanism in Ontario -- that this province,
21 for historical reasons, have embarked into a bilateral
22 agreement with what were 50 years ago or more than 50 years
23 ago 12 Métis settlements and a new one, a renewed one lately

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1 with the eight settlements.

2 We understand that these were made by
3 the provinces. As far as the federal government is
4 concerned, there is -- so what you have in mind is that
5 it is one thing to deal with the federal governments about
6 the treaty and the revision of the treaty and the
7 understanding of the obligations that are there, but also
8 that it could be done at the provincial level, in many
9 instances, together with the federal level.

10 So we realize as far as Treaty 8 is
11 concerned in Alberta that there is no such mechanism that
12 has been put forward by the government of this province.

13

14 On the round table on urban issues, I
15 think that what we have heard very clearly from people
16 who are representing treaty people was the fact that the
17 understanding is that the rights are portable. Of course,
18 it brings a series of questions, practical questions when
19 we deal with self-government in an urban setting because
20 it is quite different if it is linked to treaty rights
21 or to the reserves in other instances or if it is a local
22 organizations.

23 So we are pretty much aware of the

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1 assumptions under which you have been working all the time.

2 We know that the system under the Indian Act is not a
3 system whereby there is an acknowledgment that these are
4 treaty rights, obligations that are fulfilled that way.

5 So the whole question of treaties has
6 to be addressed in a new way and we realize that and that
7 is the reason why we are going to do the kind of research
8 that we are going to do and also the public education
9 process around these questions.

10 This being said, I think there were a
11 couple of questions. So that is about what I am going
12 to say as a response to what you just said. I just want
13 to share with you --

14 **HAROLD CARDINAL:** I did not complete my
15 response to the question on the treaty review process and
16 I wanted to deal briefly with that, if I may.

17 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Yes, the
18 review process that you have undertaken.

19 **HAROLD CARDINAL:** The treaty review
20 process that has been undertaken by the Grand Council of
21 Treaty 8.

22 I wanted to do that quickly by dealing
23 with a few preliminary points. We would ask the Commission

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1 to do all that is politically and humanly possible to ensure
2 that the policy decisions that were implicit in the
3 Charlottetown Accord are retained by the federal
4 government. We say this because of our particular
5 experience with treaty discussions.

6 Some years back, the Treaty 8 people --
7 in fact, I think it was during the 1985/87 constitutional
8 meetings -- entered into an agreement when this
9 administration was fresh, when Crombie was still Minister
10 of Indian Affairs, that was called Renovation of Treaty
11 Negotiations. Frank Oberley, who was then an MP, was
12 appointed by the Minister to work with us in trying to
13 set up a treaty renovation process. It was intended to
14 be a mechanism that would allow our people to address their
15 treaty concerns.

16 The only thing that got renovated in the
17 process was Frank Oberley's political career in the sense
18 that he became a Cabinet Minister shortly after the
19 Renovation Project was put into a state of hibernation
20 and it is still at that stage.

21 I think part of the reason for what
22 occurred was the fact that since 1969, there has never
23 been a detailed re-examination of government policy

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1 vis-à-vis Indian treaties, particularly our treaties.
2 If you are to examine government policy on how they are
3 going to deal with Indian treaties, all they have to do
4 is look at what was in the 1969 government White Paper
5 and you will find the parameters of that policy contained
6 therein.

7 So when we started talking about
8 renovating our treaties and addressing issues that had
9 never been addressed in any substantive way, the fear of
10 people within government was that we were trying to
11 negotiate or re-negotiate our treaties and government
12 policy did not allow for re-negotiation, and they went
13 on and dealt with all of the various policy assumptions
14 that were there.

15 I think you are fortunate, perhaps as
16 we are, with a string of Supreme Court cases, some of which
17 were alluded to, which have had the effect of destroying
18 the underlying basis of government policy as far as Indian
19 treaties were concerned. That certainly appears to be
20 one of the reasons why pre-Confederation treaties are now
21 being looked at in a serious way, where they were denied.

22 So it seems to me, if you look at the
23 Charlottetown Accord, the policy positions -- because the

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1 Federal Cabinet would have had to approve major substantive
2 change to previous policy positions on treaty in order
3 for those agreements to be reflected in either the
4 constitutional accord itself or in the accompanying
5 political accord.

6 I think the presentation that was made
7 by Chief Meneen was intended to highlight that: that those
8 policy positions do not derive and ought not to derive
9 their existence from either of those two accords -- the
10 political accord or the constitutional accord -- that there
11 is an independent basis of law as has been identified by
12 the Supreme Court which requires the federal government
13 to re-examine and come up with its policies and come up
14 with new approaches in that area.

15 We would ask that, as a Commission, you
16 do whatever is humanly possible and whatever is politically
17 possible to ensure that the federal government does not,
18 all of a sudden, say, "We just made those offers for that
19 situation over there. It didn't really represent a change
20 of heart or it didn't really represent a recognition that
21 we were wrong in the first place with the positions that
22 we were taking."

23 So part of the treaty review process that

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1 the Grand Council is now involved in is to begin the process
2 of trying to lay down the data, the kind of information
3 that is going to be necessary, particularly in terms of
4 protecting the evidence that our Elders have, so that that
5 information can become part of whatever process takes on
6 or occurs in the future.

7 I guess I just wanted to make those
8 comments, first of all, recognizing that there had been
9 substantive major policy changes by the federal government
10 vis-à-vis Indian treaties. We want to make sure that those
11 policy positions are kept alive and transferred into some
12 kind of new mechanism that will allow our people to finally
13 get into the kind of discussions that they have been after
14 for so many years.

15 **BERNARD MENEEN:** Thank you, Harold, in
16 elaborating a little more on treaty review.

17 There are just a couple of things before
18 I close off. One of them was the fact that you mentioned
19 that your mandate is basically two years to more or less
20 put together a vision for Canada as to where we are at.

21 At the same time, my presentation
22 clearly states that we would like to get our message across
23 to Canada to start dealing bilaterally with our treaties.

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1 I don't know if we can wait another two years.

2 The other comment I wanted to make was
3 on setting up the round table on treaty research. Being
4 that we in Grand Council have already been working two
5 years on the treaty review, we would make ourselves
6 available to the Commission to elaborate a little more
7 or whatever on treaty matters at any given time, I think.

8 So, with that, on behalf of the Tribal
9 Council, the Elders, the Chiefs, I want to thank you again.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** Thank you very
11 much.

12 I would like just on the latter question
13 to say that you will be contacted by our research staff
14 for a further discussion as to our approach to particular
15 studies as far as the treaties are concerned, in particular
16 Treaty 8. We hope, at that level, that it would be
17 possible. In fact, we want to do the most with the time
18 we have and the research budget available. So we would
19 certainly be looking for your advice.

20 Again, I would like to reiterate that
21 we see this as a good start for a dialogue, but we will
22 be coming back to Alberta, not necessarily in High Level,
23 but in other areas. We hope that we will have an

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1 opportunity to pursue a discussion which started today.

2 I still draw your attention to this
3 document and the questions that are there. We hope at
4 one point to be able to come up with the priority issues
5 that we are going to address with the understanding of
6 everybody because we will have to set up some priorities,
7 though our mandate is so large that we have to hammer many
8 nails at the same time.

9 Again, that is the reason why this is
10 not a hearing and that is it. We go back to our office
11 to write a report. It is a process and we really would
12 like you to feel free to contact us in Ottawa, to write
13 to us, to send us additional information and we will be
14 contacting you from various components of the Commission
15 for pursuing our work and mandate.

16 So it has been an honour and a pleasure
17 to be with you and spend this time discussing those issues.

18 Thank you very much all of you on behalf of the Commission.

19 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** thank
20 you.

21 **CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:** I think we have
22 the last presenter of the day. I would like to ask Rita
23 Bisailon from Employment and Immigration Canada to come

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1 to make her presentation.

2 We will break for a couple of minutes
3 just to make sure that we are back all together.

4 --- Short break at 5:52 p.m.

5 CLOSING PRAYER BY COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY BARB BEAULIEU