

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR  
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

LOCATION/ENDROIT: Thomas Cheechoo Memorial Centre,  
Moose Factory,  
Ontario

DATE: Monday, June 8, 1992

VOLUME: 1

"for the record..."

**STENOTRAN**

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Aboriginal Peoples

1 Moose Factory, Ontario

2 --- Upon commencing at 7:25 p.m., June 8, 1992

3

4 **PAT CHILTON:** Before we get under way,  
5 what I should let you know is that a couple of elders will  
6 be speaking in Cree. We have units here for translation  
7 for those who wish to have them.

8 I guess we will get started, as soon as  
9 Rick sits down.

10 First of all, I would like to welcome  
11 everybody here to this potlatch. We are sorry that we  
12 are late -- I should not apologize for this -- I will say  
13 that Canadian Partner is responsible for us being late.

14 The plane out of Ottawa for the people  
15 sitting at this table was cancelled and it resulted in  
16 a plane going up the coast -- the same plane that was  
17 supposed to go up the coast, the people coming back there  
18 couldn't get on the plane coming down, unless they made  
19 other arrangements.

20 So, our apologies. Some of the food was  
21 a bit cold but, nevertheless, it was good.

22 But the main purpose of tonight is trying

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1 to get the elders in an informal type setting to make a  
2 few remarks to the Commission.

3                   Before we go on there is a couple o things  
4 that sort of influences a lack of the elders around here.  
5 Most of them, as you know, are over in Europe. There  
6 was a fund raising effort for the last couple of years  
7 and a lot of them are over visiting Europe -- London and  
8 Europe -- where they had fought during World War II. And  
9 they are over there right now, and I can sense it is probably  
10 a very emotional time for them as well.

11                   As well, we have the grade sevens and  
12 grade eights -- the grade sevens and grade eights are  
13 touring down south on their annual grade seven/grade eight  
14 trip and they, as well, could not be here -- along with  
15 the teachers. But I know that they were disappointed that  
16 they couldn't be here but, nevertheless, have left a  
17 submission with me to pass on to the Commission.

18                   A lot of the people, since they indicated  
19 that the Royal Commission would be coming up, had indicated  
20 to me that, "Well, what I say, is it going to be heard?"

21 Well, the Royal Commission has set up an information  
22 system. It is rather broad-based, if anything, I guess.

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1 They have a number of streams of information that they  
2 are going to be getting information from.

3 There will be conferences held over the  
4 next little while. Maybe one of the Commissioners can  
5 expand on some of these things as well.

6 As well, there is a "1-800" line that  
7 goes right into the Commission. You can talk in either  
8 Cree or English, or Inuk, or whatever your language is.

9 Just don't talk any other European language, other than  
10 English -- unless they have instantaneous translation  
11 there as well.

12 There are various studies that are going  
13 to be going on, funded by the Royal Commission, or the  
14 intervenors' program. I have some information back there  
15 as well for any type of -- for the intervenors' funding  
16 program.

17 As well, there will be a number of briefs  
18 -- for instance, even tonight, one of the elders was saying,  
19 "I don't have my brief fully prepared, can I mail it in?"

20 Yes, it can be mailed in. And all this information again  
21 will be taken into account.

22 And there are special consultations.

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1 For instance, tomorrow night, with the Moose River/James  
2 Bay Coalition, there is a special consultation. Again,  
3 that will all be recorded with our court reporter here  
4 -- everything is going to be recorded -- even if you cough,  
5 I think that's going to be in there.

6 As well, we have round tables. And  
7 again, I don't know too much about that, but maybe, perhaps  
8 one of the Commissioners can expand on that.

9 All of that is going to be rolled up into  
10 an information stream, into a computerized data base.  
11 And, over a period of time, what -- there is going to be  
12 three sets of hearings -- this one, I think, ends at the  
13 end of June. The next one starts in the fall. And again,  
14 I think the third one starts in the summer, next summer,  
15 and ends in there.

16 But, after each consultation there is  
17 going to be a rap up, a report done, based on the information  
18 that's coming in. And, from there, they will have a sort  
19 of a report that is sent out to everybody, provincial,  
20 federal government, First Nations' offices, tribal  
21 councils, associations, anybody that's interested in  
22 receiving them.

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1                   From there they'll basically rap up the  
2 information and from there you can go on to the next round  
3 feeling comfortable, I guess, that your point of view is  
4 reflected in there. In the end, of course, it's going  
5 to be -- the final report will come out. All the  
6 information will be available and that will be made  
7 available to the -- tabled before the House of Commons,  
8 I believe, in that respect.

9                   So, anything you say will be recorded,  
10 no matter what it is, where it is, as long as it's in this  
11 type of setting, or any other method that I've indicated.

12                   Throughout the whole hearing -- starting  
13 tomorrow, of course -- and starting right now, we have  
14 got Alex Spence and Greg Spence, who will be doing the  
15 instantaneous translation. We have the translation units  
16 here. We have the court reporter. We also have some  
17 media.

18                   You also have the National Film Board  
19 right here, Paul Rickard and Marilyn Dumont, who is on  
20 contract with the National Film Board. And they will be  
21 setting up, I think -- well, they even asked for the key,  
22 Bobby, by the way -- starting at 7:00 o'clock in the

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1 morning, to set up their equipment -- because they're  
2 taping the whole thing as well -- they are filming the  
3 whole thing.

4                   So, we've got a number of other -- we've  
5 got all of the media here as well, the CBC, the Daily Press  
6 will be in town tomorrow -- the big one. I'm not sure  
7 if the major one, The Freighter, is going to be in town.  
8     But, nevertheless, we are going to go ahead.

9                   Before I go on too far, one of the things  
10 we wanted to do that the Commissioners have asked for is,  
11 before they go into the actual hearing, what they wanted  
12 was a complete -- or some sort of history of the area,  
13 of the community and the area that we're in. And, rather  
14 than waiting for tomorrow morning, or tomorrow -- because  
15 we have a full agenda tomorrow -- I've asked Chief Norm  
16 Wesley to give an overview or a history of the area.

17                   So, he will do that now and we will save  
18 time as well.

19                   So, Norman's getting all wound up to do  
20 his major review here. He's a teacher by profession, by  
21 the way, so he has everything.

22                   By the way, too, he is also the new Dean



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1 of Native Studies at Cambrian College, a job well deserved.

2 Norm, can you take it from there?

3 **CHIEF NORM WESLEY:** I don't watch enough  
4 Opra Winfrey to be able to operate these things.

5 Good evening.

6 I'd like to, on behalf of the community,  
7 on behalf of the Council and membership of the Moose Factory  
8 First Nations, extend a very warm welcome to Commissioner  
9 Georges Erasmus and Viola Robinson, the Royal Commission  
10 on Aboriginal Peoples, and the staff.

11 We are very glad that you were able to  
12 make it. We understand that it was a bit trying for you  
13 this morning but, nevertheless, you are here.

14 We look forward to accommodating you the  
15 best we possibly can in the course of the next day or so,  
16 for you to be able to listen to the views of the people  
17 within our territory -- what we know as Mushkegowuk  
18 Territory.

19 I've been asked -- I know that one of  
20 the things that the Commission would like to hear is a  
21 general overview of the area, the community. And I was  
22 thinking about this this afternoon, in terms of what I

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1 should be saying. And I looked at basically who was going  
2 to be here -- you, Georges, and Viola being here -- and  
3 I said, "What can I tell these people that they really  
4 don't know, in terms of who we are as aboriginal people  
5 and what we stand for, and the basis of our origins?"

6                   And when we look at this and we think  
7 about this, from the standpoint of pre-European contact,  
8 I think it's very safe to say that we believe that we are  
9 indeed the aboriginal people of this land, specifically  
10 in the area in which we inhabit, the James Bay area, western  
11 James Bay Mushkegowuk territory.

12                   We believe that we that we are indeed  
13 the original inhabitants of this land.

14                   Now, I suppose there could be a number  
15 of arguments that come into play in terms of saying, "Well,  
16 where did you actually, really come from?" -- and there's  
17 a whole vast of theories that will come into play -- the  
18 Bering Strait will come into play. The whole vast Atlantis  
19 comes into the picture somehow, somewhere along the line.

20 The Continental Divide, the drifting of the continent,  
21 the parting of the continent to make the Atlantic Ocean,  
22 and a whole variety of different type of theories come

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1 into play.

2 I don't think it's proper to say  
3 basically which one is right and which one is wrong. I  
4 think the point that has to be made is that we've been  
5 as long as we can remember, and it goes back in time.

6 It goes back in time as far as we can  
7 remember and it's told from generation to generation, to  
8 generation, to generation, since time immemorial, when  
9 time began. And there are even accounts of the origin  
10 of the Mushkegowuk Cree in this area.

11 Now, whether or not we accept that is  
12 not the point. The point is, we've been here for hundreds  
13 and hundreds of generations. We've survived that -- the  
14 land -- we were a very strong part of nature. We were  
15 indeed a part of nature. And I don't think we have to  
16 go into any kind of real detail to justify that. You,  
17 Georges and Viola, are very familiar and very knowledgeable  
18 about what your elders told you -- and what your elders  
19 have told you is basically what our elders have told us.  
20 And I think that's basically what all has to be said that  
21 end.

22 That's basically who we are as

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1 aboriginal people, pre-European, if you will.

2                   The first contact that's been made in  
3 this area in particular was due to the fur trade. And  
4 our history lessons, when we were going to elementary and  
5 secondary school, tells us that this country was colonized  
6 because of the fur trade. And it's no different here.

7                   As a matter of fact, this was a central  
8 area of activity of the fur trade, specific to the Hudson  
9 Bay Company, shortly following the fatal voyage of Henry  
10 Hudson, back in the late 1600s.

11                   This fur trade was our first contact and  
12 it was the beginning of a change in we as aboriginal people  
13 in this area.

14                   One of the first elements of change I  
15 suppose that didn't really affect us, didn't really --  
16 well, didn't really affect us, or didn't really -- we  
17 weren't totally aware of -- was the formation of the Hudson  
18 Bay Company, the company of adventurers, the signing of  
19 that charter forming what we know historically as  
20 Rupertsland, where the Crown of the country -- in England  
21 -- gave basic title to vast tracts of land known as  
22 Rupertsland, all rivers and waters flowing the Hudson and

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1 James Bay.

2                               That happened in the 1600s, as you well  
3 know, and we were, obviously, not made aware of that until  
4 a little later on, as we begin to know these people that  
5 came to inhabit this land with us.

6                               This charter I think we can say, I think  
7 with certainty, that we were never asked whether or not  
8 it was okay that we -- that we be part of this.

9                               But, nevertheless, the coming of the  
10 European in this area that we know as James Bay and  
11 specifically Moose Factory, was one that created and caused  
12 considerable change in our lives, primarily to the trade  
13 and barter of furs to satisfy the economic demand of the  
14 European countries, mainly in mainland Europe and on the  
15 British Isles.

16                               That was our first contact, through the  
17 fur trade.

18                               At the same time it was recognized, as  
19 in other parts of this country, the need to settle and  
20 civilize these Indian people who inhabited this land.  
21 And it was thought at that time -- again, as we well know,  
22 in the course of history -- that it was the duty of the

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1 missionary to come across and be part of this colonization  
2 of this country, be part of this whole trade to the extent  
3 of settling and civilizing aboriginal people. And we were  
4 much a part of that process as the targets for civilization.

5                   Specifically, in this area in James Bay,  
6 we had basically two main groups, the Church of England  
7 -- the Anglican Church -- and also the Roman Catholic  
8 Oblates in particular. And, for a very short while, we  
9 had the Wesleyan Methodist influence for a brief period.

10                   I guess this could be marked as the  
11 second level of contact that we've had, when it comes to  
12 European contact. And when I think back about this contact  
13 in particular, the idea -- the ideals of European  
14 colonization -- basically was to say to aboriginal people  
15 that, "We're here to save you."

16                   But, when we look at it from the  
17 standpoint of then and now, I suppose, why did we have  
18 to be saved? Did we not live here for many, many  
19 generations? Was there a need for us to be saved?

20                   I scratch my head and I say to myself,  
21 "I don't think so."

22                   But, when we look at it, basically we

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1 say to ourselves that this whole business of being saved  
2 in terms of Christianity at that time was a form of  
3 indoctrination, was a form of assimilation to their society  
4 that they will be imposing upon us and, indeed, they did  
5 that. And it has caused change in our lives, socially,  
6 culturally, economically, politically. Every facet of  
7 our lives was subject to change.

8                   In the course of less than 200 years,  
9 with the colonization of this country again and the process  
10 of taking lands from Indian people in this country, our  
11 encounter with Government of Canada, the Province of  
12 Ontario, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, was in 1905.

13    And, in that particular summer, previous to -- or  
14 following a number of negotiations between the federal  
15 and provincial government, on having the people within  
16 northern Ontario sign a treaty surrendering their lands,  
17 the Commission embarked on its trip in 1905 and, in August  
18 of that summer, travelled throughout northern Ontario,  
19 down the Albany River, seeking signatures to the Treaty  
20 of 1905.

21                   And I don't think it could be said any  
22 clearer in our minds what that treaty says today. Every

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1 single person who lives in this community, aboriginal or  
2 non-aboriginal, can take that document -- and the document  
3 is very clear in terms of what was intended -- what was  
4 said, or what the government wanted.

5                   It was clear. It was a surrender of  
6 land, taking all that we have, in return for very small  
7 portions.

8                   My grandfather was one of those  
9 signatories to that treaty in Albany, where my roots come  
10 from. And I cannot pass judgment on my grandfather and  
11 say in a clear conscience that my grandfather said, "Yes,  
12 I will give all the land and sign over all this land to  
13 the government of this country in return for small  
14 acreages," without thinking of me, without thinking of  
15 the future generation of what they were doing.

16                   I find that difficult to accept. Many  
17 of us find it difficult to accept.

18                   Of the three contacts that we've had in  
19 this area, Moose Factory/James Bay, we've had traders,  
20 we've had missionaries and we've had government come into  
21 the area. And, by far, the contact in my mind anyhow has  
22 changed the course of the history of we as aboriginal people



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1 in this area, started in 1905. That, itself, was the  
2 instrument known as "Treaty Number 9," that has changed  
3 -- we came to a crossroad in the history of our lives.

4                   The impact that this document has had  
5 on us -- I don't know how -- it would have to be the most  
6 significant that goes back for generations, the most  
7 significant that goes back for generations because,  
8 previous to this, we had survived in this land, our  
9 grandfathers, our great-grandfathers, our  
10 great-great-grandfathers and generations before them.

11                   But, after 1905, this began a dramatic  
12 change in our lives, our dependency on government, to name  
13 one of many impacts up to this very day.

14                   To go on and present a liturgy of the  
15 impacts that we've had -- we've experienced in this area,  
16 I guess -- would be a waste of time in my mind, and I know  
17 I'd be wasting your time also -- because the story is very  
18 much the same throughout this country.

19                   But, I think what has to be said, those  
20 of us who live in this community as aboriginal people --  
21 and much can be said for other people who live in other  
22 communities -- I'm sure you'll be hearing from them in

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1 the next day-and-a-half -- we, at Moose Factor First Nation  
2 are on the rebound. We're on our way back.

3 In particular, in terms of economics,  
4 we know that in all probability it will not be possible  
5 for us to shed everything that we have right now and go  
6 back to buckskin, beads and braids, to a totally  
7 self-sufficient economy living off the land, the way in  
8 which our forefathers and our grandmothers did. That is  
9 not possible, not for every single one of us.

10 But then again, on the other hand,  
11 although we do know that, there is a real value, a real  
12 attachment to those traditional activities, just like  
13 hunting, trapping and fishing that we do in various seasons  
14 in the area that are culturally significant and culturally  
15 important, that we can never, ever, ever put a price tag  
16 to, like the value of fur. The value of family going out  
17 and experiencing traditional activities is something that  
18 you cannot put a price tag to, and we know that.

19 In terms of economic development in a  
20 more contemporary way the Moose Factor First Nation in  
21 particular we are on the rebound in having our own  
22 development corporation who has made a considerable amount

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1 of success in the last few years in regaining more control  
2 in the area of free business and free enterprise.

3                   You will be seeing some of these in the  
4 next day or so, as you tour the community. In the area  
5 of social change we again are on the rebound, and  
6 collectively at Moose Factor First Nation and all other  
7 First Nation in this area, in addition to the non-native  
8 community in the James Bay area, we have (native language)  
9 child and family services. And (native language) means  
10 one single nuclear family. And that organization, which  
11 we can say we are a very large part of, is in the process  
12 of creating positive social change in communities and then  
13 within families, making stronger families.

14                   It's been on the move for several years  
15 and I don't think we will ever see the day when we will  
16 not need a child and family service, because we are not  
17 perfect people -- far from it. But we are on the rebound  
18 in creating that social change within community, within  
19 family. At least the means are there.

20                   In the area of politics I stand before  
21 you as a proud member of the Moose Factory First Nation.

22                   And I stand before you as a proud member of the aboriginal

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1 community of western James Bay, because I know deep in  
2 my heart of the work that we have done in the last five  
3 to ten years has seen a dramatic change in how we represent  
4 our people.

5                   We have shifted in many ways in our  
6 approach from rhetoric -- radicalism, if you want to call  
7 it that, which was very common in our approaches to  
8 government people -- some of which you are very familiar  
9 with, I'm sure -- to a very aggressive, intellectual type  
10 of discussions that we've had with government at all  
11 levels, both with Moose Factory First Nation and also the  
12 tribal council as a whole. We have changed. We have  
13 matured. We have matured in the ways of the politics of  
14 the non-native. We are fighting fire with fire. And it's  
15 working. And we see that. And we will continue on that  
16 path.

17                   We have seen, in more recent times, the  
18 advances that are being made by various groups, in  
19 particular, aboriginal groups across this country, where  
20 there was an impasse to the extent, where there was physical  
21 confrontation taking place.

22                   And I just want to say something very

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1 briefly to that extent, that we are not advocates of that.  
2 We never have, and we hope that we never will be. I,  
3 for one, I'm not a violent man.

4                   What we advocate is sensibility,  
5 rational thinking and progressive and creative and  
6 innovative solutions, where we can sit down and talk about  
7 these things and try to come up with some solutions in  
8 terms of where we would like to go as aboriginal people,  
9 where we would like to go as First Nations.

10                   However, I think we have to qualify that.

11                   And again I reiterate, and I say I am  
12 not a violent person, we are not violent people. But we  
13 do know that in nature -- in nature -- you take a trapped  
14 animal and you corner it, and it's survival is at stake,  
15 it's life is at stake, instinct will come in. And we all  
16 know what that animal will do. It will attack.

17                   Inasmuch as I say that we are not a  
18 violent people, let's hope that in our dealings with  
19 government, either at the federal or provincial level,  
20 that we will never be forced into a corner where we feel  
21 that the very existence of who we are as a nation, specific  
22 to Moose Factory First Nation, specific to who we are in

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1 western James Bay, that we will not be pushed to the wall  
2 with the threat of extinction. Because, if it does happen  
3 -- just like you said, Georges -- we cannot guarantee what  
4 will happen, because instinct will take over.

5 I pray that that will never come around.

6 We've had a very interesting year here  
7 in this community. We've had a number of issues come up,  
8 a number of meetings such as this, the Environmental  
9 Assessment Hearings on Demand Supply Plans for the Moose  
10 River Basin -- they were here and we had a community meeting  
11 and we had an excellent show of people in this community  
12 -- both aboriginal and non-aboriginal. We've had your  
13 colleagues come forward just recently the First Nations  
14 Circle on the Constitution, and we had a very interesting  
15 meeting with them.

16 We will be having a youth conference very  
17 shortly. We even have Patrick Roy coming up, I hear, from  
18 the Montreal Canadiens, sometime this month.

19 This is an exciting community, people  
20 working together.

21 We're looking forward to a very  
22 interesting day and a half, and I don't want to go any

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1 further in terms of saying what the history is of this  
2 community. I think some of it will hopefully come out  
3 in the course of the deliberations of the next day and  
4 a half, within the various tours that you will be conducting  
5 in this community -- and also in Moosonee -- and your  
6 discussions with my fellow chiefs and tribal chairmen.

7 I want to conclude by again saying  
8 welcome to Mushkegowuk territory, welcome to the Moose  
9 Factory First Nation reserve community. I hope that you  
10 will find us intriguing, interesting, worthwhile. And  
11 if there's not a lot of people here I think it can be put  
12 in perspective by saying hopefully that, if we lack  
13 quantity in numbers, that the quality of the words that  
14 will be expressed will make up for that lack of numbers.

15 We are a very busy community, and we  
16 welcome you both, and your staff.

17 (native language)

18 **PAT CHILTON:** Thank you, Norm.

19 Norms says we're a very busy community  
20 and, as a result of that, you know, some people have to  
21 go on vacation. I also hear that there's a busload of  
22 people went down to Nashville and that's where some of

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1 them are right now, too -- singing Charlie Pride tunes,  
2 or whoever.

3 Norm was going to sing a song with his  
4 wireless mike there, too, but changed his mind.

5 Also, I should mention -- I noticed that  
6 we have a good mix here of aboriginal and non-aboriginal  
7 people -- you should know that the Commissioners want to  
8 hear, not only from aboriginal people, but also non-natives  
9 as well.

10 So, feel free later on in the evening,  
11 after the elders speak, to make your remarks if you wish.

12 Before we go too far into the evening  
13 with our opening remarks, what I'd like to do is ask Viola  
14 and Georges, if they have any comments -- maybe a brief  
15 history of what they've come across so far within their  
16 hearing.

17 Who wants to go first?

18 **CO-CHAIRMAN, GEORGES ERASMUS:** I will  
19 begin, I guess.

20 My name is Georges Erasmus. I am the  
21 Co-Chair of the Royal Commission. I want to start of by  
22 thanking the community for the wonderful meal. We are



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1 trying to see how quickly we can add 50 pounds onto each  
2 of us, so you have done us a great favour with at least  
3 four or five here tonight.

4                   The opening statement by the Chief was  
5 very useful. It is the kind of statement that we are trying  
6 to encourage people to tell us and I guess what we are  
7 trying to do is to let you know that you are not only  
8 speaking to the individuals here -- you are really speaking  
9 to the country.

10                   We are trying to get people to tell us  
11 their experience, what they have found that has been  
12 negative in their relationship with Canada, with Great  
13 Britain, and what they would do differently and what their  
14 aspirations are for the future.

15                   We want to hear from both aboriginal  
16 people and non-aboriginal. And we really want everyone  
17 in the community to have an opportunity to present to us  
18 in a number of ways.

19                   As Pat was saying, if you do not have  
20 an opportunity to present to us in the next couple of days,  
21 then write to us, send us tapes, phone us. We want to  
22 hear from as many people as possible.

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1                   We have a very complex mandate with many  
2 items, and there is enough in the mandate that everyone  
3 in the community should find something that they can talk  
4 about there. And we will listen. And the way that the  
5 information will be dealt with will be -- it will influence  
6 us on our reports, in the different ways in which we will  
7 be working toward our final report.

8                   We will come out with documents as we  
9 are going along. We need to find the solutions to each  
10 of the areas of our mandate.

11                   So, in addition to hearing what has  
12 happened to people and how they would have wished it to  
13 be different, we would like to hear what people believe  
14 will be long term solutions.

15                   We definitely want to hear from women.  
16 We have been hearing from women up to now. We have been  
17 hearing some very painful stories of sexual abuse, of  
18 violence in the family and the kind of concerns that women  
19 have about self-government without the Charter or  
20 protection of rights.

21                   But yet, we have also heard the wishes  
22 of women to have the inherent right of self-government

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1 recognized, the aspirations of women to see their  
2 communities be rebuilt, the support of women for treaties  
3 and aboriginal rights.

4                   We want to hear from youth. We have been  
5 hearing from some, but we have not yet really started to  
6 really hear from the young people in this country. And  
7 we know that the majority of the aboriginal people are  
8 very, very young. And if there is anybody that this Royal  
9 Commission is working for, it is really those people, the  
10 future of us collectively, and we really do want to hear  
11 from young people.

12                   So, I am hoping that while we are here  
13 we will hear from some and that over the next couple of  
14 years that young people will continue to communicate with  
15 us in many ways.

16                   We know that the young people are  
17 especially challenged because they come from a very strong  
18 culture, but their future seems to be extremely uncertain.

19                   And they have at least two paths to walk, that of the  
20 red path, strongly immersed in the traditions of the past,  
21 aware of who they are and how they are linked to thousands  
22 of years of history, their clan systems, their relationship

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1 to the universe, their relationship to all things, and  
2 then the challenge of how to fit into the dominant society  
3 in Canada, the aspirations to become professional people,  
4 doctors, lawyers, on and on and on.

5                   And we are also aware that young people  
6 in small communities are very challenged in relation to  
7 employment, that there are very, very few jobs that provide  
8 fulltime employment and, as aboriginals, suffering through  
9 a lot of change and the future is very uncertain.

10                   So, we have a lot of problems amongst  
11 young people.

12                   We have abuse of alcohol, of drugs. We  
13 have young people caught between two cultures, not fully  
14 aware of either one, not really sure who they are. And  
15 partly that is not their responsibility, not their fault.

16                   It is the way in which the impact of colonization -- as  
17 Chief Wesley was just talking about -- has affected the  
18 generations before the young people today.

19                   We know that when young people go to the  
20 large cities they come into contact again with more  
21 problems. And so we really want to hear from young people.

22                   We want to hear about their concerns and we want to hear

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1 about their aspirations. We want to hear about their  
2 vision of the future.

3                   We want to hear how much value they put  
4 in the traditional societies and the values that have been  
5 here from long before Columbus ever thought of sailing  
6 to find India. And we want to hear from young people about  
7 how the technology of the larger society, how that will  
8 play.

9                   We want to hear from elders. They have  
10 been talking to us. They have been telling us about the  
11 change they saw, the impacts on their way of life and,  
12 in their lifetime, how things have dramatically changed.

13                   We have heard from them about how they  
14 have seen their society break down, how in many instances  
15 they cannot talk to their young people any more and how  
16 they seem to have lost contact with young people, but that  
17 there is still strong support for traditional societies,  
18 for traditional institutions.

19                   And we have also heard some sad stories  
20 about elder abuse, neglect of some elders. But, on the  
21 other hand, we have also heard these stories about how  
22 the elders are playing a magnificent role in the prisons,

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1 in the reform institutions for young people, for women,  
2 for people, the inmates, how they are bringing the healing  
3 to the prisons and how it is the lifeline that those inmates  
4 are hanging onto when they are in prison, and how it is  
5 ironic for many, many aboriginal people that they end up  
6 in jail and that is where they first start finding out  
7 what it means to be an aboriginal person.

8                   And it is those elders that are providing  
9 the help. And we are finding out now, in many parts of  
10 Turtle Island, the elders are the great help. But, in  
11 other parts, there is yet an awareness of how important  
12 those young people are.

13                   And so, we are getting a mixed message  
14 about elders.

15                   We have begun to hear from non-native  
16 people. We hear both support, very strong support, and  
17 questions. What will it mean? How will self-government  
18 be implemented? How will it affect me? What will  
19 providing a land base to aboriginal people mean? What  
20 will happen to my lands?

21                   So, there is a lot of things to be worked  
22 out. There is both strong support and some concern about

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1 an uncharted future.

2                               We can hear things on many, many issues.

3     We have an ability to listen to issues that deal with  
4 justice, with self-government, with treaties, with  
5 aboriginal title, with all kinds of social issues, health  
6 issues, educational issues, language, culture, economic  
7 issues, the constitution -- though it is not a big issue  
8 for us, we can hear some things on that -- virtually  
9 anything you can think of that affects aboriginal people  
10 in Canada.

11                              We have a mandate to look into the future  
12 of Indian Affairs, the Indian Act, and we know that with  
13 the movement forth of self-government that obviously the  
14 way things are today in Canada are going to be changed.  
15     Aboriginal people will have more authority.

16                              So, over the next two years, we want to  
17 hear more and more from people on specific solutions.  
18 We will take the things we hear from people. We will put  
19 them into documents and we will bring them back out to  
20 people, so that they see the possible future that is  
21 emerging. And those ideas can be, either from we heard  
22 in the hearings, what we have found in our research, what

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1 we have discovered in other parts of the world where  
2 aboriginal people live and we hope that, as time goes on,  
3 we get more and more focused and that we will end up with  
4 a situation where the recommendations that we will be  
5 putting forth are acceptable to as many people as possible,  
6 whether it is government, provincial governments,  
7 aboriginal organizations, large parts of the aboriginal  
8 population that is involved and as many non-native  
9 organizations as possible.

10                   We will be holding conferences and round  
11 table meetings where we will be bringing both native and  
12 non-native people together to talk about specific things.

13                   One example is a meeting we will be  
14 holding in a few weeks. In about three weeks time we will  
15 be in Edmonton and we will be holding a round table on  
16 concerns of aboriginal people living in large cities.  
17 It will be a round table on urban issues.

18                   So, we will have the mayors of cities,  
19 their staff, the people that deliver the services to  
20 aboriginal people, plus, there are many, many aboriginal  
21 agencies living in large cities servicing aboriginal  
22 people. We will have representatives of those people.

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1                   We will also have aboriginal people that  
2 are clients, or receive those services. We hope to have  
3 a good exchange on what the problems have been of aboriginal  
4 people living in large cities, what the issues are, how  
5 those issues have been addressed, what has been done about  
6 them, where the concerns of aboriginal people are being  
7 met, where they are not, what are the issues that have  
8 not been addressed at all. And we also hope to start to  
9 look at things like, well, now that the constitution seems  
10 to be moving very quickly to recognizing self-government  
11 for aboriginal people, how will that affect aboriginal  
12 people living in large cities. Will it affect them at  
13 all?

14                   We want to begin that kind of discussion.  
15 It will not be the only time that we will be talking about  
16 aboriginal people living in the large cities, because we  
17 will be holding hearings virtually in every aboriginal  
18 circumstance in the country, including the places where  
19 they live in large cities.

20                   But, it will give us a good foundation.  
21 We will then go on and hold round tables  
22 on other issues. Treaties, for instance. Metis issues.

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1 The north. We will hold a young peoples round table and  
2 also one on womens' issues and elders, and so forth.

3 It is an interesting process that we are  
4 involved in. We really want an opportunity for people  
5 to present to us, to be provided. And so we are looking  
6 for a number of ways of doing that.

7 We are probably going to be leaving here  
8 before everyone that wants to talk to us gets a chance  
9 to. So, we encourage people to go to other meetings we  
10 will have in the area. We will be coming into northern  
11 Ontario again, later on.

12 We have created a program of intervenor  
13 funding, which is for organizations to seek out funds.  
14 And the funding is there to help those organizations,  
15 whether they are tribal councils or provincial territorial  
16 organizations, or regional organizations of the Metis,  
17 the Inuit, or other organizations, like trappers'  
18 organizations, womens' organizations, friendship centres,  
19 cultural organizations. And the funding is both for  
20 native and non-native, though we expect that the majority  
21 of people applying for funds will be aboriginal.

22 We are hoping that that funding will

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1 provide the resources for organizations to put their  
2 shoulder to some of the issues that they have tried to  
3 find solutions to in the past.

4 I am going to stop talking now.

5 I am going to ask Viola here, who is the  
6 other Commissioner here, to say a few words.

7 We came here tonight to, first, listen  
8 to the elders and to listen to whoever wants to present  
9 to us. And, over the next two days, I hope that we give  
10 an opportunity to as many people as possible to present.

11 And, if you do not have your name on the list, let one  
12 of the staff know that you want to present to us over the  
13 next couple of days. And, tonight, just stand up and talk  
14 to us.

15 I think we will start with the elders,  
16 once Viola is finished. But we would like to hear from  
17 as many people as possible.

18 Once again, thank you for the wonderful  
19 meal and thank you for coming out.

20 **COMMISSIONER, VIOLA ROBINSON:** Good  
21 evening, ladies and gentlemen.

22 My name is Viola Robinson. And I want

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1 to thank you for the warm words of welcome that we received  
2 here tonight, for your warm hospitality and your generous  
3 meal that you have given us here tonight. I want to thank  
4 you for that.

5 I do not have an awful lot more to add  
6 here but, no, we are not a miracle Commission, either.  
7 You know, it sounds like we have got an awful lot here  
8 to -- we do not have a lot to talk about, but you have  
9 a lot to talk about.

10 There is something different about this  
11 Commission. You may think, "What, another Commission?"  
12 And, "What's going to happen. We're tired of  
13 Commissions. We're tired of being studied. We're tired  
14 of telling people and nothing is happening."

15 But, there is something a bit different  
16 about this Commission. It is the first time that a  
17 Commission has been appointed with such a wide mandate  
18 as we have. And, secondly, it is the first Commission  
19 that has had a majority of aboriginal people on the  
20 Commission.

21 And I think what we want to do -- and  
22 the way I think about this Commission -- it is your

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1 Commission. It is your Commission and you have a very  
2 important role to play in this Commission. We are here  
3 to listen, and that is what we want to do as we move across  
4 the country, we want to hear what people have to say, what  
5 their concerns are and, as Georges said, later on in the  
6 fall after the first round is completed, you probably will  
7 want to begin to start focusing your submissions and your  
8 presentations to start formulating some types of  
9 resolutions.

10                   And also, the other different thing  
11 about the Commission is that, when we were appointed in  
12 August -- we got started last fall -- it took about six  
13 months to staff the Commission. There is close to 100  
14 people on staff, but over 60 per cent of that staff is  
15 aboriginal. I do not think that has ever happened before,  
16 either. We have got a lot of people from across -- from  
17 one end of the country to the other working for this  
18 Commission.

19                   So, we hope that in the end that what  
20 we hear and the report that comes out, whenever it -- it  
21 probably will not be until 1994, late in 1994 -- I don't  
22 know -- it is hard to judge. When we started out we were

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1 going to work from 18 months to two years. Now we are  
2 up to three years, moving into four.

3                   So, I do not know. But it all depends  
4 on how long it is going to take to hear the people. There  
5 is a lot of people in this country, aboriginal people.  
6 There is a lot of communities in this country. And we  
7 want to try to get to as many as we possibly can.

8                   So, as we do that and when we do conclude,  
9 we hope that the report will reflect in some way or fashion  
10 a change, a change for the aboriginal people of this country  
11 and a change for Canadians in general. We have to learn  
12 to live together and how we are all going to move ahead  
13 together, side by side. I think that something -- when  
14 they talk about building a new relationship between  
15 aboriginal people and the rest of Canada, that is what  
16 we have to strive for. But we have to do it reflecting  
17 your views and trying to achieve that.

18                   So, having said that, what I want to do  
19 now is, I will just conclude my remarks by thanking  
20 everybody for your warm, generous hospitality this  
21 evening. And we are looking forward -- I am looking  
22 forward -- in the next two days to hear from the people,

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1 to hear your concerns and to see what is being said.

2 Thank you very much.

3 **PAT CHILTON:** Okay, we will start.

4 Silas Wesley from Kashechewan wanted to  
5 be the first to start off here -- so, Silas?

6 **SILAS WESLEY (through interpreter):**

7 Thank you very much, my loved ones, my  
8 neighbours. I'm very thankful that I was able to come  
9 down here and to attend this meeting.

10 I am very glad that there are lots --  
11 that I have seen familiar faces in the various past meetings  
12 and conferences. And before I would like to express myself  
13 I would like to talk about the various things in the past  
14 -- various governments that were created -- first Indian  
15 governments -- Ontario Indians was the first Indian  
16 organization I was involved with -- this were my first  
17 involvement as a native organization. Even today all my  
18 work has been involved in native organizations by attending  
19 various meetings. And I am very thankful that I am  
20 starting to see various things that what are people are  
21 starting to do and the strength that there is starting  
22 to be created by, first of all, asking the Great Spirit

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1 for that strength.

2                   And I'm very thankful to see that with  
3 my own eyes we're going back to the chiefs of Ontario  
4 Indians. It was the first time that I heard my own people  
5 when they were talking about their frustrations in regards  
6 to -- they were talking about Indian Affairs before,  
7 because they were depending on the Indian Affairs.

8                   Because the first meetings that took  
9 place in those conferences, there was always Indian Affairs  
10 that was taking the leading role and then, one time, they  
11 were asked to remove themselves and just listen in the  
12 back and listen to the people. And was the time the people,  
13 our chiefs, decided to express what their feelings were.

14                   I know there's lot of times there's been  
15 frustration -- there's been lots of frustrations in the  
16 past, because the government of Indian Affairs they did  
17 not do right, according to the people, because they were  
18 the ones that were outlining their own rules, implementing  
19 their own Act and all they needed was -- all they asked  
20 was for the signature of the chiefs.

21                   And I'm glad today that things are  
22 reversed now. It's now the chiefs listening to own people.



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1 They're the ones that their words are being heard, and  
2 I'm glad. And I was glad and I am very happy that I was  
3 part of the process when there was talking about the various  
4 self-government that's taking place. And also the  
5 meetings that been -- I remember meeting in Edmonton, and  
6 this thing about local government was being mentioned.

7 And at that time, in that meeting, there  
8 were about 526 chiefs in Edmonton and that's when the local  
9 government concept was being introduced.

10 And I'm glad and I feel very humble that  
11 things are going accordingly and also the various  
12 governments that ...

13 And I remember the next time the  
14 government was involved was the Chiefs of Ontario and Fred  
15 Plain (phonetic) and Wilbur Natachewan (phonetic) was  
16 there too and Fred Plain was the Grand Chief at that time.

17 And it was just during this leadership that the local  
18 government, self-government, was being discussed through  
19 consultation of our elders. And that is why I really  
20 express myself -- I was allowed to express myself of how  
21 I perceive Indian government is all about.

22 And for the last -- and I remember Fred

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1 Plain was -- he said "Give us five years and that's when  
2 Indian Affairs -- in five years there'll be no more Indian  
3 Affairs." But, unfortunately, it took longer. And  
4 that's what happened.

5                   When we separated from the Chiefs of  
6 Ontario the Indians of northern Ontario, we decided to  
7 start our own organization with Grand Council Treaty Number  
8 9 and our leader at that time was Andrew Rickard, who come  
9 to present our organization.

10                   And I remember specifying about  
11 self-government ... carrying out the wishes of Fred Plain  
12 and also some of the things I had said about removing Indian  
13 Affairs superiority. And I saw the sort of things that  
14 need to be done, the consultation of our people.

15                   Now, by consulting our people, we have  
16 the strength. And again -- and I'm kind of glad that these  
17 things happened. And the way I understand it, that it's  
18 their humbleness, because that's what the bible is saying,  
19 if you're humble about yourself and it's the one that,  
20 according to the bible, is the one -- the last person to  
21 speak who are the most humble one, he's got the strength  
22 to be able outline his beliefs. And what's the category

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1 the Indian people are in and that's what -- these are the  
2 ones that talk about some of the strengths that they have,  
3 or some of the various interpretation of Indian Acts.

4                   First I wanted to say I'd like to thank  
5 the Great Spirit for allowing me to be part of this  
6 conference, to be able to express ourselves, our feelings,  
7 our culture, talk about our language, because the language  
8 given by our grace -- by God. And if all these things  
9 the various governments -- the various nature of people,  
10 they have their own government.

11                   The only way they justify their  
12 government is with having their own language. And that  
13 is why, as individuals, choice of people, we were told  
14 how to follow these things. And that's why it's very  
15 important, when we talk about our culture.

16                   First, I want to say -- before I continue  
17 -- talk about various subjects such as self-government  
18 -- and also, when you're talking about the constitution  
19 of Canada I would like to express various things that  
20 happened in the past. And now I'm starting to understand  
21 what has been said, even when you talk things that happened  
22 400 years ago.

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1                   And, at the same time, I just want to  
2 express some of the things that, when we talk about our  
3 native people, we were put here by the Great Spirit. We  
4 were created here to be able to live off the land, to be  
5 able to go fishing and to be able to go hunting, because  
6 these are the things that have been able to get warmth  
7 for our ... the way we control various fires to get warmth  
8 and also some of the things that are useful tools, that  
9 were given to us by living off the land.

10                   Talk about traps, how to go about  
11 detecting where the fish are, these are the God-given  
12 things that we have to use. And that's what happened to  
13 various people across Canada. We had our languages,  
14 although the fact that they're different languages. Some  
15 of us didn't even understand each other, but the respect  
16 that we have among each other, we were very humble within  
17 -- across this country, because we had accept that this  
18 was a gift by the Creator.

19                   And also, too, and those things at that  
20 time, there was no white government here in Canada, only  
21 that we realize the various governments by native people,  
22 because it was their language controlled their government.

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1 And they used to have their own governments, their own  
2 laws, because they know -- they were thinking about God  
3 first -- they were thinking about the Creator first.

4 And that's one of the things -- it was  
5 hard to understand at that time, because non-native people  
6 is being looked at a different way.

7 You talk about economic life first. The  
8 money come first sometimes, but not like us native people.

9 We look at first what the Creator has given to us, because  
10 we didn't think about the economic life of people, we didn't  
11 think about money. All we did was make sure that there  
12 was food on our tables.

13 Now, the white people are telling us that  
14 they don't understand what the self-government is all  
15 about, or local controls are about because one of the things  
16 of today -- the elders are telling us this nothing new  
17 because, before the white man came, they used to run their  
18 own affairs. Now, that's the kind of thing that the  
19 government is trying to -- you can't understand.

20 And I know there are various programs  
21 right now we have to depend on right now. Like, for  
22 instance, the welfare system, the economic programs that

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1 have been introduced in our communities. Yes, these are  
2 the things that we have understand too, and translate in  
3 such way that they will feel comfortable when we talk about  
4 self-government.

5 Yes, I know there existing all the  
6 things, the chiefs and their councillors. Now, there's  
7 other Commissioner too. That's how some of the things  
8 they came about because the first time when the  
9 Commissioners arrived, they were told what self-government  
10 was all about. Now, today, if you look at the things that  
11 people thought, they're trying reiterate what our people  
12 has been saying when talk about self-government because,  
13 at that time, there was lots of misunderstanding. There  
14 was no clear definition about self-government at that time.

15 Now, but we have to continue with special  
16 ... people because we have large families but, at the same  
17 time, we have to think of our people because they're  
18 starting to think different now, because -- the way we  
19 expect them to do. We expect them to continue in their  
20 education but, at the same time, we're trying to get them  
21 back so they'll be able to help us, so they can be able  
22 to accommodate what our self-government is all about.

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1                   So, when we talk about -- we know, when  
2 we listen to our elders, and also when we listen to our  
3 councillors and our chiefs, we understand what they mean,  
4 because they still think that all these things were given  
5 to us by the Great Spirit. So, it's up to us people to  
6 really do some of the things of what our people are saying  
7 and also what's best for their communities.

8                   And I'm hopeful that the government will  
9 understand what the culture of our people and what they  
10 mean about their traditional life, when they talk about  
11 self-government. And I know it's very important to really  
12 specify what we're going to do, so we'll be able to look  
13 -- in the long run what we'll be able to do.

14                   Like, for instance, gardening, we'll be  
15 able to start our own gardening and also some of the things  
16 that even -- when we talk about some of the things, some  
17 of the work that comes out from farming, also logging,  
18 or various economic programs and to start controlling our  
19 own stores or housing, and also the various programs that  
20 we'll be able to control.

21                   So, if we allow ourself, I'm sure --  
22 eventually we'll be able to run our own affairs, because

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1 it's pretty hard to really depend on what's happening in  
2 the south because of the high cost of transportation in  
3 terms of -- when we talk about the high cost transportation  
4 by land, high transportation by air.

5                   So, these are the things we have to look  
6 at, too. So, once we have our own control, first we'll  
7 be able to identify what's easier for our own people for  
8 the future of our children. And some of the economic  
9 programs I'm talking about, right now they're being run  
10 by native people.

11                   If we take over some of these things  
12 like, for instance, hunting -- in the area of hunting --  
13 we should be able to have our own tourism area. And, at  
14 the same time when we talk about education, we should be  
15 able to take over also education facilities so, by  
16 controlling these education facilities, we will be able  
17 to encourage our young people to become nurses and also  
18 a different type of climate that will be created by our  
19 own people when we talk about education.

20                   So, it's very important to encourage our  
21 own people. Like, for instance, when you talk about native  
22 laws, especially right now, just like the Indian Act, I



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1 know there's lots of things that we're supposed to  
2 translate what the Indian Act is all about and I'm sure  
3 we could create our own Acts that will benefit our own  
4 people, for young people and for our grandchildren.

5                   And, like I said at the beginning, like,  
6 for instance, in the area of gardening -- there is one  
7 of the things I mentioned in the Indian Act, it's about  
8 gardening, that if you want to start gardening, or farming,  
9 it specifies there that you will be able to ask these things  
10 that will accommodate the program so that they'll be able  
11 to create ... reserve and also within the government.  
12 This was a signed agreement to be able to carry livestock,  
13 to give us livestock like, for instance, cows horses.  
14 And these are the things I've introduced ... Indian Act,  
15 trying to implement some of the things that have been  
16 mentioned within the Indian Act. And that's why it's  
17 important that the white government understand these  
18 things because some day, one of these days, you will be  
19 able to wonder what's going to happen with them, because  
20 last ... it's very dangerous because that's how it's going  
21 to happen to him. And nothing's happened.

22                   Now, when you talk about the

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1 constitution right now, and there's lots of us native  
2 people we don't really understand it just by hearing in  
3 a strange language what the constitution's supposed to  
4 mean. But, if we use our language, it will be easier for  
5 us because when white people use their own laws -- and  
6 if they use their own language it's pretty hard for us  
7 to be accommodating or to really understand, because of  
8 different rules and regulations that are being introduced,  
9 because of the foreign language.

10                   Because of some of things that are being  
11 mentioned in the foreign language it doesn't really come  
12 from the country, because it comes from overseas, from  
13 the Crown -- or from the Queen -- because there's still  
14 the Crown from overseas that really still controls the  
15 constitution of this country.

16                   That is all I wanted to say about the  
17 constitution. And I'm sure there's lots of people that  
18 will really outline what the constitution process is all  
19 about.

20                   And then if the constitution -- when we  
21 talk about the first constitution in 1867 when at that  
22 time, when the first constitution was signed, native people

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1 were not included. Now I understand even the French people  
2 are not very happy about the present constitution because  
3 they never really mentioned what was happening at that  
4 time. And that's because there was only one group of  
5 people that were mentioned within the constitution. And  
6 now I understand that -- I remember that the constitution  
7 that was signed in 1967, it was just being introduced to  
8 us when I was a chief.

9                   And at that time there were six people  
10 that come at that time, when I was a chief -- in my own  
11 community. And I remember meeting with my elders, with  
12 my councillors. They were talking about the constitution.

13                   And he was asking me, "You, as the chiefs  
14 ... that you control this reserve, you have the power to  
15 change some of the issues within the constitution. You'll  
16 be able to make your own laws within the reserve and at  
17 the same time you'll be able to change them, that you're  
18 not satisfied with, within the constitution." And they  
19 start talk the reserve life.

20                   What they told us that there was going  
21 -- you're going to increase you land, that's what they  
22 told us at that time. And then after that he said, after

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1 five months -- after five months that these people, the  
2 representative of the government came to see us, another  
3 group of people, another government came along -- which  
4 was the Minister of Natural Resources. And that's what  
5 they told us too.

6 They told us that we should work together  
7 in changing some of these laws that were being applied  
8 within our reserves.

9 And that's what I say about the  
10 self-government.

11 When we talk about self-government,  
12 especially when we talk about the new constitution right  
13 now, how self-government should be included in the  
14 constitution. I just want to say that we should be very  
15 careful and really should be careful, because -- we should  
16 really make sure that we're going to include our future  
17 generations because, when we talk about it's important  
18 that we include and justify our land within the  
19 constitution. And then it's important that we speak with  
20 one mind, that we don't have differences. Because, if  
21 we have differences, we don't really believe what the  
22 Creator had given us when we talk about various laws that

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1 we should follow.

2 And that's what I wanted to say.

3 Thank you.

4 **PAT CHILTON:** Sinclair Cheechoo is  
5 going to be next.

6 **SINCLAIR CHEECHOO:** Commissionaires,  
7 chiefs from up the coast and our Chief, Norm Wesley, and  
8 special guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am a member of  
9 the Moose Factory Indian Reserve. I have been a member  
10 of Moose Factory Indian Reserve since I was born. I was  
11 not born in Moose Factory, I was born in (native language).

12 My father came to Moose Factory by sail boat to register  
13 me on the same year I was born. And that made me original  
14 Moose Factory Band member, as well as Ontario Indian.

15 Now, I know some people here think that  
16 I'm a Quebec Indian. I am not a Quebec Indian, even though  
17 I was born in Quebec. I'm Moose Factory Indian -- I should  
18 say aboriginal Indian.

19 You know, like, we want to talk about  
20 where we come from. We have to do a lot of research to  
21 find out where everybody comes from. That might happen  
22 some day. I don't even know myself if I'm really original

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1 Moose Factory Indian. I could be coming from overseas.

2                   Anyway, I started writing my brief a  
3 couple of days ago. Yesterday morning, when I woke up,  
4 I apparently contacted some kind of virus. I tried to  
5 take some Tylenol tablets, but that doesn't work. I had  
6 some primitive medicine called cedar juice. I heat that  
7 up and I drunk it. And it start running my nose. It's  
8 a primitive medicine. What you do is, you -- you can make  
9 it into a poultice, or you can wet towels and put it on  
10 your chest as well -- and you can also drink it, it's quite  
11 safe to drink it, you can drink one cup of it -- one time  
12 -- healing any infections you might have.

13                   Now, I didn't finish -- I did very little  
14 on the brief I wanted to present at this meeting. Because  
15 of the illness I have I'm not feeling very good right now.

16                   Anyway, the history of relationship of  
17 aboriginal peoples and Canadian society as a whole -- and  
18 Canadian government, as well as provincial governments  
19 -- since the signing of treaties in Canada it established  
20 a special relationship, both sides, because of lands and  
21 resources of many kinds.

22                   Since the patriation of the Canadian

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1 Constitution our relationship with governments is enhanced  
2 and intensified for many reasons. At the present time  
3 we are seriously negotiating with federal and provincial  
4 governments for assurance and affirmation on aboriginal  
5 inherent right to self-government.

6                   As long as we continue having  
7 jurisdictional conflict the special relationship existing  
8 today can be in jeopardy. Other special relationships  
9 -- services, such as education services and many other  
10 necessities. As for Canadian society, we do have special  
11 relationship with -- many Canadian society have been in  
12 existence for many, many years, especially spiritually,  
13 physically and economically.

14                   It's hard to describe the kind of  
15 relationship aboriginal people experienced, whether it  
16 was simple or complex. The history told by our elders  
17 indicates the aboriginal peoples experienced difficulty  
18 to relate to one another, therefore, experienced very slow  
19 process and gradual change of attitudes towards each other.

20 They did eventually establish fair relationship.

21                   Some tribes were known to be hostile and  
22 kept their distance from other tribes.

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1                   Self-government. We've been asked so  
2 many times now, what do we mean by saying we have aboriginal  
3 inherent right to self-government? We don't have any  
4 written history how we inherited self-government.

5                   The only thing we have is the holy bible,  
6 when we try to explain why we believe it is an act of God.  
7    The Great Spirit, God Almighty, caused our ancestors to  
8 discover this continent and as well as first occupants  
9 of this land we call Canada. It must have been historical  
10 moment when our ancestors discovered this continent,  
11 beyond comprehension.

12                   I wonder if they opened a bottle of  
13 champagne to celebrate?

14                   When our ancestors stepped on this land  
15 no one knows how many there were. Could be one family,  
16 or many families. When they started moving through this  
17 land was the beginning of self-government on this  
18 continent, as well as the beginning of aboriginal inherent  
19 rights.

20                   When God announced inheritance to  
21 Abraham he did not only -- he not only meant the people  
22 living then, he also included future generations to the



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1 end of the world. Indians and Inuit are different people.  
2 Self-government they established was very simple. They  
3 did not sell land to their own people. They distributed  
4 the land to themselves and later distributed lands to  
5 families as family inheritance.

6 This is one type of self-government.

7 White man was different.

8 He sold the inherited lands to their  
9 people. to finance their governments and armies.

10 -- there seems to be one page missing

11 --

12 Anyway, this is why -- this is the reason  
13 why Indian people believe that they have inherent right  
14 to govern themselves. No one knows, I guess, really how  
15 self-government -- or where it originated. But I, myself,  
16 believe that self-government did start here on this  
17 continent when our ancestors began to establish themselves  
18 in certain areas. I hear or read some people saying that  
19 Indians were travellers. They wandered through this land  
20 so, therefore, didn't have any bases for economic purposes  
21 and didn't have lands to be inherited. They were only  
22 land users.

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1                   Now, according to some Indian people --  
2 and myself, I do believe this -- even though it took many  
3 thousands of years before Indian people settled wherever  
4 they want to settle, as you can see yourself -- as we can  
5 see what is happening -- what's been happening in the past  
6 -- Indian reserves scattered throughout this country,  
7 throughout Canada.

8                   That's the reason why I believe, myself,  
9 that Indian people did settle. They were not wandering  
10 through this country all the time. They settled certain  
11 places and that's where they did nation building. From  
12 there went to different places, like, in James Bay.

13                   I stated in the last meeting we had in  
14 February how Indian people occupied James Bay and began  
15 to recognize themselves as a group of people having such  
16 powers of the lands they occupied and inherited. Indian  
17 people did recognize having inherent rights in the lands  
18 they occupied.

19                   I want to say a few words on the position  
20 and role of aboriginal elders.

21                   We see today that aboriginal elders are  
22 not involved in the -- especially to have close relations

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1 with young -- (microphone cutting out) -- I believe this  
2 is important, very important -- that young people should  
3 have close relations with their elders, as a guidance to  
4 help them to find what they are looking for.

5 I hear many talks on the radio, serious  
6 problems experienced and building up. It's getting to  
7 the point that some suicides happen in our communities.

8 Maybe, if young people take time to associate with their  
9 elders more, and talk to them, maybe invite them sometimes  
10 when they have gatherings, maybe one or two elders to speak  
11 to them. I'm sure that young people are losing that  
12 element, that part, the important part in their community.

13 I listen to other people talking about  
14 young people and elders. The young people were talking  
15 about the problems, serious problems they were  
16 experiencing. They were saying that the missing important  
17 part is the elders. "We no longer associate with our  
18 elders. We no longer talk to our elders, or they no longer  
19 talk to us. And we are trying to find our way back, like  
20 it was before we lost our culture and language."

21 And this is what the problem these young  
22 people experience. They knew that the only way they can

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1 find their way back is to have the elders involved in their  
2 daily life, to show them what they have to do to make their  
3 community a safe place to live.

4                   Maybe young people don't realize how  
5 important it is to have your grandfather or your  
6 grandmother living, how precious it is. God tells us in  
7 the ten commandments how important it is to have those  
8 people and to obey those people, to honour them. It is  
9 not just writing. It's important. Parents and elders  
10 are so important that God put that in writing in the ten  
11 commandments to show us how important it is.

12                   Georges was saying that elders are  
13 abused sometimes. Abusing elders is despicable in the  
14 eyes of God Almighty. It's really bad to abuse an elder.

15                   When you abuse an elder, or look down  
16 upon an elder, thinking that he's not much use, he's  
17 ignorant and backward -- I hear this sometimes -- you know  
18 that God Almighty will be using elders when the day of  
19 judgment comes. God will be using them -- us -- council  
20 of elders when the day of judgment comes.

21                   One of the worst things that is happening  
22 today is disobedience. To disobey will lead you to total

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1 destruction, disobedience. Young people should remember  
2 that, always, not to look down on their elders but to listen  
3 to their elders, try to follow their instructions, advice.

4 I wanted to say a few words on what I've  
5 heard about who is going to finance self-government when  
6 it does happen, how it's going to be financed. I know  
7 governments are concerned about that. I think Indian  
8 people are also concerned about that.

9 I have heard some chiefs mentioning, way  
10 back, that we shouldn't worry about monies because there's  
11 a big pile of money stored somewhere belonging to Indian  
12 people. And that is a fact, because I've seen statement  
13 myself.

14 In 1967 I'd mentioned this to a number  
15 of people, as well as in a meeting we had here one time.  
16 I was misunderstood that time.

17 I'll tell you a short story why I know  
18 it is a fact.

19 When I was in Sesiby (phonetic) working  
20 for Hudson Bay Company one old man was telling me a story.  
21 He said one government official came to us -- that was  
22 long before they negotiated for damming the rivers -- I

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1 guess that's why the government official went -- to meet  
2 with the elders and talk to them about the land. This  
3 old man told me that the government official came to see  
4 me and asked me all kinds of questions.

5                   Then I asked him a question. What will  
6 I do when I retire from -- who's going to support me?  
7 And the government official told him, "You don't have to  
8 worry about that, the government will give you money.  
9 When you ride on the train the government will pay for  
10 it, you won't have to pay anything." And then he said  
11 -- he pointed across the river -- there's a hill over there,  
12 a big hill across the river at Sesiby (phonetic).

13                   He told me, he said, "You see that hill  
14 over there? If the government racked up all the Indian  
15 monies it would pile up like that. Every year the  
16 government takes a handful out of that and gives it to  
17 Indian people."

18                   How about that, eh?

19                   And then when I was welfare  
20 administrator here in this reserve -- as a matter of fact,  
21 I was the first one to be hired as a band manager in James  
22 Bay -- I handled everything myself, all by myself -- before

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1 I go to that, what I am trying to tell you -- when I started  
2 we didn't have anything. Chief and council send me to  
3 Indian Affairs office and told me to look for something,  
4 scrounge around. I did.

5                   Went up there, I went to the office.  
6 They told me to go down to basement, look for something,  
7 what I'm looking for in the junk pile. I found one  
8 typewriter and one desk. And I had to work on that desk,  
9 repaired it, to be able to use it.

10                   Anyway, to get back to what I was trying  
11 to tell you, we had a meeting in Moosonee. There was two  
12 provincial government officials we invited. And one from  
13 the Department of Indian Affairs. And we talked about  
14 the shortage of money, not enough money to help everybody  
15 that needs assistance. I believe there was somebody from  
16 up the coast -- I don't know who it was.

17                   Anyway, while I was talking that time  
18 I quoted this old man what he told in Sesiby (phonetic).  
19 And after the meeting Tommy Achawo (phonetic) came up  
20 to me and we started talking before we went out. And this  
21 government official came up to me. He said, "I listened  
22 to you very carefully, what you said." He said, "You hit

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1 it right on the nail." And he had a book. The book was  
2 about that thick, about half an inch thick, some kind of  
3 a report.

4 He flipped the pages on that book. He  
5 said to me, "Here it is, right here. What you said, that's  
6 exactly what's happening." And I looked at it. I looked  
7 at it. Are you willing to hear this? You better hold  
8 onto the table, you might keel over.

9 And I looked at it. And it said, "Indian  
10 monies, revenue monies, amounting to 94.6 billion."

11 Ninety-four point six billion -- not a million -- billion.

12 Indian monies. On the bottom it says, "1.8 billion  
13 government uses for Indian people right across Canada."

14 And this man said to me, "You see, what you said there,  
15 what I told you, you hit it right on, and that's what is  
16 happening."

17 And where is that money? What did they  
18 do with that money?

19 I know it's a fact, because I saw it.

20 It's a report. It's not like a financial audit report,  
21 but it showed revenue monies and expenditures. I saw it  
22 with my own eyes. But the mistake I made was not asking



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1 that man to give me a copy of that. That's the mistake  
2 I made. I was young and I was not thinking clearly, that's  
3 why I didn't obtain the copy.

4 And so the monies that the government  
5 at that time used, they did not even use up interest.  
6 And where is all that money going to?

7 So, why should we worry about who is  
8 going to finance self-government? The money is there.  
9 But I don't know how we can obtain that money. I believe  
10 the leaders years ago have tried to have an access of that  
11 money. I guess they haven't been able to do so.

12 So, that's why I said we have big pile  
13 of money belonging to us.

14 Now, I'm going to end my brief by saying  
15 I might write up something and send it to the  
16 Commissionaires.

17 Georges Erasmus, thank you for  
18 listening to me.

19 **PAT CHILTON:** Thank you.

20 Any other elder? Sidney?

21 Sid, did you want to say anything?

22 About that pile of money, I was just

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1 thinking, maybe that's why Columbus got lost when he was  
2 over here. Maybe he was looking for that.

3 **SIDNEY DeMORE:** Looking for what?

4 **PAT CHILTON:** A big pile of money.

5 **SIDNEY DeMORE:** Yes, I was just thinking  
6 of getting a wagon and a shovel. I'll probably have that  
7 much coming to me now.

8 I'm a non-status Indian and I have a  
9 problem here that people I talked to wasn't able to give  
10 me a proper answer.

11 In 1985 a revised act of the Indian Act,  
12 I guess -- I tried to read it. I read it twice. I don't  
13 understand the wording. It was made out for -- I guess  
14 a bunch of lawyers made it out and a simple native like  
15 myself didn't understand what it was all about.

16 But the parts I did understand -- and  
17 my whole family now are status Indians -- and the part  
18 that got to me was, it said, "Any native woman and her  
19 offspring would be reinstated as status Indians on  
20 application."

21 Well, my wife was a status Indian before  
22 we got married. And she didn't have any problem being

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1 reinstated and so did my children. But, when I come to  
2 apply, with the understanding that my mother was a native  
3 person, that I wouldn't have any problem -- but I'm still  
4 a non-status Indian, which causes a problem in my family.

5 My wife and seven of my children were  
6 all located to Fort Albany. One of my daughters married  
7 a native person from the Province of Quebec. She belongs  
8 to Quebec. And if I become reinstated I would belong to  
9 a little band of Indians from my mother's family, down  
10 around Cochrane.

11 And I have my doubts of becoming a status  
12 Indian because there's a possibility I would have to have  
13 visiting rights to get back to my wife again -- which would  
14 be a problem after being married for 42 years now.

15 In the Act I'm not qualified as a father  
16 of my eight children. And the only right I have to become  
17 a status person is because my mother was original a native  
18 person. But my dad never was and neither was my  
19 grandfather. I'm going back to these things that are being  
20 mentioned that people signed away our land in 1905. My  
21 grandfather was making his living as a white man. And  
22 he was refused signing as Indian status because he wasn't

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1 making his living as a native person.

2                   And since then I've never made my living  
3 as a native person. I've made it as a white man. I went  
4 overseas as a Canadian. I was a Canadian soldier for a  
5 short three-and-a-half years, very proud being called  
6 Canada, Canadian and everything by the people in Europe.

7    And I came home, took my uniform off and applied for a  
8 job and they asked me what was my nationality. And I said  
9 I was a Canadian. And they said, "There's no such thing  
10 as a Canadian." I said, "What am I, then?" And he said,  
11 "You look like an Indian." Okay, then, "I look like an  
12 Indian, call me an Indian."

13                   Then I come home again. I wasn't  
14 accepted by the Indian people. They said you're  
15 non-status, you don't belong here. I was born here, on  
16 this island. And inherent rights, the interpretation of  
17 that.

18                   I've looked through the dictionary and  
19 everything. Inherent, I don't know what it means, really.

20    And there's a lot of the English words us native people  
21 don't understand. We can't interpret it until we tell  
22 a story about it.

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1                   In some of the interpretations, I make  
2 up my own. It doesn't seem to come out right, insults  
3 a lot of people, which I don't give a damn if I do or not,  
4 anyway.

5                   But, to get back to this problem that  
6 I have -- and I don't think it's only my family that has  
7 this problem -- what rights does my wife and my children  
8 have of being status Indians? The status card doesn't  
9 give them even the right of free taxes, unless they're  
10 living on a reservation.

11                   And at the time the non-status Indians  
12 were promised in 1905 for 75 acres of land, plus a bit  
13 of that pile of money that Sinclair talks about -- or dreams  
14 about -- it never comes about. It never comes -- we've  
15 never seen any of that.

16                   Then, when I got discharged from the  
17 army, it was stressed that the country didn't owe me a  
18 living -- which I never accepted anyway -- and I was refused  
19 help from the Veterans Affairs to build on Moose Factory  
20 Island anything permanent because, at that time, the whole  
21 island belonged to the Hudson Bay Company. And, being  
22 white status -- and my grandfather and father worked all

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1 their life for the Hudson Bay Company and that's all --  
2 they got a broken down old Hudson Bay house that was almost  
3 impossible to repair. I think most of it was built in  
4 the shape of a boat. You couldn't use a square or a level  
5 anywhere. You just had to patch it by eye. My dad had  
6 a pretty good eye. He could find out if anything was  
7 hanging straight or not. He'd hang it up on a string and  
8 if it hung straight down he said it was level.

9 He was a pretty handy man. He learned  
10 the way so he could make his living as a dog driver, a  
11 sailor, a canoe man -- you name it -- and he got along.

12 He brought us this far. And I assumed that type of work  
13 style. Whoever I work for -- being a small man I had to  
14 work twice as hard and lift everything twice as heavy,  
15 and I managed -- I made a living.

16 And I never received these handouts that  
17 are prevailing among native people now. They claim that  
18 we're dependent on those type of things and I don't think  
19 we are. We were never really given an opportunity to  
20 succeed.

21 Like, my children, when they become of  
22 age to go to high school there was no high school in this

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1 community. But, somehow or another, children from this  
2 area were given the opportunity to go to school, tuition  
3 and board, but no extras, no clothing allowance, no  
4 spending money. This had to come out of my small cheque.

5 When my children first started to high school I was earning  
6 the whole sum of fifty cents an hour, about \$67.00 every  
7 two weeks for about 110 hour pay period.

8                   And when the hospital first opened some  
9 of us complained for the type of work we were doing that  
10 we should at least get a pay parity with our white brothers  
11 that came up to work. But then we were told by the  
12 administrator that being a Hudson Bay town, a village,  
13 their wage scale had to be on a parity with the Hudson  
14 Bay employees so their workforce would stay stable.

15                   And now, since then -- I worked as a shift  
16 engineer in the early 50s for \$135.00 a month. And I got  
17 married on that. And the Hudson Bay was good enough to  
18 give me a \$200.00 credit. I think I spent most of that  
19 on my wife's wedding gown, you know. Eventually she turned  
20 around and made a lining for my koolutut (phonetic). It  
21 was the only way it could be windproof. It was made of  
22 silk.

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1                   Well, anyway, that's a problem that we  
2 have. And on the same thing, shortly after the war years  
3 -- like, when construction was what we would call a boom  
4 in this area -- us veterans were given a preference to  
5 any jobs that we were capable of doing. And gradually,  
6 as I got a little older, the word "veteran" seemed to fall  
7 out of the preference for jobs. It wasn't if you were  
8 -- not that we were capable of doing it -- it became a  
9 matter of, I guess, whose boots you could lick faster than  
10 the fellow standing behind you in line for the job.

11                   And that's prevailing throughout our  
12 area now. Companies, when I learned the carpenter trade,  
13 were union companies that come up with a lot of respect  
14 for what a man could do during the day. And it's not the  
15 same today. The smaller companies that are not affiliated  
16 with the unions, and they come up here and take every  
17 advantage of very good working people at a very low rate  
18 of pay.

19                   I've been married now for 42 years and  
20 a lot of people said, "Well, if you don't like the area,  
21 why do you stay here?" Well, I've never earned enough  
22 money to pay my fare out to Cochrane -- or possibly I could



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1 start hitch hiking -- and possibly -- well, my children  
2 now, since they've become status Indians, they're off to  
3 school. They're getting all the benefits. They get  
4 medical benefits. I used to get bills from the Department  
5 of Public Health for hundreds of dollars and I'd go in  
6 and say I couldn't pay. And I told them, at one time,  
7 the saying was, "If you could get an ounce of blood out  
8 of a little stone well, you can go ahead and have my blood,  
9 because it happened to turn to stone right now. I can't  
10 pay, and I won't."

11                   And my wife, since she became  
12 reinstated, she has all those benefits that I couldn't  
13 afford as being a nobody -- which I was told I was, in  
14 more uncertain terms than I'd like to use here -- and if  
15 I get excited I'll probably get down to my own basic tongue  
16 and express myself in stronger words.

17                   I've belonged to the Non-status Indian  
18 Association for 20 years and attended different meetings.

19                   And there's no association now, according to what I could  
20 pick up -- too bad I had to learn to read, otherwise I  
21 wouldn't know what's going on -- but nobody tells me  
22 anything and I'm not deaf. Thank God I can hear snide

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1 remarks.

2                   Like, a few years ago they were making  
3 a survey over at Moosonee to see who was entitled to vote  
4 for the new government. And when it come down to my status  
5 and who I was -- was I cut off? -- no, I'm not going to  
6 say anything out of hand, I'm just going to explain what  
7 I told these people who come to find out who I was and  
8 whether I was eligible to vote -- and well, I said, "I'm  
9 not a white man. I'm not a native Indian." "But," I says,  
10 "remember just in the past few months there was a creature  
11 on TV known as E.T., he was an alien from outer space."  
12 "Well," I says, "I claim him as my uncle." They just  
13 got up and left, yes. They couldn't define -- they didn't  
14 have another name for E.T., or didn't have a family name.  
15 So, I said, "You can have mine. You can have More, is  
16 he likes."

17                   I don't think they liked that very much.  
18 It was the first time they met a person from outer space  
19 that wasn't a citizen of Canada.

20                   It's hard to live down, you know, when  
21 you grew up as white status. I grew up in a very small  
22 village away from here and went to school with practically

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1 every nationality you can think of -- except French --  
2 Canadiene, French -- that's the only people that define  
3 themselves as Canadians.

4                   And I was just one of the boys. I was  
5 accepted. They never questioned where I came from. They  
6 just took it for granted that I was here before they were.

7       And I was accepted as such. I was as good or better than  
8 most of them in school anyway, because I could talk better  
9 English. You know, they were always reverting to what  
10 -- where they come from, what my father said, and this  
11 type of thing -- and I never had much to brag about.

12                   But, anyway, in some shape or form I hope  
13 that I can get a little place to settle down and call my  
14 own. I have two lots that I managed to acquire through  
15 DVA over at Moosonee. And according to what I picked up  
16 on my own, my own reading and scrounging, is that unless  
17 you live on the reserve you don't own any property. So,  
18 if I become a status Indian, will the government take those  
19 lots -- those two plots of land from me and send me off  
20 to some reserve? And then I'm not wanted on the reserve.

21       This, I have to apply again, not to a place of my choosing  
22 or where I was born, just to where they would like to put

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1 me.

2 Like, from my mother's family, I would  
3 belong to the New Post Band. They would possibly accept  
4 me there. But, then, my wife and my children belong to  
5 Fort Albany. Would they make provisions for me to have  
6 my family in that one area?

7 Like I told the chief there at the time,  
8 that I would apply for a place on the new reserve and bring  
9 my wife and my seven children and their children to the  
10 reserve. "And then what will you do," he said. I said,  
11 "The first election comes up I'll run for chief because  
12 I'll have at least 30 people voting for me, which will  
13 outvote you people any time."

14 So, since then, they don't want no part  
15 of me. I thought I had it made there for a while. I was  
16 going to be a somebody. So I didn't make it in that route.

17 So now I've more or less, in my old age I have to cool  
18 off and quieten down a bit and just take things as they  
19 come. Like, as they say, roll with the punches.

20 But I'm still -- like my friend said he  
21 was down in Toronto and he was bragging about being an  
22 Indian and the fellow from the next table come over and

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1 said, "Did you really say you were an Indian?" And he  
2 said, "Yes, and I'm proud of it." And he said, "Well,  
3 where are your feathers?" He says, "I didn't say I was  
4 a bird, I said I was an Indian."

5 Well, to get down to what I started to  
6 talk about was, will I ever be able to sit down somewhere  
7 with my family and say, "Yes, I'm the father of all you  
8 children and my grandchildren" -- they call me "Grandpa"  
9 -- and they're all status Indians now with -- what was  
10 the expression? -- well, not a pot to -- well, not a pot  
11 to drink out of, I guess.

12 And will this issue ever be settled on  
13 behalf of people like me? And most of us live over at  
14 Moosonee now. And I've called Moose Factory my home all  
15 of my life and the only plots I take care of now are my  
16 loved ones buried up here behind the old church -- and  
17 possibly some day they'll find a little six-foot square  
18 for me up there. Maybe it wouldn't have to be six foot.

19 I'm only five-foot three, or something like that. Maybe  
20 they'll stand me on end, so I won't take so much space.

21 Another issue I brought up on one of our  
22 annual get togethers at White River, I got up and I spoke

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1 on behalf of widows and children of veterans from this  
2 area that we knew weren't getting the proper assistance.

3                   And it wasn't a person from Veterans  
4 Affairs from our area -- he happened to be from Thunder  
5 Bay -- and he had all kinds of questions. And I had to  
6 keep telling him that the complaints I was making wasn't  
7 mine, I took care of my own complaints. I was speaking  
8 on behalf of the people that couldn't speak up for  
9 themselves -- and we have so many in our communities that  
10 can't get up and explain themselves in any shape or form  
11 -- or they're kind of backward.

12                   And what I've done is, I've picked up  
13 a lot of talk, complaints, I guess would be the better  
14 word, just from family get togethers, or over a bottle  
15 of wine, or whatever. Like, a big issues these days is  
16 alcohol abuse. Well, I can maintain I've never abused  
17 my bottle of alcohol. I took very good care of it. I've  
18 always put it in a safe place that it didn't fall down  
19 and break, or anything. And I always made sure I put it  
20 out of sight of my wife, so she couldn't pour it down the  
21 drain.

22                   Well, that's one type of abuse that is

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1 being bantered around. And the other is child abuse.

2                   Being a grandparent and after raising  
3 eight children of my own -- according to remarks and I  
4 hear very good -- I didn't do a very good job of it.

5                   Now, who defines child abuse, or wife  
6 abuse? I've never abused my wife. She's about 200 pounds  
7 heavier than me and if there was any abuse in my family  
8 I was the butt end of it, yes. Us poor little men, marrying  
9 big women.

10                   But anyway, I hope that my problems can  
11 be cleared up to my satisfaction anyway, and to my family.

12                   We're scattered all over hell's half acre now and they  
13 still maintain that I'm their little devil in the middle  
14 of that half acre.

15                   I thank you.

16                   **CO-CHAIRMAN, GEORGES ERASMUS:** Some of  
17 the things that you were bringing up probably are things  
18 that could be dealt with fairly straightforward.

19                   If your mother was status or treaty at  
20 one time it should be straightforward that you could get  
21 your status back.

22                   As for having many of your family in one

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1 community or in one band, it is just a matter of simply  
2 applying -- getting the community to agree and having  
3 people accepted in the same area. But, if some of your  
4 family have moved on, they may want to be in the community  
5 that they have moved to.

6                   If you want us to assist you, you can  
7 get hold of one of our staff here and we can look into  
8 the particulars of your situation.

9                   We do not take on a lot of these things,  
10 but this one seems straightforward.

11                   The other thing you might do here, we  
12 are being followed by the Department of Indian Affairs  
13 and there will be at least two of their staff -- I think  
14 they are in the room now -- with us in the next couple  
15 of days. You might ask them to also take a look into your  
16 particular situation of getting reinstated.           It  
17 seems a very simply, straightforward issue, but it may  
18 be more complicated than that. Generally, it is a matter  
19 of providing all the necessary information of your  
20 situation to get reinstated.

21                   **SIDNEY DeMORE:** Pardon me.

22                   There's something I forgot to mention,



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1 really. I get carried away when I start talking.

2                   It is, when my mother married my dad she  
3 was living with foster parents and she listed those as  
4 her parents. And when I filed my application I listed  
5 her true father and mother as parents. And they didn't  
6 accept this in Ottawa, even though they knew the  
7 circumstances, which I didn't know. And my mother was  
8 never paid out of treaty. Like my wife, when I married  
9 her, she was automatically white status and my children.

10                   But my mother, until the day she died,  
11 she got her four dollars a year. But we never received  
12 any benefits, like, from my mother's side of the family.

13                   Now, this could've been overlooked, like  
14 some official in Indian Affairs. My mother should have  
15 been white status from the day she married my father.  
16 And the only other thing I forgot to mention, one of my  
17 daughters married a coloured man. And at their wedding  
18 banquet everybody got up and said a word of appreciation  
19 and what not -- we're all friends -- and it got to me and  
20 I thought I'd get up and say something. And I mentioned  
21 the More family in the Moose Factory area was an upstanding  
22 family, very colourful and whatnot. And I said, "No doubt,

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1 since Judy married Bucko, that there will be a lot more  
2 colour added to my family."

3 Thanks.

4 **MARY LOU IAHTAIL:** My name is Mary Lou  
5 Iahtail. I'm teaching in Moosonee Public School. And  
6 I'm a status Indian. And I'm originally from  
7 Attawapiskat, west coast of James Bay.

8 What I would like to talk about is  
9 education. And "education" is a broad term, it is a very  
10 broad term for everyone. And yet, the most important part  
11 of our lives is education, depending how we look at it.

12 When I was brought up, education was very  
13 important to my family. Education was, in their way, the  
14 way they saw it and the way they understood (microphone  
15 cutting out). They were very responsible people. They  
16 taught us at the very, early age to respect, to accept  
17 and share, to be responsible people, to be strong and  
18 determined people. They were preparing us for that in  
19 the future.

20 It was also very strong people in their  
21 way of believing. They spiritual values were very much  
22 a part of their lives. And they were very hard working

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1 people. They did everything for themselves. There was  
2 no such thing as welfare in those days when my parents  
3 brought me up. They had to do everything within their  
4 own power.

5                   They were trapping, and my mother was  
6 a good (microphone cutting out) She used to sew our own  
7 clothes out of animal skins. And my father was a good  
8 trapper and so was my mother. What they made out of their  
9 trap, their furs for sale, that's how we got our clothing.

10                   In our community when we came to the  
11 community of Attawapiskat, everybody was responsible for  
12 everyone. They were always sharing things. They were  
13 sharing their geese, their moose. Everything was done  
14 as a community.

15                   There was a lot of leadership in our  
16 community around 1950s, to about 1968 -- or at least '70s.  
17 The native people were taking over responsibilities to  
18 answer their problems that they had in the community.  
19 There was no one going outside to get people from Toronto  
20 to come and answer our problems.

21                   They had their own tools of answering  
22 their own problems. They had a very strong mental health,

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1 because they were always sharing, always helping one  
2 another.

3                   Early in 1960s things start to change.  
4 Indian Affairs was always telling us what to do. So,  
5 more and more young people, as they become leaders as chief  
6 and council, our ways of leading was different, because  
7 we had picked up our way of thinking the way we should  
8 lead our people.

9                   And then elders came and talked to us,  
10 saying that do not forget your elders, do not forget us,  
11 we're still here for you. And that's how they got back  
12 to us to be on the right track. (native language), which  
13 is education, it means "model." The model, how to journey  
14 the path that was prepared for you. That is what (native  
15 language) means in Cree. It's a path that's prepared for  
16 you to journey, a direction for you. That's what (native  
17 language) means in Cree.

18                   And when we were sent to residential  
19 school in 1954 the language of instruction where I went  
20 to school in Fort Albany Residential School, was Cree.  
21 Everything was Cree. I had to learn how to read and write  
22 my own language. For two years I had to learn how to read

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1 and write my language.

2                   The third year I was gradually  
3 introduced to an English language, which I learned a little  
4 bit, and then I went to the Quebec side to learn French.  
5    When I got to Ottawa, when to grade six and grade seven,  
6 I was sent from Attawapiskat to Ottawa.

7                   I had never seen a train before in my  
8 life when I got to Moosonee. And when I got to Ottawa  
9 was even scarier, because I have never, never seen so many  
10 cars, so many tall buildings in all my life. There was  
11 no such thing as a telephone, 'cause there were no  
12 telephones in Attawapiskat. We only got airplane about,  
13 maybe, three times a year to our community. That's how  
14 it's been changed. And it's not too long ago that I'm  
15 talking about. This was in the '60s.

16                   Now education is very different. Now  
17 education is a must for each child to learn English language  
18 in order to master life in the world. They must have that  
19 English language. It's almost like a mandatory -- it is  
20 a mandatory from the Ministry of Education that each Indian  
21 child has to learn English.

22                   But it is too bad -- I find it's very

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1 unfortunate to prepare our children to learn their language  
2 which is so important for native people to keep, because  
3 it was given to us by our Creator when he made us. It  
4 was given to us for a purpose, to be proud of who we are,  
5 where we came from, and to have it as an identity.

6                   People say, leaders say, teachers say,  
7 that we are very hard people, we don't know how to behave,  
8 we don't know how to discipline. It's only because --  
9 I think a lot to do because we don't know who we are.  
10 And we have no pride. What are we going to be proud of  
11 if we don't know who we are? Once we accept ourselves  
12 as responsible people, as individuals, as important as  
13 we are for any other nationality, I think we are going  
14 to change. It's only then that we'll be able to be very  
15 proud of who we are and do things for ourselves.

16                   An education also has to come from the  
17 parents. They've got to speak loud and tell us what they  
18 want in the education system. We can no longer be afraid  
19 to stand up and say, "This is what we want in the education  
20 of our children." As native people we must let the  
21 educators know what we want.

22                   In the governments, provincial,

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1 federal, municipal, everyone, I think we should let them  
2 (know) what we want and what's good for us in the education.  
3 This is a real issue, especially in the area of James  
4 Bay. You know that we are losing our language. Fort  
5 Albany, Attawapiskat, Kash and Peawanuck still speak a  
6 lot of their language.

7                   The little children still speak their  
8 language and they still have the same problem as we have  
9 around here, because they're starting their day care,  
10 nursery school, kindergarten, the language of instruction  
11 is still English.

12                   As an educator myself, if I had the power  
13 to change things, I think I would start a Cree immersion  
14 program in our school, just like the way French immersion  
15 program is done. I think it will be really a gift to our  
16 children if we did this.

17                   Another thing, too, if we wait for years  
18 and years for native people to qualify for so many degrees  
19 that is required for us to do things, in order to be the  
20 same level as the qualified teachers who come to work for  
21 us -- or qualified people who come to work for us -- in  
22 the meantime we are always losing, we are always losing

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1 our language and culture. We are constantly being  
2 assimilated into something.

3                   It would be good if we were given at least  
4 to be integrated -- that's not such a bad term. I think  
5 what would be very good for native people is to use some  
6 of the buildings that we have in James Bay area and put  
7 some native studies, native language studies in all  
8 schools, in the college, in the high school. Like, the  
9 colleges that we have in Moosonee, the Norton College,  
10 I see no native language taught there. And yet, we are  
11 preparing for nurses to come out and serve their native  
12 people anywhere in the north? Social workers are coming  
13 out from Norton College. There's no native language  
14 taught for them. It should be included, native studies  
15 and native language I feel should be included in James  
16 Bay area, if we want to save our culture.

17                   Everybody knows that we have our own  
18 philosophy in life, native philosophy, native psychology,  
19 and all those should be included and implemented, in order  
20 for us to be well balanced, like the way we were taught,  
21 respecting, accepting and sharing. Balance is very  
22 important, and also responsibility, responsible people,



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1 self-determined people, and all those should be included  
2 and always strive for the future to prepare our young people  
3 today, our young parents today so that they will mould  
4 their children like the way our elders used to mould us.

5                   Now it is our responsibility to promote  
6 those things.

7                   I have no written speech. Everything  
8 that I said I have been carrying in my heart, because I  
9 have seen it, I have experienced it.

10                   I am a single mother. I have brought  
11 my child all by myself, without any assistance from my  
12 band. I'm putting through my own child at the university  
13 by myself. I tried and tried very hard to get help from  
14 my band, Indian Affairs and other people. All the doors  
15 were closed for me to get help.

16                   But, I'm a strong woman, I don't give  
17 up hope that easily. If I did, I would have never made  
18 it where I am. And I still going to go on and I'll never  
19 keep quiet, because I think speaking out is very important,  
20 and that's what makes me strong.

21                   And I am really, really -- I really  
22 believe I have something to offer, because I have been

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1 educated in the non-native society. I've also been  
2 educated by native people and my parents educated me and  
3 prepared me very well to be strong, no matter how hard  
4 life is.

5                                   And I believe that we should not be  
6 divided. We should strive for unity together. And all  
7 those people who are (microphone cutting out) our children,  
8 who believe what I say, get on the (native language) all  
9 those people who want to work together.

10                                   (native language) We will all be one  
11 and all walking towards that journey that was prepared  
12 and that's given us that responsibility to prepare our  
13 people to reach that goal, that journey.

14                                   (native language)

15                                   Thank you.

16                                   **PAT CHILTON:** Is there anybody else to  
17 speak?

18                                   Peter?

19                                   **PETER NAKOGEE (through interpreter):**

20                                   (no interpretation at beginning)

21                                   My understanding with this meeting and  
22 hearings with this Royal Commission is to inform the people

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1 and, as well, inform the Commissioner here of our concerns  
2 and problems.

3 I understand that this Commission that  
4 it's very essential for a collective expression from the  
5 community of all their problems and it is important that  
6 we collectively tell the Commission of all our concerns  
7 and issues and problems and so that they can be informed  
8 of all these issues, to document this information so that  
9 it will be entrenched and used within the constitution  
10 reforms that are taking place and at those levels, and  
11 we express our wishes and aspirations so that all this  
12 information can be documented within that level, all our  
13 problems and issues within the educational matters, social  
14 services and, as well, all those other programs and to  
15 know the historical context of our introduction with the  
16 non-native structures and institutions and all the things  
17 that we've gone through as people within our education  
18 to read and write.

19 And I understand that the Commission is  
20 here to listen and for us to inform them of all the matters,  
21 that there is a lot of structures -- there is a lot of  
22 maps within this country, the many diverse mappings and

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1 information that are contained in those maps.

2 But, there is a problem that there is  
3 not only one, but many of these maps, how we can set our  
4 own directions. For instance, in regards to the concerns  
5 of the Quebec people, their directions that they want to  
6 take, it's like a map. And also those other peoples, that  
7 they have their own regional diversities and we, as a  
8 people, we have our map where we can set our own directions,  
9 we can set our own lives.

10 And, within that mapping we are required  
11 to express our concerns, our problems and all those other  
12 matters that were developed when we worked with these  
13 people, for instance, our treaty monies. And they have  
14 -- and within their own custodial duties and I believe  
15 me -- my perspective is that this is a whole mapping of  
16 all these areas.

17 Then there is the question of  
18 relationship. This is a very essential -- it's an  
19 essential topic that we should be discussing, the  
20 relationship, and also communications, that we -- so that  
21 it be clearly defined within the constitution what our  
22 wishes are and all the responsibilities that we require

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1 from the Government of Canada and also the leadership that  
2 will be provided to us within this country of Canada.

3 All our problems, all our experiences  
4 should stem from that and to resolve those problems that  
5 we have, so that there will be no problems, future problems.

6 And I just wanted to express that we  
7 collectively work within these directions and to help and  
8 utilize this Commission that is before us today -- this  
9 evening -- and all those other people that -- our own  
10 peoples, our own race, how we can provide the direction  
11 within the country of Canada and how they can resolve and  
12 also go hand in hand with other relations of this country  
13 of different nations.

14 I think this is my understanding of this  
15 Commission and we -- we've seen many programs that were  
16 introduced within our own communities. For instance,  
17 within the housing program that Indian Affairs was  
18 responsible for in the past, and also the off reserve  
19 housing that was provided to those people outside the  
20 perimeters of the reservations. There is no such program  
21 no more for those people that they can utilize outside  
22 the reservations that was provided by the Department of

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1 Indian Affairs before, when they were responsible for that  
2 program.

3                   And I believe since downsizing Indian  
4 Affairs that type of program and funding is no longer  
5 available -- and that resource -- since that resource is  
6 no longer there, that creates a lot of problems with the  
7 urban native populations.

8                   And, if we can see -- if we see the  
9 conditions of the urban native population with the living  
10 conditions, that illustrates these problems. And some  
11 of these resources and some of these programs are not  
12 available for some native people, for those off-reserve  
13 people.

14                   And I hope that we begin looking at these  
15 problems to resolve these issues, so those people that  
16 are off reserves can be provided that type of programs  
17 so they can -- better living conditions, to be accommodated  
18 that service.

19                   I think sometimes the housing conditions  
20 is that -- but it looks good on the outside, but once there  
21 is some kind of problems with them, maybe some things that  
22 could be cleaned up within housing -- I think -- we don't

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1 see these things. However, because although there is  
2 funding available, that funding is not available, that  
3 resource is not available to those people off reserve.

4                   There is a lot employment that doesn't  
5 provide the assistance to the people -- the native -- and  
6 also assistance or support to the high school students,  
7 that there is lack of this type and sometimes they're told  
8 that they are not qualified for this -- to qualify for  
9 those funds.

10                   And also, water and sewage -- there is  
11 no water sewage because they don't have the resources  
12 because their only dependency is on welfare programs and  
13 the lack of employment within the reserves and also such  
14 as the hospital services, there is not enough human  
15 resources to be provided that type of service.

16                   And I think the problem is that when  
17 there is a group of people -- when there is a certain  
18 mentality or attitude within these communities, that the  
19 non-native aspect of it is much more -- much more better  
20 for -- or benefit for -- and that is the problem also within  
21 the communities.

22                   I think there is 85 per cent within the

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1 community of Moosonee and I think there is only two or  
2 three people within the board -- Albany -- for the Albany  
3 representation -- for the hospital and also for the  
4 representations for Attawapiskat, the clinic in Moosonee  
5 and maybe, perhaps, maybe two or three people are  
6 represented in that board. And I think there would have  
7 been more members within that representation so that their  
8 concerns and problems can be addressed in regards to the  
9 James Bay General Hospital.

10                   And I think, although they may have  
11 addressed some of these issues, but they don't have the  
12 authority or representation, since there's only a few of  
13 them within the board.

14                   And I think there was an alternative that  
15 was set up that we can document some of these issues.  
16 But, however, that hasn't been much benefit to that  
17 direction.

18                   I think the non-native -- there is a sort  
19 of suspicion that occurs from the non-native community  
20 that they go on with a sort of a hidden agenda to some  
21 of these programs for their own benefit. And there is  
22 a lot of programs that are lacking, for instance, housing



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1 service -- hospital -- there is no ambulance in Albany.  
2 There is no ambulance at Attawapiskat, Kashechewan  
3 communities. This is a very important and essential  
4 service that could be had, but -- however, there is some  
5 fire safety programs that are available, but there is  
6 certainly a lack of funding that is provided for -- to  
7 service these programs, or to maintain these programs,  
8 which are essential programs and services for these  
9 communities.

10                   Once there is a fire that breaks out on  
11 a house there is no protection. There is no fire control,  
12 no fire -- when the fire breaks out in one of these houses,  
13 I think sometimes they're just tragedy that happens and  
14 a young child is lost and also, too, an elder.

15                   And I think there is a responsibility  
16 upon the federal government that, once the agreements were  
17 made, I think that those agreements have to be upheld.  
18 Our elders and our leaders say -- the chiefs and council  
19 -- that there is no enough funding or resources that could  
20 benefit these programs and services -- the hospital  
21 services, fire and safety equipment for native people to  
22 take advantage of these services or emergency response

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1 action programs that could be service in these communities,  
2 and also those other services that the federal government  
3 provides to these communities.

4                   And these sort of services that are  
5 available to the communities, there is no added programs  
6 like protection services and security measures for these  
7 -- although they are in the community. But there are very  
8 limited resources that could benefit these already  
9 available programs in the communities and it is essential  
10 that these types of programs, emergency response programs,  
11 can be available in these communities and that they can  
12 be available in all our communities so those people that  
13 -- and also that there be a better service to these people  
14 and these communities.

15                   And I just want to express my -- I think  
16 our collective relationship with these -- our families  
17 -- what I consider families -- the Royal Commission and  
18 the participants on this Commission, that we provide this  
19 type of information for them and to recognize and consider  
20 that we have a variety of nations and different cultures.

21                   And I think that has to be understood and recognized in  
22 the mandate of this Royal Commission and also recognized

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1 within the -- within the many government levels -- and  
2 that we better be serviced with an improved service for  
3 our communities, for our own people, and also for our lands  
4 and that we be responsible for setting up directions and  
5 setting plans to how we can protect our interest in regards  
6 to our own matters in the first -- and I think it's important  
7 that this Royal Commission, the mandate that was given  
8 to this Royal Commission is very important in how that  
9 direction can be realized within Canada, which type of  
10 map can we set our directions on, how we can communicate  
11 among each other and the many levels that we can work on,  
12 who is responsible -- the responsibilities in regards to  
13 self-government, the types, resource and funding that will  
14 be available, how we can delete or resolve those problems  
15 within the Treaty and within the Indian Act structures.

16 I think we may have to totally delete  
17 the Indian Act. There should be a First Nation Act that  
18 is developed from the First Nations, from their own  
19 thinking, from their own mentality, how they can bring  
20 their lives and guide their lives within that structure,  
21 how they can protect their lives and also for the betterment  
22 of other nations that come here, how we can better realize

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1 the services that we collectively use all these programs,  
2 and to follow the advice of our elders that use the  
3 collective rule to sign the treaties and the recognition  
4 that they had with these Commissioners of those treaties.

5                   And we should -- our relationship should  
6 be that we have a First Nations government. If they speak  
7 to us, it should be on a government-to-government level.

8 Just ask any of the governments, if they addressed  
9 themselves, they are government-to-government  
10 relationship.

11                   And if the federal government speaks to  
12 the native people then it should be a  
13 government-to-government relationship, or any other  
14 governments that wants to speak to each other and  
15 communicate, then that's the reason why Treaty Number 9  
16 was signed that there was recognition on a  
17 government-to-government relationship. And this was  
18 bestowed by the Great Spirit and all the creatures, the  
19 birds, and all the citizens of Canada and that's the way  
20 we should be looking at our relationships as such, that  
21 we should always look at each other as citizens, as people  
22 that are living with each other. And that type

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1 relationship should be -- should be there. We should never  
2 -- shouldn't really look at us as strangers.

3 And I think that's the -- I am just  
4 concluding my remarks. I will be here tomorrow to express  
5 the concerns and also to represent people from the other  
6 communities.

7 Thank you.

8 **PAT CHILTON:** I don't think there is  
9 anybody else who wants to speak.

10 We will carry on tomorrow morning  
11 starting at 9:00 o'clock sharp. I told Gilbert -- he wants  
12 to speak -- so I told him to come in at 6:30, we're starting  
13 very early in the morning.

14 Thank you very much for coming. We  
15 really appreciate it. We will see you tomorrow morning  
16 at 9:00 o'clock.

17 That you for coming, Sid.

18

19 --- Whereupon the Commission adjourned at 10:21 p.m., to  
20 resume on Tuesday, June 9th, 1992 at 9:00 o'clock at the  
21 Thomas Cheechoo Memorial Centre.