

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

LOCATION/ENDROIT: PRINCE GEORGE
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"for the record..."

STENOTRAN

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1 **Prince George, British Columbia**

2 --- Upon commencing on Monday, May 31, 1993 at 1:00 p.m.

3 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** My name is Leo
4 Hebert. I'm with the Prince George Native Friendship
5 Centre. I am going to be your moderator for today. As
6 a tradition within all of our Aboriginal gatherings prior
7 to any discussion we usually begin with an opening prayer
8 and this afternoon we have with us a respective Elder from
9 the Lheit-Li'ten Nation, Margaret Gagnon. I would like
10 to call upon her to open our activities this afternoon
11 with a prayer, please.

12 Margaret.

13 Please stand.

14 **ELDER MARGARET GAGNON:** Thank you,
15 ladies and gentlemen and young people.

16 ---Opening Prayer

17 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** Thank you, Margaret.

18 With us today we have the Co-Chair of the Royal
19 Commission on Aboriginal People, Mr. Georges Erasmus,
20 seated at my right here. Mr. Erasmus is the former
21 National Chief of the National Assembly of First Nations
22 and he served in that position from 1985 to 1991.

23 He was born August 8th, 1948 in Fort Rae, Northwest
24 Territories. In the early 1970's he served as field worker
25 and the Regional Staff Director for the Company of Young
26 Canadians, President of the Dene Nation, at which time

1 he successfully led efforts to stop the MacKenzie Valley
2 Pipeline.

3 And in 1983 he became the founding president of
4 the Dene'da Development Corporation. He serves as a board
5 member for many organizations and foundations across
6 Canada and he is dedicated to the advancement of human
7 rights and ecological concerns such as Energy Probe
8 Research Foundation, World Wildlife Fund of Canada, and
9 Operation Dismantle and others.

10 In 1985 he went to England on behalf of all
11 indigenous Survival International and succeeded in
12 convincing Greenpeace to drop an anti-fur campaign. He
13 visited the Soviet Union in 1986 to study economic
14 conditions of the indigenous people living in Siberia.
15 He is also a co-author of the book Drumbeat, Anger and
16 Renewal in Indian Country, and in 1989 he received an
17 Honourary Doctor of Law Degree from the Queen's University
18 at Kingston, Ontario and he was also appointed to the Order
19 of Canada in 1987.

20 Joining us in a few minutes as well too is the
21 other Commissioner for this round, is Viola Robinson and
22 once she gets here I will introduce her.

23 Before we get started I am going to ask all
24 presenters who are present, I am going to lay some of the
25 ground rules briefly in terms of how we will be proceeding.

26 First of all I would ask you to provide a copy

1 of your presentation to a young lady by the name of Tammy
2 Saulis who will be arriving a little bit shortly too as
3 well, so that she can make copies and prior to your
4 presentation so that the Commissioners and others involved
5 in recording will have a copy of your presentation.

6 When you come to the mike you will be sitting up
7 here at this table. When you come to the mike, speak
8 clearly, slowly, mention your name, state your name and
9 which organization that you are representing, and also
10 the topic that you are going to be discussing. There will
11 be questions and answers after your presentation and then
12 we will be moving on to the next one.

13 So, with that I would ask Mr. Erasmus to introduce
14 himself a little bit more and begin the proceedings.

15 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Good afternoon and
16 thank you for coming out for the hearings of the Royal
17 Commission in Prince George.

18 We are now travelling in three (3) teams of people,
19 so we only have part of the Commission here. We are
20 simultaneously holding hearings in three (3) parts of the
21 country at the same time. That allows us to cover more
22 territory, more ground, and to hear from more people.

23 We are in the midst of our third round of hearings.

24 We began the hearings well over a year ago and we held
25 them through last spring and early summer, ended at the
26 end of June, and then resumed them in the fall for a number

1 of months, and then now have been involved in hearings
2 I guess for most of the month, if not more.

3 The reason we are holding hearings is to allow
4 for the Canadian public and Aboriginal people in Canada
5 to participate in the process that the Royal Commission
6 has created. We have a very, very large mandate. The
7 mandate covers virtually every major subject that is
8 important to Aboriginal people, everything from political
9 issues, economic issues, culture, language. So it covers
10 things like self-government, the Canadian constitution,
11 women's perspectives, Elder's perspectives, youth issues,
12 things like the future of Indian Affairs, the Indian Act,
13 urban Aboriginal issues, land claims, treaties, Metis
14 issues, justice, culture, health, education, on and on.

15 And in that whole list of things we believe that
16 it covers every major subject that would be important to
17 Aboriginal people, so the hearings have been an open
18 process. We want to hear from both organizations and from
19 individuals. One thing we have been encouraging people
20 from the start is to give us their best ideas on how to
21 resolve the issues because the Commission is not just
22 trying to list out all the problems that Aboriginal people
23 have. In fact the very reason for the Royal Commission
24 is to find with people in Canada long-term solutions, to
25 land issues, to governance issues, to the social problems.

26 So we encourage you to provide us your ideas in relation

1 to how things should be done in the future.

2 We have developed booklets from the other
3 hearings. They include the ideas that we have heard in
4 the past. We have tried to build on what we heard in the
5 earlier hearings. We heard four (4) major themes, we
6 think, in the first two (2) rounds. We heard a lot of
7 things, obviously. In both rounds we had something like
8 10,000 pages of hearings from both the first and the second
9 round; that's not including what we heard from the -- if
10 we were to read all of the booklets and submissions and
11 the written submissions that people provided to us.

12 The four (4) major themes seem to be, one (1),
13 self-determination. Aboriginal people want a larger
14 degree of control over their lives and they cite many
15 reasons why that's the case: for a better future in Canada
16 they have to govern themselves. In addition, we have heard
17 from Aboriginal people that they want to be
18 self-sufficient. In their own homeland they argue very
19 strongly from one end of the country to the other that
20 there needs to be enough land, enough resources, that they
21 can be self-sufficient.

22 There is a cry for an improved relationship with
23 Canada and an improved relationship with the state and
24 with governments, that in the past there have been many
25 bad policies like residential schools and so forth, the
26 lack of implementation of treaties, many, many issues in

1 the past that prove to be a less than healthy relationship
2 and so there is a strong advocacy that there needs to be
3 a much greater communication, better communication, and
4 the overall relationship should be largely improved.

5 The fourth big category is from the pain, from
6 the experience of the colonial past there seems to be a
7 tremendous amount of sorrow and scars, whether it is real
8 or social or psychological, that needs to be repaired.
9 We have been told over and over the effects on culture,
10 language, identity of Aboriginal people and how there is
11 now a lot of abuse; there is abuse of children, family
12 members, sexual abuse. A lot of people tell us it started
13 with residential schools and there needs to be a tremendous
14 healing process to deal with alcoholism, addictions to
15 substance abuse and many other types of symptoms that we
16 see in the communities, including the taking of lives by
17 young people -- their own lives primarily that we have
18 heard over and over about.

19 So those are the four (4) big issues that we have
20 heard about. We want to know if that is in fact what people
21 have been telling us. So we want to verify that from these
22 types of hearings. We also laid out some of the ways
23 in which we could possibly overcome those issues and how
24 to achieve some of the goals that have been outlined, like
25 self-sufficiency and self-government and also models to
26 do healing with.

1 We hope that our process will conclude at the end
2 of next year. With all of the information we are getting
3 from the hearings plus research we are doing with
4 communities and research that Aboriginal organizations
5 are doing, plus non-Aboriginal organizations, we hope to
6 put together all of the different streams of information
7 that are at work to provide us with the final
8 recommendations that will be coming forth. Prior to our
9 final report we hope to have some interim reports which
10 we are now working on and will be coming out later this
11 year.

12 So, with that, we will begin our hearings here.
13 Again, this is an open process. We appreciate the people
14 coming out. We thank in advance those people that will
15 be presenting to us. We try to make this process as
16 friendly as possible and we encourage people to present
17 their information in the way that is most comfortable to
18 them.

19 Thank you.

20 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** Thank you, Georges.

21 With us today to begin our presentations we have
22 Mayor John Backhouse of the City of Prince George. And
23 he is going to have some welcoming remarks from the City
24 of Prince George, as well as do a presentation on the
25 Aboriginal partnerships and relationships.

26 So, Mr. Backhouse, could I ask you to come up to

1 the table, please?

2 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** Thank you, Mr.
3 Commissioner. Welcome to the City of Prince George. It
4 really is a pleasure to have you visit our community, to
5 allow people to participate in this very important process.

6 And I found the reading material -- the voluminous
7 reading material that is being produced by the Commission
8 to date to be particularly interesting and I think that
9 out of this process good will come because it is very
10 apparent from the material that is being presented that
11 there is a great deal of interest by both the Aboriginal
12 and the non-Aboriginal communities in finding solutions.

13 And I think that that is what the process is about and
14 certainly in the City of Prince George we are attempting,
15 through processes which I will describe, to find some of
16 the solutions that we so desperately need.

17 So, again, welcome to the city, and I know you
18 are going to have an interesting couple of days and those
19 brief remarks I will describe to you some of our
20 experiences.

21 The strength of any community is dependent upon
22 the ability of a variety of groups to work together to
23 achieve commonly agreed upon objectives. And that is a
24 very easy statement to make but much more difficult to
25 put into practice. In Prince George Aboriginal
26 organizations are actively involved in a number of projects

1 along with the city.

2 The physical environment is important to our
3 general well-being, to our health and our safety. The
4 Native Friendship Centre in Prince George is a major
5 property owner in the downtown. The management of the
6 centre has been pro-active in improving and maintaining
7 its own property, which not only increases visibility and
8 esteem but sets standards for other owners to follow.

9 The Native Friendship Centre has also worked
10 closely with the city's development services department
11 to ensure that development proposals are compatible with
12 existing city plans and future city objectives. Such
13 relationships increase the opportunity for developing
14 creative partnerships which will be of benefit to the
15 community as a whole.

16 That may seem like a very simple situation, but
17 I think that over the years the Native Friendship Centre
18 has become a true physical presence in the City of Prince
19 George. That affects not only those who use the numerous
20 services that it provides, but there is an image for the
21 non-Aboriginal community and there is an image for the
22 visitor. And the image is one of an organization that
23 truly belongs, that truly cares, is part of the community.

24 And I certainly think that the work that is being
25 done and the future of that organization is going to be
26 integral to the development of our downtown. While a great

1 deal of attention is focused on the improvement of our
2 downtown physical appearance the needs of those who live,
3 work, operate businesses, et cetera, must not be ignored.

4 As a result of the work of the City Community Social
5 Development Board a downtown community organization has
6 been formed to address the concerns of the downtown
7 inhabitants.

8 Key players in this initiative are the Native
9 Friendship Centre, again, and the Carrier Sekani Tribal
10 Council. This organization will be paying attention to
11 social problems and alcohol-related issues in the downtown
12 through the work of two (2) subcommittees. Out of this
13 project I believe we will experience a new level of bonding
14 between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sectors of our
15 city as we collectively tackle problems which impede the
16 development of the community.

17 Mr. Erasmus, you mentioned many of the social
18 problems which are the root of so many issues right across
19 the country and Prince George is no different from anywhere
20 else. And we have attempted through this process and will
21 be continuing through this process to work and the issues
22 are not isolated to our Aboriginal community. They are
23 issues which affect everybody. And I think that through
24 this process of working together to try to find some of
25 those solutions there will be an increasing awareness
26 amongst the community as a whole that we can in fact find

1 some of the solutions to our problems. And through the
2 process we get to know one another that much better.

3 As a community we are constantly looking for
4 opportunities which will create employment or will add
5 a facility which will attract tourists. The Lheit-Li'ten
6 Nation Native Heritage Society has developed such a
7 project. As part of a mission to preserve and enhance
8 public awareness of the contribution of the Native peoples
9 to our community a proposal for a Native Carrier Village
10 has been developed. The city and the society are currently
11 working on this project which hopefully will produce a
12 facility of which everyone can be proud and which will
13 have significant cultural, educational and entertainment
14 value.

15 Again, we have the initiative being taken by the
16 society, the cooperation and assistance of the city,
17 support from both provincial and federal governments for
18 this particular project. It is an exciting project. It
19 could well be an interpretation centre which would truly
20 enhance the tremendous cultural richness of this area and
21 one where, again, the city would be a benefactor and the
22 residents and the visitors to our community would certainly
23 benefit.

24 I am being brief in my outlines because I wanted
25 to specifically deal with the issues where we are currently
26 active. But I really do believe that involvement with

1 our Aboriginal community will also allow us to support
2 their efforts in improving conditions in terms of
3 educational opportunities, in terms of health services
4 and facilities and in terms of housing, and housing is
5 one where the cities in British Columbia may be getting
6 involved to a greater extent than they have done in the
7 past. And, again, through the organizations I have
8 mentioned I see an opportunity for us to be working together
9 to produce some solutions.

10 These partnerships are a result of the initiative
11 and the will of community leaders who see the needs and
12 see the opportunities. Chief Justa Monk of the Carrier
13 Sekani Tribal Council, Chief Peter Quaw of the Lheit-Li'ten
14 Nation and Dan George of the Native Friendship Centre are
15 such leaders. The vision and the will is present in our
16 community and I look forward to many joint ventures in
17 the coming years.

18 And if the City of Prince George, Mr.
19 Commissioner, can be of any assistance to the work of your
20 Commission in the future years as you go through this
21 process, I offer that assistance now and will be very
22 pleased to work with you.

23 And I thank you for the opportunity to speak
24 briefly to you today.

25 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Thank you.

26 Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?

1 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** Not at all.

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** One of the major
3 issues that Aboriginal people are faced with, like of
4 course many other people living in Canada, is employment.

5 Is there anything that you can think of that could assist
6 in the movement to as close to full employment amongst
7 Aboriginal people as possible?

8 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** Well, I see two (2)
9 opportunities. One of those that I mentioned were a
10 specific project an interpretation centre could be
11 developed, and that would certainly create employment;
12 fairly small numbers.

13 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm.

14 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** I think in the educational
15 system, though, there has got to be opportunities for the
16 preservation of languages and the enhancement of awareness
17 of the languages and the culture in university education,
18 post-secondary education. I think there are
19 opportunities -- and I can't speak for the University of
20 Northern British Columbia but that certainly has been one
21 of the thrusts in the development of that concept, that
22 the First Nations history and culture will be a part of
23 every program. And I think that that is very important.

24 I would hope that the long-term result of that kind of
25 initiative -- and unfortunately it is long-term -- would
26 be increasing employment among the Aboriginal people.

1 Short-term, though, I am a very strong believer
2 in education being the path to employment and I think that
3 we have got to collectively make greater efforts to ensure
4 the members of the community get access to education.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm. Okay.

6 Is there any programs that the city has considered
7 in the way of actually hiring Aboriginal people? Do you
8 have an affirmative action program? Do you go out and
9 try and hire Aboriginal people within the city work force?

10 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** The city does not actively
11 try and necessarily hire Aboriginal people. But there
12 is absolutely nothing to stop Aboriginal people from being
13 hired by the city.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What percentage of
15 your staff do you think are Aboriginal? Do you have any
16 idea?

17 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** I think that question may
18 be -- it's not quite zero (0) but it's very, very low.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Yes.

20 Why would you think that is the case? Is it simply
21 that they are not interested, they don't try, or ---

22 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** I would really have to go
23 back and find out what kind of applications have been made,
24 what abilities are there in people who are applying for
25 jobs. But certainly I have every assurance and every
26 confidence that in terms of people getting jobs and not

1 getting jobs, it's based upon qualifications. We have
2 many ethnic origins included in the city work force.

3 It is a point, though, that I am going to follow
4 through on and find out.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Have you ever had an
6 Aboriginal person on council? Do you know?

7 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** No, we haven't. I don't
8 believe that we've had anybody even run for council.

9 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Yes. Okay.
10 Is there anything else you want to add?

11 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** No, I think that's all I
12 wanted to express to you -- the relationships we have,
13 the partnerships we have -- and certainly hope we will
14 have continued good relationships and improved environment
15 for Aboriginal people on the city work force.

16 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Thank you for your
17 welcome and the information you have provided.

18 **MAYOR JOHN BACKHOUSE:** Thank you very much.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Thank you.

20 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** Thank you, Mr. Backhouse.

21 The next speaker or the next group on our agenda
22 is we have a Mr. Vern Solonas from the McLeod Lake Indian
23 Band.

24 Vern, would you like to come up to the table and
25 do your presentation for us, please?

26 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Please proceed

1 whenever you are ready.

2 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** First of all I would just like
3 to thank the Royal Commission for allowing us to speak
4 today. The other thing is I guess I should thank lately
5 people for allowing us into their territory.

6 I guess I feel kind of awkward sitting like this,
7 the audience is behind me, really, because ---

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Do you prefer to sit
9 over here or either side? Please take a chair where you
10 feel more comfortable.

11 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** And I guess what I have to say
12 really is for the benefit of all. It's not just for the
13 Commissioners or to sit on a piece of appear somewhere.

14 I think it's for ---

15 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Seriously, would you
16 prefer to move? Do you want to face the people? There
17 are lots of mikes.

18 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** And maybe Kevin will learn
19 something from this today. Sorry, Kevin.

20 I am not a Christian but the Christian's will tell
21 you that God holds you accountable for everything you know,
22 for what you do know. About a year ago I was in grad school
23 in Vancouver, studying history at UBC, when the LA riots
24 broke out.

25 And I remember I had to sit down with my professor
26 and seriously examine what I was doing there in Vancouver.

1 A number of things were happening in my life at that time.
2 I had set myself and one other grad student to do some
3 historical research work with a number of Native groups
4 throughout B.C. and at that time it seemed like a promising
5 career. I seemed to be going on the right track, that
6 I was going to set up my own consulting firm and I was
7 going to do business and I was going to earn some serious
8 cash there and pay the bills. At that time I was
9 entertaining an option to buy a house either in Vancouver
10 or in Prince George.

11 And fortunately, in an unfortunate kind of way,
12 it did happen and that made me stop and look and take a
13 look, take stock of where I was going and what I was doing.

14 And I guess in a way that was when I sat down with my
15 professor and I says "I can't do this any more. I really
16 seriously can't do this any more. This is not what I should
17 be doing."

18 And I told him that I was quitting, that I had
19 had enough of it: mainstream society of Vancouver. And
20 also I told him I had to take care of some personal business.

21 So, he said "Okay, well, we'll always be here," you know.

22 At that time I also was studying with a guy by
23 the name of Bill French. Bill come out of Houston, Texas
24 and he was teaching Mexican history. And as a grad
25 professor he was trying teach me what -- I was interested
26 in the evolution of ideas in Mexico: what types of ideas

1 influenced Mexican society at that time, particularly
2 government policy. And he indicated that, well,
3 government policy comes from -- at that time, around the
4 turn of the century -- their intellectuals who were
5 studying in Europe.

6 And of course everyone at one time studied with
7 Marx or studied Marxist ideas and the interesting thing
8 I think if anything I got out of grad school was that Marx
9 studied with Engel and I wasn't sure -- I was surprised
10 that Engel's teachings on society and the philosophy of
11 man was that this is how society should be, so a very strong
12 Christian went with very clear morals. Society was part
13 of God, man was part of God, nature was -- man was part
14 of nature and part of God. You can't separate anything
15 out and that's what Engel was teaching.

16 And so Marx comes along and studies with Engel
17 and he says "That's wonderful, that's great, but we
18 shouldn't be teaching our students what society should
19 be like, how it should be. Rather we should be teaching
20 them how it is, really how it is."

21 And I guess to me that was the other reason I left
22 grad school, was because there was so much emphasis on
23 what you know the ideas of Marx and how society should
24 be. And I guess the end product of my presentation today
25 would be how society -- I think we really, for a couple
26 of hundred years, really have been misled, that we should

1 have been asking ourselves, well, how should society be
2 and not how society is.

3 But to pursue Marx' ideas I just wanted to talk
4 about some things I think that are particularly irksome
5 to Native communities and Native societies, and
6 particularly Sekani society of McLeod Lake -- that's where
7 I come from -- and that things will change, or at least
8 that's the vision of the Sekani people.

9 So, how is society -- how is it viewed? How do
10 we view it at McLeod Lake? I guess the way we look at
11 it is very secular society, very -- mainstream society
12 is very secular: clear separation between man and God.
13 God is in the church where you visit on Sundays. He has
14 clear visiting hours and you go see him on Sundays.
15 Spirituality is also held separate from man himself.
16 Spirituality, once again, is in the church you know and
17 it's not part of oneself, it's separate.

18 Western economic man -- which is mainstream
19 society -- is very science-oriented. And that has been
20 the trend since the days of Marx, to try to explain
21 everything in scientific terms. You have the rise of
22 scientism. Someone once asked Einstein: "Can you explain
23 everything in scientific terms? Can you explain
24 everything in the universe that you can possibly think
25 about in scientific terms: the trees, the air, the soil,
26 the water, the molecules, the animals?" And he says "Yes,

1 of course you can, but it would make no sense." So you
2 could conceivably explain everything in the universe in
3 scientific terms.

4 The other way you do it is in order to do that
5 you have to separate everything -- the trees and the water
6 and the soil. You look at the way universities conduct
7 their research: they take a tree and they bring it to the
8 lab and they implant it into soil, and they examine how
9 it grows and try to figure out what makes it grow. They
10 take it out of its natural environment and they try to
11 simulate the natural environment within the lab.
12 Everything is very -- you can pick everything apart. And
13 that was what Einstein was talking about.

14 If you can pick things apart and if you can examine
15 it and if you can understand how a tree grows it seems
16 right from the seedling -- I don't know which comes first,
17 a tree or a seedling, but I guess it don't really matter.

18 The idea is to try to figure out how it works, then you
19 can control it. You can control the tree's growth. And
20 maybe if you create the right conditions you can make the
21 tree grow faster. Sometimes if you use herbicides you
22 can make it grow even faster.

23 So, the idea is control. If you can understand
24 things you can control things. It's not just trees; the
25 air, bugs, animals, people. Man is at the centre of the
26 universe. If you can control nature you can dominate

1 nature. You are in the driver's seat now. The church
2 isn't in control. Nature is not in control. You are in
3 control. You are the driver. You separated yourself from
4 God. You separated yourself from nature. You are the
5 driver now.

6 Very materialistic. And that was where I was
7 going about a year ago when I packed her in in grad school.

8 The idea was I needed -- I had my career more or less
9 identified. I had contracts that were lined up. I had
10 contacts. I had the basic knowledge and the tools in order
11 to get this business under way. I was going to make lots
12 of bucks. I was going to buy a house. I was going to
13 invest my dollars and benefits package and a pension; those
14 things were important.

15 Part and parcel of that is very property oriented.

16 And property comes in many forms but the clearest ones
17 is the house, the car, the career. And just before I come
18 in here I had a discussion with a friend of mine. He is
19 still a friend of mine, even though I beat him in the
20 discussion. We talked about history, how people want to
21 write books.

22 We invited a guy to our reserve a few years ago,
23 about 15 years ago, and we shared our history and our
24 culture with him. And they guy went away and became --
25 it was for his PhD and he wrote a book on it and totally
26 displeased the people. But the history is like in a sense

1 a property; it can be sold, can be bought and used and
2 sold. Pension, children, rights -- rights are a form of
3 property. This is my body, I have the right to kill myself.

4 I have the right to propagate different ideas, whether
5 they are racist or discriminatory.

6 Very competitive. I remember I was up until about
7 2:00 one morning. I was preparing some -- that same time,
8 about a year ago -- preparing some work for a next morning
9 class. Very competitive. You got to maintain a "B"
10 average in grad school. And I remember I got up in the
11 morning and I was rushing around, putting my stuff on,
12 and got my work together and I jumped in my car and started
13 racing out to the university. And I was going too
14 carelessly and there was two (2) old ladies there. They
15 were at least 80 years old. And there was one (1) lady
16 laying on the ground. I guess she fell or something and
17 the other lady was trying to pick her up and they were
18 both really old and frail. And at that moment I come
19 screaming by and I seen this and was I going to stop and
20 help or was I going to continue on and make my class --
21 because I had a presentation that morning too? And I kept
22 on going. Very individualistic.

23 If you are going to be competitive, it's difficult
24 to be competitive against your brother or your sister or
25 your family, but if you are individuals you are trained
26 from Day One to be individuals then it makes it a lot easier.

1 You are trained as soon as you enter the school system
2 that you are competing against others, you got to get
3 straight "A's," that we are going to reward you, get good
4 grades and then later good career choices; material rewards
5 for being competitive and very individualistic.

6 And like I can see the problems with that. I
7 remember we were fighting about a year ago also -- or some
8 time -- over the constitution. And I think the
9 Constitutional Referendum last year kind of I think really
10 exposed us, where we are today. People were fighting to
11 get different rights enshrined in the constitution: Native
12 rights, French, Anglophone rights, women's rights, and
13 so on, and competing. And I could see it in other areas
14 too.

15 We work quite a bit with the companies up North.
16 Competition is stiff amongst the companies. And that's
17 one of the problems we have with the companies is over
18 herbicides because they need to get more trees out of the
19 ground, they are trying to force the ground to produce
20 more trees. When we do you speed up the growing processes
21 through herbicides. We told them "You can't do that;"
22 now we are having a bit of a fight over that.

23 And you could see it in other areas. I dropped
24 off a print the other day to get framed. Actually, it
25 was framed already and I broke the glass. I took apart
26 the stupid thing and so I had to get the glass repaired.

1 And I asked her "How much is this going to be," and she
2 says "Well, it's \$8.00 for the glass." I says "Oh, great,
3 that's very good," and she says "Oh, it's \$7.00 to put
4 it together."

5 I mean that's what competition does to people,
6 is they are finding more innovative ways to charge people.

7 You know you pay taxes to the provincial government to
8 build a road. Then you ever try buying tires? You got
9 to pay extra taxes to use the road. They call it road
10 tax. Competitive. Competitive.

11 If Marx were here today that's the things he would
12 see.

13 I kind of like the egalitarian approach myself,
14 like how the world should be viewed, and that's what I
15 term the "Sekani principles," which is in clear contrast
16 to the way that I was living in Vancouver. And there is
17 nothing mystical about the way a Sekani society is
18 structured, but it just works you know; it worked for 10,000
19 years. Today we have some problems in the community --
20 quite a few problems, actually -- and we are working those
21 things out. But the things that guide is the principles.

22 The cornerstone of the value system of Sekani
23 people is honour, respect, sharing and caring. Very
24 egalitarian. Total equality. No need for a constitution
25 because everybody is equal already. There is no such thing
26 as rights. People have privileges and they have

1 responsibilities. They have the privilege to use the
2 land, the trees, the air, the soil, the water, the animals,
3 the territory.

4 Along with each privilege to use the trees, there
5 is a responsibility to those trees. You don't overcut,
6 you don't take it all out today. Responsibility to the
7 air. It's there for your use. You need oxygen. You need
8 air to breathe and to live. You got a responsibility
9 there. You just don't pollute it.

10 Women have a special place in society because they
11 are the ones who bring up the children, rear the children
12 and pass down the knowledge and the values, plus they just
13 boss us men around all the time so no debate about that.

14 Sekani men always think they are in control
15 because they sit in council and they go home. I looked
16 at my dad when I was growing up and, sure, you know like
17 he was the one who drove the -- we always went around by
18 boat and motor and he was the one who always guided the
19 boat around the bend, you know, and running the motor and
20 stuff like that. But when there was a major decision to
21 be made he always went to my mom and he didn't make a
22 decision without my mother's input.

23 And Chief and Council you know it's mostly men
24 who sit on Chief and Council and they run around, they
25 act as if they are making decisions. They're not, they're
26 just taking orders, so ---

1 Property is not a priority. When I left Vancouver
2 a year ago I went home and started working with the people --
3 or more or less I got to back to where I had left off the
4 year before. I was working for the people then also but
5 I wasn't learning much at that time. I was kind of learning
6 and just going on this one trail, going away from my people.
7 Now I am following this other trail, the trail of my people
8 and ancestors.

9 Family and community takes priority over material
10 things, and that was one of the things was I reconnected
11 with my daughter at about that time and started building
12 up this relationship with her. That's important to me.

13 That's more important than the vehicle I drive. I don't
14 have a pension. I got no pension. I got no money in the
15 bank. I got a nephew who is with me who is schizophrenic,
16 I got a niece who has been sexually abused in the past.

17 Those people are more important to me. That's where
18 actually all of my money goes, into feeding those kids.

19 And I talked to a girl a couple of days ago. She's
20 my age -- we're both really young, actually, and her parents
21 always told her that you always stick together. If
22 something goes wrong you always stick together because
23 you never know, it might be you one day that's going to
24 be hurting or that is going to be needing somebody else's
25 assistance. And they do that. They do that really well
26 and that's something I am starting to learn about now.

1 You always feed your brother or your neighbour
2 first before you feed yourself. It's just common sense.

3 The Creator is the source of all life and Earth and Nature
4 is the government. It governs man. Go to the Arctic
5 Circle and you better put on a nice big thick overcoat
6 because Nature has turned down her thermostat and she says
7 60 below. And I want to tell you how you are going to
8 dress here. When you go down to Mexico it's a different
9 story: you got to take all your clothes off. Man is the
10 servant of the Creator and Nature. That's what I'm doing
11 now. I've taken those kids to look after those kids.

12 Somebody said that if you help other people
13 they'll always -- if you do bad things to other people
14 it will always come back double on you. If you help other
15 people you will always get rewarded, and I'm hoping
16 somebody sends me a million bucks some day.

17 Nature is the source of law. Same idea as you
18 go to the Arctic Circle she's going to tell you how you
19 better dress. Reality is made up of everything around
20 you, including the physical and the spiritual. You and
21 I see the physical things around us but we seldom see the
22 spiritual part of things. The spiritual part of things
23 is there and it exists every single second of the day.
24 The medicine people, the people who are deeply spiritual
25 understand that and that's something I am just starting
26 to learn about now myself.

1 You can't separate Nature and the physical world
2 from the spiritual world. It's there together. It
3 co-exists. Unlike mainstream society: if it's not
4 standing in front of you it doesn't exist.

5 Everything fits together. The whole world fits
6 together. It operates like a machine. Society operates
7 like a machine. The motor in your car. You take the
8 carburetor out and it ain't gonna run. You take the oil
9 out of there it's going to break down. Society is like
10 that. You take the trees out, you take all the trees off
11 the earth, and then you have problems with the oxygen.
12 You take away the oxygen see how many of us live.

13 Take away the animals, take away the water. You
14 separate out, nothing fits together. And that's what
15 Einstein meant was "Can you possibly separate everything
16 apart from each other and explain it away?" Sure you can,
17 but it just don't make sense because everything fits
18 together. It took 3.5 billion years to get that way, for
19 it to evolve. Scientific man says it evolves that way.

20 Whatever you do impacts on everything else around you.
21 Take trees out there are some bugs in the ground there
22 that live off the tree and they lived off the water and
23 you impact on those bugs. You take the tree out and it
24 can't generate oxygen, oxygen which we need. You impact
25 on everything else.

26 In our territory no one owns anything, no one owns

1 anything. The only thing you own is the soul or your
2 spirit. Everything within our traditional territory is
3 there for the benefit and use of all, whether you are Native
4 or non-Native, regardless of race, gender, species. It's
5 there for your use and benefit. All life must be
6 respected.

7 Since I've been back I go out in the bush once
8 in a while with a guy from the reserve; I grew up with
9 him. We go up to the mountains there. You can drive up
10 there actually now. And he makes a fire and we have tea
11 and then he puts some food in the fire. This is a guy
12 five (5) years ago, six (6) years ago, used to drink all
13 the time. Guy changed his life around now and a very humble
14 existence. You always give thanks, regardless of whether
15 you actually take something that day or whether you've
16 actually taken a moose or a tree or used the water or
17 whatever; you always give thanks. Give thanks to the
18 Creator for putting that stuff there, extending those
19 privileges to you for your use and your benefit.

20 And that's one of the things I'm learning now is
21 how to be thankful. Thankful for the things I don't have.

22 Thanks for things I do have.

23 And, finally, for us self-government has to be
24 for all people. It's got to be for within our traditional
25 territory, which is Summit Lake to Finlay Forks and roughly
26 that area. It includes MacKenzie, Finlay Forks, Summit

1 Lake, Bear Lake, whether you are Native, non-Native. Our
2 self-government has to be for all those people. How could
3 you have government for just your own people and not try
4 and help out the guys across the street? You can't do
5 that. You can't separate people out. You are there
6 together. You breathe the same air. You got to take care
7 of each other. That's the way it's going to be.

8 And that's the things we are going to be shooting
9 for, all those things I outlined in there we are going
10 to be shooting for those things through our treaty
11 settlement, which is just -- treaty settlement really is
12 just the beginning for all the work that we got ahead of
13 us. And so, the Sekani principles outline how the world
14 should be, not where it is.

15 Thank you.

16 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, thank you for
17 your presentation.

18 I would like to introduce Viola Robinson who has
19 just joined us. Viola was conducting hearings somewhere
20 else in B.C. this morning and that is the reason that she
21 has arrived a little late.

22 She was formerly head of the Native Council of
23 Canada. She is a Micmac. And for many years prior to
24 that, in Nova Scotia, she headed a provincial or Aboriginal
25 organization there. When the Commission was created she
26 had an option of either continuing on as head of the Native

1 Council of Canada and going into the constitutional
2 hearings or else stepping down and becoming a Commissioner.
3 And she decided to become a Commissioner.

4 On your presentation I found it very interesting
5 the detail with which you described different
6 philosophical approaches to life. That of the
7 predominantly Western world of materialism, separating
8 one's spiritual life from one's economic life and one's
9 social life and on and on and on -- family life and business
10 life and all the rest of it. To the way that the Sekani
11 people would have approached the world, which is that it
12 is more holistic and everything kind of flows together
13 and you are quoting Einstein and so forth. Then you ended
14 up saying that self-government must be for all people,
15 that it is inconceivable that you would leave people out.

16 What is it that you envisage is going to occur?
17 Is the system of government that you are talking about
18 what we now see here in Prince George, where you elect
19 a mayor and council for a period of time; just that
20 everybody does it together? I understand from the mayor
21 earlier today that there has never been anybody on council
22 that he knows of, that's there has never been an Aboriginal
23 person.

24 Are you talking about the way that the Sekani used
25 to govern themselves in the past or are you talking a bit
26 of both or what is it that you envisage should take place?

1 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** Well, first of all what we've
2 done in mainstream society is we've given the government
3 over to the government and we pay them to govern us. The
4 way we work it in Sekani society is each individual
5 governs -- everybody governs everybody else. Very strong
6 peer pressure that operates within society. You keep --
7 people know the difference between right and wrong and
8 you are always reminding people about it.

9 But in mainstream society what you have is you
10 hire people to govern you and you pay them. And we wonder
11 where all our taxes is going. You know I am paying taxes
12 and recently a friend of mine was talking to one of the
13 MLA's and all the MLA could talk about was the pension
14 he is going to get when he retires, when his term is up.

15 And we never see the guy. Who is this guy? What does
16 he do?

17 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What do you envisage
18 this will look like in the future?

19 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** Land use board. Land use
20 board covers our traditional territory. You see this as
21 a land use. It covers our entire -- this is our traditional
22 territory, from Summit Lake to Finlay Forks, and of course
23 east and west. You have Summit Lake, Bear Lake, McLeod
24 Lake, MacKenzie, Finlay Forks, and everybody that lives
25 in there, whether they are Native or non-Native, they are
26 a part of this land use board. Any form of development

1 that is going to occur within the traditional territory
2 has to go through the land use board.

3 And who is the land use board? It's everybody
4 that lives in there. You are represented on this land
5 use board. And don't ask me how we're going to do it but
6 that's how -- we are going to talk about it and we are
7 going to work it out. We are going to work out the
8 mechanics of it but everybody is represented there.
9 Everybody has to have the same information.

10 We got computers. We'll put it all up on the
11 computer screen, all the development that is going to
12 happen. Dosment (PH) wants to put up a new mill, it goes
13 through the land use board. Somebody wants to transfer
14 their trap land from one trapper to the other, it goes
15 through the land use board and they discuss it and sit
16 around and they have consensus. And consensus doesn't
17 allow for if you can't get a consensus today then you call
18 in the government and they make the decision. That's not
19 consensus. Consensus is you go away and you talk about
20 it and you come back and maybe you will have a decision
21 the second time around. But it's got to be by consensus.

22 Everybody gets a vote on there.

23 Then you hire an MLA and you hire him from this
24 area and his job is to run around and make sure everybody
25 has got the same information within the traditional
26 territory. Like the trapper in the bush doesn't have

1 access to a computer. Well, the MLA has got to go out
2 there and he has got to go talk to him, tell him about
3 these things.

4 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** When you say everyone
5 has a vote and there should be consensus, do you mean the
6 consensus of the representatives, however you are going
7 to arrive at them, or are you talking about everyone living
8 in the area that is adult?

9 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** Well, somebody has got to speak
10 for the children and somebody has got to speak for the
11 animals because the children don't really understand yet
12 and the animals you know -- you know, the air. Who is
13 going to represent those things, because those things are
14 part of the whole system, part of that engine, that machine
15 there of society and nature and Creator all together.
16 So you can't just go -- all the adults will get together
17 and they'll talk about it and make a decision and forget
18 about everybody else.

19 If you are part of a family, if you are part of
20 a community, all decisions you make will have already taken
21 into account those things, you know Nature and children,
22 the handicapped, the mentally infirm.

23 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** So are you talking
24 about government through representatives, or are you
25 talking about government where there is continuous either
26 polling or referendum process where the public is involved?

1 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** I think the entire public has
2 to be involved. I don't know how we are going to do it
3 but the only way you are going to do it is if everybody
4 had the same information all the time. Like Fletcher is
5 going to put up a mill at MacKenzie; well, everybody should
6 know that. Now, the guys from Bear lake and Summit Lake,
7 chances aren't going to run down there and vote on whether
8 it's going to go ahead, but they should have a say in it.

9 Let's say there is a new mill in Saskatchewan there
10 that is totally a closed system. It doesn't dump any
11 toxins into the environment. Now, the guys at Summit Lake
12 would be interested to know that that option exists. Now
13 why is the company putting up a pulp mill that will dump
14 toxins in the environment? And what's to say that they
15 are not going to do it at Summit Lake if they let Fletcher
16 do it in MacKenzie? So they do have a vested interest.

17 But basically what it is it operates by peer
18 pressure. That's how it operates is peer pressure.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What about in
20 organized communities like Prince George?

21 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** That's outside of our
22 territory.

23 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What about
24 communities within your territory? Do you see a community
25 government structure?

26 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** There is going to be different

1 values. I think the idea is -- the only way you are going
2 to ever make it work is everybody has got to sit around
3 and talk about it. Because you got to get everybody's
4 value on the table and you got to respect each other.

5 Like for instance what if there is some Sikh
6 families that live in MacKenzie. They have a different
7 way of doing things. And we can't just go ahead and do
8 stuff, like everybody in the territory does stuff, and
9 then forget about the Sikh community. They got to fit
10 into the whole scheme of things. So self-government in
11 the end is ---

12 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** You have a number of
13 Aboriginal communities you are talking about within your
14 territory. What do you see for the kind of structure of
15 government that is going to happen at that level?

16 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** Sorry?

17 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** In your communities.
18 What kind of structure of government do you see there?

19 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** I think the least it can be
20 is representative government. That's the least you can
21 get away with. Like what I would like to see is where
22 everybody sits around a big table and makes a decision,
23 but that would be difficult so I don't know how it's going
24 to work out. But at least the values are there. That's
25 what's going to drive the machine; work out the details
26 later.

1 Like it's a new idea. I can't do all the thinking
2 for you guys.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Have you looked at the
4 traditional clan system and so forth and rejected that
5 as the model?

6 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** We come from a different
7 tradition. I know at one time they attempted to implement
8 the clan system in our territory and that faded away in
9 the late 1800's and early 1900's. There may be ties
10 through marriage to the clan system but the egalitarian
11 system kind of operates. I don't know what kind of system
12 you would call it.

13 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** No, I understand what
14 you are saying. I was just wondering if you had looked
15 at that as an option.

16 Okay. Well, thank you for coming forth.

17 Since Viola has just come in I do not know if she
18 has any questions but I would like to thank you for your
19 ideas and if you can think of anything else you want to
20 add at some point, just write us a letter.

21 Thank you.

22 **MR. VERN SOLONAS:** Thank you.

23 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** Thank you, Vern.

24 Next on our agenda today we have some local
25 representatives from the Prince George Regional Hospital,
26 Dennis Cleaver.

1 Mr. Cleaver, I will ask you to basically introduce
2 yourselves, who you represent again, and basically what
3 your topic is going to be here for us, for the record,
4 please.

5 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** With me is Mr. Cliff Dezell.
6 Cliff is a senior administrator at the hospital, is a
7 long-time resident of the area. And included in his
8 responsibilities at the hospital is strategic planning,
9 and within that we are looking at educational issues at
10 the Prince George Regional Hospital. I am Dennis Cleaver,
11 the Executive Director of the Prince George Regional
12 Hospital and I have been in the community for just over
13 a year now.

14 The topic that we wanted to share some thoughts
15 with you on is the one of providing learning opportunities
16 for Aboriginal peoples to become health care providers.

17

18 Would you like us to continue?

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Please do, yes.

20 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** Okay.

21 Our efforts we believe are supportive of the
22 initiatives as outlined in the overview of the second round
23 document in that we also see a need for the increased number
24 of Aboriginal health care workers. At our hospital there
25 are very few people who are Aboriginal and providing health
26 care to the people of our region. Further, having a larger

1 number of Aboriginal health care providers in the system
2 I believe will help lead the way to an Aboriginal health
3 care system controlled by Aboriginal peoples.

4 Some background to what we are doing at Prince
5 George Regional Hospital. First, beginning in September
6 of 1991 the Prince George Regional Hospital has been
7 working cooperatively with the Kelowna General Hospital
8 and the Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops. Our
9 tri-hospital discussions have encompassed a number of
10 topics of importance to the three (3) facilities.

11 One of the topics is education and our collective
12 tri-hospital objective is to increase the number of
13 educational opportunities outside of the lower mainland
14 for residents who live outside the lower mainland. And
15 included in this broad topic is the sub-topic of learning
16 opportunities for Aboriginal peoples.

17 At this point I would like to turn it over to Cliff,
18 and then Cliff will turn it back to me in a short time.

19 **MR. CLIFF DEZELL:** Thank you.

20 One of the efforts we have attempted to
21 investigate is our linkages with other educational and
22 health care institutions, as Dennis has talked about.
23 We have attempted in the local community to contact
24 institutions like the school district, College of New
25 Caledonia, University of Northern B.C., as well as some
26 of the local Aboriginal groups -- the Carrier Tribal

1 Council, the Native Friendship Centre and others, to
2 attempt to help us define what role we might have in
3 education in general, and specifically in education
4 regarding the First Nations groups.

5 We have talked to individuals such as Margaret
6 Anderson at UNBC and Doug Brown at the College of New
7 Caledonia. One of the issues that we have been struggling
8 with that we would appreciate some advice from the
9 Commission on are: exactly how to access the Aboriginal
10 community, who should we speak to, who represents the group
11 in educational issues, do we in fact have a role?

12 We have some expertise and in linkages with
13 educational institutions. We think we can provide
14 education in health care and perhaps clinical placements
15 but at this stage we are groping a bit as to really who
16 to talk to and what those arrangements might be. We have
17 had some interesting preliminary discussions and there
18 has been a good deal of interest expressed to us but at
19 this stage it's very ill to find.

20 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** Okay.

21 So, in our discussions at the tri-hospitals and
22 in our discussions with the local agencies and the learning
23 institutions we have learned a number of things in a
24 preliminary kind of way.

25 One is that the three (3) hospitals have extensive
26 linkages with a variety of educational institutions: high

1 schools, colleges, universities, including the faculty
2 of medicine at UBC.

3 Second is that those learning institutions in turn
4 have a small number of relationships with the Aboriginal
5 communities.

6 Third, the hospitals themselves have an indirect
7 relationship through the learning institutions. We do
8 not have any direct relationships with the Aboriginal
9 communities to provide learning opportunities.

10 Fourth, in trying to gain some input and advice
11 directly from the Aboriginal community we have found that
12 there are actually several Aboriginal communities and as
13 Cliff has mentioned we are hoping that you could provide
14 some advice to us as to how we could work our way through
15 this general topic where we feel we have an important role
16 that we can play.

17 Fifth is we believe there is a need to provide
18 a greater number of Aboriginal health care providers as
19 we believe this will make it possible for the hospital
20 to better understand and provide health care which better
21 meets the needs of the Aboriginal community.

22 I would like to turn it back to Cliff to touch
23 on some comments about how we see the future unfolding.

24 **MR. CLIFF DEZELL:** There are one (1) or two (2)
25 existing linkages that we think bear some promise. The
26 hospital, as we mention in the brief, already has

1 arrangements with the Native Friendship Centre. We have
2 a Native liaison worker provided by the Carrier Sekani
3 Tribal Council that works within the hospital. As I said
4 earlier, we have talked to Doug Brown and others in
5 educational institutions. So we see some efforts being
6 made and some improvements possible in the issue of health
7 care education and also access.

8 I think that's the other issue that we need to
9 deal with, is education and the provision of health care
10 workers to the Aboriginal community is one thing, but
11 access to the organized health care system is quite another
12 and I think that we need to go some way as far as that's
13 concerned also.

14 There are two (2) possible avenues that we see.
15 One, which we will be pursuing with the board's patient
16 care committee, is inviting representatives of the
17 committee to meet with representatives of the Aboriginal
18 community to get firsthand the Aboriginal community's view
19 of the services that the Prince George Regional provides
20 in access and in the delivery of service.

21 Secondly, we are making an effort right now to
22 broaden the base of the Prince George and District Hospital
23 Society to get all sorts of organizations and groups
24 interested in the business of the society and the election
25 of trustees. And the Aboriginal community, among others,
26 will be receiving an invitation within the next three (3)

1 weeks to participate in that process, to become members
2 of the society and perhaps to provide candidates to the
3 general election of trustees later on this fall.

4 So, we think there are some possibilities for the
5 future. Right now we are primarily here to ask for your
6 assistance in how we might best proceed.

7 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** So, with that we would like
8 to open it up to questions and answers that you might have.

9 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Thank you. It is a
10 slightly different presentation than we normally get.

11 I certainly applaud your interest in getting
12 Aboriginal people more involved. What seems to be the
13 concern about Aboriginal communities? There are
14 different Aboriginal people around. If you approach the
15 different organizations what seems to be the hang-up?
16 Why can't you work with the different communities that
17 you have discovered?

18 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** Well, we are in the beginning
19 stages and we're not sure if we are going to be spending
20 our time wisely but we do want to meet with as many people
21 as we can and each time we speak to one group then we find
22 there is a couple of more groups. And we are trying to
23 go down that path in a slow and careful way.

24 **MR. CLIFF DEZELL:** I guess what we don't want to
25 do, Mr. Chairman, is to assume that in fact we are talking
26 to representatives of all the group and find out we missed

1 a whole segment entirely by accident. And looking at the
2 organizations from the outside it's difficult for us to
3 know whether or not we are talking in fact to the right
4 people and to all the groups.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, most
6 organizations have provincial affiliates that you could
7 go to that would I guess advise you about the different
8 groupings of Aboriginal people. It would have regional
9 organizations, community organizations and so forth. So
10 long as you try to cover a cross section of the Aboriginal
11 people and you go to the known organizations I suspect
12 that you would probably discover them all. You seem to
13 be approaching it very wisely and cautiously so I can't
14 see how you are going to go wrong.

15 **MR. CLIFF DEZELL:** Okay.

16 The other item we might take the opportunity to
17 mention is that there will also be an invitation going
18 out to attend what we call a major stakeholders workshop
19 on June 18th which deals with the strategic plan and the
20 role of the hospital, and again representatives of the
21 Aboriginal community will be invited to that, to
22 participate in that. So we are attempting to be as
23 inclusive as we can.

24 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** Another general comment is
25 that we are a large regional referral hospital in British
26 Columbia here and we would speculate that there are a fair

1 number of facilities our size and serving similar
2 geographic areas throughout Canada. And I would suspect
3 that there is a great potential there that hasn't been
4 tapped in terms of learning opportunities for residents
5 outside the large urban centres, and a subset of that is
6 learning opportunities for Aboriginal peoples. And if
7 we can do anything to help influence some comment in your
8 final report on that potential that may make it easier
9 for us as we go through our systems in working with people
10 that we are responsible to.

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** There are few
12 incidents in the country where they are actually doing
13 that. Offhand, Northern Ontario comes to mind. They have
14 a regional hospital. There was a lot of discussion about
15 whether or not there should be a separate hospital for
16 Aboriginal people and a study was done, a small inquiry
17 in Northern Ontario, and a panel which included eminent
18 Ontario residents, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
19 looked into it and recommended a single hospital that
20 served the needs of everyone.

21 The existing hospital that was going to be used
22 in an expanded way had really not done a lot previously
23 to encourage as much Aboriginal participation and so forth.

24 But following that process there was a plan put in place
25 that provided for a large degree of input. So there are
26 other experiments in the country but there aren't that

1 many and certainly there could be more. It's a very good
2 idea.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** When you say you have
4 experience to share what do you envisage? Do you see
5 accelerated educational programs to create skilled health
6 care experts from the Aboriginal community or what are
7 you actually suggesting?

8 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** We presently have a fair
9 number of linkages with the educational environment: high
10 school, college and university level. And we think that
11 with that foundation it would be reasonably easy for us
12 to expand that to include additional educational
13 opportunities. This would be for front-line caregivers
14 including Care aids, nurses. It also includes a family
15 practice residency teaching unit that should be developed
16 in the community here in the next couple of years, or
17 hopefully within the year and there will be an opportunity
18 for all kinds of people to become general practitioners.

19 So, I think we are doing a number of things that
20 we can build on.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** One of the apparently
22 interesting things that is going on in Northern Quebec
23 amongst the Inuit is they have a centre where they actually
24 teach people midwifery again. And so they take Inuit women
25 that previously might have been midwives already or else
26 have/an interest in it, so they are trained and then they

1 are recognized by the province and so forth.

2 It has greatly enhanced the ability of children
3 to be borne at home. The whole family is involved again
4 and the Inuit themselves play a role in the delivery of
5 their own children. It's something that you might
6 consider up here because midwifery was an important skill
7 that was practised all through North America by Aboriginal
8 people and there probably still are midwives in most
9 northern parts of provinces.

10 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** Okay.

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Viola, do you have any
12 questions or comments?

13 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** No, I do not think
14 so.

15 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** The other thing you
16 might consider doing is there is an association in Canada
17 of some 53 or 56 Aboriginal doctors. You might consult
18 them for their ideas and if you need their address we have
19 it.

20 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** Okay.

21 Just one other point of interest you might be
22 interested in is the Ministry of Health approached Prince
23 George Regional Hospital a number of months ago to see
24 if we were interested in a trial project to incorporate
25 faith healers into the facility and we are awaiting news
26 on that and would want to try something if we could.

1 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** There are a number of
2 projects in the country doing that also, which is a very,
3 very good idea.

4 Thank you for coming forth.

5 **MR. DENNIS CLEAVER:** Thank you.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay. We have been
8 requested to take our break now, just a short break. So,
9 get up and stretch your legs, and if you smoke, go have
10 a smoke briefly I guess and get back here in about 10
11 minutes.

12 --- Upon recessing at 2:42 p.m.

13 --- Upon resuming at 2:52 p.m.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay. Could we call
15 the meeting back to order, please, or the proceedings.

16 We have had a small change in our agenda, for those
17 of you who have one. We have been asked by a respected
18 Elder of this territory who is a representative of the
19 National Indian Veterans Association, an Elder from the
20 Fort St. James area, Mr. Ray Prince ---

21 Ray, would you like to come up and say a few words
22 for us, please?

23 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** Mussi cho (Native language).

24 I would like to introduce myself. I am originally
25 from Fort St. James and president of the Linguistic
26 Committee. I am a Christian, also a General Director for

1 Northern Region of National Aboriginal Veterans'
2 Association, B.C. Chapter.

3 I am going to speak on behalf of the Aboriginal
4 veterans of Canada, particularly in this northern region.
5 We are just under way with our visiting of our Native
6 war veterans in isolated areas. Some places we have to
7 walk in six (6) miles with no roads and all these places
8 like Lorapost (PH) and Kitselas (PH) we are going to visit
9 and all these are where the veterans are. There aren't
10 many of left now, as you know.

11 The people I serve -- myself, I served overseas
12 for five and a half years. I served two (2) years in Italy,
13 fighting, and when I give you indication that when I
14 first -- when I celebrated my twentieth birthday in Nice,
15 France and already I served two (2) years in Italy. I
16 served also Continental Europe and was under General George
17 S. Patton, Third Army. But mainly about our Native
18 veterans, Mr. Chairman, I would like to tell you about
19 how war veterans of the Korean War, the First and Second
20 World War and their spouses who are not really right up
21 to standard compared with our non-Native war veterans.

22 I know for two (2) of the veterans right now --
23 one is wounded pretty bad, the other one he had a pretty
24 bad wound in Sicily in Italy -- and they both haven't got
25 no -- what do you call -- wheelchair. They request it
26 but I don't know why they cannot get it. But we will give

1 you a further report on that in the future.

2 But after the war -- again, I will use myself as ---

3 I was kicked out of the reserve right after the
4 war, in 1946, when I came back from overseas because I
5 was away from the reserve for seven (7) years, they told
6 me, at that time. That was in 1946. And then in 1987
7 one of the MP's from this area asked me if I wanted to
8 get back on the reserve. I said "I'll get back if I wanted
9 to." So he asked me if I wanted to get back. "Yes," I
10 said, "okay."

11 So they put me back on the reserve in 1987. All
12 these years when I came back from overseas after the war
13 I did not receive my full soldier's settlement which the
14 other people got. My cheque from the Department of
15 Veterans Affairs from Ottawa come through the Indian
16 Department in Vanderhoof, from there he made another cheque
17 to me. And about a few months later they said I had no
18 more money from my war gratuity money, also they call it
19 war veteran's allowance or soldier's settlement.

20 And a lot of us are like that because of in between
21 there is the Indian Department and us and the Department
22 of Veteran Affairs. I know a lot of these people that
23 fought in the war, First and Second World War, also in
24 Korean War and the Pacific with some of them across the
25 border. They went across the border, they joined United
26 States Marine Corp. We have evidence here, now here and

1 there, and if people want to ask us that, they are welcome
2 to do that. We have people that are suffering right now
3 because they are not getting proper treatment and their
4 level of income is very minimum, of \$18,000.00 I think.

5 The biggest complaint is that one time in -- I
6 guess you remember, all of you -- as you will remember
7 in Ottawa in 1991 I was there that time and we were not
8 allowed to march with other veterans of Canada in Ottawa
9 to the Cenotaph. I was there and the little hole they
10 tell us to lay a wreath there for our war dead; we did
11 that. And after I came back it was really a sad time for
12 me because I figured I was a Canadian and I earned it and
13 I know myself we did very well in Italy. I got honourable
14 discharge in 1946.

15 And when I came back here right after the war I
16 still had my uniform on. I was on leave when I came back
17 from overseas. I came down here in Prince George in a
18 little place they call Canada Hotel to have a beer, me
19 and my white buddy. They let my buddy go in and have a
20 beer but they wouldn't let me have a beer you know and
21 they said I was not allowed in there. That's the way things
22 were after the war for us.

23 It was really difficult. They told us to have
24 a Veterans' Land Act and they didn't do a very good job
25 on us either. Because they took some bushy land, not even
26 cleared, and the people try to -- they want them to settle

1 there for veterans. There was no machinery whatsoever.
2 It didn't work out too well.

3 And in these federal laws what they impose on us
4 all the time, it was not really what you would call justice.

5 A lot of things what they imposed on us years ago -- today
6 we cannot go ahead and do what we like in trap lines, and
7 even in the trap lines they want to change that. It's
8 not Native people that made them laws; it was the federal
9 government made them laws and the provincial government.

10 Now they are stepping in there. They said we are not
11 supposed to do these things nowadays and all that you know.

12 However, myself I got a big trap line, my son has
13 here, hereditary trap line from up in the Nation Lake areas.

14 Ever since I was a little guy I roamed that country and
15 I know that country like a book. I do not need a map.
16 It's a large country and I always go back there. After
17 the war I did go back there. And that's my land. My
18 culture is there. My culture is my land.

19 I would just like to read a little prescription,
20 little bit of -- not prescription but what we have, we
21 as a veterans of Canada had said one time. I want you
22 to read ---

23 "We, your veterans, have taken part in many workshops and
24 we have many things to say about what we have
25 seen and heard.

26 First and most important we call the abolishment of the

1 Indian Act. This legislation has injured
2 and divided our people beyond measure. We
3 must start right now to prepare ourselves
4 to resume the responsibilities that are
5 currently held by Indian Affairs. We must
6 begin planning and organizing ourselves to
7 care for our own people so we are ready for
8 the day when we shall sure (PH) our skies
9 with this ugly part of our history and we
10 can govern ourselves again.

11 Let us develop self-government along traditional lines
12 with a place for the hereditary Chiefs and
13 Councils. Let us provide our Elders with
14 the respect they deserve. Let us listen to
15 the wisdom of their voices and share in
16 respect for our territories. Let us govern
17 ourselves along the holistic principles that
18 have traditionally provided balance in our
19 lives and spirits. Let us be guided by the
20 words healing, trust and protection.

21 We must protect our women, our children, our child bearers
22 who are the sources of our future. Let us
23 guard the rights and equality within the
24 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
25 until our own Charter of Rights within our
26 self-government is ready to protect them.

1 We must seek guarantees from the future of
2 our children and our grandchildren for the
3 future lies with our youth.

4 Their future, our future, lies in education; not just
5 education in our languages but our
6 traditions and our culture, but also in the
7 schools and universities in this land so as
8 to return self-respect and self-esteem to
9 our young people and so they be on a par with
10 any of the youths of the world. Education
11 means self-preservation.

12 We call for the elimination of distinction between Native
13 and non-Native, status, non-status, Inuit
14 and Metis. We are all one people under the
15 scheme. All clans are my relations and
16 culture is our land. Let us eliminate all
17 religion barriers that have been used to
18 divide our people. We know God. We knew
19 God long before the white man ever came here.

20 Let us then let the spirit of the Creator
21 show us the way to respect each other and
22 all living things. Let us reach out with
23 our brothers and sisters in Labrador who have
24 so little who must work and fight so hard
25 to survive. Let us draw them closer and
26 insure their future along with our own as

1 we work through the coming months and years.
2 Thank you."

3 This is what I would just like to tell you that
4 what we are doing now as veterans, we are, on a voluntary
5 basis, we are travelling the country, interviewing the
6 veterans. We are going to interview a lot of veterans
7 and bring them about how they are standing. I know a lot
8 of them are not right up to par with other people because
9 of a lot of things that happened in their spouse, some
10 of the people have died, and they have some kind of pension
11 should be coming forth to them.

12 I remember a few years ago when Brian Mulroney
13 government got into office they said that they were going
14 to do something about the veterans of Canada. Well, my
15 brother is a veteran of Canada and he got wounded pretty
16 bad. He got 49 cents rent since that time. I just thought
17 I'd let you know these things you know. It's not just
18 a laughing matter I think when they do/say things like
19 this.

20 That's all I have to say and I thank you very much
21 for listening.

22 If there any questions I will answer that
23 question.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Thank you. Thank you
25 for your presentation.

26 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** You are very welcome.

1 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** When you came back
2 from the war you say that they threw you off the reserve.
3 What do you mean? Did they take you off the treaty list?
4 Is that what you are talking about? Indian Affairs
5 removed your name from the band list or what?

6 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** Yes. After the war you know I
7 was sitting in the house. Somebody knocked at the door,
8 so I opened the door. Here was an Indian agent with some
9 documents. And he told me that "Raymond, we are going
10 to take you off the reserve because you have been away
11 seven (7) years." And I said "I've been away five and
12 a half years overseas." Well, he says "That's too bad
13 but that's our law," he said, "We have to take you off
14 the reserve." So he gave me a little blue card they call
15 enfranchisement; that's what he gave me. He said "You
16 can drink beer now and do like I do and whatever." I said
17 "I been drinking beer all the time anyways," I told him.

18 So this is what -- so, anyways, what they were
19 doing to me at that time I felt in myself that "Well, they
20 give me this little card, I can get off the reserve any
21 time I want and go to work anywhere." So I went and I
22 worked all around: Queen Charlotte Islands, Vancouver
23 Island. I'm a logger. I went fishing. I am good
24 trapper. I come back winter time.

25 First time I visited Prince George was 1932 and
26 I landed down here on Cutting Wood Island. At that time

1 we brought a lot of moose meat down and my father they
2 were having court. This German guy shot another German
3 guy that time. And there was no road up north, no road
4 down east, a little caribou highway down to Vancouver,
5 hardly any road to Vanderhoof.

6 And the backbone of the people were the Native
7 people at that time. My dad had two (2) teams of horses,
8 a couple of cows. We shared with non-Natives; they didn't
9 have anything. In Fort St. James it was just industry;
10 there was nothing. They was nothing, nothing. The
11 trappers were the backbone and that's how this country
12 came to be.

13 But when I joined the army everything was new to
14 me: big ships on the coast. I didn't know the water, the
15 tide. I didn't know nothing about it. I see lots of
16 planes and towards the end of the war I have seen 3,000
17 bombers in the air, which was I never -- I don't think
18 I'll ever see it again.

19 But to tell you the truth -- to tell you the truth
20 that the Native war veterans they never will take a back
21 seat to anybody because they done very well in these war
22 theatres. And to mention a few like Dick Patrick and some
23 of the boys that we lost quite a few men in this area.
24 I know there was like Tony Prince from Winnipeg: most
25 decorated soldier in the Allied army, in Allied Forces --
26 not just Canadians -- in Allied armies, most decorated

1 soldier. And yet, when he died, he was living in a four
2 (4) by eight (8) room and he was sweeping the floor in
3 the factory building for \$3.00 an hour.

4 But myself I bulled my way. I work. I belonged
5 to Operator Engineers for 31 years. I just retired five
6 (5) years ago and I do all these work. And I work hard
7 for our people. What I am doing for our veterans right
8 now is that I am doing it on a voluntary basis. We are
9 not getting any money for it. But every time we are trying
10 to do something I know we get in the papers and they said
11 that "Oh, the Native people are getting everything hand
12 out."

13 I think the biggest handout of the people is your
14 corporate affairs, like you know your sawmills, is a big
15 donation. That mining outfit the same thing: the
16 government putting all the money in. And myself when we
17 are self-sufficient we don't need any help from anybody
18 else. And this country is good to us and I know Prince
19 George and that area, this area, for many years, has been
20 good you know because of the lots of resources.

21 And when we fought for our timber to slow down
22 on the timber, well the non-white people they say "Well,
23 they get after us," -- because we are talking with the
24 outside agents -- "Well, you know if they call themselves
25 Canadians they got to help us too to stop that over-cutting
26 of the timber in this area." In the next few years you'll

1 have no more timber for the young people, our children,
2 their children.

3 I just thank you again.

4 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Could you answer just
5 one (1) more question perhaps?

6 When you returned what did the Government of
7 Canada provide to you for being a veteran? What kind of
8 benefits did they provide to you?

9 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** Well, firstly -- the first
10 thing -- we didn't have anything outside of a few bucks
11 from the war, the gratuity money which they cut off pretty
12 quick. Today I don't know how much my total was. They
13 never gave me any statement to that.

14 But other than that they offered us a job, but
15 there was no job around anywhere you know. Like we cut
16 logs in the bush up there by -- back then there was no
17 power saw and they didn't bring power saws to this country
18 till 1951. But I operated one of the biggest ones, 12
19 horsepower Mercury, down the coast; that's the first time
20 I operate one.

21 But there was not too much after the war for the
22 veterans. It was just minimum. Some of the poor guys
23 that got wounded -- like I know my friend in Tschlada (PH)
24 had to bring him to the reserve with a stretcher right
25 from where the road was, just where it was flooded after.

26 And he couldn't move himself. And these people had

1 nothing, no protection.

2 And same with my brother. He was wounded in the
3 eardrum. Eardrum busted right in in Montecasino (PH).
4 Them people they never -- but if it wasn't for our people,
5 our close relatives, they look after them pretty good you
6 know. If it wasn't for them, they would never survive.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** This work that you are
8 doing now, the volunteer work, you are going to the veterans
9 and you are talking to them. Will you have some kind of
10 report from that and when will that be and could we have
11 a copy of that at some point?

12 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** I will get a report on that in
13 time because we are going now to many other veterans.
14 We have the address and location and as you know yourself
15 the northern British Columbia is a big territory, big area,
16 and we have to cover all that. Some by river boats and
17 maybe summer.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Do you have any idea
19 when you might finish your work?

20 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** We are starting right now.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Will it take about a
22 year?

23 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** I think it's about maybe a couple
24 of years. Two (2) summers anyway.

25 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, we would
26 appreciate it if you could give us something in about a

1 year or so because we would like to have something before
2 we finish our work.

3 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** I would like it back but you could
4 get a copy of that if you want.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Yes.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Okay.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, thank you for
8 coming forth.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you.

10 **MR. RAY PRINCE:** Okay.

11 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** Thank you, Ray, merci.

12 It is always an enlightening experience to listen
13 to an Elder speak for a little while.

14 At this time I would like to ask the next group
15 that is on the agenda, which is the Prince George Native
16 Friendship Centre. I guess Dan George, Diane Prest,
17 Donagh, Mary and Barry. And if we can get you to come
18 around on this side, as much as possible down in this shape
19 over here.

20 Maybe if you could go around and introduce
21 yourselves and your position within the organization and
22 basically what topic you will do.

23 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** I was wondering if it's possible
24 that we could give our presentation in its entirety and
25 then entertain questions from the Commissioners?

26 With that being agreed ---

1 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** You are going to
2 insist on reading every word?

3 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Every word. Do you know how long
4 it took for us to put together?

5 With that in mind I am Dan George. I am status
6 facilitant (PH) from Hagligett Reserve, born and raised
7 in the urban community, and I am presently executive
8 director of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre.

9 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:** My name is Barry Seymour.
10 I am a member of the Wet'suwet'en Nation. I am the Director
11 of Social Programs at the Prince George Native Friendship
12 Centre.

13 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** I am Mary Clifford, Director
14 of Health Services, Native Friendship Centre.

15 **MS DIANE PREST:** I am Dianne Prest and I am a
16 student or a participant in the Native Entrepreneurial
17 Training Program.

18 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** I am Donagh MacCartain.
19 I am the Director of Education and Employment with the
20 Prince George Native Friendship Centre.

21 **MR. VINCENT PRINCE:** My name is Vincent Prince
22 and I am of Carrier Nation. I am the Job Placement Officer
23 for one of the programs at the Prince George Native
24 Friendship Centre "Project Refocus."

25 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Okay.

26 I would like to preface my comments about urban

1 self-government by speaking about the Prince George Native
2 Friendship Centre so we can put our presentation in
3 context.

4 Our society was started in the mid-nineteen
5 sixties by a group of young Native people who saw a need
6 for an urban agency to provide services to the many Natives
7 migrating to Prince George from the surrounding reserves.

8 From a humble beginning in a donated building on School
9 District 57 property to the multi-dimensional organization
10 we now are, our centre's transition has been an exercise
11 in community empowerment.

12 When I say "community" I mean community in the
13 truest sense of the word. The non-Native community have
14 been instrumental in the evolution of our organization
15 from a sports club to now arguably one of the top five
16 (5) friendship centres in this country. We are now major
17 landowners in the downtown core. We employ 55 full-time
18 staff and a complement of 20 part-time staff and have an
19 annual budget in excess of \$4 million.

20 The core funding we receive from the Secretary
21 of State, which by the way is under attack by the federal
22 government, constitutes less than five (5) per cent of
23 our overall operating budget. Our core funds are used
24 as leverage to approach municipal, provincial and federal
25 governments for the funds necessary to deliver our myriad
26 of services.

StenoTran

1 As with the medicine wheel we deliver services
2 in the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental realms.

3 This holistic approach ensures the development of
4 programs that begin to address the many social ills our
5 people face residing in and adapting to the urban
6 environment. Holism appears to be the buzz word of the
7 1990's, yet in my opinion not many organizations
8 operationalize it.

9 I am proud to say the Prince George Native
10 Friendship Centre is one of the organizations using the
11 holistic approach as a driving force behind any strategies
12 or interventions we develop on behalf of our constituents.

13 This one-stop shopping approach ensures we can provide
14 services to the entire family in all areas of their lives.

15 For example a summary of our programs are:

- 16 !College and Career Preparation
- 17 !AIDS Prevention
- 18 !Federal Corrections Halfway House
- 19 !Single Men's Hostel,
- 20 !Native Employment Unit
- 21 !Sexual Abuse Treatment Service
- 22 !Drug and Alcohol Programming
- 23 !Native Men's Healing Circle, and
- 24 !Reconnect Streetworker Program.

25 Again, these programs and services are by no means
26 exhaustive. We have over 20 programs which are ongoing

1 and another 30 which are annual events or seasonal in
2 nature.

3 I felt it important to tell you a little bit about
4 our organization because we feel what we are doing is a
5 form of urban self-governance. We have been able to
6 achieve our infrastructure through diligence and
7 persistence, but most importantly using compassion and
8 empathy as the underscores of our program development.

9 In developing this brief presentation many
10 questions arose, questions which we felt, if answered in
11 the absence of an extensive community consultation
12 process, would be very presumptuous of our society and
13 not keeping with the notion of community empowerment I
14 spoke of earlier.

15 Questions such as:

16 !What is urban self-government?

17 !What form of governance will oversee urban
18 self-government?

19 !How will it be paid for?

20 !How will this relate to First Nations self-government?

21 !How will the model represent the views of women, youth
22 and Elders?

23 These questions are just a sampling of the many questions
24 we were asking ourselves. I am not here to suggest I
25 personally, or our organization as a whole, have the
26 answers to these questions. Rather, I want to speak about

1 guiding principles and some community initiatives we are
2 a part of that may be of interest to the Commission.

3 First, I want to relate to you an incident that
4 occurred to me recently with a local newspaper reporter.

5 Since 1993 is the Year of the Indigenous Peoples a reporter
6 felt that profiles of Aboriginal leadership published in
7 the local newspaper would go a long way in educating the
8 larger community about Aboriginal leaders in our
9 community.

10 Being executive director of the friendship centre
11 I was chosen to be interviewed. The interview went well
12 and I was quite pleased at the interest expressed by the
13 reporter. During my interview I spoke of urban
14 self-government and my dismay that friendship centres were
15 not recognized as key players in the constitutional
16 process. Once my interview was written up it was given
17 to the editor to critique. His response to my talking
18 about urban self-government was one of disbelief. What
19 was this thing Dan George was speaking about that nobody
20 has ever heard of? This indifference occurred even though
21 this was part of the position of the Native Council of
22 Canada in the constitutional process. This begs the
23 question: "If an editor of a major newspaper does not know
24 of urban self-government then how will the rest of
25 Canadians know about it?"

26 Needless to say the article was never published

1 and the concept of urban self-government remains just that:
2 a concept. Perhaps if the article was published it could
3 stimulate dialogue amongst all, the goal being
4 cross-fertilization between the Native and non-Native
5 communities. We cannot learn from each other if we do
6 not begin the exercise of talking.

7 The disbelief and indifference of the newspaper
8 editor is symptomatic of the apathy and misunderstanding
9 urban self-government receives by political leadership,
10 both Native and non-Native. It must be understood by all
11 that this is not a power grab. The very same problems
12 experienced on isolated reserves also occur in the urban
13 community. Family violence, low functional grade levels,
14 alcoholism, inadequate housing and lack of employment
15 occur whether you reside in the country or in the city.

16 Also, many of our people are leaving the reserves for
17 a life in the city which lends further credence to urban
18 self-government. It has been said that two-thirds of our
19 people reside in the urban community. We are becoming
20 concrete Indians or hunters of the city. As a distinct
21 people we must have more say and control over our lives
22 and the lives of our children and grandchildren.

23 To that end Aboriginal leadership in our community
24 formed a fledgling Unity Committee. The basic premise
25 behind the formation of this committee was a need to become
26 more complementary of each other rather than fighting over

1 meagre funding dollars. In short, taking the holistic
2 approach to service delivery practised in-house at the
3 friendship centre, and try and transposing this to the
4 larger community.

5 Representation on this committee is from the
6 Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, the friendship centre,
7 United Native Nations, and the Metis community. Although
8 this committee is still in its infancy stages we have been
9 successful just because we have started to communicate.

10 We are not without our detractors, though. Some feel
11 the process is not inclusive in nature, while others do
12 not see the relevance of such an entity. We will continue
13 to persevere and lead by example as we feel we are on the
14 right path. If we cannot speak freely to one another in
15 an atmosphere free of competition, then how can we purport
16 to govern ourselves? It is this question that keeps our
17 organization at the table and confident we will succeed
18 in our mutual endeavours.

19 I could go on and on espousing the virtues of the
20 friendship centre movement, yet we have limited time to
21 address the Commission. With that in mind I will relay
22 the guiding principles we feel are paramount to the
23 successful implementation of any form of urban
24 self-governance.

25 1. For the process to be successful it must be
26 bottom-up driven. This ensures the process is owned by

1 the community and empowering to the participants.

2 As I said earlier, I feel very uncomfortable
3 coming here and saying "This is how our friendship centre
4 says it should happen," in the absence of having a community
5 consultation process.

6 2. Secondly, that contribution agreements be
7 investigated immediately as an alternate form of funding.

8 This would allow greater latitude to service providers
9 and also lend itself more effectively to long-term
10 programming.

11 What we are seeing now is that we are being
12 hindered by government of the day to do things the way
13 they want to do it. And I think so often in Indian country
14 we have tried to put square pegs in round holes and haven't
15 met with very much success in dealing with the problems
16 that we face as a people.

17 Additionally, we are always doing short-term
18 programming, six (6) months to a year, and we can't get
19 any long-term programming that can take a person from
20 square one and take him up to square twelve and do something
21 substantive with them.

22 3. Thirdly, that in any self-governance discussion
23 the urban Aboriginal be actively involved.

24 An example in B.C. is the creation of policy tables
25 which to this point do not include the urban Aboriginal
26 community. I believe they have a First Nations policy

1 table and they have a Metis policy table, but nothing
2 specific to the urban Aboriginal person. And I have had
3 some discussions with Deputy Minister Gary Wouters of
4 Aboriginal Affairs in this regard and he has assured me
5 that they are looking into this.

6 4. Fourthly, that an extensive community
7 consultation process occur which includes all parties:
8 women, youth, Elders, as well as the larger non-Native
9 community.

10 5. Number five, that whatever form of governance is
11 developed in the urban Aboriginal community it be
12 respectful of the First Nations aspirations for same.

13 We are not here to suggest that what we want should
14 be at the expense of First Nations' aspirations. What
15 we are saying is that we need an alternate form of
16 governance that will meet our unique needs in the urban
17 setting.

18 6. Number six, that alternative forms of governance
19 be investigated for these groups who require or request
20 a parallel process.

21 It is our opinion at the friendship centre that
22 people should have choices and they should not be coopted
23 into a process that they do not feel comfortable being
24 a part of. So, in that regard we feel that some kind of
25 alternate avenue should be available to them.

26 In closing this presentation is a beginning of

1 a rebirth of Aboriginal culture across this country and
2 certainly in this community. If we are to truly unite
3 as a country we must avoid at all costs confrontational
4 activities such as Oka. While I am not criticizing or
5 passing judgment on what happened there, we must strive
6 for a more amicable solution to our problems. After all,
7 Aboriginal culture is founded on the precepts of
8 friendship, mutual respect and harmony. It is our opinion
9 that we must go back to our grass roots and begin to practice
10 the very traditions that have guided us since time
11 immemorial. Only then will we be able to take our rightful
12 place in Canadian society.

13 Mussi cho.

14 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Mr. Chairman, members of the
15 Royal Commission, ladies and gentlemen, education is a
16 force, a force to change the world. The success of the
17 Prince George Native Learning Centre is based on its
18 commitment to provide meaningful learning opportunities
19 to the Aboriginal community. Our programs are developed
20 for the community from which they are derived.

21 Our community-centred approach reflects the
22 following four (4) philosophies: holistic learning,
23 empowerment, relevance and healing.

24 **Holistic Learning** - The learning environment and the
25 process of education facilitates development of the whole
26 person. We work toward sustaining safe, challenging

1 environments that foster physical, emotional,
2 intellectual and spiritual development.

3 **Empowerment** - Learning is an interactive process. The
4 teacher is also the learner. The learner may be the
5 teacher. In the process of education we validate the lives
6 and experiences of the learner and we continuously engage
7 them in validation of our programs through dialogue and
8 feedback.

9 **Relevance** - Curriculum is based in the lives of our learners
10 and in the community. We recognize culture as being the
11 contextual base through which learners make meaning of
12 new knowledge and experience.

13 **Healing** - For many adult learners the process of healing
14 is integral to the process of learning. The Prince George
15 Native Friendship Centre provides a challenge to begin
16 the healing process in a safe, supporting environment in
17 the context of the whole learning experience.

18 We are successful because we are different. We
19 are different because the Aboriginal community wants
20 success. In the Prince George Native Friendship Centre
21 education has a wider meaning than in the mainstream
22 system. Learners in each program have access to all the
23 services -- health, social, cultural and recreational --
24 that the centre offers. The trust relationship need only
25 be established once.

26 When learners finish with our programs they have

1 the same access to service. In this way they are supported
2 through informal follow-up and they maintain a
3 relationship with the centre.

4 In the classroom emphasis is placed on
5 relationships of trust and respect. Participants feel
6 support in expressing themselves, support they had not
7 necessarily felt in other classroom situations. Our
8 emphasis on the concept of "participant" rather than the
9 traditional education term "student" reflects a commitment
10 to see learners as more than passive receptors of expert
11 knowledge. Learners actively participate in the process
12 of their learning. This process is facilitated by our
13 instructors.

14 Again, we have tried to move away from the concept
15 of teacher and expert, to the concept of facilitator.
16 Instead of lecturing, our instructors work to facilitate
17 the learning of participants. They are catalysts and
18 change agents, leaders and role models. Instructors
19 engage participants in the process of education rather
20 than concentrating on its product.

21 In the classroom we provide the opportunities for
22 participants to take responsibility for their own
23 learning. Through a positive trust environment we provide
24 the empowerment and support so that participants can
25 actively pursue their learning vision.

26 In the classroom environment group support is

1 essential to the progress of the learner, whether formally
2 through the process of our touchback circle and planned
3 activities or through informal activities such as potluck
4 luncheons, participants develop a community of mutual
5 support. Positive friendships are struck and continued
6 long after the classroom program has finished.

7 The last classroom-based process that works
8 successfully is flexibility. When a participant enters
9 one of our programs they are invited to participate in
10 a group of core activities that relate to the intent of
11 the program. Rather, then, than the content
12 curriculum-based approach which sets the learning path
13 we have built flexibility into our model to reflect
14 differing group and individual needs. This reflects our
15 ability and our philosophical intent to change. This is
16 a contradiction for an institution. Institutions become
17 what becomes institutional norms. Here the process of
18 change is natural in peoples' minds.

19 Community networks are an essential part of our
20 success. As often as possible we work to bring the
21 community into the classroom and to bring the classroom
22 into the community.

23 We have developed partnerships with other
24 educators in the community, including the local college
25 and school district. We are partnered with the opening
26 learning agency and with other Aboriginal education

1 institutes through the First Nations Post-Secondary
2 Education Committee. These partnerships reflect a need
3 for accreditation and a philosophy that sees networking
4 as essential to the whole learning process.

5 **MR. VINCENT PRINCE:** Education is a force to
6 change the world.

7 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** Could I ask people to
8 re-introduce themselves for the record, please, so that
9 we know who has actually delivered the presentations, if
10 you do not mind?

11 **MR. VINCENT PRINCE:** Vincent Prince, with Project
12 Refocus.

13 Education is a force to change the world.

14 Today I would like to talk to you and increase
15 your awareness of the educational programs available at
16 the Prince George Native Friendship Centre.

17 There are currently four (4) main education
18 programs at the NFC: the longest running to date is
19 Project Refocus, a program to refocus adult participants
20 on getting into or back into the work force; S.T.A.R.T.,
21 a stay in school initiative program for youth 12 to 18
22 years of age; N.E.T., Native Entrepreneurial Training --
23 unlike its abbreviation N.E.T. drew together people with
24 similar goals and dreams; and most recently C.C.P.P.,
25 College and Career Preparation program, an exciting new
26 field for the NFC in that the C.C.P.P. is the first program

1 taken on by the NFC that is geared towards tapping into
2 the nominal role, a continuous source of funding for
3 education in B.C.

4 The NFC has always tried, and succeeded in many
5 cases, to provide relevant, high-demand education programs
6 to the Native community in and around Prince George. All
7 four (4) of the education programs mentioned work with
8 the concept of the medicine wheel or the healing circle
9 or the circle of life, which include looking at areas of
10 the mental, spiritual, physical and emotional of each
11 participant.

12 Project Refocus is currently a 24-week program
13 and has two (2) intakes per year. The mandate is that
14 of job preparation for Native adults. Project Refocus
15 started in April of 1989. The program includes academic
16 upgrading up to the G.E.D. level. The academic
17 responsibilities also include education and counselling,
18 higher educational planning and assistance.

19 There is a comprehensive living skills component
20 which covers not only areas of employment readiness but
21 a lot of areas of personal development and growth, such
22 as -- relating to the emotional -- anger management, role
23 playing and respecting confidentiality. The three (3)
24 work placement situations are spaced throughout the
25 program -- weeks number 7, 12 and 13 and weeks 21 to 24 --
26 to help facilitate a solid employment readiness at the

1 end of the program.

2 The program has seen over 160 participants pass
3 through its doors with a consistent increase in
4 applications received.

5 The drive for a youth program to deal with student
6 attrition from the public education system saw the
7 development of the S.T.A.R.T. program. S.T.A.R.T., a stay
8 in school initiative program, started in May of 1991 with
9 approximately 75 participants passing through the program
10 to date. The target of S.T.A.R.T. is the Aboriginal youth
11 12 to 18 years of age in the Prince George area.

12 The focus of S.T.A.R.T. is to address the various
13 issues affecting the youths who have dropped out of school
14 or who have a hard time adjusting to the traditional public
15 school learning environment. The design is to address
16 social and emotional issues relevant to this target group.

17 Some of the issues addressed are:

18 !sexual abuse

19 !unstable home environment

20 !self-esteem

21 !alcohol and drug abuse and addiction, and

22 !cultural discrimination.

23 After a few years of success with Project Refocus
24 and the S.T.A.R.T. program the demand for business training
25 was met with the N.E.T. program, Native Entrepreneurial
26 Training. The twist with this program is that it is geared

1 toward training Natives to set up, run and be successful
2 in their own businesses. N.E.T. is a 42-week
3 entrepreneurial training program designed to bring about
4 positive changes for Native individuals wishing to achieve
5 self-reliance.

6 The N.E.T. program, much like S.T.A.R.T. and
7 Refocus, is holistic in its approach, embracing the
8 participant as a combination of the mental, emotional,
9 physical and spiritual. The early stages of N.E.T. are
10 devoted to self-discovery and personal growth, then move
11 into academics and business concepts.

12 The most recent of the education programs is the
13 C.C.P.P., College and Career Preparation Program, college
14 prep. The college prep course is the first long-term
15 program at the NFC, two (2) years. The mandate is that
16 of entry level college and university transfer. The
17 college prep program has a very comprehensive life skills
18 and communication components. They are members of the
19 Talking Circle Toastmasters Club, along with participants
20 of N.E.T. and some staff at the NFC. The program moves
21 quickly into academics and career preparation. The
22 academic components will look closely at a lot of the issues
23 that affect Native peoples of today such as land claims,
24 self-government and community healing.

25 The academic components will also prepare the
26 participants for further college or university training

1 in the fields of social services, social science and
2 education. The Prince George Native Friendship Centre
3 is not only one of the leading providers of education with
4 Project Refocus, S.T.A.R.T., N.E.T. and C.C.P.P., but is
5 also a frontrunner in training future educators and
6 community resource people with programs that are holistic,
7 relevant, empowering and healing. The Prince George
8 Native Friendship Centre is a force that will continue
9 to have a positive impact on Aboriginal people.

10 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:** Barry Seymour, social and
11 health presentation to the Royal Commission.

12 We would like the Commission to walk with us
13 through an example of a family case that is unfortunately
14 all too typical of many families who access services
15 offered by an urban organization.

16 We feel this will not only demonstrate the issues
17 but also the philosophies and strategies to assist families
18 and communities to truly address the multi-level crises
19 we all witness on a day to day basis.

20 **Scenario:**

21 **Daughter:** Age: 15 1/2 years old

22 Her first contact with organization is through the
23 streetworkers. (Reconnect Program) Her disclosure
24 occurs of sexual abuse by father when she was nine (9)
25 years old, also that her uncle, her mother's brother,
26 sexually abused her recently and mother did not believe

1 her that the incident occurred. Consequently she ran away
2 and is presently on the street. She is experimenting with
3 heavy drugs and alcohol. She is involved in prostitution
4 to support dependencies. She is talking about moving to
5 Vancouver. She is very concerned that her father is to
6 be released from a federal institution back into the
7 community.

8 **Mother:** Age: 33 years old
9 Has been involved with the organization on a sporadic basis
10 for substance abuse and pre-natal counselling. She is
11 an adult survivor of sexual abuse. She currently is
12 abusing drugs and alcohol. She has been welfare dependent
13 most of her life. She is presently four (4) months
14 pregnant. She grew up on a reserve but left home at an
15 early age. Her mother and father attended residential
16 school. She is an Adult Child of Alcoholics. She has
17 a Grade 7 education. Her desire to confront issues but
18 is unsure of herself due to confusion, shame, guilt, and
19 accessibility to services.

20 **Father:** Age: 45 years old
21 Has had contact with the organization through a local
22 federal parole officer inquiring for residency at the
23 halfway house when released on parole. He is a recovering
24 alcoholic. He is an adult survivor of sexual abuse and
25 an abuser. He has a sporadic work history. He is a logger
26 by trade. He is not in a state of denial. He is a Grade

1 12 graduate, however is functioning at a Grade 9 level.

2 He has received rudimentary programming while in the
3 correction system. He received a seven-year sentence for
4 sexual molestation of a minor, serving five years and is
5 presently being considered for parole. There has been
6 no contact with the victim. He attended residential
7 school where he was sexually abused.

8 **Son:** Age: 9 years old

9 He has had no direct contact with the organization,
10 however, background was provided from mother during
11 counselling sessions. He has been determined as a Fetal
12 Alcohol Syndrome child. He has been in short-term care
13 with the Ministry of Social Services on several occasions.

14 He has major behavioural challenges. He is in special
15 programming in the public school system. He has no
16 self-esteem and has no support mechanism. His sister
17 always took care of him. Doesn't know his dad.

18 **Uncle:** Age: 37 years old (mother's brother)

19 Has had no contact with the organization. He is a heavy
20 drug abuser (needles). Has a criminal record, primarily
21 for robberies and violence. He graduated from public high
22 school system with honours, with one year university
23 transfer courses. He was physically, emotionally and
24 sexually abused by father. He is an adult child of an
25 alcoholic. He recently sexually abused niece while
26 intoxicated. He is presently in denial; feels guilt for

1 his abuse of niece. He is presently facing charges but
2 hasn't went to court to date. He is unemployed and lives
3 on and off reserve.

4 **Grandparents:**

5 (mother's side) Grandmother 60 years old

6 Grandfather 62 years old

7 Has had no contact with the organization. Both went to
8 residential school. Grandpa was sexually abused. Both
9 grew up on separate isolated reserves, both brought up
10 traditionally by grandparents. They no longer are
11 substance abusers, however did abuse until 10 years ago.

12 They are very religious, to a point where their attitude
13 is that solutions can only be found through prayer.

14 Grandpa sexually abused all five (5) children. Grandma
15 was a passive abuser. Both in a state of denial. Both
16 dealing with guilt, trauma and grief of the loss of two
17 (2) of their children: one son overdosed on heroin on the
18 streets of Vancouver at the age of 25; another son committed
19 suicide 11 years ago. They have a daughter that
20 disappeared for a couple of years and turned up on the
21 streets of Vancouver. She was a heavy drug user and
22 contracted the HIV virus. Now she wants to return to her
23 home community but is not allowed to.

24 As we have illustrated, these individuals and
25 families present many issues that must be addressed in
26 order that the family are able to heal and function as

1 a healthy unit. The Prince George Native Friendship
2 Centre, through its myriad of services, can assist families
3 such as this one. In general our solutions for this family
4 would include:

5 -a continuum of services that is fully accessible to all
6 members of the Aboriginal community.

7 -this continuum includes services which assist all four
8 (4) aspects of a person: the mental, physical,
9 emotional and spiritual.

10 -services that focus on the long-term solutions

11 -solutions that recognize the traditional family systems
12 rather than the splintered approaches to the
13 family unit

14 -Aboriginal traditions and wisdom must be in the forefront
15 of these solutions.

16 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Mary Clifford, Director of
17 Health Services.

18 For each member of the family presented today
19 individual strategies must also be employed in order for
20 each person to heal individually and for them to reunite
21 as a healthy family unit. The strategies presented today
22 are long-term and integrated. Family members will be
23 assisted to continue healing from the first point of
24 contact and throughout an intensive time period. This
25 healing is based on Aboriginal wisdom, traditions and
26 values base and must continue throughout the life of each

1 individual in order for it to truly stop the cycle of
2 disfunction and abuse. Specifically, strategies for this
3 family would include:

4 **Daughter:**

5 For the daughter, she would begin accessing
6 counselling and crisis support through the streetworkers.

7 They would refer her to other programs that are
8 appropriate, specifically the youth drug and alcohol, the
9 Sexual Abuse Treatment Service. They would fulfil an
10 advocacy role. They look at reunification of the family
11 and start that, as well as provide alternate healthy
12 activities for this young person.

13 The youth drug and alcohol counsellor would help
14 her to deal with her dependencies. Perhaps she would
15 access team support groups around relationships and
16 dating. The Sexual Abuse Treatment Service. She would
17 receive counselling for her survivor issues. At one point
18 she would be counselling with her family, specifically
19 her mother, her father and her uncle who have been abusers.

20 She would also experience some cultural reformation in
21 that program.

22 The AIDS prevention program would also provide
23 service around counselling safe sex practices and probably
24 testing because she has been on the street.

25 The S.T.A.R.T. program or stay in school
26 initiative would help her reconnect with education and

1 hopefully reintegrate her into the mainstream education
2 or other alternate activities.

3 The mother would access drug and alcohol
4 counselling, continue the drug and alcohol counselling
5 to work on her issues and access a women's support group
6 and certainly work on her victimization as a child.
7 Through the Sexual Abuse Treatment Service she would be
8 able to take individual counselling as well as be involved
9 with group counselling around survivor, parenting, human
10 sexuality, relationships, mother and daughter
11 counselling, and after she has healed some she could become
12 a peer tutor or sponsor for another woman in the same
13 situation. She would also work on her family of origin
14 issues, working with her own mother and father and brothers
15 to overcome their dysfunctions. Further along in her
16 healing process she would probably want to access some
17 education programs to fulfil her goal to become a Drug
18 and Alcohol Counsellor. This may include Project Refocus
19 or College and Career Prep.

20 The father would return to the community and be
21 housed in a transitional phase in the halfway house and
22 that would be to reintegrate him into the community. We
23 have an in-house Elder counsellor that is available to
24 this man and also he would receive referrals to all
25 appropriate programs within the community of Prince George
26 and within the centre. He would access the healing circle

1 for men: that would be group counselling around his sexual
2 abuser behaviours as well as cultural reformation and
3 guidance by a spiritual advisor and Elder.

4 He would most certainly be involved with abuser
5 treatment through the Sexual Abuse Treatment Service.
6 Also, family therapy with his wife and his victim who is
7 his daughter. He would also take some parenting and human
8 sexuality training through the S.A.T.S. program. And
9 hopefully he would also access education, upgrading
10 through the Native Learning Centre, testing and career
11 planning through the employment unit, and perhaps force
12 retraining through College and Career Prep.

13 The son would be involved with family counselling
14 with his mother, his sister, his father, through the Sexual
15 Abuse Treatment Service. Perhaps he could work on his
16 behaviour problems through play and art therapy and
17 experience some cultural reformation. He would also
18 access youth drug and alcohol counselling in a pro-active
19 manner. He would have a peer counsellor and support and
20 hopeful Child of Alcoholics counselling.

21 The uncle would enter into the Sexual Abuse
22 Treatment Service under a legal diversion program. We
23 would hope that he would be able to work in the program
24 and not be put in jail. He would join an abuser group,
25 work on his family of origin issues, his issues as an
26 abuser, and also work with his victim issues. He would

1 also be able to access the men's healing circle, drug and
2 alcohol counselling, specifically around Adult Children
3 of Alcoholic issues and his narcotics addiction.

4 The grandparents we see as very much a link in
5 the chain and they would need to be brought into the
6 situation. They would need to do work around their own
7 abuser behaviours and the dysfunction in the family, work
8 around their own traumatization at residential schools,
9 and also work as a couple on family work with their children
10 and then with their grandchildren. We would also hope
11 that they would access drug and alcohol counselling,
12 specifically around the grief and loss of the two (2)
13 children that died on the streets of Vancouver.

14 The strategies and services we have just
15 highlighted do not function alone. They work together
16 in concert with one another to create a circle of support
17 for individuals and families. This multi-dimensional
18 integrated approach is a dream for some organizations,
19 individuals and communities. For the Prince George Native
20 Friendship Centre it is a reality. This reality
21 challenges us daily to further create a vision that will
22 assist all Aboriginal people who walk through our doors.

23 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:** Barry Seymour.

24 The recommendations that we make to the Commission
25 today to provide you with the concrete solutions in the
26 areas of health, social services and healing include:

1 1. Social and health services encompass the emotional,
2 intellectual, spiritual and physical parts of a
3 person, a family, a community.

4 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:**

5 2. True healing must be the primary focus for all Aboriginal
6 health and social services. It is the root
7 solution to the long standing problems that have
8 created crisis after crisis.

9 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:**

10 3. Healing must confront the "denial mode" currently in
11 place within Native communities and political
12 leadership. Self-sufficiency and
13 self-government will not succeed if our people
14 are not able to deal with the intense pain and
15 complex issues which have lead them to continue
16 the cycles of dysfunction and abuse.

17 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:**

18 4. Services must be delivered using available tools and
19 resources. This includes traditional wisdom,
20 teachings and rituals, as well as non-Aboriginal
21 methods which are appropriate to use.

22 This also includes accessing federal and provincial
23 dollars by creating partnerships within
24 ministries and the federal government. It also
25 includes partnerships of non-Aboriginal
26 resources in communities that families must

1 access and utilize. Long-term funding base that
2 is sufficient enough to address the multitude of
3 needs. This base must be Aboriginal-controlled
4 and not at the mercy of political leadership and
5 manoeuvres.

6 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:**

7 5. Creation of a child welfare services for Aboriginal
8 families that are free-standing and autonomous
9 but which are parallel to the current systems.

10 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:**

11 6. Federal dollars, currently inaccessible to Aboriginal
12 people who are urban by choice or circumstance,
13 must be equalized. Federal programs available
14 only to on reserve people are discriminatory.
15 Status people who wish to access services in urban
16 centres should be able to access funding from
17 their home reserve to contribute to the
18 urban-based funding and therefore to the services
19 provided. Urban services should be able to
20 access federal funding for the provision of
21 services to status people just as rural
22 communities can access provincial Aboriginal
23 funding sources.

24 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:**

25 7. Services must be easily accessible. This includes, but
26 are not limited to:

- 1 -appropriate services in one location
2 -integrated programs that provide a continuum of services.
3 A continuum of support, discovery, and
4 healing.
5 -services must utilize the wisdom inherent in Aboriginal
6 culture, tradition, and history
7 -recognition of the dissolution of the arbitrary systems
8 which further divide and separate Aboriginal
9 people along the lines of ancestry and
10 geography.

11 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:**

- 12 8.We must look at multi-disciplinary approaches,
13 coordinated mandates between these services.
14 This includes looking at the issues and solutions
15 from the whole, not the part, the family as a unit,
16 not just individuals.

17 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:**

- 18 9.Information, especially around strategies and treatment
19 modalities must be shared. Again, the arbitrary
20 divisions, power and control issues that create
21 mistrust between people must be challenged and
22 overcome.

23 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:**

- 24 10.The answers, especially in urban settings, lie in
25 creating a truly community-based focus. Working
26 with non-Aboriginal organizations to also teach

1 them the wisdom and traditions to facilitate a
2 greater understanding of Aboriginal people and
3 their culture.

4 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:**

5 11.Commitment to develop skilled Aboriginal medical
6 professionals and para-professionals to ensure
7 that in decades to come our healers come from our
8 communities.

9 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:**

10 12.Funding must be committed to community-based
11 programming for abusers.

12 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:**

13 13.Multi-faceted urban medical clinics must be
14 established, supported and maintained to address
15 the health issues of urban Aboriginal people.
16 These must focus not merely on the physical needs
17 of a person, but also the mental, emotional and
18 spiritual needs.

19 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:**

20 14.And, finally, creation of legal diversion programs that
21 support individuals desire to heal. These
22 programs would be managed, as would the abusers,
23 by the Aboriginal systems in conjunction with the
24 legal system now existing.

25 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:**

26 Mussi cho.

1 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Thank you.

2 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** That concludes our presentation
3 and we will be more than happy to try and answer some
4 questions with regards to it.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** I would like to thank
6 you for your presentations there. They are very, very
7 good.

8 I don't have a lot of questions but maybe I will
9 start with the most recent presentation. Page seven (7),
10 the recommendation number five (5). Could you explain
11 what you mean by "a free-standing autonomous child welfare
12 service?" Is this something that is empowered by the
13 province, the federal government, an Aboriginal
14 government? What do you mean by "free-standing,
15 autonomous?"

16 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Dan George.

17 The provincial government has just embarked on
18 an exhaustive consultation process with the Aboriginal
19 and non-Aboriginal community with respect to an overhaul
20 of our child welfare system. What we find in our community
21 is there is a child welfare system that is set up through
22 Northern Native Family Services which is a part of the
23 Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. But that does not begin
24 to address the needs of the urban Aboriginal. If you are
25 not Carrier or you are not Sekani you cannot access service
26 from them.

1 So what we are talking about here is the need to
2 create a free-standing system yet keeping with the
3 philosophy of friendship centres and working and building
4 partnerships. We feel that there are much that we can
5 learn from the non-Native community rather than
6 re-inventing the wheel, if you will. So it's a need for
7 us to start to take care of our own children, development
8 of Aboriginal foster parents, development of apprehensions
9 where children are placed with the extended family which
10 is something that is indigenous to all Aboriginal cultures
11 is the importance of the extended family.

12 So we see a need in our community. We have
13 approximately seven to ten thousand Aboriginal people who
14 reside in our community and the majority of those are of
15 non-status or Metis ancestry or status Indians of a
16 different tribal affiliation than Carrier Sekani. So,
17 some kind of structure has to be put in place so that those
18 children are not lost in the mainstream system.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** You still have not
20 answered the question I asked, though.

21 Where does the empowerment come from? Is it
22 provincial? Is it federal? Is it an Aboriginal
23 government?

24 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Well, I think the empowerment
25 initially would come from the provincial government.
26 Right now there is a disproportionate number of our

1 children who are wards and what we are finding is, as was
2 captured in the presentation of my staff here, is that
3 status Natives who reside in the urban community cannot
4 access any federal dollars, even it being Brighter Futures
5 as an example.

6 So in that regard we would have to first form our
7 first partnership with the provincial government, and
8 certainly for any kind of service to be supportive the
9 reality is that it has to have support of the Aboriginal
10 leadership in the province. So what you are seeing in
11 the Province of British Columbia is the urban community
12 becoming more active in a political sense to ensure that
13 our voices are heard and not only the voices of First
14 Nations communities.

15 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What is the long-term
16 goal? You were talking about self-government at the
17 beginning there. Now you are talking about the province
18 continuing to empower your urban institutions. You lost
19 me somewhere. Where does self-government come in?

20 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Well, there has to be a process
21 where we learn how to walk before we run. And we have
22 to also build the capacity through education that we talked
23 about that we can begin to start taking care of our own.

24 So I don't see a wholesale change. I think our vision
25 is a form of self-governance but it has to be stepped in;
26 it can't happen all at once.

1 And, again, why I refer to the provincial
2 government is because the provincial government at this
3 point is more open to the urban Aboriginal than the federal
4 government is.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, what is the
6 long-term solution then? I mean the recommendations that
7 the Commission is going to be putting forth is for the
8 long-term. So, if in the foreseeable future, in the next
9 decade or so, we see provinces legislating urban services
10 in this way what is the vision? What is the long-term
11 vision? What does Aboriginal self-government look like
12 in the urban sphere?

13 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Well, as I said earlier in my
14 presentation, I can't sit here and tell you ---

15 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:** Speak for yourself.

16 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Speak for myself.

17 What I think we are starting in B.C. here is a
18 process called the British Columbia Aboriginal Health
19 Council where we have the divested responsibility of \$5.5
20 million in provincial funds that we can go through an
21 adjudication process with proposals and determine how we
22 feel the money should be best spent in our communities.

23 At the table we have a partnership between the rural and
24 urban Aboriginal communities and the unfortunate thing
25 is that the federal government is not at the table with
26 their dollars as well.

1 So, what I mention in my presentation is that
2 two-thirds of our population reside in the urban
3 communities and right now we -- we used to have exclusive
4 use over the provincial pot of funds for the urban community
5 but now the provincial government of the day has embraced
6 on reserve populations. So now we find ourselves having
7 to share that fifty/fifty with the on-reserve population.

8 So, in effect what we have is two-thirds of the population
9 and one-third of the resources able to address the problem.

10 So, I think by getting all levels of government --
11 the federal and the provincial and the Aboriginal
12 governments as well as the municipal government -- at the
13 table together, working in concert, and through honest,
14 open dialogue in a neutral venue I believe some positive
15 interventions can be developed. But if we continue to
16 do this hit and miss we are going to find ourselves no
17 further ahead than we've been in the last 20 years.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Maybe I could go to
19 another presentation that was made in relation to
20 education.

21 Project Refocus talks about a 24-week program.

22 One of the other presentations we have had recently in
23 one of the hearings it was something similar to this that
24 was being done. Does 24 weeks provide enough time to train
25 most people or do you have to have people come back for
26 another 24 week period and so forth?

1 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** In terms of the specific
2 program -- Donagh MacArtain.

3 In terms of the specific program 24 weeks has
4 sufficed. It is not an ideal. The funding arrangement
5 that was set initially for the program was actually three
6 (3) 18 week programs. It was increased to 24 weeks to
7 reflect a need to include more in the program.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm.

9 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** We operate on a year by
10 year funding base and they are very much determined by
11 the funders. More Aboriginal control of that process has
12 occurred over the years. So I guess as a direct answer
13 it suffices. It is not necessarily an ideal. What we
14 are trying to do with Refocus and with the learning centre
15 is to have Refocus in a sense be a feeder to our programs,
16 like our College and Career Prep and to our entrepreneurial
17 training program as well as to entry level job positions.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Right.

19 Does this give them enough to go into some kind
20 of post-secondary educational experience?

21 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** Refocus specifically
22 doesn't. From Refocus a person would go into, say, College
23 and Career Prep where they would do more academic
24 upgrading. It's a longer program. And then they would
25 be able to transfer to university or college.

26 The Refocus program -- six (6) months in length --

1 what we aim to achieve for those who want to go straight
2 into the work force -- and many of our population do --
3 we aim to achieve G.E.D. equivalence so that they can access
4 entry level positions.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Do you have some way
6 of knowing how successful you are with these programs?

7 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** Yeah, very direct way of
8 knowing. We have to keep statistics for our funding
9 agency. And over the four (4) or five (5) years of Refocus
10 we have had roughly a 60 per cent success rate with
11 employment. Probably 80 per cent have what we term
12 "graduated" from our program in the sense that they have
13 finished the program and often will be going into other
14 endeavours.

15 In terms of direct employment we are looking at
16 about 60 per cent, and that's in a variety of employment
17 fields like the Royal Bank of Canada, the local credit
18 unions, B.C. Hydro, B.C. Tel. We've managed to access
19 some fairly good employment opportunities.

20 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Do you do these
21 programs with some kind of accreditation institution that
22 gives you the ability to give them some kind of certificate
23 or something like that?

24 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** Our College and Career
25 Prep program we have affiliated with the local college,
26 a college named Caledonia, and our accreditation comes

1 through them, and also to the Open Learning Agency which
2 is a provincial articulation.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** You do the design,
4 they look to see if they can agree with it, and then you ---

5 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** That's right.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** --- deliver the
7 program and they put a rubber stamp on it, saying it's
8 accredited?

9 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** That's right, and
10 legislatively that's what we have to do.

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Right.

12 Is there some long-term desire to become an
13 educational institution yourselves?

14 **MR. DONAGH MacARTAIN:** Actually, just on Friday,
15 we have the Minister for Advanced Education Training and
16 Technology from the province came and visited our centre.

17 And, yes, the long-term desire is to set up a free-standing
18 Native adult learning institute so that Aboriginal people
19 in the community can enjoy success in the post-secondary
20 sphere.

21 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** There are core-funded Native
22 education centres throughout this province but none that
23 are in operation north of Kamloops, British Columbia.
24 And with the creation of the University of Northern British
25 Columbia which was going to be located in our community,
26 which has a strong First Nations focus, our people will

1 not be participants unless we can develop what we call
2 a laddering approach to education. We give the Aboriginal
3 learner the prerequisites to succeed in the college
4 setting, the college in turn prepares them for university,
5 and the friendship centre is there throughout the whole
6 way for support and advocacy for that Aboriginal learner.

7 So, as my colleague spoke of we are having some
8 tremendous difficulty in getting some long-term planning
9 in the absence of any core funding for educational
10 division.

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Have you tried to get
12 some?

13 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Yeah, that was about three (3)
14 months back. Myself, two (2) board of directors, Donagh
15 and one of our students, went and met with the Minister
16 of Aboriginal Affairs as well as meeting with the Minister
17 of Advanced Education and Training and Technology. And
18 what emanated out of that was his visit to our facilities
19 so he can get a firsthand understanding of what we are
20 talking about. And it is our impression that he was
21 suitably impressed with what he seen there and we are very
22 hopeful and confident at the same time that we'll be
23 receiving some kind of support in the fiscal year 1994-95.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** All right.

25 In relation to the outline of the typical or --
26 not necessarily typical -- but one family and the kinds

1 of services that were organized that were needed, is this
2 what you would like to do or is this what actually takes
3 place? I mean given that the people want to participate,
4 but I mean does the institution that you have here in the
5 friendship centre have the ability to deliver all of these
6 programs?

7 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** It is Mary Clifford.

8 All of these programs are in existence. The
9 S.A.T.S. program will be seeing clients in August. We
10 are still in the training, in the final development.
11 Everything else has been in existence for over a year and
12 the system truly does work that way.

13 So whether it's on an individual counsellor to
14 counsellor basis -- for instance between a streetworker
15 and the youth drug and alcohol counsellor -- or once we
16 get into our sexual abuse treatment service and go into
17 a more of a case management system with the psychologist
18 on staff it will be even moreso that way.

19 The ideal of having the whole family there is
20 certainly our ideal; it may not be the family's but that
21 would be what we would always strive for, especially to
22 get to the root, to get back to the grandparents and assist
23 them in their healing as well.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** You have had most of
25 the services for the last year. Have you noticed any
26 success with the approach?

1 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** I think we have seen great
2 success when Barry and I were talking about this and sort
3 of the ideal where people may end up. We also have talked
4 about families like this where maybe one (1) person has
5 finished their education and come back to work at the
6 friendship centre as a staff. So you see a whole circle:
7 they come in as a client and maybe leave as executive
8 director one day; who knows.

9 But we have seen that happen and so, yes.

10 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:** Barry Seymour. Point of
11 clarification.

12 Many of the programs that we speak about here have
13 been in existence more than a year. For example, Reconnect
14 has been in place for four (4) years. Our Native Halfway
15 House has been in place for three (3) years.

16 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Right.

17 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:** Our drug and alcohol
18 counselling has been in place for four (4) years.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Which is the one that
20 you are identifying for one (1) year? Bringing this all
21 together; is that it?

22 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Yes, bringing it all together,
23 and actually the youth drug and alcohol is new within the
24 last year, and our Sexual Abuse Treatment Service we have
25 been developing the model and will see clients in August.

26 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** So you haven't treated

1 people for sexual abuse yet?

2 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** No.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay.

4 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Not in that program I should
5 say. We have another program ---

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Not in that program.

7 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Not in that program.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay.

9 One of the programs you have here is addictions
10 related, alcohol and drug abuse. That is a program you
11 have had for a while?

12 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Yes.

13 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What kind of program
14 is that? It's not a treatment program or 30 days or ---

15 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** It's an out-patient. So
16 there's individual counselling and right now there's two
17 (2) existing groups: one with the youth drug and alcohol
18 counsellor around teen relationships and dating, and then
19 a women's support group as well.

20 Right now we only have the availability of two
21 (2) counsellors. Due to funding we only have a male
22 counsellor right now. But we do have a men's healing
23 circle that is run by the spiritual advisor, that for
24 instance you know one of the drug and alcohol clients could
25 access if he wanted specifically to be with men for his
26 therapy.

1 They also have two (2) beds in our hostel that
2 are either post or pre-treatment beds; there would be
3 referral and then a treatment plan would be -- but it's
4 not a full program. They certainly will be integrated
5 as front line counsellors in the Sexual Abuse Treatment
6 Service.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Is there a local
8 treatment centre where people could go for a 30 day detox
9 and treatment program?

10 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** There is Chapel (PH) Centre
11 attached to the hospital. It's not a Native focused
12 treatment service but it seems to work for some people.

13

14 We do referrals right down to the Island. We try
15 to match people for appropriate reasons. So, whether it's
16 family or whether it's more cultural reformation or because
17 they have to deal specifically with their sexual abuse,
18 so we try to match them and see if a funder will go for
19 it and try to send them wherever it is possible.

20 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** So the counselling
21 that you would do with people, is that something that you
22 would try and do before or after they have gone through
23 a detox program?

24 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** After detox but preparatory
25 for treatment ---

26 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay.

1 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** --- to go into treatments I
2 think, and then post-treatment and follow-up and
3 continuum. So they may you know have intense counselling
4 and end up just going to the women's support group or
5 something.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Right.

7 Do you have anything equivalent to this under way
8 right now where you have most of the members of a family
9 that are ---

10 **MS MARY CLIFFORD:** Oh, certainly, certainly we
11 do. We have a couple of families that we are working with
12 at the S.T.A.R.T. classrooms. We are starting to bring
13 the parents in. So often we can teach the kids or the
14 young teens new skills or alternate ways to live, but they
15 go back into the same situation and nothing changes so
16 that's very frustrating. So we definitely are.

17 You know for instance I just spoke with my youth
18 drug and alcohol counsellor who is starting
19 mother/daughter counselling.

20 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Great.

21 Well, I am really impressed with your principles
22 that you are trying to operate by. For sure.

23 Viola, do you have any questions or comments?

24 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you.

25 I was really impressed as well with the work that
26 you are doing here. And I guess first of all I think what

1 I want to ask you about is your funding and your operation
2 you have now.

3 You are major landowners. From a humble start
4 you have now moved up to be major landowners in the downtown
5 core and you have a staff of 55 full-time staff and
6 Secretary of State, your core funding, is less than five
7 (5) per cent of your overall operating budget and you are
8 certainly operating with a big budget here, \$4 million.

9 Is your programs that you are operating there,
10 are they mostly funded provincially, outside of Secretary
11 of State?

12 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Yes, there is a real mixture.

13 We almost exclusively -- in our educational division we
14 are funded through Employment and Immigration Commission,
15 which is federal. Our halfway house is funded through
16 Federal Corrections as well. And the rest is -- pretty
17 well the rest of it all is funded through provincial
18 contracts as well as bingo revenues. We have one of the
19 largest bingos in the community which we use to offset
20 our operation and fund some of our programs. So we have
21 been very instrumental in being able to, as I said in my
22 presentation, use these funds for leverage to get other
23 funds.

24 But one of the concerns that I have being on the
25 board of the National Association of Friendship Centres
26 is some of the smaller friendship centres are going to

1 be really hurt, the ones that just run the drop-in centres
2 and that sort of thing in the urban community. A 10 per
3 cent cut out of a \$200,000.00 budget to us is \$20,000.00,
4 which is a fair chunk of change but we could absorb that;
5 whereas a smaller friendship centre that could be crippling
6 to them.

7 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Your comment on
8 page three (3) that you say you feel that what we are doing
9 is a form of an urban self-governance. And I guess you
10 know one of -- you have demonstrated here I think, through
11 your presentation on the kinds of work that you are doing
12 here could be a form of urban self-governance.

13 How would you see that continuing on sort of a
14 permanent basis? I guess sort of follow-up on what he
15 was asking before. What you are getting now is just from
16 year to year and certain programs, and if say Pathways
17 falls apart or C.E.I.C. your program falls apart and all
18 these. And even the public doesn't recognize you as being
19 a service delivery or potential self-governance. They
20 just want to seem to think that there's only going to be
21 self-government in the communities and that's it.

22 What kind of policy changes would you vision as
23 something permanent coming up out that would support the
24 kinds of things -- a model such as the one that you have
25 here federally or provincially?

26 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Well, one of the recommendations

1 that I spoke of was a contribution agreement, some kind
2 of -- through the DIA it's called Alternate Funding
3 Arrangement or AFA. We would need something similar to
4 be able to give us enough monetary funds that we can
5 mobilize ourselves and start moving towards a long-term
6 programming.

7 One of the difficulties that you create for your
8 clients and students when you start to develop such an
9 array of services is a sense of expectation. And it is
10 our fear that eventually we have -- Project Refocus for
11 example has 75 people on a waiting list at any given time,
12 and that is indicative of all of our programs. So if the
13 funding is pulled we are right back to square one.

14 So there is a need to, one, be able to move away
15 from short-term programming to long-term planning and to
16 be able to get the necessary monetary resources, which
17 in turn would ensure the necessary human resources to be
18 able to continue to do the job that we are doing right
19 now.

20 Our success has been our philosophy, which is
21 creating that bridge of better understanding between the
22 Native and non-Native community. Because of that
23 philosophy we are seen as one of the major service
24 organizations in the community and are approached by
25 different levels of government to develop programming and
26 deliver the programming in the communities.

1 So I don't want to just come here and say "Just
2 give us the money, that's all we need," but I think, one,
3 we certainly are going to need some money, but, two, we
4 are going to need the ability to have a dialogue between
5 all levels of government as well as the taxpayer to ensure
6 that what we are developing is sustainable as well as
7 meaningful.

8 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Do you ever see
9 this form of governance being self-sufficient somewhere?
10 Do you ever think about getting into a economic project
11 or something that might be self-sustaining?

12 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Having a tax base
13 mainly.

14 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Over the last four (4) years our
15 core applications for Secretary of State have included
16 a little blurb on there on what is our five-year plan for
17 self-sufficiency. And it's difficult for us to move
18 towards self-sufficiency when all of our funding base is
19 being slowly dwindled away.

20 We did have an initiative of a six (6) bay service
21 station called Dene Auto Centre which we tried to partner
22 with PetroCanada and training Aboriginal people to become
23 mechanics and front line people. But the uphill battle
24 that we had was, one, being an Aboriginal organization,
25 and, two, if you had to go get your car serviced would
26 you want to go see an Aboriginal person who is just learning

1 how to be a mechanic or do you want to go see the top guns?
2 Most people chose the top guns. And unfortunately that
3 economic development endeavour went by the wayside.

4 Another one was NFC Woodworks which was a cabinet
5 company that we had which developed out of a cabinet making
6 joinery benchwork program that we ran through our
7 educational division, where we try to take some Aboriginal
8 people and make a go of cabinet making, hoping that we
9 could capitalize on the social housing market in the
10 surrounding 15 reserves.

11 Unfortunately we weren't able to break into it
12 as quickly as we could have and in this community, due
13 to all the construction that is happening, it's a very
14 cutthroat market and we couldn't compete. So that went
15 by the wayside and right now that facility is being
16 renovated into our Native Learning Centre.

17 So the one economic development -- purely economic
18 development venture that we have is our Native Art Gallery
19 and Framing Shop. And what we try and do, even with our
20 social programs, is run them like a business to make sure
21 that they are self-sustaining. One of the difficulties
22 that we had was that it appeared that our social programs
23 were supplementing our economic initiatives and we
24 couldn't have that.

25 So we are still moving towards that. We did buy
26 1.2 acres in downtown Prince George, a property on

1 speculation that the market would improve here, and it
2 has and we are sitting on that property and looking at
3 the development of an Aboriginal Peoples Complex which
4 will tie into downtown revitalization and start to promote
5 Aboriginal culture in a more positive light.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Okay.

7 I just want to ask you one more question here and
8 it really has nothing to do, I don't think, with the
9 presentation that you gave but I guess it has to do with
10 a lot of the work that we are dealing with, and that is
11 developing a new relationship and the relationship in
12 Prince George as a whole as Aboriginal versus
13 non-Aboriginal.

14 What is that relationship like and is there
15 possibilities of -- the way that I see your presentation
16 here it sounds like it might be some kind of an integrated
17 form of urban self-government, because you are in an urban
18 situation you may have to rely on the urban non-Native
19 community as well if you are going to get into services
20 or whatever -- I don't know but it's because of your
21 location.

22 But what is the relationship like in this area?

23 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** The relationship with the larger
24 non-Native community is a very positive relationship.
25 The one area that does require some work is the relationship
26 amongst the Aboriginal groups themselves. What we are

1 seeing is a meagre amount of funding dollars and we are
2 all starting to compete against one another to get this
3 money.

4 So when I talked about, in my presentation, about
5 the holistic approach that we do in-house at the friendship
6 centre and putting that to the larger community, what I
7 was talking about there is the friendship centre we are
8 in health and education, so the other groups support us.

9 The Metis do a tremendous amount of work in housing in
10 the community. We will support them. United Native
11 Nations does recreation in the community. We will support
12 them. And the Tribal Council does a tremendous amount
13 of political work and we will support them.

14 So that unity committee I believe is going to be
15 the vehicle that is going to be able to operationalize
16 any form of urban self-governance outside of the individual
17 organizations, what they are practising right now. But
18 as we heard from the mayor today we enjoy some tremendous
19 support albeit at times it's not in a monetary sense, it's
20 more in a verbal sense.

21 So it's incumbent upon us to start getting more
22 active, running for City Council, running for the local
23 hospital board, running for the health unit board, and
24 running for school district. To date no Aboriginal people
25 have. So I am not going to sit here and complain about
26 it since we haven't tried to run for it.

1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** I just have one
2 last question.

3 Do you have any of these tribal or these Indian
4 organizations on your board or is your board comprised
5 of just ordinary citizens?

6 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** We endeavoured to try and do that
7 before and it wasn't met with any degree of success, again
8 due to the competitive nature between the organizations.
9 You may find yourself taking some confidential
10 information and using it against the organization when
11 you are competing for funding dollars. We, again, are
12 the only Native organization in this community that has
13 non-Native representation on our board of directors and
14 we have a mixture of professional people as well as lay
15 people.

16 And, again, to ensure Aboriginal control over what
17 happens at the friendship centre we have a 50 per cent
18 plus 1 Native decision-making. So if I have two (2)
19 non-Native people show up to a board meeting and two (2)
20 Native, they can't make a decision without that Aboriginal
21 person to break the tie.

22 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you.

23 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Thank you.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** I would like to thank
25 you all for coming forth. It was really good.

26 **MR. VINCENT PRINCE:** I would like to make a

1 comment on the question she asked about the relationship
2 between the program and the community.

3 I just would like to say with Project Refocus as
4 a direct link from the program to the community that the
5 community is very receptive to the education programs at
6 the Prince George Native Friendship Centre and has seen
7 not only a growth in number of people responding to my
8 inquiries, but also people inquiring of me as to how they
9 might be able to work with us in the programs that we face.
10 So it has grown tremendously in the last year.

11 **MR. BARRY SEYMOUR:** Barry Seymour.

12 I would also like to respond to the relationship
13 question.

14 Being a member of the Lheit-Li'ten Nation I grew
15 up in Prince George here. This is where our reserve is.

16 I grew up through the public school system. I have always
17 enjoyed a very positive relationship with the non-Native
18 people.

19 There is some racism here. If that is what you
20 are getting at, yes, there is. It's a logger town. That's
21 to be expected. With Native issues in the forefront these
22 days people do get their backs up against the wall and
23 are concerned. However, I feel that the work we are doing
24 in the community is helping to bridge the understanding
25 between the Natives and non-Natives.

26 Thank you.

1 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Once again, thank you
2 all.

3 **MR. DAN GEORGE:** Thank you very much.

4 **MODERATOR LEO HEBERT:** Well, it looks like -- by
5 the clock on the wall and our agenda that we have here --
6 that we have come to the point of a break. And there is
7 a social event that is happening at the Native Friendship
8 Centre starting at 5:00 o'clock and it will go to a quarter
9 to seven. The hearings will continue from 7:00 p.m. to
10 9:00 p.m., back here in the same building and the topic
11 will be women's perspectives. We look forward to seeing
12 you all there.

13 Thank you.

14 --- Upon recessing at 4:28 p.m.

15 --- Upon resuming at 7:30 p.m.

16 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** I would like your
17 attention, please.

18 Good evening to all of you. My name is KarKarin
19 Hunt and I am going to be the moderator for the women's
20 perspective component of the Royal Commission on
21 Aboriginal Peoples.

22 Prior to starting it is the local tradition to
23 commence with prayer and I would to call on our respected
24 Elder Sophie Thomas to lead us in prayer. Please all
25 stand.

26 ---Opening Prayer

1 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** For those who were not here
2 earlier I would like to introduce two (2) distinguished
3 members of the Commission. To my right, Co-Chairman
4 Georges Erasmus, and Commissioner Viola Robinson.

5 The format selected for this evening is that we
6 are going to be calling on the presenters in order according
7 to the agenda and it will go from my left to the right.

8 We have a recent addition to the agenda in the name of
9 Betty Ann Barnes who is the Director of Social Services
10 for the Nechako Fraser Junction Metis Association and she
11 will be adding her presentation at the end.

12 To all of the people who are going to be making
13 a presentation I would like to state that you each have
14 approximately 15 minutes and then there will be an
15 additional approximate 10 minute question and answer
16 period. It is important that you speak clearly and slowly,
17 that you state your name, your organization and the topic
18 that you are going to be presenting. If you have a guest
19 at the table, please introduce your guest.

20 We will start to my left.

21 **MS RENA KINNEY:** My name is Rena Kinney and to
22 my left here is my guest, who is Jessica Lafond. Jessica
23 will tell you a few things about herself.

24 **MS JESSICA LAFOND:** Hi. My name is Jessica
25 Lafond and I am proud to be a Native girl because my mother
26 helps people to stop abusing each other and she helps people

1 get jobs and all this makes me feel good and proud. She
2 teaches me how to help other people that are in trouble.

3 **MS RENA KINNEY:** My topic today is dealing with
4 prejudice and discrimination and racism in the present
5 school system.

6 The relationship between the Aboriginal and
7 non-Aboriginal people at present is more often than not
8 based upon prejudism, discrimination and racism. These
9 attitudes are being fostered in the schooling system I
10 feel because of the following reasons.

11 (a) The present school system has little or no
12 Aboriginal representation in the Canadian history books.

13 What little representation there is is either treated
14 as of minor significance or negative. This leaves all
15 concerned in the dark or in ignorance of the whole
16 historical picture.

17 (b) There is little or no Aboriginal representation
18 in the classroom, in administration and at the school board
19 levels.

20 (c) The school system is not made to be accountable
21 to the general public in regards to the education of our
22 children. Our children take the blame if they fail in
23 the school.

24 (d) Aboriginal parents are fearful of the school
25 system so therefore do not have confidence in dealing with
26 any school official. This fear is based on mistrust of

1 past and present treatment of Aboriginal people by
2 non-Aboriginal school officials.

3 The following are possible solutions to the
4 dilemma we face regarding changes in the attitudes of the
5 non-Aboriginal people in establishing a more positive and
6 respectful rapport with all people.

7 1) All non-Aboriginal people that are in service jobs for
8 Aboriginal people should be required to take a
9 Native awareness course as part of their training,
10 i.e. teachers.

11 The Native awareness course should include:

12 1) an examination of one's own beliefs and how they affect
13 the Aboriginal people, and examine the extent of
14 knowledge of Native people;

15 2) Native communication styles should also be taken into
16 consideration;

17 3) Native beliefs and values which often clash with the
18 non-Aboriginal people;

19 4) cultural genocide should also be learned about and its
20 negative effects on the people it is aimed at.

21 2) Secondly, we need to have a place for Aboriginal history
22 in the history books that are presently in the
23 school system, or we need to have a separate
24 history course on Aboriginal people from an
25 Aboriginal perspective. These courses should be
26 made mandatory in the school system.

1 3) The Aboriginal people need to have Aboriginal
2 representation throughout the school system
3 hierarchy: teachers, administration staff,
4 school board trustees.

5 4) The school board should also be made accountable for
6 the MTA monies (Master Tuition Agreements) that
7 they receive from the government. These monies
8 could be used to develop history curriculum and
9 other Aboriginal drop-out prevention
10 initiatives. As it now stands non-Aboriginal
11 students appear to be reaping the benefits from
12 these monies.

13 5) The school system also needs to change its attitude
14 towards Aboriginal parents, if they want more
15 input from these same parents. Aboriginal
16 parents are not without concern and
17 responsibility for their children's education.
18 These parents feel alienated and intimidated by
19 teachers and school officials and these feelings
20 are not conducive to establishing a good rapport
21 with their children's teachers. Teachers and
22 other school officials must put aside their
23 attitudes of superiority in order to open lines
24 of communication with Aboriginal parents.

25 In conclusion, we realize that the task ahead of
26 us is monumental but we also realize that we have to start

1 from somewhere. These possible solutions would and should
2 be the foundation for establishing a base of new knowledge
3 of Aboriginal people and therefore would go towards
4 building a new and more positive relationship with the
5 non-Aboriginal community.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** I wonder if it would
7 be better if we hear all the presentations and then we
8 can just get into whatever questions and discussions after
9 that.

10 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Geraldine.

11 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** My name is Geraldine
12 Thomas. I am the Vice-President of the Prince George
13 Native Friendship Centre. I also work for School District
14 57 here in Prince George. I would like to introduce my
15 guest, Brenda Thomas.

16 **MS BRENDA THOMAS:** Good evening. My name is
17 Brenda Thomas. I am a status Native from the Stoney Creek
18 Reserve.

19 As a single parent I face many barriers in all
20 areas, such as housing, day care and educational
21 assistance. It seems that I have to fight for my education
22 rights. Instead of placing blame I would like to suggest
23 that the criteria for educational assistance meet all needs
24 of Native people whether they live on or off the reserve.

25 I feel that I should not be discriminated against
26 by my own people to obtain educational assistance. In

1 order for me to further my education I have a full-time
2 job and solicit funds from Native organizations off the
3 reserve to pay for my educational endeavours. Why should
4 I have to go through this hardship when I am accounted
5 for on the band list?

6 As a status Native I have the right to obtain
7 educational funding. With or without this funding I will
8 succeed. I have dreams and no one will stand in my way
9 of making these dreams a reality. My biggest fear is that
10 my children will have to fight for their educational rights
11 just because they live off reserve.

12 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** My talk tonight will be on
13 self-determination and self-government for Aboriginal
14 people.

15 My name is Geraldine Thomas. I am a Carrier
16 Native from the Stoney Creek Indian Band. I am very
17 fortunate being status and I take great pride in my grass
18 roots. But in the same token I am unfortunate for reasons
19 beyond my control. I am considered to be an urban Native,
20 but that is the least of my worries. I am also an urban
21 Native woman.

22 We need more appropriate services on and off
23 reserve to meet those needs and to provide support services
24 and follow-up for Native women. In today's new age we
25 are being taught and encouraged by our own Native leaders
26 to further our education, but to do so you have to leave

1 your communities and your traditions behind, which to a
2 lot of us is a great personal sacrifice.

3 Upon returning to our communities our people are
4 left jobless and without housing. In addition, students
5 who went away to study often experience stress because
6 of their inexperience in budgeting and delays in receiving
7 funding. Department of Indian Affairs policies and
8 eligibility requirements have to be flexible to meet all
9 the needs of status people who are trying to improve on
10 their quality of life in an urban setting.

11 People who are Bill C-31 are considered to be at
12 the lowest level in terms of distribution of band funding
13 and post-secondary support. We, the urban status Natives,
14 join these ranks unwillingly. Status women living in
15 urban areas are being treated as second class citizens
16 by our own people and reprimanded for a current system
17 we have little or absolutely no control over.

18 Women who are trying to return to their
19 communities and receiving services after regaining status
20 are continuing to experience inequities because of Bill
21 C-31. This is intolerable and should not be dignified
22 by our leaders. Aboriginal rights and benefits should
23 apply to wherever our people reside and not confined to
24 our people living on reserve. We cannot be left out of
25 the self-government process.

26 Native women of Canada in the past have been left

1 out at the last constitutional process. It must be
2 recognized that we are a matrilineal society. European
3 influence has forced Native women to take a back seat to
4 Native issues affecting us all.

5 Native women representation is mandatory for the
6 self-government process because male Aboriginal leaders
7 have in the past and present not supported programs for
8 the following issues:

- 9 !stop violence against women
- 10 !sexual abuse family treatments
- 11 !child welfare

12 These initiatives are being taken on by women but
13 they affect us all. We must be culturally sensitive to
14 our people and give priority to our children. Aboriginal
15 children are in care five (5) times the national average.

16 Non-Aboriginal agencies are placing our children in
17 non-Native homes.

18 The current framework and policies make it
19 difficult for Aboriginal people to become foster parents.

20 We have an extended family system in place that must be
21 recognized by our leadership and government. The genocide
22 now practised to break up our Native families instead of
23 the fight in keeping it whole, must fit our Native cultural
24 beliefs.

25 I would like to see a collective change in the
26 selection process of our current Native leadership.

1 Living off reserve currently takes our right to vote away.

2 In our last band election held I was told I was not allowed
3 to vote because I live off reserve. However, I took it
4 upon myself to vote as a responsibility to my children
5 and did so anyway. Band custom is recognized in most
6 Aboriginal communities and offers the power of choice and
7 does not infringe on our Native inherent right in
8 decision-making.

9 The Indian Act should be drastically revised or
10 abolished. My own people are building barriers and
11 prejudice against us, hiding behind an Indian Act that
12 we know is obsolete yet trying to appease at our own
13 expense. It must be recognized that Aboriginal women are
14 coming into their own power. The Indian Act discriminates
15 against people living off reserve with strict guidelines,
16 making it impossible to have any priority in educational
17 funding, housing and employment.

18 Priorities for housing on reserve is again a male
19 dominated issue. Single women and children are being
20 overlooked. There has to be more accountability to the
21 membership at the band level. We have to rid ourselves
22 of favouritism and nepotism because in the end we all
23 suffer.

24 A development of a National Commission of Ethics
25 would be a good step in eliminating abuses of power by
26 Chief and council. This National Standard Ethics

1 Committee for our Native leadership would be set into place
2 as a means to ensure the protection of our future children
3 and grandchildren with the safeguards in place to provide
4 prosperity for healthier Aboriginal communities.

5 A solution would be to implement a national
6 databank. This approach would be adopted and supported
7 by our Native communities to prevent Native leaders with
8 a criminal past to take on high powered appointed positions
9 in our Aboriginal communities. This would provide a more
10 positive direction to what is needed.

11 A local, internal investigations process set by
12 a National Ethics Guideline would take into consideration
13 Native traditional council that would be set up regionally
14 to apply and meet the needs in each distinct Aboriginal
15 community. This traditional system of Aboriginal
16 governance was used for centuries and was effective in
17 finding solutions within our communities which our current
18 framework of leadership does not address.

19 An appeals process and a means to ensure the
20 accountability of the political leadership should be
21 implemented. The current system of governance was imposed
22 by legislation and provides only a voice for elected Chief
23 and counsellors, of which the majority are male.

24 Native women are making great strides for
25 collective change and are ready to take up the challenge
26 and the role on nurturing and to re-teach our society on

1 the respect for which we deserve.

2 Thank you.

3 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Geraldine, thank you very
4 much.

5 Please, Rosalind.

6 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Hi. My name is Rosalind
7 Caldwell and I am here to present a Native woman's
8 perspective on self-sufficiency for Aboriginal people.

9 There are key business markets in each of our
10 communities that are being tapped into by the
11 non-Aboriginal sector which are the source of the financial
12 drain we are experiencing. This drain is eliminating many
13 employment opportunities for our people. We need to set
14 forth a strategic plan which will transform these markets
15 into a foundation for economic development and
16 self-sufficiency in all of our communities, both on and
17 off reserves.

18 Women have been a neglected majority in our
19 communities on and off reserves.

20 United Nations researchers are gathering
21 information about the world's women and so far they haven't
22 found a country that treats its women as well as it treats
23 its men. Despite a spreading struggle among women for
24 equality that includes changes in national laws and other
25 efforts to decrease gender bias no country treats its women
26 as well as it treats its men. Among the worst is Japan,

1 ranked at 17, but it would be ranked first if gender bias
2 was excluded.

3 Other countries with lower rankings when
4 treatment of women are factored in are Canada, Switzerland,
5 Germany, United States and Hong Kong. Discrimination
6 against women in industrialized countries, mainly in
7 employment and wages, are women, often earning half the
8 salary of men. Disparities also occur in health care,
9 nutrition and education. In politics women make up just
10 more than 10 per cent of parliamentarians or national
11 legislators, and less than four (4) per cent of national
12 cabinets.

13 There have been many offers to solutions to the
14 damage that has been caused by the non-Aboriginal sector
15 but the real solution must come internally from all First
16 Nations communities as well as urban centres. It goes
17 without saying that women collectively have a lot of power.

18 This strength needs to be tapped into on a larger scale
19 in all aspects which include decision-making at all levels
20 in the corporate world.

21 Clearly the mandate of providing leadership in
22 the vast area of self-sufficiency is coming on strong with
23 the women's movement. Some of the ways to
24 self-determination and self-sufficiency would be to
25 recognize, create, develop and implement different
26 approaches to being in the driver's seat.

1 1) One would be to create our own banks and other
2 types of financial institutions with Aboriginal women in
3 top level management.

4 2) Number two, create our own Chamber of Commerce
5 and Trade.

6 3) Create our own training institute focused on
7 women's issues in the business sector.

8 4) And number four (4), create cross-cultural
9 awareness for non-Aboriginal businesses, et cetera.

10 **Taxation**

11 The right to taxation in any First Nations
12 community is the inherent and exclusive right to the First
13 Nation governments. Any new arrangements must benefit
14 our people, not reduce or erode the benefits achieved by
15 our forefathers in their negotiations. First Nations are
16 immune from all forms of federal and provincial taxation
17 both on and off reserves. First Nations never have and
18 never will give up the right to govern themselves.

19 **Land Claims**

20 In respect to land claims there needs to be more
21 opportunities for access to jobs when negotiations are
22 taking place. What is currently happening is tokenism
23 from the lowest of the totem pole to the highest. All
24 Indian monies negotiated should be put in an
25 interest-bearing account and re-invested. Aboriginal
26 business initiatives serve as catalysts to the spiritual

1 and economic development of our communities building a
2 solid foundation for recapturing our inherent right to
3 self-sufficiency and self-government.

4 With centuries of negotiation our people have not
5 reaped any benefits from the relationship with European
6 immigrants who have come to our land. Our forefathers
7 signed treaties with the understanding that these pieces
8 of paper would not interfere or force changes to our way
9 of life.

10 The time has come for our people to regain our
11 position as a leading nation on our land. The ways of
12 these immigrants has severely damaged Mother Earth. As
13 we move aggressively towards healing the wounds of our
14 people and our land we should seek to instruct them of
15 our ways, refusing to have them change the rules once more
16 in order to further benefit their cause.

17 In closing, as First Nations we have the
18 opportunity to join together through this type of dialogue.

19 Business operations and taking control of key markets
20 and translating these economic developments into healing
21 benefits for our people and communities is self-government
22 and self-sufficiency and they go hand in hand.

23 We are proud to offer this opportunity to all First
24 Nations. By working together we can build a new tomorrow
25 in our communities. When we combine the traditions of
26 our forefathers with the new skills and technologies of

1 today we will change the future.

2 I forgot -- I am so sorry, I got so excited because
3 I was actually going to get to do this. I would like to
4 introduce my role model, my sister.

5 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** Hello. My name is Gloria Lerat
6 and I am former owner/operator of a sole proprietorship
7 from 1978 to 1981 called the "Capri Salon." I have since
8 been re-educated and retrained and I am now employed as
9 a Native Employment Counsellor and Workshop Facilitator
10 for the Employment Unit at the Prince George Native
11 Friendship Centre.

12 I have experienced many years of stress and
13 determination to become self-sufficient, to break the
14 cycle of welfare in my family, and also, most important,
15 to become a role model for my children and my grandchildren.

16 Thank you.

17 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Well done, Rosalind and
18 Gloria.

19 Please, Lillian, will you proceed?

20 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** Thank you.

21 Hi. My name is Lillian George. I would like to
22 introduce my guest, the Elder in our group, Mrs. Sophie
23 Thomas.

24 Sophie, do you want to say anything right now?

25 **MS SOPHIE THOMAS:** I have something to say about
26 the women. You know years ago the women were the leaders;

1 it wasn't the men. The men always asked the women what
2 they going to do. They ran. The women tell them what
3 to do and they did. It was the women that lead the family,
4 not the men. They were just the workers. And that's the
5 way I understand it.

6 How it's going to change now, from the men. We
7 can't change, that's our way of life. The women says so
8 to go ahead, it will go ahead. If it say "No," it wouldn't
9 come. And that's the way it was. The men had always to
10 ask the women before the man could make a decision of what
11 he was going to do. Now they are starting to change the
12 men, to put them first. No. The women, they are the
13 multiplier, so you got to look after them and they are
14 the boss. Nobody tells them what to do. They wouldn't
15 tell me what to do because I know what I am supposed to
16 do.

17 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** Sophie, thank you very much.

18 Your comments are very precious to us.

19 My name is Lillian George and I am the Program
20 Director of the Sexual Abuse Treatment Services Program
21 here in Prince George for the Prince George Native
22 Friendship Centre. I am also a member of the Wet'suwent'en
23 Nation. My topic today is on healing.

24 Healing will play a very critical role in
25 Aboriginal communities and will be similar to the four
26 (4) cornerstone approach of the Royal Commission, as well

1 as utilizing the concepts of the medicine wheel. Before
2 families or communities can heal physically, spiritually,
3 mentally and emotionally it must start with an individual.

4 The Aboriginal people have been oppressed for
5 hundreds of years, which started with European contact,
6 the Indian Act, colonization, residential schools,
7 adoption and foster homes. Those that attended the
8 residential schools were not allowed to speak their Native
9 tongue, to laugh or cry. So, in other words, show no
10 emotion.

11 They weren't taught to love and respect but how
12 to be abusive. They should have been learning how to be
13 responsible young adults. The skills they did learn was
14 how to be physically and sexually abusive. Many that had
15 children of their own did not know how to love and nurture;
16 all they knew was how to be controlling.

17 You asked in your questionnaire about provisions
18 of culture, language and Aboriginal identity in modern
19 society, about the conflicts with the non-Aboriginal
20 society and how this would be resolved. We as Aboriginal
21 people have adapted to the non-Aboriginal way of life
22 without any question. Were we ever given a choice?

23 Have we ever condemned the non-Aboriginal society
24 for their lifestyle? Has anyone ever really taken the
25 time to understand what our needs are, what works or doesn't
26 work for us? Do Aboriginal students in the school system

1 have a choice for a second language? Can traditional
2 ceremonies be used in the school system or work sites?
3 Many other ethnic cultures freely practice their culture.
4 What makes them so different from us?

5 All we ask is the various levels of government
6 -- municipal, provincial and federal -- to ask us what
7 we want or need before making the decisions for us.

8 The biggest pitfall in today's society is that
9 many non-Aboriginal services do not meet our needs. The
10 service providers don't have an understanding of
11 communication styles, family dynamics of Aboriginal
12 society, and are many times we as Aboriginal people are
13 misinformed or misdiagnosed.

14 The recommendations I put forth are:

15 1) What is required to ensure healing takes place
16 is for the government to stop with the quick fixes and
17 bandaid approaches. We know what the problems and
18 concerns are and we may possibly have the solution.

19 One solution that we in the Prince George Native
20 Friendship Centre have come up with is we developed a Sexual
21 Abuse Treatment Services Program, otherwise known as the
22 S.A.T.S. program. What makes this such a unique program
23 is that we have taken the holistic approach to healing.

24 We will be providing treatment for survivors and abusers
25 of sexual abuse, the family and extended family. It is
26 our philosophy that in order to heal an individual family

1 or community of sexual abuse it is of no use curing half
2 the illness.

3 The ultimate goal for the S.A.T.S program is
4 family unification. This program was developed by
5 Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people and services to
6 be provided by Aboriginal therapists. We have
7 incorporated traditional and contemporary healing
8 methods. For example, sweats, smudging, healing/talking
9 circles, ceremonial rights, versus art and play therapy,
10 psychodrama, gestalt and psychotherapy. Our traditional
11 healing methods were very effective before European
12 contact. If they worked then why can't they work now?

13 2) Transition homes in the urban and rural
14 communities. These homes would be operated by Aboriginal
15 people, a place where an Aboriginal woman and her children
16 will feel welcome, listened to and get help in connecting
17 with whatever services she requires: financial, day care,
18 food or counselling.

19 Giving the Aboriginal woman a chance to enter into
20 the workforce, those who don't have qualifications having
21 resources available for them to receive proper training.

22 This would make her self-sufficient, build her
23 self-esteem, as well as equal opportunity to apply for
24 management positions. Get more women involved in
25 leadership training. Who said a Chief had to be a man?

26 Many of the male leaders within Aboriginal

1 communities are very unhealthy, thus makes for an unhealthy
2 community. It is time we started speaking out and voicing
3 our concern. It's bad enough we have to fight with the
4 non-Aboriginal communities; we don't need to be fighting
5 with each other.

6 3) Our Elders need to become more active in healing,
7 being a positive role model, teaching the younger
8 generations about our culture and traditions. Give the
9 healthy Elders a chance to be counsellors in the community.
10 It is our belief that we learn from the stories told by
11 our grandmothers and grandfathers. This has been lost
12 and must be brought back.

13 A retirement centre for Elders that have no family
14 to provide a safe, secure and healthy environment. Such
15 a centre would provide shelter, medication, traditional
16 foods and entertainment and be Aboriginally staffed. Any
17 medical treatment required would be done on-site except
18 those that are life threatening or requiring surgery.

19 In order for healing to take place in our
20 communities we have to start from the very young to the
21 eldest, teaching the young and re-educating the Elders
22 about healthy relationships, traditions and values that
23 have been lost. It is for our future generations that
24 I put forth these recommendations.

25 Thank you.

26 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** That was excellent,

1 Lillian.

2 Please proceed, Betty.

3 **MS BETTY ANN BARNES:** Good evening. My name is
4 Betty Ann Barnes and I am the Director of Social Services
5 for the Nechako Fraser Junction Metis Association who are
6 represented provincially by the Pacific Metis Federation
7 and federally by the Metis National Council of Canada.
8 I am delighted to represent the Metis women of our region
9 here tonight.

10 I, like many other Metis women, have experienced
11 the pain and rejection of a denied culture and we as Metis
12 women must overcome these obstacles and open the doors
13 to the Canadian institutions for ourselves, our daughters
14 and our granddaughters.

15 Today Metis people are being asked to consider
16 and present their ideas on the meaning of self-government
17 and how this should be included in Canada's constitution.

18 As women we must consider these issues and the role we
19 want the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to play
20 in Metis self-government.

21 Metis women have not been included as
22 representatives of Aboriginal people. Governments must
23 realize that male dominated Aboriginal organizations do
24 not represent the interests of most Aboriginal women and
25 should not be seen as acting on women's behalf. Aboriginal
26 rights of women are already being violated in their

1 communities today and without the involvement of women
2 at a political level we Aboriginal women will continue
3 to live in oppressive conditions.

4 Metis women are under-represented by existing
5 Aboriginal women's groups. There are many Native women's
6 organizations who say they speak on behalf of Metis women,
7 but they don't. We have our own special needs and we have
8 to develop policy and find solutions that reflect Metis
9 women.

10 As Metis women we should be working diligently
11 to bring Metis women's perspective to our Metis National
12 Council. We need to reach the women of our regions and
13 learn from them. It is a great honour to be a Metis and
14 a woman. We are living in a world with many distractions
15 yet we want to continue to pass down our culture to future
16 generations of our children. We need to ask ourselves:
17 "How can we do this?"

18 Well, for me it means staying involved,
19 determining our long and our short-term goals and not
20 losing heart. As women we are responsible to tell our
21 children to stay in school, attend regularly, complete
22 assignments and work hard. As women we need to set our
23 goals high and let nothing deter us. If we are good
24 examples for our children they will fly high and attain
25 their goals. They will carry on passing down our rich
26 culture and traditions to future generations.

1 A new day is dawning for all Metis people,
2 especially our Metis women. Our dreams and dedication
3 for a realistic, brighter and fairer future is on the
4 horizon and we can't sell out. With the passing of Bill
5 C-31 many Metis women who had lost their status were once
6 again entitled to regain it. But as Metis women we need
7 to refuse to abandon our Metis identity. I'd rather be
8 free here than to live on a reserve under the imposed
9 identity of the Canadian government.

10 As mothers, sisters, wives and aunts we have been
11 forced to watch with horror as the confused identity
12 imposed on us by our governments has eaten the life breath
13 from our loved ones. More and more our children are being
14 deposited into Canadian prisons where they are being
15 classified as Natives. The Metis always get lumped
16 together with Indian people and Indian culture is
17 automatically ascribed to them. The extended family
18 network, the Metis flag, the Metis art, the Metis fiddling
19 and jigging and the multi-coloured sash set us apart as
20 a distinct culture. At one point in history we developed
21 our own Metichif language, a mixture of French, English,
22 Cree and Ojibwa.

23 Our parents lived in the silent era, an era of
24 culture degeneration whose impact is still painfully
25 experienced today. Our parents, in order to survive
26 racism, tried to erase their cultural identity. We, the

1 children of this generation, just about lost our cultural
2 inheritance. Although many of us did not learn of our
3 Metis-ness until adulthood we were considered by the whites
4 to be Indians, and by the Indians to be white. Is there
5 any wonder we possessed a distorted identity and a low
6 self-esteem?

7 As women we need to promote a sense of personal
8 and group identity. A positive self-concept is developed
9 by how we see ourselves and how we think others see us.
10 By promoting recognition of our cultural heritage we will
11 increase our pride and self-acceptance. As women we have
12 the power to end racism by redefining and implementing
13 appropriate ways of honouring cultural diversity in our
14 daily interactions with our children. Our own Metis
15 children will be stronger and richer people for our
16 efforts.

17 Also, problems affecting Metis women's personal
18 growth must be addressed. Metis women need personal
19 autonomy and independence in relation to men, including
20 our husbands. We have, like many other women, been taught
21 to think of men as superior, to do as we were told, and
22 we usually did but not without great personal loss.

23 Women's activities and interests are often
24 overlooked or disregarded by the male world. Community
25 rinks for example are almost totally utilized for hockey
26 games or for activities for the children. This rejection,

1 coupled with women's own put-down of women, compounds the
2 problem. If women put themselves down then they welcome
3 others to do the same. We need to take responsibility
4 for ourselves, get an education, and learn effective
5 communication skills, which in turn will free us to be
6 assertive and independent.

7 At the same time as we move toward independence
8 we need to be patient and realistic as it will take time
9 to heal the wounds of a lifetime. Maybe the Metis women
10 of this generation won't feel the total impact of their
11 efforts, but our daughters and granddaughters will grow
12 up feeling good about themselves and they will be free.

13 I stress the importance of political power for
14 Metis women. We need to support each other to positions
15 of government that will create change. We, like the
16 Natives, have lived lives of oppression, but unlike many
17 Natives we received no special programs to educate our
18 people within an appropriate cultural setting. We either
19 compete in the white world or are forced to swallow Native
20 culture that for many of us is alien.

21 We need sponsored programs that are designed by
22 us to meet our specific needs. We can no longer tolerate
23 the push and pull forces of two (2) different, incompatible
24 worlds. We need to gain ground in the political arena,
25 to reeducate the educated so that they understand that
26 there are more Aboriginal people living in Canada than

1 those identified in the Indian Act.

2 Metis women have two (2) strikes against them.

3 First, they are Metis in a country that has manipulated
4 their identity and, second, they are female in a
5 patriarchal society. Competitive materialism has
6 reinforced the situation and Metis women, without the means
7 to compete for adequate health and educational programs,
8 experience even greater losses.

9 Metis women and men need to work beside each other,
10 speaking for themselves while creating a stronger and
11 better world for all Metis people. In the past Metis women
12 were the bridge between two (2) cultures. Without them
13 Canada would not have developed into the true North, strong
14 and free. Now it's time for them to tear down old bridges
15 and create new means of communication where the hopes and
16 dreams of Metis women are realized and appreciated.

17 Women need to take part in writing and the
18 re-writing of Metis history. We have the potential to
19 accomplish whatever it is we want to do. By voicing our
20 concerns in the political arena we will let the world know
21 that we are not Native people, nor are we white. We are
22 Metis and our needs are unique. No longer can we allow
23 our concerns and needs to be seen as secondary to what
24 is said to be general concerns for all non-status people.

25 For too long Metis women's contributions to
26 development and change programs have been seen as either

1 insignificant or unimportant and therefore ignored or
2 subsumed under more general concerns for Aboriginal women.

3 But we must not lose sight of the fact that we are women
4 first and while pressuring for development for Metis women
5 we should work in close harmony with other women's
6 organizations to end the oppression that all women
7 experience worldwide.

8 Thank you.

9 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Thank you, Betty. That
10 was excellent.

11 At this point in time we will have a question and
12 answer period and I would ask that when you are called
13 upon to respond to a question, please identify yourself.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** I would like to thank
15 you all for your presentations. It was very good to hear
16 them all, one after another. They worked very well
17 together.

18 I think I will let Viola Robinson go first with
19 any questions or comments she has.

20 Viola.

21 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you.

22 I too want to thank you for your presentations.

23 I think you've done an excellent job here of presenting
24 yourselves.

25 I guess what I wanted to ask you is -- I think
26 it was the first presenter who talked, Geraldine Thomas,

1 who was talking about the problems that you are having
2 off the reserves and being treated as second class citizens
3 by your own people.

4 Just what kinds of things are you experiencing?

5 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Well, as my sister said
6 here, like she and myself both grew up and lived on reserve
7 and we had come off the reserve to get our education here
8 in Prince George. In doing so like we did leave the
9 reserve, but then as soon as we came off reserve we're
10 not a priority any more for band funding, for education.

11 We are no longer considered even being on the band lists
12 and we both have children and they're both not considered
13 to have any priority in any kind of educational or
14 recreational funding.

15 I don't know how it works in other communities
16 but I did hear that in every community it's different.
17 But I know with my band that's how it is. We don't have
18 a priority in housing, in education, in health, in any
19 sort of recreational support to help us succeed.

20 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Do you think your
21 problems with not getting funding support for education
22 has something to do with the education program itself being
23 capped by the Department of Indian Affairs? We've heard,
24 going from community to community across this country,
25 that everybody is complaining about education, even people
26 who are on the communities, because the Department has

1 capped education and there's just not enough money to go
2 around.

3 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Well, what they are saying
4 is, like I said, that they're hiding behind the Indian
5 Act. And in our case and a lot of cases that I've seen
6 they've used that as their rationale for not helping us
7 continue our education. They say that there is no money,
8 yet I see it all the time: students going to school, a
9 handful at a time. The money is not accounted for. How
10 much money do we get and what are they spending on
11 education? And yet there is still people that are in their
12 second year in college that have to drop out because they
13 are going to pick up somebody else on reserve to upgrade.
14 Like where are the priorities?

15 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** How do you think
16 this should be resolved in terms of how do you see -- I
17 think you did mention in here a ---

18 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Well, for one thing, they
19 should revise the Indian Act, like I said. They should
20 not exclude us because we live off reserve. We still have
21 our status.

22 And another thing, they should give us -- like
23 if they say that there is no funding there they should
24 make funding available to meet each individual reserve
25 population.

26 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So, you say the

1 Indian Act should be drastically revised or abolished.
2 But I guess you would rather see it revised rather than
3 abolished; is that ---

4 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** One or the two I guess.
5 If they don't want to revise it, they might as well get
6 rid of it because it's useless to people like ourselves
7 that are living in urban communities trying to make it.
8 It's useless to us.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** What should
10 replace it, then?

11 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** We would replace it with
12 our own people governing ourselves and not even having
13 that. Like taking control of our own lives and saying
14 "This is what we want. This is how much money we are going
15 to have in education and this is who we are going to send
16 to school and support." At least we'll have a say and
17 we wouldn't have to hide behind a piece of paper and say
18 "This is law." It shouldn't be like that. I mean times
19 have changed so much since the Indian Act was written.
20 It's time for change basically is what I am saying.

21 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You also mention
22 in your paper about a development of a National Commission
23 of Ethics would be a good step in eliminating abuses of
24 power.

25 Could you elaborate a little more on that one?

26 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Well, currently in a lot

1 of the communities you have a lot of male Aboriginal leaders
2 with a criminal past and people know these things, even
3 myself living off reserve. And people would complain
4 about it and they would have nowhere to go. They can't
5 go to their leadership or they would be reprimanded or
6 their families would be reprimanded in one way or another
7 on reserve.

8 So we have to have something that would protect
9 us within our own communities. A long time ago we had
10 traditional council, we had our potlatch system. If
11 someone in our leadership did something wrong to somebody
12 in our community he was reprimanded right there in the
13 council with our Elders all present.

14 This is something similar to what I was saying
15 but more of an updated approach. With all our technology
16 we could have a national databank, we could have people
17 on file knowing that if they do have a criminal past that
18 they shouldn't be working with Native people or with
19 children. We should know about these things instead of
20 having to make these mistakes over and over in our own
21 community.

22 Because we have so many different communities here
23 surrounding Prince George -- I think we have 14 bands --
24 and I do recognize the cultural differences it should be
25 recognized and recommended as part of the national ethics
26 guidelines.

1 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So, really, you are
2 saying you should go back to your traditional ways, the
3 way the nations were governing themselves prior to ---

4 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Yes, with the help of
5 technology, like I said. Like if a Native person wants
6 to go into one community and go into a community maybe
7 outside of British Columbia, we would know these things
8 right at our fingertips, what's happening, and not allow
9 that to happen or to take place in our community, any
10 wrongdoing or any person with a criminal record.

11 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** That kind of ---

12 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Embezzlement or whatever.

13 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** --- recommendation
14 do you think would satisfy the concern that is being raised
15 nationally by the National Native Women's Association with
16 respect to the Charter of Rights not applying to Aboriginal
17 communities?

18 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** I think it would be a big
19 step. I think it would solve a lot of problems in our
20 own communities if we could take control of our own
21 situations and be able to have it brought to our Elders.

22 And if there is any solutions to be brought about I think
23 we have to have it within our own communities. That's
24 part of self-government.

25 It's just like saying that if there is something
26 happening on another reserve that's 20 miles away from

1 mine, I'm not going to go there and put my two (2) cents
2 in there. But if it's something happening on my reserve,
3 I would have that right, it would be brought to the Elders
4 or to the council and something would be done.

5 It's a big step and that's why I say like it would
6 have to be supported by the community. It has to be
7 recognized because right now the way things are women are
8 pretty well intimated by a lot of our leaders. So it has
9 to be supported within all our communities to benefit ---

10 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Is this something
11 that is being talked about now in the communities?

12 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Right now, what I've been
13 hearing is that this process would be a good step because
14 we all do need somewhere to go like for something right
15 or for something wrong to become a right.

16 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Thank you.

17 Rosalind Caldwell, you were making a presentation
18 here on self-sufficiency and self-government. And you
19 also made some recommendations here about how you can excel
20 in self-government and you mentioned here to create our
21 own banks and other types of financial institutions with
22 Aboriginal women in top level management.

23 There has been some talk about that in some of
24 the areas that we've visited, especially in Alberta.
25 Actually, there is some talk there about -- we don't have
26 an Aboriginal bank in Canada but they are really thinking

1 about it.

2 How would you envision Aboriginal women reaching
3 the top level management supposing if that were to come
4 about?

5 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Well, first of all I think
6 that the women themselves would probably create their own
7 bank to ensure that they would be in top level management
8 positions.

9 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** You are talking
10 here about women creating ---

11 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Our own bank.

12 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** --- your own bank,
13 a women's bank?

14 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Exactly.

15 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** M'hm. Very
16 ambitious.

17 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Well, I dream a lot and
18 have big dreams. But we could have our own banks. We
19 already have our own banks in one kind of a way, like with
20 Peace Hills and you know people over there in Alberta.
21 And then there is Ruthover (PH) and down around Kamloops,
22 you know they do that trust fund thing there that she has.

23 And you know there is a lot of branches opening up across
24 the country.

25 And of course in the corporate world itself, like
26 with the Bank of Montreal and the TD and Chamber of Commerce

1 kind of but not too much, and the Royal Bank, I know they
2 are really making efforts, okay. They are making a lot
3 of efforts and they are putting a lot of money into their
4 marketing and advertising to promote and to give I think --
5 to give the picture that corporate Canada is open to do
6 business with Aboriginal Canada.

7 But I tend to not agree with that as a business
8 person, as a small business person myself, doing business
9 off the reserve and with my banking needs. My banking
10 needs are not the same as a non-Aboriginal business person
11 because of my status as a treaty Indian off reserve in
12 respect to the GST and taxation. You know all goods and
13 services supposedly -- you know we were supposed to be
14 immune from those. And of course all of the banking that
15 we do you know I would rather -- if I knew that there was
16 an Indian women's bank somewhere, I would bank it with
17 women because women are smarter when it comes to money.

18 I really believe that. I mean you can stretch
19 a dollar. You could give a woman like 50 bucks and they
20 could live on that, literally, like for eons. You give
21 a guy \$50.00 and it's gone. I know.

22 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Is there any kind
23 of a network system among Aboriginal business women ---

24 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Yes.

25 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** --- either
26 provincially or nationally?

1 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** It's nationally and
2 internationally.

3 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Oh!

4 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Yes. Because I happen to
5 belong to it: International Winning Women's Group that
6 is based out of New York and it's Native American Indian
7 that are all business women. And they are trying to get
8 into the market into Canada and they are trying to organize
9 a chapter in Canada.

10 So a couple of years ago I had an opportunity to
11 be in New York with one of the ladies that sits on the
12 national board for this and she asked me if I knew any
13 business women in Canada and I said, "Yes, I have access
14 to a lot of women that are in business for themselves but
15 they've never networked with each other," type thing, and
16 how we could pool our resources together and start doing
17 our own thing sort of you know.

18 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So you really
19 haven't gotten together as a Canadian network ---

20 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** No. Like this is what I'm
21 saying. Like these banks and like Peace Hills Trust and
22 some of these other programs like in economic development
23 that the government throws out to Aboriginal people, a
24 lot of these big, top heavy organizations they take the
25 money and like the women like at the business community
26 we don't see any of that money and we don't have access

1 to that. I mean it's the same argument that we've been
2 having with the CAED's program. You know like I am a
3 bi-product of what can happen. It's a nightmare to go
4 through CAED's. I would strongly recommend don't ever
5 go through CAED's if any woman ever wants to go into
6 business because I went through that. I'm an
7 entrepreneur, though, so there's a big difference,
8 supposedly you know.

9 But I think if there was more programs that were
10 made available to the women in small business where they
11 could access the markets, a lot of their advertising could
12 be done for them, or at least assisted where they would
13 pay half even, to get their businesses out there and
14 networking with other women businesses. I think it would
15 create a really good foundation to start something here.

16 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** I think what I would like to
17 add to that, I found in most cases like it was in mine
18 when I first started a business I had trouble getting
19 financing. I didn't meet all the red tape that DIA wanted
20 me to have. I went to school for many years to get trained
21 in the hairdressing trade to buy a shop and all the red
22 tape, it was just way too much.

23 Most Native women are in the same position as I
24 am. What they have to do is end up going to aunts, uncles,
25 sisters, going to the immediate family members or friends
26 who would back them and borrow to start a business. I

1 had to go to three (3) different places in my own family
2 personally when I -- plus the bank to help me start up
3 the capital to go into business. And if those roles could
4 be changed today I think -- what I want to say is most
5 of the money and most of the decisions will go to an
6 Aboriginal man than it will to an Aboriginal woman.

7 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** So you think all
8 the problems you experienced in accessing funds was because
9 you are a woman ---

10 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** Yes.

11 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** --- for Aboriginal
12 funding?

13 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** It's true. I think men have
14 an advantage. It's true. I mean it's evident. We just
15 need to take a look around. How many you know women's
16 businesses are there? I was just lucky this year to make
17 it.

18 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Well, I wish you
19 luck at least. You have started anyway. You will
20 probably be a role model for some other women.

21 You were talking about the healing and transition
22 homes. Are there any transition homes for women in this
23 area? When you were talking about transition homes should
24 be operated for women ---

25 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** I meant transition homes
26 specifically for Aboriginal women. There are transition

1 homes in Prince George but it's just for the whole Prince
2 George area and surrounding area. And from what I
3 understand there's not a lot of Aboriginal women that
4 utilize that home.

5 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Right, but the need
6 is there?

7 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** Yes, it is.

8 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** The need is there
9 and you would be looking -- have you tried before to get
10 resourcing or funding for ---

11 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** With our program at the
12 friendship centre, the S.A.T.S. program, it is our hope
13 that within the next possibly two (2) years to have a
14 women's transition home started here in Prince George.

15 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** There are programs
16 around that would provide the funding for transition homes
17 for Aboriginal women?

18 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** I don't think it's so much
19 a problem getting the funding as it is getting a location.

20 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA ROBINSON:** Okay. All right.

21 I think that will cover my questions for now.
22 If I think of any I will come back to them. So I would
23 like to thank you for your responses.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** I think with
25 Geraldine's presentation I have some questioning.

26 You talk about the National Ethics Guideline which

1 you talked to Viola about. But beyond that you say we
2 should consider a Native traditional council, set up
3 regionally. Could you describe that a little bit more?

4 You are thinking of something that goes beyond the
5 community, so perhaps for a whole Nation: like all of the
6 Carrier together or ---

7 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Actually, I was thinking
8 of every individual community or each region. Like we
9 have in this region here you are the Carrier Sekani region
10 and if you go into another region it would be ---

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Nisga'a?

12 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Nisga'a or whatever.

13 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Yes.

14 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Just to meet every distinct
15 culture, cultural needs, and take into consideration how
16 they do things traditionally, because not all traditions,
17 as you are probably well aware, are the same.

18 What I said about a Native traditional council
19 I was thinking more of how we govern ourselves as Carrier
20 people. That we have the potlatch system in place, like
21 I explained to Viola, that if there was someone that did
22 wrong in the community would be reprimanded in the potlatch
23 system.

24 To do this, to use the resources that we have now,
25 the technology, we could speed up this process. Everything
26 is there. Everything is in place. We have our potlatch

1 system. We have the law enforcements. We have to make
2 it aware to our people. We have to make it work for us.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay.

4 But what we have right now is the Indian Act being
5 imposed on people for over 100 years. So you have this
6 Chief and Council system that because of the Indian Act.

7 How do we go from where we are now to back again to
8 something close to a traditional government using you know
9 the modern tools and technology and computers and databanks
10 and all the rest of it, outside of the technology? How
11 do we take the people from where we are now back to something
12 that they want?

13 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** That is traditional?

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Yes.

15 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** I think we are doing that
16 now. As Carrier people I can say that our potlatch system
17 has always been there and will always be there and is a
18 big way in how we take care of each other. So I don't
19 think it's something that we have to set ourselves out
20 to learn when it's already existing, if that's what you're
21 getting at.

22 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** I realize that a lot
23 of people in the community still remember how to do it
24 and some people might still be carrying on that. I guess
25 what I am trying to figure out is the process which we
26 could use as a model in different parts of the country.

1 How do we move from where we are now, which is an imposed
2 government system, to one where the people all agree "Okay,
3 this is what we want. This is what we are going to use
4 from now on."

5 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** I think it would be
6 impossible if you were going to try to set a national
7 guideline for all Aboriginal people.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm.

9 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** When I said in my ---

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** No, but in my question
11 I am just talking simply about a process; how to get from
12 here to there.

13 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** A process.

14 Well, if you take a look at each Aboriginal
15 community now and the way they govern themselves -- like
16 I can't speak for Native people across Canada but I can
17 speak for my own people and how we do business here now,
18 presently, and how -- that we don't have a National Ethics
19 Guideline and we're not taking into consideration our
20 Native traditions.

21 But to get back to your question, I lost my train
22 of thought.

23 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Let's forget that one.

24 If we went back to a traditional form of government
25 would you need an appeals process or do you need an appeals
26 process now to fix the system you now have?

1 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Yeah.

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Yes. Okay.

3 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Maybe I can help you a
4 little bit here, Geraldine.

5 Like I know what you are trying to say, like that
6 process and how to get from Point "A" to Point "B."
7 Traditionally you know the way the problems are being
8 solved on the reserve is kind of like the way these circles
9 are going I guess after this new justice system that is
10 coming into place where defenders are being tried in the
11 circle of Elders, and then they are you know handed their
12 sentence so to speak, you know, traditionally speaking.

13 As opposed to going before a judge and jury and getting
14 six (6) months for driving without a driver's licence or
15 something or for beating up somebody or for breaking
16 somebody's window, that type of thing.

17 But with the self-government now that she is --
18 because we helped each other on this presentation that
19 she is making like. The national network, the appeals
20 process needs to be in place because there is so much
21 corruption in our communities across the -- it's across
22 the board. I mean it happens everywhere, from the grass
23 roots level to the national level. And it's unfortunate
24 but that's the way it is.

25 And I think it needs to start at two (2) places.

26 It needs to start at the community level, from the people

1 to the Chief and Council, and it needs to start from the
2 national Chief and the Executive, on down, and then the
3 two (2) come together and they'll meet halfway. Because
4 if we start this databank and start putting in names of
5 everybody that has a criminal record we'll all be on there
6 at one point or another because most of our people have
7 criminal records and they are not like "criminal" like,
8 really deadly criminals. But I mean like petty crimes,
9 you know like driving without a driver's licence. I mean
10 we all know how to drive but they say we have to have a
11 piece of paper that says we can. We have to.

12 No insurance. Your taillights busted, or
13 something like that, or your muffler is dragging. You
14 know stuff like that you get really stupid -- you get thrown
15 in you know. And I know that happens.

16 But we need to have some kind of a list, a master
17 list, of people who are in leadership positions where they
18 can't go around from community to community running for
19 Chief or Council and then absconding with the money and
20 taking off, and then going off you know and -- you know
21 how Indians are. They really got short memories some of
22 them. They forget. And then next election they vote them
23 back in again, you know, like, it's just kind of like how
24 it is. But there needs to be seriously something in place
25 for that.

26 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** I think we got that

1 point.

2 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** I mean like we laugh about
3 it but it happens.

4 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** I think one of the issues too
5 that we were talking about that day we were working on
6 this together was how women were being intimidated by other
7 people -- males or band council members or some men in
8 the community -- into not filing charges when they had
9 been abused. And they would be welcomed back into the
10 community with open arms although they had been a wife
11 beater or they had sexually abused someone in their
12 community. They would be sent back -- they would be
13 brought back. They are being brought back by their own
14 people.

15 Someone -- a man -- talking up for them, saying --
16 going to the judge on behalf of that person and saying
17 "Well, bring him back to our community, we'll rehabilitate
18 him our way." And that doesn't seem to happen. What seems
19 to happen is the abuser comes back to the community and
20 continues to abuse. Therefore, the women and the children
21 and the victims are still there, they are not being
22 protected. In order for them to get help for this abuse
23 they have to leave the community; that's not fair.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** You have brought up
25 a subject I wanted to ask a question on and that was justice.

26 And you have set up the situation of men abusing women,

1 children and so forth.

2 What should happen in those cases? There is some
3 kind of a debate going on in the Aboriginal community about
4 whether there should be severe punishment on one hand.
5 There is some people that are saying you know "Those people
6 hurt, cause pain ---

7 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** Yes.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** --- and they are part
9 of a cycle and so it's going to continue on. Their
10 children's children are going to probably carry on unless
11 it's stopped.

12 And then on another side you hear the argument
13 "No, we're not a society that go around and punish for
14 the sake of punishing people." That what we should be
15 doing is curing these people, healing them ---

16 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** Exactly.

17 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** --- and that they are
18 victims of something that started a long time ago.

19 So, where do you -- any one or all I wouldn't mind
20 hearing a number of opinions on that. What is your ---

21 **MS GLORIA LERAT:** Well, I feel they should be
22 treated, yes.

23 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** For one thing, by law, if
24 they did sexually assault someone on reserve -- a child
25 or whatever or beat a woman -- they should be severely
26 reprimanded by law. But at the same time they shouldn't

1 tear apart the family. The family shouldn't be
2 reprimanded for that. And then again -- and if this guy
3 is, say a counsellor or a Chief of a reserve, he shouldn't
4 have that position.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm.

6 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** But the family has to be
7 treated as a whole.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Right.

9 You had a comment you were going to make?

10 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** Lillian George.

11 I am with the Sexual Abuse Treatment Services
12 Program at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre,
13 as I said earlier, and part of our program is dealing with
14 survivors and abusers of sexual abuse. And the reason
15 why we decided to deal with the abusers is for the exact
16 reasons you guys are talking about here: is the abuser
17 gets punished, gets sent to jail, is in jail for a certain
18 length of time, and then let back into the community with
19 no treatment or therapy. So, our program is designed to
20 give the abuser that treatment and therapy that he or she
21 needs. I mean we all know that abusers aren't strictly
22 males; they are also females. And our program is designed
23 to deal with the abuser and survivor and the family and
24 extended family.

25 As I stated in my report that the main goal of
26 this program is family unification, trying to keep the

1 family together. Our treatment program is going to be
2 through like a court diversion program. An abuser will
3 be court ordered to attend our treatment and our treatment
4 will be from anywhere from two and a half to three (3)
5 years in length to complete the full treatment process.

6 If at any time an abuser re-offends he or she is
7 automatically put back into the court system.

8 So going through our treatment program is an
9 alternative to going to jail. In our treatment program
10 the person can still maintain his or her employment, still
11 stay in the community and make retribution to the community
12 by doing community hours, attend treatment. Hopefully
13 the abuser will be the one that will have to leave the
14 home, not the child or the wife, keep the family together.

15
16 The abuse will be -- again a long-term goal of
17 ours is to have a building or something like a longhouse
18 outside the community, outside the Prince George -- in
19 the Prince George area where these abusers can go for
20 anywhere from six (6) to eight (8) weeks for intensive
21 therapy and treatment.

22 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Something I have
23 always been curious of knowing, some of the presentations
24 made references -- Rosalind particularly made mention of
25 the women's movement.

26 Is there a single worldwide women's movement, or

1 are there differences within the women's movement? And
2 I ask it not really facetiously. I am really quite
3 interested in knowing if there is differences because I
4 mean like Metis women seem to feel that they have something
5 different from -- in fact the whole presentation was that
6 there is a difference.

7 So, is there an Aboriginal women's movement or
8 are there a number of women's movements or ---

9 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** There are a lot of women's
10 movements all across the country, nationally and
11 internationally and globally. Like ---

12 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What makes them
13 different.

14 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** --- and they are all
15 different.

16 What makes them different is their backgrounds
17 and their languages and their lifestyles. But there is
18 things that is common with them as well because we are
19 women. That's what makes it so much fun. And it's strong
20 and it's -- like you learn a lot from other women, like
21 all ages of women ---

22 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm.

23 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** --- from older women, from
24 younger women. And in different areas, like from business
25 to the health care to healing to just all kinds of stuff.

26 But, yes, there is a big, big women's movement out there

1 and we are just going to take over.

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** You are going to put
3 us back in the kitchen, are you?

4 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** We are going to put you
5 back in your place.

6 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** The way I was raised I had
7 a really excellent role model of my grandmother, Sophie
8 Thomas. She started the Native Women's Movement on my
9 reserve. She was Chief on my reserve for seven (7) years
10 in a row and she used to take me around on business with
11 her. So I seen a lot of leadership when I was growing
12 up. She also started the B.C. Homemakers' Society,
13 women's group, and that's a big movement here in B.C. and
14 I think it's still quite strong in Vancouver. Also on
15 my reserve is the Elder Society and the majority are women
16 and leaders in the community. And there is also the
17 Aboriginal Businesswomen Group.

18 And I take pride in all this. I grew up around
19 that.

20 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What about the Metis
21 women? What would you say makes the -- is there a women's
22 movement amongst Metis women that is different from the
23 rest if the Aboriginal people?

24 **MS BETTY ANN BARNES:** I think mainly what I tried
25 to express here tonight is that we don't have the chance
26 of having our voices heard. We would like to work

1 alongside other Aboriginal women but even in the case of
2 tonight I get here and we're not on the agenda. There's
3 something happening. There's a communication gap
4 somewhere.

5 I am studying to be a social worker at the College
6 of New Caledonia and hope to go to university next fall.

7 I did all my articles on Metis-ness. When talking to
8 some of my professors they tell me that the Aboriginal
9 people are represented in the colleges, and this year they
10 were trying to work on setting up a culturally appropriate
11 programs at the college and he said the Metis, again, are
12 not notified. So we are constantly being left out.

13 And I think this has to end. We have to have our
14 voices heard at hearings like tonight. This is a step
15 in the right direction. We have to be notified about what
16 is going on so that we can have our voices heard. And
17 our culture has been distorted. My daughters, when they
18 tell an Aboriginal person sometimes that they are Metis
19 and they have Native blood, they are looked at and
20 discriminated upon. Many times they say "You're not a
21 Native," you know. We are Native people. We are
22 Aboriginal people. And we have a history and we have a
23 story to tell and we need to be heard.

24 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Carol, could you use the
25 mike, please?

26 **MS CAROL TOWNSEND:** A year ago in Winnipeg Metis

1 women from all across Canada gathered at a conference and
2 it was decided there that the Metis women would form the
3 Metis National Council of Women to work alongside with
4 the Metis National Council of Men. We felt that there
5 were a lot of Aboriginal women's groups out there but that
6 they weren't expressing our own concerns. So therefore
7 there has been a women's group organized in Canada for
8 the Metis.

9 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Thanks, Carol.

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Yeah, we are well
11 aware of them. We had a memorandum of understanding with
12 them which includes the Metis women.

13 Now are we just trying to figure out what makes
14 the different women's movements different, if there was
15 some way of figuring out what that was.

16 In the presentation ---

17 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Why are you trying to
18 figure this out like in particular?

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, there are a
20 number of reasons. During the constitutional debate for
21 instance the NAC played a large role with Aboriginal women
22 and I was wondering what kind of links there was between
23 the larger women's movement in Canada and Aboriginal women,
24 whether it was all coming from the same source, whether
25 it was two (2) forces coming together.

26 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Who is doing what now?

1 NAC or -- what did you say?

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** There was a larger
3 Aboriginal -- you know the women's movement in Canada
4 represented by both the larger non-Aboriginal women's
5 organizations ---

6 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Oh, okay.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** --- plus the
8 Aboriginal women were seemingly sometimes taking the same
9 position. So, I was wondering if it meant that the views
10 are exactly the same.

11 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** I think it was politics
12 during the constitutional debate.

13 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** And the reason I am
14 wondering that is because what you hear from the larger
15 women's movement is "We want 50 per cent of the power."
16 I mean I am just wondering if gender politics is exactly
17 the same across the board.

18 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** No. In the white world
19 with white women's groups it's different than with Indian
20 women's groups.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, that is what I
22 was asking about.

23 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Right.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** What makes it
25 different?

26 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Well, they're white and

1 we're Indian. I mean that's the first difference right
2 there.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, besides colour
4 I mean what ---

5 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** They're different. I
6 don't know how, they just are.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Are the ideologies
8 different?

9 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** They have different
10 principles. They have different value systems. They
11 have a different way of doing things than we do. Our
12 culture. You know we're more culturally oriented than
13 they are, I think. I mean I might be saying that just
14 because I'm biased and because I'm an Indian, but I can't
15 help it you know. I mean I like joining non-Aboriginal
16 women's groups and I learn a lot from them.

17 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Excuse me, Geraldine, do
18 you have something to add to that?

19 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** I think the differences
20 that she is talking about between non-Aboriginal groups
21 and Aboriginal groups is that the issues are different.

22 We don't have the same sort of issues. They don't live
23 on a reserve. They don't have status. A lot of things
24 don't apply to them that applies to us. So, that's one
25 of the main ---

26 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** There are some things that

1 do.

2 **MS GERALDINE THOMAS:** Well, that's the main
3 thing, the differences between us.

4 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** But the abuses I think --
5 like I know when it comes to abuse it's the same.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm. Okay.
7 Go ahead.

8 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Rena, go ahead.

9 **MS RENA KINNEY:** Another thing too is among the
10 Aboriginal communities there is a saying that has been
11 passed on down by our grandmothers and our grandfathers,
12 and all of them state that until the women heal themselves
13 then the men cannot heal because the women are the leaders.
14 So, therefore, throughout Canada and the States you will
15 see more and more women coming to that conclusion and doing
16 something about it.

17 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Are women the leaders
18 or the bosses as our Elder was saying over here?

19 **MS RENA KINNEY:** They are both.

20 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay.

21 In the healing presentation, at the bottom of the
22 first page, Lillian said

23 "All we ask is the various levels of government, municipal,
24 provincial, federal, to ask us what we want
25 or need before making decisions for us."

26 Is that seriously all you are after? All you want

1 is a bit of consultation and you will be satisfied?

2 **MS LILLIAN GEORGE:** Well, I think that's a start.

3 I mean we didn't ask to be put on reserves. Were we
4 consulted about that? Were we consulted that we be
5 categorized as status, non-status and Metis? Nobody asked
6 us those questions; not that I can ever remember or that
7 I was ever told.

8 I don't like being classified as a Bill C-31.

9 As far as I'm concerned I'm just an Indian woman.

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, start by quit
11 referring to yourself that way too. I didn't know you
12 were until you said that.

13 Okay, I think those are most of the questions I
14 have.

15 In relation to the presentation on the Metis I
16 was trying to figure out how much of a difference you were
17 trying to make in relation to Metis women speaking for
18 themselves. I thought you made a very good presentation
19 here but what I mean is what we are going to be doing is
20 making recommendations to government about what should
21 be occurring in the future. So with that in mind what
22 are we supposed to get out of this presentation? Let me
23 just keep talking for a minute.

24 Are we supposed to hear you that, like other
25 Aboriginal peoples, when only men speak unless they are
26 traditional men and they are coming from a traditional

1 society where they have gone to their bosses, the women,
2 the leaders, the women, and all the rest of it, then they
3 are speaking for the whole community? There will be
4 instances where Metis men are not fully representing Metis
5 women, so Metis women need to have a role for themselves?

6 Is that the message you want us to be getting out of this?

7 **MS BETTY ANN BARNES:** Not exactly.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Okay.

9 **MS BETTY ANN BARNES:** I believe, as a Metis, we
10 would work as a partnership, male and female.

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** M'hm.

12 **MS BETTY ANN BARNES:** What I want is a better
13 opportunity for women. I think Metis women have been
14 extremely oppressed because we have had no funding for
15 education, regardless of where we have lived. We have
16 lived in very oppressive conditions. And I feel that the
17 opportunity has to be made so that we can gain education.

18 Like I paid for my own education all the way. But we
19 need the opportunity to get an education so that we have
20 the opportunity if we have the skills to get out there
21 and have our voices heard.

22 But as far as for feeling a man couldn't represent
23 me, I don't feel that I would feel that. I feel that men
24 and women can work side by side. We are partners.

25 But I know, coming from the family I came from
26 as a Metis and the only girl -- I had five (5) brothers --

1 I was 25 years old before I learned to drive. All my
2 brothers were driving by 12 or 13 years old. So as a Metis
3 woman I was severely oppressed. I went out and my brothers
4 were able to work construction and make good money for
5 the time they were working in. I worked for 80 cents an
6 hour.

7 I lived in very oppressive conditions at one time
8 and I don't think even one brother who is sitting in the
9 audience tonight knows that I slept in a car at 17 years
10 old. And I feel that I've worked long and hard to get
11 where I am today and my goal is to express you know the
12 oppression that we have felt as Metis women.

13 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** Please ---

14 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** May I ask a question?

15 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** We are the ones that
16 ask questions.

17 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** I know.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Go ahead.

19 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** I just can't help myself.
20 Serious now.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Go ahead. Don't
22 laugh, then.

23 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Okay.

24 What is going to happen to all the stuff that you
25 are hearing, all of these papers, everything? What is
26 going to seriously really -- is all this stuff going to

1 get shelved again?

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, it is not going
3 to get shelved by us. In relation to our report we can't
4 guarantee what's going to happen with it.

5 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** When is it due out?

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Late '94. That's
7 when our final report is out.

8 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Then what is the plan after
9 that kind of generally?

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** We provide it to the
11 federal government, to the prime minister of the day,
12 whoever is prime minister; there is going to be an election
13 this fall. So our report is coming in approximately a
14 year and a little bit after that election. So it will
15 be very early in a new mandate. And hopefully the work
16 is done, such a level of quality that you know the message
17 will get across.

18 But obviously if people across the country are --
19 if we are off the mark and people like yourselves that
20 have been presenting to us say "Well, you know they didn't
21 hear us, they are way, way off the mark," if it's not
22 supported by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
23 then it's very unlikely government is going to be doing
24 very much with it. So that's why we're taking so much
25 time going around repeatedly, to try and make sure we are
26 hearing very, very clearly what people are telling us needs

1 to be done, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

2 And at the same time we are also trying to keep
3 in touch with governments. We are encouraging provincial
4 governments for instance to make presentations to us so
5 we know where they are coming from.

6 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** So is anything going to
7 really happen with this, then?

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, that's the one
9 thing we can't guarantee. But certainly it seems to be
10 as likely as any other commission's work because when we
11 got started we were launched with the full support of all
12 provincial governments ---

13 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Yes.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** --- and the federal
15 parties.

16 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Right.

17 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** The Liberals, the
18 Conservatives, the New Democrats fully supported the
19 creation of this commission.

20 So, if we do our work right, if we keep the support
21 of everybody on hand and everybody likes what comes out --
22 the Aboriginal organizations, the women, organizations
23 across the country -- we are getting quite a lot of
24 non-Aboriginal organizations now presenting to us this
25 time around -- it's very likely that with that kind of
26 support that it will receive serious attention and it will

1 be dealt with seriously.

2 **MS ROSALIND CALDWELL:** Okay. That's all I wanted
3 to know.

4 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:** Well, those are my
5 questions. Unless there is any final comment from you
6 people I would like to thank you all for coming out tonight
7 and helping teach me about the women's movement and other
8 important things. And I wish you well on your ideas.
9 Some of them are quite innovative.

10 **MODERATOR KARIN HUNT:** I would just like to state
11 that the information you presented tonight was well thought
12 out, well planned. On behalf of the Native women in Prince
13 George I thank you for your time and your effort and for
14 the courage that it took to come forward.

15 Also to Georges and to Viola. We appreciate your
16 being amongst us. It's a pleasure to have you here and
17 we also appreciate the time and the effort and the hard
18 work that you are doing as you travel across this country.

19 In closing I would like to call upon Sophie Thomas
20 to lead us in a closing prayer.

21 All rise.

22 **--- Closing prayer**

23 ---Whereupon the Hearing was adjourned at 9:07 p.m. to
24 resume on Tuesday, June 1, 1993, at 8:40 a.m.