

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR  
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

LOCATION/ENDROIT: Sheshatshiu,  
Labrador

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"for the record..."  
**STENOTRAN**  
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**INDEX****June 18, 1992**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Presentation by Charlie Andrew	132
Presentation by Judith Hill	134
Presentation by Michel Rich	138
Presentation by Gregory Penashue	144
Presentation by Gregory Andrew	159
Presentation by Ben Andrew	171
Presentation by Lyla Andrew	181
Presentation by Chief Francis Penashue	195
Presentation by Rose Gregoire	200
Presentation by Ponis Nuke	222
Presentation by Kathleen Nuna	228
Presentation by Angela Andrew	235
Presentation by Martha Hurry	239
Presentation by Lionel Rich	243



132

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1

2

Sheshatshiu, Labrador

3

--- Upon commencing on June 18, 1992 at 9:53 a.m.

4

**MR. BEN MICHEL,**

5

**FACILITATOR:** We're going to start now, I guess. And  
6 we're going to start with the opening prayer.

7

**(Opening Prayer)**

8

**MR. BEN MICHEL:** The9 first speaker on the list is Charlie Andrew. He's an  
10 individual.

11

**MR. CHARLIE ANDREW:** This12 morning I want to talk for a few minutes on my adult  
13 education. After 23 years out of school, about a year  
14 and a half ago, I decided to return to school. I enrolled  
15 in the A.B.E. program, Adult Basic Education program, at  
16 Labrador Community College. Personally, I have a lot of  
17 problems writing and reading English. I thought I needed  
18 to further my education. And this year, I graduated from  
19 the Level Two course. And the funding for the program  
20 was provided by the Manpower. I'm not sure which program.  
21 I think it's called Community Futures Program. And the  
22 course was limited to only 52 weeks. So that only gave

StenoTran

133

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 me a chance for that 52 weeks--didn't give me a chance  
2 to finish my high school diploma. Fifty-two weeks wasn't  
3 long enough. So I think that the Federal Government should  
4 look into a way for the native people or aboriginal people  
5 who want to further their education as to their second  
6 language, to give them at least two to three years funding  
7 by Manpower. Right now, I don't--I was just starting to  
8 get excited to go on further, but there's no funding by  
9 the Federal Government for me to go further. So that's  
10 my personal feeling towards this program. I was talking  
11 to some adults who are also interested to go back to school.  
12 So that's my presentation, Mr. Chairman.

13

**CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

14 Thank you very much for your presentation. I'd like to  
15 know if this program--was this program delivered on the  
16 community here in Sheshatshiu? Was it--you could attend  
17 it--you either attended the courses here on site. And  
18 what is the name of the program, if you can--Community--?  
19 It's a program with Manpower.

20

**MR. CHARLIE ANDREW: I**

21 think it's Community Futures Program.

22

**CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

StenoTran

134

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 And you attended it for 32 year--32 weeks?

2 MR. CHARLIE ANDREW:

3 Fifty-two weeks.

4 CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:

5 Fifty-two weeks. For a year.

6 MR. CHARLIE ANDREW:

7 Uh-hum.

8 CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:

9 And you can't go further than that?

10 MR. CHARLIE ANDREW: No.

11 CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:

12 Because of funding?

13 MR. CHARLIE ANDREW:

14 Uh-hum.

15 CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:

16 Okay. We're going to have a look at this program. Viola?

17 Okay. Thank you very much for coming and speaking to  
18 us. MR. BEN MICHEL Sorry.19 Next speaker on the list is Judith Hill. She's an  
20 individual from Sheshatshiu.21 MS. JUDITH HILL: My name  
22 is Judy Hill. I work in the Curriculum Centre here in

StenoTran

135

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 Peenamain School. And like, I'm going to be taking about  
2 Inuit language, Inuit, [Innuamun?]. Well, I've been  
3 working here for two years now. And, like, there's only  
4 two of us working with hearing in the school for the Inuit  
5 language. And we found that we have a lack of staff and  
6 a lack of funding for what we are doing.

7                   We have--I find it difficult to really  
8 say, like--if French and English are protected by Canadian  
9 law, you know, why can't--why couldn't our language be  
10 protected too, the Innuamun. Like, when we have  
11 children--we only could work from--we work from  
12 kindergarten to grade three books. And the rest are done  
13 by the--there's an Inuit teacher that go to the other  
14 grades. But we have a native teachers that are from  
15 kindergarten to grade four, that are all native, that teach  
16 Innuamun to the children until they get to grade four.

17                   And, like, we're in so lack of funds.  
18 We have to collect our material, and we have to make it,  
19 and draw our own pictures and write it. And it takes a  
20 long time, because of--the dictionary we're doing now,  
21 it took us a whole year. It's not finished yet. We have  
22 to have it corrected by September. We have to call a

StenoTran

136

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 workshop and have the people come and, you know, say if  
2 there's anything right. And if we don't do that, our  
3 children is going to lose out on their language. To me,  
4 there're using more English than they're using the Innu  
5 Innuamun.

6                                   So what I'm asking is, is there any way  
7 that our language can be protected for the future use of  
8 our children and our grandchildren? I, myself, have--was  
9 educated in the English language. So at home, I used to  
10 speak Inuit. And I'm able to read and write in Inuit.  
11 But there are some other people here in the community who  
12 were not so fortunate. They just know the English writing.  
13    So if our language is lost, I think our culture will be  
14 lost too.

15   **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
16 Thank you very much for addressing this very important  
17 issue. And you are certainly well situated to do so.  
18 The cultural and language aspect is one of the major items  
19 of this Commission. And we are convinced that it goes  
20 to the root of many of the problems that--the question  
21 of identity, the question of maintaining the culture.  
22 And we are certainly going to have a close look at the

StenoTran

137

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 way languages could be protected into the future, in order  
2 to maintain what is there and try to regain what might  
3 have been lost. Because we feel this is a central issue  
4 that relates with many others. And we thank you very much  
5 for raising it in the way you did. Thank you.

6 **COMMISSIONER VIOLA**

7 **ROBINSON:** I agree, too, with what you're saying, and  
8 it's a major concern. And language is, I think, one area  
9 that has-- people are saying that's really really  
10 important. It's important right across the country.  
11 Your language is stronger here than it is where I come  
12 from. It's just about lost. So it's very, very  
13 important. And I--and certainly, I think the Commission  
14 is going to have to change something with government.  
15 If they want to do something good for people, Aboriginal  
16 people, they have to look at language. And they should  
17 do it right away. So I thank you for your presentation.

18 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

19 I think that you should be congratulated for the work,  
20 the very important work, that you are doing. Of all the  
21 Native groups in Labrador, the Inuit are the strongest  
22 in their language. And I think that every effort should

StenoTran

138

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 be made to make sure that still is the case, you know,  
2 when your children are grown up and when your grandchildren  
3 are around. And you can rest assured that the Commission  
4 is very committed to looking at this issue very seriously.

5 Thanks.

6 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** The next  
7 person on the agenda is Michel Rich. He's an individual  
8 of the community.

9 **MR. MICHEL RICH:** Good  
10 morning, Commissioners. The reason I'm here, I'd like  
11 to be heard out to the Commissioners, so they could take  
12 whatever they--the reason I'm here, I'd like to talk about  
13 four years ago, 1988, in the first week of June. I was  
14 arrested for assaulting a police officer. The reason I  
15 was arrested was I assaulted a police officer. It all  
16 started when he told me to hop in the back of the police  
17 cruiser. And the fighting started because [always wanted  
18 it written for me?], whatever I was charged wasn't--I  
19 wasn't told. And that's how the violence started in.  
20 I wound up being four months remand. And the reason I  
21 was remand, I didn't plead guilty on the charge because  
22 I feel at that time, I wasn't guilty. So I was behind

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140

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 to change my plea to guilty plea. But I had strong feelings  
2 about what happened and my point of view was I wasn't  
3 guilty. But when I went up with the court and I was found  
4 guilty. I think there should be at least--what I'm really  
5 trying to say, probably, is you can't have all--the  
6 government should really look at hiring native people.  
7 I must say, I was down Quebec north shore and I saw  
8 aboriginal policeman down there. At least they didn't  
9 have any problem with the [hiring natives or the island  
10 natives?]. I found that the system down there was suitable  
11 for them, because they were communicating in their  
12 language. And at the same time I was down there, I was  
13 communicating in the same language too. And I didn't see  
14 much violence down there.

15 This charge in 1988, a  
16 police officer came down in a cruiser and asked me if I  
17 wanted to talk to him, hop in the back. And my response  
18 was, "No." And then he asked me again. I said, "No."  
19 And then he jumped out from the cruiser and grabbed my  
20 wrist and grabbed my hair and pulled it towards the ground.  
21 And that's when violence happened. And then I wound up,  
22 being locked up for four months. And that, I feel, I didn't

StenoTran

141

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 start it, because I wasn't read my rights and what  
2 charge--what I was charged with. And I still strongly  
3 feel that I wasn't guilty.

4                                       But--and I'm just glad I'm  
5 here, talking this problem to the Commissioners. So you  
6 can take that to Ottawa and express my experience that  
7 I had towards Canada. While I was in the correctional  
8 institution, two investigators from Ottawa came along.  
9 They told me they were from Ottawa and they were  
10 investigating this complaint about Innu rights. And I  
11 told them what happened then. And I strongly feel that  
12 I was doing the right thing when I gave them the statement.

13 But I haven't heard nothing from them yet ever since.  
14 Because almost every day, I look at the news and news from  
15 across Canada. And all the other Aboriginals have the  
16 same problem as I did. I guess this--I'm lucky I could  
17 speak English and I could probably just communicate with  
18 the Commissioners.

19                                       And the other four  
20 individuals who got locked up with me in 1988 were assaulted  
21 and beaten up with bruises. And the police officer we  
22 assaulted told the other clients that, "If you piss on

StenoTran

142

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 the side of the road, I'll be..." he'll be shooting. I  
2 don't think that you should be--a police officer shouldn't  
3 do the other individuals. He's doing a mistake without  
4 no rights of the aboriginals. I know that the Aboriginal  
5 people have rights, but I don't know how to give them  
6 communication. Even you get--you get only one phone call  
7 a day. And that one call gets you to your lawyer.

8                   What I'm really trying to say, if there's  
9 still government or Native communities should be hiring  
10 native police officers, native lawyers and native judges.

11 That's my expression towards our justice system. Because  
12 I experienced it and I know a whole lot of people in the  
13 Inuit community experience it. But I'm just lucky that  
14 I'm seeing you face to face with the Commissioners, so  
15 they take this problem to the--Canada. And I hear a lot  
16 of people talk about being assaulted by police officers  
17 and I didn't believe it at first, but I believe it then,  
18 after what happened to me. And I believe that's about  
19 all the native people have the same problem with the system.

20 And that would probably believe it 100 percent, because  
21 it happened to me. And this is all I can say for the time  
22 being for the justice system. I was just glad I brought

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143

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 it up, face to face with the Commissioners. And I hope  
2 something will be done with aboriginal rights and the  
3 system. Thank you.

4 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
5 Thank you very much. The justice system is a high priority  
6 for the Commission and for aboriginal people and the whole  
7 country. And we are certainly happy that you could come  
8 and make your presentation. It has been recorded and will  
9 be available in the transcripts. It certainly shows that  
10 there are problems into the system, communication  
11 problems, and also understanding of the particular  
12 situations. As far as your specific case is concerned,  
13 your own situation, it is difficult to go further than  
14 this this morning. But I would ask you to give your phone  
15 call to Roger Farley and address. And we could see whether  
16 there is additional information that we should get and  
17 forward to you in order to see more clearly what has been  
18 the situation. But again, we thank you very much. I think  
19 it is helpful for everybody. So you could go and give  
20 your phone numbers and address to Roger after this hearing.  
21 Are there other questions? Mary? No?

22 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

StenoTran

144

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Well, I too, would like to thank you very much for raising  
2 this issue. What we had hoped to do when we started our  
3 public hearings was to start a process of public education.

4 And I think that it, you know, like, your having the  
5 courage to come here and say what you have, should be heard  
6 by the R.C.M.P. and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, because I think  
7 everyone who is in a leadership position must be  
8 accountable for their actions. I think change will only  
9 come about if people like you and others like you come  
10 and tell those kinds of stories publicly. Thank you very  
11 much.

12 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** I don't  
13 know if the coffee's brewed or whatever. But we have one  
14 more speaker before we have a coffee break, I think. And  
15 that's Gregory Penashue. He's a social worker. Excuse  
16 me, I make a mistake, Mr. Chairman, it's Gregory Penashue.

17 **MR. GREGORY PENASHUE:**  
18 Good morning. I can see that he could easily--he had  
19 forgotten because of the--since I retired from politics  
20 two years ago. And I want to thank Ben Michel and the  
21 group, the panel. When I was reading the pamphlet that  
22 you have regarding the Royal Commission on Aboriginal

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145

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Rights, my concern was one of the articles in there, which  
2 is the justice we're talking about here. And I want to--I  
3 guess, I've been involved in a lot of Royal Commissions  
4 in my time with the organization. At other times, I  
5 thought it was just a waste of time because of the--nothing  
6 ever came out at all in terms of the Royal Commission that  
7 have been--because there's a key issue that everybody's  
8 so protective about the resources, the rights that they  
9 have. Especially the government always have been very  
10 strong in not letting anything out of their way, because  
11 their--they depend so much on the resources that we have  
12 as Innu.

13 I just want to give you some  
14 sort of background information regarding to the Innu Nation  
15 which used to be Naskapi-Montagnais Association. I used  
16 to get involved, not only with just--international on this  
17 level, we used to travel all--the entire--probably in  
18 Europe at the United Nations level, complaining about a  
19 lot of the human rights aspects of it have been avoided,  
20 I mean, violated by the Canadian governments, both  
21 government, provincial and federal governments. And I  
22 think that the more and more--we used to travel using the

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148

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 especially the Innu, even though they've always been  
2 recognized as maybe not smart people or [far-out] people,  
3 savages, whatever you name it. We always did our homework,  
4 but the federal government never did their homework.  
5 Meaning we know who we are. We know what we want. We  
6 know what's good for us. But you got--the federal,  
7 provincial governments have to let it go. Let us be.  
8 One of the films that was made on Father O'Brien, I think,  
9 stated, Leave the Indians alone. They should have been  
10 listened to, I think, in the first place. Because we  
11 somewhat, in the crowded area these days, we're not sure  
12 where we're going to go. Even though we talk about,  
13 generally speaking, I guess, that we're trying to change.  
14 But we'll never change. We were a people who have a  
15 different religion, different culture and different  
16 language.

17  
18 And I want to add by  
19 stating, also, I wanted to thank Mary for the other day.  
20 He was talking, not only into Labrador, so-called Labrador  
21 is recognized internationally. I want to thank her for  
22 appreciating the reason why Labrador has been recognized  
internationally because of the Innu did a real hard

StenoTran

149

**June 18, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 struggle. Because I had to spend some time in jail to  
2 prove that the government was wrong. One of the other  
3 things I heard the other day, the problem that exists today  
4 not only exists amongst the Innu people. I think it exists  
5 for the people generally speaking in Labrador, too, as  
6 well. I attended the afternoon session at the Friendship  
7 Centre on Tuesday. If you have--that a lot of people were  
8 saying both federal government--the federal and provincial  
9 government are somewhat neglecting all the people in  
10 Labrador, which we call [the Seia?]. There are some good  
11 ideas that came. But we also have to be real careful now  
12 how we should be dealing with the situation, because I  
13 see people, especially in Happy Valley-Goose Bay the other  
14 day, when they said that we should be all one people.  
15 Have a different province from Newfoundland, because we  
16 spend so much money and in return we don't get nothing  
17 at all. I kind of like the idea, but I wouldn't go as--with  
18 arms open. I have to be careful. We did that once with  
19 the Roman Catholics priests. We end up with nothing.  
20 We become religious maybe, but we lose everything. We  
21 lose--we are just about going to lose everything, the  
22 culture and the respect that we used to have among

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151

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 there who was saying that there shouldn't be no federal  
2 rule until such studies is completed. So we got these  
3 things to back up the Innu, and half the time, the  
4 government just uses them as a--you know, we did this study  
5 so we could do it. You know, this is the attitude of  
6 the--that the government always have. We did study, but  
7 did doesn't show that we're going to go do a lot of damage.  
8 And this is what I'm saying. Somehow, you're beginning  
9 to have some sort of a, not really supporting this kind  
10 of study, the Royal Commission, because in the end, it  
11 never solved the problems. It only got worse. I heard  
12 one speaker the other day, too, he was saying we have a  
13 real problem here. We have alcohol problems. We have  
14 housing problems. And most of the people say that we need  
15 money. I mean, we need money in a good way, that--to  
16 support ourselves and to be able to rule that money without  
17 any guidelines of government interference. But half the  
18 time, I think, this is what created us. They created  
19 schools. They created buildings. They created monies  
20 to go anywhere we want to. That killed us. Because we  
21 never had to control that we need. We never had--we  
22 never--we have our own rules. We have our own laws that

StenoTran

152

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 been--that's always been good.

2 I remember what I was  
3 talking about on Tuesday, that Eric Saunders was making  
4 a real good presentation. As far as talking about the  
5 settler people in earlier stage, this child abuse thing,  
6 alcohol abuse, none of that existed when I was part of  
7 growing up. Like I said, I was too busy travelling all  
8 over the place with my parents. And everybody was happy  
9 back then. Today, the community is sick. And yet, the  
10 government officials came up here. Like, there's election  
11 day today. I mean, a provincial one. All the politicians  
12 have their posters on probably every street corner here,  
13 wanting some votes. And in return, they forget the Innu.

14

15 I--one of the opening  
16 statements that you made the other day when you said, "We  
17 want to be able to help and hear some of your comments."

18 I was going to say, regarding to that, it's time that  
19 the so-called native people should take control of their  
20 own lives, rather than the people in Ottawa, the  
21 bureaucrats, writing the laws that will never work for  
22 native people in Canada. Maybe it's the Native people

StenoTran

153

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 that should be in the hump--in parliament, rather than  
2 those bureaucrats who know nothing of what the Innu want  
3 or native people want. Half of the times, I think that  
4 we--the people, both the lower and the people with very  
5 little education, and people, the academics, never meet  
6 themselves in halfway. And this is the reason why I think  
7 also, that's why it's happening here. You could--half  
8 the time, they probably only guess what we want. We want  
9 something that is best for our people, our children and  
10 the generations to come. And I, for one,  
11 when I was hearing our president of the Innu nation talk  
12 about yesterday, there are some people who hate the word  
13 of land claims negotiations. I am one of the person who--I  
14 thought that land claims negotiations is one of the worst  
15 things you could get involved with. Speaking from the  
16 experience and the meetings that I went through with the  
17 James Bay people, the Cree. But half the times, I always  
18 feel that maybe that's the only alternative. Because you  
19 can go abroad to settle the differences that we have with  
20 the governments, the human rights, the injustices among  
21 the Native people. But if we do, they cut your funding.  
22 I lived though that when I was working with the

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155

**June 18, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 link between them. And, of course, the thrust of what  
2 you have been saying to us is, if I understand it properly,  
3 is that it revolved around the question of the freedom  
4 to manage your own things. And we realize, and I think  
5 may people in this county realize that the way the money  
6 has been granted to far has brought a lot of dependancy.

7 And that's the reason why the whole notion of  
8 self-government has come so strongly as maybe a solution  
9 for, or at least part of a solution, for many problems.

10 I only hope that people like you will be able to continue  
11 thinking about the means of doing it. Yesterday with  
12 another presenter, we've discussed a bit what form it  
13 should or could take in Labrador as far as the Innu people  
14 are concerned. And these questions will--when we move  
15 from the constitution to a more ground level, these  
16 questions will come to be very high in terms of priority.

17 And we have the Inuit. We have the Metis. There's the  
18 Innu nation here in Labrador and, of course, in Quebec.

19 And so we will have to get down to a level to try to address  
20 those practical questions. And we really need the help  
21 of people like yourself, who have had a lot of experience  
22 and--across the country in land claim process. And we,

StenoTran







158

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 we're going to have to know, how are we going to deal with  
2 this? And we need you to you to give us that kind of advice.

3 So I thank you.

4

**COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

5 I would share with my colleagues thanks for your  
6 excellent presentation. Now, when you talked about what  
7 you heard in Goose Bay, people calling for one territory.

8 People living in one territory. People all being the  
9 same under that territory. In my heart, I felt that  
10 there's a real difference in being unified and being the  
11 same, and keeping your differences and living in one  
12 territory cooperatively. Because I really think that it  
13 isn't the wish of the aboriginal peoples here to be the  
14 same. I think assimilation has been attempted by the  
15 federal and provincial governments. And aboriginal people  
16 right across this country said, "No way. I am aboriginal.  
17 And I have the right to stay that way." So I share with  
18 you that view.

19

I know that you appreciate  
20 the nature of Royal Commissions. But I think, as well,  
21 that there's--nothing in this life is guaranteed. I think  
22 that one of the things that we can say about the Innu--like,

StenoTran

159

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 we can say about the Inuit, is that despite all of the  
2 harshness and all of the frustrations, the spirit of us  
3 is one of survival. It's a spirit of accepting life's  
4 difficulties and celebrating life's pleasures. But most  
5 of all, it's a spirit of survival, optimism and hope.  
6 And I think that even though you may feel frustrated,  
7 impatient, your being here confirms to me that there is  
8 still some hope. So I believe that change can only come  
9 about by not giving up. So I really appreciate the effort  
10 that you've taken to be here. Thank you.

11 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** We're  
12 ready, I think, for a coffee break of 15 minutes. Thank  
13 you.

14 --- Hearing is recessed at 1054 hours

15 --- Upon resuming at 1118 hours

16 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** Okay,  
17 the next presenter on the list is Gregory Andrew. He's  
18 an individual in the community of Sheshatshiu.

19 **MR. GREGORY ANDREW:** Good  
20 morning.

21 morning.

22 **MR. GREGORY ANDREW:**

StenoTran

160

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 First of all, I was going to make an official presentation  
2 by reading a brief note that I had prepared.

3 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** I'm  
4 sorry. Could you speak closer to the mic for--

5 **MR. GREGORY ANDREW:** I  
6 said, you know, I was hoping to make an official  
7 presentation, but I don't have a brief, you know. But there  
8 a number of topics that I would like to address. But let  
9 me begin by saying, you know, that I have always had concern  
10 when you talk about--when I heard the people talking  
11 about--the government talking about constitutional  
12 conferences. I have some experience in working with  
13 native associations before.

14 One of the things that I  
15 had a great difficulty understanding is that while  
16 we--while the federal government has indicated, you know,  
17 that--that when they appointed the Royal Commission, they  
18 did so--one of the concerns that I have is the mandate  
19 of the Royal Commission. And it's a general question.  
20 How did Canada gain our territory when there was no treaties  
21 ever signed by Innu people. How did Canada, you know,  
22 end up gaining our territory when there was no treaties

StenoTran

161

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 sign by the Innu people, and today this is still the case.

2

3 So I'm not sure, you know,  
4 the mandate of the Royal Commission is something that they  
5 would address. And that is, how did the government of  
6 Canada ended up our country. According to archeological  
7 evidence, the Innu people have been here for the past 9,000  
8 years. And, as such, you know the country still doesn't  
9 remain with the Innu people. The Innu people has been  
10 here for so long, and yet no treaties were ever signed  
11 between ourselves and the federal government. To me, if  
12 you want to have a meaningful dialogue with the Innu people,  
13 then I think probably what should happen is that it should  
14 be done through the auspices of the United Nations.

15 I would also say, you know,  
16 that it's premature for us to talk with the federal  
17 government over our land. We view ourselves as a nation  
18 with the right to determine our own future. And I think  
19 a lot of people of my generation understand, you know,  
20 the process well enough to have real, meaningful dialogue  
21 with the federal government if it was possible to do so,  
22 you know.

StenoTran

162

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 I remember during the time  
2 that I was involved with the Association, that when we  
3 seek funding from the federal government on the question  
4 of land claims research, they give us some money to do  
5 research on our country, and I remember quite clearly what  
6 happened. I remember that we had to go through the  
7 humiliating experience of asking our elders in the  
8 community, interview them, asking them questions like  
9 where were you born in the country, can you indicate on  
10 the map where you were born and where you did your hunting.

11 I want to take this  
12 opportunity to indicate on the map the lands that the Innu  
13 people have been using since 9,000 years ago.

14 Now I'm going to ask my  
15 brother, Alexander, and my mother to explain the map.

16 My mother, her name is Mary  
17 Andrew, and my brother is Alex Andrew, and I want to tell  
18 her to indicate on the map the places that she has been  
19 and the place that she was born. I could have chosen any  
20 elder out in the audience, but I happened to choose my  
21 mother to explain, in her own words, the places that they  
22 have been.

StenoTran



163

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 [Two men hold up map while  
2 Mrs. Andrew speaks, interpreted by man who accompanies  
3 her.]

4 **INTERPRETER:** She says she  
5 was born in the interior of our country, somewhere around  
6 here. The map is not very detailed to show you the place  
7 where she was born, and she says her parents always  
8 travelled into the country, and she says that along the  
9 way, she was born in one of those, in that area. That  
10 was before there was any industrial towns like Wabush and  
11 Churchill Falls, and before the train, railroad, was there.  
12 She says this travelling was done by foot, and parents  
13 travelled sometimes to Davis Inlet and sometimes to Fort  
14 Chimo, which is located right there. Travelling was done  
15 from Seven Islands, which is about here.

16 She says this country was  
17 very, very beautiful back then. Right now, it's very  
18 spoiled, spoiled country, and Wabush, the mines there are  
19 spoiling the lakes. Mishikamoo Lake is spoiled. Many  
20 of the animals have been either drowned in the flooding,  
21 and we lost many of our deer in that flooding. Many of  
22 the grave sites in that area have also been flooded over,

StenoTran



164

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 and that land has been very good to us, and we have learned  
2 to survive on that land.

3 About two years ago, our  
4 camp in the interior where we were where the RCMP and the  
5 wildlife officials came to take the living, the caribou  
6 that we had, and confiscated our guns. What crime is that?

7 It is just people trying to survive in the country. Year  
8 after year, the wildlife and the RCMP have come to check  
9 upon our camps, and this year has been the only year that  
10 they have never come to our camp.

11 When people are in the  
12 country, they are always anticipating the RCMP and the  
13 wildlife people to come to our camps. They are very  
14 scared, and they can't properly be in their camps, because  
15 they are always these people will be coming to confiscate  
16 more things away from them. The country is more home to  
17 us than here, because that is where we are more traditional,  
18 and that's where we have more control over our lives.

19 Also, I would like to tell  
20 you that my grandson almost jumped out of the canoe one  
21 time when a helicopter with RCMP and wildlife officials  
22 were hovering around the canoe. My grandson panicked and

StenoTran

165

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 almost jumped out of the canoe and into the water.

2 She says that she really  
3 dislikes the low-level flying because it scares them,  
4 because it's all very sudden, and she also dislikes when  
5 the military helicopters are hovering around the camps,  
6 looking for she doesn't know what. Once the military  
7 people find our camps, they treat the camps like the enemy  
8 people. That's where they concentrate most of their  
9 really low-level flights. Before there was low-level  
10 flying, the country that is still remaining good and where  
11 the animals are still plentiful has all been invaded by  
12 the low-level flights, and the low-level flights have  
13 caused great sorrow among us because we see the animals  
14 being depleted, and even where there are caribou, they  
15 tend not to have any fat at all.

16 Right now, you probably  
17 only see jets taking off and landing. You would probably  
18 think there was nothing happening in our country right  
19 now.

20 That's it.

21 **MR. GREGORY ANDREW:** I  
22 also want to tell you that the total population of the

StenoTran

166

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Innu people is 10,000 Innu people, and those are the Innu  
2 communities here [native language]. Those are the places  
3 that you are probably aware of, but all of the Innu people  
4 have used this territory to hunt, and I think it  
5 demonstrates that there's no such thing as Labrador or  
6 Quebec, to us. If you will look in the audience and look  
7 at the people there, you will find out that most of the  
8 relations live on those communities that I just indicated  
9 on the map. But when they go to school in Quebec, the  
10 second language of the Innu people is Quebec, while our  
11 language is English.

12 So I think what is  
13 happening is that there are serious problems with the  
14 educational system in which our people have to go to a  
15 foreign school system where everything they learn is about  
16 the history of Euro-Canadians. It's creating a lot of  
17 problems for Innu people going through school because of  
18 an identity crisis, they don't know who they are. And  
19 I think a lot of problems, social problems, come from the  
20 fact that these people are confused, they're not taught  
21 about their own culture by their own people.

22 I think that if you did a

StenoTran

167

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 quick analysis of the whole system right across the  
2 territory of the Innu people, you will find out that it's  
3 not good at all. I think you would be very devastated  
4 by the experience if we took some of your children and  
5 taught them in our own schools, our own history and our  
6 own culture. And I think you would find out that your  
7 society was breaking down, if we did that. You would have  
8 problems of alcohol abuse and problems of child neglect  
9 and suicide. The Innu people here, we have a common  
10 language and culture and history and territory.

11 I also want to touch on some of the  
12 terms that are being used by politicians nowadays when  
13 they talk about self-government. Most of the terms that  
14 are presently being used within Canada have had meanings  
15 before. They were turned upside down. One perfect  
16 example of that that I want to use is the term "first  
17 nations." My opinion is that the Innu people would  
18 constitute the Innu nation within the definition of  
19 international context, and that would have meant we would  
20 have control over our land and our resources and our own  
21 educational system. But the term is not used in that  
22 context. The Innu people are viewed as a minority. Now

StenoTran

168

**June 18, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 it only means just the village or reserves that have come  
2 to mean just reserves, villages, which totally denies the  
3 existence of aboriginal nations like the Innu people.

4                                   The other thing that I want  
5 to address also is the excitement that is created within  
6 the government circles, and that is the inherent right  
7 to self-government. Now this is not to say the inherent  
8 right to self-government, because the Federal government  
9 has said within Canada. I mean, it could just as well  
10 mean the inherent right to freedom within the prison, or  
11 subject to the rules and values of the jailors.

12                                   And for Innu people to  
13 meaningfully participate in the constitutional talks, it's  
14 one of the hardest things to do that, although you may  
15 say that we have an Innu nation representative here, but  
16 to talk about the meaningful principles, like the right  
17 to self-determination. So I'm not very hopeful of one  
18 day controlling our own resources and our lands and other  
19 services.

20                                   I would like to conclude  
21 my presentation by just asking a general question, why  
22 the Innu people have to prove that this is their country.

StenoTran

169

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 It should be the other way around. Canada should prove  
2 to us that they own the land that the Innu people have.

3

4

**CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

5 I would like to thank you very much for presenting us with  
6 a wide picture and a broad range of issues. Of course,  
7 as you have mentioned, the question of the recognition  
8 of the inherent right of self-government within Canada  
9 is, at the moment, discussed on the constitutional table,  
10 and we are, of course, as a Commission, dependent on what  
11 would be the result of these talks, because we will have  
12 to work within the framework that will be accepted at the  
13 constitutional level, if there is an acceptance. On the  
14 other hand, we realize that there is so much to do to make  
15 the concept of self-government a living thing, and so much  
16 to learn from communities like yours and others, in terms  
17 of what is expected and what could work and what could  
18 be done.

19

As I told a former  
20 presenter this morning, if we could be able to get down  
21 from the higher principles to the specifics of the working  
22 of the notion of self-government, and I understand it goes

StenoTran

170

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 with the question of land and land base, but also we've  
2 heard a lot about the delivery of social services, about  
3 the social problems that you've mentioned, like confusion  
4 of the young people as to what they are, the cultural side,  
5 the alcohol problem, and abuses also that exist in the  
6 community. We hope that we will be able to, in the coming  
7 months, focus on those issues.

8 I would like also to thank  
9 the two other presenters who joined you to explain and  
10 give us a first-hand knowledge of their own experience  
11 on the land. Of course, we realize that the provincial  
12 borders and territorial borders of this country were  
13 designed without taking into account the nations, the  
14 aboriginal nations, that were there, and with the result  
15 that many of them have been cut off between provinces,  
16 or even with the US, in a certain part of the country,  
17 and that brings some border issues, additional issues.

18 So I would like to thank  
19 you very much for raising those questions with us. Thank  
20 you.

**COMMISSIONER VIOLA**

21  
22 **ROBINSON:** I would just like to thank you as well for your

StenoTran



171

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 presentation, and everything is being recorded, and I guess  
2 it will be something that we will clearly have to have  
3 a good look at. But thank you for your presentation.

4 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** The next  
5 presenter that we have on the list is Ben Andrew, and he's  
6 an individual from the community of Sheshatshiu.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
8 Good morning.

9 **MR. BEN ANDREW:** Good  
10 morning. I would like to start out by reading a quote  
11 from some book I read.

12 "The truth is that  
13 colonialism, in its essence, was already taking on the  
14 aspect of a fertile purveyor for psychiatric hospitals.  
15 We have, since 1954, in various scientific works, drawn  
16 the attention of both French and international  
17 psychiatrists through the difficulties that arise when  
18 seeking to 'cure' the native properly, that is to say in  
19 seeking to make him thoroughly a part of the social  
20 background of the colonial type, white Anglo-Saxon,  
21 because it is a systematic negation of the other person,  
22 a nefarious determination to deny the other person, all

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172

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 attributes of humanity. Colonialism forces the people  
2 it dominates to ask themselves the questions constantly.  
3 In reality, who am I?"

4 This quote, taken from the  
5 book The Wretched of the Earth by Franz Fanon, who was  
6 a psychiatrist, tells the whole story on why the different  
7 peoples within Canada are so collectively dysfunctional.

8 The same process that was used on the Algerians is still  
9 used and being used by the Canadian government in the  
10 programming of them from their culture. The people deny  
11 their own people, their own nationhood, and their own  
12 uniqueness. They're made to feel ashamed about their  
13 culture.

14 One of the most powerful  
15 weapons used against people is the educational system.  
16 And we see always people being used by government, people  
17 being held up who area really educated in the European  
18 way. This is good, this is the way you're supposed to  
19 be, never the hunting cultures. It has only been held  
20 as something that's in the past. They say this is the  
21 20th century, but what is the 20th century in which the  
22 world around us is collapsing through all the industrial

StenoTran

173

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 poisons that are being put to the earth?

2 By the time the kids  
3 graduate from school, all the schools, especially the first  
4 people's, most of them are destroyed, and that affects  
5 them for their whole life, and this whole cycle is being  
6 repeated by their kids. There are people that are  
7 wandering around, they're lost. I don't believe for one  
8 second when people say that I've found my culture, when  
9 it has been destroyed, and the Innu people are in that  
10 same process, even though it's in the past 40 years that  
11 people have been introduced to this European way of  
12 thinking, and which has caused great harm to the culture.

13 I heard some comments which  
14 I was going to read. I was going to say the same thing  
15 about people, different people, being taught other  
16 people's ways, and how probably the Europeans wouldn't  
17 like it, and they would be in the same situation if they  
18 were in our boat, if they were taught the first people's  
19 ways, and would they be satisfied.

20 I don't think enough focus  
21 has been placed on the role of colonialism in the  
22 destruction of the people. I think people are placed in

StenoTran

174

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 a situation of dependency always, so that you never hear  
2 people talk seriously about what they can do on their own.

3 Instead it's with the help of government. They have  
4 placed these people in such helpless situations that they  
5 feel that they need the government always.

6 I think that the solution  
7 is quite simple. Never mind all the money that would be  
8 spent, because it would be all the money that is theirs  
9 anyway, all the money taken from their lands. People talk  
10 about the billions of dollars that are going to be spent  
11 on the first people's. It's all their money, so I don't  
12 have too much faith in those people who say that it's all  
13 economics, for the people, that it's all their money.

14 All the hydro flowing out  
15 from Quebec, from Labrador, there's billions and billions  
16 of dollars that are owed to these people. I don't feel  
17 that there has been enough emphasis placed on some of these  
18 problems, the root causes of all these problems. People  
19 seem to talk economics most of the time, but it's not an  
20 economic issue, even though at some point, there would  
21 be economics, I suppose. But once people are in control  
22 of their own lives, their own lands, and I think Canada

StenoTran

175

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 is being very smart to be so caught up in this  
2 self-government, people sort of hanging on to this name  
3 self-government. Most of the people, for the next how  
4 many years, I don't know, will be hanging on to that.  
5 It was some great game by their people. I don't see it  
6 as such. I see it as this dangling thing that will never  
7 be settled, because colonialism can only be gotten away  
8 from by the decolonizing, decolonization. I know a lot  
9 of people get turned off when people talk about  
10 decolonization, but that is the truth and it's a fact.  
11 It's not some made up word.

12  
13 Canada has always been  
14 looked on as this great country which treats its people  
15 fairly, and yet 500 years later, it still hasn't treated  
16 the first peoples as human beings who have these collective  
17 rights as any other people who were decolonized in the  
18 early '60s. When people seem to talk about  
19 self-government, they seem to be talking about band  
20 councils having more power over some lands. I suppose  
21 it would be like the homelands being given more power in  
22 South Africa. There is no difference at all in the way  
that Canada is trying to steer away from its problems as

StenoTran

176

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 regards the native people.

2 I think most of what we talk  
3 about is so made up. We talk about a country, Canada.  
4 Canada has written its own history on somebody else's land,  
5 and they teach that to their people, and the people believe  
6 it. It's like you go to France, and you just take over  
7 a country, and you do up your own history, and you start  
8 to teach the French people another history, and they start  
9 to believe that. It's colonizing.

10 So I don't have much  
11 sympathy for the way Canada is going on right now, because  
12 I think Canada should be a country just south, a narrow  
13 strip of land. All the northern part of Canada, there  
14 is all aboriginal people there, and they control their  
15 land. A lot of people say to us when we talk about all  
16 these massive lands that are given to the people, and yet  
17 they never compare the total population of Canada and the  
18 territories it supposedly controls. On the ratio basis,  
19 it's the same.

20 To sort of put the thing  
21 into perspective, I guess, on this whole thing, when, in  
22 the 1920s, Quebec and Newfoundland fought over Nitassinan,

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177

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 and the only time they ever thought about the Innu people,  
2 which they call the Indians, was in their presentation.

3 They said the Indian people occupy all that land, eastern  
4 Quebec and Labrador, and we haven't heard anything since  
5 that, whoever acknowledged that they ever occupied that  
6 land but in a court case in Privy Council in the 1920s,  
7 and three blokes in wigs signed away our land to  
8 Newfoundland. And who was fighting over it? It wasn't  
9 the Innu people. It was Quebec and Newfoundland fighting  
10 over it. It wasn't their land.

11 So I think for us to talk  
12 about Canada, it's not something that I hold through to  
13 my heart, but I'm afraid it would break up.

14 There seems to be also this  
15 term "inherent," and people seem to be afraid of it. Sure,  
16 they should be afraid of it, because I think it means what  
17 it says, inherent. It's not something that can be passed  
18 on from the Europeans when it was there already. And I  
19 think that "inherent," to me, means we should be able to  
20 do what we want on our lands. Why should I want to define  
21 to Joe Clark what I want to do on those lands, when they're  
22 mine? Joe Clark should also define what he wants to do

StenoTran





179

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 so how do people expect to get any justice from the European  
2 justice system, especially when it's so well grounded in  
3 property rights, because that is what it is. Most of the  
4 legal system is all property rights designed to protect  
5 the wealthy.

6 So how do people expect any  
7 justice from the courts? We were thrown in court and in  
8 jail for practising our culture, so why would they agree  
9 to that?

10 I don't have much more to  
11 say, except I think all this talk with the constitution,  
12 I think it should all start from zero, start over again,  
13 and give people their rights to their lands. Thank you.

14 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

15 Well, only a short commentary. I would like first to thank  
16 you very much for joining us at the table and opening this  
17 discussion. You've mentioned the constitutional process,  
18 and I just would like to recall that this Commission was  
19 created alongside the new constitutional process that has  
20 been put into place since last September.

21 As you probably know, we  
22 have published a commentary on the imminent right of

StenoTran

180

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 self-government, in which we gave some criteria that we  
2 felt would be useful for leading to a successful  
3 constitutional conclusion or deal. Essentially, what  
4 we've tried to say to the various governments is that it  
5 would have been the wrong battle to fight against the  
6 principle of inherency. The real discussion was to try  
7 to see how it could fit within the Canadian structure and  
8 framework. We are aware that these discussions at this  
9 point have been moving quite a bit. We don't know what  
10 would be the result, but I just want to say that we will  
11 have to work within the framework that will have been agreed  
12 upon by the parties, if there is an agreement. Otherwise,  
13 we realize that everything will be back on the table, and  
14 the atmosphere, depending on the point of view, will be  
15 more difficult or with more freedom, because we'll have  
16 to start from nothing.

17   Having said that, we hope  
18 that we will be able--and that's the message we're putting  
19 across--to come down to some specifics as to what should  
20 be done in the coming years to make self-government not  
21 only a concept, but a reality. I understand that there  
22 are some conceptual discussions or problems that are the

StenoTran

181

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 basis of this, but on the other hand, as a Commission,  
2 we know and we realize that there are many urgent problems  
3 that are there, the education for the young people, the  
4 possibility of getting a good job, of retaining their  
5 identity, maintaining of the language, getting back the  
6 language. So these are pressing issues that should not  
7 be overlooked by the Commission while working on bigger  
8 issues or more political issues like self-government.

9 So I just wanted to give  
10 the context under which we have to work. Our mandate is  
11 quite broad, and we were certainly happy to have this  
12 opportunity to have this exchange with you. Thank you  
13 very much.

14 --- Hearing is recessed at 1220 hours

15 --- Upon resuming at 1330 hours

16 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** The next  
17 person that's on the list is Lyla Andrew.

18 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
19 Good afternoon.

20 **MS. LYLA ANDREW:** Much of  
21 what the Innu have said and will say to this Commission  
22 speaks of misery, despair, chaos. I heard those words

StenoTran

182

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 repeated many times yesterday. I believe this pain is  
2 very real, and that it's spoken from the heart. I also  
3 believe there is much anger that you haven't seen. I've  
4 witnessed some of this. I've seen much of this despair  
5 turned inward to self-loathing and loathing of the culture.

6 There is so much despair and hopelessness, but the Innu  
7 can document this a lot better than I can. I want to speak  
8 briefly about where I see joy and hope.

9 I'm here to speak not on  
10 behalf of the Innu, for they're quite capable of speaking  
11 for themselves. I'm here to speak as a person with  
12 European roots who grew up in Toronto as part of the  
13 dominant, privileged group within Canada. I've always  
14 thought of myself as a Canadian, but today, I could no  
15 more define what that Canadian culture is than I think  
16 the majority of Canadians could begin to define what  
17 Canadian culture is.

18 What brings me with some  
19 confidence to sit in this seat is the 15 years that I've  
20 spent living in the village of Sheshatshiu. Although I  
21 came to Sheshatshiu as an educated adult, I now know that  
22 much of my adult education did not even begin until I came

StenoTran

183

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 to this culture. I now know that I came to this village  
2 and to the Innu culture in the same way that I believe  
3 all Europeans approach aboriginal people, and that is with  
4 a sense of being superior. This wasn't a conscience sense.

5 Actually, I've always thought of myself as a rather nice  
6 person, and I don't think I would knowingly discriminate.

7 But this sense of superiority is very real, and it grew  
8 quite naturally out of my upbringing and education, and  
9 to this day, this sense of superiority suggests that if  
10 only Innu could be a little bit more like us European  
11 Canadians, if they would only be a little bit more  
12 hard-working, if they would only manage the money that  
13 they've got a little bit better, if they would only get  
14 a bit more education, if they were only a bit more able  
15 to control their alcohol abuse, they could still have their  
16 drum dances and their celebrations, but they would be so  
17 much better off if they could only be a little bit more  
18 like me.

19 There are still many times  
20 when I find myself thinking and acting in a superior way,  
21 as if my way, the way I was brought up, the things that  
22 I learned to value, as if these things are inherently

StenoTran

184

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 better, and if only the Innu would aspire to be more like  
2 me.

3 I believe that all  
4 Europeans, all Canadians who are of European descent, have  
5 this in them, and that the first responsibility for  
6 Europeans who have any dealings with Innu, or any other  
7 aboriginal peoples, is to recognize and accept that we  
8 have these feelings of superiority, that somehow, our  
9 European-rooted cultures are more advanced, and that our  
10 culture should be the model for aboriginal cultures.

11 It has been my good fortune  
12 that the Innu I first came to know in this village were  
13 people who took me out of the village, who showed me that  
14 there was a life outside this village, that there was  
15 something that happened to Innu when they were with their  
16 families, living in their tents away from this village,  
17 that was substantially different from day-to-day life of  
18 the village.

19 I've come to think of this  
20 life away from the village, to refer to life in the country,  
21 as the "real life," as the real life of the Innu, as the  
22 place where I have seen joy and hope among Innu. A couple

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185

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 of days ago, my extended family and I arrived back from  
2 where we've been living since April, in the country. Our  
3 camp was at a place known as Kapien nipi, and I think it  
4 was one of 13 different places in the country, in  
5 Nitassinan, where Innu were living this spring. There  
6 were 43 people at our camp, mostly young people, young  
7 couples and their children. My mother-in-law, who is a  
8 widow, was the oldest person at the camp. She's 58. She  
9 was the woman who spoke this morning about some of her  
10 experiences. The youngest child was four months of age.

11 We lived from the riches of the land, and I want to show  
12 you the most precious of these riches. I brought it with  
13 me today, some of it. This is known as "Neueken."

14 Actually, it's illegal to have this, and at the whim of  
15 the Provincial government, I might not have it here to  
16 show you today. There were 17 caribou killed at the camp  
17 we were in this spring, along with porcupines and black  
18 bears, and all of these things were illegal for us to have.

19 Actually, still in the freezer in Goose Bay are the 11  
20 caribou that my husband killed two years ago and that were  
21 confiscated from our camp. The so-called justice system  
22 is not very just in this regard at all.

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186

**June 18, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 But in spite of the fact  
2 that European Canadian law says it was illegal for us to  
3 have those caribou, to hunt those caribou, those laws were  
4 disregarded, and people, especially the older people in  
5 the camp, but the fear of being caught behind them, and  
6 this is a very real fear that older Innu have, this fear  
7 of being caught. This fear was put behind people because  
8 the need to have the caribou was more important than any  
9 other concern.

10 When I hold this neuken  
11 in my hand, and when I see my children watch their father  
12 or their grandmother or one of their aunts or uncles making  
13 the neuken in the camp, it's a direct connection with  
14 their people, the Innu, which goes back thousands of years.

15 I can hardly comprehend what thousands of years is like.

16 I don't have any connection with my culture that goes  
17 back thousands of years, but the Innu can have this  
18 connection, because the Innu must have made this very same  
19 dried meat in the same way, for their own sustenance, down  
20 through the generations. And this is at the heart of what  
21 is strong about the Innu culture. The Innu culture is  
22 a hunting culture.

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187

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 Yesterday, Jean Pierre  
2 Ashini was one of the presenters. I believe he said he  
3 was 32 years of age, and he said he is a hunter, and I  
4 wonder at the reaction of non-Innu to someone describing  
5 themselves, in this day and age, as a hunter. I have come  
6 to feel proud to describe my husband as a hunter. I have  
7 come to feel proud that our sons and daughters show so  
8 much love for being in the country, for learning the skills  
9 associated with hunting and living in the country.

10 I think country living  
11 needs to be given a high priority, that the impediments  
12 to country life, such as low-level flying and wildlife  
13 regulations, have to be eliminated. I'm not talking about  
14 the Innu going backwards. I'm talking about trying to  
15 find a way to promote today the need for Innu to live in  
16 the country, to educate their children in the country,  
17 to practice their spirituality in the country.  
18 Euro-Canadians treat the country experience as a holiday.  
19 They say the Innu are just going off on expensive camping  
20 trips. What this tells me is that there is an incredible  
21 lack of knowledge that Euro-Canadians have about the Innu.  
22 There are only a handful of non-Innu who have ever lived

StenoTran

188

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 with Innu in the country. The Innu's most vocal critics,  
2 certainly locally, have never lived with Innu in the  
3 country, and they have no idea what country life is.

4 One of my sisters-in-law,  
5 who happens to come from Utshimassit, Davis Inlet, was  
6 in the country with us this spring, and she said that the  
7 closest word in English that she could think to describe  
8 the place and the experience of living in the country was  
9 "paradise," and I think country life is like paradise,  
10 especially in contrast with village life.

11 But there is a price that  
12 Innu pay who go into the country. Some Innu spoke  
13 yesterday about the horror of low-level flying, and  
14 certainly that has had a major impact on people wanting  
15 to go into the country and being able to stay in the country.

16 Another price that Innu pay  
17 who go into the country is that children are not attending  
18 school. Our children are not attending school. They are  
19 being told by us, as parents, that really, they should  
20 have very little respect for the formal school system,  
21 that they have to see the school system as the major  
22 instrument of assimilation. We don't want them to

StenoTran

189

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 disrespect other Innu, but very hard choices have to be  
2 made by Innu. So much of the dominant Euro-Canadian  
3 culture will inevitably affect our children. It is a fight  
4 to help our children to be proud to be Innu, to know who  
5 Innu are, and what makes them a unique, distinct people.

6 I just want to relay a  
7 little personal story about that. Our daughter is nine  
8 years of age, and before we went into the country, she  
9 came home from school one day. She had gone up to school  
10 to actually, I think, to get books to take into the country  
11 with her. She came home with a map of Canada, printed  
12 on a sheet this size, mimeographed off, and all the  
13 provinces were coloured in different colours. So Quebec  
14 was purple, and the Labrador portion of the map was in  
15 a different colour, and I asked her to tell me where was  
16 Nitassinan, but she sort of put her hand around that area  
17 on the map, and she looked at me, and said I'm not really  
18 sure, and I said well, ask your father. And he picked  
19 up the map, and he looked at it, and he said to her this  
20 is lies. You have been taught a lie. For Innu, this isn't  
21 real. This is not true. And he went on to explain to  
22 her about the border, and she looked at him, and she said

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191

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 me the night we returned, did I think that her father would  
2 be drinking in the village this summer. She knows what  
3 village life can be like. She knows the pain, the hurt,  
4 the shame. So already, we're focused on the fall, because  
5 we'll go back to a camp in the country this fall, and we  
6 anticipate the life that we know we can live there.

7 I see the hope for many Innu  
8 in this, having their children living in the country.  
9 I hope for Innu children to be nurtured in the country,  
10 to develop a strong self-concept, to learn what are the  
11 strengths of the Innu culture.

12 It is just as important,  
13 when Innu children are in the country, is to learn to  
14 understand why there's chaos in the village, and to learn  
15 not to blame Innu, not to blame their own people, but to  
16 see how their own people, when caught in the grip of a  
17 colonial relationship, are going to behave as colonized  
18 people do.

19 I see hope in the Innu being  
20 in control of all aspects of their lives. I don't see  
21 this in a Canadian context. This is their country. This  
22 is Nitassinan. I don't see that there can be a bridge

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192

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 between the gap of Euro-Canadians and Innu. These worlds  
2 are too far apart, too distinct. I believe energy and  
3 effort has to go into decolonization, into the creation  
4 of an Innu state which will be separate and distinct, where  
5 Innu can practice their inherent right, as a collective  
6 people, to be a hunting culture.

7 I know the Innu will fight  
8 not to be a culture only known from museum artifacts.  
9 I have to hope that the Canadian state will come to see  
10 the Innu people as more than just a small group of  
11 protestors, and recognize the value in their growth and  
12 development as a separate and distinct culture.

13 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

14 Thank you very much for your very eloquent presentation,  
15 obviously coming from 15 years of experience and from the  
16 heart.

17 I think you made the point  
18 very clearly about what it means for the Innu, life in  
19 the country, in comparison with living in the village.  
20 My question is, do you see a choice for the young people,  
21 or do you see a possibility of a life for all young Innu  
22 in that kind of life in the country that you've explained

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193

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 with the demographic situation? I just want to ask you,  
2 how do you see the future for the whole community, because  
3 it seems to imply that there is, in fact, only one way  
4 that should be satisfactory for the Innu people. Am I  
5 wrong in thinking that, or could you expand on that?

6 **MS. LYLA ANDREW:** I think  
7 it would be very bold of me to suggest that I have the  
8 answer, and that I could imagine what the future could  
9 be for all Innu young people. But I think that already,  
10 so many things are happening to Innu young people that  
11 there is no real choice for them. If they are growing  
12 up in a household where their parents have jobs and they  
13 are committed to living in the village, essentially year  
14 around, what opportunity do those children have to learn  
15 the skills that they need to be in the country? If children  
16 are attending a school where you receive awards for good  
17 attendance and for being there, and that's put forth as  
18 what will give you the better future, you're already, as  
19 a very young person, being directed in a certain way.

20 Where is the push coming  
21 from, other than from individual parents and grandparents,  
22 who are saying I'm taking my children to the country?

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195

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 is going to make the next presentation, who also happens  
2 to be the Commissioner of the Day.

3 **CHIEF FRANCIS PENASHUE:**

4 I have to speak within my own heart. The things that I  
5 see when I was young, and today, as you see me as a chief,  
6 but when I look in the past, every camp in the country,  
7 as you see, there is no chief. With the elders, they would  
8 co-ordinate the camps and give the people direction,  
9 whatever.

10 But today, as a white  
11 society, you look at a chief, like the outsiders, like  
12 the RCMP, when the Innu people have protests at the runway  
13 a few years ago, and they said when they came to approach  
14 the Innu, and they said where's the chief. So they think  
15 if we arrest the chief, the people will stop. So the white  
16 society looks at the chief as controlling the Innu people,  
17 their people. But I look at myself as a messenger. We  
18 pass the message to the white people. But the outsiders  
19 cannot understand what Innu people want for their society  
20 or culture.

21 So it was my understanding  
22 in 1950 when the government gave the houses and schools

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197

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 the country, they do the things with their families. In  
2 the country, there is no alcohol, people work together,  
3 and they're happy. In the community, they're not doing  
4 anything for themselves. They use money for beer, can't  
5 pay the bills or buy food.

6 Life in the community is  
7 just like in jail. People don't talk about alcohol. Like  
8 myself, I'm an alcoholic. I can see it today, myself,  
9 has happened. I was like that, and today, I can see it  
10 myself. When you don't talk about alcohol, you cannot  
11 see what has happened in your community, and I'm going  
12 to talk about a little bit of experience about myself,  
13 what did happen in the country in the past.

14 I was born in the country  
15 where the white calls [park lake close?] area. I see a  
16 lot of difference in the community and [no ge medi?].  
17 I was born in the country, and at that time, there was  
18 no hospital or no nurse or doctor, and the Innu people  
19 had their own nursing or doctor. I remember the old lady  
20 who delivered me, and my father and the one who was getting  
21 food and who brought me up, and my mother was [breaking?]  
22 for milk.

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199

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 animals, they had their own spirits. Like I said, I guess  
2 the people have to use drums or whatever they call the  
3 shaking tents. Like they used to see the spirit of the  
4 animal where they are and to get the food for them. But  
5 what I believe, because I seen it myself, that happened.

6

7 The food, the medicine,  
8 what I was saying, the Innu people had their own medicine,  
9 and when they were sick in the country, they get the  
10 medicine from the ground or from the trees.

11 As you know, the Innu  
12 people are trying to stop the things like environment,  
13 to destroy the land, because the land is very important  
14 for the Innu people, like the dams, the military, forests,  
15 because if you look at in the past, like for the medicine,  
16 because the military, it goes over our land, because  
17 pollution will be the damage for the medicine for the Innu  
18 people, or water, because Innu people, this is very  
19 important for the land.

20 And one more last thing.  
21 So this is, I guess, the elders being lost so quickly,  
22 and the elders, so we have to respect those elders, because

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200

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 I can remember myself, like at 15 years ago, and I did  
2 see the old people, like they were going up about 106 and  
3 110, that old, and they were still walking at that time  
4 when I saw them. But today, I don't see any people that  
5 old. Because here in the community, like I said, 15 or  
6 20 years ago, people settled in a community, and they've  
7 lost a lot of control, alcohol, or the old people would  
8 do nothing, and have to just sit down in the house and  
9 watch TV, and they have to do nothing.

10 And that's about all I can  
11 say. Thank you very much.

12 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
13 Thank you very much for your presentation and your thoughts  
14 on the basic values of Innu people, and the way they were  
15 preserved in the past. I think it is certainly important  
16 that this be understood and put on the record. We hope  
17 that it will be possible to find, with your communities  
18 and other communities, ways of doing things and solutions  
19 that will enable you to return to those values, while  
20 meeting the challenges of the future.

21 So thank you very much  
22 again for your presentation, Francis.

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201

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1                                   **MR. BEN MICHEL:** The next  
2 person on the list to speak is Rose Gregoire. She's an  
3 individual from the community of Sheshatshiu.

4                                   **MS. ROSE GREGOIRE:** First  
5 of all, I have a statement here from Raphael Gregoire.  
6 He wanted me to read his statement here, so I'll read it  
7 first.

8   Firstly, I'm a bit hesitant  
9 to make any kind of presentation to any Royal Commission,  
10 even in a Royal Commission whose panel includes aboriginal  
11 people. It is not because I do not trust the aboriginal  
12 members on the panel. Rather, I am disillusioned by the  
13 fact that Royal Commissions are created by the government  
14 of the day to avoid dealing with the pressing or difficult  
15 issues that they do not want to deal with immediately,  
16 but delay that issue or issues as long as possible.

17   No doubt when this Royal  
18 Commission has finished its mandate, another Royal  
19 Commission will be created to explore or find answers to  
20 this Commission's findings. It is a never-ending cycle  
21 that goes on and on, and still the first issue will never  
22 be answered.

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202

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 I wish I did not have to  
2 sound to pessimistic. I wish I could be more optimistic,  
3 given the fact that these Royal Commission that wants to  
4 deal with aboriginal issues, and that the Commission  
5 members themselves are aboriginal descendants, or have  
6 some close ties, or have been affiliated with aboriginal  
7 people, currently or in the recent past. But when all  
8 this has been said and done, I fear that what has happened  
9 in the past will happen again.

10 What will be gathered by  
11 this Commission when the final report has been completed?

12 It will be shelved together to gather dust in the various  
13 departments of the government which it will be presented  
14 to. Can you understand why I am being pessimistic?

15 Secondly, although I am  
16 making this presentation with a great deal of reservations,  
17 I hope that the Commission will try to make sure that any  
18 information or concerns that need to be addressed  
19 immediately should not be delayed until the final report  
20 is finished. Rather, any concerns which can be addressed  
21 immediately should be forwarded immediately to the  
22 department concerned to any area of this country.

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204

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 is a reality of life that few adults escape from completely  
2 here in Sheshatshiu. In the past 15 years or more, I have  
3 worked as a court translator. Being a court translator,  
4 I have been able to observe firsthand that many times,  
5 many Innu have gone through the court process needlessly.

6 There were a great deal of times when I have felt that  
7 Innu offenders could have been dealt with another and  
8 creative way than by the usual way of dragging Innu through  
9 the courts. I have been amazed that judges could impose  
10 a sentence over and over again which obviously had no  
11 effect. In the end, when a judge has become fed up with  
12 dealing with the same Innu over and over again, finally  
13 he imposes a prison sentence that does not solve the first  
14 problem of why individuals end up in court in the first  
15 place.

16 The history of Innu prior  
17 to contact with the Europeans has been one of living in  
18 harmony with nature. In Sheshatshiu before the 1960s,  
19 the Innu had very little contact with other cultures and  
20 their form of system of exercising law and order. When  
21 the Innu became subjected with foreign laws, they have  
22 been made to suffer under these foreign laws than any other

StenoTran

205

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 group and culture are suffering.

2 Consider, for example, the  
3 provincial court at Happy Valley-Goose Bay. When the Innu  
4 have to go to court in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, it had been  
5 unusual for the number of Innu to outnumber the number  
6 of non-Innu on that particular court date. Keep in mind  
7 that the population of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, is five  
8 times larger than Sheshatshiu, yet the number of Innu  
9 offenders outnumber other offenders two to one. Why is  
10 this so? It isn't because Innu commit offenses every  
11 single day. That is not necessarily so. Many times, as  
12 I have said before, Innu are dragged through the courts  
13 unnecessarily. When, many times, minor offenses could  
14 have been handled at a community level, this has been done.

15 It has not even been explored as an alternative.

16 The other part of this  
17 situation is that the courts should not be dragging Innu  
18 all the way to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, to hear their  
19 offenses. I have always understood that courts have to  
20 hear in courts where the offenses took place. That law  
21 is broken every time a person is transferred to Happy  
22 Valley-Goose Bay, instead of that case being heard in the

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207

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Wabush, Lab City, a French-speaking person needing a court  
2 translator would be provided that service. The translator  
3 would be paid an amount which would be over \$35 an hour.

4 Is this fair? I think not.

5 There are many examples in  
6 the way that the Innu are not fairly treated under the  
7 law. It would take a long period of time to list the types  
8 of unfair treatments that the Innu are forced to endure  
9 in the long struggle to gain justice. For the Innu, there  
10 can be no justice as long as they are forced to live with  
11 a system which they had no part in creating.

12 I hope that I have been able  
13 to stimulate your curiosity, and it will provoke you to  
14 do a further research in this area. I know that one of  
15 your Commission staff is a recent graduate of the Law  
16 School, who can contribute more by doing further research  
17 on why courts aren't fair to Innu and other aboriginal  
18 people in Labrador. Only then should any graduate of law  
19 school contemplate joining the system which brings so much  
20 disruption and disharmony to the lives of the Innu, in  
21 particular, and aboriginal people in Labrador.

22 Thank you for your time.

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210

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 sitting here in prison and being away from my kids, which  
2 I find it very hard, being away from my children.

3 I have also spent some time  
4 here in the lock-up in Goose Bay, and I guess a lot of  
5 Innu people here in the community feel that it's no good  
6 to do anything any more, because I feel that way sometimes.

7 I just feel there is nothing that I can do that would  
8 persuade the government to listen to the native people.

9 It was down to the point  
10 when I was talking about when I was going to school myself.

11 The way my parents used to dress and their ways, the  
12 culture, their way of life, because I have seen other white  
13 people making fun of my parents and other people in the  
14 community, even the way they talk and the way they dress,  
15 and I'm ashamed to say I was really ashamed of my culture.

16 I was very, very ashamed of it. And I still, as of today,  
17 I'm 43 years old, and when I go into the store, I will  
18 make sure that people are not going to make fun of my people  
19 any more, because I will speak up.

20 I have worked in a hospital  
21 for a long time, eight or nine years, and I've seen people  
22 coming from the north and people coming in from

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211

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Sheshatshiu, and I have worked with white nurses, I have  
2 worked with doctors, for a very long time. And when I  
3 was working at the hospital, I was able to speak English,  
4 like I am now, but when I hear doctors saying dirty things  
5 about native people, like they wouldn't be here if they  
6 weren't drinking, they wouldn't be fighting if they weren't  
7 drinking, they wouldn't be here, and sometimes I could  
8 hear nurses saying the Innu people, the native people,  
9 are dirty. They didn't want to have anything to do with  
10 them. I always wanted to be there when I knew a plane  
11 was coming from the north, or when I knew there was an  
12 Innu person being admitted. I wanted to be there and deal  
13 with that myself, to avoid people from making fun of my  
14 people, and I still do that today.

15 I have an older sister  
16 here. When I see her sometimes in church, if there are  
17 any white people around, I want to make sure nobody says  
18 or nobody laughs at her for the way she dresses, because  
19 she still dresses the way my parents used to dress.

20 I quit working at the  
21 hospital because I was getting so fed up and tired with  
22 the doctors and nurses, the way they have treated my people.

StenoTran



212

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 I was there when one of the kids was taken from a home.  
2 The baby was admitted to the hospital, and there was a  
3 doctor from Scotland, and when he saw the baby, he said  
4 this child is not going back home. Call a social worker.

5 I didn't know what to do, whether to tell the mother,  
6 because she was a good friend of mine, and I couldn't,  
7 because I thought it was supposed to be confidential.  
8 I couldn't tell anybody. But I was really worried that  
9 they would never bring the child back, and they never did.

10 It was only this year that the friend of mine found her  
11 son, and he's 19 or 20 years old. The doctor said this  
12 child is not being looked after, he's being neglected,  
13 he's dirty, he's starving, oh everything very negative  
14 about the mother. And I said to myself, I wish you could  
15 try to understand the people. I wish you would know where  
16 the problem is coming from. But I just couldn't do  
17 anything about it. I couldn't even talk about it.

18 I want to talk a little bit  
19 about the justice system, what I have seen here in the  
20 community. Ever since I worked with Social Services--and  
21 I am not afraid to say this--I have seen women being beaten  
22 up by their husbands or boyfriends, and they were really

StenoTran



213

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 afraid. Sometimes you would call the RCMP, and the RCMP  
2 doesn't show up until two or three days after. I must  
3 say, it has improved a little bit over the past year.  
4 I understand, as a woman myself, and I support women who  
5 have been abused, both physically, sexually and  
6 emotionally. I just like to be there for women.

7 My hope and dream for the  
8 RCMP in the community is that I would like to see my people  
9 doing their own policing in the community and dealing with  
10 the problem itself, and not taking the man to jail and  
11 keeping him there for five or six months, and not getting  
12 any counselling in the correctional centres. If they were  
13 allowed to govern themselves here in the community, this  
14 is what I would like to see, people dealing with the  
15 problems themselves, and the same thing with the school  
16 and Social Services.

17 I have worked with Social  
18 Services for the past eight years, and I guess to this  
19 time, I am very tired and frustrated with their system,  
20 Social Services system. I don't know how many different  
21 social workers I have worked with. I work as a family  
22 support worker with Social Services, and I work with

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214

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 different social workers, and I'm tired and very frustrated  
2 in telling them about the culture, about the people here.

3 A year from that, another white social worker comes in,  
4 and I have to do the same thing, telling them who lives  
5 here, and who's this, and all this.

6 I wish we could govern  
7 ourselves, and we would take over Social Services, and  
8 then we can work. We're not stupid. We can do the job  
9 ourselves. With probably some training, we can certainly  
10 do it.

11 I guess I could say I also  
12 sometimes feel very angry and very frustrated when I think  
13 that I could work with this family and I could do things  
14 with them, and I don't want a lot of white social workers  
15 to get involved with me, but they have to, because I'm  
16 not a social worker, I don't have a degree in social work,  
17 so I don't have any authority to do anything.

18 I have seen also children  
19 or young offenders many times admit to the crimes, even  
20 though they may not have committed those crimes, particular  
21 crimes, that they have come to trial for. Young offenders,  
22 by their own testimonies, have admitted to crimes that

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216

**June 18, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 social worker in Sheshatshiu who was dealing with a group  
2 home over here. I was looking for some money to buy some  
3 cigarettes for her, and they said they couldn't help her,  
4 and I was wanting to get the social worker to put her in  
5 a foster home in Davis Inlet while she's waiting for court,  
6 and they couldn't do that, either. So I felt that I  
7 couldn't help her, I couldn't do anything. When the time  
8 came for her to go to court, I went to the courthouse to  
9 be of support, because she didn't have anybody else. She  
10 had to stand up for a witness, because her father was  
11 sexually abusing her in the past. And I know I understand  
12 what that's like, because I was abused myself as a child  
13 when I was growing up, and I understand how painful that  
14 is for her. She wanted me to interpret for her and sit  
15 with her where she was sitting, and I wasn't allowed.  
16 The judge said because I was too close with her, and they  
17 wouldn't allow me. All I could do was give her support  
18 for her to know that I'm there for her. This was only  
19 a preliminary hearing in court. There was a translator  
20 available for her, but this was a man, and she didn't want  
21 him to translate for her. She wanted me to do it, but  
22 I wasn't allowed. I did my best to be with her, and I

StenoTran

217

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 made sure I was always around for her. There wasn't  
2 anything else I could do for her. I couldn't get social  
3 workers to listen to me, I couldn't get RCMP to listen  
4 to me, and I couldn't believe that a young girl who is  
5 in an open custody here in a Sheshatshiu group home went  
6 to Davis Inlet, and the social workers and the RCMP didn't  
7 even make an effort to try to find a foster home while  
8 she was there waiting for court. She was already in Davis  
9 Inlet in the lock-up a week before I arrived there, and  
10 I guess I stayed in Davis Inlet for about six days, and  
11 she was still in the lock-up when I left. I phoned her  
12 Monday morning, and she said they're going to transfer  
13 me to Hopedale. Now they're having court in Hopedale.  
14 But I haven't talked to her since.

15 I also want to talk about  
16 the hospital a little bit, the hospital over here at the  
17 Melville, the Melville Hospital in Goose Bay. I had a  
18 sister who was sick in the country. She was brought out  
19 in the country a few days ago. She was short of breath  
20 and she had chest pain, and she was brought out in the  
21 morning, so I went up to meet her. I went to the doctor  
22 with her at the Melville Hospital, and she sat there for

StenoTran

218

**June 18, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 hours waiting for a doctor to come in. And the doctor,  
2 a female doctor, came in and examined her, and I guess  
3 she had wanted another doctor's opinion about her, and  
4 she went over and got another doctor to come in. Another  
5 doctor came in and examined her, and I guess the doctor  
6 noticed some marks on her body, on her back, some marks,  
7 and they were healed, and he took off her bandanna--she  
8 had her bandanna on--and started to look in her head, and  
9 when I saw the doctor doing this, I said to the doctor,  
10 what are you doing, and he said I'm looking for some bugs  
11 in her head. I said she didn't come here to get her hair  
12 checked. She's not well, she's sick. And he goes back  
13 to the time to me she was very, very embarrassed, and she  
14 was very, very hurt. When I told the doctor, when I said  
15 something to the doctor, he looked in a couple of places,  
16 and then he stopped. This is what reminded me. It goes  
17 right back to me when I went to school, when I saw the  
18 doctors doing this, when the teachers, the public health  
19 nurse, you would come to the school and checked out heads  
20 and used to put some stuff in our heads. I talked to my  
21 sister after, because I was very angry and very upset about  
22 it, and she said to me, Rose, forget it, forget about it,

StenoTran



219

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 try to forget about it. I told her I couldn't forget about  
2 it. She said because it happened to us, and it's going  
3 to continue to happen to us for a long time, and it's going  
4 to continue, and that's what she said. She wanted me to  
5 forget about it, because she just thinks it's hopeless  
6 to do anything about it. That's what she was trying to  
7 tell me.

8 I just want to talk a little  
9 bit about what I'm hoping and dreaming about will happen  
10 in the community sometime in the future. I wish the  
11 government would give us to control ourselves. I wish  
12 the government would leave us alone so we can go on with  
13 our lives.

14 I wanted to talk a little  
15 bit about housing. I remember when my parents moved into  
16 their new house. I felt sorry for my mother and my father  
17 for thinking they have a good deal, that they were being  
18 treated very good by the government. I feel sorry for  
19 them in thinking that I must have been thinking that way,  
20 too. We moved into a house with nothing in the house,  
21 a three-bedroom house, no toilet, not a thing, no furniture  
22 or nothing. And my father didn't have the money to buy

StenoTran



220

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 furniture, a few mattresses on the floor. It seems like  
2 my parents were satisfied, and seems very happy that they  
3 have a house. Even though the government is giving money  
4 to the band council for housing, the housing here in  
5 Sheshatshiu is very poorly done. The housing is not very  
6 good. I'm sure anybody from outside or anybody from Ottawa  
7 would never move in a house with no water or no nothing  
8 in the house.

9 I think sometimes the  
10 government looks at people like we're just a bunch of  
11 animals, you know, as if we don't know the difference.  
12 Like I said, I feel sorry for my parents in thinking that  
13 they were being treated very good by the government.

14 I hope you understand what  
15 I'm trying to say to you, because English is my second  
16 language, and I'm trying the best way I can to put my message  
17 across to you. Even though I hear a lot of people sometimes  
18 saying, from Happy Valley-Goose Bay, saying the Innu don't  
19 realize how good they've got it. They've got housing given  
20 to them, they've got their children, and if they want to  
21 go to university, their school is paid for. I'm sure  
22 Francis or Peter Penashue know there's only so much money

StenoTran

221

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 coming from the government every year, and that's not even  
2 enough. And if we don't spend the money right away they  
3 wanted us to spend, the money is going to be cut off, or  
4 we won't be given the money, and it is very hard trying  
5 to achieve, or an Innu nation president trying to work  
6 with people with no funding.

7 I could continue talking  
8 for hours, but I don't want to take too much time, so I'll  
9 just stop here. Thank you.

10 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
11 Thank you very much. You've given us a presentation that  
12 is very clear, and obviously coming from experience and  
13 from the heart. I know it is not easy for you to come  
14 in public and say those things, but I think they will  
15 benefit the whole community, and we are very happy that  
16 you convinced yourself to do it. It's being put on record,  
17 and we are going to have a hard look at what you said to  
18 us this afternoon. Thank you.

19 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** The next  
20 person on the list is Mr. Ponis Nuke. He finally got here.

21 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
22 Welcome. Good afternoon.

StenoTran

222

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

MR. PONIS NUKE,

1  
2 [INTERPRETER]: I was born in Davis Inlet, and I presently  
3 reside in Sheshatshiu. I've been here for 15 years. The  
4 Innu has been in the country to do the trapping in the  
5 spring, in the fall. Sometimes the Innu are sick in the  
6 country. Today, this spring, not long ago, it's been two  
7 months. There was one elder that got sick in the country,  
8 and there was a call through the radio transmitter to get  
9 a call to Sheshatshiu, a doctor. I remember the time of  
10 the call. It was 9:00. I don't know what time the doctor  
11 was called. When the doctor was called, the doctor was  
12 unable to send a plane when someone is sick. If I got  
13 a call from St. John's, this is when I will send a plane  
14 to the country. There is not that many families for the  
15 elder who was sick. Everyone in the camp was frightened,  
16 scared. It was already 10:00, and everybody was paranoid.  
17 The elder woman who was sick was unconscious, but yet  
18 the doctor was waiting a call for consensus, a call from  
19 St. John's. It was at midnight, the elder has died. This  
20 is when the doctor has sent the plane to the country.  
21 When the doctor came to the country, the elder was already  
22 dead for three days. The doctor took the elder who died

StenoTran

223

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 back to the community.  
2  
3 This is not the first time  
4 I've seen the elder die in the country, the way the doctor  
5 has treated her. When someone dies in the community, it's  
6 the same thing. The doctor took the body to outside.  
7 This is what I feel about the doctor. Nobody is telling  
8 me what to say. This is what I feel. This is what I think  
9 of the doctor. This is what I feel about the doctor when  
10 someone dies and is taken to the outside, and trying to  
11 analyze the cause of the death of the person. I don't  
12 think the doctor wants to know how the person dies or how  
13 the illness. Those student doctors and nurses are the  
14 only ones who want to be shown how the person died. But  
15 there is a clinic here in Sheshatshiu to help the elder,  
16 the kids, if someone was very sick, but yet things are  
17 not going the right way, even though when there is a clinic  
18 being built here. Five days is when the clinic usually  
19 opens. For 24 hours, the clinic is not that accessible  
20 to the Innu. When the doctor comes in here, usually she  
21 comes in here two or three times to the clinic, and then  
22 the doctor gives a paper prescribing the pills, drugs,  
giving the prescription to get the pills to Happy

StenoTran

224

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Valley-Goose Bay. When the doctor gives certain days  
2 prescription, there are certain days that a patient don't  
3 usually get prescription pills until the next day. But  
4 today, even though there is a clinic here in our community,  
5 the Innu are using more services with the other side of  
6 the clinic, North West River.

7 Even though the clinic is not open for 24 hours, there  
8 is a phone there where you can phone when someone is very  
9 sick. Sometimes the doctor, when they see a patient in  
10 Goose Bay, when someone is sick, to go to the hospital,  
11 usually six or seven in the evening is usually when they  
12 see a doctor, but I feel that the doctor has  
13 responsibilities to seek health-wise with the Innu.

14 Another thing I want to  
15 discuss is somewhere in 1986, the Innu went to Alberta,  
16 and then the Innu took a trapping course in Edmonton,  
17 Alberta. One of the reasons why the Innu take it is because  
18 the trapping is kind of different, because this trapping  
19 today is kind of not well used, not well know, and yet  
20 I know how much the Innu knows the elders, how they sell  
21 their fur for their hunting. But today, there is no  
22 existence the way our grandfathers and forefathers used

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225

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 to be. But today, there's other people making fur money.  
2 Those fur money are the ones who are choosing how it can  
3 be sold, in relating to pelts. But today, it has been  
4 three years that the trapping program has been running.

5  
6 In the early days, I don't  
7 know how long the community college existed. Happy Valley  
8 has been in existence now for 20 years, but there was no  
9 such thing as trapping courses. When the Innu went to  
10 Edmonton, Alberta, this is when this trapping courses  
11 begin. But today, when the Innu went to Edmonton, the  
12 resource person who went there is not being used any more.

13 There is a non-native person who has been hired from  
14 Northern Bay, Ontario. He's the one who is teaching the  
15 traditional skills on the Innu in Labrador. On the first  
16 day when the white men see in Labrador, he knew right away  
17 how the Innu run and were taught. But there are only a  
18 few things that I know he has taught. But I can only tell  
19 you one thing, how he teaches. I remember my grandfather  
20 and my father knowing how to make snowshoes, but I've never  
21 seen a metal using on a snowshoe. Instruction today in  
22 a trapping program is the same thing that the Innu are

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227

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 much for listening to me for this presentation.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

3 Thank you very much for your excellent presentation. What  
4 you said in particular concerning the distribution of  
5 health services is of great importance. I understand that  
6 there is one doctor in the community. You have the clinic  
7 that is open five days of week. What kind of personals  
8 are they in this clinic in the community? I just wondered,  
9 the kind of health personals that are in the clinics?  
10 You have a clinic in the community, a health clinic, and  
11 what numbers of persons are working there.

12 **MR. PONIS NUKE,**

13 **[INTERPRETER]:** He doesn't really know the number of staff  
14 who are presently working in the clinic. I don't know  
15 how many nurses are working or taking shifts. Employees  
16 are two nurses or a doctor. They don't have enough working  
17 in the clinic. They don't have enough hours working in  
18 the clinic.

19 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

20 There is no Innu person working in the clinic?

21 **MR. PONIS NUKE,**

22 **[INTERPRETER]:** I think there is an only Innu worker who

StenoTran

228

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 is taking the names of the patients at the clinic.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

3 Thank you very much.

4 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** The next  
5 person on the list of speakers is Kathleen Nuna. I think  
6 she's just outside, so somebody is going to fetch her.  
7 She's coming in now. This is Kathleen Nuna.

8 **MS. KATHLEEN NUNA,**

9 **[INTERPRETER]:** I was born in the country. This is where  
10 my father has raised me, in the country. Since now, the  
11 government has been treating us, how the government is  
12 changing our lives. There's so many things that the  
13 government has changed us. When we talk about our land,  
14 not only our land, we are also talking about our animals,  
15 our trees, our lakes, our country--everything that's here  
16 in Labrador. There's only one thing, and that's our land.

17 We want to teach our kids  
18 how our ancestors used to live. These are the things that  
19 I long for. These are one of the things that the low-level  
20 flying jets are destructing. How so many things have we  
21 wasted, wasted in our animals, wasting our berries, wasting  
22 our rivers, wasting our medicine. There are so many things

StenoTran

229

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 that the government has. Since the government, we have  
2 lost so many things. These are the things that I want  
3 to teach my grandkids, how we used to live, we long for.

4 It has been 15 years that  
5 I have taught. These are one of the things that we're  
6 very grateful, not to lose our language. This is one of  
7 the things that I'm teaching the kids, is the Innu language.

8 And then when we try to teach our kids, there's no funding.  
9 I have been teaching for 15 years. There is no paper,  
10 there is no Innu history, there is no Innu geography, there  
11 is no Innu stories. This is one of the things that I value  
12 most, for these papers to be written. As far as I can  
13 remember, being a teacher, I'm always the one who is doing  
14 the writing, I'm always doing it with my hands, but I have  
15 no paper. I also envy the non-native teachers. They only  
16 grab the pen and paper when they want to teach, and they  
17 also order their papers. The government is not giving  
18 me anything to teach. The government who has stolen so  
19 many things from us, stealing our land, and yet in return,  
20 they only give us houses.

21 The only thing that's of  
22 value is only of one sense , and yet they get so many

StenoTran

230

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 resources from our land, building houses in Labrador and  
2 also in Canada. There's so many fishing camps being set  
3 up. They're making a lot of money from these things, and  
4 the government is one of the things that is stealing from  
5 us, and yet the government, we're the very last ones, at  
6 the end, to live. We're the last ones to be in the land,  
7 including the Inuit. How come the government is treating  
8 us with our lives? It's always, always in the end that  
9 we're being looked at. And yet, the government is hurting  
10 us, and we are also grieving. And yet, the government  
11 is not stopping. It is always trying to dam our lakes,  
12 flooding our lakes.

13 We also are never going to  
14 stop protesting, yet I know that the lake will be--there's  
15 going to be one lake that's going to built a dam. We're  
16 always going to be there, we're going to be recognized.

17 It's because that we're trying to teach our kids.  
18 Everyone in this land is dependent on their own lives.  
19 Everyone also wants to use money, yet I do not understand  
20 why the government is treating us this way. Our  
21 grandfathers and our ancestors never signed a treaty with  
22 our land, and it's one of the purposes and the reasons

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232

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 the country, I never saw a drunken person or a fight with  
2 one another. We also have a very healthy way of living,  
3 eating healthy foods, and yet, the government is not  
4 believing us, blaming with the low-level flying in relation  
5 to the animals. I know the animals belong to us. It's  
6 the same thing as the non-native know their cows, their  
7 horses, their chicken. And yet, they knew right away that  
8 there is sickness. And yet, the government is saying to  
9 us that it is mosquitos. It is the mosquitos that is  
10 turning the caribou away. We used to live in the country,  
11 and we never see a caribou. I have never seen a caribou  
12 run away from mosquitos. They caribou knew what to do.  
13 The caribou run through the water, through the lakes,  
14 when he or she runs away from the mosquitos.

15 The government never  
16 studies anything. When there is a forestry cutting, the  
17 government never studies it, and yet the government is  
18 saying to us that we don't know what we know. They never  
19 consulted anything when they're trying to build projects.  
20 When we were blocking the road this fall, if we didn't  
21 blockade the road, the trees would all be taken away, and  
22 yet this is where we could have found dollars. We use

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233

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 our trees, and these are the things that we want to teach  
2 our kids, and this is how we survive. These are how we  
3 collect things from the trees. We also depend on caribou.  
4 When my father used to kill caribou, the way he kills  
5 a lot of caribou, when he used to kill a lot of caribou,  
6 he feels like he has a lot of stores. When they kill a  
7 lot of caribou, he feels like there is a lot of stores,  
8 a lot of malls. Ever since I work, my kids  
9 never go to the country. They also don't eat the way I  
10 used to eat. I have a high sympathy for my kids, when  
11 I think about them. When I get paid, I go to the Co-op  
12 store. From there, I buy food. With the food that I  
13 bought, the food being, for instance, chicken, baloney,  
14 french fries. The kids are very happy when I bring the  
15 food. This is one of the things that I have sympathy for  
16 my kids, because my kids don't know that the food has been  
17 there for a long time.

18 And then when I used to  
19 live, how I live, how my father lived, when my father comes  
20 home, after he hunts. When my father brings food, I was  
21 very happy when he brings food. This is what you call  
22 "real" food. This is one of the things that I long for.

StenoTran



234

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

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And when I want to teach my kids and other kids traditional skills, and they say there is no money, no funding. Now it is that the government has their way of living, there's always funding available for them. This is one of the things that I say we're the very last persons to be recognized, to be seen, to be listened. There are so many things that I want to teach my kids and other kids, other, numerous, traditional skills.

This is all I need to say.

Thank you very much.

**CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

Thank you very much for your presentation.

**MR. BEN MICHEL:** I think

we should break for some coffee for 15 minutes.

--- Hearing is recessed at 1537 hours

--- Upon resuming at 1556 hours

**ANGELA ANDREW**

**[INTERPRETER]:** My name is Angela Andrew. My topic will be education, culture and crafts.

We see a vision that our

StenoTran

235

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 children have lost their culture. Children are caught  
2 up in two worlds, the white world and the Innu culture.  
3 That's when alcohol is destroying our lives. I was once  
4 a heavy drinker, too, because I didn't understand the  
5 disease of alcoholism. The students are frustrated and  
6 there are high drop-out rates, lots of drop-outs. They'll  
7 lose their culture. Most have learning disabilities.  
8 You can't blame them, because they got their mother tongue,  
9 and they have to learn to speak English.

10 I'm glad school is taken  
11 the Innu education. The children will not learn English  
12 first. They will have to learn the Innu language and  
13 writing or crafts skills. We want our children to learn  
14 traditional skills, like making snowshoe frames for men  
15 and women, moccasin, and doing beadwork.

16 The elders have  
17 traditional skills, but the problem is they don't have  
18 the education that gives certificates, and that is what  
19 white culture wants. We want our children to learn  
20 traditional skills, for instance, like making snowshoe  
21 frames, moccasins and beadwork. The elders who have these  
22 skills must teach the younger generation the traditional

StenoTran

236

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 skills. The problem is they don't have the education to  
2 give certificates, and that's what the white culture wants.

3

4

When Innu people take over  
5 the education system here in our community, they should  
6 make an effort to take the children into the bush so they  
7 could learn traditional skills, maybe take the children  
8 out for one or two weeks in the bush and let them understand  
9 themselves, and to have energy not to drop out. Students  
10 are frustrated because parents can't help their children  
11 with homework. No wonder our children need Innu history,  
12 to build new materials, teaching ideas, techniques and  
13 skills.

14

As far as I know that I  
15 teach on the other side, I work and teach in the community  
16 college. I teach with the students, teaching them the  
17 Innu language, and taking English as their second language.  
18 They can finish level A, B and 1, and they're unable to  
19 finish it for one year or finish it in 15 weeks. 52 weeks  
20 is too short. The students are unable to write their own  
21 written Innu language, and also they're very slow in  
22 learning English. Also, the training allowance to be

StenoTran





239

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 parents, like children, they've got mother tongue, they've  
2 got second language to learn in school, the English, so  
3 they're frustrated. There's lots of trouble.

4 If they understand their  
5 culture, like to do traditional skills themselves, they  
6 would be proud of themselves, so they won't drop out.

7 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
8 Because these are small solutions, but very important,  
9 every day. Thank you very much for your remarks and  
10 recommendations. Thank you.

11 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** The next  
12 person on the list of speakers is Martha Hurry.

13 **MS. MARTHA HURRY:** Hello,  
14 my name is Martha Hurry. I had to write down what I want  
15 to say, because my English isn't really that great.

16 First of all, I want to say  
17 that I worked with the Peenamin McKenzie School for eight  
18 months. I was the kindergarten teacher. I had to make  
19 a very tough decision before I went into the country.  
20 Every spring, the Innu go into the country to take the  
21 children. My children's ages are from 12, 20 to five years  
22 of age. They were all very anxiously waiting to go into

StenoTran

240

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 the country. Then I was torn between two very important  
2 things, my job with the school, plus my children waiting  
3 for me to give them an answer to go into the bush. Then  
4 I said to myself, I, myself, have to make that decision  
5 and choose whatever is best for me and for my family.  
6 Then I wrote a letter to the RC School Board and the Innu  
7 Education committee. My leave was approved. Once I got  
8 my record of employment, I took it up to the Canada  
9 Employment Centre. If I didn't, they would have asked  
10 me why I didn't sign up early. This is why I took my record  
11 of employment as soon as possible. The woman at the office  
12 said I would be disqualified for nine weeks. I understood  
13 what she said to me. I figured the nine weeks has been  
14 covered since the time I spent in the country. I went  
15 in the country on April 9th right through to June 11th,  
16 but when I arrived home on June 11th, I went back to the  
17 office only to find out again I would be disqualified for  
18 seven more weeks. Well, that adds up to 16 weeks. I'll  
19 be getting no income. I have no regrets from going to  
20 the country, but the price I have to pay when I come back  
21 is I don't have no income, plus bills to pay.

22

When I left the Canada

StenoTran



241

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Employment Office, I felt to helpless. I said to myself  
2 that it would be useless for me to argue with the insurance  
3 agent at the office. She raised her voice so loud when  
4 she explained why I was disqualified for seven more weeks.

5 I wished at that time there was an aboriginal person  
6 working there who had an understanding of why people go  
7 into the country.

8 I have talked to non-Innu  
9 about the situation, and they told me that I was being  
10 discriminated against. I thought the agents at the Canada  
11 Employment Centre were there to help people if they had  
12 any problems with their UI benefits, but instead, the  
13 person was very harsh, so I left their office feeling angry.

14 I said to myself, how many times do they do this to other  
15 native people. If I had stayed in the village, I would  
16 have got my UIC after I have worked 20 weeks, but I was  
17 punished because I went in the country.

18 I feel that that is another  
19 way to keep people in the community. I tried to explain  
20 to the woman that I went to the country for cultural  
21 reasons, but it seems that she didn't even want to hear  
22 what I was trying to say to her, so I gave up talking to

StenoTran

242

June 18, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 her.

2

**CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

3 Thank you very much for presenting us with this particular  
4 situation. The unemployment benefit program is a very  
5 technical one, and it's quite obvious that the norms or  
6 the standards that are there are not necessarily fitting  
7 with cultural aspects, and what we would like first is  
8 to make sure that the information why these nine plus seven  
9 weeks, 16 weeks together, is cut off, that the explanation  
10 be given to you quite clearly. For this aspect, I would  
11 like if you could, after your presentation or later this  
12 afternoon, to give your phone number and address to Roger  
13 Farley, who is sitting at this table, so we could get the  
14 information.

15

As far as the larger

16 question is concerned, it deals with the application of  
17 the whole program, and taking into account specific  
18 circumstances, and we are going to have a look at it on  
19 a more general scale. But I think it is very important  
20 that you raised that issue with us, bringing the Commission  
21 to this reality with the program. Thank you very much.

22

**MR. BEN MICHEL:** The last

StenoTran

243

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 speaker, I think, Mr. Chairman, is Lionel Rich.

2 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**

3 Good afternoon.

4 **MR. LIONEL RICH**

5 **(Sheshatshiu Resident):** Good afternoon. My name is  
6 Lionel Rich, and I'm from here, not too far from here.  
7 I just want to talk about the young offenders last year  
8 has been taking place here in Sheshatshiu. I want to know  
9 why there wasn't an arguing about an incident that took  
10 place last year about the RCMP and social services. Some  
11 time ago in September, some teenagers, teenaged boys, did  
12 some break and enters in clubs in Northwest River and Goose  
13 Bay. I am concerned about the conduct of RCMP officers.  
14 The boys avoided the police about a week. The boys didn't  
15 stay in safety or shelter of homes of their parents. They  
16 spent the nights outside in the woods. They were afraid  
17 to come home. They only came home for something to eat.  
18 They weren't staying long. They had to go only for a  
19 few minutes.

20 I've seen this happen with  
21 the young offenders last year. A lot of RCMP, probably,  
22 10 RCMP, were looking for those young offenders, and they

StenoTran

244

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 were threatening the young offenders using helicopters,  
2 guns and dogs as well. I feel this is not right for the  
3 young offenders, because they were afraid of the cops.  
4 At that time, there was panic and that sort of thing.  
5 I'm not surprised at what's been happening to those young  
6 offenders.

7 I feel that if there was  
8 a person who murdered any person, that could have been  
9 done, to use a helicopter or dogs or guns, that sort of  
10 thing, but those kids were afraid because they don't know  
11 the system, the law, if they break the law. They don't  
12 know the system, whether they break in or not, because  
13 they're not living in white society, as far as I'm  
14 concerned, because I know these people, these kids were  
15 threatened by cops.

16 I can tell you one time as  
17 an adult, I was threatened by a cop one time when I was  
18 drunk. As a matter of fact, they took me in Goose Bay,  
19 a half mile from here, I was handcuffed and was hit by  
20 a cop and he gave me a black eye. I didn't like that,  
21 because this is not right. They could have put me in jail  
22 for overnight, yes, I can believe that. But again, a cop

StenoTran

245

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 threatened you, which is not good, which is not right at  
2 all.

3 I've seen this system, the  
4 law system, turned upside down, as far as I'm concerned,  
5 because I notice a difference, I've seen prisons so many  
6 times, and I know the law is turning upside down, as far  
7 as I'm concerned, because I don't think the RCMP follow  
8 the law as well. At the same time, they're breaking the  
9 law, as well as to follow it. I've seen this happening  
10 so many times. One time I was with an elder in his home,  
11 and the cops came in and searched for a person, which he  
12 didn't have no search warrant and that sort of thing.  
13 And I said to the cop, I said do you have a search warrant,  
14 and he said no, I can go in any time I like. I said you're  
15 breaking the law. You work for the Majesty, the Queen,  
16 whatever you call them, and then you break the law against  
17 that, on top of that, which is not right.

18 I've seen this happen so  
19 many times in this community. I've seen a lot of things  
20 that have been happening to us. I've seen the government  
21 threatening the Innu people. I've seen this in this  
22 community as well. The government, I think, doesn't

StenoTran









249

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 I said, we would like to see something to be done, because  
2 some day you will see a young offender, he could have a  
3 heart attack with this kind of incident, threatening  
4 against the cops.

5 This is not what we want.

6 We would like to see a Royal Commission do research or  
7 do some kind of this thing to resolve the problem. Thank  
8 you.

9 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
10 Thank you very much. I think the facts that you raised  
11 show again the importance of the relationship between the  
12 RCMP officers and the community on the way the work should  
13 be done, and this is part of the look that we certainly  
14 have to have on the justice system.

15 As far as these special  
16 events are concerned, our Commission is not the proper  
17 organization to dredge out the facts and to make a specific  
18 inquiry. What we can do is to try to have the information  
19 of where is the situation, and maybe to put you into contact  
20 with the organization that is enabled by Statute, by the  
21 law, to make that kind of investigation. There is some  
22 body where complaints can be made against the RCMP under

StenoTran

250

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 the RCMP legislation, so what I would suggest, in this  
2 particular case, is that you give your phone number, name  
3 and address to Roger Farley, who is sitting beside me,  
4 and in terms of information, we would try at least to  
5 channel you to the proper place.

6 But again, I would like  
7 that you understand that our Commission is not empowered  
8 to dig in every instance of where there have been problems  
9 with the police, because we are not a permanent body, but  
10 we are there more to look at the system and propose  
11 corrections to the system. But it is good to know the  
12 facts of special events in order to propose corrections  
13 to the system.

14 So thank you very much  
15 again. I would like that you give your name and address  
16 to Mr. Farley. Thank you.

17 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** There are  
18 no more speakers, Mr. Chairman, so I think we're going  
19 to have the closing prayer and the drum beat.

20 **CO-CHAIR RENE DUSSAULT:**  
21 Maybe just before, I would like to close these two days  
22 of hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

StenoTran

251

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 here in Sheshatshiu with some very brief remarks.

2 I think these two days have  
3 been very, very helpful and fruitful. We've heard many  
4 individual cases, and we've heard also cases that are  
5 important, of course, to the individuals concerned, but  
6 also that lay the background of the problems that are in  
7 the community, and I hope that from there, we will be able  
8 to propose, with an additional discussion and dialogue,  
9 some solutions that will help government to have sound  
10 policies in the future. What has been difficult is that  
11 too many bad policies have been implemented.

12 This would not have been  
13 possible without the presence of many, many members of  
14 the community throughout those two days of hearings, and  
15 of course, without the presenters themselves, who  
16 sometimes made great effort to come and speak out publicly.

17 It's always a contribution for the public education, or  
18 the education of not only people in the community, but  
19 outside, through the media. This would not have been  
20 possible without the help of many, many people.

21 I would like to thank Mary  
22 Ann Michel for the opening prayer and the closing prayers

StenoTran

252

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 she made yesterday and this morning. I would like to thank  
2 our local community co-ordinator, Etienne Andrew, whose  
3 job was essential to the success of this hearing. He has  
4 been within the community, working, convincing presenters  
5 to come, even if there was scepticism, in some cases.  
6 I would like, of course, to thank our friend, Ben Michel,  
7 for his good work during these two days and his good sense  
8 of humour. This has been very important. I would like  
9 to thank all those who prepared the two lunches that we  
10 had yesterday and today. Of course, these are highlights  
11 in their own of the date, in their own time of the day,  
12 and very important, also.

13 I would like to thank this  
14 school, the Peenamin McKenzie School, for allowing us to  
15 meet and have those hearings in this gymnasium. I would  
16 like, of course, to thank again the whole community for  
17 the interest that it has shown.

18 We have had Eddie Pottle  
19 with us of the Labrador Institute of Northern Studies for  
20 the last two days, covering the meetings, and I would like  
21 to give many thanks, and also to our Commissioner of the  
22 Day, Chief Penashue, Francis Penashue, and I would like,

StenoTran

253

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 of course, to thank the translators, who did a very good  
2 job, and important one, even if they have to sit in some  
3 kind of reclusion in the back during those two days. Thank  
4 you very much for your good work. There are Lou Rich and  
5 Cecilia Rich, and of course, again, to all members of our  
6 staff who have ensured the success of these two days, in  
7 particular Nora Jarrett, who is our team leader, Rhoda  
8 KayakjUak, who is our communicator officer, Michael  
9 Lazore, and Roger Farley, who will have many cases to follow  
10 up back in Ottawa.

11 So thank you very much  
12 again, and we will be back in Labrador in the fall, in  
13 another community, but you will be informed of where and  
14 when, and it will always be possible to come and make a  
15 presentation, an additional presentation, if you have  
16 additional thinking.

17 As you know, we are looking  
18 for solutions for the future, because we have to be looking  
19 forward. Thank you very much. It has been a real pleasure  
20 and of great human interest to meet each of you. Thank  
21 you.

22 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT :**

StenoTran

254

June 18, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 I, too, would like to thank everyone. I think Mr.  
2 Dussault has covered every single individual, but there  
3 is one person, I think, who deserves a mention of  
4 appreciation as well, and that's one of our staff members,  
5 Michael Lazore. And in particular, I would like to thank  
6 the translators, interpreters, and I would really like  
7 to thank Etienne Andrew. He was telling me earlier that  
8 he has worked with Royal Commissions before, but for this  
9 one he has never worked so hard, and for that, I thank  
10 you very much. Thank you [Penote?], and Francis.

11 **MR. BEN MICHEL:** [Few  
12 remarks in native language, not translated]  
13 --- Whereupon the Commission is adjourned  
14