

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR  
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

LOCATION/ENDROIT:   DAVIS INLET  
                          LABRADOR

DATE:                TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1992

VOLUME:             1

"for the record..."  
**STENOTRAN**  
1376 Kilborn Ave.  
Ottawa 521-0703

ii

**INDEX****DAVIS INLET****DECEMBER 1, 1992**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Opening Remarks	1
Presentation by Cajetan Rich	17
Presentation by Chief Katie Rich	24
Presentation by Innu Nation George Rich, Vice-President	59
Presentation by Philip Rich	100
Presentation by Youth Council and Tribal Police Simeon Tshakapesh	102
Presentation by Innu Nation Raphael Gregoire, Director of Education	122
Presentation by Ben Andrews	138
Presentation by Innu Nation Peter Penashue, President	144
Presentation by Gordon Warner	163



1

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 Davis Inlet, Labrador  
2 --- Upon commencing on December 1, 1992, at 1028 hours

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

4 We're going to begin our hearings here. The Royal  
5 Commission is on its second set of hearings. We held some  
6 hearings from April to June last year. So now we started  
7 our hearings in October, and we've gone through November,  
8 and we will be holding one more week of hearings after  
9 this before we're finished this set of hearings. We just  
10 came from Nain, and after today we'll have a day in  
11 Cartwright.

12 The Commission is  
13 travelling in three panels. There are seven  
14 Commissioners, and we've broken it up into three groups  
15 and we're travelling in different parts of Canada at the  
16 same time.

17 With me here is Mary  
18 Sillett, my name is Georges Erasmus, and we have five other  
19 Commissioners that are travelling on two other teams.  
20 Out of the seven Commissioners overall, four of them are  
21 Aboriginal peoples, three are non-Aboriginals.

22 We were appointed a year  
23 ago, and we have a very large mandate. The mandate of  
24 the Royal Commission is to report to the Government of  
25 Canada in about two years' time. We can report on a whole

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3

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 their territories, and in places in Canada where there  
2 are treaties with First Nations, we heard about how  
3 governments did not respect those agreements that were  
4 made with Aboriginal people.

5 We heard about people's  
6 problems in trying to hunt according to the way that the  
7 treaties outline, or to trap or to fish, and we heard a  
8 lot about the problems people are having in the  
9 comprehensive claim areas, like in the North and the Yukon,  
10 the Northwest Territories, where people have been  
11 negotiating claims for a long time. The kinds of  
12 complaints they had were they didn't like the policy, the  
13 government's policy, on comprehensive claims.  
14 Particularly, they didn't like the fact that the government  
15 policy on land claims was based on extinguishing Aboriginal  
16 title.

17 In large cities,  
18 Aboriginal people told us about how, if they're a treaty  
19 Indian, they come to this city and they have no rights  
20 any different from non-Native people. They felt that they  
21 were being treated as if they were non-Aboriginal people  
22 living in the city. They have housing problems, they have  
23 problems with trying to find a job in a large city, they  
24 found discrimination or racism amongst non-Native people,  
25 and they, of course, had difficulty maintaining their

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5

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 identity, their culture, their language, their history,  
2 everywhere we went, whether it was a small community in  
3 the North somewhere or downtown Toronto, it was the same.

4 Everyone was concerned about remembering who they were,  
5 being able to tell when they are practising a value that  
6 is their own or an activity that belongs to the majority  
7 society that has come to North America.

8 In many, many places we  
9 went, we heard about people wanting a revival of  
10 traditional spiritual activity and beliefs. We heard a  
11 lot about how residential schools or boarding schools had  
12 affected people. We heard about how sexual abuse and  
13 physical and emotional abuse took place in these  
14 institutions, where children were sent away from their  
15 parents and their families for years, how people lost their  
16 language that way, how, when they came home, they couldn't  
17 speak to their parents anymore or their community. And  
18 because they had not lived with their parents, they had  
19 not learned how to parent, they did not know how to raise  
20 a family, and so when they, themselves, had families, then  
21 they were not good parents.

22 We heard how when people  
23 are abused, and it's really funny, but those same people  
24 turn around and they abuse their own children, and that's  
25 how the abuse just keeps going. Once it starts it's very

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6

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 hard to stop. If people receive violence then that's what  
2 they do, and it's all tied into the residential school  
3 system.

4 We heard from young people.  
5 We heard from young people that wanted to find people  
6 they could look up to. They wanted role models. They  
7 wanted to be able to be proud of who they were, but they  
8 were finding a lot of trouble finding somebody in their  
9 community or even amongst their people who they could be  
10 proud of. What they were seeing was people being violent  
11 to their mothers, people involved in alcoholism, drug  
12 abuse, and so the young people did the same thing. They  
13 sniffed glue, if they could, gasoline, all kinds of  
14 solvents. If they could get their hands on alcohol, then  
15 they drank that. In places in the country where they could  
16 get drugs then they did drugs.

17 But those young people all  
18 were pleading for help. They talked about when people  
19 are attempting to take their life, and we asked the young  
20 people, what do you think the young people are saying,  
21 what are they saying to their family, what are they saying  
22 to the group? And the young people told us that they were  
23 crying out for help to anybody that would listen. And  
24 it was not because young people wanted to take their own  
25 life, as they attempted many times and some succeeded,

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7

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 but because they saw despair around them and they wanted  
2 change.

3 We heard from elders, who  
4 told us how they had cried about what had happened to their  
5 people, that there were communities in the country where  
6 Aboriginal elders would speak to the community and no one  
7 would be able to understand their language under 30 years  
8 old, and that the way of life of the past was gone and  
9 that the values were gone, the respect that was there for  
10 adults and elders in the past was gone. And at the same  
11 time we were hearing from the young people who were saying  
12 we would like to look up to our elders, but our elders  
13 are the worst examples in some of our communities, so it's  
14 hard for us to look up to them. So we heard from the elders  
15 that they wanted the young people to look up to them and  
16 respect them.

17 Everywhere we went,  
18 communities and nations of people told us about how they  
19 had been robbed of their land, they had been robbed of  
20 their authority, they had been robbed of their  
21 responsibility to take care of themselves, to run their  
22 own lives, to govern themselves and to continue to play  
23 the role on the land that the Creator had given them.

24 We heard about people were  
25 being concerned about the environment, on how major

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9

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 power and they would hurt their own people.

2 So over and over, we were  
3 told, even when we went to prisons, we were told from people  
4 that what was needed was healing, and the best way that  
5 healing could take place was traditional healing, and that  
6 elders and spirituality had to be part of the repair of  
7 the trauma and the hurt and the pain that people have gone  
8 through.

9 So after we finished our  
10 first round of hearings, we developed some documents,  
11 developed a video and some documents, and we have copies  
12 of it here, which we hoped would help us in this round  
13 of hearings. In this round of hearings, we were hoping  
14 that we would hear more solutions from people, we would  
15 hear from people what kind of future they wanted that would  
16 be different. We know that people have gone through a  
17 lot of pain, and they still are in many parts of Canada.

18

19 But for us, we cannot only  
20 be hearing about the pain. We must find out what the way  
21 out is, what is the route out of where people find  
22 themselves, what are the solutions, what are the ways  
23 problems are going to get solved once and for all, and  
24 there will be a good life in the future.

25 So we're in a second round

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10

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 of hearings, and we're hoping that people will tell us  
2 the beginnings of those solutions. We will take those  
3 ideas, and we will use them in the next round. We will  
4 come out with documents and probably a video, where we  
5 will list out what people are saying and how we can solve  
6 the problems together, and we hope that that will be a  
7 tool that we can use in the next round where people will  
8 say well, you know, that idea that came from British  
9 Columbia is good for over there but maybe it's not very  
10 good for the Northwest Territories, or that idea in Ontario  
11 is good for Ontario but it doesn't really work for Quebec.  
12 So we hope that from this set of hearings, we will come  
13 up with a lot of ideas on where to go in the future.

14 We are also doing a fair  
15 amount of research on our own. We are doing over 100 case  
16 studies across Canada where we're going into the community,  
17 and we're working with the community on a project.  
18 Sometimes it's on self-government, sometimes it's on  
19 economic development, other times it's on social healing  
20 and social problems. We hope to be able to have these  
21 different case studies from all parts of the country so  
22 that every situation that Aboriginal people find  
23 themselves in in the country can be covered one way or  
24 another.

25 In addition, we have set

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11

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 up a fund, an intervenor funding program we call it. It's  
2 for people or organizations that want to do some work and  
3 send in their ideas to us. It's to help with their  
4 research, it's to help with their travel if they want to  
5 send people to our hearings if the hearings are a long  
6 ways away. But primarily, it's for research for  
7 Aboriginal organizations and some non-Aboriginal  
8 organizations, to give them the resources necessary to  
9 do the kind of work they think they need to do to finalize  
10 some ideas that they've been working on, and that program  
11 has been underway since last spring, and most of that money  
12 has been circulated out across the country to organizations  
13 that have intervenor funding.

14 So with that, I'll ask Mary  
15 here to introduce some of the other people, introduce  
16 herself, and we'll get started with our hearings.

17 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

18 Dun chikm dun (PH). For those who didn't understand what  
19 I was trying to say, I was trying to say "thank you" in  
20 Innu-eimun. I did go to the dorm in North West River,  
21 and at that time I did hang around with some people across  
22 the river, and they did teach me a few words of Innu-eimun,  
23 and I may or may not have forgotten the words. It's been  
24 a long, long time.

25 Before I make my comments,

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12

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 I would like to first recognize some of the other people  
2 that have worked to prepare for this hearing in Davis Inlet.

3 I know that you call it another name, but I can't hardly  
4 pronounce it so--yet.

5 I would like to introduce  
6 some of the people that are working with us. We have Linda  
7 Jordan, she's an Indian, she's from Ontario, and she's  
8 working with the Secretariat in the Royal Commission.  
9 We have Rhoda Kayakjuak, she's an Inuk, she's from Hall  
10 Beach, Northwest Territories, she's in the back, and she  
11 works with the Royal Commission as well. We have Joyce  
12 Ford, she's from Makkovik, originally, she's an Inuk or  
13 a Kablunangajuk from Makkovik. We also have David Hawkes,  
14 he's a qallunak, a white person from Ontario. And I would  
15 like to recognize the people who have helped at the  
16 community level for this hearing. We have Damien Benuen,  
17 who is a local community co-ordinator, and we've asked  
18 David Nui to act as Commissioner of the Day.

19 When we first started  
20 working on the Royal Commission, we said that we were going  
21 to do things differently from other Royal Commissions.  
22 We're going to hire, for the most part, Aboriginal peoples,  
23 whether they're Indian, whether they're Métis, whether  
24 their Inuit, as long as they can do the job. And right  
25 now, we have over 90 staff, and most of them are Aboriginal

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13

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 people. And there's a reason for that. For those of us  
2 who have lived in Labrador, we know most people always  
3 say that Aboriginal people cannot succeed, and for the  
4 most part we feel that we, as Aboriginal people, have got  
5 to support ourselves, and we felt that there are many,  
6 many qualified Aboriginal people in this country, and we  
7 have many of them working for us. So when our work is  
8 finally finished we will be able to say it was Aboriginal  
9 people who did this.

10 We want to go to places  
11 where hardly anyone ever goes to for some reason or another,  
12 so we're going to small communities, we're going to remote  
13 communities, we're going to even large communities because  
14 we know that there's a lot of Aboriginal people in those  
15 communities. We know that there's a lot of non-Aboriginal  
16 people in those communities, and that we have to talk to  
17 them, too, because we live in Canada after all, and if  
18 we're to find any solutions it must be done with everybody's  
19 help.

20 I want to say--Georges has  
21 covered mostly everything, but I do want to say two or three  
22 things in addition to what he said. One of them is that  
23 for the most part, right across this country we have heard  
24 Aboriginal people saying that they no longer know their  
25 language, that they want to relearn their language, and

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14

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 they want to relearn their culture. But I think that the  
2 Innu of Labrador deserve congratulations because, despite  
3 all kinds of pressures, you've been able to maintain your  
4 language very, very well, and that's different from other  
5 Aboriginal groups in Labrador.

6 I think, clearly, there  
7 have been a lot of issues that have brought the Innu of  
8 Labrador to national attention. The Innu of Sheshatshiu  
9 have fought low-level flying for a long, long time. That  
10 has been seen by Canadians, and at least now some Canadians  
11 know that there is a Labrador, because many Canadians do  
12 not know where Labrador was or is.

13 I think that I still hear  
14 a lot of confusion from Canadians about Innu or Inuit.  
15 When you say you're an Inuk, they think you're an Innu,  
16 and when you say you're an Inuk, they don't know what that  
17 is. But we in Labrador know who the Innu are, we know  
18 who the Inuit are, and we know that there's a culture of  
19 difference between the two.

20 I think, as well, Davis  
21 Inlet, because of the incident the year before last, when  
22 there was a house fire in which six children perished,  
23 that has reached national attention. I know that we'll  
24 hear more about that today, but I do want to say that  
25 although one of the good things that happened with that

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15

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 is that even though the Innu were asking the Minister of  
2 Indian Affairs to do the inquiry, and the Minister said  
3 no, the Innu took it upon themselves to do a people's  
4 inquiry, and for that you deserve congratulations.

5 So I'm glad to be here in  
6 Davis Inlet. I look forward to hearing from you, and I  
7 hope that Etienne survives this experience. Thank you  
8 very much.

9 **DAMIEN BENUEN:**

10 [Introduction of Mr. Cajetan Rich inaudible due to distance  
11 from mic]

12 **CAJETAN RICH:** This is  
13 just a short history of Davis Inlet. My name is Cajetan  
14 Rich, and I'm working with the United Nation in Davis Inlet.

15 Davis Inlet was renamed  
16 Utshimasits by the Mushuau Innu of Labrador. It is an  
17 unincorporated community with a population of over 500  
18 in September of 1992. It is located approximately 295  
19 kilometres north of Goose Bay on the Labrador coast. Its  
20 nearest neighbours are Nain, 85 kilometres north, and  
21 Hopedale, 70 kilometres south.

22 The Mushuau Innuts of  
23 Utshimasits, Davis Inlet, lived for generations in the  
24 interior of Labrador, depending heavily on the large George  
25 River and other caribou herds, and only in the summer months

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16

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 they travelled back to the coast to fish salmon and Arctic  
2 char and to hunt other sea birds.

3                               Between the 1950s and 1966,  
4 Innu used to spend most of their time in Old Davis Inlet,  
5 and then gradually the number of people increased to the  
6 point where they outgrew the area. So in 1967, the old  
7 village began to move to the present location of Lluikoyak  
8 Island. The Old Davis Inlet was located on the mainland  
9 just five kilometres south of New Davis Inlet.

10                            Today, Davis Inlet  
11 consists of a Roman Catholic Church, 72 Innu houses, a  
12 school with over 188 students, a power plant, a nursing  
13 clinic, two stores, a wharf for large ships to dock, an  
14 air strip with terminal, band council office with garage,  
15 as well as office buildings.

16                            As early as in the  
17 mid-1700s, a fur trading post had been established at North  
18 West River in Labrador. The Innu, who live on hunting  
19 and trapping life throughout the Ungava Bay, would trade  
20 furs for supplies and materials for various trading posts  
21 scattered throughout the Labrador interior and on the north  
22 shore of St. Lawrence.

23                            Some of the Innu would  
24 travel up the North West River in the month of June and  
25 then start the journey back into the interior in August.

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17

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Others would make a brief visit there for supplies in  
2 January. For the most part, however, the Innu would travel  
3 overland to the port of St. Augustin, Sept-Iles and Mingan.

4 One of the reasons for the choice in this location over  
5 the North West River was because, unlike the North West  
6 River, these communities had permanent priests who lived  
7 among the Innu and spoke their language.

8 Hudson's Bay Company in  
9 North West River was anxious to have more Innu use their  
10 post and arranged for police to visit the settlement in  
11 1866. A mission was established there by Father  
12 Barbaroimajen (PH) in 1866, and was operated until 1895  
13 when the abbotage (PH) withdrew from the area.

14 Faced with the prospect of  
15 a losing very good fur trade, the Hudson's Bay Company  
16 appealed to the Newfoundland church authorities for a  
17 priest. Between 1921 and 1946, the Innu were served by  
18 Monseigneur Edward O'Brien from the Diocese of Harbour  
19 Grace, Newfoundland. Each summer he would travel to  
20 Labrador to spend several weeks with the Innu who travelled  
21 to North West River. For the first years, he visited only  
22 North West River, but in 1925 he received a letter from  
23 the Hudson's Bay Company store manager in Davis Inlet  
24 stating that the Innu trading in that area wanted Father  
25 O'Brien to visit them as well. In the summer of 1927 he

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18

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 travelled to Davis Inlet, and he repeated this yearly  
2 summer visit to Davis and North West River for 25 years.

3 The well-being of the Innu  
4 of the time was dependent upon the success of the hunting  
5 and trapping. A difficult year could bring hardship and  
6 at times starvation. When he was back in Newfoundland,  
7 Father O'Brien would keep informed of Labrador affairs  
8 through the Hudson's Bay Company managers. Father O'Brien  
9 made frequent appeals to the Newfoundland government on  
10 behalf of the Innu. Most often this resulted in a telegram  
11 to the post to issue relief on the government accounts.

12 For a period of years,  
13 Father O'Brien was given the authority in all matters  
14 related to Indian relief in Davis Inlet and North West  
15 River. During his summer visits, he would assess the needs  
16 of the people, and then authorize relief through the  
17 Hudson's Bay Company.

18 In 1933, Ralph Parson, an  
19 official with the Hudson's Bay Company on the Labrador  
20 coast, wrote to Father O'Brien to inform him of his  
21 aspiration [of Dr. Parson?], to the Director of  
22 International Grenfell Association, to centralize  
23 residents who were scattered along the Labrador coast into  
24 depots which would be supplied by the Grenfell Mission  
25 and the governments. It is the first indication of a

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20

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 in particular. By that time, the administration of public  
2 health and welfare, including who live along the Labrador  
3 coast, had been given over to the Newfoundland Rangers.

4 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

5 I wonder if you could summarize that, rather than just  
6 reading every sentence.

7 **CAJETAN RICH:** I only have  
8 two more pages. These are the last two.

9 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

10 Sure

11 **CAJETAN RICH:** Father  
12 O'Brien has been highly critical of the Rangers over their  
13 handling of the Innu. He angrily described the refusal  
14 of Rangers to provide assistance unless the Innu agree  
15 to go to [Boyce's?] Bay where there were given work. 1949  
16 brought in the flu epidemic, which took a terrible toll  
17 on the Mushuau Innu. Again, it was the children who  
18 suffered the most. In August of 1948, Joe Rich (PH), a  
19 Mushuau Innu who had a close friendship with Father  
20 O'Brien, wrote to inform him that the Innu would be moved  
21 to Nordak (PH). Rich did not speak or write English.  
22 The letter was written by Max Bodgil (PH), who worked for  
23 the provincial government at the time.  
24 "We have left Davis Inlet and are going to live in Nordak  
25 (PH). I don't know yet whether it

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21

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 will be better or not, but we are  
2 going to try, and hope to get more  
3 there than at Davis. Last year was  
4 a hard winter. Three children  
5 starved because we were far in the  
6 country, and bad weather stopped  
7 us before we moved to Davis Inlet."

8 And that's the end of it.

9 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

10 Thank you.

11 **DAMIEN BENUEN:** Katie

12 Rich, Chief of Davis Inlet.

13 **CHIEF KATIE RICH, DAVIS**

14 **INLET:** Good morning. First of all, I would like to say--I  
15 would like to thank you coming to our community and hear  
16 some of the problems that we are facing, and hopefully  
17 at the end of the day, you will hear some of the  
18 recommendations made by the Innu.

19 As you heard from Cajetan  
20 Rich, when we were first relocated here in the '60s, one  
21 of the things that was promised by the government was better  
22 housing. When the people were first moved here, the only  
23 thing that was equipped was a wood stove. They were  
24 promised water and sewer but none of that came about.  
25 None of the Innu homes right now have water and sewer,

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22

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 except for three houses that were built three years ago,  
2 and they only work in the summertime. Millions of dollars  
3 has been spent on repairing homes year after year and people  
4 became dependent on the government to do that every year.

5 Over the past 20 years, we  
6 have seen studies done in our community to find suitable  
7 drinking water, and all these five studies that were done  
8 proved that there is simply no water in the community to  
9 supply the whole village. When the federal government  
10 announced that they would do another study, we asked them  
11 to include the proposed new site, Shango Pond.

12 When we were first moved  
13 here to Davis, none of our people had carpentry skills,  
14 so when they were moving into their new homes, the houses  
15 that were given to them, they thought that the houses were  
16 just any other house across the country, but they were  
17 not. They have no water or sewage systems, and they become  
18 overcrowded.

19 We think that more input  
20 is needed from the people about what kind of houses they  
21 need. Usually people come in from outside, put the houses  
22 together and then leave. It's pretty obvious that the  
23 houses do not meet the people's needs. Just recently,  
24 my father wanted to fix his skidoo. He had to bring it  
25 into the living room in order to do that. Most of the

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23

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 houses are real small for our families.

2 Last spring, we had  
3 measurements done on our houses and compared these to the  
4 measurements of other government-built houses on the coast  
5 and other places. Houses were twice as big.

6 I would recommend hiring  
7 people from the village who have carpentry skills to build  
8 their own houses. Fifteen people graduated from carpentry  
9 assistant courses this fall. Four of them were women,  
10 I'm proud to say. If more people start building their  
11 houses themselves they would feel proud that they have  
12 accomplished something, because the houses they're in now,  
13 somebody else built them, so they have no pride in trying  
14 to maintain those houses.

15 In the studies that were  
16 done, each engineer had his own solutions to our problems.  
17 For example, one suggested damming of the brook at the  
18 end of the village to supply the village with water.  
19 Millions of dollars have been spent and still the situation  
20 remains the same. Last year, the federal government was  
21 going to put two million dollars in hooking up water and  
22 sewer in Davis. We think that's a waste of money because  
23 studies have proven that there is not enough water to supply  
24 the village.

25 Today, people are getting

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24

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 water from one pumping station. Honey buckets are a way  
2 of life. When we hear, over the years, of the non-Native  
3 teachers complaining about our children being dirty, it's  
4 really hard to keep your children clean without water.

5 When the government  
6 decided to move our people here, no future plans were made.  
7 As the years go by the need for housing continues, but  
8 where to put the houses? There was no room for expansion,  
9 and that's what the elders have been saying. They have  
10 no part in deciding on relocating this village from Old  
11 Davis.

12 As people get more  
13 educated, we can see things that are not right for our  
14 people. When the store manager's house was built, they  
15 took all the trouble to hook up water and sewer. They  
16 hired women to dig ditches. They didn't bother with other  
17 homes in the village, except for the teacher's residence,  
18 the mission, the nurse's residence and the school. Very  
19 few people have bikes to haul their water, so what they  
20 do is get water from where they can find it. Some of the  
21 water they are drinking now are contaminated and the  
22 children get sick.

23 One of the funny things  
24 that happened two years ago was that after building in  
25 our homes, they installed a bathtub and a toilet in each

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25

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 bathroom which used to be a room for one of the children.  
2 Now those tubs and toilet just sit there, taking up space  
3 in rooms that used to be bedrooms. The Innu had been  
4 travelling inland all over the country. When they were  
5 settled here, the less they travelled, and the more they  
6 stayed in the community drinking cider.

7 We have seen so many  
8 alcohol-related deaths over the past 15 years. People  
9 neglect their children when they drink. As a result of  
10 this, last year, last February, tragedy struck Davis Inlet.

11 A fire took six children while the parents were out.  
12 That is when the people decided that we should look at  
13 what's been happening to us for the past 25 years. We  
14 approached the government to do an inquiry but they  
15 refused, so the Innu decided to do the inquiry themselves.

16 As a result, a report was done called "Gathering Voices:  
17 Finding the Strength to Help our Children," and in this  
18 report there were recommendations made by the people how  
19 to regain their lives and to start a healing process.

20 We have looked at all the  
21 institutions that come to Davis and how they have become  
22 a part of our--and how we lost control of our lives. In  
23 the school, for example, they only teach the white man's  
24 ways to our children. Nothing is provided, such as  
25 curriculum, to teach our way of life in school. The

StenoTran





28

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 these teacher's aids have families and they cannot travel  
2 without their families to go outside to get this training.

3 We think the Innu teachers have more experience than any  
4 other teacher but are not allowed to teach it to the  
5 children by themselves. They always have to have a white  
6 teacher there. And when you have a white teacher and an  
7 Innu teacher, and the Innu teacher translates, and what  
8 she gets is less pay because she is an Innu, but they do  
9 the same kind of work.

10 We also had to approach the  
11 government to get special funding to teach the life skills.

12 I think our schools should have life skills program like  
13 any other subject, even though we don't have the books  
14 to do it. The elders have it in their heads to teach it.

15 And why don't we have any books? Because there's no  
16 funding.

17 I would like to ask the  
18 Commission to recommend that things like life skills  
19 programs be available in the school, just like any other  
20 subject, for example, English or science or math.

21 It's hard for me to talk  
22 about the traditional ways of justice because I'm not sure  
23 what our elders used to do. Years ago, we didn't have  
24 500 people in one place. They didn't have windows to break  
25 in the country. They used to have bands all across in

StenoTran

29

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 the country, travelling, but when the RCMP came here, we  
2 have seen more and more people going to jail and going  
3 to court, and the system is simply not working for us.  
4 This is also talked about in the report of "Gathering  
5 Voices," why the justice system has failed us.

6 Last year, we sent out two  
7 Innu boys to go for training, and we see that as a part  
8 of our solution to bridge the gap between the RCMP and  
9 our people. These two men trained at the First Nations  
10 Tribal Justice Institute. So when we approached the  
11 government to recognize these officers, they simply  
12 refused. The reasoning that they gave was that the  
13 institute that the boys went does not meet the standards  
14 of the Government of Newfoundland. So I'm sure that if  
15 we had our police officers to patrol our community, and  
16 one of the things that the government has been saying to  
17 us is that we don't--they want to see the Native people  
18 have a better police force than theirs. We have seen  
19 corruption with the RCMP.

20 The band council employed  
21 the two men that came, the two police officers, and when  
22 we tried to ask our officers to patrol our community, for  
23 example, it seems like the Department of Justice does not  
24 want us to make our own laws in our community. For example,  
25 we asked our two officers to shoot the dogs that are roaming

StenoTran

30

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 around in the village. We received a call from the RCMP  
2 and said you cannot shoot the dogs in the village. If  
3 you start shooting the dogs in the village, the two Innu  
4 police officers will be charged. The RCMP have been  
5 shooting the dogs in the village by people's homes, so  
6 they thought that the two Innu officers would do the same.  
7 This is an example of how they want to control us from  
8 their offices in St. John's or anywhere else.

9 Over the past month or so,  
10 we have been talking to government officials, federal and  
11 provincial, to help us to set up a mobile treatment facility  
12 for our children that are sniffing gas. We have identified  
13 42 children that have sniffed gas, and 17 of those are  
14 chronic gas sniffers.

15 It seems like every time  
16 we ask the government for help, we have to fight all the  
17 way. We keep telling them that we know the solutions to  
18 our own problems, and I think that is one way of saying  
19 that--the one way of trying to control again over our lives,  
20 to take matters into our own hands. Not only do they refuse  
21 to send our children to treatment centres, we also wanted  
22 to treat the whole family, because parents also have a  
23 problem.

24 When I made the  
25 presentation last spring, I gave the Commissioners of the

StenoTran



31

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 people's inquiry, and, again, I won't do the same here.  
2 So in one of the recommendations made by the people, and  
3 we are strongly trying to fight for whatever the people  
4 are saying, is that the only way to regain is that we must  
5 relocate, to move away from this island, where we can have  
6 better health and living conditions, a place where we can  
7 deal with problems facing us. Relocation is the first  
8 priority for us, and this time it's the Innu decision,  
9 not the decision of government or the church.

10 So during the inquiry, we  
11 have listened to our children, and all children need to  
12 be happy, they need to be loved and cared for. In many  
13 ways, this inquiry and our desire to change expresses the  
14 hope that we will find the strength to help our children.  
15 Thank you.

**CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

16 Thank you, Chief. Could we ask you some questions? Two  
17 Innu who received police training, have you hired them  
18 and asked them to do police work here?

**CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes, I

20 have.

**CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

21 What have you done about the dogs? Have you let them run  
22 loose or--

**CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Our two

StenoTran

32

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 officers have been trying to control the dog problem that  
2 we have, and I believe it's under control.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

4 I'd like to get a better handle on the new site that you  
5 want to move to. Why do you feel it's better than here  
6 for you? Have you enough land to expand there, or what  
7 are the characteristics of the new site?

8 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Well,  
9 the desire to move away from this island was expressed  
10 by the elders. When they were first relocated here, they  
11 had no say whatsoever in the relocating of the community,  
12 and the elders say that this is our decision, it's not  
13 the decision of the government, the desire to move. We  
14 have seen five studies done in the community to find  
15 suitable drinking water, and they proved that there is  
16 simply no water here to support a whole village, and like  
17 I said before, there were no future plans made by the  
18 government when they decided to move the people, because  
19 we just can't find the land to place some of our homes,  
20 the houses for the people.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

22 The government involved when you moved here, was that  
23 the federal government or the provincial government?

24 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** The  
25 provincial government.

StenoTran





34

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1                                   **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Last  
2 spring, we took some of our building supplies over there,  
3 and the provincial government doesn't like that very much  
4 because they think we are twisting their arm in deciding  
5 to move the community, but we are determined to move.

6                                   **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
7 So by saying that they feel you're twisting their arms,  
8 the Province has not been convinced yet that it's a good  
9 idea to move?

10                                  **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** No.  
11 Just a few weeks ago, a study has been finished to look  
12 at the possibilities of relocating or staying here in the  
13 community, but the report has not been released yet. It  
14 won't be released until December 7th. So the report looks  
15 promising.

16                                  **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
17 Who did the report?

18                                  **CHIEF KATIE RICH:**  
19 Terpstra & Associates of Goose Bay.

20                                  **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
21 Could you make sure we get a copy of that?

22                                  **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes.

23                                  **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
24 What about the federal government? Are they convinced  
25 of the change, are they open to being changed--of the

StenoTran

35

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 relocation?

2 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** One of  
3 the things that they told us was they would have to look  
4 at the report first before they could make decisions on  
5 it.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
7 So in the relocation over the next years, what kind of  
8 assistance is it you're hoping will come from government?

9 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Well,  
10 one of the things that we will strongly ask for is that  
11 we would get the proper housing that the people need, the  
12 proper water and sewer, just like any other people across  
13 Canada, is simply what we want.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
15 So I presume you've been talking to Tom Siddon about that.

16 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** I  
17 haven't spoken to him directly, but the previous council  
18 have.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
20 And Siddon's department is waiting for the report?

21 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes.

22 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
23 Is this something that the government commissioned, this  
24 study?

25 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** No.

StenoTran



37

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1                                   **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Well,  
2 we'll simply take some of the houses here in Davis and  
3 just move them to the site.

4                                   **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
5 You cited social problems earlier, because of the despair  
6 and the loss of control and the rest of it. What do you  
7 see being done there? You talked about the need for  
8 healing. How would you see that coming?

9                                   **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Well,  
10 one of the first steps we think we should take is that  
11 we need to heal the parents, the whole family, because  
12 they have the problem of alcoholism over the years, and  
13 we think that's one way of taking the step in healing our  
14 people and our children. Because we have seen children  
15 from alcoholic families that start sniffing gas, and we've  
16 been trying to tell that to government, that they need  
17 treatment and we have to do it ourselves. And one of the  
18 thing that we proposed was that we obtain a facility which  
19 is in Border Beacon.

20                                   **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
21 Which is where?

22                                   **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Border  
23 Beacon. It's in the country, and it used to be an Armed  
24 Forces base, and it was sold to someone in Goose Bay for  
25 a dollar. But when we tried to ask them if we could

StenoTran

38

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 purchase--

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

3 For two dollars?

4 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** His

5 price was one million dollars.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

7 What are they doing with it--

8 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** I could

9 tell you so many horror stories that you would not believe--

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

11 It would curl my hair even more, would it?

12 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes.

13 So that's one of the first things that we would like to

14 do, to obtain this Border Beacon facility and set it up

15 as a treatment centre for our people, because when Health

16 &amp; Welfare came in--when we told them about the problems

17 that we had, of the 42 children that are sniffing gas,

18 they came in for a week, and they called across Canada

19 to find a treatment centre for our children, but there

20 was none across Canada. So this is one way, I think, to

21 help ourselves, is to set up this treatment for our people.

22 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

23 Now what do you see in the long run that will employ people

24 as far as the rural-- Do you see continuing activity on

25 the land, do you see people becoming professionals and

StenoTran



39

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 taking jobs--

2 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** That is  
3 one of the things that I think we have to look at as well,  
4 is that the people here are people who used to travel in  
5 the country, they used to travel everywhere, and the only  
6 thing that they are capable of doing is to hunt the animals  
7 in the country. They do not see the animals that they  
8 kill to--it's--all they know is to share, is to share the  
9 things that they have killed in the country, so they have  
10 no knowledge of making the animals that they kill to be  
11 a part of--or sell them to other people.

12 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
13 Do people still have their traditional skills of being  
14 able to travel on the land?

15 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes,  
16 they do, yeah.

17 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
18 Is it being passed on to young people?

19 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes,  
20 they are.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
22 How strong is the Indian--

23 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** I think  
24 one of the things that it also said in the inquiry was  
25 that these kinds of traditional things that the people

StenoTran

40

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 have should be taught in the school as well, because there  
2 are more non-Native teachers at the school than Natives,  
3 and we don't have elders in the school, and we have to  
4 have special funding in order to teach our life skills  
5 in the school. We think that should be a part of a subject  
6 that should be taught at school.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
8 How strong is the Innu language here? Is it being passed  
9 on to young people?

10 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes, it  
11 is. Practically every child in the community knows the  
12 language.

13 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
14 That's quite remarkable.

15 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yeah,  
16 it is, and we are proud to say that we are trying to maintain  
17 our language, keep it alive.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
19 The week before last, Mary and I went up to Old Crow in  
20 the Yukon. It's the northernmost community in the Yukon,  
21 and very, very isolated. The only way you can get in is  
22 to fly in. It's a traditional community, and they're  
23 losing their language. They feel that television and the  
24 schools in English, and they see the end of the time when  
25 people speak Lusha (PH), it's a [Wet'suwet'en?] language.

StenoTran

41

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 So it's quite amazing that your language is still quite  
2 strong, quite remarkable.

3 So the material that you  
4 brought on site, to your new community site, did you begin  
5 building your first house or just arrived before the snow  
6 or--

7 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** No, we  
8 took it over there last spring. So when the government  
9 said that they'll be doing a study at Shango Pond, we  
10 decided to wait until a decision had been made whether  
11 to relocate the village or not, so we haven't done anything  
12 with the material over there yet.

13 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
14 Ideally, how many houses are you going to build in the  
15 first year?

16 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** We are  
17 looking at 50.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
19 50, five zero, in the first year?

20 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
22 You want to move in one year?

23 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Not  
24 really, no, we don't. Well, the way we are looking at  
25 it is that we will be building so many houses a year, and

StenoTran

42

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 by 1996, no, 2001, the whole village will be relocated  
2 at the site.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

4 That's 50 houses--

5 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** It will  
6 be more than 50 houses. I don't know how many houses we  
7 will be building a year, but we have calculated over a  
8 specific period that we will be building so many every  
9 year.

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

11 What do you do when you start moving and some people are  
12 living there and some are living here?

13 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** That's  
14 one of the concerns we have to look at as well. One of  
15 the things that we haven't done yet is that we have to  
16 bring our town plan to the people here in the community.

17 That's one of the things that we have to do, once the  
18 decision to move the village is done.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

20 Is there a better wood supply there?

21 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes,  
22 there is.

23 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

24 Is it closer to hunting and so on?

25 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes.

StenoTran

43

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 One other reason why we are moving is that usually we are  
2 on this island, and the hunters cannot travel on the  
3 mainland until it's frozen over or when the ice is open,  
4 so we are stuck here sometimes two or three months a year  
5 that we cannot travel to the mainland.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

7 This site you're talking about, is it still on the coast?

8 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes, it  
9 is. It's about 15 miles west of Davis.

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

11 Is it reachable by large boats?

12 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes, it  
13 should be.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

15 So you could still have it serviced by Marine Atlantic  
16 or--

17 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yeah.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

19 And what made you choose that spot over other spots?

20 Is it in some kind of significant site or--

21 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** For the  
22 past two years, we have been having gatherings at this  
23 site, and one of the things that the elders were saying  
24 is that the people have been living at this site, and they  
25 have chosen this place, the elders have chosen that place

StenoTran

44

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 to be the place for us to relocate because it has room  
2 for houses, and it has water, lots of water. It has a  
3 big pond behind it. There's no way for us to run out of  
4 water.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

6 How many buildings in Davis Inlet outside of what the  
7 Innu are living in are there?

8 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** There  
9 are about 80 Innu homes.

10 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

11 42, it says in our book, but--

12 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** I'm  
13 sorry?

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

15 It says 42 in our book here, but it could be outdated.

16 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** I think  
17 there are about 60 Innu homes, and the rest are non-Innu  
18 or the school, and none of those houses are worth saving.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

20 You can use them as kindling to start your fires?

21 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** We  
22 could use them when we relocate.

23 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

24 Do you have any questions?

25 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

StenoTran



45

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 See what happens when you're the chief? You get  
2 questioned long, eh? I'm not going to be long, anyway.  
3 Can you tell me, what's the difference between Innu and  
4 Mushuau Innu, because I heard people say Innu and Mushuau  
5 Innu, and I'm just wondering, in my own head, what the  
6 difference is.

7 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Mushuau  
8 Innu is what we call ourselves, and, for example, they  
9 are Montagnais and Naskapi, and we are Mushuau Innu.

10 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
11 Mushuau Innu are the Davis Inlet people?

12 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** People  
13 of the--

14 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
15 Of Davis Inlet, and then Sheshatshiu are Innu?

16 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Well,  
17 yeah. It's all--all have the same name, but each tribe  
18 has different--

19 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
20 So the Naskapi are one and the Montagnais are another.

21 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes.

22 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
23 O.K. We've often heard, and especially in this area,  
24 that there are Indian communities, for example, and they  
25 receive CORE funding from the Secretary of State. In this

StenoTran

46

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 area, you receive provincial funding from Canada and  
2 Newfoundland and Native peoples of--it's a long one, but  
3 Innu--so is that your situation, that you receive funding  
4 from both those sources?

5 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** That's  
6 right, yes.

7 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
8 And are you in the position, like other bands, of wanting  
9 recognition--

10 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** That's  
11 what we've been asking for. I believe the Innu nation  
12 has been asking the federal government to give direct  
13 funding to the Innu rather than going through the  
14 provincial government, and the provincial government gives  
15 the funding to us. So one of the things that we did ask  
16 for was to give us direct funding from Ottawa.

17 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
18 Yes, I find that very interesting, because some of the  
19 groups that we hear is that they don't want the Indian  
20 Act, they certainly don't want to come under it, and you  
21 guys aren't into it and you want into it, and I'm just  
22 wondering what you see as the benefits of being--

23 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** I'm  
24 sorry, I can't hear you.

25 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

StenoTran

47

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 What do you think is good about it? Why do you want to  
2 go that way?

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

4 The Indian Act, she's talking about.

5 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** The

6 Indian Act?

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

8 She's saying that it seems like Innu want to go underneath  
9 the Indian Act.

10 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** No, we

11 don't, no.

12 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

13 **You don't?** You just want recognition--

14 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** That's

15 right, yes.

16 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

17 I'm just wondering too--it's very clear that the Innu  
18 have been able to maintain their own language, and I found  
19 that really quite always interesting, and I'm wondering  
20 what is it that you've been able to maintain your language  
21 despite all kinds of pressures. I guess, in this area,  
22 you're more of an island, eh? For the Innu in Sheshatshiu,  
23 they're alongside of North West River, and they're only  
24 30 miles from Goose Bay, and they've still been able to  
25 maintain their language, and I'm just wondering if you

StenoTran

48

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 can tell us what lessons everybody else can learn about  
2 maintaining their language.

3 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Well,  
4 it's only a few years ago that we have seen--for the past  
5 couple of years we have seen TV into our living rooms.  
6 It's only a few years ago that people started living in  
7 the community, because they used to travel--they didn't  
8 used to stay in Davis. They used to be up the Bay, or  
9 anywhere else, they usually take their children with them,  
10 so it's only a certain time of the year that they usually  
11 come to Davis and stay.

12 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
13 Sheshatshiu, they've been able to maintain their  
14 language, and they have a different history than the  
15 history of Davis Inlet.

16 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Oh, I'm  
17 not so sure.

18 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
19 Now one of the things that we heard very, very clearly  
20 in Sheshatshiu, and the reason, and the reason I remember  
21 is because I guess I've always been aware of it. I grew  
22 up in North West River and lived in Happy Valley-Goose  
23 Bay, but the amount of racism that is directed towards  
24 the Innu, and I always remember Lionel Rich's presentation.  
25 He was saying we're not dogs, we're human beings, and

StenoTran

49

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 it occurred to me that it's pretty sad when you've been  
2 treated so badly all of your life that you have to remind  
3 others that you are a human being, that you are worthy  
4 of respect.

5 I'm bothered by the amount  
6 of racism that I see in my own homeland, and I know that  
7 the Innu in Sheshatshiu live under different  
8 circumstances. They're surrounded by--they're the  
9 minority in the middle, and then there's the  
10 [Kablunangajuk?] and then there's the qallunuk on that  
11 side. But I was wondering, too, that it seems to me that  
12 even though the Mushuau Innu are the majority in Davis  
13 Inlet, it seems to me that there's still some kind of racism  
14 that exists. I read excerpts from your report saying that  
15 qallunuk teachers have come in, the storekeepers, the very  
16 few qallunuk that you have here have made comments, and  
17 they were derogatory comments, about the children and about  
18 the community. So I'm wondering, does that racism exist,  
19 why do you think it's there, and how do you think it can  
20 be stopped?

21 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** In the  
22 report, we have heard a lot of racist remarks made by the  
23 people that come to Davis, and I guess the Innu have been  
24 putting up with it, and they will have to put up with it,  
25 because it exists everywhere else, racism exists

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50

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 everywhere else, and they, too, have made racist remarks  
2 about the white people that come to our village, and I  
3 think it works both ways. I do not blame the people who  
4 are being racist, because of the way they have been treated  
5 for the past 25 years since they moved to Davis. We have  
6 seen, over the years, what the--as we become more educated,  
7 we have seen some of the things that the government has  
8 done to our people.

9 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

10 When you were saying that the schools have not done  
11 anything to teach children about what it's like being Innu,  
12 and then you say that yet parents obviously encourage  
13 education. You were saying that parents say that if you  
14 don't go to school, you won't get a job, you won't get  
15 anything, and I'm wondering, if they do go to school, do  
16 they get something?

17 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** I'm  
18 sorry, I don't understand.

19 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

20 Like, for example, are there a lot of dropouts, are there  
21 a lot of kids that finish school--

22 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes,  
23 there are a lot of dropouts, yes.

24 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

25 And a lot more dropouts.

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51

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1                                   **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** We have  
2 seen a lot of dropouts over the years, and one of the things  
3 we see as a problem is that children are not encouraged  
4 to go to school, and that's one of the problems that we  
5 see is the alcoholism. There is no way that a parent who  
6 has a problem with drinking will encourage his children  
7 to go to school when he has seen so much despair in the  
8 community. When there's a sense of hopelessness among  
9 the Elders in our community, this sense of hopelessness  
10 is passed on to the children.

11                                   **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
12 And the people, for example, that finish school, what  
13 do they do? Do they come back here, do they get good jobs?

14                                   **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** We have  
15 seen five graduates last year, and none of them went out  
16 to further their education. They are here in the community  
17 doing odd jobs here and there.

18                                   **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
19 Do you know if there are some--I know, for example, you  
20 went to university, you got a good position with the  
21 community, and I know that two of your people went to the  
22 first-- I saw that story on television sometime, they're  
23 back here and they're employed by the bands. I'm wondering  
24 people that go out and get educated, do they then come  
25 back and assume the top positins in your community,

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52

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 usually?

2 **CHIEF KATIE RICH:** Yes,  
3 that's right.4 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
5 O.K. It's getting close to lunch time. I don't know  
6 if I should ask any more questions.7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
8 We're going to break for lunch now for about an hour,  
9 I guess. We'll start again at around 1:30.

10 --- Hearing is recessed at 12:22 hr.

11 --- Hearing is resumed at 13:25 hr.

12 **GEORGE RICH,**  
13 **VICE-PRESIDENT, INNU NATION:** My name is George Rich, and  
14 I'm vice-president of the Innu nation. I want to begin  
15 by saying that I had prepared a statement on behalf of  
16 the Innu nation, and I also want to point out my own personal  
17 experience in dealing with the community and my own  
18 experience in dealing with the four levels of government.

19 (Native language--no translation available)

20 Davis Inlet is in a really bad  
21 situation right now. It's got all kinds of problems that  
22 never existed in other Native communities across Canada.23 But I don't come here to talk about problems, because  
24 I heard what you said there. People already mentioned  
25 it a thousand times, a million times.

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54

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 other Native people in Canada. As I was growing up, I  
2 was learning things in my own way. My father showed me  
3 how to fish, hunt, and do things that they had been doing  
4 for generations. (Native language--no translation  
5 available)

6 Along the way, there has  
7 been a block, a wall, between my culture and the white  
8 culture, the white culture pressing me to learn their ways,  
9 learn how the Newfoundland government works, learn how  
10 the Newfoundland history, and learn what Canada's system  
11 is. The one thing they never taught me was what at great  
12 man Joey Smallwood is, but I found out growing up that  
13 Joey Smallwood is the one who flooded our lands and took  
14 the iron ore and destroyed lands in our other neighbouring  
15 Innu communities.

16 One thing led to another.  
17 When I was in grade 9, I dropped out of school, coming  
18 home from Cornerbrook on the island of Newfoundland. I  
19 went through the school not knowing anything at all,  
20 because all I learned in the school was what colour my  
21 face is, and what nice black hair I've got, all that kind  
22 of stuff. It doesn't help me a lot when I trying to learn  
23 something, that somebody kind of stampedes in my face all  
24 the time.

25 I thought I knew it all and

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57

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 study to our beloved children that were killed on February  
2 13.

3 Again, we tried to  
4 implement the recommendations that were in the study, and  
5 we were told that there's no funding available. That's  
6 a favourite line the bureaucrats tell us all the time.  
7 But we continue to do it our way, trying to find solutions  
8 among ourselves.

9 Chief Rich mentioned here  
10 about two young fellows who went to Mission, B.C., to do  
11 their police training, and that's the same kind of program  
12 that the RCMP does in Regina. I mentioned that I have  
13 corresponded with the head of the RCMP off and on, and  
14 I tried to tell him what we need for policing in the  
15 community. Our people are not safe. Their houses are  
16 being broken into. Every year that's passed, I keep hoping  
17 that the two boys would be graduating soon, and I know  
18 the complication that we're going to lead into, things  
19 like there will be no funding available, there's no  
20 jurisdiction, and all the white laws that have been  
21 implemented on us.

22 We went to see the Justice  
23 Minister, Ed Roberts, and he told us, yes, he'll see what  
24 he can do, but nothing happened in the next few days, and  
25 we got real fed up and contacted the right people in the

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59

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 officers as peace officers, recognized peace officers,  
2 and to have our own hold-up cell, our own jail, where we  
3 could hold people.

4   There were a lot of  
5 incidents this past year in Utshimasits. I think there  
6 were about 46 attempted suicides and one fatal. We could  
7 have buried 46 people in the community in the year of 1992.

8 We don't have resources and we don't have a place to get  
9 those people.

10   One solution that we have  
11 discussed at hundreds of meetings is our own treatment  
12 centre. The treatment centre could consist of holding  
13 family units as a more holistic approach in treating the  
14 whole family, because if you send a child to a treatment  
15 centre, they're going to come home to the same environment  
16 where their parents are still drinking. And if we start  
17 treating one family, the whole community will heal itself.

18 Once the whole family, once the whole community heals,  
19 then people are going to realize that we are of one strong  
20 mind. We can do anything that we want.

21   I often heard many  
22 outsiders say that they've got a lot of stuff, decent  
23 housing, they've got all kinds of money, because they hear  
24 that every time that you travel to Goose Bay or St. John's.  
25 We're not the only ones who depend on subsidies. We're

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60

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 not the only ones who depend on those monies. All kinds  
2 of monies have been available to people in Newfoundland,  
3 people in Canada, the subsidies, the jobs. There's a  
4 40-million subsidy that is available to Canadian Airlines.  
5 That's a government subsidy. And there's \$400 a week  
6 of money that's available to Newfoundlanders. That's a  
7 subsidy. And there's a family allowance, and that's a  
8 subsidy, too. We are in no better shape than any other  
9 people, even though we are given funding to look after  
10 community projects and pick up garbage or look after  
11 housing repairs and all that.

12 But in the community with  
13 us it's very different than the other Native communities  
14 across Canada. People are recognized. People existed,  
15 whether it is in a treaty or whether it's in reserves.  
16 And every time we ask for funding, a certain kind of  
17 funding, there has always been a stumbling block. There's  
18 a wall there that we couldn't go through. We were told  
19 we're not recognized. We were told we're not registered.  
20 We're not a card-carrying Indian. That's the kind of  
21 things that have frustrated me and frustrated some other  
22 people in Utshimasits.

23 Again, I would like to ask  
24 a question. What do we have to do to make our point clear  
25 to the governments? About five or six miles south of here,

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61

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 there's a radar site. I could easily know how to make  
2 a bomb, and I could blow that place apart. I could easily  
3 be filled with anger and tear that place apart. I could  
4 easily do that. I could easily ask my people to do that.  
5 And there are facilities all across the Disinow (PH).  
6 There are facilities of fish camps, and I could easily  
7 burn those fish camps. There's a facility that we're  
8 talking about off and on near Border Beacon where they  
9 have search and rescue gas tanks. I could easily burn  
10 that gasoline. But I'll be regarded as a militant Indian,  
11 a terrorist. I don't want to take that kind of approach,  
12 because my people have always been a peace-loving people.  
13 They're not violent people.

14 I have seen a lot of  
15 militants across Newfoundland. The Newfoundlanders broke  
16 into an office building. That's militant. I've seen much  
17 more peaceable protests in Sheshatshiu. I don't call that  
18 militant.

19 I want to begin by saying  
20 the Innu Nation presentation to the Royal Commission on  
21 Aboriginal Peoples. The public knows about this  
22 commission, and asks for answers to the following  
23 questions. How will Aboriginal self-government lead to  
24 political and economic self-sufficiency? The Innu nation  
25 has the answers to this question, but I want to make it

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62

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 clear from the beginning that the Innu are not waiting  
2 for any government or Royal Commission to take action on  
3 our rights. We have already waited too long. We are  
4 implementing our rights now, but it is difficult to do  
5 this because of Canada and Newfoundland policies. All  
6 we ask of this Commission is that you take what we have  
7 to say about Innu government seriously. All we can hope  
8 for this is that your recommendations will result in  
9 changes in provincial and federal policies, so that  
10 implementation of Innu rights is less of a constant  
11 struggle. We want to get on with the important issues  
12 that face our nation. We want to be able to go to the  
13 country without any fear that someone in a faraway city  
14 is deposing on the very land upon which we rely.

15 I want to begin by saying  
16 that I know Innu government is, and then I want to say  
17 something about the obstructions to the Innu government  
18 and how this Commission can help to remove these  
19 obstructions.

20 Innu government--what is  
21 it? Innu government means the recognition by provincial  
22 and federal governments that the Innu nation has a  
23 nation-to-nation relationship with Canada and a  
24 nation-to-government relationship with Newfoundland. We  
25 have never signed any treaty or any agreement giving up

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63

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 our land or any rights to Nitassinan. We never gave the  
2 government or the people of Canada and Newfoundland any  
3 rights to use our land or resources without our permission.

4 Legally, that means we retain Aboriginal title to our  
5 land and the right to govern ourselves, which goes to  
6 Aboriginal title.

7 Section 35.1 of Canada's  
8 Constitution recognizes and should protect our rights.  
9 We do not receive rights from Canada, nor have we given  
10 the responsibility to Canada to define our rights. No  
11 other people or government can give us our rights. Our  
12 rights to Innu government, to be a nation of Nitassinan,  
13 entitles us to the same rights as any other nation state  
14 in the world, namely the right to control our land and  
15 resources, and to decide how the land and resources should  
16 used, and reap the benefits of the decided use. This means  
17 the right to use our language, to practice our own  
18 spirituality, to establish our own institutions, and to  
19 live and preserve our culture.

20 Innu government means the  
21 right of the Innu to be self-determining now and for many  
22 generations of Innu to come. It means an adequate land  
23 and resource base and the control of those lands and  
24 resources. It means accurate jurisdiction to run our own  
25 institutions, such as schools and other programs, programs

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64

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 for our people that includes the special needs of children,  
2 elders and single parents. It means adequate financial  
3 relief from our lands and resources and compensation for  
4 the past and continued illegal use of our lands and  
5 resources. It means that we'll make the decisions about  
6 what other use can be made of our lands. If provincial  
7 licenses for use of our lands are issued, we'll issue them  
8 and decide on the royalties and terms and conditions  
9 attached to the license.

10 Most importantly, the Innu  
11 government will nurture and promote Innu use of our land.

12 To live on our land for periods of time throughout the  
13 year continues to be of central importance to maintaining  
14 our culture. We are a hunting people. Life in the  
15 country, away from the villages, is not sufficient for  
16 us. It is what is at the heart of who we are as a people.

17 In the country, we have the skills passed to us from our  
18 mothers and fathers. In the country, we are the teachers,  
19 passing on Innu skills to our children. It will be a major  
20 role of the Innu government to do whatever is necessary  
21 to ensure that our rights to use and occupy our lands are  
22 protected.

23 All of these are examples  
24 of what Innu government means. I think it is obvious how  
25 recognition of the Innu government and the Innu rights

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65

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 will lead to political and economic self-sufficiency.  
2 Recognition of our rights means recognition of our  
3 nationhood, and recognition of our nationhood brings all  
4 we need to be politically and economically  
5 self-sufficient.

6 Obstructs to Innu  
7 government. The fundamental obstructs to the Innu  
8 government and Innu political and economic  
9 self-sufficiency is the failure of Canada and Newfoundland  
10 to recognize that we are a nation, and have a legal and  
11 moral right to Utshimasits. That failure began hundreds  
12 of years ago across North America when the governments  
13 set about to destroy Aboriginal institutions and  
14 assimilate Aboriginal nations into the culture and  
15 institutions of immigrants coming to settle on Aboriginal  
16 land. The collective rights of this Aboriginal nation  
17 were ignored.

18 In 1949, when Newfoundland  
19 joined the Canadian Federation, the Innu people were never  
20 consulted. The Innu have never joined Canada or  
21 Newfoundland. Accordingly, all attempts by those  
22 governments to take our lands and resources and exert  
23 jurisdiction over the Innu are without legal or moral  
24 right.

25 In 1982, the Canadian

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66

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Constitution finally recognized Aboriginal and treaty  
2 rights in Section 35.1. This was a positive step, but  
3 only a small step, as Canada and Newfoundland remain  
4 reluctant to use Section 35 to implement the  
5 nation-to-nation relationships with Aboriginal nations.  
6 The comprehensive claims policy of the Federal government  
7 is a good case in point. In 1985, the Cooligan report  
8 on Canada's comprehensive claims policy made some very  
9 positive recommendations which could have brought the  
10 policy more in line with Section 35, but most of these  
11 recommendations were ignored in a minor revision made to  
12 the policy in 1987.

13  
14 The Innu nation is  
15 currently in the framework stage of comprehensive claims  
16 negotiations with Canada and Newfoundland. We entered  
17 those negotiations very reluctantly because of narrowness  
18 of the claim policy of both Canada and Newfoundland, but  
19 we entered in good faith, with the hope that the process  
20 could be used to restore our nation-to-nation relationship  
21 with Canada and our nation-to-government relationship with  
22 Newfoundland. We also entered with hope that the  
23 comprehensive claim policy would change to reflect the  
24 growing awareness of the need to recognize every man,  
25 rather than distinguish Innu rights.

Through our experience in

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67

December 1, 1992

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 framework negotiations, we have learned that a number of  
2 the fundamental changes must be made in the comprehensive  
3 claim policies if fair and just nation-to-nation  
4 negotiations are to take place. I want to share some of  
5 the changes with the Commission.

6 One, the policy must direct  
7 that negotiations elaborate and implement, not  
8 distinguish, our rights. At present, both Canada and  
9 Newfoundland policies direct the extinguishment of  
10 Aboriginal rights, nicer or more polite words such as  
11 clarifying the relationship are used, but the intent is  
12 clear.

13 Two, the policy must ensure  
14 that the Innu government is the outcome of a comprehensive  
15 claim process. Canada's current policy restricted  
16 comprehensive claims to land and resource issues.  
17 Self-government agreements reached through other  
18 negotiations result in delayed powers, which do not have  
19 constitutional protection.

20 Even with the failure of  
21 1992 Constitutional amendments, there's no reason why  
22 Canada's policies should not be changed so the recognition  
23 of Innu government and the constitutional protection of  
24 agreements that elaborate recognition become a part of  
25 a comprehensive rights negotiations. We urge you to

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68

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 recommend that change.

2 Let me say a few words about  
3 what recognition of the Innu government means and the type  
4 of changes that Canada and Newfoundland must take. First,  
5 Canada must amend its Constitution to say that the Federal  
6 powers that are set out in Section 91 of the BNA Act does  
7 not apply to the Innu. The Constitution of Canada should  
8 also be amended to say that powers of the province over  
9 the subject matters listed in Section 92 does not extend  
10 to Aboriginal peoples. These amendments must be made  
11 because Canada and the Province must vacate those  
12 restrictions to now legally exercise over the Innu and  
13 our lands and resources.

14 We are willing to sit down  
15 with Canada and Newfoundland, as we have demonstrated by  
16 entering the framework of negotiations, to discuss how  
17 we will share our lands and resources with you, and to  
18 agree in the fairest institutions of government, so that  
19 our governments can work together in an orderly and  
20 efficient manner. But we are no longer willing to accept  
21 the colonial oppression from the federal and provincial  
22 government in taking control of our lands and resources  
23 without our consent.

24 The policies of Canada and  
25 Newfoundland must recognize that negotiations are

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70

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 protection is required. We detailed the damage inflicted  
2 on our people, animals, lands and rights by low-level  
3 military flying, forestry operations, current and proposed  
4 hydroelectric projects at the Churchill River, commercial  
5 tourism proposed for Tarmackan snowmobile trail and  
6 completion of the Trans-Labrador Highway. We also  
7 discussed the Aboriginal right of our people to hunt, fish,  
8 and gather without provincial regulation. We have  
9 continually asked how the governments can, on the one hand,  
10 acknowledge that we have Aboriginal rights, by agreeing  
11 to negotiate with us, and on the other hand, continue to  
12 violate our rights on every turn by illegally granting  
13 the licensing of our lands and resources by third parties.

14 Your Commission must  
15 recommend that the comprehensive claims policy of Canada  
16 and Newfoundland can be changed to provide a moratorium  
17 on all development and licensing of activities on  
18 Aboriginal claims territory, unless there is a consensus  
19 from Aboriginal people and there is an agreement reached  
20 setting out the terms and the conditions of that consent.

21  
22 Independent body of  
23 regulating and funding negotiations. Under the present  
24 policy, Indian Affairs decide whether an Aboriginal nation  
25 qualifies for negotiations, decides on the level of loan

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72

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 with adequacy determined by the independent body.  
2 Two, dispute the rights  
3 during negotiations, including issues of whether  
4 negotiations are being conducted in good faith, and  
5 substantial issues should be referred to the independent  
6 tribunal jointly appointed by Aboriginal nations and the  
7 federal and provincial governments and chaired by an  
8 international appointee. Disputes between governments  
9 should not be settled in a court established by one of  
10 those governments, but rather, they must resolve in a  
11 jointly appointed court. We ask that you make that  
12 recommendation, as well as detail the operation of such  
13 a joint tribunal.

14 Three, good faith  
15 negotiations require a political as well as technical  
16 component. There's another problem with the current  
17 set-up of negotiations. The federal and provincial  
18 negotiators are civil servants or contract appointees  
19 without any power. Time after time, even at the level  
20 of framework negotiations, we were told that negotiators  
21 have no power to consider the Innu proposal, or that what  
22 we want to discuss is not in our policy. This is designed  
23 to leave the Innu nation powerless to shape what will be  
24 discussed in substantive negotiations. It's dressed up  
25 differently, but in fact, it's the same way that the

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73

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 governments negotiated with with a number of treaties  
2 during the past 125 years.

3 Today, they still come with  
4 the equivalent of a pre-written agreement and say take  
5 it or leave it. We have no real access to the political  
6 people behind the negotiations, and the process is most  
7 often frustrating. What is needed is a formal political  
8 table where Aboriginal, federal and provincial ministers  
9 meet on a regular basis to consider issues referred to  
10 them by the technical table of negotiators.

11 Under the present system,  
12 the federal and provincial representatives are not really  
13 negotiators. They have no power to negotiate anything.

14 All they do is present positions, and have no power to  
15 divide from those positions. Your Commission should  
16 recommend something like an Ontario round table which  
17 brings Ontario cabinet ministers and Aboriginal leaders  
18 together on a regular basis to discuss the implementation  
19 of Aboriginal rights.

20 I should make it clear that  
21 although we enter negotiations with Canada and  
22 Newfoundland, we do not accept their negotiating policy.

23 As I have just discussed, our nation has its own policy  
24 that allows us to see what can be achieved at negotiations,  
25 while rejecting the parts of the Canada and Newfoundland

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74

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 policies that will compromise our nation. At the same  
2 time, we continue to implement our rights in other ways,  
3 and will take action when our lands and our rights and  
4 our lives our threatened.

5 Conclusion. I began this  
6 presentation by saying the Innu government means exerting  
7 the right to self-determination and self-sufficiency.  
8 However, I want to add that I believe it's important that  
9 the Innu and non-Aboriginal nations not wait until all  
10 these matters are settled legally and constitutionally  
11 before beginning to exercise the rights of  
12 self-government.

13 Today, the Innu nation  
14 faces many serious and complicated issues. We have, over  
15 the past five years, made efforts to address all the issues  
16 in which ways to bring us to be more self-determining and  
17 self-sufficient. For example, in 1991, using the \$20,000  
18 Peace Foundation prize that was awarded to the Innu people  
19 for the non-violent opposition to the militarization of  
20 our land. We established our own health clinic at the  
21 community of Sheshatshiu.

22 The next step, in the short  
23 term, we hope that we'll be able to have federal funding  
24 now provided to the province for health services in our  
25 regard allocated--reallocated to us directly. Similarly,

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75

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 in regard to the education of our children, we have been  
2 forced on several occasions over the past three years to  
3 lock our school in Sheshatshiu in order to force  
4 Newfoundland to acknowledge our right to jurisdiction over  
5 education. We are gradually succeeding in this. A  
6 greater challenge arises in trying to finance the education  
7 of our children.

8  
9 In the face of the  
10 ever-increasing industrial expansion and seizure of our  
11 lands and resources, we have been ready to resist. This  
12 has meant blockading logging roads and marching on runways  
13 at CFB Goose Bay. Many of us have spent weeks, or in some  
14 cases, months, in jail. Today, Innu in the community of  
15 Sheshatshiu are refusing to pay their Newfoundland and  
16 Labrador hydro bills. They have removed the hydro meters  
17 and replaced them with CSA-approved jumpers so that they  
18 still have power. The community decided it was immoral  
19 to pay for the power produced at the Innu expense. It  
20 was immoral to help finance the company determined to flood  
21 more Innu lands.

22 In the past few years, we  
23 have also come to acknowledge the terrible impact that  
24 alcohol and chemical dependency has on our people and on  
25 the function of our society. We face a very complex and  
costly challenge for providing the means of treatment and

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76

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 healing for our people in the Innu environment where we  
2 are to build a healthy society for the future.

3 Another issue, my  
4 community, Utshimasits, has shown a desperate need for  
5 changes in the implementation of policing and justice  
6 issues. This became a central element which we are  
7 beginning to become self-determining once again. In a  
8 step towards achieving this goal, the people of Utshimasits  
9 have trained and mandated two men as their police officers.

10 Predictably, the government of Newfoundland has refused  
11 to recognize these steps.

12 Utshimasits is a prison for  
13 us. It's located on the island, whereas we are people  
14 of the land. During the spring break-up and freeze-up,  
15 we are trapped here, unable to get to the mainland where  
16 you can hunt and fish for food. There's not enough here  
17 to provide each family with the basic necessities. The  
18 ground is not good for housing. In short, the only reason  
19 we are on this island is because others decided this was  
20 a good place. We were not consulted. We are trying to  
21 relocate, but governments want studies and fear action.

22 When we decided to take matters into our own hands and  
23 began building new homes on the new site we have selected,  
24 we will try to build the new houses at the new site, the  
25 government was very furious. So we once again showed good

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77

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 faith and delayed construction of the new site to allow  
2 the government to complete the study to end all studies.

3

4 But how much longer do we  
5 have to stay in this prison before governments look up  
6 from their reports and see the human suffering? We are  
7 unwilling to wait much longer. We have begun to design  
8 a new community and to examine the prospects that the new  
9 site offers. In the future, the Innu nation needs to be  
10 aware of the growing Innu population and the needs our  
11 young people will face in 10 or 20 years. In order to  
12 provide possibilities of work and well-being of this  
13 generation and those that follow, we have to keep the future  
14 in mind in the decision we make today.

15 In addressing these many needs and  
16 issues, the Innu nation has developed the following  
17 strategy.

18 One, we work to support and  
19 bring about necessary legal and constitutional changes  
20 that will see Canada and Newfoundland obligated to deal  
21 with the Innu as a nation, and which will elaborate and  
22 implement our rights.

23 Two, we will resist, by  
24 every possible means, threat to Innu lands and resources  
25 and the effort to weaken our cultural identity and

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78

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 integrity of the Innu. We are attempting to prepare  
2 ourselves for the future now, so that we have the experience  
3 and capability to exercise fully the rights of the Innu  
4 government once the governments of Canada and Newfoundland  
5 have come to acknowledge that right.

6                   Four, as Innu, we face a particular  
7 difficulty concerning recognition by the federal and  
8 provincial governments. In 1949, when Newfoundland  
9 joined Confederation, the Innu were never consulted, and  
10 by the decision, Newfoundland claimed jurisdiction over  
11 every facet of our lives and laid claim to all our lands.

12

13                   Still today, Newfoundland  
14 defines us as ordinary citizens of the province of  
15 Newfoundland. In doing so, the province neatly avoids  
16 recognition of the Innu as a distinct people or nation.

17 This position has been accepted by the government of  
18 Canada since 1949. The government of Canada argues that  
19 it will bear responsibility only for health care in  
20 relation to the Innu that has been undertaken to support  
21 financially to the province for these programs. In recent  
22 months, we have called upon the federal government to  
23 recognize its failure to current responsibilities in  
24 regard to the Innu. We are awaiting a response from them.

25

StenoTran

79

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1                                 In a separate action, we  
2 launched an official complaint to the Canadian Human Rights  
3 Commission concerning this matter, and have asked them  
4 to examine the issue.

5                                 I have talked long enough.  
6 These problems have built up over many, many years, and  
7 I could talk for days and weeks. We have already talked  
8 at many similar meetings. We have written and we have  
9 meet with Newfoundland and Canada. We have been arrested  
10 for defending what we knew to be true, but we have not  
11 seen results. Sometimes I wonder why we are talking at  
12 all. In the case of this Royal Commission, I hope that,  
13 for a change, action will result.

14                                 I have this letter here,  
15 and I am supposed to give it to you. Do you want me to  
16 read it or--

17                                 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

18 Give it to us. Can we ask you a few questions?

19                                 **GEORGE RICH:** Sure.

20                                 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

21 Thank you for your presentation. You said something  
22 at the end there that I thought I better check on. You  
23 said in 1949 when Newfoundland joined Canada, the Innu  
24 were not consulted.

25                                 **GEORGE RICH:** No.

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80

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
2 What did you mean? They had two referendums, and the  
3 first one was not successful, so they had another one,  
4 and just slightly over 50 percent voted to join Canada.  
5 There were fewer options in the second referendum. Does  
6 that mean that the Innu were not provided an opportunity  
7 to vote in the referendum, or if they were, that your people  
8 boycotted, or that they participated and didn't know what  
9 they were participating in? What is it you're telling  
10 us?

11 **GEORGE RICH:** At the time,  
12 the missionaries were really powerful in the community.  
13 I think, at that time, they had a lot to do with it.  
14 The missionary has always been a spokesperson at the time  
15 for our communities. They say you go and vote for this,  
16 and you're going to get a lot of support. You're going  
17 to get new housing, you're going to get all the new stuff,  
18 family allowance. So I think they were consulted on the  
19 terms, but they were not consulted on the terms of what  
20 was going to happen. They were not explained. There was  
21 not much more information that was given to them.

22 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
23 You still haven't answered what I asked, though. I wanted  
24 to know if they actually took part in the referendum.  
25 Did they actually go and vote in the ballot or--

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81

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1                                   **GEORGE RICH:** I think they  
2 voted, a few people voted, I think. The only remaining  
3 people who now vote, I guess, are in the country. I think  
4 they did vote, few people voted.

5                                   **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
6 So what you're saying is that because of the influence  
7 of the church at the time, that you don't really consider  
8 it a serious consultation.

9                                   **GEORGE RICH:** No, it  
10 wasn't.

11                                  **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
12 How many of your people voted? What do you think? Half,  
13 three-quarters, ten percent?

14                                  **GEORGE RICH:** I don't  
15 know. It could be--

16                                  **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
17 Were there some people on the land at the time?

18                                  **GEORGE RICH:** At the time,  
19 there were people travelling all the time, and there were  
20 people who hang around in the mission, in the trading post.  
21 I think the people that remained would be maybe 30, 20  
22 families, I think.

23                                  **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
24 O.K. The comprehensive claims policy that you talked  
25 about that you want changes in, you're against

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82

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 extinguishment, you want it based on some kind of  
2 recognition policy.

3 **GEORGE RICH:** Yeah, like  
4 we're not recognized right now. Every time you ask for  
5 funding or any kind of funding that could help us, we're  
6 always told that you're not registered, you're not an  
7 Indian reserve, and we're not recognized at all. But the  
8 time is changing, and they start to recognize the health,  
9 we've got the health agreement and we've got the education  
10 agreement. It's very slow. But we're not saying that  
11 we want to be registered as Indians. We want to be  
12 recognized so we can get access to resources that the other  
13 Aboriginal people are getting. We were told that the other  
14 Aboriginal people across Canada want to get out of the  
15 Indian Act, they want to abolish the Indian Affairs  
16 Department. But it's going to be very foolish for us to  
17 go into the Indian Act, when everybody wants to get out  
18 of it.

19 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
20 Right. I think those were my questions. Mary, do you  
21 have any others?

22 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
23 Thanks, George and George, both Georges. When we were  
24 coming to Labrador, and I was on the plane with Georges,  
25 and I said Georges, you know, those Labrador people are

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84

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 that we don't have that kind of experience that the Elders  
2 have, like implementing the way of life and the hunting  
3 skills and the Aboriginal beliefs and the spirituality  
4 But sometimes, they're very angry with us. There have  
5 always been confrontations between Elders when I was  
6 growing up. They've always been there. They are the  
7 advisors. One time we had an Elder council here, and  
8 that's when we realized that we cannot do this alone.  
9 We, the young people, cannot do it alone. We need help  
10 from the Elders. We had Elders advise us on the land claims  
11 and negotiations, and we have Elders that we occasionally  
12 go to to talk, and we always have Elders to open the  
13 meetings. But it's also a very dangerous position to have  
14 an Elder running the council. They could be easily  
15 manipulated also by the outsiders. I have seen the Elders  
16 be manipulated by the outsiders who came to work, and I  
17 have seen the Elders sign cheques, to sign things like  
18 that, to be manipulated by business persons, whether in  
19 Goose Bay or St. John's, just to get the funding. I've  
20 seen that, and that's dangerous.

**COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

21  
22 Why? Is it because they can't speak English?

**GEORGE RICH:** Because they

23  
24 cannot speak English, and because they don't know how to  
25 write, and because they don't know the difference between

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85

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 a salesperson and--I don't know. It's difficult. I've  
2 seen Elders like that in the community.

3 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

4 So what would your definition of a great leader be, like  
5 what kind of skills would that person have to have?

6 **GEORGE RICH:** I'm a very  
7 different person. A great leader, to me, is going to have  
8 knowledge of the old traditional ways and a knowledge of  
9 the English language, and must be a solid leader to  
10 understand the problems that are affecting us here daily.

11 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

12 And so do you have many of those in your community, many  
13 people that are like that, that young people can look up  
14 to, that everybody can respect?

15 **GEORGE RICH:** There are  
16 quite a few now. Years ago, I used to drink myself, and  
17 I know a lot of people who are drinking right now and they're  
18 recovering gradually. I think that's the kind of  
19 leadership that's needed in the community.

20 I attend a lot of workshops  
21 across Canada, and I want to learn what their system is  
22 in community leadership. And they always say the healer,  
23 the person who heals could heal the other person. If I'm  
24 a drinking person and talk about drinking, that, to me,  
25 is telling a lie, and if I'm not a drinker and talk about

StenoTran

86

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 drinking, I just may as well speak to shoe, and that's  
2 the kind of leadership that's needed in this community.

3 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

4 That's what we also heard from the young kids in Nain,  
5 that they have now many adults who set a bad example, they  
6 needed good role models.

7 The second question, the  
8 last question. On this whole issue of civil disobedience,  
9 we've known now for awhile that that's going on in Labrador,  
10 that the Innu have occupied the runways, and when you get  
11 around, you hear a lot of people saying, you know, call  
12 the Innu down to the dirt because of that kind of action,  
13 not really understanding why they do that, and saying that  
14 the Innu have much more support internationally than  
15 locally for these kinds of efforts, and you've more or  
16 less said that you're really, really frustrated, there  
17 must be a way to get governments to listen, you've tried  
18 everything, everything hasn't worked. And you've  
19 mentioned that as a peace-loving people, you've been so  
20 frustrated for so long that you've even thought about doing  
21 more serious things, and I'm wondering--I haven't heard  
22 a lot about that in Labrador. For the most part, people  
23 are very peace loving, and I'm wondering if you take that  
24 kind of action, what impact will that have on your  
25 relationship with the people in this region. Do you think

StenoTran



87

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 that will either help you get what you want or not help  
2 you get what you want, or do you think this kind of action  
3 will get you what you want with the provincial and federal  
4 governments and with the people of Labrador here, seeking  
5 a relationship of equality and respect?

6 **GEORGE RICH:** To me, one  
7 of the things that I know, while travelling back and forth  
8 to Goose Bay all the time, is that people in Goose Bay  
9 lack understanding of the Innu culture. They have the  
10 Innu in their own backyard there, and they still don't  
11 know what they're fighting for and what they want.

12 Looking back at  
13 disobedience, when I hear the news now and see some people  
14 occupied the CEIC office or Secretary of State, all that  
15 kind of office that they occupy, and they get results right  
16 away, and they are militant people. The break windows  
17 or they break doors, and the government quickly responds  
18 to that. I've been repeating the same things in my  
19 meetings with bureaucrats over and over.

20 I had a meeting with a  
21 bureaucrat about a week and a half ago. What I wanted  
22 to do, what frustrates me is, yeah, yeah, we care and all  
23 that. I wanted to bang on his head, hello, are you in  
24 there, are you listening. Open your eyes. You're in  
25 Utshimasits now. Open your eyes. But that's the kind

StenoTran

88

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 of things that make me angry. They don't understand that.  
2 We couldn't understand why people in Goose Bay are really  
3 angry, especially in Goose Bay. That community is hurting  
4 too, in a way. When I was in Goose Bay in the summertime,  
5 even those young kids aged five and six that call you names,  
6 call out everything they can think of. Everywhere the  
7 story goes, it's always been the same.

8 When I travelled to Toronto  
9 three weeks ago, or just last week, there was a flight  
10 from St. John's to Toronto, I was in Halifax, and there's  
11 young people there from the community of St. John's and  
12 the City of St. John's, and they talk to me on very friendly  
13 terms--hey, how are you doing, where are you going, have  
14 a good flight, and all that. There's a lot of difference.

15  
16 I'm not suggesting to break  
17 laws, white laws. I'm only suggesting that what do we  
18 have to do to get attention from the federal and provincial  
19 governments. Do we have to be militant, like the people  
20 in Newfoundland or in Oka, or do we have to continue our  
21 peace-loving ways? I think people tend to support you,  
22 too, when you're militant. Look at the blacks in South  
23 Africa. They're militant, and they get a lot of support.

24 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

25 Those are our questions, I guess.

StenoTran

89

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1                                   **DAVID NUI:** I have one  
2 question there. (Native language--no translation  
3 available)

4                                   **PHILIP RICH:** Thank you  
5 very much, George and Mary. My presentation is not more  
6 than one page long. In 1967, the government of  
7 Newfoundland had moved Innu to this island. Since that  
8 time, the community has never improved. Poor housing,  
9 and no water can be found anywhere on this island.

10                                   Our Elders and children are  
11 suffering the most because of poor living conditions in  
12 this community. Our children are feeling helpless and  
13 they end up into gas sniffing. Both governments don't  
14 seem to care what happens to our children and Elders.  
15 In the last two years, we have talked about moving to a  
16 better location, but who's going to listen, who will fund  
17 the new location. When we look at how many millions of  
18 dollars are spent on the military in Labrador, in Goose.  
19 The low-level flying jets doesn't benefit us. Instead,  
20 they are destroying our way of life.

21                                   Some of our children can  
22 no longer watch our community falling backward, not getting  
23 better, so they're committing suicide, and those who  
24 survive end up drinking alcohol and gas sniffing, just  
25 to forget how much they suffer.

StenoTran



91

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 In the present Davis Inlet, living conditions are very  
2 bad, and we all suffer from that. We are not getting  
3 anywhere. It's like moving back to the future.

4 To conclude, I would like  
5 to say thanks to the Royal Commission for listening to  
6 our concerns in Davis Inlet. And this, I also have to  
7 give to you, I guess.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

9 Thank you very much.

10 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH, YOUTH**

11 **COUNCIL AND TRIBAL POLICE:** I have two presentations to  
12 make today. One is the youth council and one is tribal  
13 police. My first presentation is the youth council.

14 I'm the president of the  
15 youth council. We have been trying to get our strength  
16 for our youth. We have been struggling against outside  
17 culture, the government bureaucracy, both provincial and  
18 federal. When we ask for funds to help achieve our own  
19 vision, they usually say that we're not status Indians.

20 The Indian Act doesn't include us because we never signed  
21 the treaty.

22 Sometimes we wonder who we  
23 are. Are we human beings? We, the Innu of Utshimasits,  
24 are looked at as lower-class citizens. We, the youth  
25 council, simply do not have enough resources, human

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95

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 has a big recreation centre and an addition to the school  
2 gym. We have been scheduled into a few hours and weekends  
3 only to use the gym here. We have some parts for an ice  
4 skating rink, but they never have been put together, and  
5 are lying in the middle of our village. Maybe it's time  
6 to put it up, so we don't have to skate on the sea ice  
7 or shovel the crusty snow off the small pond.

8 Any youth facility should  
9 have staff to maintain it and to play youth activities.

10 This would take some commitment and committed leader  
11 interested in youth work. We recommend some youth work  
12 training, especially youth leadership training, for these  
13 youth workers, since they will be strong role models for  
14 our youth. Any training should be balanced with our  
15 traditional life on the land, which we would still enjoy  
16 with non-Native youth work skills adapted to our situation.

17 Funds for ongoing support and training should be available  
18 once we have our own youth workers, especially advice from  
19 other more experienced Native youth leaders, since helping  
20 youth is dynamic and challenging work, which we would be  
21 glad to share our experience with our communities as well,  
22 once we have gained strength in our journey towards  
23 wholeness for the youth.

24 Thank you for coming to  
25 Utshimasits to hear about our village, our values and our

StenoTran

96

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 life here. It shows you care about our future, and it  
2 inspires us to work on the next steps of the journey.  
3 Our youth, our future. Thanks for your help in making  
4 that future as healthy and bright as possible. Thank you.

5

6 I do have another  
7 presentation. That was for the youth council, and I have  
8 one for tribal police. I am a tribal police officer, First  
9 Nations tribal police, Simeon Tshakapesh.

10 Let me introduce myself.

11 I am Simeon, and I was trained last year at the First Nations  
12 Tribal Justice Institute to be a constable here. My band  
13 sent me and my brother so we could solve problems in our  
14 own way, instead of relying on the RCMP always. We  
15 graduate in June and start working here in July.

16 As you may know, Provincial  
17 Justice Minister Ed Roberts does not recognize our  
18 authority as trained police officers. The training that  
19 we received was the same training as the RCMP training  
20 in Regina. In addition, we receive special training about  
21 culture, language, drumming, singing in sweat lodges and  
22 spirituality, which is the source of the power of all Native  
23 peoples. We also had training on human relations, legal  
24 studies and the Criminal Code of Canada. The training  
25 has prepared us for work here, and I don't think other

StenoTran



98

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 and the power of the support of our people. But these  
2 are the most important things. I have been doing all the  
3 work for the RCMP. They always come to me when they need  
4 information.

5 So what do we recommend for  
6 the Native justice? Basically, give us the funding and  
7 the authority to do things ourselves. We've proven  
8 ourselves that we can do the job, since we have been doing  
9 it without any equipment, that our culture ways are  
10 stronger than laws enforced by the outside society. So  
11 give us a chance. Let us run our own affairs.

12 Thank you for coming here.

13 Maybe you ought to give a hand to Mr. Ed Roberts. Thank  
14 you.

15 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

16 Do you mind if we ask you a few questions?

17 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** No.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

19 Thank you for your presentation. Mary, do you want to  
20 start?

21 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

22 Thank you. In Ottawa last week, we had a round table  
23 on justice, and at that time, we invited many people to  
24 attend the conference to discuss justice issues, and one  
25 of the persons that we did invite was Ed Roberts, because  
we felt that the Ministers of Justice and other people

StenoTran



99

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 like that would benefit from a discussion where there were  
2 Aboriginal lawyers and Aboriginal judges, but his time  
3 schedule wouldn't let him, so we are aware of the particular  
4 situation in this province.

5 I just want to ask you, you  
6 and your brother went to the First Nations School--was  
7 it in B.C.?

8 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Yes,  
9 B.C.

10 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
11 And why did you choose that school?

12 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** We  
13 don't have any choice. We applied to the RCMP, and we  
14 never got accepted, so we went to the First Nations Tribal  
15 Justice Institute.

16 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
17 You applied for the regular RCMP school, but you didn't  
18 have the grades, or you didn't have what?

19 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** I  
20 don't know. They just said I was rejected. I had good  
21 reports from the RCMP, and they said I was going to be  
22 accepted, and I was excited, but Newfoundland turned me  
23 down.

24 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**  
25 Were you applying for the regular RCMP or special

StenoTran

100

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 constable?

2 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** I

3 applied for the regular RCMP.

4 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**5 And this school that you went to in B.C., you said that  
6 was a year program?7 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Yeah.8 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**9 So you were in B.C. for a year. So you guys lived in  
10 Davis Inlet all your life, mostly.11 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Yeah,

12 that's correct.

13 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**14 And you went to B.C., and you stayed there for a year,  
15 and you finished--16 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:**17 Almost a year. I was supposed to go on job training, so  
18 they sent me back, because I was qualified already, so  
19 I didn't have to go on the job training.20 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**21 Now I find that very, very interesting, because for the  
22 most part, what we've heard is that Native people who are  
23 from very small communities, who are in what they call  
24 "fly-in" communities, with no roads, they have a hard time  
25 leaving and going to school and making it, and so I was

StenoTran

101

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 wondering what made you succeed, what made you and your  
2 brother, what are the kinds of things that happened in  
3 that school to make you finish.

4 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Well,  
5 it's really simple. When somebody is committed and  
6 dedicated, and a person who has a heart that he wants to  
7 help his people, he'll suffer. I suffered there for nine  
8 months, so I had the same training, and I made it through,  
9 because I always wanted to be involved in law enforcement.

10 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

11 Did it help that your brother was there?

12 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** It  
13 helped a lot, yeah.

14 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

15 Did it help that the school that you went to was run--I'm  
16 assuming it's run by Aboriginal people.

17 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Oh,  
18 yes, definitely.

19 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

20 That helped?

21 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Yeah,  
22 because you can do a lot of different things with different  
23 people, different nations, because I met a lot of different  
24 nations, I met Chicotin (PH), Statlin (PH) Nation, so it  
25 brings me a lot of strength.

StenoTran

102

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples1 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

2 So now you're back in the community, you and your brother,  
3 and you're employed by the band, but you don't have real  
4 authority to act like an RCMP, is that it?

5 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Well,  
6 the province of Newfoundland doesn't recognize us as police  
7 officers, because they don't want to lose the funding,  
8 I guess, or the contract. I can work anywhere in Canada,  
9 if I want to. I'm qualified, because I got my diploma  
10 and my marks and everything, and I can work anywhere in  
11 Canada, if I want to, on the reserve or off the reserve.  
12 I can even work in downtown Vancouver, if I want to.  
13 The B.C. Institute hired our training officers directly  
14 from our office to their office.

15 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

16 So you can work anywhere in Canada except Newfoundland  
17 and Labrador.

18 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:**

19 Uh-huh. I've been doing all the work for the RCMP here.

20 I haven't seen RCMP doing something in the community.  
21 Just about two weeks ago, there was a break in at the post  
22 office, and I recovered about \$4,000, and the RCMP said  
23 that they recovered it themselves, which they never did.

24 I was the one, and my brother. They only came down here  
25 to take some statements, and I gave them all the information

StenoTran

103

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 that they needed, and they took off again.

2 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

3 So you're saying that you have a good relationship with  
4 the RCMP in the community. For example, I've heard that  
5 if you become the RCMP, they don't station you in your  
6 community because sometimes it's very hard for a policeman  
7 who's from there to charge people with crimes. Are you  
8 having any of those kinds of problems, or is the community  
9 accepting you really good?

10 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Well,  
11 the community is accepting us, I guess. We've been  
12 receiving a lot of calls, so they must be respecting us,  
13 I guess. One time, the RCMP were down here, and something  
14 happened and they called us, they didn't call the RCMP,  
15 and we had to call the RCMP.

16 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

17 Well, I wish you well in your work, and congratulations.

18 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Thank  
19 you very much.

20 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

21 George might want to ask you some questions.

22 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

23 Because of the problems you're having with the Province  
24 recognizing your status and so forth, whose laws are you  
25 actually applying? Whose laws are you enforcing?

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105

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 don't know.

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**3 This training that you went and took, is it recognized  
4 by any Canadian governments?5 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Oh,  
6 yes, the federal government recognize it.7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

8 Some provinces?

9 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Yeah,  
10 like I say--11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**12 You said you could work downtown Vancouver, does that  
13 mean the province--14 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Yeah,  
15 they hire our officers directly from our institute to their  
16 office justice institute in B.C. We got some guys working  
17 in the Vancouver police right now, so--18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**19 You said you were given some of the same training that  
20 the RCMP take. What part of their training was similar  
21 to yours?22 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Well,  
23 public relations is one of them, investigation patrol,  
24 legal studies, Criminal Code, and the Police Act, rifle,  
25 driving, weapons, that's the same training as they got,

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106

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 but we got more training, because we include culture and  
2 spirituality in our training.

3 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

4 Right. How many days a week was this? Was this a  
5 five-day week training?

6 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Five  
7 days a week, yeah, sometimes seven days a week. That's  
8 a lot of work. That's under the legal studies.

9 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

10 Had you gone to Regina to take the RCMP training, how  
11 long would that training have been?

12 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** About  
13 six months.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

15 Six months?

16 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** Six  
17 months.

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

19 Interesting.

20 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** And I  
21 scored about 84 percent overall average, and especially,  
22 I don't use English when I talk to my brother, I use my  
23 own language, and especially to my people, I use my own  
24 language.

25 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

StenoTran

107

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 And you have no understanding of why the RCMP didn't accept  
2 your application.

3 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** No.

4 Maybe it's the language, I guess, I would say.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

6 Since you've taken your training, how have the RCMP  
7 reacted to you in relation to the training that you've  
8 taken? Do they recognize it?

9 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** They  
10 don't mind, I guess. They're just afraid of the bosses,  
11 because I'm doing a favour for them right now, like I said.

12 I'm doing all the work for them, and they always give  
13 themselves the credit.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

15 Let me go back to this break-in you said that occurred  
16 here. You found the people, you found the money?

17 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** I  
18 found everything, yeah. I marked everything down that  
19 I found, and I seized everything, and I marked it. I did  
20 all the work.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

22 So you didn't catch them in the act, so you found  
23 witnesses?

24 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** No, I  
25 investigated, and I found them.

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108

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples1 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

2 Very good. Is there anything you want to add?

3 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** No.4 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

5 Thank you for coming forth. Oh, on the youth, I was going  
6 to ask you something on that. You were saying that part  
7 of what your purpose is here, I was just reading, is to  
8 organize recreational events, and in your presentation  
9 you mentioned that there's some material for, I guess,  
10 an outside skating rink laying around, and I was wondering  
11 if you were going to take matters into your hands, as young  
12 people, and just put up your rink.

13 **SIMEON TSHAKAPESH:** We  
14 always depend on the band council, that's what we've been  
15 doing. We always depend on the band council, because  
16 that's where the funds come from, because the band council  
17 doesn't have any funds to set it up, so--

18 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

19 Thank you for coming forth. Good luck with the youth  
20 council.

21 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE, DIRECTOR**

22 **OF EDUCATION, INNU NATION:** My name is Raphael Gregoire,  
23 and I'm from Sheshatshiu. I have a written presentation  
24 that I have to make.

25 I'm making this

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109

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 presentation on behalf of the Innu nation for both  
2 Sheshatshiu and Utshimasits. These two communities share  
3 common goals and aspirations, but they are, at the same  
4 time, very much aware of the different approaches they  
5 take when dealing with similar issues. These differing  
6 approaches are necessary because we as Innu are very much  
7 aware and are respectful of the fact that each individual  
8 community has the basic right to deal with its own problems  
9 in its own way, but wherever or whenever it is necessary,  
10 they will stand with each other in solidarity.

11 I think that it is very  
12 important and necessary to make this point clear at the  
13 beginning, so that it will not appear that the Innu of  
14 these two communities are divided on many issues and are  
15 not supportive of each other on issues of common concerns,  
16 education being one of those concerns. What is important  
17 to keep in mind is that issues and concerns cannot always  
18 be dealt with by one approach in the two communities, and  
19 so therefore there will always be a compromise.

20 For the first time in its  
21 long history, the Innu nation took the unprecedented step  
22 of hiring an Innu person to work exclusively on educational  
23 matters and concerns, last July, when they hired me as  
24 director of education for the Innu nation. The fact that  
25 it took a very long time for the Innu nation to hire a

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110

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 person to work on education matters and concerns should  
2 not be taken to mean that education had never been taken  
3 seriously by Innu leaders.

4   The Innu nation, also  
5 formerly known as the Naskapi and Montagnais Innu  
6 Association and the Native Association of Newfoundland  
7 and Labrador, have always attached great importance to  
8 the issue of education in general, and more importantly,  
9 how the education system, as it is being presently offered,  
10 is relevant to meeting the needs of Innu children.

11   It should be of no great  
12 surprise, then, to learn that the Innu nation is in  
13 disagreement with the educational philosophy that the  
14 Roman Catholic School Board for Labrador tries to impose  
15 on Innu children in these two communities. The RC School  
16 Board for Labrador has basically been following the  
17 philosophy which borders on the assimilation of the Innu  
18 child into the mainstream of North American society, and  
19 thus forcing and/or coercing the Innu child to abandon  
20 and/or reject the notion to be a distinct people. Our  
21 children follow a school system which teaches them values  
22 and aspirations which are foreign to us. The school  
23 system, in fact, reflects nothing of our culture, but  
24 rather continues to confuse and poison the brains of our  
25 children by a steady flow of non-Innu values and

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111

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 aspirations being fed into their heads.

2 I am sure administrators  
3 of the Roman Catholic School Board for Labrador will argue  
4 that the Innu have been given the opportunity to make  
5 changes within the school system, and will point to the  
6 Innu Curriculum Centre in Peenamin MacKenzie School as  
7 an example that great strides in Innu curriculum  
8 development are taking place. As the education director  
9 for the Innu nation, I have made it my primary  
10 responsibility to observe and scrutinize the flow of  
11 materials that are coming out of that Innu Curriculum  
12 Centre. Thus far, I have not been impressed at all. What  
13 I've seen so far is the regurgitation of English learning  
14 materials which have been translated into Innu-eimun to  
15 pass for Innu learning material. There are no innovative  
16 programs being developed now, nor are any likely to be  
17 developed in the future, until there are real changes made  
18 to the whole school system.

19 A few weeks ago, I attended  
20 a conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, to listen to and  
21 learn about curriculum development that has taken place  
22 in that province. I attended that conference because it  
23 had been nationally advertised as an opportunity to meet  
24 with other educators and exchange information on  
25 curriculum development. I was greatly surprised to learn

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113

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 that we, the Innu, can give you that would satisfy you.

2 We can only tell you this. We believe strongly that we  
3 have the right to determine our own futures, and that right  
4 includes the right to become educators of our own children.

5 We cannot relinquish that right, because if we do that,  
6 the future of our children would be in jeopardy.

7 I have always believed that  
8 achieving self-government is the only way that we, the  
9 Innu, can run our own lives as we deem necessary in order  
10 to bring stability back into our lives. It will be our  
11 means of becoming strong politically, and thereby  
12 achieving many of the aspirations that we now want to  
13 achieve. Until that time comes, I think it would not be  
14 logical to speculate upon other matters.

15 The context of my  
16 presentation is this. We want to control our lives, in  
17 terms of our own education and the education of our  
18 children. We have that right, and we want to do it now,  
19 before it is too late. We need the financial resources  
20 to do this, and the willingness of the government of Canada  
21 and Newfoundland to let us decide for ourselves how we  
22 want to manage our affairs on educational issues. It is  
23 also important that both federal and provincial  
24 governments are able to support this process without  
25 interfering.

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115

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 means that if the children don't take that option they  
2 won't learn how to live on the land?

3 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** I'm  
4 saying that we should be given the option to teach our  
5 children the way we want to teach them. If we want to  
6 teach them English and other subjects, then we should have  
7 the right to do that. The whole point is this. We don't  
8 want to follow the Newfoundland school system entirely.

9 I think there should be room for some flexibility, where  
10 we are able to teach our children the things we would like  
11 them to learn, based on Innu skills and culture.

12 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
13 The local school that you're trying to take over in  
14 Sheshatshiu, how far does it go again? Does it include  
15 high school?

16 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Yes.

17 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
18 And how are the efforts to take it over coming?

19 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Well,  
20 what's been happening so far is that there was a study  
21 done on the process of the transition to take over the  
22 school from the Roman Catholic School Board and ultimately  
23 to be transferred to the Innu Education Authority. As  
24 you know, the Newfoundland government has suspended talks  
25 in the meantime, because of other issues, so the process

116

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 is in a halting position now.

2 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

3 Were you considering also taking over this school here?

4 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Well,  
5 the first part of my presentation dealt with that. Each  
6 community has the right to decide what they want to do  
7 in their own areas, and I think that should be understand,  
8 and it has been said before by other Aboriginal groups,  
9 that each community has the right to decide what kind of  
10 self-government they want. If they choose not to do it  
11 at this time, but they want to do it in the future, then  
12 they have the option to do that. No, we're not interfering  
13 in how they want to plan their own education system here  
14 in Utshimasits, not at this point.

15 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

16 Will you set up a school board?

17 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** We want  
18 to set up an Innu education authority, which will  
19 administer and develop policies which will be reflective  
20 of Innu culture.

21 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

22 And would it include some way in which parents would select  
23 people that would represent them on some type of an  
24 authority like a school board?

25 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Oh,

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117

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 yes, that's very important. We envision setting up an  
2 Innu education authority composed of seven members  
3 selected from the community, and they decide how the school  
4 should be run. Now again, this is Sheshatshiu I'm talking  
5 about.

**CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

7 Indeed, you are. So the Roman Catholic School Board,  
8 you believe, has philosophies bordering on assimilation,  
9 and the new curriculum centre they've created, or the Innu  
10 Curriculum Centre they have, you feel is doing very little  
11 more than just translating material from English or another  
12 language into the Innu language and very little beyond  
13 that.

**RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Yes.**CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

16 There's nothing really--

**RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** You

18 see, the Innu Curriculum Centre was developed by the Roman  
19 Catholic School Board. They decide what kind of materials  
20 should be developed, and most of it is based on what they  
21 get from English textbooks, which was just re-translated  
22 and which passed for Innu learning materials. I think  
23 it's important that the Innu develop their own educational  
24 programs, and that means textbooks and learning materials,  
25 and if they decide that they want to change the school

118

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 calendar, for example, so that most of the Innu education  
2 should take place in the country, then the Innu should  
3 have that right, because what is important to us is that  
4 the Innu have a lot of cultural values that have been taken  
5 away by the present school system, and we certainly think  
6 that the Innu children should go back to the country to  
7 relearn many of the values that they have lost, and this  
8 is the time to do it.

9 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
10 Would you see, in your school system, besides spending  
11 time on the land, when they were back in the community  
12 and they were in a formal school setting, would it include  
13 elders, would it include being taught in the Innu language?  
14 What would be different?

15 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** The  
16 most important difference is the concept that the elders  
17 would be the driving force behind the education changes  
18 that would take place. They would decide and they would  
19 advise the younger people what should be taking place.  
20 They know what has been lost.

21 The other important thing  
22 is there are very few elder people, and they're getting  
23 on in years, and if we don't do anything now, it will be  
24 too late.

25 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

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119

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Besides having elders with that kind of direct influence  
2 over the system and possibly participating in the education  
3 process, would the language of instruction be in the Innu  
4 language?

5 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Well,  
6 that's taking place now. There is Innu language  
7 instruction.

8 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
9 From what to what?

10 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Well,  
11 I think it's from one to four. But beyond that, there's  
12 very little of it taking place. We are fortunate, in a  
13 way, that when we are home we speak our own language, kids  
14 speak their own language. But what is alarming is the  
15 fact that many of the younger people are starting to lose  
16 the richness of the language, and when they start to do  
17 that, you begin to wonder.

18 When I was in Saskatoon a  
19 few weeks ago, one of the people that I talked to said  
20 that in 30 years they lost 40 percent of their language  
21 because they were schooled in the English school system,  
22 and I certainly wouldn't want to see it happen here in  
23 Labrador. I can see how easy it can be to lose one's  
24 language if you don't practice it.

25 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

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120

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 The way that your language is written here, is it the  
2 same way that the Innu write their language in Quebec?

3 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** It's  
4 similar.

5 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
6 So you can read the same materials?

7 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** We're  
8 the same people, so we understand each other.

9 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
10 No, no, I'm talking about the written form. I'm wondering  
11 if the written form is the same.

12 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Yes,  
13 it's the same.

14 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
15 Is it? Because amongst the Dene and the Inuit, they came  
16 amongst us in different places and found different ways  
17 of writing the same language.

18 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** No, not  
19 with the Dene or the Cree. I think behind you you have  
20 some syllabics, and that's the Cree system of writing.  
21 But my experience is the further west you go, then you  
22 start to not understand the language. But as long as you  
23 are in Quebec, the north shore of Quebec, where most of  
24 our relatives are, we understand them, and we write down  
25 the same kind of language.

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121

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:  
2 So you only have one writing style, only one form of  
3 writing.  
4 RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:  
5 Writing system, yes.  
6 CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:  
7 How did that come about?  
8 RAPHAEL GREGOIRE: I  
9 suppose originally ours is an oral language. The writing  
10 system came from the missionaries.  
11 CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:  
12 And you had the same missionaries both in Quebec and in  
13 Labrador?  
14 RAPHAEL GREGOIRE: Of  
15 course.  
16 CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:  
17 Very interesting. Is it similar to any of the other ways  
18 that Aboriginal languages have been written? If you are  
19 literate in Innu, in the form of written versions, does  
20 that allow you to read any other Aboriginal language?  
21 RAPHAEL GREGOIRE: Well,  
22 there's a geographical area, or region, I guess, that this  
23 language is spoken and written. I think when you talk  
24 about northern Quebec, for example, and the language there  
25 is known as the Cree, and since the dialect is different,

StenoTran

122

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 it becomes difficult to understand. But I've looked at  
2 the television programs produced by the Cree and I can  
3 understand some parts of it. The difficulty is trying  
4 to understand the dialect. So I suppose their writing  
5 system is different, too, because they use the dialect  
6 not the syllabic system of writing.

7 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
8 When you were in Saskatchewan, did you understand any  
9 of the language of any of the Cree?

10 **RAPHAEL GREGOIRE:** Well,  
11 when I was there, my main purpose for being there was to  
12 try to gather as much curriculum material that they have  
13 over there, but my experience is that they don't have very  
14 much. Their main concern was that since they were losing  
15 their language so rapidly, their main concern was to revive  
16 it, so whatever I gathered from there wasn't very useful  
17 or beneficial to the Innu here. I thought it could have  
18 been incorporated into our Curriculum Centre, but I think  
19 it was a dream.

20 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
21 While you still have money to travel, you might consider  
22 going amongst the Navaho. They've been able to maintain  
23 their language very, very strongly down there, and you  
24 might be able to learn some things from them.

25 Do you have any questions,

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123

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 Mary?

2 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

3 No, thank you, Raphael.

4 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

5 Thank you for travelling all this way to present to us.

6 Congratulations on being the first director.

7 I think we'll take a

8 three-minute break right now.

9 --- Hearing is recessed at 1533 hours

10 --- Hearing is resumed at 1540 hours

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

12 I think the next presenter is Peter Penushue. Peter

13 around?

14 **BEN ANDREWS:** I would like15 to make some general comments about what I've read in the  
16 Royal Commission papers and from what I've heard.

17 I think now is a good time

18 to discuss what has been talked about a few years ago within

19 the Dene organizations, which was colonization. I think

20 people are ready to discuss these kinds of issues. It

21 seems almost every way has been discussed and nothing has

22 ever worked, and it seems to me what people are describing

23 in all their presentations is a process of colonization,

24 and colonization, to me, means you strip people of all

25 their beliefs, their land, their children, everything,

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125

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 A lot of people, especially the leaders, seem to accept  
2 that this is the way it is, and this is the way it's going  
3 to be, without ever explaining to the people just why do  
4 they accept it.

5 I have a lot of problems  
6 with some leaders talking about the Innu people, and they  
7 are the different peoples of Canada when they talk about  
8 Indians. I don't think there's such a thing as an Indian,  
9 and this is also a big problem amongst the different  
10 Aboriginal peoples of Canada. I think this is a term  
11 coined by the colonial powers to sort of put people below  
12 them and dividing up people into races.

13 "Races" is also the other  
14 term which was used by the colonial powers to sort of divide  
15 people into lower classes, so the Europeans could divide  
16 them up into lower classes of people, and it's still being  
17 used very frequently by Aboriginal people, the leaders,  
18 which is just sort playing into the hands of the colonial  
19 powers.

20 All the process of  
21 colonialism can be seen and heard in all the communities  
22 of Labrador and Quebec and Canada. That has been going  
23 on since the Europeans first came, when the people started  
24 to turn towards their own people. This is the process  
25 of colonialism; it's not something that just happens.

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126

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 It's been forced amongst the people to behave in such a  
2 way as to be destructive towards themselves. And I find  
3 it very distressing when I hear people talk about these  
4 events as if they're causing all these events themselves,  
5 when these forces have been at work, these colonial forces,  
6 which sort of put them in an animal sort of way.

7 I find it very difficult  
8 to listen to people sometimes when they talk about their  
9 problems, personal problems, and then having to blame  
10 themselves for what's going on, when it's really the  
11 colonial powers and the system and the governments that  
12 have forced this amongst them, to feel powerless. And  
13 that's one of the things that I think people should stress,  
14 that this is colonialism, and people have to understand  
15 the effects of colonialism.

16 A lot of people tend to talk  
17 about colonialism, and just think about Africa, because  
18 for themselves it's a foreign thing. It didn't happen  
19 to them, because they had been taught everything, the other  
20 people's history, European history. But when you look  
21 at the situation, at the whole situation in Canada, it's  
22 all because of this system. I don't think it's just an  
23 isolated event that's happening to people, because it's  
24 the whole system: it's the school, it's the church, it's  
25 everything.

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127

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1                                        So what do people do about  
2 this whole process? I find it difficult to say that the  
3 colonization is the way, because I think that people are  
4 in different stages of their own personal growth, about  
5 how they view things in wider scope. So I think when people  
6 talk about some of the things, they're missing some of  
7 the things that they should be talking about. It's very  
8 easy to blame yourselves for what goes on.

9                                        I think we should take our  
10 own initiative. We should take over control of anything,  
11 whether that requires forceful measures, non-violence,  
12 or any other means. I think people should be prepared  
13 to do whatever is necessary so that their rights are  
14 protected. I don't think we should be worried about public  
15 opinion at this point, because where the people are right  
16 now, public opinion should be worried about these people,  
17 not the other way around. We shouldn't be worried about  
18 what others think of us. They've had 500 years to do what  
19 they did, so why should we worry? I think it happened in  
20 the Oka situation, where most people didn't support the  
21 Oka Mohawks, and look what happened. They were brought  
22 down again. What would the difference have been if they  
23 had supported the Oka people? The situation came down  
24 the same way.

25                                        I think at some point, once

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128

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 people start to believe in themselves, that they have these  
2 rights and that nobody is taking them away, then they have  
3 the right to be violent if they want to. They have every  
4 right. Canadians were violent against the Americans.  
5 Everybody is violent whenever their rights are threatened.  
6 So why should the Innu people or any other peoples sort  
7 of look around and be hesitant? They are a people, and  
8 they have their rights as a nation, and every nation has  
9 a right to protect itself from foreigners.

10 Thank you.

11 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

12 Thank you.

13 **PETER PENASHUE, PRESIDENT,**

14 **INNU NATION:** I would like to thank the Commission for  
15 taking the time to come and visit Davis Inlet. I was also  
16 asked to thank the youth council for providing the meal  
17 this afternoon.

18 I don't really have  
19 anything in particular that I want to talk about. The  
20 presentation made by George Rich was a joint presentation  
21 by the Innu Nation for both communities. I just want to  
22 talk about mostly, I guess, trying to set aside politics  
23 and trying to set aside different national positions, but  
24 to talk about the people themselves.

25 I've been involved with the

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129

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Innu people in the different struggles since I was about  
2 16 years old, and I have been president of the Innu Nation  
3 for the last two years. I had set out to make some changes  
4 in people's lives when I got involved as president of the  
5 Innu Nation, but in the last two years, David was with  
6 us then, and David was vice-president, and we found it  
7 very difficult to make real changes on the community level  
8 in people's lives, because we can talk about the politics  
9 and the national rights and all the rights we have and  
10 all the exploitation of our national rights and our  
11 resources and all those things, but when it comes to the  
12 basic employment and housing, other services that are being  
13 provided to other Aboriginal groups, we are told--

14 I just came back, I guess,  
15 two weeks ago with Katie and George, and met with Don  
16 Ferguson, the director general with Health & Welfare  
17 Canada. In Davis, we had a lot of problems with gas  
18 sniffing and alcoholism. We had tried to talk with Don  
19 Ferguson about establishing a long-term treatment centre  
20 here in Border Beacon for both communities, and we also  
21 talked to him about the gas sniffing problem of the kids.

22 We went there to talk about resources for us to bring  
23 the program to the people rather than the people going  
24 out to the program, be it in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan,  
25 the United States or wherever, and we found out that there

StenoTran

130

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 aren't that many programs for solvent abuse, so we decided  
2 to ask Health & Welfare Canada for resources for us to  
3 start up something for the kids and the people, only to  
4 be told in Halifax that the Health & Welfare Canada didn't  
5 have the mandate to talk about long-term treatment centre.

6 And, I guess, for all of us, for Katie and George, it  
7 was very frustrating. We were told that because we didn't  
8 fit neatly into this category of the Indian Act, and weren't  
9 on a reservation, we couldn't apply for this. Don Ferguson  
10 outright told us that he didn't have the mandate to deal  
11 with us on this matter, and the only thing that he wanted  
12 to discuss was the gas sniffing situation. And the reason  
13 why he was willing to discuss that was because he was  
14 dealing with this situation as if there was an outbreak  
15 of some sort in Toronto and the federal government was  
16 immediately showing support, so they were treating it in  
17 that fashion.

18  
19 And I argued with him about  
20 the different programs they've already put forward to the  
21 Innu people, such as non-insured health benefits,  
22 post-secondary education, band council funding, and  
23 without registration under the Indian Act nor a  
24 reservation, he simply told me that what they were doing  
25 was illegal. In my opinion, the message that we got from  
him is that you have to hush up about these things, because

StenoTran



132

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 There's no royalties paid to the Innu people in Davis Inlet.

2 There's been all kinds of forestry developments around  
3 the area of Goose Bay, there's no royalties paid to the  
4 Innu people. There's a hydro development that took place  
5 in the 1960s, flooded the lands, flooded graveyards, no  
6 apology was ever forthcoming, no compensation. As a  
7 matter of fact, as you are aware, we took out the meters  
8 and said we wouldn't pay.

9 The issue on that is that  
10 we want an apology and compensation, and the Province  
11 simply ignores our grievances and says that the land does  
12 not belong to the Innu and that it belongs to the Province.

13 My argument is that why are they negotiating land rights  
14 negotiations with the Innu if the Innu do not have any  
15 title to the land? If they were absolutely sure that the  
16 land belonged to the Province, they wouldn't be negotiating  
17 with the Innu, but in this case they do, because they  
18 realize that they're going to have to deal with it either  
19 now or they're going to deal with it later. And they  
20 realize, in my opinion, that they don't have a clear title  
21 to the land.

22 So all these royalties that  
23 come out of our land, for example, the Wabush Labrador  
24 Mining, there's millions and millions and millions of  
25 dollars that goes out of our lands, and we go talk to Don

StenoTran

133

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 Ferguson, to put in place a treatment centre for the  
2 community here in Sheshatshiu and put something for the  
3 kids so that we can start dealing with the social problems,  
4 and he tells us no, you don't fit in that category. And  
5 it's very frustrating.

6 Last year, we put on a  
7 conference here, talking about relocation and the  
8 different social problems here associated with the housing  
9 and water and sewer. We said to the Province and feds  
10 that we need a new community for Davis Inlet. They said  
11 O.K., let's have studies. People here have been saying,  
12 you know, they've been saying we're studied to death.  
13 And it was really something, in the report of the Royal  
14 Commission--not Royal Commission, in the infrastructure  
15 study to look into the relocation, the provincial  
16 government very carefully crossed out the words "studied  
17 to death," and they replaced it with "extensive studies  
18 done," because they don't want to read about it in their  
19 own studies. And this was a quote that was made by Terpstra  
20 Engineering, who did the study.

21 So my point is that it's  
22 very frustrating when you try to do something and you can't  
23 have the resources because somebody else hold onto those  
24 royalties that come out of your land. And we still don't  
25 know if Davis Inlet is going to get funding for relocation.

StenoTran

134

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 We're hoping the recommendation from the report is very  
2 positive, but once they tear it up and look at the fine  
3 print, I don't know what the report will say, whether it  
4 will be still supportive of relocation. But as you can  
5 see, in this community, this community needs new housing,  
6 needs water and sewer, needs a new life. And, you know,  
7 Katie and George and many others, Prody (PH), worked very  
8 hard to make changes in this community, but it's very  
9 difficult when you have government officials that are not  
10 co-operating with you, are making it very difficult to  
11 discuss any real changes.

12 On the issue, for example,  
13 of education, which George mentioned earlier, I don't know,  
14 it seems to me that somehow, we're expected to somehow  
15 make the existing programs and services work, and in my  
16 opinion, unless the policy development is in place for  
17 the Innu to--so they can get their hands on policy  
18 development, nothing really changes, because all you do  
19 is accept the delegated authority from the federal or the  
20 provincial governments and all you do is run their programs  
21 and services. There's no real change.

22 I hope, in my own  
23 lifetime--as Mary said, I'm very young, or maybe she's  
24 old--I don't know which it is--but I hope, in my own  
25 lifetime, and I know George and Katie and the rest feel

StenoTran



135

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 this way, that we don't continue to fight. Nobody likes  
2 fighting for the rest of their lives, because at some point  
3 life is meant to be lived to the fullest extent possible.

4 And I hope that through the negotiations through federal  
5 government and the provincial government, that we'll be  
6 able to find a place for the Innu people to find a home,  
7 a place where we can belong, where we can develop policies  
8 and pass laws that affect our people rather than being  
9 told what to do all the time.

10 We're not subordinates to  
11 the federal and provincial governments, and I think that  
12 the Royal Commission should make that very clear. The  
13 Innu people are not subordinates to the federal and  
14 provincial governments, that things need to change, that  
15 the Innu people themselves need to make decisions affecting  
16 everything in their lives, and that includes land, social  
17 services, policy development. How to, for example, how  
18 to apprehend kids, how to develop education programs.

19 I was telling Mary earlier  
20 that there's so much pretending that happens in government,  
21 because everything is segmented into the social services,  
22 the education department and many other departments that  
23 are available or that are present, and everybody is  
24 supposed to kick in their own little systems when something  
25 takes place, and that makes it very difficult for us.

StenoTran

136

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 For example, we have cases in Sheshatshiu, for example,  
2 there's sexual abuse, and what happens when a child  
3 discloses of sexual abuse, the whole system takes off on  
4 its own. By law, the councils are required to tell social  
5 services, social services have to tell the RCMP, RCMP  
6 involve the Crown, the judges, and then the jury, and then  
7 whomever. And then you have a system where one party has  
8 to win. It's either the victim or the perpetrator. The  
9 system is not designed so that both parties win, and I  
10 think that's the aim that we have to focus on. We have  
11 to find a way where both parties can win, the perpetrator  
12 and the victim, because we're all caught in the same system.

13 As Ben said earlier, we're just caught in this wave that's  
14 happening, and all we can do is move forward with no past  
15 and nothing to really change the future, because the  
16 machinery that's happening is moving and it's very strong.

17 See, in my own way, I think  
18 what needs to happen is that when a sexual abuse case is  
19 put forward, what should be happening, for example, is  
20 that the child should be fully aware of the difficulties  
21 of the court process. He or she should be aware of the  
22 cross-examination, the publicity, the possible shame that  
23 he or she could feel in the community. That should be  
24 all put forward. And we should say O.K., but maybe there's  
25 another way. Maybe we can bring both parties into a system

StenoTran

137

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 where we can bring them to treatment centres rather than  
2 involving the authorities all the time. Maybe there's  
3 a way of having both parties win, rather than having a  
4 victim or the perpetrator win, depending on what the court  
5 decides or feels that day. It's stuff like this that I  
6 think makes it very difficult for us to make real change,  
7 because everything from the federal and provincial  
8 government is legislated, which affects us down the line.

9

10 Last year, we had a case  
11 of a traditional adoption taking place in our community.  
12 Social Services found out about it, and they said you  
13 can't have that, we have to be involved in the adoption.

14 We were alerted to the situation and got involved.  
15 Eventually the press was involved, the Premier was  
16 involved, the Minister was involved, and then eventually  
17 we had a meeting with the director of child welfare. He  
18 sat across the table from us and essentially told us all  
19 children in this province come under his jurisdiction.  
20 People from the community that were at that meeting simply  
21 said look, how is it possible that a Newfoundlander can  
22 make decisions for an Innu child. How would you feel if  
23 we made decisions for your child in St. John's, and we  
24 don't know anything about your children?

25

This is, in my opinion,

StenoTran

138

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 what self-government is about. We have to have some faith  
2 and trust in ourselves, so that we can develop a system  
3 where we can have--where we don't develop a system where  
4 there's adversarial roles, but we develop a system where  
5 everybody in the community wins.

6 I know George and Prody  
7 (PH) and Katie have been talking about family treatment  
8 centres at Border Beacon, but as far as I know there's  
9 nowhere else in Canada that does that. But that should  
10 be a right for us to develop something like that, because  
11 we realize that it's not only the kids that are affected,  
12 it's the parents, it's everybody in that family. So if  
13 you take just the father, then you're still stuck with  
14 the mother and child, so what you're doing is developing  
15 a situation where ten years down the road the child is  
16 in a similar situation.

17 So we have to look at things  
18 in a holistic way and deal with it in that manner. Because  
19 what's happening right now is that everything is segmented.  
20 Social Services kicks in for this, the Department of  
21 Education kicks in for that, or the RCMP takes care of  
22 this, but none of them know what they're doing, because  
23 they don't talk. It's not a co-ordinated effort, which  
24 makes it very frustrating if you're on the other side of  
25 the fence, because you see your life is being controlled

StenoTran

139

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 by the Premier and by the Prime Minister and their  
2 designates, and you have no control over that.

3 My parents were the first  
4 ones that made the transition from the nomadic way of life  
5 to a community way of life. My father, in the '50s, was  
6 sent out to Mount Cashel. He doesn't talk about it, and  
7 there's probably a lot of stuff that he experienced and  
8 a lot of things that have come out later on from the Mount  
9 Cashel case. But who's going to take--what do they call  
10 it--accountability or responsibility for that?

11 Certainly, the church was involved, and were paid by the  
12 government to send him out there. And of course, he became  
13 an alcoholic, I became an alcoholic, the whole family  
14 became alcoholics, and my parents now are in Windsor,  
15 Ontario, trying to deal with their problems, and they're  
16 coming home next week. And I'm very proud of that. See,  
17 I'm not ashamed to say I'm an alcoholic, because I'm  
18 grateful that I realize that I've got a problem, and that  
19 it's a problem that I've got to deal with. And that's  
20 the kind of reality that I'm talking about when I say that  
21 we have to deal with that. We have to take the facts and  
22 build upon what we've got. And in order for us to take  
23 a holistic approach, we have to look at the church, we  
24 have to look at education, we have to look at Social  
25 Services, we have to look at the RCMP, we have to look

StenoTran

140

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 at governments, we have to look at their policies,  
2 everything. We can't pretend anymore and deal with  
3 problems in a segmented approach.

4 I think I've covered quite  
5 a lot of area, but I tend sometimes to cut myself in my  
6 own thoughts and leave the other half half said, but I  
7 hope I didn't at this round. That would be my  
8 presentation. I hope you understand the kind of  
9 self-government that I'm talking about, and I think that  
10 for all the things that I've just talked about, for the  
11 changes to happen, it has to be a holistic approach, and  
12 that essentially involved self-government, and people,  
13 as a nation, to make laws, rather than laws being made  
14 in Ottawa or St. John's, which has no relevance to us.  
15 They have to be made from the people. Thank you.

**CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

16  
17 Thank you.

**COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

18  
19 I just want to thank you all for coming from Sheshatshiu.  
20 I know it is not so far away, but it is further away than  
21 being here locally, so we would like to thank you for coming  
22 here to make your presentation.

23 When you were talking,  
24 there's two questions that occurred to me. I think that  
25 when we've come to Labrador generally, we've heard a lot

StenoTran



141

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 about-- especially from the men, and they acknowledge,  
2 for example, that there are alcohol problems, that there  
3 are substance abuse problems, but one of the things that  
4 we haven't heard a lot about is, for example, child sexual  
5 abuse, incest, the spousal assault, and I'm wondering,  
6 what is the extent of that problem in your communities?  
7 What is being done about it? Is it being acknowledged?  
8 Does it exist? And what are the male leaders doing about  
9 those kinds of issues, or do they feel that they have a  
10 responsibility to address those issues?

11 **PETER PENASHUE:** I think  
12 all of us have a responsibility, be it leadership, be it  
13 mothers, be it children, I think everybody has a  
14 responsibility to be involved. But my philosophy is that  
15 either it be sexual abuse, either it be family violence,  
16 either it be family violence, either it be alcoholism,  
17 either it be gas sniffing, it really doesn't matter. The  
18 point is that you have a problem and to deal with that  
19 problem, you have to go back to your childhood, and it's  
20 a very painful process that one endeavours on that trip.  
21 For me, when I went to a treatment centre, it's a very  
22 painful process to have to look at your childhood and have  
23 to deal with all those negative aspects of your life.

24 So I think the approach  
25 that Katie and George and Prody and others--David was

StenoTran

142

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 involved at that time--have taken, and that is to start  
2 looking at a treatment centre here in the community, or  
3 between here and Sheshatshiu, which is Border Beacon, and  
4 to start developing a program for the families and deal  
5 with it in a holistic approach. You start--see, it's very  
6 difficult, again, if we start talking about sexual abuse,  
7 family violence, wife battering, suicides, again, we're  
8 doing the same thing as the government is doing. We're  
9 segmenting everything else. Why not take a problem as  
10 a problem and treat it as a problem?

11 For example, the way the  
12 government approaches things, they say O.K., this will  
13 be a family abuse program, this will be a wife-battering  
14 program, this will be whatever, or solvent abuse program.

15 And that's not my philosophy. My philosophy is that a  
16 problem, be it family, sexual abuse or what have you, is  
17 a problem, and why not deal with it as a problem and deal  
18 with it in that way. So what you do is you bring in the  
19 families or individuals to start dealing with the history,  
20 with the past, because all of us are born good, we just  
21 become bad. We aren't born bad. And if we take the  
22 approach that we're born good and started running into  
23 problems, be it very oppressive families.

24 Like Ben mentioned earlier, which is  
25 very true, what has happened in our communities, the

StenoTran

143

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 oppression and the colonialism and the negative impacts  
2 of that have turned inwards. Innu people have never fought  
3 the government, but they turn that violence amongst  
4 themselves. You know, they beat up their wives, they beat  
5 up their children, because they're ashamed to beat up--or  
6 to confront the governments that make the policies that  
7 drives them crazy up here. Because it's everything: the  
8 church, the education system, the government policies.  
9 For example, you have independent people who make all the  
10 decisions for life suddenly plunked into a community, and  
11 everything else is designed and segmented in their lives.

12 For example, when you're hungry, you go to Social  
13 Services. When you have problems with family issues, you  
14 go to Social Services or the RCMP. People start changing  
15 you up here, and that's what they refer to as colonialist  
16 mentality, because people start changing in their minds  
17 about how to approach things.

18 So I think we have to have  
19 a holistic approach, and we can't segment everything the  
20 way government does. The way government does, as I've  
21 said, is they prefer to segment everything, to put  
22 everything in these little pockets. You can't do that.

23 You have to take a problem as a problem. We have to move  
24 away from this idea that one is wrong and the other one  
25 is right. We have to deal with it as a problem and approach

StenoTran

144

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 it from that, because otherwise we're continuing to fight  
2 like governments, one is right and one is wrong. We have  
3 to stop doing that. We have to start looking at the future,  
4 and everybody to be dealt with fairly and honourably,  
5 because we all have to come out of it.

6 **CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**  
7 Recently, there was a referendum in the country, a vote  
8 on the constitutional package, and I heard that the Innu  
9 made some statements after there was a No vote in the  
10 country on that. I was wondering, what was your position  
11 on the package? Did you feel that it was an honourable  
12 agreement? Were you in support of it?

13 **PETER PENASHUE:** Well, was  
14 it honourable to accommodate everybody, in terms of  
15 Aboriginal people in Canada? I don't think it was. But  
16 for us, we saw an opportunity there for governments to  
17 start treating the Innu people as a people, and that there  
18 was a very strong possibility that there was going to be  
19 a third order of government, and that's something that  
20 I personally liked. And because we're not under treaties,  
21 we're not under reservations, we're not under the Indian  
22 Act, it left the door wide open for us. Because now the  
23 Charlottetown Accord is dead and gone and buried, I'm not  
24 sure what--I guess the most positive thing that came out  
25 of the Charlottetown Accord is that we planted the seed

StenoTran

145

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 in people's minds, in the Canadian minds, that they have  
2 to start thinking in the manner of peoples, that Aboriginal  
3 people are peoples. That they have to start looking in  
4 the way of setting up a process where Aboriginal people  
5 will be a third order of government, meaning that they  
6 would have their own authority to set laws, regulations,  
7 what have you, for their own people. We don't want to  
8 make laws for people in St. John's, because we don't know  
9 what their culture and lifestyle is. The same way should  
10 apply. St. John's should not make laws for our people,  
11 because they have no idea who we are.

12

**CO-CHAIR GEORGES ERASMUS:**

13 Good. Thank you.

14

**GORDON WARNER:** Mennonite

15 Central Committee has been invited to Davis Inlet for a  
16 number of years now. I personally have been invited here  
17 by the band as a construction consultant, and my reference  
18 is to back up what Chief Katie was saying this morning  
19 about relocation. You seemed interested, Georges, in  
20 particular, on relocation.

21

22 The relocation isn't just  
23 something these people have gone out and said we want to  
24 move here. I've researched, we had a village architect  
25 from MCC here this spring for two months, and we went over  
the area extensively. I've been in construction for--from

StenoTran

146

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 the colour of my beard, I've been in it for a little while.  
2 There is not an engineer in this province or in Canada  
3 that could have come here and chosen a better site for  
4 relocation. We've gone through the site many times, and  
5 I've been over there a lot, and it's just absolutely an  
6 excellent spot for relocation. There was a lot of wisdom  
7 by these people. It's not chosen by--these people chose  
8 this place, and they chose it with a great deal of wisdom,  
9 believe me. They don't only have an abundance of water,  
10 they have their own power project, if they so desire to  
11 pursue that. I've looked that area over, and they can  
12 have their own power system. They don't have to rely on  
13 diesel generators or anything like that, and there's enough  
14 power there.

Getting back to Davis

15  
16 Inlet, where we're situated here right now, we cannot build  
17 a home here that would have anything below ground level,  
18 because the ground is so saturated from this point to the  
19 end of the village that I've had houses where half the  
20 house has been going up, half of it has been sinking,  
21 throughout this summer. I don't have to tell the people  
22 here that. They know it. They're living in these  
23 conditions.

24 Besides that, we say, in  
25 Davis Inlet, that the water is bad. That's true. The

StenoTran





148

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 the presenters that took the time to present to us, both  
2 from this community and from others. We will finish our  
3 second round of hearings by the end of next week, and then  
4 the Commission will be working on a document which we've  
5 already started, which we hope to use in the next round  
6 of hearings. The kinds of solutions we've been hearing  
7 from people in this round will be used in that document,  
8 and we will be publishing a number of documents early in  
9 the new year.

10 We had a meeting in  
11 Edmonton last June on issues that are important to  
12 Aboriginal people living in large cities. We will be  
13 publishing something from that meeting soon. Last week,  
14 we had a meeting in Ottawa. We brought together lawyers  
15 and judges and Aboriginal people from across the country  
16 that are involved in different kinds of justice projects.

17 A number of the people are going back to running their  
18 own tribal justice in different parts of Canada. They  
19 all presented to us. We had a number of projects explained  
20 to us. We also had people from the United States, the  
21 Dene from the United States, the Navaho, and the Supreme  
22 Court judge explained their situation to us.

23 So we will be publishing  
24 a report from that meeting, which will be very important,  
25 we think, in helping us come up with some ideas on

StenoTran



150

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 will be coming out with quite a few documents. This time  
2 around we used the video, and it's likely that we will  
3 come out with more videos, and certainly with our final  
4 report, we will be coming out with a video, along with  
5 the written version of it.

6 I hope that some of you have  
7 been leaving your names with us, because we want to be  
8 mailing out the material that we're publishing to people  
9 as we're going along, and particularly people that have  
10 been coming to our meetings, so that they follow what we're  
11 doing.

12 The process that we're  
13 taking in these hearings and our overall work is that the  
14 answers are in the communities already, and we're trying  
15 to pull them out through our hearings, and we're trying  
16 to use the documents that we publish to help us in that.

17 At some point, we will be publishing models, probably,  
18 of self-government, and maybe models of tribal justice.

19 Certainly, in the round table report, you will see already  
20 some initiatives, some projects, that are being done in  
21 different parts of the country. We would like responses  
22 from people on those documents that we publish. We want  
23 to know if people think those projects are in the right  
24 direction and think those models are going in the right  
25 direction. It's quite important for us to hear from both

StenoTran

151

December 1, 1992

Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples

1 Native and non-Native people in Canada.

2 So with that, I just want  
3 to thank everybody for participating, and thank the youth  
4 committee for organizing lunch for us, and I'll have Mary  
5 do the closing comments before we have our final prayer.

6 **COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:**

7 Well, first of all, it's an honour for me and a privilege  
8 to be in Davis Inlet. Although I spent my earlier years  
9 in Labrador, I can truly say that I've never known so much  
10 about the Innu in Davis Inlet as I've learned today.

11 I would like to thank the  
12 public, the Davis Inlet public, for being so patient, for  
13 staying here, for listening, and particularly to the  
14 unilingual Innu-eimun speakers, because I know it's really  
15 a very long day to have the earphones stuck in your ear  
16 all day.

17 I would like to thank  
18 Damien Benuen, who was our local community co-ordinator,  
19 for helping us to organize this meeting. I would like  
20 to thank David Nui, the Commissioner of the Day and the  
21 moderator, and Father Fred Maggee for allowing us to use  
22 this meeting room, to use this church, and for preparing  
23 coffee and tea and letting us use the photocopier, and  
24 to Philip Rich for saying the opening prayer, and to you,  
25 Etienne Pastiwet, the interpreter. I must be in Labrador

StenoTran

152

**December 1, 1992****Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

1 where people laugh at anything, eh? And Conrad Lutes,  
2 who is with CBC, the Okalakatiget Society staff, Margaret  
3 Sagagiak, Boas Millie and Toby Pijogge, and to our staff  
4 and the court reporter and the sound system person. Thank  
5 you all very much. Nuc oh mik (PH)  
6 --- Whereupon the hearing is adjourned at 1642 hours  
7

StenoTran