

A Conversation after Dinner

GORDON F. GIBSON AND SATSAN (CHIEF HERB GEORGE)

Excerpts from presentations by Gordon Gibson, columnist and Senior Fellow in Canadian Studies, The Fraser Institute, and Satsan (Chief Herb George) from a conference dinner in May 1999.

Gordon Gibson

I cannot bring to this subject the distinguished lineage of Satsan and the titles he holds. All I can say is that he is still a vigorous young man. I'm an elder. Unfortunately elders don't get much respect in my society.

This is actually my third conversation him, and my second public one. The private one happened after a meeting of the Progressive Democratic Alliance of British Columbia, which was Gordon Wilson's former political party. I was there in my capacity as a *Globe and Mail* columnist. I should describe in passing what a wonderful thing it is to be a political columnist. Your job is to sit in comfort, high up in the bleachers, and watch the politicians stabbing each other and drawing blood. At regular intervals, it is your job to rush onto the field and stab the wounded yourself.

Anyway, at the time of that event, I was not involved in aboriginal writings at all. I have to say that I entered the field in part because of

that presentation, which I admired so much. Following the talk, there was a fortuitous event. Satsan was waiting for a cab to go downtown. I happened to have my car there and we had a long, long talk on the way downtown, and I developed a very high regard for him as a leader.

So I have been thinking of these things since, and thinking about why Canadians have been having so much difficulty with aboriginal/non-aboriginal relationships over the years. And I'm almost wondering if it's a bit like Einstein's theory of relativity: that the same events look different to different people, to different observers in different conditions. Einstein found a way to pull those things together. We haven't done that yet.

There are at least two views of native Indians among Canadians. One is that there are 600,000 native individuals in Canada, of 30 million Canadians and six billion people in the world. The other view is that there is a small number of collectivities, and what is important is the collectivity rather than the individual. I want to come back to this as being one of the central questions that all of us have to work with here.

I want to give my paper on how we got to where we are, and then I want to say a little bit about where we might be going, and then we'll hear from Satsan.

The first observation I have to make will be no surprise to the collection of experts and concerned people here, and that is that history is very, very important. Mackenzie King used to say some countries have too much history and not enough geography. I think a great many Indian groups would say they have exactly the same problem. They're looking for more geography. But most Canadians don't understand the history. They don't understand how people were dispossessed across this continent as an act of government policy for a hundred years and more. They don't understand the importance of 1867, when the policy of the British colonial administration with respect to the Indian people was put into the Constitution, and the words, the federal government being responsible for "Indians and lands reserved for the Indians," were added as Section 91.24.

1867 was a time that was racist and sexist. Indians were discriminated against, women were discriminated against, and the Chinese were discriminated against, among others, particularly in my province of British Columbia. The Chinese people and the female people were not put into the Constitution. And 125 years later, their estate has changed remarkably. But for the Indian people, the requirements of our Constitution have not just argued for but *required* a constant institutionalization, a constant reinforcement of the difference between Indian Canadians and the rest of us. With all other people in Canada, and with the excep-

tion of language that has been troublesome in its own right, we tended to focus on the things that we have in common rather than the things that divide us. That has been an important part of our history.

In the 1950s, we saw a break with the past. We saw the growth of a sense of guilt, of wrong in the non-aboriginal society that became the spur to action in many areas. We saw the enfranchisement, the phase-out of the residential schools, a lot more money. In 1969, we saw the first serious government reassessment of aboriginal/non-aboriginal relations since Confederation in the Trudeau-Chrétien White Paper, which of course was rejected decisively by the Indian leadership of the time and by their associates and traditionalists. In my opinion, that was an opportunity lost. It was not an assimilationist document but rather an individualistic document. Be that as it may, that's part of history. It was not a central part of the Trudeau government's thrust, and therefore it was abandoned when trouble arose.

Since then, we have backed into the future, with no well-articulated policy. Things have been driven by events, by the media, by the latest academic writing. What has happened is that differences among us have been reinforced and reinforced. This has reached its full flowering in the *Nisga'a* treaty.

So here we are. The usefulness of history is to understand where we've all come from and to underpin the existing patterns or differences, for better or for worse. One must understand history to understand aboriginal rights. Too few Canadians have that understanding. That leads to my second observation. As a result of history and law and the Supreme Court of Canada, some, perhaps most, aboriginal rights are not well understood, at least in concept.

Quantum is another question. *Delgamuukw*, for example, put down very few markers in terms of quantum: what compensation means; how much Indian title there really is in British Columbia; and so on. We may well need more litigation for that. But the concepts are there. And those defined rights, at least as I analyze it, mostly relate to property. By that I mean the right to use property, to take natural resources, property rights in almost full title, defined treaty rights, rights to compensation for unlawful infringement, which I think we're going to hear a lot more about in the future. These are all constitutionally protected rights under Section 35.

The dollars may be difficult for people to swallow but they should not bother anyone in concept. Even the dollars really fade into the background when you consider the amount of money that is going to have to be spent here anyway. Furthermore, these property-type rights are all clearly heritable, and therefore are clearly specific to individuals, or to collectivities of individuals. A very important question is whether

the collectivity or the individual administers these properties and matter of right. But that is a second-order question that is up to the owners of the property to answer.

The third observation I would make, however, is that history may not be the best guide to the future. We must understand history, we must reconcile with history, and those are some of the most difficult parts we're going through now. We have to regard history as a sanctuary and not as a prison. We have to regard it as something we build on, and we must be prepared to transcend history. Talking about the future, we move away from the idea of rights and we move squarely into issues of governance, and the individual and the collective.

How does this interact with *Delgamuukw*? I'll give you cases in British Columbia, two treaties under negotiation. One of them, the *Nisga'a* treaty, would constitutionalize a new governance model. It is highly controversial, mostly because of that governance package. The *Sechelt* treaty is a similar settlement in terms of land, cash, and after giving effect to the semi-urban versus rural characteristic. The *Sechelt* treaty is moving along quietly, relatively quickly, with no controversy. What we have here is a form of government that is municipal-plus, but *delegated* legislation that has been working for 10 years. People are comfortable with it. Governance, I would suggest to you, is going to be the central issue of aboriginal-non-aboriginal discussions over the next few years.

So, we get into the slippery concept of the inherent right to self-government. What does this mean? On the face of it, this is something that is just good and true and beautiful. But without specifics, I would argue, it is a platitude. Clearly, individuals are entitled to their own self-government. "I'm the boss of my own body," my teenage kids say to me when I tell them not to smoke. But that's an individual right. When you get beyond that, where does the inherent right to self-government lie? With people who live in Canada, or people who live in British Columbia, or people who live in Vancouver, or the Catholics living in Vancouver, or the Indo-Canadians living in Richmond, or the Shaughnessy Heights Property Owners' Association? It's much more difficult.

Clearly, the answer is that there are different entitlements to government at these various levels. But how do you draw the lines? All have claims, and the concept can't be discussed really without details, such as whether there is there full consent of the government. What is the scale of the operations? What are the mobility rights and the disincentives to mobility in and out of the area of the government? The federal government clearly has a vision in this regard, which was developed for the *Nisga'a* treaty. That vision is, I'm convinced, to be replicated if they can do it based on one agreement that Indian Affairs Min-

ister [Jane] Stewart made with the Treaty 8 tribal council in northern Alberta. In other parts of the country, that agenda remains unclear.

Now, when you start to talk about governance, I guess the first question involves the law. I am not a lawyer. But is there an aboriginal right to governance? In a Lincolnesque phrase: of aborigines, by aborigines, for aborigines? The courts have not pronounced, but the communal nature of property of aboriginal title requires an administrative mechanism. I would argue that it only requires a society or a cooperative type administrative organization, rather than a full-blown government. What the Supreme Court has in mind, of course, we don't know. The Liberal Party says "yes," but I don't think there's much content in their "yes," with the exception of the actual Indian Affairs department. Most Canadians, I think, are very troubled by the idea. Not by the idea that different Canadians should be different. People are perfectly tolerant nowadays of the Hutterite communities in Alberta, though they weren't a generation ago. And the Hutterites are probably more different from the mainstream Canadians than the people on the *Nisga'a* lands, for example. It's not a question of difference *per se.*; it's a question of a different approach, of different entitlements, that instinctively bothers Canadians.

But, the question we have to address is what form of government, consistent with Canadian federalism and with Canadian values, can best meet the needs of the people in Area X? Area X being Indian land. And a number of subsidiary questions arise. Will this government have to do with all of the people in Area X, or only status Indians or aborigines in Area X? The government of Canada in the *Nisga'a* treaty says only the latter. But if it doesn't include all of the people in Area X, do the powers of the government have to be modified? And perhaps lessened?

A third question: how do we address these issues of government in terms of practical matters, like subsidiarity; costs and efficiency; capacity; human and financial, external controls? There are external controls over most levels of government in Canada. The federal government is controlled by the courts and the constitution; the province is the same; the municipality by the province; and so on. So, how should that work?

We have to worry about democratic accountability of small governments with large powers. This is not a theoretical problem. This is a problem you can see in existence in different parts of the country, whereby an administration of a small government that not only has municipal-type powers, but has the right to grant and withhold housing, employment, perhaps access to higher education. You may get a situation where the elite controls the people, rather than the people controlling the elite. It's a question that has to be answered in each case. And

when and if the government is ethnic-based rather than territorially based, what is to be the position of off-reserve or off-lands aborigines?

In a recent and very important Supreme Court ruling, the *Corbière* case, the Supreme Court said Section 77.1 of the *Indian Act* is not constitutional because it denies the vote to band members off the reserve. The *Nisga'a* solution also discriminates against off-reserve people. The majority of *Nisga'a* who live off reserve have only about 10 percent of the legislative body's members. Will this be considered good enough? We do not know because the courts haven't pronounced whether or not it is.

The bottom line in all of this is the practical question of designing governmental arrangements to give the best services to citizens with resources that are always limited. Intimately entwined with all of the above is the relationship of the individual and the collective. I pose these philosophical questions without attempting to answer them right now. Indian collectivities, limited membership groups, are inherently closed organizations, like trade unions or co-operatives. All other Canadian governance collectivities are open, in the sense of residence being the qualification, at least a minimum qualification.

So the first philosophical question is this: is a closed society an appropriate unit for general governance? It is clearly an appropriate unit for asset management, or for the administration of lands and so on. Is it right for general governance?

The second question is pretty fundamental: do collectivities have any freestanding value beyond their total value to the individuals that make them up? Some people say "yes," they do. Some say aboriginal culture is, in and of itself, important and something outsiders should be prepared to support. Others say that preservation of this option for future generations is important. I still pose it as a question.

Philosophical question number three: should decision-making capacity in a collective, if that's the way the collective decides it's going, be predominantly individual-based, which calls for such things as private property, and private enterprise, and minimal law and regulation? Or, is it to be predominantly in the hands of the collective elite, however chosen?

Philosophical question number four: the legal and constitutional and discriminatory restraints placed on aboriginal people over the years have fostered, have indeed enforced, a collective arrangement. Is that the right route for the future?

And finally: do outsiders by way of sanctioning, indeed imposing, constitutional and entrenched governance procedures have any right to inflict these procedures as a matter of law on generations yet unborn?

I'm not pretending I have the answer to any of these questions. But I think they are questions that must be asked. Governments up until

now have not encouraged debate on fundamental issues of this kind. That is not a favour to anyone, as we're seeing, given the reaction to the *Nisga'a* treaty in my province. The *Nisga'a* treaty, according to polls, is currently supported by 25 percent of British Columbians; opposed by 25 percent; and undecided by 50 percent.

Now, think about this: this is a treaty that should have been a joyous event, a treaty which after 120 years of pretty bad treatment of the *Nisga'a* people, who persisted over all those years, finally came to what was said to be an honourable arrangement. Why is it that the people of British Columbia have such ambivalence about this deal? And I suggest it comes down to governments having improperly, or inadequately, made sure there was a dialogue among British Columbians and among Canadians on these issues. So I think we all have a job to do. Satsan is a big voice in this dialogue, and a very constructive one. I look forward to what he's going to say.

Satsan (Chief Herb George)

Thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in your conference. I decided I would do something a little different this time: I want to try to put my words into a context of stories. I think that these stories will tell you a lot.

I want to mention that I appreciate the opportunity to sit beside my friend Gordon. When I first met him, it was not under the best of circumstances. I attacked him. [Laughter] He was there trying to get material for his story on the Progressive Democratic Alliance, which had invited me to be a keynote speaker. I noticed him sitting there. I had also been reading his column. I went at him to try to make the point that, 'you know, for the life of me, I can't understand the columns you write because they are based on opinions that you hold about aboriginal issues. And although I read them, and reread them, I still don't get where you're coming from. And maybe we should sit down and talk about that.' We had that opportunity. I was quite surprised, pleasantly surprised, to learn that even though people come to an issue from opposite extremes, when we had an opportunity to sit down, respecting one another and listening to one another, we can arrive at an understanding. We can realize that a lot of the issues that seem to set us apart, we agree to in common. When you get right down to it, the things that we have which create a difference between us aren't all that big, and aren't all that difficult to overcome. I believe that the reason

we could have that kind of a relationship is simply because you go in there with an open mind. You go in there willing to listen, willing to change your point of view and the opinion that you hold. I think it takes a lot of courage to do that, and I respect that a lot.

The point I wanted to raise is that if we could take that same kind of energy, that same kind of passion that we brought to the battlefield, to try to find the solution and the resolution, and reconciliation, we could certainly do it. Without question, I believe.

[Holds up an article and quotes from it] "*Fraser's Formula for Prosperity: Small Government with Economic Freedom.*" That's my speech tonight. Rather than write one, I thought I'd borrow one "*A new study shows government policy a key growth factor.*"

"What's basically needed for success," says Mr. [Michael] Walker, "is a reasonable ability to engage in trade and keep the majority of the income earned. Further than economic rights are fundamental rights. They are a prerequisite for the economic growth, and for broader human development. The least free countries score poorly on United Nations Human Development Index. The most free score highly."

To prepare myself today, I set up a meeting with Indian Affairs—to talk about policy and to get myself into a state of mind of rage. I found something very, very interesting. I didn't get into a rage. I didn't even get upset. Even coming here and listening to the opposition—I call [them] the Last of the Indian Fighters. They are always the same guys. I've come to know a lot of these guys, and I was sitting there talking to [one participant] and realized that, man alive, it wasn't too long ago I wouldn't have given him the time of day. I would have sat over there. But I find that through the opportunity of sitting down, and getting to know one another, that way down deep we're all good people.

But I don't want to talk about the position of *Delgamuukw* itself, or the law, or the Constitution. I spent 24 years of my life working on *Delgamuukw*, and I want to talk about why someone would do such a foolish thing. Why give a fourth of your life away, seeing it's for an endless pursuit?

The whole point of it goes back to my grandfather's time. My grandfather appeared before the *McKinnon Commission*, in 1911 and 1913 in our area. They came along after the reserves had already been established, and their job was to cut off lands, to reduce the size of the reserves that were originally set up. Our people made representation to the Commission. Our grandfather was there, and he said: "We don't want to talk about reserve lands. Who are you to give us our own land? And who are you to press in these little places and fence us in? You know, we're like animals in a cage when you do that to us. We want to talk about continuing to live on our lands, and how we will share it

with you. We don't want to talk about reserves." But unfortunately, that was the case. They were there to talk about reserves, and to put our people on reserves.

Between the time of my grandfather and my young life on a reserve, the spirit of our society has been turned upside down. I believe that I grew up during the worst upheaval our society has ever known. What that was, was the transition between a people who could take care of themselves and a people who are almost wholly dependent upon government transfer arrangements for every aspect of their lives. Those very things that some members of Canadian society get so uptight about—they get free housing, they get free education, they get free health, free this, free everything—without taking into account, or taking the time to educate themselves about how this came about, the devastating effect that it's had on our community, and on our people. Nobody should have to go through that. And I don't think anybody could understand it unless you do.

It was a terrible, terrible thing to grow up in, and to watch. As a result of that, I became a very, very angry person. Very, very angry. I spent all my time in the library of the residential school, reading about South Africa, India, South America, and about different movements for independence and freedom. I learned at an early age that I was not free, that somebody had imprisoned me, and took everything away. They were trying to make me become like my parents who had succumbed to that. And I made a decision, early on, that that will never happen, I will never accept that. Never. And as a result I became very, very angry.

After university, I spent all my time fighting with the profs, arguing. I went to law school, and I spent all my time fighting with the students. And every bloody day there was a line-up to debate with me about aboriginal rights. I got so fed up one day I told them: "Why don't you guys just all f*** off and leave me alone?"

The point of this is that you come from something like that, and through your history you know where you came from, and you know what you had, and you know how you lived. You know what lands are yours, the rights that you have. You know what government that you have. All of a sudden you're on a reserve, and you're forced to govern yourself through the *Indian Act* which, I submit, tried to force on us individual rights. But we as a collective refused to accept that, and we maintain [our collective rights] to this day. Not because we think that it's any better than individual rights, but because that's what we grew up with, that's what we know. That's a part of our history. That's who we are.

Given that, I don't think that anybody else should be so arrogant as to tell us that we should be like them, and that we should adopt

those things that they hold dear to them, the values that have, the principles that they have, simply because it's theirs.

Which brings me to my second story.

During *Delgamuukw*, as you can imagine, it was a very, very adversarial relationship between the Wet'suwet'en and the Gitksan and the surrounding municipalities, because they were in court challenging the status quo as a whole, challenging everything. And certainly there was opposition to that, heavy opposition to it. But things change. In one situation in Smithers, I was at a meeting that the Reform Party hijacked and took control of. They were, in my view, misleading the people about the whole notion of self-government, saying that we're going to create independent, sovereign states within Canada. I was only one of two aboriginal people in that building. When I got up to raise a question, I was shouted down. You'll apologize for my language, but I'm going to use it, because this is what was said: "Sit down you f***in' welfare bum ... F*** you welfare bum." Just a chorus of it. And I stood up there and I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to respond. So I started to encourage them. "Come on! Let's go!" I kept getting louder, and they got louder, and louder, and louder, and they realized the foolishness of it all, and settled down to almost silence, like we have right now. And I said: "Good for you. It's good for you to vent and get it off your chest. Because you still have to deal with me. I'm not going away. I'm still going to be here. I'm not afraid of you. It doesn't scare me to come in here to deal with you."

After that there were some questions about governance. I got up again to answer, and this time there was more respect from the people there. When I finished, they were almost going to start to clap, and they realized it, and got a hold of themselves.

[Laughter]

But the problem with that was that there was just a complete misunderstanding. There was no dialogue between us and them. Just total opposition from one side to the other.

So, from that incident we realized that we needed to get out and do some work, promote an understanding between the people who live there, and we started to do that. One evening I was doing some work in Smithers again, in front of a crowd of people, and the issue was governance and the problem with it. The point of view of the person who was questioning me on it was that he couldn't agree that we should govern ourselves with a system that, in his view, was feudal in nature. He characterized our chiefs as feudal lords, because that's all he knows about the feudal system. He doesn't know anything else. I tried to explain to him that that's furthest from the truth, because, in fact, our system is based upon accountability. We never heard of this word democratic un-

til you brought it along. The way it works is this: I am from the Frog Clan, and when my clan is doing our business, the other clans come in and take their seats, and they are the witnesses to the business being done. Everybody knows about it. Everybody participates in it. Before we bring this forward, we have to deal with our own membership, our own clan membership, to reach consensus amongst ourselves. We can't bring this forward on our own as chiefs, because if we do, we'd never survive. You can't be successful because your people won't support you. Often you have to give up your name. And when we bring white people into that, show them the way it works, they are suitable impressed.

I was explaining it to this guy, and he didn't really agree with me, but we talked about the need to educate the greater community. So we thought, well, how can we do that? I suggested to him: "Why don't we use the town council, you know, we have a good relationship with the municipalities, we could get together and utilize the town council chambers and the local community hall, and we could organize from there." And this guy said: "Not a chance. That'll never work." I said: "Why?" He said: "Well, everybody knows they're all corrupt. You elect them, and never hear from them again. They go about, and they just do whatever they want to do. They don't talk to us." And I said: "Well, that's really interesting. What about maybe the regional district?" He said: "Well, they're just as bad. They're elected too, and it's the same thing. They're a bunch of crooks." I said: "Well, why don't they talk to you guys?" He said: "Well that's just the way it's always been. That's the nature of the system. When you elect people, whether it's the municipalities, whether it's provincial government, federal government, regional districts, we never hear from them again. They just can't be trusted." So I said: "Well, that's *really* interesting. Because here you are telling me that you can't agree or support us governing ourselves the way we know how, and that we should adopt your system because it's based upon democratic principles, and now you're telling me that it's corrupt, and that they don't talk to you? That in fact, you don't have a voice? What's democratic about that? I don't think I want that. I don't think that's for us. We'd have a lot of problems with that. Our people won't be left out."

Again, it points to just a total misunderstanding of the reality of the situation, or the truth of the matter. I think the other problem is that people forget that this whole thing is about people. It's about human beings, of which I am one, like you. And we're not seen that way. Somehow or another we're just a pain in the butt. You know, we're a burden to your society, and a burden to the taxpayer. We're just a burden all around. You wish we would just go away. But we're not. We never have, and we never will. We'll always be here, the way we are.

Which brings me to my third story. We had organized in our area to meet with the town councils, realizing that we have got to deal with issue as a community, as the people who live within the Wet'suwet'en territory, of which there are four municipalities. So we set up meetings with the town council, and we started to have a dialogue, a discussion. What can we do to reconcile the differences? In a very, very serious way. At one meeting, we also invited the regional district. I was told by one of the Smithers councillors that I should be very, very careful because there was going to be an individual there who was totally against anything and everything that I was going to have to say about aboriginal rights or title. As a matter of fact he said: "If you can convince him, you can convince anybody."

So I went to this meeting, and we sat down, and we proceeded to have this discussion, and he spent all his time scowling at me. You know, every time I looked up he was scowling at me. We had a break and I finally said to him: "Excuse me, I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you before," and introduced myself to him. He introduced himself to me, then he said: "Your last name is George?" I said: "That's correct." And he said: "Are you any relation to Felix George?" "Yes, he was my grandfather." He said: "We used to go there with my parents every Sunday, and have Sunday dinner with them, and at the time they lived on Holland Lake," which wasn't a reserve incidentally. That's where my grandparents lived; that's where they were from. We started to talk about that, and he talked about the relationship that they had as people. "Oh my God," he said, "what's happened to us? What's happened to me as a human being? What's happened to me that now I can say 'no' to you, when in the past we had a different relationship?"

So we started to discuss that, and we discussed that several times, at different venues in the municipalities, about the fact that at one time there was a relationship that was based upon mutual recognition and respect between the settlers who came and the Wet'suwet'en people who lived there. And remarkably, he became my friend. This weekend, the Cattlemen's Association had a meeting in Smithers, and he called me to invite me to come. We talked about things that are going on, and his whole reason for being now is to find a way to resolve things, as opposed to just sit in opposition.

I think the lesson in that is that if we can get away from the law, emotion of truth, the fact that you don't understand our government so you can't support it, and try to sit down and deal with each other as human beings, we can get somewhere. You can go a long way to resolving the issues that we have, because than they're personal, they're personal to us. But as long as we have people who are removed from the

community, sitting on one side or the other side of the fence and lobbing grenades at one another, nothing changes for us.

I want to impress upon you that we're talking about human beings, people who have as much right as you do to a healthy economy, and a healthy society. You have no reason why we should be denied that, to use your own words, "on the basis of race." Because that's in fact what has happened, and we need to acknowledge that.

So when I read this article from The Fraser Institute in the [*National Post*], I thought it was very interesting that you should have such strong feelings about your right to a healthy economy. And I thought, "well, if they think that's so important to them, than they should be able to realize the importance of that to us as well." We need to start looking at the things that we have in common, as opposed to the things that we disagree on. But I think that in some instances, both things that we disagree on we'll never agree on. That's possible. Possible to die that way, maybe. But I think it's our responsibility for our young people to come along behind us and clean up the mess that we made.

And speaking of young people, when we look at what we wish for our children in the future I bet we have the same wishes, without a doubt. I want those things for my children too. I don't want them to have to spend their lives fighting in the courts so that they can have some measure of this debt, and some ability to exercise fundamental human rights that the rest of the society takes for granted.

In terms of histories, you look forward to clarification from the courts on many, many different issues. I don't think you need to look any further than looking at myself as I stand here for clarification. I'm a Wet'suwet'en person. Whether I can go in the court and convince them or not doesn't remove the fact that I'm still a Wet'suwet'en person, who has a history, who has a language, who has a homeland that he knows.

We have to step back and realize that it's not about the burden of proof—it's about respect. It's about recognition, and of people. It's about a commitment to one another. It's about a spirit of generosity. It's about realizing that we can live and co-exist together, and that we can share from the bounty of the land, and everything that it has to offer us. And if we could look at that from the point of view of our children, in common, I believe we could have that. I look forward to the day that we can.

Just to close on this last point, I had a very difficult time coming here to do the talk. I'm simply sick and tired of it. I think that was why when I was sitting there meeting with Indian Affairs today I just felt no passion in my soul and in my heart for it. I realized that the only people who are going to change it, are people like myself. And if it takes going

onto the land and just simply taking possession of it, and taking advantage of the uncertainty that exists to bring about the kind of reconciliation that I think we need, then that's what I'm prepared to do. I've reached the point, I think, I'm very close to it, where I can't in all good conscience get up and try to say that the processes that we have in place to dissolve this issue are good ones. They're not. They leave a lot to be desired. If we have 100 per cent of the title interest in our land base, why are we going to give up 95 percent of it to have a relationship? It doesn't make any sense. Why do we have to give up anything? We're not asking you to give up anything. We're not asking you to adopt our government structures. We're not asking you to live on reserves. We're not asking you to depend on transfer arrangements from us to live. So we've got to look at that in that context. Question yourself about what you ask of us, because the standard that you set is simply too high. It's higher than your own society can bear.

We need some compassion here. We need some understanding. We need some commitment for resolution. That is the solution to our differences and the problem that we have. So I thank you for your attention, and I look forward to a good conversation with you.