



**EXCERPT FROM SEPTEMBER 2000  
FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT MEETING**

**Statements made by:**

**Premier Ujjal Dosanjh,  
Province of BC**

**and**

**Grand Chief Edward John  
First Nations Summit**

**September 21, 2000  
Prince Rupert, BC**

1 --- MEETING RECESSED AT 12:15 P.M.

2 --- MEETING RESUMED AT 1:35 P.M.

3 **PREMIER UJJAL DOSANJH AND MINISTER DALE LOVICK**

4 CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: Could you take your seats  
5 please. At this point in time I'd like to call on Bob Hill, Bob. Could we have some  
6 order back there please.

7 BOB HILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (Native Language Spoken)

8 Chiefs, matriarchs, honoured guests in the audience, it gives me  
9 great pleasure to welcome the Premier of this province. This is the land of the  
10 Tsimshian, and it isn't the first time that I had the opportunity to have a chat with the  
11 Premier. He assures me that if he meets with me again in the next three weeks we'll  
12 become buddies, and then we'll own a good portion of the province.

13 Mr. Premier, I say that, of course, in jest. I was hoping that you  
14 were going to take it seriously. None the less, it must give you an idea of our  
15 geographic location, if you understand what I'm talking about.

16 The Tsimshian Nation is represented under the seven  
17 communities of our tribal council. It goes as far south as Kitasoo, and they're  
18 represented here by Percy Starr, as well as Hartley Bay just north of that community,  
19 that's represented here by Chief Pat Sterritt. And then further north, of course, to  
20 Kitkatla, is represented by Chief Matthew Hill, and then the Metlakatla, Chief George  
21 Leighton; Lax-Kw'alaams, that's Chief Gary Reece. I don't think he is here, he's had  
22 a number of meetings with you. And indeed, Kitsumkalum, Chief Diane Collins and

1 Kitselas.

2                   Mr. Premiere, it's vitally important that, in your attendance with us  
3 today, you pay attention to some of the words that indeed the First Nations in British  
4 Columbia will be talking to you about. We certainly recognize the limitation of your  
5 presence here, hopefully it will be the first or the second of many visits you will have  
6 within this community.

7                   In our time when negotiations about our lands and treaty making  
8 is so crucial, let it be known that we're also cognizant of the hardships that are faced  
9 by our brothers and our sisters on the east coast. That we certainly hope that we will  
10 not be in that same predicament in the years to come. I think that is important as a  
11 message from the Tsimshian.

12                   I certainly am very pleased, on behalf of the Tsimshian and all the  
13 chiefs in assembly here today, welcome your participation in this very important  
14 meeting of ours. Again, I thank you for accepting the invitation.

15                   CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: Thank you, Bob. I now call on  
16 Kathryn Teneese.

17                   KATHRYN TENEESE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, on  
18 behalf of the representatives of the First Nations Summit that sit around this table, we  
19 are very pleased to have you in attendance today, and thank you for taking the time  
20 out of your schedule to come and speak to us about the very serious concerns that we  
21 have around the treaty process.

22                   We look forward to hearing your words and also, hopefully, that

1 you will hear our words, and that we will be able to make progress on this very serious  
2 issue that is affecting the lives of all British Columbians. So with that, I'd like to  
3 welcome you to the Summit meeting and look forward to a fruitful dialogue.

4 CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: Task Group member, Bill Wilson.

5 BILL WILSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I've never  
6 met you, Mr. Premier, my name is Hemus Klowie Lecla (phonetic), that's according  
7 to our law, not your law.

8 I happen to have the good fortune of having lunch in a  
9 establishment owned by a fellow who says he's from the Punjabi. He and his parents  
10 immigrated here when he was six months old, so he's been a Canadian citizen for  
11 some 45 years, something like that; very successful in a beautiful land that belongs  
12 to Robert's people.

13 I happen to have some shrimp, which apparently were caught not  
14 that far from here, and I'm thinking to myself these belong to the Tsimshian. So I was  
15 thinking of paying you, rather than paying him, but he wouldn't let me out of the place  
16 before I paid, no, he's a very nice guy.

17 Please don't take this as any kind of a racial slur. I tell you what  
18 our basic problem is in this country and in this province, in particular, with Dhaliwal  
19 and Dosanjh, we're being governed by the wrong kind of Indians. Not that I have any  
20 disrespect, and I congratulate you on your success in the political world.

21 The reality is that what we're talking about, and one of the biggest  
22 problems we have with the treaty process, which Grand Chief Eddy John will explain

1 to you in greater detail than I intend to go into, is the reality is that we don't have any  
2 control over our own government. We welcomed you, we helped you, you gained a  
3 good living off of our land and our resources, and yet Aboriginal people still sit on the  
4 sidelines watching non-Indian people or non-Aboriginal people to this territory, flourish  
5 in this wonderful land. And that's the basic issue as far as I'm concerned.

6 The treaty process is designed to help resolve that. But more  
7 importantly, as Dale knows, establish a new relationship between or among us all,  
8 that allows Aboriginal people to thrive, as they once did as recently as 50 years ago,  
9 as they once did on the resources of this land.

10 Our people own this land, and I don't care what you say. You can  
11 tell me about the rule of law, but you've got to remember it's not our law. The law that  
12 you talk about is not our law. What's happening at Burnt Church and what's  
13 happening at Eddy's reserve and other places and has happened around the province  
14 of British Columbia, is us attempting to impose upon ourselves and the people who  
15 came from other places, a respect for our right to make decisions about ourselves and  
16 to have those rights be enforced by economic opportunities. I feel very frustrated, and  
17 I've been to communities in this province where 90 percent of the population are  
18 unemployed, where people don't have a way of live. They don't share in the Canadian  
19 dream, they don't share in the British Columbia dream. They sit there and they wait  
20 for the handouts from the Department of Indian Affairs, which seems to be delegated  
21 to making absolutely sure that we don't have any power.

22 Now, these negotiations are about power and who exercises it.

1 I said that in 1983 to then Prime Minister Trudeau, I said that again to Mulroney, it's  
2 about power and who exercises it. We want to control our land and resources and we  
3 want to have an agreement with you and the federal government about how we do  
4 that.

5 Now, I don't know how and I wonder how, in all clear conscious,  
6 someone can talk about the rule of law, when in fact the rule of law only applies to the  
7 non-Indian people, and the Aboriginal people simply have to wait around for  
8 governments to give them certain handouts.

9 The biggest problem.... I've been writing this book for 40 years,  
10 and it's almost done. I was trying to decide what is the Indian problem? Well, we don't  
11 have a problem, as Indians we don't have a problem. What we have inherited from the  
12 non-Indian people is a whole lot of problems that they created, for which only we know  
13 the solutions. That's really what all of this is all about.

14 We need to develop a relationship between or among ourselves  
15 that allows Aboriginal people to govern themselves on their own land according to  
16 their own traditions and cultures. It's not about living up to the expectations of the  
17 provincial government to place us into little square boxes of provincial or federal  
18 legislation. It's not about the federal government attempting to tell us what to do. I got  
19 to tell you something, and you're not there, the biggest enemy of the Indians in this  
20 province, two things, the Department of Indian Affairs is the clearest expression of the  
21 biggest enemy that we face. But the biggest enemy, which I've written in the book, is  
22 the assumption on the part of non-Indian people that they're superior to us; that

1 somehow we have to conform to their way of life and if we're nice Indians we get a  
2 few more handouts. That's the problem.

3 The non-Indian people in this province or in this world, aren't  
4 superior to us. They aren't inferior to us either, that's my attitude. But we are treated  
5 as if we are inferior, we are treated as if we are beggars on our own land. I want to  
6 conclude and thank you for coming with a statement by Chief Robinson at one time,  
7 when he was talking about the land claims negotiations. He stated: "I don't want my  
8 people on their knees beneath the white man's table waiting for scraps to fall. I want  
9 my people to take their rightful place at the table and take their fair share."

10 CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: I'd like to call on Edward John,  
11 oh, the Premier. Okay, Premier, mike number three.

12 HONOURABLE UJJAL DOSANJH: Thank you. Greetings to all of  
13 you, elders, chiefs, Assembly of First Nations National Chief, Matthew Coon-Come,  
14 First Nations Summit co-chairs, Danny Watts and Justa Monk, members of the  
15 Summit Task Force, Grand Chief Ed John, Kathryn Teneese and Bill Wilson, all of the  
16 First Nations Summit members and respected guests.

17 As I am before you today, I recall that one of my first  
18 engagements, after having been sworn as Premier, was to address the meeting of the  
19 First Nations Summit scheduled for March 10 this year. As we all know that meeting  
20 was canceled due to the untimely death of Squamish Chief, Joe Mathias. Six months  
21 later I still feel, acutely, the loss to us all of Chief Mathias' wisdom. But I also feel,  
22 even more strongly than ever, the rightness of the treaty process to which he was so

1 personally committed.

2                   If there is a single message I would like you to take away from my  
3 remarks today, it is the following: that the British Columbia government continues to  
4 believe that success in the current treaty process is critical to long-term prosperity and  
5 stability in this province.

6                   As many of you know, I was the attorney general when treaty  
7 negotiations with the Nisga'a were drawing to a close. The provincial government  
8 faced two significant issues in concluding the Nisga'a Treaty that had never been  
9 resolved before. First, we wanted to include self-government as part of the treaty, so  
10 that the protection of Section 35 of the Constitution would apply. Second, we wanted  
11 to achieve certainty without the use of the term "cede, release and surrender."

12                   Critics, including the official opposition, argued we couldn't do  
13 either. And the opposition, along with some others opposed to the treaty process,  
14 challenged the Nisga'a Treaty in the courts. As the Nisga'a, B.C. and Canada were  
15 celebrating the treaty's effective date, lawyers were preparing for the hearing of the  
16 opposition's challenge. In July this year the court gave its answer: the critics were  
17 wrong on both accounts. Self-government can be included in a treaty, and it is  
18 possible to achieve certainty without using cede, release and surrender.

19                   The opposition, of course, is not satisfied with that decision and  
20 has appealed. I am confident the Court of Appeal will reach the same conclusion, but  
21 that doesn't change the fact that reaching fair treaties is not supported by all in this  
22 province. However, I am confident the majority of fair-minded British Columbians

1 realize that we must resolve land claims in British Columbia.

2                   When I ran for the leadership of the NDP, someone asked me  
3 what my primary passion was. The answer was simple: for me, it's social justice. In  
4 my opinion, the most significant demonstration of that principle of social justice is this  
5 government's commitment to treaty progress. My government believes that treaties  
6 are a matter of social justice. They are simply the right thing to do.

7                   This being said, we have to be realistic. This government has a  
8 limited amount of time left in its mandate. The issue we face is how to make best use  
9 of our time and perhaps extend it. Despite the naysayers, I am pleased that we have  
10 made considerable progress since I became Premier.

11                   On April 27, we signed a political accord on land and resources  
12 with the Wet'suwet'en First Nation. This accord committed the provincial and federal  
13 governments and the First Nations to work cooperatively to increase Wet'suwet'en  
14 involvement in the forest sector and to find solutions to forestry issues. The next day,  
15 we concluded an agreement settling litigation and a longstanding dispute involving the  
16 McLeod Lake Band's claim for land and other benefits of Treaty No. 8.

17                   On August 2, B.C. and Canada presented an offer under the B.C.  
18 Treaty Commission process to Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. We expect a formal  
19 response to this offer shortly. We're getting close to making offers to other First  
20 Nations as well. We were pleased to receive a proposal from the Tsawwassen First  
21 Nation and will be responding in the very near future.

22                   Since the useful agreement reached by principals to the treaty

1 process on April 28 regarding interim measures, we have also made significant efforts  
2 to implement a number of interim measures across the province. To me, the simplest  
3 proof of the well-being of the treaty process is that the majority of First Nations are still  
4 working hard at treaty tables, as is the government. These include tables where offers  
5 have already been made, such as Gitanyow, Sliammon, Snuneymuxw and Lheidli  
6 T'enneh. Nevertheless, we recognize that the treaty process has not moved as quickly  
7 as the parties would have wished. We have listened to First Nations' concerns in this  
8 regard, and I want everyone to know that we have increased our mandates so that our  
9 negotiations can get deals at the tables.

10 At a very difficult time for government in financial terms, we've  
11 added significant funding and resources to the provincial negotiating effort. We have  
12 heard the desire of First Nations to make practical on-the-ground progress now. And  
13 we've worked hard to make rapid change through a variety of interim measures,  
14 treaty-related measures and program decisions.

15 A recent example of this determination to act as quickly as  
16 possible can be seen in the list of interim measures which the B.C. Treaty  
17 Commission has compiled with input from every treaty table. I am pleased that the  
18 province is already engaged in implementing a great many of the projects and  
19 proposals on this list.

20 I have asked my colleague, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, to  
21 ensure that we make this list a priority, so that, wherever possible, we respond to the  
22 aspirations of the First Nations in the treaty process promptly and in a practical way.