

QUEEN CHARLOTTE AGENCY

ROYAL COMMISSION ON INDIAN AFFAIRS FOR THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COL.

A. Masset, B.C.,

September 9th, 1915:

HENRY EDENSHAW was sworn as interpreter.

The CHAIRMAN briefly explained the scope and purpose of the Commission.

An address of welcome (Exhibit D₁) was read by Chief Councillor A. Adams, to which the Chairman replied, as follows:

"The Commissioners are very much obliged for the address which you have just presented and for the kind way in which you have received us. We trust with you that our work may be satisfactory all round, not only to the Indians but to the governments which we represent, and that it may be the means of bringing increased happiness and prosperity to the Indians. Insofar as the rights which you speak of are concerned we have nothing to do with the question of Indian title, as I stated in my remarks at the beginning of this meeting. With regard to your past history, I do not wonder that you look back upon that with very great regret and I think that would be especially true of a people who are descendants of such men as the Aishah Indians, who, I have always understood were among the strongest of the Indians in this part of the world. We cannot deal in any way with the matters which you suggest should be brought before the Rivy Council, because that is a judicial court. We have no such power and no such authority. You have referred to the condition which the Indians present in this village and you have stated that you have none of you been tried as yet in the courts for any criminal offence, and I think that is most creditable to you. Judging from the assemblage of men I see before me this morning I am not surprised to hear that such is the case. I have heard the fact that you are just as you have described most emphatically stated by the gentleman here on my right, who is the clergyman labouring among you. I think it is the desire of all white men to see the Indians advance and become more prosperous, because it is better to live with people who are advanced in civilisation. Of course there are exceptions, but I am satisfied that all the best thinking white people are desirous of seeing the Indians advance in civilisation and prosperity. We have nothing to say with regard to your advancement in Christianity, because we know that you are for the most part members of a Christian community. I do not think anything has given any member of the Commission more pleasure than to see that the Indians throughout the Kolla Coola Agency are members of various Christian churches. We see more cleanliness and order among the Indians who have the blessings of Christianity among them. As regard to the matter you have touched upon as to your having no voice in the councils of the nation, and no power to elect your representatives to parliament, I believe I am right in stating that an Indian may obtain the franchise. They have done so down in Western Canada. It seems to me that the power which an Indian has to obtain the franchise should not be as small as it is. But it depends largely upon his intelligence. I understand that if you can convince the authorities by certificates, recommendations, etc., that an Indian has the qualifications to obtain the franchise he can do so. And judging by the appearance of the Indians here I cannot see any reason why they have not got the franchise. I think that the Indians powers as regards this might be enlarged and it is a matter which I think might very properly be brought under the notice of the government some of the tight strings which are at present around the Indians in this respect might be in some ways relaxed.

Other addresses were read by Henry Edenshaw (Ex. D₂), Mark Ingram (D₃), Robert Weart (D₄), Peter Hill (D₅), George Jones (D₆).