

## **Appendix B Biographical Notes on Commissioners**

### ***Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, Commissioner***

Paul Chartrand, of the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, was born on July 27, 1943.

A Métis, Mr. Chartrand grew up in Manitoba and graduated from the Manitoba Teachers College and the University of Winnipeg. He later studied law at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia, graduating with an honours degree, and at the University of Saskatchewan, where he specialized in Native law and received the degree of Master of Laws.

Professor Chartrand has written a book on Métis land rights, as well as articles and other publications. In recent years, he has been an adviser to government agencies and to Aboriginal organizations at the local, national and international level. He served as interim president of the Institute of Indigenous Government in Vancouver in 1995-96.

### ***Honourable René Dussault, Co-Chair***

René Dussault, Justice of the Quebec Court of Appeal, was born November 23, 1939, in Quebec City.

He received his law degree from Laval University and a PH.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Mr. Dussault was a legal adviser to Quebec's Health and Welfare Inquiry Commission and lectured in law at Laval University from 1966 to 1970. He has served as Special Advisor to the Minister of Social Affairs in Quebec (1970-1973), as President of Quebec's Professions Board (1973-1977), and as Quebec's Deputy Minister of Justice (1977-1980).

He held the Laskin Chair in Public Law at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto from 1983 to 1984. He taught at the Quebec National School of Public Administration from 1981 to 1989 and has practised law and written and co-written several books on administrative law, including *Administrative Law: A Treatise*. In 1987, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and received the Quebec Bar medal, the highest distinction bestowed by the Bar in recognition of outstanding contributions by Quebec jurists to the advancement of law and its practice. In 1992, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from York University.

### ***Georges Erasmus, Co-Chair***

Georges Henry Erasmus, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations from 1985 to 1991, was born August 8, 1948, in Fort Rae, Northwest Territories.

In the early 1970s, he served as a fieldworker and a regional staff director for the Company of Young Canadians. He was president of the Dene Nation from 1976 to 1983, during which time he led successful efforts to stop the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. In 1983, he became the founding president of the Denendeh Development Corporation.

Mr. Erasmus serves as a board member for many organizations and foundations across Canada dedicated to the advancement of human rights and ecological concerns, including Energy Probe Research Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund of Canada, Operation Dismantle and others.

In 1985, Mr Erasmus went to England on behalf of Indigenous Survival International and succeeded in persuading Greenpeace to drop an anti-fur campaign. He visited the Soviet Union in 1986 to study the economic conditions of Indigenous people living in Siberia.

Mr. Erasmus is co-author of the book *Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country*. In 1989, he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. He was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1987.

#### ***J. Peter Meekison, Commissioner***

J. Peter Meekison, University Professor of Political Science and Belzberg Chair in Constitutional Studies (Faculty of Law) at the University of Alberta, was born in January 1937. He has been on the Faculty at the University of Alberta since 1967. He served as deputy minister of the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs for the province of Alberta from 1977 to 1984. He served as Vice-President (Academic) of the University of Alberta from 1984 to 1991. He has been actively involved in constitutional discussions over the past two decades.

Named an officer of the Order of Canada in 1986, Professor Meekison obtained a B.A.Sc. and a B.A. from the University of British Columbia, then an M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Western Ontario and Duke University.

Professor Meekison sits on the board of directors of the Institute for Research on Public Policy and the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada and on the board of governors of the Canadian Centre for Management Development.

#### ***Viola Marie Robinson, Commissioner***

Viola Robinson is a Micmac Indian born in Amherst, Nova Scotia. She attended the Micmac Indian Day School at Shubenacadie and the Sacred Heart Academy in Meteghan before completing her formal education at the Maritime Business College in Halifax.

Ms. Robinson entered native politics in 1975 when she was elected vice-president of the Non-Status and Métis Association of Nova Scotia. The following year she was elected president of the association, re-named the Native Council of Nova Scotia. In 1990, she became the president of the Native Council of Canada, a post she held until August 1991.

She has served on the boards of many native organizations in Nova Scotia, including a term as chairperson of the Mikmakik Development Corporation. In 1990, she received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Dalhousie University in Halifax.

***Mary J. Sillett, Commissioner***

Mary Sillett was born July 10, 1953, in Hopedale, Labrador, and has extensive experience in Aboriginal affairs dating back to the early 1970s. Her work experience includes executive and board positions with several Labrador community and regional organizations. Through these organizations, she gained invaluable experience in political, criminal justice, social and economic issues. She was instrumental in the groundwork leading to the creation of the Torngat Fish Producers co-operative.

Ms. Sillett relocated to Ottawa in 1981 to work as the Labrador member on the Inuit Committee on National Issues. She is a founding member of Pauktuutit, the Inuit Women's Association of Canada, and served as its president for two terms. She also served as vice-president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada for four years.

In 1976, Ms. Sillett completed her formal education, earning a Bachelor of Social Work Degree from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

***Honourable Bertha Wilson, Commissioner***

Bertha Wilson was born in Scotland on September 18, 1923. She was educated at the University of Aberdeen after which she immigrated to Canada and studied law at Dalhousie Law School in Halifax.

She practised law in Toronto with the firm of Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt from 1958 to 1975, when she was appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal. She earned a reputation for imaginative and humane decisions in cases involving human rights, ethnic and sexual discrimination, matrimonial property and child custody.

In 1982, Justice Wilson became the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. She has received numerous honorary degrees from Canadian universities and from her alma mater, the University of Aberdeen. Justice Wilson retired from the court in 1991. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1991 and appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1992.