

Whitla had been appointed lawyer for the Commission and the members were made up of Judges: Locke, Prud'homme and Myers. The first meeting was in the Court Room in Winnipeg on June 30, 1911, and was basically organizational while the first "hearing" would be scheduled later.

Meanwhile, about 100 Indians attended a meeting at the Gilolo schoolhouse on April 18, 1911, called by John Watson, Indian Agent, for the purpose of considering the matter of "transferring the remainder of the Band to the new reserve on Fisher River this summer". The Ottawa authorities, it was stated, were anxious that the whole of the Band should migrate to the new reserve. However, from the sentiments expressed at the meeting it was evident that the Indians did not intend to move until after the Commission appointed by the Provincial Gov't had brought in its final report and conclusions.

The Council of the Town of Selkirk during their regular meeting (April 24) passed a resolution "this council requests the Provincial Gov't to have transfer of title from the Dominion Gov't and also Provincial to make survey now re: The Great Hwy. through St. Peters." The Munc. of St. Andrews passed a similar motion.

On June 5, 1911 the Selkirk Board of Trade passed a resolution urging upon the Dominion Gov't "to remedy present affairs and conditions Re St. Peters Indian Reserve", and "remove certain doubts said to exist regarding the validity of the Surrender" by passing the necessary legislation at the next session of Dominion Parliament.

These resolutions mentioned were presented to the Hon. Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior when he opened his Western "Reciprocity" tour with meeting in Pearson's Hall in Selkirk on Wed. June 7, 1911. He arrived in the afternoon and was met by several Joint delegations and a conference took place RE: St. Peters, Hon. Mr. Oliver said, "the Dominion Gov't had already done its part in full and he could not see any more action was called for" -- he also said, "the Dominion Gov't in deciding to transfer the Indians to Fisher River had acted in the best interests of the Indians and the conditions, and he could only ask the Board of Trade to look for the remedy to those who had caused the trouble". That evening, before one hundred or so people in Pearson's Hall, Mr. Oliver, although his speech was to be basically on reciprocity, devoted most all of his time re: St. Peters land questions and only fleetingly on reciprocity.

The Royal Commission held its first meeting toward the end of July 1911, in the schoolhouse at St. Peters and then transferred to the Town Hall in Selkirk by Aug. 1911. where a heated discussion erupted as to the "Jurisdiction of the Commission", and much argument over the printing of a letter dated July 5, 1908 written by J.O. Lewis of Ottawa. Capt. Howell, it appears thought the letter contained information pertinent to the hearings, so had it printed in the Selkirk Weekly Record. The article caused quite a stir and almost brought the hearings to a halt.

Toward the last week in Oct. 1911, the Commission questioned Frank Pedley, Deputy Supt. General of Indian Affairs, on the question of his authority to accept

the surrender. He claimed he had the power and was instructed by Hon. Frank Oliver, Minister of Interior, to proceed after Chief Justice Howell had it all arranged, to meet the Indians and take Surrender. Other witnesses examined during Oct. 1911 were: Rev. John Semmens, John Watson and J.O. Lewis, all Indian Agents.

The hearing was continued and finally the news media were able to report by Jan. 12, 1912 "The Surrender not Valid".

The decision of Judges Locke and Prud'homme, 2 members of the commission, was that the surrender was "not binding or valid". Judge Myers, 3rd member of the commission took issue with his colleagues stating:

"The members of your Commission have laboured together faithfully and with great harmony and the report signed by my colleague is, to some extent, the unanimous report of the Commissioners. We disagree chiefly upon the question of whether the "Statutory formalities" described in Sec. 49 were complied with".

In May 1912, the Selkirk Board of Trade were co-ordinating and circulating the distribution of petitions "an adoption of a memorial to the Dominion Gov't asking that St. Peters Reserve matter be finally settled in order that land now tied up be thrown open for settlement". It was being widely circulated and largely signed by the Town of Selkirk and was causing a controversy in town. Some interpreted the petition as asking the gov't to validate or legalize the surrender and the Board of Trade answered by saying it "asks that the question be settled in whatever manner the gov't thinks best". By June 1912 Dr. Grain had presented the petition to Hon. Robt. Rogers, Minister of Interior. It contained the signatures of the Selkirk Board of Trade, Town of Selkirk Council and the Councils of the Municipalities of St. Andrews and St. Clements plus several hundred individuals "praying for a speedy settlement of the St. Peters Reserve Case."

Selkirk citizens were claiming that this surrender that had been held up a number of years, owing to charges that the Indians were unfairly dealt with, was retarding development in the Selkirk district, and handicapping its future.

The Hon. Robt. Rogers in his reply to the delegation pointed out the gravity of his position as executor (executive guardian) for the gov't of the Indians, who are the wards of the gov't. There were over 50 in the delegation and he promised to make an effort to settle without further recourse to the courts.

Things appeared to have died down during the summer of 1912, but it was an uneasy quietness around Selkirk. By Sept. the residents were well organized into another large deputation and were ready to meet Dr. W.J. Roche, Minister of the Interior, who was due to arrive in Winnipeg about mid-Sept. 1912.

The Dominion Gov't assigned the task to the Hon. C.H. Doherty (Justice Minister) and by Sept. 1913 when he and the Minister of Interior headed west, another large deputation from Selkirk waited upon them. Mayor Ross of Selkirk and the Selkirk Board of Trade spoke at length and Dr. Roche listened patiently and replied in conclusion: "It appears there are 3 courses of action open to the Gov't, 1. To appoint another Commission, 2.