

The Path to Aboriginal Advocacy: Mennonite Interaction with the Lubicon Cree¹

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Introduction

The historical relationship between Canadian Mennonites and Aboriginal communities within Canada is very complex. When Mennonite farmers came to Western Canada in the 1870s they tilled the soil that once belonged to Aboriginal nations. Mennonites have since then participated in Aboriginal community life as authorities - doctors, teachers, missionaries - and as guests. In this way Mennonite individuals and agencies have participated in the paternalism of mainstream Canadian society towards Aboriginal communities, but have also offered an alternative vision of a mutually enriching encounter between peoples. This paper explores a relatively recent aspect of this many-faceted relationship through an example of Mennonite advocacy of Aboriginal land rights, namely the Mennonite response to the Lubicon Cree of northern Alberta.

The community of Little Buffalo, located east of the Peace River area, approximately 450 kilometers northeast of Edmonton, Alberta exhibits many of the characteristics of relatively isolated northern Aboriginal communities across Canada. The 500 Lubicon Cree who call this settlement their home, however, face a major obstacle in their attempt to build a sustainable future for their community. They face the Canadian federal government's refusal to fulfill a 60-year-old promise of reserve land and resources.

The Lubicon Lake First Nation was left out of an 1899 treaty signed by the government and numerous other Cree bands in northern Alberta. As a result, the Lubicon were ignored by federal and provincial governments until they were granted band status in 1940. At the time, a reserve of approximately 65 square kilometers was surveyed but the land was never officially transferred to the Lubicon. In 1979, the first all-weather road through Lubicon territory was completed, opening the way for extensive oil and gas exploration and, a decade later, a large-scale, clear-cut forestry. The impact of the onslaught of exploratory wells and survey cutlines in the Lubicon territory was sudden and traumatic. Within three years of the road's opening traplines had been destroyed and wildlife chased away. The Lubicon community of Little Buffalo lost a sustainable hunting/trapping economy and over 90% of its members became dependent on social welfare. Since the early 1980s, the Lubicon Cree, led by Chief Bernard Ominayak, have sought the recognition of Aboriginal rights to traditional lands and resources, the fulfillment of land entitlement promises, and compensation for resources already taken from the First Nation².

The Mennonite response to the Lubicon situation highlights two complementary dimensions of a unique expression of advocacy: participation in an interchurch support network's articulation of solidarity with Aboriginal peoples, and the creation of direct, personal relationships with the Lubicon Cree through the sustained presence of Voluntary Service (VS) workers in the community of Little Buffalo. This paper explores three expressions of Lubicon advocacy: the solidarity discourse of the church-based support movement; a specific collective action campaign; and the Mennonite voluntary service presence in Little Buffalo. This Mennonite emphasis on the creation of personal relationships through ongoing community presence with the Lubicon undergirds and sustains the interchurch advocacy

Construction of an Interchurch Solidarity Relationship

In 1983 the Lubicon leadership began to tell their story and to seek supporters at various public forums across Canada. Lubicon advisor Fred Lennarson also started to collect names and mailing addresses of individuals who expressed their interest and concern. This list, steadily growing with every public speaking appearance of Lubicon representatives, became the primary mailing list for Lubicon news and commentary. By 1988, the mailing list included more than 600 names of individuals and organizations, extending across Canada to parts of the United States and to ten countries in Western Europe. During this time, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) representatives joined other church leaders on visits to Little Buffalo and also shared in the dissemination of the information and commentary received through the Lubicon mailings.

In response to Lubicon requests, the interchurch support network had, by 1984, inundated the federal government with "bushels of mail" [Goddard, 119]. As a result, the federal government was compelled to appoint a special envoy to study the Lubicon situation. The support network also participated in a series of rallies and boycotts during the Calgary Winter Olympics in February 1988 and succeeded in gaining further international exposure of one of Alberta's unresolved Aboriginal conflicts. Throughout the 1980s, the support network grew and demonstrated its ability to gain media attention and influence public policy.

Mennonite advocacy of the Lubicon began as part of the church-based Aboriginal rights movement's response to the Lubicon crisis.

Members of this church-based sector of the movement³ expressed their support for the Lubicon as a "solidarity" relationship. The use of solidarity language within a faith-based social justice context inspired a particular understanding of a solidarity relationship, an understanding that had its roots in Latin American liberation theology. One of the most influential Latin American liberation theology texts demonstrates how solidarity was articulated within this context:

The "poor" person today is the oppressed one, the one margined from society, the member of the proletariat struggling for his most basic rights; he is the exploited and plundered social class, the country struggling for its liberation. In today's world the solidarity and protest of which we are speaking have an evident and inevitable "political" implication insofar as they imply liberation. To be with the oppressed is to be against the oppressor. In our times and on our continent, to be in solidarity with the "poor", understood in this way, means to run personal risks – even to put one's life in danger [Gutierrez, 301].

Solidarity responses to Canadian Aboriginal injustices did not carry the same degree of personal risk as did participation in the Latin American liberation movement. Still, the call to solidarity did include an element of resistance to state structures and to corporate systems that marginalize parts of society. Aboriginal rights lawyer John Olthius, for example, emphasized that working "to change the structures and policies of non-aboriginal society and government is the most difficult but also the most effective way for non-aboriginal people to stand in solidarity with aboriginal people" (Olthius, 205).

In a book calling for church constituency support of the aboriginal rights agenda, another Aboriginal rights supporter, Murray Angus, extended this definition of solidarity. He described a common interest shared by different groups:

True solidarity arises out of situations where different groups discover their own reasons for wanting to achieve the same goals. The coming together of otherwise disparate groups on the basis of common interests provides the basis for true community....In order for solidarity to occur, it will be necessary for non-Native Canadians to discover their own reasons for reshaping Canadian society in ways that would also benefit Native people. Non-Natives have been encouraged to learn about the circumstances relating to Native people but have seldom been encouraged to analyze their own. This can and must change if solidarity is to be developed, and if the government's long-term agenda is to be successfully challenged [Angus, 74-5].

A more problematic image of solidarity is offered in a recent study of the politics of solidarity with the Labrador Innu⁴ (Barron 1998). Barron notes that efforts to create a solidarity relationship are marred by the tendency to use deeply rooted cultural views for projecting aboriginal peoples as culturally "other", thereby framing them as objects for salvation or the projections of the desires or longings of non-Aboriginal supporters. According to Barron's analysis, both structural and cultural factors appear to be significant and, at times, problematic aspects of a solidarity relationship.

The solidarity relationship with the Lubicon articulated by members of the church-based Lubicon support movement was driven by a faith stance and moral imperative that urged participation in social justice struggles alongside those facing injustice. One interchurch activist sums up how the involvement in the Lubicon conflict was central to religious faith:

Well, I think the Bible speaks a great deal about justice and love for the neighbour and doing well by those who are marginalized, being a voice for the voiceless and not standing with power but standing with people, especially people who don't have power, and I think the whole thrust of the Gospel is very much in that way. You know, the Old Testament prophets certainly say that and Jesus certainly reiterates it in a number of ways.⁵

The relationship was also empowered by the interpersonal relationships developed by those engaged in a common struggle. Another Lubicon supporter stated the following:

It's out of those relationships that are built between the network groups and the Aboriginal people in the middle of the struggle over land rights and self-determination issues. It's out of those relationships that the energy comes and some of the analysis comes and where a lot of the excitement comes, but I think it speaks to ultimately what the solidarity work is all about. It's not about, you know, theoretically changing the state of the world. It's about changing relationships.

I suggest that the type of advocacy characterized as a solidarity relationship can be defined as integrating the confrontation of structural inequities with the creation of personal cross-cultural relationships. As will be shown below, church-based supporters tended to participate in specific campaigns designed to confront the structural and power inequities, but were not always able to create the sustainable cross-cultural relationships on the other side of this equation. The Mennonite experience with the Lubicon provides one example of the importance of generating such relationships.

InterChurch Advocacy

Throughout the 1980s the Aboriginal rights support network participated in a series of Lubicon-sponsored letter-writing campaigns and public events that gained extensive public attention for the Lubicon situation. A solidarity relationship could be expressed through participation in collective action as and when it was requested. In the words of one supporter, "it was very easy to be in solidarity because they had a very clear [request]; they were coming and saying, 'we need your support.'"

Perhaps the most publicized Lubicon campaign of the 1980s was the five-day barricade of roads through Lubicon territory in October 1988. This action was announced by the Lubicon leadership in response to a decade of watching the effects of oil and gas exploration on their land and community. Previous attempts to gain redress through Alberta courts and energy regulatory agencies went unheeded, with one Alberta judge going so far as to state that it would be easier to compensate the Lubicon for loss of livelihood and culture than to compensate the energy industry for loss of potential revenue, should their activities in the Lubicon area be curtailed.⁶

The Lubicon chose to assert Aboriginal sovereignty over their traditional lands by setting up four separate passport control stations on October 15, 1988 and by monitoring traffic in and out of the territory. Oil and gas companies were informed that they would require permits to continue operating in the region. Rather than submitting to this declaration of sovereignty, the oil industry temporarily shut down all wells and applied for a court order to have the barricades dismantled. On October 20 the barricades were removed by a detachment of Royal Canadian Mounted Police in full riot gear, armed with attack dogs and submachine guns. Lubicon community members who had camped by the barricades and Lubicon supporters were arrested or forcibly dispersed in a display of police power that one witness compared to Vietnam or Nazi Germany.⁷

The Lubicon blockade was a prime example of a strategy devised to extend the power of the Lubicon by pressuring provincial and federal governments to enter into a substantive negotiation process. According to a Lubicon advisor, the confrontation was essential because of the lack of alternative strategies:

The Lubicons had resolved to erect the passport controls several months before they actually took place. If something could change, and they advised people, 'They give us no choice. We have no alternative, to do it, because we don't want to do it. That's not a desirable alternative for a small, weak society against a great big, powerful society. They've given us no choice as to what to do.'

Members of the church-based support network understood their participation as acts of solidarity, namely as an opportunity to challenge unjust social structures from a faith perspective and to empower a marginalized people. One member wrote the following reflection several years after the event:

Road blockades, erected as a last resort by native people in my country to protest the injustices against them and their communities, are also important influences for me. The blockades have come to symbolize the way in which God calls me and other non-natives to work out, in just as radical a way, what "love" means for us as citizens confronted with injustice [Land 1992:210].

Through this form of advocacy, supporters could enable both physical and spiritual empowerment. Aside from contributing to the numerical power of a mobilized public presence, interchurch supporters could also view their own participation in relation to the manifestation of a spiritual power upholding the Lubicon throughout this experience. The presence of the church provided a key symbol in the attempt to gain public legitimacy and public support for the Lubicon cause – a unifying symbol of empowerment and strength. One participant offered an analysis:

There was a sense that it was a 'held' experience, that the entire blockade was being 'held in the light', is what Quakers would say, that we're being cared for by the Creator. And it's one of those things where if you have eyes to see, you see, and if you have ears to hear, you hear....[I]t was the power that was enabling and supporting people to go through this process which was challenging enough for

those of us who were from [the] outside, but for people who had been living this struggle for decades, the tension they must have been under must have been quite profound.

Although the initial reaction of the provincial government was to show its own coercive power as the RCMP dismantled the barricades at gunpoint, Alberta Premier Don Getty was also very quick to begin negotiation of the Grimshaw Agreement with the Lubicon, indicating that the actions of the Lubicon and their supporters had had some impact. The action was partially successful in addressing unjust structures, but could only begin the process of developing the direct personal relationships that a solidarity relationship also implied. With the assertion of sovereign jurisdiction and the establishment of barricades, the Lubicon welcomed several hundred non-Aboriginal supporters and thereby provided them with opportunities to experience community processes, converse with various community members and actually visit different locations within Little Buffalo. Through these contacts, individuals began to share common concerns and some of the feelings of cultural difference were challenged and transformed.

Interchurch supporters who joined the Lubicon at the barricades generally viewed themselves as guests of the Lubicon, participating at the invitation of the local community. One such guest later described the honour of being invited to sit with the elders beside the road, listening in as they told stories in Cree that were only partially translated into English. Others remembered and treasured conversations with local community members, conversations that gave them the opportunity to gain insight into community changes and to understand these changes in terms of other struggles in other locations.

This entrance into Little Buffalo, however, also produced a great deal of stress and tensions for some members of the community. This factor was recognized by individuals who previously or subsequently developed closer relationships with the local residents. The direct support of the Lubicon at the barricades, therefore, provided an opportunity to begin crossing cultural boundaries but could not, by itself, do more than begin to address the sense of "otherness" experienced by individuals and groups on both sides of the Aboriginal-Euro-Canadian cultural divide.

One Euro-Canadian participant in the barricade action, only discovered in later visits to the community how difficult it had been for Little Buffalo residents to maintain their welcome and hospitality to outsiders during this time.

Some people in the community, and I didn't find this out really until I came back later, some people in the community left and went into the bush because they couldn't deal with the onslaught and the invasion of their community by all of these foreign customs and foreign languages.

The Lubicon support network remained active into the 1990s, but no other campaign achieved the intensity and the level of personal connection to the struggle as exhibited during the blockade experience, an experience that many participants later defined as a life-changing encounter.⁸ After 1988 supporters were able to participate in a public citizens' inquiry process, the Lubicon Settlement Commission of Review (LSCR), a campaign protesting the establishment of a sour gas plant upwind from Lubicon land, and a national campaign to

boycott the product of a multinational forestry company which had received a license to clear-cut the area. But unlike the times at the barricades, these campaigns did not allow for close interactions. Instead, most of these strategies involved some intermediary relationship and structures that responded separately to the Lubicon leadership and to the supporters.

The result was a distancing of the Lubicon from some of the regional support networks that had been very active throughout the 1980s. One example of this was the experience of the Edmonton Interfaith Coalition on Aboriginal Rights (EICAR) which had participated in the Lubicon campaigns up to and including the 1988 blockade but which gradually drifted away from direct Lubicon interaction in the following decade. During the time of my field research (1997-2000), members of the group felt this loss of connection with the Lubicon and struggled to redefine their solidarity relationship from a distance. As one EICAR member noted, "we've always taken direction from them but now seem to have no contact with them. Injustices still abound, but where do we connect?"

Mennonite Participation in Interchurch Advocacy

Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCCC) and Mennonite Central Committee Alberta (MCCA) became involved in the Lubicon struggle through the Mennonite participation in the church-based support movement. Through the activities of Menno Wiebe, director of Native Concerns for MCCC, and the support of Mennonite individuals and congregations across Canada, Mennonites showed their support of the Lubicon. They participated in the various public forums, letter-writing campaigns, rallies and boycotts.

Participation in the blockade action raised a few concerns for the Mennonite constituency, however. Reluctance to be involved in the blockade was partially related to a concern about the potential for violence in this type of confrontation. This concern was raised in correspondence between MCCC and MCCA in the fall of 1988 as a reason for holding back from full participation. They held back even though Wiebe argued that an official Church presence as a public witness could forestall and prevent the violence that might otherwise arise.

Despite such concerns, the Mennonite presence contributed significantly to the visibility of the Church at the barricades. The most significant symbol of church presence was a press photograph of Wiebe reading a Bible during a religious service on the road at the barricade.¹⁰ The photograph was reprinted in newspapers across the country as an image of church participation in a social confrontation. One of the participants later shared his understanding of the sacred significance of a this roadside worship service:

And then you go through the turmoil of saying, do you then do this as a genuine worship or is this a gimmick? Is this a device to arrest attention? The people...asked for it, and then we did it right there. They said, 'We're here. We're not in church. We're here'; which is theologically very startling to me.

Church presence could be taken out on the open road and to the front lines, rather than left for highly ritualized encounters bound within enclosed, confined spaces.

Mennonite participation in this event also demonstrated the significance of a connection to the Lubicon community that went much further than one dramatic public encounter. Several of the Mennonites who joined the Lubicon struggle also benefitted from more extensive relationships with members of the Little Buffalo community and therefore could take direct action from a broader context. The experience of one of these persons drew more extensively from ongoing interpersonal community relationships than from the excitement of participation in the blockade on its own:

I visited one of the elders who had basically a living-room view of the whole thing, but just looking through. And every time I ever visited him, it was always in the kitchen and there was tea, too, always there to fill up another pot. But this time we sat in his living-room so we could watch and he was just like he didn't want all this to happen but he was proud of what was happening and then we talked for ages and he was very frank about it....But while the whole media came into town then, satellite dishes, all that stuff was happening, to be with him, watching it and listening to him discuss his future, the future of the Indians present and what the hopes were, having many previous coffees with him during the summer, it was a nice place to be, out of the limelight but watching.

Mennonite individuals who gained some familiarity with the Lubicon could also find a connection between Lubicon dispossession of land and the migratory history of Canadian Mennonites. Menno Wiebe alluded to this in a letter to the *Carillon News*¹¹, a Mennonite community weekly, in which he defended his presence at the barricades by noting, "we ourselves have a history of displacement and social marginalization." This same point was also raised more directly in an MCCC statement presented to the media at the barricades:

As immigrant people the Mennonite people have gained tremendously from the privilege of living in this country. We appreciate the access we have been given to the land and its resources. Historically we too know about displacement from our lands, we know about injustice.

Mennonite Advocacy

This acknowledgement of a people-to-people connection highlights the significance of the direct personal relationship aspect of a solidarity response to the Lubicon Cree of Little Buffalo. For MCCC and MCCA, the establishment of such direct relationships was an important part of the work with the Lubicon.

From 1986 through to the early 1990s, MCCC sponsored volunteer gardeners who spent their summers at Little Buffalo, working with community members on local gardens and on other tasks as locally requested. In 1992 Elaine Bishop, a Quaker activist who had participated in the 1988 blockade, moved to Little Buffalo and spent four years as a MCCC Voluntary Service (VS) worker. In 1996 she was replaced by Dean Denner and Cia Verschelden and their family and they worked in the community until 1998. After that, Chris and Louise Friesen carried on the tradition of a Mennonite presence at Little Buffalo.

While approaching the Lubicon with a gardening agenda, MCCC and MCCA linked this with two related goals: economic viability for the Lubicon and an ongoing visible community presence with the Lubicon. This was spelled out in a letter from Bill Thiessen, then executive director of MCCA, to Wiebe in November 1984, the time when the idea of sending gardeners to Little Buffalo was first discussed.

I recall your suggestion that the most appropriate way for MCC to become involved is to find a way of helping the Lubicon to a level of self-sufficiency, perhaps along the lines of summer gardening. This would facilitate the development of meaningful relations, as well as opportunity for Christian witness.

The Lubicon leadership affirmed these goals and the Mennonite commitment to these goals by continuing to invite MCCC and MCCA to send workers to Little Buffalo. For the workers themselves, these goals could be held together but only with some degree of tension. As the gardeners quickly discovered and as later VSers also had to learn, coming into the community with a specific agenda was not enough; a long, slow, time-consuming process of discerning and responding to a more subtle community agenda was also required. One of these gardeners described this in the following terms in a 1987 issue of *Weeds and Seeds*, a newsletter for MCCC summer workers:

Face it, at Little Buffalo they would not perish in the community without gardener helpers from MCC, though this is one area in which we can help...Being in the community, gardening with them, getting to know some of the people quite well, making some close friendships, working at the projects of the community and not being too limited, and relaxing with people when there happens to be a particularly slack day. These fall into the role and mandate of MCC in Little Buffalo. Bernard [Chief Ominayak] has at one point explained our reason for being here as a sign of support for the community. So let's garden. But let's be open to other things, or even what seems like nothing.

One report from the same gardeners listed several activities which "helped to overcome the hurdle of nothing-to-do-ness," including working with a building team to erect a fence, fishing, constructing a floating dock at the local swimming hole, testing soil for a local agricultural project, and keeping a log of progress on land claims negotiations.

Several years later VSer Elaine Bishop could report back on a similarly diverse range of activities, including coordination of local education initiatives, development of a Lubicon Womens Circle, and establishing a liaison with outside solidarity groups. For these volunteers and for others who lived with the Lubicon for several months or even several years, the negotiation of a role and a purpose within Little Buffalo began with a broadly-defined agenda which was then initiated through cautious and sensitive daily interactions with the Little Buffalo residents and leaders. While some degree of confusion over community roles and responsibilities always remained, those who persevered in their attempt to negotiate a local presence were able to reach at least a partial understanding and appreciation of their advocacy and support role in Little Buffalo.

Gardening provided another way to respond to the structural and power inequities con-

fronted by the Lubicon and their supporters. The significance of gardening as an initial response to this inequity is implied in a letter, dated July 11, 1986, from Eric Rempel, MCCC Native Concerns, to Bill Thiessen of MCCA:

Gardening is still much more prevalent [in Little Buffalo] than it is anywhere else we are working. That it to say that Lubicon Lake has not experienced the social degradation that most Native communities have. But it will! Our presence may in some small way slow down or even halt that downward slide.

Rempel commended the “sort of spirit one finds in a community that feels basically good about itself and about where it is” but added that, given the drastic changes caused by the arrival of the oil industry, “it will not take long for that spirit to change.”

Later, when Mennonite constituency concerns were raised about the MCC presence at the Lubicon barricades, Wiebe could defend Mennonite involvement in this confrontation by setting it in the context of years of support for the Lubicon through community-based initiatives.¹² The ongoing personal connections and interactions of the summer gardeners served to legitimize Mennonite participation in a more directly confrontational assertion of Lubicon identity and power.

Despite all the solidarity discourse within the interchurch Lubicon support movement, strong cultural and social boundaries separated the Lubicon from the faith communities outside the Little Buffalo area who expressed a desire to act in support and in solidarity. The actions and statements of Mennonite individuals who developed personal relationships with members of the Little Buffalo community pointed toward a more deliberate and hopeful construction of common purpose. This would be constructed, in part, through the willingness of individuals to immerse themselves in the Lubicon society and to remain susceptible and open to community members, negotiating daily their role and presence in the community.

Conclusion¹³

What does advocacy for and with the Lubicon mean for those who felt compelled by their religious faith to respond to the situation experienced by this community? How does the Mennonite participation with the Lubicon compare to the type of advocacy expressed by the church-based Lubicon support movement of the 1980s and 1990s? Was there a uniquely Mennonite social justice response to situations of Aboriginal injustice? What is the potential of similar Mennonite relationships with other impoverished and struggling Aboriginal communities like the Lubicon Cree of Little Buffalo?

My thesis is, first, that while Mennonite individuals and institutions participated in the initiatives and actions of the church-based support movement, Mennonites supplemented this with a physical presence in the Lubicon community. Second, this response provided some indication of the unique strengths and problems of the Mennonite reaction to the oppression or social marginalization of Aboriginal peoples. Support for this thesis is based on several points drawn from the previous discussion of interchurch and Mennonite activity with the Lubicon.

First, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, members of the church-based support network readily participated in specific campaigns and initiatives as requested by the Lubicon. However, during those periods of time between specific action campaigns, most of these supporters had almost no contact with the Lubicon until the next request for assistance. Mennonites, while participating in these campaigns, also emphasized the creation of an ongoing community presence at Little Buffalo. Therefore, instead of spurts of activity and episodic support, the Mennonite willingness to participate in community life over periods of time provided more opportunities for developing direct people-to-people relationships.

Second, the agenda of the church-based support network has been geared toward the resolution of land rights and Aboriginal status struggles by creating a public resistance to the power of government and industry. The Mennonite constituency has been reluctant to support confrontation, but does affirm Lubicon advocacy within the wider context of economic and social community development. By focusing on this wider context, Mennonites encouraged a dialogue about the potential shape of the community after the land rights question is resolved.

Third, while the activities of the support network are aimed toward redressing the structural inequities and power differentials between the Lubicon and the forces of government and industry, the Mennonite activities have helped to assert the importance of cultural sensitivity and of the slow, frustrating task of building people-to-people relationships. As Bill Janzen, another former executive director of MCCA, wrote in July 1991 after a trip to Little Buffalo, "a basic understanding of the culture, their vision, and the development of a trust relationship needs to be developed before we can move in to help them."

The significance of the Mennonite response to the Lubicon is communicated by the fact that MCCA and MCCC continue to be valued partners in the search for justice for the Lubicon. In the spring of 2000, MCCA was requested to send a representative to monitor future negotiations between the Lubicon and federal and provincial government representatives. The first set of this round of negotiations, on May 8 and 9, 2000, included two Mennonite representatives as observers. In fulfilling this role, these individuals demonstrated a type of support similar to that seen at the Lubicon barricades in October, 1988 – a visible symbol of the presence of the Church standing with the people in the midst of conflict – but they did so with the realization that years of personal and community relationships created the opportunity for this visible presence.

In conclusion, a social justice advocacy must include both the aspect of walking with the people one purports to assist and the aspect of speaking for justice to the systems of power. Interchurch supporters have readily lent their voice and their presence in the effort to speak to the structures of power. Mennonite support also includes a renewed emphasis on the importance of standing with the people, being open and present to them on a daily basis.

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Notes

¹ I acknowledge with gratitude the feedback on an earlier draft of this paper from Abe Janzen, director of Mennonite Central Committee Alberta, and from the readers for the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

² Space does not permit a full, detailed description of the Lubicon struggle. Goddard (1991) provides the most comprehensive account of the Lubicon situation up until the early 1990s. For an update on the struggle throughout the 1990s, see Churchill (1999:190-236) and *Solidarite*, the newsletter of the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, 151 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N8.

³ While the church-based Lubicon support movement exhibited some distinct characteristics as noted here, it must also be viewed as one part of a larger coalition of public support for the Lubicon. For more information about this larger coalition and about the interaction of the various parties within it, see Long (1997).

⁴ The Innu of Labrador also share a long history of struggle for recognition of aboriginal rights and land sovereign status while land and resources are exploited by outside interests, particularly the use of Innu territory for low-level high-speed military flying training by NATO.

⁵ All quotations attributed to unnamed individuals are taken from interviews conducted in 1998 and 1999 for a Ph.D. dissertation on the interchurch response to the Lubicon conflict.

⁶ See Ryan and Ominayak (1987) for a discussion of the implication of this particular ruling.

⁷ See "RCMP Raid on Lubicons Shakes MP", *Edmonton Journal*, October 21, 1988.

⁸ This assessment was noted by most of the blockade participants interviewed during my dissertation research.

⁹ Quoted in field notes, March 3, 1999.

¹⁰ See "Day of Prayer and Rumors on the Blockade", *Edmonton Journal*, October 17, 1988 for the original publication of the photograph.

¹¹ See "MCC Action Defended", *Carillon News*, November 15, 1988.

¹² See "Mennonite Central Committee Statement: Lubicon Protest at Little Buffalo", October 15, 1988 (a statement presented to the press at the barricade) and "MCC Action Defended", *Carillon News*, November 15, 1988.

¹³ It must also be noted that all conclusions are tentative since it is only possible to tell one side of the story here. More direct feedback from the Lubicon people of Little Buffalo is needed to test these ideas and ensure that Lubicon insights and concerns are properly heard.