

**Athabasca Area Seniors' Memory Project**  
**Transcription of Charles Sequeira recording 2015.mp3**  
[http://digiport.athabasca.ca/aasmp/people/c\\_sequeira.htm](http://digiport.athabasca.ca/aasmp/people/c_sequeira.htm)

Narrator: Charles Sequeira  
Interviewer: Peggy Baker  
November 27, 2015

[Start of Interview]

**Peggy** This is Peggy Baker and I'm talking to Charles Sequeira at his home in Edmonton. The date is November 7, 2015 and we're about to start talking about his growing up years in India.

**Charles** My name is Charles Sequeira. I was born September 10, 1925. My schooling was in India at two or three different kinds of schools. My father was an administrator and a magistrate. Those days, it was a combined focus and there was no separation. So, he used to be transferred from place to place. Some schools were Indian schools, some schools were Anglo-Indian schools, and some schools were European schools. There's a distinction here because European schools had a British superintendent who inspected and the curriculum was a little different. The Indian schools had district educational officers, and usually it was an Indian who would be the educational officer. That said, after high school, I went to St. Joseph's College in Mangalore. After that, I went to Loyola College in Madras to pursue my arts degree. And finally, I took my masters in economics and political science. Throughout my education, it was in Jesuit institutions. My father spent a lot of money sending me to all these colleges. I took my LLB degree, my law degree in Pune, a city a little south of Bombay.

After articling for a year, I practiced law for a while. I was a junior to Justice Kushnia, who at that time was a leading criminal and civil lawyer, and then he was an MLA as a minister for justice. Then he went to the high court in Kerala, and after that he was released to the Supreme Court. I had the good fortune to work in his office for a while as a junior lawyer. Later on, after I was practicing law, I was appointed as a prosecutor and later as judicial magistrate.

I trust in my destiny. I was always dreaming of going abroad. Canada never came to my mind. Most people went to Britain or Africa, or some other place. I wanted to go to other places and spend some time outside for a while, not as an immigrant, but as a guest worker program and come back after a few years. I went to my mother and my mother wept because I had lost my father the year before. She said, why would I want to leave the country when I had a good job? My wife later said she would stay here with the blessings rather than leave India with her tears. So, we decided not to go. At that time, we had no children. Then after a few years, we had three children and the idea came back again to go abroad when things were getting a little bad as a prosecutor and later as a judicial magistrate. With three wars with Pakistan over Kashmir, all the money was

going for defense. Number two, with inflation things were getting hard for salaried people. Number three, there was a frontier dispute between China and India in the northeast and we were at war with China for a few years. When the Communist Party was split into two, the Moscow Group and the Peking Group, hundreds and hundreds of people were arrested. There was a lot of turmoil, especially in Bengal and Kerala.

**Charles** Kerala was a highly literate state. Even when I left India in 1966, anybody below 60 years old were all literate. It was 100% literacy, and politically were a trial [unclear] state. During that time, in Bengal, one judge and a prosecutor were assassinated. Taking it all together with a young family, I thought maybe I should go abroad. By that time my mother said, "From now on you can do what you want. I'm getting old. You seek your own future." After we got her blessings, we went to Delhi where we had an interview, had a medical exam, and finally took the plane from New Delhi after our immigration. We arrived in Montreal the next day, that'll be November 29 to 30th, early morning 1966. Then we took a plane from there, Air Canada and arrived at about 12 o'clock midnight in Edmonton. When we got down, it was 40 below. So, we took a taxi and went and stayed at the King Edward Hotel. Now it has been burned and is lost due to fire. It was a nice hotel. We stayed there for the night and next morning it was too late to catch the Greyhound bus. The children were a little air sick so we thought we'll take a taxi. We took a taxi and came to Athabasca. The house that was kept for us was delayed because our immigration was delayed without papers. I had to get permission to leave the country and get clearance from the high court, as a magistrate, and from the home department, as a prosecutor. Secondly, I had to get a clearance certificate from the Accountant General that I had no loans for cars or whatever. When I was cleared by that time, our immigration was delayed and we came, took a taxi and came over here.

Mr. Larson was the superintendent and his good secretary, Effie Nelson, and Mr. Hall was the chairman. They all came to meet us at the Union Hotel and made arrangements for us to stay there until we got a house in a week or so. Mr. McGregor, the principal of the school, came to take Rita the very next day to school, and she started teaching duties.

Down below in the Union Hotel was the pub. It was not easy for me to go to a pub in India because I worked in small towns, district towns and going to a pub was not acceptable, because I held a judicial position. This was a good idea for me to have an idea of what a pub would be. So, I went downstairs. Rita refused to come with me, so I went. I wore my suit, not knowing what to expect in a foreign country. As soon as I came to the pub, the door was closed. And I saw there, no guns, no knives allowed inside. I suddenly thought about some of the American films that I saw in India about these wild west towns. I wondered, what am I getting into here? Anyway, I was brave enough and I went in. I sat there and somebody came and served me beer. Before I knew it, more than four or five people came around and sat at my table, uninvited. I thought, oh, who are these people now? But they were such nice people. They were very hospitable and we talked for a while and we had a beer.

After a week or so, we got a house, a very old house near the brick school. There was no heating arrangement. There was only an oil heater in the living room and that heat had to spread throughout the house. Once you went to the bathroom, it was really, really cold. Later on, we moved to a better house that was available near the hospital. It was Charlie Fix's house. We stayed for almost a year or two. Then we thought, no more moving here and there and we built our own house on the south hill close to high school.

**Charles** In my case, I went to the dean of the Faculty of Law and he said he knew my university, my law degree, and he knew the founder of my college, who was also a federal court judge in India. He knew the name Dr. J. Edgar, but he said, I recognize your degree, but I have no vacancy. I could have given you a job to teach comparative law but unfortunately, I've no vacancy. You could do your master's based on my LLB to pursue my LLM. I was ill prepared for that because just before I left India, the rupee was devalued and the Reserve Bank of India, allowed me only \$40.00 subsistence allowance to come to Canada. With limited resources, I couldn't think of pursuing my graduate work. He suggested that I approach the Law Society because the university has nothing to do with practicing the law.

I wrote to the Law Society and it placed very punitive conditions that I should go back for three years and article again for one year. It was too long for four years to do that. I had told Mr. Larson that I'm prepared to teach. He said, since you were interested in teaching why not meet the dean of the Faculty of Education. So, I went to Professor Pilkington, who was the Associate Dean from Scotland, a very nice man. He shook hands with me and he said you're welcome, but I may have to do, for one year, some educational courses since I was never in education. I thought it was fair enough. I took a loan from the bank. My wife, with three children stayed in Athabasca, she was teaching, and she kept the fires burning until my year was over, seven or eight months. After coming back, I joined the teaching staff. We both taught senior high, she taught English and I taught Social Studies. I also started a blog post for the high school Grades 11 and 12.

We knew the winters were cold, and remember I told you our first house was heated only with an oil heater. One day when for two weeks we had 60 to 65 below in 1966/67, and at midnight, some five or six people knocked at the door. I opened the door and here are some people, I think, from the United Church with blankets. They said it's a cold house and we have brought some blankets for you. I was really moved by the hospitality that they showed. I should not fail to say that when we came here, except for the correspondence with Mr. Larson and the secretary, Effie Nelson, we didn't know anybody personally. The United Church was the only church that gave us that moral support in the person of Reverend Clifford Parkes. He was the minister of the United Church at that time. He had come from Britain three years before we came, and he used to constantly come and visit us. He was a source of a lot of moral support because we didn't know anybody at that time. I have to say that I'm always grateful to Mr. Parkes and the United Church.

After finishing my studies at the university, I joined the staff until at the age of 60, my health was failing with heart problems and blood pressure. I had to resign from teaching but still, I could not keep quiet in the house. Some suggested that I run for the school board. It was a by-election and it was unanimous. When I ran for the next term, I got 87% of the votes, so I was happy. I got a good majority to start a different kind of life as a school board member. Later on, I was Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Board for a few years. Until my health failed and we were forced to come to Edmonton because for want of specialists. We moved to Edmonton seven or eight years back. So, that is our history.

**Charles** When I was in Athabasca, I tried to do my master's degree and then later on I got a fellowship from Ottawa to pursue my PhD degree. I was working on the metropolitan satellite model of development and to what extent it can be related to Canada. I was trying to make a study of the distinction between some of the problems that India had when I lived there and what kind of problems we could have in Canada. What I noticed was that what divided India was religion and the caste system. Caste was supposed to be pure division of labor. It finally became a sore point in Indian society. From achieved status, it went to a scripted status where they were born into it. We had a lot of untouchables who were disenfranchised, who are not in the mainstream Hindu society. The others were in a hierarchical ladder, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, etc. When I came here, I found it was not so much caste but being an immigrant country where the population is mainly coming from immigration. I was perceiving that there'll be a problem if the economy goes down because economics seems to be the central focus for any problems in society. Usually, when the economy is down, always it is the immigrant who is to be blamed for the unemployment because they say local jobs are being robbed. This is happening in the States with Mexicans. I thought we may run into a problem if the economy doesn't run well. It was already showing some shaky signs in the economy. I thought the only solution was to build a multicultural society.

I was happy when I was asked by the province to be a member of the Premier's Multicultural Committee in Alberta. I pursued my ambition to make further study. When the Alberta Multicultural Commission was appointed and they came to the Athabasca University for a hearing, I gave a presentation about the problems that we may face as an immigrant province, immigrant country as a whole, and Alberta in particular, I also took part in the early stages as the secretary of the Lions Club and later on in the Rotary Club and a few other community activities. To support the disabled, I attended the meetings at the Alberta Association for Community Living as a board director and as the vice president.

All in all, it was a very fruitful life that my wife and I and our children spent in Athabasca. We found it was a great community to live in. A very hospitable community, and I'm grateful. My children themselves told me, Dad I'm happy you didn't go to Ottawa or anywhere for any federal jobs. I'm glad you stayed in Athabasca because we saw the difference between schools in Athabasca and schools in the city when we went to university. My children are grateful that we raised our family in the town of Athabasca, a very hospitable and friendly community. We saw a diverse community of Anglo-Saxons, French, Polish, Ukrainian, what have you. Plus, we are from India. It was great to live in

Athabasca. We still look back many times at the good days we had and we still miss Athabasca after spending the best years of our lives from age 42 to past 80 years old.

**Peggy** I was wondering if you would like to compare the things you did when you were a kid with the things that your kids did in Canada.

**Charles** As a kid, I was essentially interested in debating at the high school level. I took an active part and many times, I won some debates, inter-school and inter-district debates. At the college level, my interest was the independence movement that gained momentum from 1943 to 1945. When home rule was denied, Gandhi called for our independence. We, as young students, joined Gandhi and the Congress movement for the independence of India. I was quite active in the political movement at that time. Then, I was the first second-year university student to be the president of the student union at the college level. Usually, it was the monopoly of a BA student final year or BSc or a BCom. All in all, it was a very fruitful and engaging time. It was a dangerous time too, because of the all-out police actions. Many times, we had to face a lot of reserve police coming and threatening to arrest us. Fortunately for me, the principal of our college told the police that as long as they are educated within our premises, they shouldn't be doing anything to us. So that was a pretty active life as a student.

My children were also engaged in debating in Athabasca. All my three students were presidents of the student union at the Edwin Parr Composite High School. Especially my son, Prem, and Aroon also, they took part in a lot of inter-school debates and went to the international level. Prem especially, and once in a while Aroon, took part in the CFRN debates that were conducted in Edmonton. My wife used to drive the students there, my two children and some of the debating students from Edwin Parr. She also hosted two provincial tournaments in Athabasca and put the Athabasca town on the map. Everybody knew Edwin Parr Composite debating students.

**Peggy** For recreation, I was wondering when you went out to play, what did you do?

**Charles** Recreation, that was a real problem. As a student, we had ground hockey, not ice hockey. I was the vice-captain of the high school team and I played tennis and cricket. After my university and when I joined the bar, I kept going with my tennis. The lawyers and judicial officers had our own club and we played tennis. When we came to Athabasca, unfortunately, it was mostly curling, skating and I was nervous. I didn't want to break my back when I was in my 40s. I did not take part in any of the sports activities or athletic activities, because I had no idea of skating and skiing. But my children are avid skaters. They used to go to the mountains to skate when they were young and youthful, and had enough energy to do all that.

**Peggy** I was also wondering about your memories of your years as board chairman of the education system. What do you remember as being your proud achievements or failures?

**Charles** There was a lot of resentment regarding the teaching of French. Before my election as a board member, one of the items on my manifesto was that if I am on the board, I will see that there is French immersion introduced in our school systems. I tried to appeal to the parents that learning more than one language only raises the IQ of students. It doesn't diminish them. The more languages you know, the better it is for your children. I impressed upon them the benefits of having French taught in our schools. In fact, I told some people that when my kids came here, they could read and write in three or four languages: English; Hindi as the national language; my own mother tongue, Konkani, which is derived from Marathi or Hindi; and the local languages, Malayalam and Assamese. They could read all the newspapers I brought in different languages, except, my daughter who was only three and a half or four years old. To me, that was a great thing and a great benefit to our student population in Athabasca.

**Peggy** Were there any particular challenges for those years?

**Charles** Things went quite smoothly. Nobody challenged any of my decisions or suggestions. As a chairman, my stand was to convince people if there is going to be some policy change or something. I tried to resolve the conflicts even before they started, when I perceived a conflict would arise. The best thing to do it was to convince them that we are all working for the common good. I may represent Athabasca, but I represent the whole county. You also do the same. You represent your own jurisdiction, but on the whole, it is for the common good of all students in the county. With that kind of an approach, I thought we could resolve a lot of conflicts, unnecessary competition, unhealthy competition. I didn't have any problems, so thank God for that. We had two or three different superintendents during my time. Of course, as the chairman, I was on the selection committee also. Everything went smoothly.

**Peggy** You talked quite a bit about how much you like Athabasca and what you appreciated about Canada. Are there things about India that you wish that you could transfer to Canada?

**Charles** I think Canada is a great country. It's a very tolerant country. Of course, you will always have a minority group of rednecks that you'll get anywhere, including India. Of course, there's always been the annoying problem with the native people, the heritage we got from the old colonial society, unfortunately. I think even that is going to be resolved really nicely, especially now with Notley in Alberta and at the federal level, Mr. Trudeau, again, quite a liberal person without any extreme right wing conservative ideas. There's a lot of hope in Canada to be an emblem or a leading star for other nations to imitate Canadian multiculturalism. We've got a long way to go. I'm sure we can overcome all that with different and diverse populations coming. You can expect conflicts, but I think we know how to resolve them also in a very nice way, and I think they are doing it very well. Especially now with Trudeau at the federal level, and Mrs. Notley at the Alberta level, we are having a great team politically. The very fact that the Liberals and the NDP don't have a common agenda, yet are able to work amicably. They're trying to show that we are heading very well in the future, in the right direction.

**Peggy** Sounds like you're always interested and involved in politics from your student days. How did you get involved or initiated into it in Athabasca?

**Charles** I found the student population was a little tame from what I saw. The Indian student population is very volatile, very active. When I came here, I think there was a lot of complacency that there are good reasons for that. It has been a very peaceful country with very little conflicts. While in India, it was always conflict. I thought it is Hindu, Muslim, or it is caste system creating conflicts. At the same time there were very progressive movements of student population to say that this is all outdated medieval societies, we do not want that anymore. We are to build a modern society. But you will always have rednecks everywhere and in India, we also have them. It takes time. India also is a very diverse society. We have some 200 dialects and languages, and 14 to 16 official languages, so you can imagine the diversity. Here with two languages, French and English, we have a conflict, then imagine how much it is for 14 or 16 official languages. But things are coming.

**Peggy** How did you get it initiated into politics in Athabasca and Alberta?

**Charles** I was always a social democrat, even in India. I liked Karl Marx, but I didn't like a one-party state. I never joined the Communist Party. The closest to me after that was the social democracy. At the international congress, at that time, under Nehru and Gandhi, I would say they were social democrats. They believed in the people. They believed in the welfare of the people. They did not want to serve only the elite class. I found that good Baptist minister, Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan. When I was reading his manifesto, I was attracted towards that. Even after coming here, I always had social democratic values and social democratic beliefs. It has its own weaknesses, but we can't do things in a hurry. People have to slowly get used to it. When I read Perestroika by Gorbachev, I was more than convinced that it would be with a one-party state where absolute power corrupts absolutely. Lord Acton's old adage stays even now. And number two, what Johnson said once, politics is the last resort of the scoundrel. I truly believe that social democracy will achieve its goal for a better society in Canada or in India.

**Peggy** So you found people who enjoy debating with you about politics.

**Charles** We had very heated debates. Like Mr. Mike Butler, he came from Britain, he had a few colonial ideas. He was a child of the empire and I was a child of Gandhi and Nehru, so there were always conflicts. At the same time, he was one of my best friends ever since day one when we came to Athabasca, until his death. I was asked to speak for his funeral eulogy. After the eulogy, his daughter Susan, and his son David, came to me and said, how come with all those heated discussions you had in the house, you still became such good friends? They were surprised that we remained friends till the very end. When we debate, it should not be personal. We should be fighting on ideas and ideology, rather than personal attacks. Unfortunately, that is what is happening in politics, as we saw during the last federal election. Extremely sad. Even conservatives, I have no quarrel with them, if they were the type of say, Joe Clark or Stanfield. They

were decent conservatives, but not the type of people we had later on, that extreme right wing. I don't think Canada deserves that kind of a government.

**Peggy** You got involved with people who thought the same as you and you found that in the New Democratic Party.

**Charles** I found a lot of things common to what I believed in. A fair society, decent wages for people. You can't make money by giving them low wages and make money on the backs of the people. You have a fair wage and you have your fair profit.

**Peggy** Was Leo Piquette's campaign the first one that you were involved in?

**Charles** When Leo Piquette ran, I was the president of the constituency of the NDP party. We worked very hard to get him elected. And we got him elected. I always think the future will always be better. Put the dark side of life behind us.

**Charles** We had a colonial history in India, also the same thing. The problems we have, the wars we fought for Kashmir on religious grounds, were wasteful of people's character, people's integrity, and people's faith in others because of diversity. I think unity is much better than all this disunity. I hope someday we will have a fair and decent society. I think Trudeau has started with better representation in the federal government. I've never heard of so many aboriginal people as ministers, different ethnic groups as ministers. It's not a monopoly of any particular, who came first and who came second. It is that we are all citizens of Canada and treat them all alike. That's the only way to build a healthy, unified society free from all the conflicts.

I shall continue from where I left yesterday. You asked me one or two questions, which were not completed by the time we had to end our interview last night. One was with regard to my coming to Athabasca and some of the experiences. We had no difficulty with the language, but I did have some difficulty to learn the local expressions. I committed a few mistakes or a few embarrassments. One was when some friends came to visit me, my neighbors, and then they said so-and-so was stoned yesterday. I thought he was literally stoned. I didn't realize that he was over tipsy. I was wondering, how on earth can a modern state still apply the Old Testament laws and regulations meant for a primitive society, stoning people for any kind of delinquency?

Number two, kitty-corner. The first year when we came, we had no car for the simple reason the Reserve Bank of India allowed me only \$40.00 subsistence allowance. The rupee was devalued and they clamped down on all currency or jewelry going out of the country. Property had to be declared, immovable property had to be declared. All kinds of restrictions came in, two months before we left. That was hard on us, so we could not afford a car. We used to go by Greyhound bus to Edmonton. Once a friend of ours gave us a ride to Edmonton. He said, meet me after one or two hours at the kitty-corner and he dropped me somewhere in Edmonton. It was 20 or 25 below. I was going around and around the blocks to find out where the kitty-corner was. I thought kitty-corner was a store or something meant for selling toys for kids. Finally, I found that it was nothing



but going diagonally across the road. We soon learned the expressions that were used in Canada.

You asked me about the children. As I said last night, they were very grateful that they grew up in Athabasca. They did very well in school and university. They are now in their various professions. Prem is an orthopedic surgeon and Aroon is a chartered accountant running his own company. He has his own firm and has three or four others, associate juniors working for the firm with three branches. Actually, one in Edmonton, one in Calgary, and one in Vancouver. He's doing quite well there. My daughter, Nimi, took a degree in music and used to give private tutoring at home and earning quite well. She later decided that the children should be home schooled. She is now at home and doesn't do any tutoring for others. She just tutors the two kids who are age 10 and age 12. They are a happy family, very close to where we live. Things are going on quite well as far as the family is concerned. On the whole, we have been very fortunate to have a successful life in Canada. Now I'm 90 years old and I'm ready. Having done all of my duties as a parent, as a father, and whatever. I'd say that any time I am prepared to face the inevitable.

**Charles** I told you yesterday how important it was I found multiculturalism in Canada, having seen the turmoil, conflicts, wars, murders, and bloodshed during the partitioning days between Hindus and Muslims. Also, caste plays a key role in politics to divide and rule. After a few years, we identified that the danger in a peaceful society like Canada would be when things go wrong in the economy. We are essentially an immigrant country and without immigration we will be having a zero-population increase, and we have to depend on immigration. Unfortunately, when things go bad and unemployment increases, the first target will be the immigrant and usually the latest arrival. Everybody had their share of their wars of discrimination by the Ukrainians, later on the Asians, and now also the Africans. I thought the only way to minimize the evils of race and nationality will be through multiculturalism. A key beginning is with schools and the family where children are here to tolerate others, but also to respect them.

As they say, you can tolerate a pimple but you don't respect a pimple on your face. It's the same thing with multiculturalism. Toleration is a very condescending term. It's not toleration that we need, what we need is respect for each other. Multiculturalism is the key. Fortunately, I was on the multicultural provincial committee, appointed by the government of Alberta at that time. Sometime in 1988, we heard that the government appointed a multicultural commission to listen to the voice of citizens all over the province. The commission arrived in Athabasca and held its hearing on November 4th, 1988. As a citizen of Canada and a resident of Athabasca for quite a number of years by then, I attended the hearing and gave my presentation with regard to multiculturalism.

If you don't mind, I will read out a few things that I said at the hearing presentation to the Alberta Multicultural Commission held on November the 4th, 1988, at the Governing Council Chambers, Athabasca University in Athabasca.

**Charles** Honorable Chairman and members of the Multicultural Commission. It is gratifying to note that the government of Alberta has taken the initiative to appoint this commission to solicit public opinion in this province on the important issue of multiculturalism. The submissions made in this presentation centered around the question which asks, what kind of multicultural future do you see in the year 2000? The overall content of the presentation is based on the observations and impressions gathered, and the experiences gained, during the last 22 years when, along with my family of a wife and three small children, I immigrated to Athabasca, Alberta from India. The period of transition was not easy. That was to be expected. There was nothing surprising about it. In fact, the surprising part was how quickly the years passed by and how few years it took for the period of settlement to end in a totally foreign environment. This would not have been the case if it were not for the warm and hospitable community which welcomed a family from a faraway land. It was an era when the province was flowing with milk and honey, and there was a place for everybody in Canada.

The situation in the province and in the nation has changed and is changing. If the present economic trend continues and the present population movement gathers momentum at a global level, Albertans have to be prepared for the inevitable change. Change within Alberta in Canada, and the effects of change in a fast-shrinking world, in an age where traditional national, racial, religious, linguistic, and other protective barriers are becoming more and more obsolete. Since 1972, the government of Alberta has allotted considerable sums of money to prepare Albertans for the future. The intentions are all relevant, however, the results achieved so far are not very encouraging. If the pattern continues, the year 2000 could be more disappointing. At the beginning of this century, multiculturalism was not even relevant as a topic for academic discussion or debate, even for young high school students in Alberta. Because Alberta was fairly a homogeneous population with the native people excluded on the reservations, Alberta was no different from other settled colonies of European empires. Nor was the fate of aboriginal people any different. With the internalization of capital and the consequent mobility and internationalization of labor.

Now with rapid technological changes, beginning with the late 50s, for the first time we saw new faces, heard new languages, and faced new cultures in an increasingly number. New enlightened national policies were and are made at the top level to counter the zero growth Canadian population. The breakup of empires, the rise of independent nations with independent economies necessitated Canadian governments to review national policies in the light of the realities of our dependent world and interdependent world, with the transfer of goods and services and movements of national and human resources from one part of the world to another. However, the common man experiencing the vicissitudes of the unstable and receding economy, unless equally enlightened, will not see the newcomers, especially the visible ones, in the same perspective.

A few decades ago, racist pronouncements and activities were considered to be unCanadian and uncivilized. Using religious sentiments for political and economic gain was assumed to be characteristic of a backward, traditional, and/or primitive tribal

societies of the third world or of the medieval European society of a bygone era. It was presumed that these could never take root in a highly technological society like ours. These sentiments negate this belief. Race, language, and religion, increasingly being used for political mobilization, may bring advantages for the few, but can bring sorrow, misery, and hardship to many innocent victims, their bodies, souls, and minds. These sciences of social pathology are the harbingers of events to come unless strong leadership and enlightened statesmanship are forthcoming. The quantitative increase in laws and regulations to curb anti-social elements are not effective without the qualitative change in personal convictions and commitments developed in the home and in the school.

As an educator, I ask the question: Have our schools inculcated the Canadian core culture in our young? Who will man our educational, government, industrial institutions, and our legislatures? Are our young being prepared for the year 2080? Recent events in Alberta, and in some parts of Canada, prove that schools and universities have largely become training rooms just for salable skills for the labor market to the neglect of educating and I quote, educating the young to be fruitful, intellectually healthy adults of the future. They are ill-prepared for the tremendous changes in the year 2080 and beyond. I do not want to be a prophet of doom and gloom. Albertans as a whole are an enlightened, tolerant, and peaceful people. Many of them, old and new, or their parents or grandparents, have experienced intolerance of various sorts in their own countries of origin. The older generation of Albertans who came from Europe have narrated the stories of how aristocracies of old greeted them or their parents. It was no different from Asian aristocracies, except probably the latter type was more ancient and more ruthless. But public memory is short. Leadership and statesmanship call for a strong political will on the part of decision and policy makers if we have to achieve the objectives of multiculturalism.

**Charles** To this end, the following recommendations are made:

1. A total, not partial, commitment to multiculturalism. Traditional arts like drama, music, and symphony are all important and should be encouraged. But the all-important multicultural reality cannot be treated as a peripheral phenomenon.
2. Equal access to multicultural funding. At present, the disparity exists between funding for traditional arts and funding for multicultural programs and activities.
3. Multicultural activities to be nonpartisan.
4. An independent, permanent multicultural commission to be created to pursue the objectives of multiculturalism on the same lines as the Economic Council of Canada.
5. The above body to be an advisory body to the government.

6. Adequate funding to be provided for such a commission for research activities to help the commission offer proposals to government based on the funding of such research.
7. Adequate powers to be invested on an independent commission or the proper implementation and delivery of goals of multiculturalism throughout the length and breadth of Alberta and across all departments of government.
8. Appropriate legislation to be introduced to make numbers 5 to 8 possible.
9. Individual ethnic groups to be funded, as is presently done, with greater emphasis on an all-embracing multi-organization in the province to avoid ghettoization.
10. Such an all-embracing multicultural organization to be defined as those whose members have been told of all ethnic and racial groups in a community, with the main objective of developing and propagating a core Canadian culture. Again, to avoid ghettoization.
11. The core Canadian culture to be defined as a culture of tolerance, acceptance, and mutual respect for each other's race, nationality, religion, language, customs, and traditions. Further, to have a strong belief in equality of opportunity and accessibility in the true spirit of pluralism, reflecting the ideal of unity and diversity of Albertans and Canadians as a whole, and the reality of global interdependence.
12. To refuse funding to organizations whose objectives and/or activities are counter to the objectives of multiculturalism.
13. To refuse funding to organizations whose objectives on paper are multicultural but its activities are far from Canadian core culture mentioned in number eleven.
14. The government of Alberta to develop a multicultural educational policy to provide leadership and direction to integrate multicultural education in the Alberta education system.
15. The government of Alberta to introduce a mutual and multicultural curriculum as an important and compulsory component from Grades 1 to 12.
16. Such a policy and curriculum to be developed in consultation with school trustees, teachers, and the heritage councils and other interested groups.
17. From the Government of Alberta to the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism and the Department of Education, provide adequate funding and other resources to make multicultural education meaningful to our youth in Alberta.
18. Adequate exposure to be given to this important concept to our educators, teachers, administrators, boards of education and those in the public and private sector.

**Charles** If we want to continue to build a tolerant, enlightened, and understanding society, we have to strive for multiculturalism, not ghettoization. We have to develop a common core culture which is distinctly Canadian in the Canadian environment, if the rich diversity of peoples and cultures which make up Alberta is not to be tarnished by racial or religious, linguistic, and other bigotry. The key ideals of our core culture should play a major role, to build a healthy province and a healthy nation. In the race for the pursuit of material prosperity, we sometimes fail to see the importance of human resources. If you want to get the best out of a citizen for himself and for his country, he should, first of all, feel secure and free. A healthy society cannot be built with insecure citizens fearful of dominant groups, whether they are walking on the streets or in a government office, or before an employer for a job interview, with the fear that one is different and may be treated differently. Respect for one's own culture and that of other Albertans in a multicultural milieu is the only answer to achieve our objectives 12 years from now. May your efforts be rewarding. I am unable to officially present a brief as a Chairman of the Lakeland Regional Council or as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Education, County of Athabasca. Time and distance were against me to hold a joint discussion. But I have no hesitation to state that my colleagues in both these organizations will endorse the views I have expressed here tonight based on the premise that we are all working towards a common good. Respectfully submitted, Charles Sequeira.

**Peggy** Thank you, Charles.

[End of Interview]

Machine transcribed by: trint.com  
Edited by: Shirley A'Hearn  
Proof-read by: Jan Thiessen

March, 2022