

ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

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--- Upon resuming at 9:07 a.m. on Wednesday,
December 1, 1993.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Good morning, everyone. The Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada is resuming its series of public hearings with the presentation of the brief by the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec.

I would like to give the floor to Lorraine Pagé, the President, without further delay.

LORRAINE PAGÉ, President, Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec: Good morning, Mr. Chair, Madam Commissioner.

I would like first to introduce the people who are here with me this morning.

To my right, Daniel Lachance, Vice-President, and to my left, Henri Laberge, a counsellor with the Centrale and the person who wrote the brief we will be presenting today.

The main thrust of our brief is stated in its title, which affirms our belief that the preservation of the national identities and political autonomy of nations

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is one of the essential conditions for the development of those nations as a whole. This applies equally to the Québécois nation and to the First Nations of Quebec and Canada.

DANIEL LACHANCE, Vice-president, Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec: There are numerous analogies in the situations of the Aboriginal people and of the Québécois people in relation to the majority Canadian society which should lead them to work together in their efforts to achieve similar objectives.

Both of us are seeking political autonomy in order to apply solutions that are adapted to our own problems and take into account our respective cultures.

We are not starting from the same place, and our paths may not be identical, and so the similarities in our aspirations may not seem so clear. As so often happens, disadvantaged groups, which are disadvantaged to varying degrees, unfortunately see each other more as rivals and competitors than as potential allies. This perception further disadvantages both sides.

LORRAINE PAGÉ: Our two peoples deserve

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better than the numerous prejudices that both have been subject to and that divide us.

We must recognize that since the Oka crisis in 1990 relations between the Québécois and Aboriginal peoples have seriously deteriorated, that some prejudices have solidified and some misunderstandings have become even deeper.

The CEQ wants to contribute to reestablishing constructive dialogue. We believe that this dialogue must develop through a better understanding of our respective needs and our respective aspirations.

The CEQ will contribute to this dialogue on the basis of what we are and our fundamental options.

You know that the CEQ has been committed since 1990 to working for the national independence of Quebec.

This option is closely connected to the undertaking to work also for real recognition of the right of Aboriginal peoples to self-determination.

It is this dual commitment that serves as the basis for the first chapter of our brief, in which we develop our concept of the national questions, both Québécois and Aboriginal.

Our organization works primarily in

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educational institutions and has a number of Aboriginal people among our members, primarily in northern Quebec, and this explains the particular interest we take in the second chapter of our brief in the role of education in development and self-determination and in the battle against prejudice.

We are a trade union and we believed that it was important, in the third chapter, to put forward some ideas on the role of trade unionism in Aboriginal communities.

One of the difficulties in approaching the Québécois and Aboriginal national questions jointly lies in the misunderstandings that are involved in the use of certain concepts, particularly the idea of "nation" which is used by both groups to refer to our collective identities.

One prejudice that holds that Aboriginal peoples' claim to self-government necessarily requires that there be ethnic or even racially-based governments created. The same prejudice is held by some Canadian nationalists against Quebec nationalism.

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There is also a political will to subvert the feeling of belonging to Quebec as a national territory and make it into something that would be first and foremost an identification with an ethnolinguistic category that exists throughout Canada. On this point, we believe that it is important that the use of the concept of race to identify our collective selves be clearly rejected.

There is no [Aryan?] race. Nor is there an Indian race or an Eskimo race. No human society is a perfect reflection of any racial profile. The concept of race cannot be used to support any claim to nationhood.

Moreover, the heritage that comes to us from our family and ancestors is primarily a cultural heritage, the first foundation of what we designate as ethnicity. Ethnic identity, ethnic culture, should be preserved and cultivated.

However, they are not a perfect reflection of national identity and culture.

A nation is not an ethnic category, nor, most definitely, is it a racial category. It is not a category of people. It is a collective unit which is characterized

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primarily by the fact that it consists of a coherent society, it is connected with a land base, and it has its own way of functioning as a society, and this generally implies that there is a national language and national laws and customs, as well as institutions unique to the society.

It is not necessary that all people who are part of a nation be culturally identical at the outset, that they all come from the same ethnic culture. It is the process of participating in a single society, sharing in a common effort or a vision of a society, that determines membership in a nation, rather than conformity to a cultural profile inherited from one's ancestors.

We must therefore make a distinction between belonging to the French-Canadian ethnic group that is represented in Quebec, in Canada and in the United States on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the Québécois nation, which takes in people of diverse origins, mother tongues and beliefs, who are bound up in Quebec's destiny and are from the outset fully entitled to participate in its future.

Similarly, an Aboriginal nation should be able to integrate people of other origins into its vision of

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society, people who would have the same fundamental rights, the same fundamental obligations as people of Aboriginal origin, including, where appropriate, rights and obligations relating to learning and using the national language of the Aboriginal people concerned, or relating to aboriginal law, whether customary or codified.

The Aboriginal national question, however, has certain unique characteristics that make it impossible to approach it in entirely the same manner as the Quebec national question. Before European colonization, the Aboriginal peoples lived in societies organized in geographic areas which were gradually taken from them, although they had never chosen or agreed to cede those lands.

Moreover, they often became minorities on the lands they had traditionally occupied. They were pushed back onto reserves. They were given a unique legal status which meant that they were subject to a law made by others, that applied only to them.

Some authors have described the peoples who fit the characteristics we have just described as comprising a [fourth world?]. What distinguishes them from the peoples

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of the third world is that in the third world, although the people were conquered, dominated and exploited by the colonizers, they are still a majority on the conquered lands, so that when they achieve national independence they are able to regain political control over that land and their national life.

In colonies where the descendants of the colonizers have far surpassed the Aboriginal population in numbers, the Aboriginal people do not regain political power when the State that is established on their ancestral land becomes independent, and so it is necessary for the Aboriginal peoples to phrase their national questions in innovative terms, and specifically to claim the return of the lands that belong to them.

The concepts of Aboriginal self-government, Aboriginal sovereignty and Aboriginal self-determination presuppose the existence of a defined land base.

We further believe that the status of belonging to a people can legitimately be defined only by that people itself. For this reason, among others, we must replace the Canadian Indian Act with laws that the Aboriginal peoples

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may enact themselves, for themselves.

The Aboriginal people of Quebec are subject to the same Indian Act as Aboriginal people in the rest of Canada.

They are also wards of the State, treated somewhat like perpetual minors. What is unique for them is undoubtedly particularly the possibility of Quebec achieving the status of a sovereign State.

Some of them are wondering what changes the advent of this possibility will make in their present situation and in their progress toward self-government.

We are of the view that the mere fact of Quebec achieving independence will change nothing in the situation of Aboriginal peoples in relation to the dominant society. They will still be dominated peoples, a situation that will *a priori* neither improve nor deteriorate.

Jurisdiction over Indians will be transferred from the Canadian State to the Quebec State, which will inherit the Indian Act and the obligation to carry it out.

We further believe that the Quebec State should then logically offer the Aboriginal peoples a

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redefinition of their political status on the basis of the principles adopted in 1983 by the government of René Lévesque and those approved by the National Assembly in 1985.

These principles expressly recognize 11 Aboriginal peoples in Quebec as distinct nations. They recognize their right to their culture, their language and their customs and traditions, their right to direct their own development, to own and control their lands, to govern themselves, to control the public institutions that meet their needs. and to receive public funds from Quebec that they may administer as needed to meet the objectives that they consider to be fundamental.

We are of the view that the principles adopted by the government of the National Assembly at that time should be considered to be only the starting point for more complete recognition of Aboriginal peoples' right to self-determination.

For example, the rights of Aboriginal peoples should be guaranteed not by ordinary statutes but by a treaty of association which would have the value and effect of a supra-legislative principle.

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In the event that Quebec becomes independent we believe that the 12 peoples who live here should consider themselves to be associated nations, each having a sovereign base with all the jurisdiction and powers that they themselves decide to adopt. This is how we envision the rights of self-determination that we believe belong both to the Québécois people and to the Aboriginal peoples. I shall now move on to the part that deals more specifically with education.

In any organized society, school is the foremost method of passing on the national culture and ensuring that children are prepared to take part in it. But the educational system, the content of the educational process, pedagogical approaches, must all be adapted to the unique needs of each people and its national culture.

We know that the educational levels of Aboriginal people in Quebec, as in Canada as a whole, is considerably lower than among the rest of the population. And we also know that the involvement of Aboriginal communities in directing and managing their school system, while relatively recent, has produced excellent results in

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terms of attendance in elementary school and the first years of secondary school.

The drop-out rate in secondary school is still too high. Dropping out, along with absenteeism, are caused partially by problems within the family and also partially by a failure to adapt the schools to the reality of Aboriginal life.

The unique situation of the people in northern Quebec in terms of education is easier to define than the situation of other Aboriginal people, because of the existence of the Cree and Kativik school boards, which provide elementary and secondary education to their respective populations.

Until about the 1980s educational levels for the Aboriginal populations of northern Quebec were not only considerably lower than those in Quebec as a whole, but were lower than those of Aboriginal people as a whole in Quebec. More than half of the northern population was then functionally illiterate.

That is easily explained by the relative

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isolation in which the northern communities were kept until about the middle of the present century. Since the Aboriginal people took over the school system the situation has been transformed.

Among other things, there has been visible improvement in the rate of school attendance. In the Kativik school board, there has been a steady increase since 1978-79.

In the Cree school board, the increase has been less steady, but it achieved a peak of 3,023 students registered in 1989-1990.

To illustrate the progress made in a relatively short period we would point out that the rate of school attendance among young Inuit aged 5 to 15 years, which was 8 per cent in 1950-1951, was about 95 per cent in 1984-1985, and is probably very nearly 98 per cent today.

Despite this undeniable progress there are still serious problems. There, as in other Aboriginal communities, the problems of dropping out and absenteeism are felt particularly sharply.

There are undoubtedly individual or family causes to explain the high drop-out and absenteeism

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rates among Aboriginal people in northern Quebec, causes that may be similar to those that explain the same phenomenon among young people in isolated rural regions or in disadvantaged areas in the southern urban centres, but there is also unique set of problems around dropping out among Aboriginal people and in the north that must take into account the cultural content of curricula, traditional seasonal activities that involve the entire family or other aspects of their way of life.

In order to respond to these problems, we believe that we must work to transfer greater control of the school system to the nations concerned so that they can create solutions that are better adapted to their students' problems.

Schools that are better adapted to the needs and interests of Cree and Inuit students certainly require a greater number of both Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal professional staff. We must therefore encourage Aboriginal young people who show an interest to move into the teaching profession.

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We must also pay more attention to training non-Aboriginal people who work in Aboriginal communities so that their input will be increasingly better adapted to the Aboriginal context and culture.

Adapting school to Aboriginal culture also presupposes that more attention will be paid in the schools to each community's own language.

In Quebec more than anywhere else in Canada, Aboriginal languages are used and taught in the schools, but more progress must still be made.

While not ignoring the fact that a second language must be learned so that the student can go on to higher education in the institutions in southern Quebec, we must put more emphasis, where the Aboriginal language is still the language used by the majority, on making it the normal and usual language of work, education, communications and business.

The schools have a unique role in this process, but they cannot achieve this objective alone. All of the institutions in the community must contribute to it.

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The final chapter of our brief deals with the question of the role of trade unionism. One of the major changes that affects the way of life of the Aboriginal people of northern Quebec is the introduction of wage labour. This is a break with Aboriginal tradition, which was based on sharing, mutual assistance and egalitarianism.

Unless they join together with other people in the same position, individual employees are in an economically vulnerable situation; they are dependent and in a state of social isolation.

We believe that, initially, trade unionism can provide the beginnings of a response to the difficult situation of Aboriginal employees and assist them in getting back to the essential values of their culture of origin. Indeed, trade unionism is founded on the solidarity of workers in the struggle for greater equality in their economic conditions.

Trade unionism in Aboriginal communities cannot simply be a carbon copy of trade unionism as it is practised in western countries. It will have to adapt to the unique features of Aboriginal cultures and espouse the fundamental demands of Aboriginal peoples.

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Trade unionism is not an abstract idea. It is made up of organizations whose policies and directions are decided by their members, and more specifically by the members who get involved. In order for trade unionism to fully espouse the Aboriginal cause, Aboriginal people will have to get hold of it, take possession of it, take it for themselves.

In conclusion, we want to say that the aspects of self-determination and development that we have not specifically addressed in our brief are nonetheless very important. This is true, for example, of economic independence and economic development, which are necessary conditions for real political autonomy.

However, economic development cannot be conceived of without cultural development, without dissemination of knowledge and skills, without rising levels of competence. For this reason, we have emphasized the importance of finding the best solutions for problems relating to the operation of the school system and educational achievement.

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Development is never just economic. There is no real development if it does not occur across the spectrum.

The problem of underdevelopment found among the Aboriginal peoples is economic, political, social, educational, linguistic and cultural in the broadest sense.

We believe that implementing a new Aboriginal policy founded on the principle of the self-determination of peoples implies abandoning any definition of the Aboriginal as an individual who belongs to a genealogical line and replacing it with the recognized right of each people to define itself in terms of an Aboriginal vision of society.

We believe that precluding discrimination against individuals on the basis of their ethnic background must be reconciled with recognizing the national rights of distinct peoples. Each people must be able to decide its future for itself, while respecting the individual rights of all persons who share its historic destiny, and to freely adopt an autonomous framework for its life along with political institutions appropriate to its

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geographic size, its unique environment and its own culture.

We also believe that exercising the right of self-determination presupposes that the people has its own land base. This is not a matter of reserving lands that the Canadian or Québécois State would continue to own for the purpose of housing the Aboriginal people. We must give each people land which it would own outright and over which it would exercise whatever degree of political autonomy best suits it.

The independent land base of an Aboriginal people should necessarily include all the lands that are at present exclusively reserved to it, with such additional lands as are needed to meet present needs and to allow for genuine development among the peoples in question.

On this land base, a people who so wish can establish autonomous political institutions which will enact laws, develop institutions and [manage?] public property on its behalf. The public schools seem to us to be institutions which should be managed and directed on the

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basis of Aboriginal autonomy as soon as possible, taking into account the unique situation of each people.

In the context of Quebec achieving national independence, we propose that a model of sovereignty-association be put in place among the 12 peoples who share the territory of Quebec. Twelve national governments exercising the powers of their respective peoples, conferred on them alone, in a distinct and autonomous fashion, will collaborate among themselves in a variety of areas, including environmental quality, the protection of plant and animal wildlife, trade relations, scientific and technical development, civil defence and national defence.

This is also the context in which we could arrange to establish common institutions to which each people might decide to assign such political powers as it may not want to assume directly, on a revocable basis.

Whatever happens, the 12 peoples that now inhabit the territory of Quebec, the Québécois people and the 11 Aboriginal peoples, have a stake in mutual

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recognition and in developing cooperative and friendly relations.

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you, Ms.

Pagé. I would like to thank the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec for this presentation, and without further delay request that my colleague, Mary Sillett, start by asking you some questions about your brief, which is substantial and which certainly has an important impact on the work of the Royal Commission.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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LORRAINE PAGÉ: Mr. Laberge, who did the research that resulted in this brief, will try to answer that question.

HENRI LABERGE, counsellor, Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ): These are data that are public, that are published by the educational authorities.

It may be that these data are skewed because it may be that before the 1950s, at that time when the ministry of education was not present in northern Quebec, in fact there was no school board, it may be that the data relate partially to knowledge of English.

These are the data we consulted. Of course if we had done the statistics we would probably not have done them in that manner.

Relying on data that was corrected [collected?] by the educational authorities, that is what we got, about 8 per cent with elementary school in the 1950s, and today about 98 per cent. What we wanted to point out was the enormous progress that had been made.

This progress has been made in a school

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system where considerable value has been placed on the use of the Inuit language while in earlier years the Inuit language was not taught at all in the schools.

It may be that the statistics are not good, but that is what we consulted.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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LORRAINE PAGÉ: I think that you have provided a good illustration in what you just said of the extent to which control by Aboriginal peoples over their institutions has made things much easier.

When you are in charge, by having control over the public institution operating in a particular field, this is the case for education with the Cree and Kativik school boards that may exist, you find ways of occupying that sphere of activity and no one doubts that this situation has made it possible, for example, for school board administrators and the teachers' union to provide for measures that have even assisted in recruiting and hiring Aboriginal teachers.

There are provisions in the collective agreements, for example, that require that when there are

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Aboriginal teachers available, they will be hired before non-Aboriginal teachers. So there are all sorts of measures that may be put in place, that may be organized when there is control over public institutions.

I think that we have succeeded in doing things in the education sector precisely because we had these means, which were not available in other sectors, such as health, or other sectors of economic, cultural or social activity.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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LORRAINE PAGÉ: Daniel Lachance, our vice-president, will be the one to answer that question.

DANIEL LACHANCE, Vice-president, Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec: You understand that on this question as on many others there is no model at this time, but if we look at the situation of Aboriginal people in urban centres and specifically at the relationship to public services, whether they be educational services, health services, whether they be what I might call employment services, vocational training, looking for work, all of the public services that enable an individual to have access to individual development, to live properly, it seems to me that the role currently being played by the Native Friendship Centres should be, in quotation marks, institutionalized so that these centres would play what I would call a referral role for all Aboriginal people living in urban centres.

In other words, we do not believe that all educational services, health services, employment services in the municipalities should be separate for the

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Aboriginal populations living in urban centres, you know, an Aboriginal hospital, an Aboriginal school, and so on.

So all services should be accessible to Aboriginal people living in urban centres.

On the other hand, there should be centres with budgets, with resources, so that there could be real access for Aboriginal people living in urban centres to all of these services, and not mere formal access.

Some Aboriginal people, for example, arrive in Montreal, I am using Montreal because there is a particular concentration there, speaking neither French nor English, and with no knowledge of the services that they may have access to, that can provide them with access to this kind of individual development, access to employment, access to health and educational services.

It seems to me that these centres should have the resources they need so that all Aboriginal people can arrange their lives in that municipality, and during a transitional period, which might be "X" years, some services could be separate. I am thinking for example of language

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services, job skills services, in terms of vocational training.

But as I said, there is no model for this, but it seems to me that the Native Friendship Centres could provide a base for development, to enable Aboriginal people living in urban centres to have access on an equal basis, in terms of both quality and quantity, to public services.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Perhaps I could go back to the first part of your brief and the question of self-government, the clarification you provided on a number of concepts.

I think that it is none too soon, in both Quebec and Canada, to place work on clarifying concepts. Some terms are often degraded or used for the purposes of each group, but without necessarily taking into account the reality that lies behind the concepts.

One of the public discussions we have started, which will continue both in Canada and in Quebec in terms of self-government, is the question of public government versus ethnic government.

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We know, for example, that the Inuit -- this week we had representatives of the Inuit of the western Arctic on the Beaufort Sea, we also had representatives of the Nunavut Inuit, in Baffin and central Canada, and also the Inuit of northern Quebec, Makivik, and of course the position of the Inuit is well known, a public government, that is, covering the geographic area and involving all persons.

Of course they are a majority, but with the right to vote for the government, and so on.

Among the First Nations the perception of the situation is easier because, of course, they have historically lived on reserves, not by choice but because this is how Canadian policies developed. So there is a more ethnic character on the reserves, except that what is often very poorly understood is the fact ... is the distinction between the concept of ethnicity and the concept of political entity.

I think that you have clearly pointed this out here, where the Aboriginal nations have always had policies of exchanging people, adopting people, including

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non-Aboriginals and members of other Aboriginal nations, and so on, and you very clearly point this out in your brief, so that it is the political nature of the will to live together as a nation that is the determining criterion, among the Aboriginal nations as well.

It is somewhat difficult for the public to understand this. There is a lot of public education to be done, I think, because of, among other things, the criteria in the Indian Act for Indian status with more biological relationships, and so on, which has skewed the perception of the concept.

In view of the important role played by the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, the number of members it has, the strategic location, essentially, where the Centrale de l'enseignement finds itself for distributing information in the schools and also more broadly among the public, I can only encourage you to pursue this work of educating the public and clarifying concepts. I think that this would greatly improve the quality of the democratic debate.

Accordingly, the Commission certainly

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receives your efforts very positively. We hope that this will have some effect, because often the debate about concepts that are both as fundamental and as sensitive as that is poisoned at the outset.

The fact that the Aboriginal governments are political governments, of course, with a membership policy that will be under their control, but tradition must be upheld, and that tradition was one of great openness historically, in the past. I think that is important.

I think my colleague, Mary Sillett, mentioned the urban issue. When you talk about a nation, spontaneously, of course, certainly the land base is important, particularly since there are peoples historically who have sailed around searching for land for some years, and often and for quite a few years.

But the reality of urban life is very important in Canada and there is a strong trend toward growth in Aboriginal populations in the cities. This has been a little less common here particularly because of the agreements in northern Quebec, which made it possible for the Cree and the Inuit to remain there and to come in less

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massive numbers to Montreal than they undoubtedly would have come. It is stronger in western Canada.

I think that the pursuit of the concept of government in the cities, I think that it might be very flexible. We had the hospitals association, for example, two weeks ago in Montreal. We know that since 1971 when the Act respecting Health Services and Social Services was revised there was an election process so that people could participate on the boards of directors of health institutions under the law of Quebec. Aboriginal people, of course, did not take advantage of this.

There is a gulf, so there is no participation. Certainly in terms of education, of the schools and school boards, there is a significant desire for control, certainly in the elementary schools, partially in the secondary schools Aboriginal people are recognizing that ultimately they will have to go into the broader public institutions, but the educational system really has pretty much missed the boat throughout Canada in terms of promoting Aboriginal cultures and preserving Aboriginal identity, and

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so on. And that happens in the cities too, of course, as well as in Aboriginal communities and reserves.

Perhaps one final point of clarification.

You say in the opening of your brief, in the introduction, that the Canada-wide referendum ended in a resounding no from the majority, both in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

I would nevertheless like to point out, you know very well that the Inuit in particular voted massively to confirm the existence of the inherent right that was in the Charlottetown agreement.

On the political question, when you talk about a sovereignty-association model for the 12 peoples of Quebec, perhaps a small aside again. Later in the day we will have the Native Alliance of Quebec, which represents many of the Métis in Quebec. We had the Association des Métis du Québec here in May.

Of course what they tell us is that they are always falling through the cracks, they are always forgotten, they are not recognized in the brochure from the Secrétariat des Affaires autochtones as a 12th nation.

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Everybody always talks about 11 nations. But their existence is still an important.

I would just like to point out this concern among the Métis of Quebec. This is always a situation that is very frustrating for them, in that they find themselves to some extent in a place between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people, and they are driven from pillar to post, with nowhere of their own. This is not their vision of things.

They have made presentations to the Commission. If you are interested we can send you transcripts of what they have said. Some thinking needs to be done on this issue.

I know that you are involved in the Forum paritaire. We had their presentation on Monday morning. One of the questions I asked at that time was about the sovereignty-association formula proposed in the context of Quebec achieving its own full sovereignty and also put forward as valid in the context of Canadian federalism.

So it would be the principle of sovereignty-association between the Aboriginal peoples and Canada and of course the provinces that would apply. This

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is your perception, it is from this perspective even if you don't return to it in your brief you of course demonstrate it more in terms of Quebec.

You have considered that model as interchangeable, for either Canada or Quebec

LORRAINE PAGÉ: In the context of the discussions within the Forum paritaire we worked on the dual option, but in the base for the brief that we are presenting, given that our Centrale is formally committed to the national independence of Quebec, we developed this aspect of sovereignty-association more in the context of Quebec achieving independence, but in fact in the discussions we had in the Forum paritaire it was clear to us that the formula could be transferable in the event that the Canadian framework was retained.

I would even say if Quebec achieved independence this formula of sovereignty-association could be put in place within the rest of Canada, to which Quebec would no longer belong.

This is really a concept that is suited both to the situation of an independent Quebec and the rest of Canada, and to Canada if it remained in its entirety as

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a recognized country.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You are aware, however, that in the context of Canadian federalism a process like that, which would retain two levels of government, the government of Canada and the provinces, the concept of sovereignty-association would be in addition to that. So it is more complex than it would be in the Quebec model from the perspective which you have taken.

LORRAINE PAGÉ: Of course. We are convinced that the Canadian Constitution is complex, if nothing else.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In terms of the second part of your brief, on education, one major concern is to persuade Aboriginal young people to complete secondary school, and you indicate, at one point, for the Cree, year 4, for the Inuit, year 3. Secondary school is a period of difficult and crucial years, when young people may drop out.

In terms also of convincing young people to go on after secondary school, during our public hearings we have met with several thousand young people in the schools -- in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 -- to discuss with them the barriers to continuing their education.

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Does the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, through its members who are attached, the school boards in northern Quebec, among others, but also for the public school boards, whether in Sept-Iles, Uashat, Malioténam, and so on, do you have any thoughts at this time about succeeding specifically ... I know that the drop-out rate is a general problem, but do you have any thoughts, is there any effort specifically in respect of the Aboriginal situation, to try to counteract, because the drop-out rate is even higher among Aboriginal people and the population is very young and growing.

Do you have a program, an approach, have you had discussions with the teachers, together with the parents, to try to help do something about filling this gap, which is really very costly for the Aboriginal peoples.

LORRAINE PAGÉ: A few things on that point.

Daniel and Henri will be able add to them.

First, we provided you with a document entitled [TRANSLATION] "Research notes on the school of success [success in school?] in northern Quebec", in which

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we wanted more specifically to pursue the discussion of the phenomenon of failure, of quitting, and so of educational success, adapted to the reality of Aboriginal peoples' lives.

This is one of our overall concerns.

The Centrale has done a lot of work and research on the theme of failure and quitting school, but we wanted more specifically to examine this situation for the Aboriginal people with our teachers who belong to the AENQ, the Association des enseignants du Nouveau Québec, precisely to pursue the analysis of the phenomenon, and the solutions that might be proposed to solve the problem, a little more.

We are still planning a conference to be held in the area under the jurisdiction of the Cree and Kativik school boards, to pursue this with the various people involved, and when we talk about the people involved we of course include the teachers and professional staff, but we also include school administrators, parents, representatives of the community itself, so that, I would say, we can adapt our thinking to the specific situation.

This plan is being discussed with the

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two school boards and we are moving ahead with it, there are much more significant organizational difficulties in view of the size of the area in question, but in spite of everything it is a plan that might have a good chance of succeeding and that would enable us to really pursue the concrete application, I would say.

At the same time we find with our members who are working in certain regions that you had identified, not only in the secondary schools but for example in college-level institutions, there are plans under way precisely to promote the integration of Aboriginal young people who are arriving at college.

Even if we succeed in developing public education in the Aboriginal communities at the elementary and secondary levels, when we get to the post-secondary level we have to do it through a different system, there are formulas, programs to be established to promote, first to attract Aboriginal young people, and after that to keep them, to give them the appropriate services, and particularly at the CEGEP de Baie-Comeau and the CEGEP de Sept-Îles, we have

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initiatives there that have been developed and that could provide useful reference points in terms of identifying possible solutions for the problem.

But there are some constant facts that we want to point out. In the brief, we point out, the turning point comes in Secondary III, Secondary IV, these are the key years, we find, even among Québécois youth. This a really a specific situation.

This demands all sorts of measures in terms of pedagogical approaches, in terms of guidance, because often this is where the choice in terms of educational direction in school as it relates to occupational direction arises most pointedly in a closed context.

In terms of economic development and employment, there are problems that are unique to non-Aboriginal people and even more problems that are unique to Aboriginal people, when we look at the economic development situation and the job prospects that may exist in their own communities.

Now Daniel will continue, and then Henri.

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DANIEL LACHANCE: I would like to continue what Ms. Pagé was saying. There are some questions unique to the schools. There are problems that can be dealt with in the schools themselves, and we refer to them in the Centrale's brief, for example, the problems of young people left in foster families while the parents and the rest of the family go about their traditional occupations.

We make a number of proposals which are not a panacea, of course, because I think we have to look at this question in greater depth.

For example, because the foster families do not by any means have the resources to support the young people in their studies, for all sorts of reasons, we are talking about creating student residences with a cultural environment that would provide young people with support in their studies.

When we talk about residences, that brings back memories for some Aboriginal nations that are not necessary very pleasant, of things that happened at the beginning of the century.

We also refer to the importance of

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teacher training, training teachers who come from the south, during the transitional period when Aboriginal teachers might be replacing them but who in fact arrive in the north with no training about the political, economic, social and cultural situation in which they will be teaching.

And so we make some proposals as to the type of training that these teachers should be receiving.

It seems to me that once all this is set in motion and all this is done, if the Indian Act is not eliminated, if the feeling of being treated like wards of the State, minors, and so on among the Aboriginal population, is not eliminated, if there is no feeling of being able to control their land, control what they become, control their future, of securing real, sustainable economic development, prospects of power, putting this training, as a citizen but also as a person who wants to contribute to his or her region's economic development, into practice, it seems to me that in a few years we will still have high drop-out rates, even if we are able to create an environment that respects the values of history and so on.

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It seems to me that there is a very important key point in economic development and on this point, I will close with this, vocational training too, which is relatively undeveloped in a context of the economic development of a particular region, is perhaps also a key that will be able to reduce the drop-out rate substantially.

In both the south and the north we have to begin to promote vocational training again, but I think that in the Aboriginal regions that is even more important.

HENRI LABERGE: I think that the important points have been made.

The role of the schools, because the schools cannot do everything, it is all institutions together, as Daniel said; I shall divide the role of the schools into two parts.

There is the curriculum aspect and the aspect of the organization of the schools.

In terms of curriculum, we have put a lot of emphasis on the place of Aboriginal languages, Aboriginal cultures, adapting curriculum to the specific needs of each community, first.

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In terms of organization, there are methods of organization that must be adapted to the situation, for example, families among the Crees, for example, where for part of the fall and all winter the family goes into the forest. These are situations that have to be taken into account, and we must find solutions that are truly appropriate.

When we suggest a solution it is, of course, just a suggestion. It is not a formal proposal, because the real solution is something the community will have to invent and find the one that best meets the needs and aspirations of young people.

Also the fact that the difference in the length of the days and nights, between summer and winter, is not the same in the south as in the north. I imagine that there are probably also effects on the level of interest in being in school.

These are also some factors that mean that it may not be necessary for the school calendar to be exactly the same as in the south. It might be reorganized

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some other way to take into account seasonal, climatic and cultural factors involved in the peoples' way of life.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Mary Sillett would like to follow up on that.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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LORRAINE PAGÉ: Obviously there are a number of goals in teaching history. First, knowledge of one's self, one's people, one's nation. I would say this is one aspect, national pride, that is essential.

There is also education that supports the struggle against racism, the struggle against prejudice, through better knowledge not only of one's self and one's nation, but also of others, of the part played by others in the development of one's nation.

While the program or content of national history should be adapted in teaching history for Aboriginal people, I think that at the same time this imposes a need to review the teaching of history for non-Aboriginal people, because our history has been distorted.

The teaching of history has been distorted in Quebec and in Canada and the actual role of the Aboriginal nations has very often been concealed, if not simply presented as a caricature.

When, for example, in our brief, we refer

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to the struggle against prejudice and to the very deep-rooted prejudice that is often the result of mutual lack of knowledge, there is no doubt in our minds at the Centrale and even less in my mind, since I taught history for years, that the teaching of history is a determinative factor.

This is true for relations with the Aboriginal peoples but I would say that it is also true from the point of view of cross-cultural education, because we also can no longer teach history in Quebec and in Canada and continue to deny the reality of the fact that numbers of immigrants have arrived over the years who have contributed to the very essence of the Canadian people or the Quebec nation.

And so these factors must necessarily be taken into account. And that brings us back to two concepts at the same time: revision of the programs of national history, but more than that, the latitude that is allowed for adapting, for applying, for configuring history courses.

In fact there is a need to have some space to introduce curriculum that is more meaningful, depending on the region where you are teaching, and the nation or people whom you are teaching.

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I think that you have put your finger on something very important in terms of the struggle against racism, on mutual knowledge and respect. To me, this is an essential factor.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT: [ENGLISH]

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I know that the ministry of education has changed quite a number of things in terms of school texts and so on, the program.

Last week I took part in a meeting at Laval University in Quebec City and I was talking with a teacher about the how young people in Quebec in the schools lack knowledge about the Aboriginal reality. He pointed out that there was a component of the program of the ministry of education. At the elementary level, in grade 4, I think, there is provision for specific teaching.

If I had a recommendation to make on that point, it seems to me that there is a lot missing, beyond the question of history, which is extremely important, but young people don't know very much.

Young people come out of elementary school, come out of secondary school, and do not know about

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the physical and geographic reality of the Aboriginal people in Quebec.

You talk about 11 nations, perhaps 12, the people don't know what they are, where they are, what the languages are, the number of people involved. This is purely in physical and geographic terms.

There is a little brochure, you know it, the Quebec Secrétariat des Affaires autochtones, which has a map and ... I can only think that if we spent two hours with young people, without upsetting the entire program, going over this physical and geographic reality and the aboriginal language situation with the young people, that would ultimately make a big difference.

Because you are certainly in a good position to do this, I would like to make this suggestion, if it were possible, in the educational system in Quebec, that this at least be done, I think that we would succeed in changing a lot of things in a few years.

I'm not talking about a 45 hour course. It seems to me that there is an essential minimum. I don't know what you think about it. And can it be done. It seems to me that it should be possible to do it.

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LORRAINE PAGÉ: First, the suggestion itself, I think it is so minimal that there is really no problem, but I think that this leads us to other important questions that we must not avoid asking, even if your suggestion may seem so simple, so obvious, that there would even be a risk that this would be all that would be done.

I think that this leads us to a number of other questions, and at that point the conditions are perhaps created to raise the question more than ever and better than ever.

In the next few days the ministry of education is going to propose the establishment of a discussion committee to deal in very specialized terms with leaving profiles, that is, what a student must know when he or she completes his or her courses.

In the work of a committee of this nature there are questions that must be asked, that must be raised, and I think that it is not right for a young person in Quebec to finish his or her elementary or secondary education without knowing a certain number of physical and political facts about what makes up the actual reality of Quebec today. I think

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that this question must be asked.

We are in the process of implementing a revised teacher training program. We cannot ask teachers, who do not themselves know this, to teach it. We are undertaking a review of teacher training.

This training must not be the only issue, are we training teachers to teach a subject or to teach two subjects. We must at the same time ask how, in their initial training or in their basic training, we have to integrate new realities, and I am thinking of the aspect of cross-cultural education, but also how we have to go about integrating realities that have been completely ignored over the years so that they will truly be part of our teacher training.

Here again there are conditions that enable us to raise these questions. I think that we have to go even further than the simple suggestion you have made.

Third, of course, can we take initiatives?
In the past we have worked with partners to

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produce pedagogical workbooks on environmental education, for example, or on peace, or the struggle against racism, in which we helped teachers to address some of these questions in their regular teaching.

It might be very worthwhile to design materials of this nature to help teachers to address the Aboriginal question and to work on building a different relationship between the Québécois people and the various Aboriginal nations.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This is exactly along the lines the Commission is thinking and it is true across Canada, except that we know from experience in this field often nothing gets done because something better might come along, and we would rather have something real happen than wait for something better that only gets talked about indefinitely.

I understand the nature of your brief and what you are telling us this morning, that the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec has made some commitments in terms of its members to give out this type of information.

For example, you clearly make the distinction between the cultural communities and the

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Aboriginal people, that the two must not be lumped in together.

There are historic rights as the first inhabitants. Emigrants [immigrants?] are something else. If you emigrate [immigrate?] to a society you join it.

These distinctions are very important for purposes of public discussion and of good mutual understanding with the Aboriginal people. It seems to me that you are in a truly privileged position first with respect to teachers, so that these distinctions are not made solely within the Centrale but among a number of people, and they may be conveyed by teachers by raising awareness of Aboriginal reality in Quebec.

I can only hope that you will make a firm commitment to your members to work on programs from the perspective you described so that changes will in fact take place, changes that are not controversial and that might produce considerable change.

Time is passing but I would also like to mention that what you were talking about in terms of the CEGEPs is essential. What is largely missing is orientation and support services for making the transition. When you

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leave a community to come here there is a culture shock, and services are seriously lacking.

In this respect, all that can be done to assist in the transition of young people going from secondary school to CEGEP ... when they go to Montreal there are communities that can provide a bit more assistance, and so on. That seems to me to be essential.

There is one question that struck me. In the discussion of what I was saying at the very beginning about the question of the fact that people actually did express themselves in syllabics, Inuktitut. One of the things that really struck us, there are several school boards that have told us about this in Canada.

We have programs at the federal level to support second languages for immigrants, in French or in English, specific programs. Aboriginal young people who start grade one and are unilingual Cree-Attikamek or Cree in the west are considered, as Canadians, to be French or English speaking and so those programs do not apply. So the school boards have no additional support although in a way they are almost immigrants in their own country. The situation is foreign to them too.

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Is this a question you have considered in the Centrale?

LORRAINE PAGÉ: Certainly we must distinguish between what may go on in the Cree school boards, for example, where teaching in the elementary school years is done almost entirely in the mother tongue.

Even in other regions we have experiments, if you like, going on where the first grades will be done in the mother tongue, that will leave a bit more room for teaching in the language of origin. We see this particularly on the north shore, even though that is not within the jurisdiction of the Cree school board *per se*.

I think that these experiments have to be encouraged and supported. Almost everyone with whom we raise the question in any language, for example even when we go into international cooperation programs that we may have with our African colleagues, we find that the ability to reserve a significant amount of time in the first years

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of school for teaching in the mother tongue is a determinative factor in staying in school, in succeeding in school.

This is such a significant factor that there should not even be any doubt, culturally or politically or pedagogically. It has definitely been tested and proved.

What must really be supported is the ability to do it, and what we mean by that is having choices in hiring teachers who are going to be capable of doing it, giving school boards the ability to have the latitude so that they can develop teaching in the mother tongues, and not just keep this teaching in the primary years but even be able to have programs for teaching languages of origin. Not simply for our cultural communities that exist in the Montreal region, for the various cultural communities, but it should also be seen as the same thing for teaching Aboriginal languages of origin. Some have now disappeared, but there are some still in existence and we should promote their preservation and continuation.

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HENRI LABERGE: In terms of Aboriginal people learning French, I would say that it is perhaps to different degrees but there is a problem that is somewhat similar to that of anglophones in Quebec.

When they go to French second language programs or to get access to orientation classes for French instruction and so on, they aren't treated the same way as people who speak another language.

In the case of Aboriginal people of course this is doubly unacceptable. If a Montagnais young person comes to live in Quebec City we can't leave that person on his or her own. If he or she does not already speak French, he or she should at least be entitled to the French courses that immigrants arriving get, and probably even more.

We think this is very clear, there must not be categories of citizens and presuming that they should know French or English. Everyone who does not know French in Quebec should have all the services that will enable them to function in the society where they are living.

Of course it is not the same thing for someone who lives in an Aboriginal community. There, it is the Aboriginal language that should be promoted, but if the

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person goes to live in Quebec City he or she should be entitled to all the services he or she needs to be able to function in the same way as a young Italian or a young Greek who comes to live here.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In your proposal for sovereignty association, I am reading your brief correctly when I understand that you are saying that the Aboriginal governments should have authority over their school systems because this is just about the most fundamental thing for identity, and so on.

Of course you have in mind powers not only over administration as there now is in northern Quebec, but legislative powers in respect of education, over programs.

Is this how I should understand this? It is not explicit in your brief, but that the aboriginal governments could, for example in exercising their inherent right to self-government, exercise legislative power over education.

LORRAINE PAGÉ: When we were talking about the need for Aboriginal communities to adapt the

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educational system to their situation, they must have the powers to do this.

I know that this may seem disturbing for some people who are saying to themselves, fine, now we are going to start having all sorts of educational profiles or all sorts of systems of all sorts of training, but I think that we don't need to worry all that much.

Even if increased powers were granted to the Aboriginal peoples in controlling their own educational system, the general economy of the world in which we live, the need for students who have completed their secondary education to be able to move on into public institutions that are not under the sole control of the Aboriginal communities, and I am thinking here of the colleges and universities, is going to mean that there will be adjustments and transitions that will be inevitable.

So there really is no risk of it blowing up or of anyone being able to suggest there would be discount education or education that is unsuited to our modern civilization or the needs of our global world as we near the end of the century.

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I think that there is room for greater power to provide genuine control over an educational system without this jeopardizing young people's ability to have access to other training. I think that the Aboriginal communities themselves would not want to keep their young people in ghettos. I think this is clear. When we talk with Aboriginal leaders we see this clearly.

I would say that wisdom will require that there be, yes, adaptations, they are needed, they are essential, Henri raised some just now in terms of educational organization, we addressed some in terms of curriculum, but at the same time there is necessarily going to have to be adjustments because the point of development is to enable young people to have access to quality training, and so when necessary to go on to postsecondary training, sometimes even university.

In this sense I do not think there are significant risks. I think that people have to be reassured.

We were talking just now about prejudices, fears, worries. It is important to say that increased powers will not result in limiting the training to be given, far from it.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The basis of the treaty you see between the Aboriginal nations, there might conceivably be 11 treaties, and the Québécois people, again in your model, recognizes the self-determination of the Aboriginal peoples, and so their option to enter into sovereignty-association with Quebec on the basis of the inherent right to self-government. Is that the Centrale's position?

LORRAINE PAGÉ: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Very quickly, because time is flying, one of the difficulties for education among Aboriginal people at present is the scientific profile, among other things, interest in the sciences. For going into the health professions in particular there is a real need.

Does the Centrale have specific measures that would enable Aboriginal people in a way to break down the wall of fear of that area, which can be broken down, as we know, in all the communities.

Is there a specific concern in addition, of course, to completing secondary school and making the

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postsecondary transition, but in terms of the sciences, so that Aboriginal people can move into the scientific profile.

HENRI LABERGE: Very generally ... this is not something we have examined specifically, but I think that it is somewhat similar to the entire equity approach in all disciplines.

This is being done for women, for example, in the various university disciplines. We know that there are concentrations where there are more women, others where there are more men. This was the case for sciences, for example, until very recently.

In the case of Aboriginal people we see the same thing. We will have to create methods that will ensure that Aboriginal people are present in all disciplines.

If there are weaknesses in the sciences, for example, in engineering, and so on, we will have to create programs that will enable us to attract more Aboriginal students. But that cannot be done solely by non-Aboriginals.

This is where Aboriginal people taking control themselves will make it possible for them to find appropriate solutions.

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When we talk about taking over political power, that does not mean ... Of course, for example, all the nations will not be able to take on the same share of political responsibilities. The Malécite nation will not take on the same thing as the Cree nation, because it is a question of volume.

It is impossible to have the same number of institutions and all the institutions that meet the needs of the population. But nonetheless they can take over political power over a field and at the same time enter into agreements with other governments, most importantly and particularly the government of Quebec, which could administer the joint services, still with the basis that each nation has its own authority and may, when it wants, take back the powers that it may have temporarily assigned to a common body.

LORRAINE PAGÉ: The question you are raising leads first to a general observation. The educational road for the sciences, for mathematics, is a selective one.

This is the reality we live with, that

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Aboriginal people live with. At the same time as it is the royal road, it is also a selective road.

This is true for Aboriginal people, and it is true for other categories of students, I would say. There is an exclusion phenomenon that is significant and which merits our attention.

I think that with the teachers in the Aboriginal communities, I would say the Aboriginal teachers who are even more capable of understanding the difficulties encountered, we can develop the most appropriate pedagogical approaches precisely for ending this exclusionary situation in terms of the sciences, mathematics, this choice of training.

And here we are also referring both to pedagogical approaches and to pedagogical choices made and to a number of measures that we must be able to implement precisely with a view to equity in certain fields that at present are not designed that way.

Here I think that there is really an opportunity, with teachers and also with professional staff,

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to examine the solutions that might be proposed, in a little more detail, more concretely. This observation might be applied to quite a number of categories of our students in terms of teaching sciences and mathematics.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This is in fact a universal problem but when an Aboriginal group has so much catching up to do ...

LORRAINE PAGÉ: There are specific measures that need to be taken.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Yes.

We could spend many hours continuing this discussion. We can only share with you the experience we have had.

The Commission had a hearing in Restigouche in June, with the Micmacs. The Chief of the Micmac Nation in Restigouche, Brenda Miller, told us about the decision they made to ...

The situation was this. For 25 years the Micmacs had been sending 500 students more or less to the other side of the bridge, to the Campbellton school board.

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They accounted for one fifth, one sixth of the school population in Campbellton.

Never in 25 years had they thought about the content of the program in terms of the cultural aspect, of Micmac identity. They really set about hiring Micmac teachers, interesting parents in sitting on the school board.

They told us about a decision of the band council starting with kindergarten and moving up through elementary school to withdraw the students from the schools gradually to do what must be done on the reserve, saying they were to some extent throwing the towel in, in terms of the public system.

We had the teachers' union, people from the school board, who came to our hearings, who told us, listen, this makes no sense. We are going to lose 40 teaching positions at the school board.

I wanted to share this with you because it made a big impression on me and I think that you are in a good position to understand everything going on there.

I would like to take the opportunity in closing to let you think about that because it is happening

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elsewhere in Quebec. I think that we look at it and say there is in a way ... first of all there are 25 years lost, in a way, when the people were living separately, there is also a loss in taking that kind of action, but it is necessary because the response was not there.

I shall close on that. I think that it is quite striking in terms of what happened and that it must be corrected for the future.

Mary.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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LORRAINE PAGÉ: I have the impression that we could start the discussion up again for another hour. All the questions you raise are real ones, and at the same time complex ones. That clearly shows that all these factors are present at the same time.

Mr. Dussault gave us the example of a place where they lost 25 years. At the same time, we could tell you about other regions where progress has been made in 25 years. What is important is not to lose another 25. We can at least agree on that.

And also to observe that all the questions we have addressed are interrelated. We can say that education is a factor in personal development, that it is a factor in economic development, that it is a factor in social progress, and this is true. But at the same time, when we are in a negative growth situation, zero hope in terms of economic development or social progress, it is difficult to convince people that education is still a key for getting a better life or being a better person.

We can observe that today a graduate is

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not immune to unemployment. But at the same time we see that graduates are less affected by chronic unemployment than people who have not graduated.

It is difficult to see in education what we could see 25 years ago. We were told that an education meant a good job. It was clear, it was simple, it was obvious.

Today the situation is so difficult in terms of jobs that young people more particularly are having difficulty believing that they will have a future when they feel like they don't even have a present. And this is even truer for the Aboriginal nations.

This is perhaps where we have to leave it, by saying that you and we too are addressing very complex questions. Ready-made solutions are less and less obvious, and probably we will have to be able to generate complex responses to complex problems, that is, responses that do not speak with a single voice, that are multi-faceted, that look at the situation from a variety of angles.

We cannot undertake these solutions

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without having a constructive dialogue, without working cooperatively, as allies, to seek solutions.

This is perhaps where we could leave it.

A call to work together to find solutions that will truly bring a future with them.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT: [ENGLISH]

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you again for your contribution. We encourage you to continue the good work and we are always interested in staying in touch until we finish our work.

If you have additional ideas to submit to us, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are available and receptive.

The Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada will adjourn its public hearing for 15 minutes.

We shall resume with the presentation of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Thank you.

--- Hearing recessed at 10:48 a.m.

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

We are going to recess the hearing for two or three minutes. We shall resume with the presentation of the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies.

--- Hearing recessed at 12:15 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 12:30 p.m.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada resumes its public hearing with the presentation of a brief from the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies.

I shall give the floor immediately to Jules Dufour.

JULES DUFOUR, Director, Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon, Madam Commissioner.

I would first like to thank you on behalf of the Association for this opportunity to present our views, and particularly what we are doing in the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies.

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I therefore wish to thank you on behalf of the President, Roger King, and also on behalf of the board of directors. The president apologizes for not being with us today. He was not able to attend.

I am pleased, since I met the former president today, who was president not so long ago, Dr. Marianne Stenbaek, and she accepted my invitation to accompany me and present our brief.

I am doing this not as executive director but as a director, that is, a member of the board of directors of the Association. In the past we had a full-time executive director. We no longer have this position, it has disappeared, and we have been trying, as board members, to be more active for the last few years.

The brief was prepared by the members of the executive of our association, the officers, and it provides a good reflection of all of our activities and also deals with our main concerns at present which we are currently discussing for developing northern training and research in Canada.

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I would also like, before giving the floor to Marianne, to congratulate the Commission for the extraordinary work you have agreed to do, since this is an extremely difficult task, conducting a commission in so large a country as Canada, and I congratulate you.

This responds to a call from the Yawananchi (PH) program, a call that was made urgently to governments, and I hope that the results of your Commission, and I am sure they will, will provide us with some solutions as to how better to share the resources of our country.

I also saw in the alternative world treaty on Aboriginal peoples that we discussed in Rio last year this call to try to establish a better dialogue and a better method of cohabiting throughout the world for Aboriginal peoples.

We are simply going to present to you the first part of our brief, and I shall then read to you and we will also be able to comment on the 18 recommendations we have prepared, and we will be able to talk about what our current concerns are.

MARIANNE STENBAEK: [ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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JULES DUFOUR: Mr. Chair, Madam

Commissioner, I would perhaps also like to mention that we are assisting in the development of the scientific training program in the North. Since the Association was founded we have been assisting this program of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to help graduate students who want to pursue research and additional training in the North, and particularly research in the North, so that we can help them get around on the land, with lodging and transportation.

This program has had considerable success, as you will see in our brief, since it first came into existence.

Since 1962, 1963, more than 12 million dollars have been granted to a large number of students. You see that this program has developed, and today, in 1991-1992, we distributed more than \$748,000 among the 31 participating universities.

And so during that same year, 1991-1992, more than 280 students, spread throughout Canada, benefited from grants.

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This is an extremely important program and we are perhaps going to talk about it with you, if you would like, after I have read the various recommendations you will find at pages 11, 12 and 13 of our brief, if you think there is time for that.

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you for this presentation. I am going to ask my colleague, Mary Sillett, to begin the discussion.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: It is always interesting to be in Quebec City.

I would like to thank you for your presentation, which was quite useful. We hope to be able to stay in touch on a number of points.

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Thank you, Mr. Dufour and Ms. Stenbaek.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples will recess its public hearing until 2:15 p.m., when we shall resume with the presentation of the brief of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee.

--- Hearing recessed at 1:25 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 2:27 p.m.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada resumes its public hearing with the presentation of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee.

I would like without further delay to ask the representatives of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee to proceed with their presentation.

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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The Royal Commission will recess its hearing for two or three minutes. We are going to resume with the presentation of the Native Alliance of Quebec Inc.

--- Hearing recessed at 3:22 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 3:37 p.m.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada resumes its public hearing with the presentation of a brief by the Native Alliance of Quebec Inc. I would like without further delay to ask Ms. Racette, the president, to proceed with the presentation of the brief and the presentation of her group.

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Ms. Racette.

**GINETTE RACETTE, President and Grand
Chief, Native Alliance of Quebec:** I think I shall proceed in
French. Unfortunately, [ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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CATHERINE CHEEZO, Native Alliance of

Quebec: I am going to talk about my culture. I was brought up in foster homes; I lost my own language. This program that we want to present to you today would be a program that could help us find our cultures again, find our traditions again; not just for me, but it is for our future descendants as well.

This is a very positive plan, which we think is also quite legal.

Having been brought up deprived of all that, today, I am learning that it is really very important for us. It is really a very important point: our own traditions today have been wiped out, and we want to get it back on track because it is a culture that should not be wasted.

GINETTE RACETTE: [ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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GILLES BÉRUBÉ, President and general manager, Waskahegen Corporation, Native Alliance of Quebec:

In the brief we presented to the federal and provincial governments relating to housing at the beginning of the year, we clearly stated in it that we want to become an autonomous institution in terms of housing. I think that our brief is clear on its own, in saying that we want to have our own housing programs.

I think that today the Waskahegen Corporation, which was founded by the Native Alliance in 1972 and has now been in existence for 21 years, is capable of conducting its own programs with the expertise it has and its knowledge of the clientele itself, in the sense of the Aboriginal people living off reserves.

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We also submit in our brief that we want autonomy, we want to conduct our own programs, but we still want responsibility for housing to remain with the federal government. We do not want to have differences among programs, depending on whether you live in Ottawa or in Hull; the Aboriginal people want to have the same housing programs because they have the same problems, whether they are in Ontario or in Quebec. So we consider it extremely important for responsibility for housing to lie with the federal government.

We also have a national housing committee which was established last year, in which we have worked together on this, and we are all of the same opinion -- a consensus -- that it is the responsibility of the federal government. We want the federal government to be a financial partner and also a partner in terms of expertise, but we know that the specialists in terms of housing among Aboriginal people are the Aboriginal people themselves. We know what programs we need, we know what we need.

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But we do not reject the possibility of having performance criteria. We are not telling the government here to hand over money and hand over money and we are going to build what we want. We want to perform. We are also aware that federal and provincial budgets are fairly limited, and we want to perform more with the same money that is available.

This is something of what we are proposing at the national level.

We are also saying in our document that we also want to benefit from the economic fallout from our own activities, which is very, very difficult at present. One thing we know is that if the government says, "You need 100 housing units in Quebec", for example, if we build the 100 units ourselves, if we create jobs for thirty people, that makes 30 people who are going to be able to pay for a housing unit, and so who not need this kind of program. We want to attack housing on two fronts, in other words. I think that we have the expertise to do it, and the government

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must recognize this expertise throughout Canada.

We are certainly going to make mistakes but we are going to learn from our own mistakes; a little like the way the governments themselves learned.

We want to use the housing program to reduce the number of unemployed by enjoying the benefit of the economic fallout of our own activities, we want to reduce social assistance. As I told you, fewer families will need housing because there would be families working. The economic benefits are very, very important for us.

The work experience that Aboriginal people would gain in the construction industry as well would be useful to them in economic development, for going to work somewhere other than just on our housing. So they would have some work experience.

At the end we are going to give you, if we have not already done so, a copy of a document which is really quite clear, and which says it all. I can tell you that we have presented it to a number of Aboriginal politicians at the national level, and they are in complete

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agreement with this document. And the document is the "statement" [?] of all the members of the Native Alliance of Quebec.

Thank you very much.

GINETTE RACETTE:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: And does that complete the presentation of your brief?

GINETTE RACETTE: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I would first like to thank you for accepting our invitation to come and meet with us to share the results of your brief with the Royal Commission. As well, I know that you have been working in this area since we were created and well before that, and that you are going to continue when we are gone.

I would simply like to take the opportunity to say that since the beginning of the week, we have had two weeks in Montreal but certainly since the beginning of the week, we have had the opportunity to remind several groups that there is a Métis fact in Quebec -- this morning with the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec which presented its brief, and in terms of other organizations too,

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such as the Forum paritaire Autochtones/Québécois on Monday morning.

We want in any event to say that we are aware that it is not so spontaneous, that any one of the 11 traditional nations for the groups, and we will not miss an opportunity to point out that there is a Métis fact in Quebec.

This being said, I know that there are two organizations -- the Association des Métis du Québec, whom we met with and who gave us a very eloquent presentation in May, and also, of course, your association, the Native Alliance of Quebec -- and, of course, more broadly, the Native Council of Canada, working in this area.

And so my first question would be: You mentioned that you have started discussions with the government of Quebec on enumerating the Métis in Quebec. Could you elaborate on that, with whom and in what context?

GINETTE RACETTE: When I was first elected last year, I had the opportunity to meet in a tripartite format with Richard Garand and André Maltais, that is ... he had made us a proposal to start the negotiations

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with a view to the enumeration and registration of the Métis in Quebec. Starting with our association, another group was formed that is working on defining the Métis nation.

We got back to work, and the government got back to work, that is, Mr. Maltais and Mr. Meunier called us back to Quebec City at the beginning of this year to discuss it further. We have not yet reached an agreement as to what procedure we are going to use and how we are going to prepare for the enumeration. However, at a recent conference in Quebec City, three weeks ago, I had the opportunity to speak with André Maltais, and there should be a forum in the spring of 1994 on the Métis question in Quebec. I think that after that we should be well on the way to enumerating and registering the Métis.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

In your brief, of course, you point out the difficulty with recognition from the Métis in the West. Of course, the Commission must live with that fact; it is true for the Métis of Quebec and Labrador. This makes the

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issue more complex, in some ways.

You say in your brief that essentially some of the ancestors of the Métis of the Red River had come from Quebec to go there, and of course lived with the Métis nation for some decades.

So for you, there is no progress, there is no contact with the National Métis Council.

GINETTE RACETTE: There is no contact with the National Métis Council at present. Something fairly funny happened. Last winter I had the opportunity to listen to a recording of a telephone call in which a minister of a province was saying that there were no Métis in Quebec or east of Quebec and he was talking with the president of the Labrador Métis Association. This is quite wrong.

So there is a Métis fact which, yes, I must admit, for perhaps a couple of decades was not very active; it was dormant. Except that now there is a very strong movement among the Métis, Métis who are convinced and who have the proof that they are Aboriginal and who are working

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diligently for the recognition and welfare of the Aboriginal community in Quebec.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Listen, I think that what we have to do is get going and get to work, on both sides, with the reality of the situation.

On another level, in your brief, under the title of self-government, the brief is not page numbered but you say in the third paragraph that the right to self-government requires a land base for the Aboriginal people, that there can be no self-government without a defined land area. I would like to have a bit of clarification, because we have had a lot of discussion for a year and a half on the concept of Aboriginal government in urban centres; this morning we met with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

What is your point of view on that? Certainly it is more spontaneous, but in your mind, does the concept of self-government necessarily imply a land area within the city, an urban reserve? I would like to hear your explanation.

GINETTE RACETTE: Of course, this is a

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very direct question. As we see, in the Native Alliance of Quebec, as I noted in my presentation, many of our members, many Aboriginal people living off the reserves live in rural communities.

As I also explained earlier, we have not yet really examined this, in view of the concerns, that is, in terms of the government of Quebec, what is going to happen in Quebec. Should we move toward institutions within the cities? Should we move toward autonomy for the communities?

Should we form communities in the cities? There are all sorts of questions that were even raised at the recent conference in Quebec. It was a very interesting conference.

We have not yet really found our legs, in any event, we in the Native Alliance, in terms of the sort of self-government we should be moving toward. This is going to be very difficult. When we talk about land claims, the Métis who live more or less everywhere in Quebec really have no defined land area. So it is going to be very difficult to negotiate, I agree.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: (Microphone

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off) For example, you say that you have 14,000 or 15,000 members. I understand that the enumeration in general has not been done, but you have some idea of the origins of your members.

In May we had something of a demonstration of the spectrum.

Do your members overlap somewhat with the Association's members, or are you separate? Do most of your members live in urban settings, be it small towns or large towns, or in rural areas?

GINETTE RACETTE: Of course, I think you will have noticed that at the end of our brief we sent an organigram of the Association. I am going to give you just one example. In the community of Sault-aux-Moutons on the north shore, those people, I can say that it is half and half, half Métis and half status Montagnais. So how will they achieve self-government in that community? Will they have to move toward situations where several communities on the lower north shore group together?

Of course, in the Association, we have very close to 14,000 registered members. Some have died,

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some had joined in recent weeks, but it is very close to 14,000 members, and these people come from the 11 nations now found in Quebec.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Here in Montreal, do you have quite a few members or are they rather spread throughout the province ...

GINETTE RACETTE: The Hochelaga 12 community in Montreal has more than 400 registered members on its roll at present.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

I would like to move on to the housing corporation. You say that you have submitted a plan to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Claude Ryan. You say that the Alliance has been working with other Aboriginal groups since March 1992 on establishing and operating the Société de crédit commercial autochtone, on the one hand; this is the financing aspect.

Could you give us a little more explanation on this point, and after that also in respect of housing.

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GILLES BÉRUBÉ: I am going to talk about housing itself, and I will let Ginette talk about ...

In terms of housing, I should perhaps give you a bit of history which is very, very important.

We were incorporated in 1972 and started to deliver federal programs; we agreed with the federal government to deliver certain programs. In 1985 there was a federal-provincial agreement; housing units were administered by the Société d'habitation du Québec, and the federal government continued to contribute 75 per cent of the budget.

You know, over time, the negotiations that took place between Quebec and the federal government, even though we had a tripartite committee, there was no room left ... we were the third wheel. It was tripartite but we were in fact the third wheel. When it came time to say what we thought and state our needs, as Aboriginal people, there was no room left for us. There was only room for the federal-provincial thing.

Since that time, we have been applying social programs that apply to everyone in terms of housing

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off the reserves. And we want to get away from that somewhat, the social program. We want a truly Aboriginal program, and this is very, very important. It is quite a different thing.

Aboriginal people are different from the rest of the population. There are specific needs, and there are different ways of life.

I think that in Quebec it is very, very hard to have this part recognized. It creates conflicts. Fitting Aboriginal people into programs that were not designed for them, bending the programs, creates conflicts with Quebec, and that is not what we want. That is why we told you just now that what we want is federal responsibility for housing.

We get are some people who apply from Ottawa, or family members from Ontario, who come to Quebec, and we cannot house them because the programs are not the same in Ontario and Quebec because Quebec has different status.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: But at present the status of this housing corporation, it is tripartite, in a way, under the agreement?

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GILLES BÉRUBÉ: It is tripartite at present. We still think that we cannot meet the housing needs of the Aboriginal people of Quebec in a tripartite committee like that. Why? Because when everyone has put their oar in there is no room left to say what we really want, what we really need.

We think that in those programs, in those budgets, we are convinced that we can do more for ourselves with the same budget. We are not asking for additional funding, we are asking to do more with the same funding. This is somewhat what we are asking for. And we think that it is the responsibility of the federal government, that will work better.

There is still nothing to prevent the Waskahegen Corporation or Aboriginal groups from changing tack and negotiating with the province of Quebec for it to make a contribution to housing within Quebec, but on the basis of an agreement, in which the Aboriginal people will have decided their own programs, what they need for their people who are poorly housed, their people who are poor.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: At present, how many units are you capable of building?

GILLES BÉRUBÉ: Each year, at present we have 2,000 units on reserves, that we now have, that we have delivered since 1985; we build 266 units per year, 133 urban and 133 rural. At present the budget has been cut; this year we are going to build only 42 units. For the last three years there have been budget cuts, and we think that 42 units for the Aboriginal population off the reserves ... we have a waiting list that is as high as a couple of thousand names and we are not out looking for more, because we can't meet existing expectations.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You were talking about economic fallout. At present, for example, in building these new units, do provincial regulations apply? How does it work?

GILLES BÉRUBÉ: Yes, we have the provincial regulations, which were recently deregulated, of course, and there have been a number of consequences. On the other hand, we are still managing to operate within that

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in some cases, but someone always seem to be saying, each time the Aboriginal people get the economic fallout, we are in a conflict of interest. That seems to be said in several quarters. I do not think that the federal government says it, but it seems to be said in some quarters.

This is partially why we talk in our brief about the conflicts that exist. How are the Aboriginal people supposed to develop themselves if the general population is saying, "We shouldn't encourage the Aboriginal peoples too much"? If we can't buy from ourselves for our own programs, how are the Aboriginal peoples supposed to develop themselves? That is partially it. We wonder.

I think that the Aboriginal peoples in Quebec intend to take charge. And in that respect, if we have the tools to do it, we will definitely succeed.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

Mary.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I have one last question on the Société de crédit commercial autochtone, which you were saying is a complete success. This is very interesting. Could you talk a little about it?

GINETTE RACETTE: About a year ago, or a little more than a year, the Société de crédit commercial autochtone, commonly known as SOCCA, was established, based in the Huron-Wendat nation in Quebec City. The Huron nation was joined by the Algonquin nation, I believe, the Micmacs, Abénaquis and Algonquins. As well, the Native Alliance had made representations to be actively involved in this program.

Starting from there, it was decided within SOCCA that a sub-corporation known as SECPAQ, the Société d'experts conseils en programmes autochtones au

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Québec, would be established, and it is operating very well.

I am very pleased, very proud, because many members of the Alliance, many members of other nations, are actively involved in SOCCA and SECPAQ and have access to commercial loans either to start up a new business or to expand an existing business.

I could not say how many, but within eight or nine months, it had succeeded beyond our hopes and the hopes of the representatives of SOCCA.

The president of SOCCA is Gilles Bérubé and the general manager is Jean Vincent.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Where does the funding come from?

GINETTE RACETTE: ISTC. It is 100 per cent funded by ISTC programs, and the Native Alliance has its own economic development agent. So we can say that it has been a total success to date.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: How many businesses have you been able to finance?

GILLES BÉRUBÉ: In one year we have received 137 applications, loan applications. I think that

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as we speak there are about fifty applications that have actually been approved. It is moving ahead, and a number of small and medium-sized businesses are starting up using those funds, because they do not have access to the banks. To go to the banks, for them, access is more difficult. So they come to us. Of course they have to repay, because it has to be profitable ...

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That is the question I was asking. There haven't been any defaults? Of course, there is not a lot of experience yet, but ...

GILLES BÉRUBÉ: No. Up to now, no one has defaulted. It is going very well. We have had great success. This is precisely to demonstrate that Aboriginal people are capable of running things if they are given the chance.

GINETTE RACETTE: What makes me even happier about this program, which serves Aboriginal people, is that there is no discrimination in terms of the number of generations. A person from the Alliance who is Métis and who has his or her card has access to the program. Most of

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the Alliance people who have had access to loans with SOCCA or SECPAQ are Métis.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Very well.

Of course, we could go on for a long time, but there are other presentations coming up. It has been a great pleasure for us to have the opportunity to hear you, to hear your brief and to discuss some of the points in it. We hope to have the opportunity to do so informally -- this is the end of the public hearings this week -- and to stay in touch over the next year, when we will be trying to put together an analysis based on all the information we have received.

Thank you.

GINETTE RACETTE:

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

We are going to recess the hearing for a few minutes and we shall resume with a presentation by the

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Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. Thank you.

--- Brief recess at 4:21 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 4:39 p.m.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples resumes its hearing with the presentation of the brief of the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

[ENGLISH FOLLOWS]

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Thank you.

MICHAEL ANDERSON: [ENGLISH] Thank you very much for having us here.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Commission will recess its hearing for two or three minutes. We shall resume with the presentation of the Centre de ressources sur la non-violence.

--- Hearing recessed at 5:49 p.m.

--- Upon resumption at 6:03 p.m.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada resumes its hearings with the presentation of the Centre de Ressources sur la non-violence, Comité de solidarité avec les autochtones.

Welcome for the second time to the Commission. We are pleased to have agreed to receive an additional brief. Without further delay, I will give you the floor, if you will proceed when you are ready, sir and madam.

GERRY PASCAL, Coordinator of the Comité

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de solidarité avec les autochtones, Centre de ressources sur la non-violence [aboriginal solidarity committee, non-violence

resource centre]: My name is Gerry Pascal. I am the coordinator of the Comité de solidarité avec les autochtones of the Centre de ressources sur la non-violence.

Today, Jacques Boucher, who is on my left, will present the brief, the general theme of which is the inherent right in the Canadian Constitution, and will deal specifically with the concept of terra nullius.

Jacques Boucher.

JACQUES BOUCHER, Centre de ressources sur la non-violence: As Gerry said, our brief is essentially intended to highlight a current event where Australia has set a precedent which could serve as an example for Canada. On October 19, 1993, the Australian Prime Minister obtained the approval of his government for a new system of administering lands which would take into account the Aboriginal people's land rights, which have now been recognized, as a result of the decision of the Australian Supreme Court handed down last year. This was an historic decision which revoked the concept of terra nullius

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which was the basis on which possession was taken of all the lands discovered by the European colonial empires. This attitude has lasted until our time, with, for example, the Canadian government inviting foreign air forces to use Innu lands for their military training exercises, telling them the lands were uninhabited and under government jurisdiction because they belonged to no one other than the Crown.

The Australian government will therefore proclaim by statute that the Aboriginal people, who were there before the Europeans, have an inherent right to their lands.

This is a first step toward fair negotiations, between equals, which will result in further action for social justice.

In view of the tremendous opposition prompted by the greed and fear of a population that is for the most part ignorant of the issue, and moreover of anything relating to the Aboriginal people, we must tip our hats to a politician capable of holding a firm position when he was convinced of the justice of recognizing the inherent rights of people who until now had been practically invisible.

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The First Nations are societies with dignity and reason, with which our own has always refused to deal on a truly equal basis. We have tried to assimilate them. It was only for the worse: part of their society has already assimilated western concepts of profit and violence. They have been inculcated by our society, our schools and our media. These are the people who will soon be sitting down to talk with us, and essentially they still maintain their rights while at the same time they have learned how to misuse benefits. And yet we would have so much to learn from people who still have their traditions, instead of holding their calmness, their honesty and their spiritual strength in contempt.

It is time for the damage that has been done by this pillage to stop. It is time to stop destroying other peoples' lands after laying them bare. We are not responsible for what was done by the generations that came before us, but if we continue in their footsteps, we assume responsibility along with them for all their actions. We must stop closing our eyes because reality is unpleasant. The time has come for us to protest and demand justice.

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We must look the truth in the face and see how our long line of governments have acted without respect, with the aim of dispossessing the first inhabitants of these lands.

For the love of justice and peace, we must recognize the inherent rights of the people who were the guardians of this earth where we live. If our government were to recognize these rights, it would be demonstrating maturity and wisdom. Are Canadians really not capable of choosing a new way of living? Of admitting that they were wrong and taking the first step on the path of friendship? This is the only route to take if no one is to win and no one lose, which is the situation that best reflects traditional Aboriginal thinking. Because recognizing rights and correcting wrongs is the first step toward friendship, and friendship guarantees peace and cooperation in the interest of everyone.

As a closing to this international year of Aboriginal people, we recommend that this Commission strongly advise that the government to take the positive step of including the concept of the inherent right of the First Nations in the Constitution and then act accordingly.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

Does that complete your presentation?

JACQUES BOUCHER: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Well we are very happy that a group like yours is bringing the fact of this recent judgment of the High Court of Australia into the public eye, and publicizing the subsequent action on the part of the Australian government. The Commission is aware of this judgment and the action that has been taken, but this enables us this afternoon, through the public transcripts of the public hearings, to share it more widely, to point out what has happened in recent months in Australia. This is part of what the Commission will be looking at and the documentation that is currently before the Royal Commission.

Your recommendation with respect to recognition of the inherent right in the Constitution ... of course, I think you are well aware of the present Canadian situation: the Charlottetown framers, the 17 representatives, essentially, around the Charlottetown Accord, had agreed to confirm the inherent right to

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self-government in the Constitution. Of course, the public referendum decided otherwise; there were a lot of things in all of the Charlottetown agreements.

So at present we are kind of back at the starting line, where we have the Constitution Act, 1982, which recognizes the ancestral rights arising out of existing treaties. The Commission has produced a document to support the idea, the opinion, that there are good reasons to believe that the inherent right to self-government is implied in the existing rights recognized in 1982.

And so this is the present state of the matter. Clearly we are working in the context of the present Constitution, but clearly, also, the constitutional question will undoubtedly have to be taken up again in Canada. At that point, the question will certainly be one of the first to be asked.

We have already had the opportunity to say that this Commission is, of course, a Commission on Aboriginal issues in Canada, but it goes much further and touches on the very fabric of Canada, of the country, at the

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turn of this century and into the next century. So it is much more fundamental than just tinkering with social and economic problems; it calls into question the true nature of Canada itself.

So for this reason I want to thank you for your presentation. I am happy on the one hand that it could be done in public, but we were aware ... this takes nothing away, quite the contrary, from what you have done, the merits of your efforts in coming to tell our Commission about it.

These are the comments that come to mind in response to your presentation.

I would perhaps at this time ask my colleague Mary Sillett to say a few words.

COMMISSIONER MARY SILLETT: [ENGLISH]

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So, I don't know whether you have additional comments to make. If not, I think that this completes the hearing of your brief.

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JACQUES BOUCHER: That's fine.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That's fine?

So then thank you once again.

The Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada will recess its hearings until tomorrow morning, when we shall hear a presentation by Roger Julien and, at 10:00, a presentation by the Government of Quebec, which will be represented by its Minister of Native Affairs, Christos Sirros. In the afternoon we will have the opportunity to hear the briefs of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, of Lise Bourgault, the former M.P. for Châteauguay riding, who was therefore very close the events at Oka/Kanesatake, and also a brief from McGill University.

Thank you, and good evening.

--- The hearing is recessed at 6:14 p.m.

and will resume at 9:00 a.m. on

Thursday, December 2, 1993.