

FOREWORD¹

Today, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones² du Québec (RCAAQ) is undertaking to present to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: the current problems concerning those Aboriginals living in urban areas and the concerns of the Friendship Centres in relation to the future prospects that are here and now identifiable.

From the start, we would like to tell you that the Commission represents a privileged forum for Aboriginals, in these difficult constitutional circumstances for Canadians and Québécois as much as for Aboriginals.

We repeat the need to settle the Aboriginal question, for it is an important step to settling the Quebec-Canada problem.

We do not want to analyze the failure of the 1992 referendum nor try to identify what were undoubtedly the multiple causes of this failure. However, we are concerned about its negative consequences. The temptation to put off indefinitely our needs for self-government and development could seduce the political decision-makers, insofar as the Aboriginal question is currently quieter in the Canadian and Québécois political agenda, as well as in the media.

The existence of the Royal Commission, the credibility of its members and its works is henceforth one of the only competent platforms in order to identify realistic parameters for the development of a Quebec and Canadian society project which would recognize the dignity of the Aboriginal peoples and which would take account of their basic aspirations.

This Commission allows all actors in society, and mostly Aboriginals, to express themselves on what the future holds for us in the Aboriginals/non-Aboriginals relationships, and it seeks to identify a common basis for building a reciprocal relationship which we could be very proud of in the years to come.

Today's situation is also tinged with a wider awareness of the general public to the stakes that constitute the Aboriginal rights in Canada. From now on, the public gets the importance of the

¹In the current text, the masculine form indicates both men and women and is used to make the text easier to read.

²In the current text, the word "Aboriginal" will be used to designate indiscriminately and generically an Amerindian, an Inuk and a Metis. The word "Indian" will be used to designate a person registered in the federal Indian Register according to the *Indian Act*.

issues that concerns us, even if the public has not understood its deeper meaning, and the politicians could not, at the risk of disgraceful social conflicts, avoid to touch them on real soon.

We also have to emphasize that the Aboriginal peoples have gained, in the last few years, a knowledge and an expertise in managing their own affairs. This development brings into question the tutelage of the *Indian Act* and demands that this relationship that exists for more than a century be changed. Inherent self-government seems to be the answer.

OUR APPROACH

In our brief, we will deal with the self-government issue without diluting the real meaning of the word. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) deals with this major issue as a mere program within the framework of a few modifications made to the *Indian Act*.

True self-government is not part of this framework and we will discuss this issue in the context of self-determination of our peoples and the recovery of our rights which have been taken from us without our consent.

The current social situation, in spite of the political difficulties we are experiencing, can be a favorable area for receiving the forceful message that your Commission will have to give regarding the place to be occupied by Aboriginals at all levels of public life. The balance and survival of our societies and social peace are at stake. Without this perspective, the urban areas where we work and where more and more Aboriginals will live in the future will become the outlets of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies with the social aftermath that this will bring.

We approach the Royal Commission with this perspective in mind. Our basic analyses were drawn from our Centres' experience of more than twenty years and from some specialized studies conducted by the Centres and other Aboriginal organizations.

Friendship Centres' representatives took time to critique these analyses during a three-day workshop. RCAAQ's conclusions were modified and validated by the Centres themselves.

Therefore, our position reflects the long hours of analysis made by the organizations that know best the problems of the urban Aboriginals in Quebec: the Native Friendship Centres. We hope that our contribution will be appreciated by the Royal Commission.

On each of the subject matters that will be brought up, the situation will be summarized in order to illustrate the problem and then proposed recommendations will be presented to you.

Having presented to you our provincial movement of Friendship Centres in Quebec, we will describe to you the problem of the Friendship Centres, the problems with the milieu in which we work, the profile of the users of the Centres, the relationship between the governments and the Centres and the relationship between urban Aboriginals and the First Nations. We will then present our position on a perspective of urban self-government.

Finally, we will present to you various action plans regarding the status of the Centres, their financing, their activities and their mission.

1. THE NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRES OF QUEBEC

In Quebec, there are six Native Friendship Centres whose general objectives are to provide Aboriginals with meeting places, access to referral and information services, socio-cultural and recreational services, training and information workshops, and in certain places, temporary sheltering services.

The centres also play an important role of liaison between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sectors. This role can take on various forms, such as escorting and referring Aboriginals to urban public services, holding cross-cultural events, raising awareness of non-Aboriginal institutions to the Aboriginal reality, etc. The specific objectives of the Centres are to maintain harmonious relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, to improve the quality of life for Aboriginals in urban areas, and to promote the Aboriginal culture in communities where Aboriginals are established.

The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) is the only provincial organization representing the Centres located in Montreal, Chibougamau, Senneterre, Val d'Or, and La Tuque. The headquarters of the RCAAQ are located in Wendake (Village-des-Hurons), near Quebec City.

Accessible Government Programs

The Native Friendship Centres Program (NFCP) is made up of 10 components, including the core funding component of the Centres (94% of the NAFC budget in 1992-93). In addition to insuring core funding to the Centres, this program enables financial support of activities in order to extend services and integration into the urban milieu, of projects that focus on self-reliance or that deal with the needs of the disabled, or bilingual communication and research.

However, the Centres consider that this program's funding is insufficient to maintain a basic structure for the services provided. Moreover, the Program is threatened by major budget cuts recently announced by the federal Finance Minister. We want to repeat that the federal government has the responsibility to maintain this sole basic program for our organizations and to increase its budget in relation to the growing needs of the Centres. The Centres do not have access to the programs and budgets of the DIAND which focuses on Status Indians living on reserve. Besides, this situation creates an obvious disproportion between the accessible human resources working on reserve and the human resources affordable at the Friendship Centres' management.

In combination with the basic federal program, other sources of funding are already used, notably in the private sector or through the social and community services available in urban areas. However, one has to be aware of the financial difficulties already touching the private sector in a recession period that tends to last, as well as the fund-raising campaign for organizations that becomes a strain on human resources.

The housing program or *Programme de subvention d'appoint aux centres d'amitié* (Friendship Centres' Additional Grant Program) of the ministère de la Santé et des services sociaux of Quebec is also available.

The centres also fund themselves, in part, from their own activities, and through local fund-raising campaigns.

Some provincial or federal sector-based departments could finance some specific and special events. However, the available budgets are low.

2. PROBLEMS RELATED TO ABORIGINALS LIVING IN URBAN AREAS

During a recent forum that dealt with interracial relations, the Centres have identified some elements of the problems they have to deal with. We will mention a few which seem common to all Centres.

The Centres which are located in a regional urban milieu are almost the only employers for Aboriginals living in that area. Access to other jobs in a non-Aboriginal milieu is almost impossible. This situation is being perceived by the Aboriginals as discriminatory, and the phenomenon is particularly emphasized in an unemployment and recession context still affecting regional economies.

There is a discrimination problem in the areas where the Centres are established. It is subtle and discrete. It is being noticed particularly in the housing and employment fields.

There are also particular difficulties in accessing the work market, in the constraints imposed by the use of French, as well as employment equity.

There is a growth in the Aboriginal migration to urban centres. This trend will increase in the future, due to the baby boom, to the limited land space of the reserves, to the need for employment, to the need for higher education, to family problems, etc.

There is a tension between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Quebec which results from, among other things, the popular globalization of some local or specific issues related to certain Aboriginals. As a result, the actions of some Mohawks easily become those of all Aboriginals, and the speech of some Aboriginal leaders is being identified as the opinion of all leaders. Surely, the negative role of the tabloids doesn't help to develop mutual communication and understanding.

In local Aboriginal communities and in urban Aboriginal environments, there is a tension between the modern lifestyle and the traditional culture.

There is not enough social research made on the situation of Aboriginals living off-reserve and in urban areas, particularly in the province of Quebec. However, let us point out the researches made in Val d'Or and Montreal which dealt with certain issues.

People migrating to an urban area lose their Aboriginal identity as well as their culture in comparison to those remaining in their original milieu. However, the Centres are places that

enable the preservation and the enhancement of the Aboriginal identity in urban areas, for the migrants as much as for the long-time residents.

The Centres are places for the expression and the promotion of Aboriginal cultures.

The Centres are among the rare contact points between Aboriginal cultures, ethnic minorities' cultures, and Quebec culture in general.

It is important to note that most urban Aboriginals, as in any other society, are not problem people and they are organized in a relatively autonomous manner. However, they specifically need a place to identify with, to meet people and to bring out their culture. This is the role of the Friendship Centres.

However, some people need more particular services due to the differences in culture, values, lifestyles, and social environment between the city and the regional communities where they come from.

Some people also have psychosocial difficulties. These difficulties can be painful and dramatic, be they experienced on a reserve, in a region, or in a big city like Montreal. However, the state of distress and loneliness related to these difficulties may be worse in a big city for it could easily go unnoticed. Support and solidarity of friends, family members, members of the original nation are more accessible in the smaller regions; these environments are usually easier to understand and communication is simpler to decode than in the great cities' environment, which is colder and less personalized. The big cities have major concentrated centres of poverty and the Aboriginals, like others, lie there, anonymously.

The difficulty to communicate for those people who speak only their native language or who don't speak French is also a major handicap in urban areas, particularly for the people in difficulty.

The capacity of the Centres to provide services is limited, due to the available physical, human, and financial resources. It is the case for reception, information, and referral services. Generally speaking, the Centres complain about the lack of financial resources, and this situation even seems to compromise the existence and longevity of the Centres.

There are major differences between the problems of Centres located in the regions and those of Centres located in a big urban area. On the other hand, the general problem of the Centres is sensibly the same in Quebec as in the rest of Canada.

In Montreal, for instance, members of several Aboriginal nations live there, and this specific context of cultural and linguistic diversity demands specific interventions and needs. The regional Centres welcome members of one or a few Aboriginal nations only. The social context of a big cosmopolitan city like Montreal is different from the social context of La Tuque or Chibougamau.

2.1. Profile of urban Aboriginals

In order to better understand the reality of urban Aboriginals, distinctions may be made according to the following categories:

- socio-demographic factors (age, sex, family situation, etc.);
- the kind of services required (housing, employment, social services, recreation, culture, etc.);
- their level of experience in the city;
- their level of permanent integration into urban areas.

According to Statistics Canada's 1991 Census data, 137 615 Aboriginals live in the province of Quebec, which represents a 70% increase over 1986's data. This is a spectacular increase, which is explained by Statistics Canada by the current interest of the Aboriginals of Quebec to identify themselves as such.

In Canada, the average increase in the Aboriginal population is 41%.

The Census shows that 44 645 Aboriginals live in Montreal, which represents a 100% increase over 1986's data. Let us say that the Census uses a larger indicator than the official Indian Register. It compiles the number of people claiming to be of Aboriginal ancestry during the data gathering.

In Quebec, according to DIAND's 1990 data, the percentage of "registered Indians" in the federal Register which live near urban centres is estimated to be of 25%, that is to say 20 000 people.

2.2. Reasons for the growing migration of Aboriginals to urban areas

An important and increasing part of the Aboriginals living in urban areas is made up of people migrating from their home community. A part of the urban Aboriginal community is made up of people who need extended health services, of children who have been adopted from non-Aboriginal families, of Metis people whose one parent was Aboriginal, and of Aboriginals living in urban areas for a few generations.

According to analyses that have been made in relation to the migrating phenomenon of the Aboriginals into urban areas³, the reasons behind migrating are usually the following ones:

- A. The unfavorable situation of the work market as well as the social conditions that prevail on the reserves, and on the other hand, the access to work and social services found in urban areas;
- B. The difficulties experienced or identified by the migrants in their home environment, for instance: constraining community sharing standards, lack of intimacy and privacy, the pressure of too big a family, the high level of housing occupancy, the lack of housing, jobs, a situation of domestic abuse, separation, etc.
- C. The needs for services, for training-education, for health and social services, etc.

³See the following document, among others: Canada, *Urbanization and Indian People, an Analytical Literature Review*, 1977: Research, Policies, Research and Evaluation Directorate, Indian and Inuit Affairs Program, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa.

2.3. Stages of integration in urban areas

Even if interspersed with trips back to their original reserve or halts at certain levels, the integration into urban areas usually follows an ongoing process punctuated with several steps:

A - **Transition**, or moving from one place to another; it sometimes has to do with itinerancy or with a context where a person makes little effort to provide himself with worthwhile urban life conditions in the long run;

B - **Migration**, or the effort to settle in an urban area; the person tries to transfer the primary social network of his reserve to an urban environment; some make transfer at the social, psychological, or economical levels; some people will keep going back and forth and they will need their home environment as well as the urban one; they will intermittently live both in the city and on the reserve; these people are sitting on the fence between two worlds;

C - **Residency**, which is characterized by the fact that an individual has been living in an urban area for some time; often, the person was born in an urban area; his social, psychological, and emotional needs correspond to those of non-Aboriginal residents who have the same social and economic goals, and not to the original or home Aboriginal milieu; however, these people remain attached to their original environment and identify themselves to it. Some people are second and third generation. Others are adopted children, disabled people living in institutions or people living in the city for prolonged health services.

D - **Establishment**, which corresponds to the complete integration of the individuals as urban citizens. Some people would talk about assimilation, because they have renounced their original culture. These people were born in the city and have always lived there. Some of these people seek to learn about their original culture. They can or cannot undertake a self-actualization process in regards to their original nation, or in regards to their Aboriginal identity.

Some people will stop their integration process as early as in the first steps, and will never adapt to the urban area. Consequently, some people will permanently live on the margin of the urban culture.

2.4. Difficulties experienced in an urban area

The most important difficulties when integrating into the urban milieu concern those who are recent arrivals.

The difficulties generally experienced or met by the Aboriginal migrants in the city are the following ones:

- access to housing;
- access to self-actualizing employment, due to the lack of vocational or general training, or to the lack of education;
- lack of knowledge and preparation for urban life; misunderstanding of the non-Aboriginal and urban way of life, life in the fast lane; the habit of planning;
- cultural differences; difficulties in cross-cultural relations;
- the difficulty to adapt to the taxation of all the goods and services in comparison to some on-reserve exemptions;
- prejudices towards Aboriginals; globalization of certain Aboriginal issues or to the problems related to certain Aboriginal nations;
- being identified at a lower socio-economic level;
- pay inequity in comparison to similar employment for a non-Aboriginal;
- the often negative consequences of the dominant Aboriginal leaders' speech;
- lack of positive Aboriginal role models to look up to;
- specific problems related to youth;
- isolation from the original culture;
- lack of self-government as a result of the previous dependant state;
- problems related to language.

It is also generally admitted that the urban Aboriginal migrants do not form an homogeneous group, nor do they form an ethnic community aware of its identity. This phenomenon is partly due to cultural, linguistic, and geographical differences between the many Aboriginal nations in Quebec and in Canada.

2.5. Needs of urban Aboriginals

Each one of these integration stages corresponds to a different type of interaction between the Aboriginal and his environment, and as a result, of his needs.

At the beginning of the process, the migrant needs emergency help. The needs are characterized by temporary shelter, food baskets, temporary employment (precarious, most of the time), a contact as well as a guide in services, linguistic help, and for some, access to a detoxification process, a crisis intervention, etc.

Speed, flexibility, and availability are the characteristics of this first hand help.

When the migrant is able to make decisions in a longer-term perspective, he changes as a result, and the migrant looks for more convenient employment and housing, in the long run. His needs are characterized by housing, short-term employment, some help with adaptation, access to recreational facilities, access to specialized organizations' services, information and referral services, day-care or home care.

The need of the permanent residents have to do with permanent housing, long-term employment, training and proficiency courses, recreational activities, support from organizations, access to social services, access to education services.

The need of the urban citizen consist of a permanent or steady job, permanent housing, support regarding culture, access to social organizations' services, integration to education services, participation in anti-discriminatory or cross-cultural activities.

Generally speaking, the needs of the Aboriginals living in an urban area, be it on a temporary or permanent basis, have to do with asserting their own identity, and having access to a support environment in relation to integration at the psychological, social, cultural, and economic levels.

The Native Friendship Centres work within this context and they basically play their role in relation to all the needs we have just identified. Their objective is make Aboriginals integrated into urban areas.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN ABORIGINALS AND THE FIRST NATIONS

Urban Aboriginals have various relationships at various levels with the local Aboriginal communities and with the First Nations.

According to their stage, in transition, in migration, in residency or in establishment, their relation with their original milieu or home nation is more or less weak. Aboriginals living in urban areas for a few generations almost don't have any formal or cultural relations with the First Nations. However, people who have been in urban areas for a short time have more sustained relations with the original milieu and receive a restricted number of services.

We remind you that there are eleven (11) Aboriginal nations in the province of Quebec, including the Inuit, and around 55 local communities, villages or "reserves".

The transition phenomenon of the Aboriginals towards urban areas is growing and, sooner or later, the services related to this growth will have to follow the same pattern.

The First Nations strictly exercise their prerogatives on the reserves and don't offer services to their members living permanently in urban areas.

The federal government, in part, funds the services provided by the Friendship Centres through the Department of the Secretary of State. However, the program that concerns the Friendship Centres is threatened and a cut to the budget of this program has already been announced. The federal government administers most of its other programs intended for Aboriginals for services intended for on-reserve Indians.

The Friendship Centres, present in six municipalities of Quebec, are currently the organizations offering the most services to urban Aboriginals.

Faced with the growing migration of the Aboriginals into urban areas and the eventuality of the progressive implementation of Aboriginal governments, we can wonder what will be the role of the Native Friendship Centres.

This component of the issue will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Up to now, however, the Aboriginal nations have worked on the basis of the *Indian Act*, but this framework is questioned and it will be replaced sooner or later by responsible and autonomous governments.

With a few exceptions, the expertise of the Centres and the First Nations is still not combined. The local communities and the Aboriginal nations don't use enough of the Centres' expertise, (for example: in social intervention regarding suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, etc.).

There may be some relationship difficulties when the Centres and the First Nations are competing for programs and financial resources which are limited and available to both organizations alike; for instance, the manpower training program "Pathways to Success".

The Centres believe in the importance of raising the local communities' awareness of the services they provide and of the essential role that they are playing for the members of the First Nations living in the urban areas where they are located.

We want to stress that the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal has maintained relations with several Aboriginal communities of Quebec and it works within the context of a support network with the surrounding Aboriginal communities.

Nevertheless, the dialogue between the Aboriginal communities and the Centres is increasing more and more and has been strengthened by the regular participation of the RCAAQ at the meetings of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL). This is certainly a sign of the importance given to a dialogue between all the partners working at various levels for the Aboriginals. The relationship between the Centres and the First Nations can be described as good.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND THE FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

With the exception of the Inuk, Cree, and Naskapi communities, whose activities are governed by self-government laws pursuant to the James Bay Agreement and the Northeastern Quebec Agreement, the current system of unfinished business of the Aboriginal communities depends on the *Indian Act, 1876*. This Act is the concrete incarnation of the federal constitutional responsibility (subsection 91.24) "towards Indians and the land reserved for the Indians".

The *Indian Act* officialized the existence of reserves, defined Indian status and structured in bands and band councils for the Aboriginal communities. The Act also set the band councils' operation rules. Finally, the *Indian Act* placed the Indians under the tutelage of the government.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) is in charge of applying the *Indian Act*. The DIAND has implemented a series of programs which, with a few exceptions, only apply to on-reserve Aboriginals. The management of some of these programs has been decentralized to the benefit of the band councils and regional organizations set up by some Aboriginal nations.

Apart from the DIAND, some federal departments provide programs accessible to Aboriginals in general. They are: Health and Welfare Canada, the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of the Secretary of State, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Employment and Immigration Canada. Other federal departments, such as Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada fund some programs that are available, but not exclusive, to the Aboriginals.

The Government of Quebec also offers some specific services through the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones and some general services through other provincial departments. For instance, the ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche recently offered access to its recreational services.

The current financial relationship between the Native Friendship Centres and the governments is mostly conducted through the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada. Comparatively, the other federal and provincial departments do not participate as much in the funding of the Centres' activities.

Within the framework of their general activities and their services delivery, the Centres regularly have to deal with various private and public organizations such as CSSSs, municipalities, etc.

In the future, the relationship that the Centres will have with the public organizations and the governments will surely deal with the services that will always be necessary to urban Aboriginals and, eventually, with new responsibilities that will result from the evolution of the urban self-government issue.

5. THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ABORIGINALS AND NON-ABORIGINALS

In order to well define the situation that conditions the future of the relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, the major elements of the current respective problems of the Quebec and Aboriginal circles have to be known.

Aboriginal problems are very far from the concerns of the Quebec milieu. It is trying to improve all the socioeconomic conditions that are located well below the Quebec and Canadian statistical standards. The Aboriginal nations and communities, with a few exceptions, are only beginning to mix with the government administration of Quebec and the Quebec milieu in general. Centres located in the regions currently use the province's financial resources for 1/3 of their entire funding.

The Native Friendship Centre of Montreal finds half of its funding in provincial programs. Moreover, all the Centres put forth efforts to make some fund-raising.

Too often, when speaking about the relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, people only think about the political and legal relationships between the government and the Aboriginal nations. But, Quebec and Canadian societies are made up of numerous individuals from the economic, financial, social, cultural, and educational circles.

In Quebec, the first regional economic talks with the Aboriginal nations began only three of four years ago. The administrative and legal relationship is still under federal control in major part. The *Indian Act* still maintains the tutelage and paternalistic trusteeship over most bands. However, in the past decade, the Aboriginal organizations have taken charge of some federal programs and services, which allow them to train Aboriginal managers and to begin to be in charge of their business.

The discourse of most Aboriginal leaders focuses on a form of self-government that could only exist if the Canadian constitutional issue was resolved. The Aboriginal groups rather rely on federal guarantees to achieve self-government, unless this perspective becomes real through an open and generous political negotiation with Quebec on the recognition of the major collective rights. Some Aboriginal groups seem to be opposed at any price to the political autonomy of Quebec; others recognize this legitimacy, seeing that they may receive the same.

When the Aboriginals of Quebec talk to Québécois, they insist on their collective rights, their "distinct society", their desire to collaborate, their willingness to become partner and their need to develop themselves through the possibilities and resources of their traditional lands. The Aboriginal identity comes from their history, their customs, and their traditional lands. Some Aboriginal organizations denounce the social poverty that prevails in several communities, the violence resulting from this and the hopelessness of these environments. Other organizations work at preserving languages and enhancing Aboriginal cultures. Some groups hesitate between the traditionalist lifestyle and the modernization of the way of life and the structures of their social and political environment. In some places, the traditionalist trends confront the modernist ones.

With a few exceptions, the Aboriginal economic development is relatively weak even if it is progressing. It is still non-existent in several places, particularly in the regions. The communities located near urban centres or near the tourist network are better off than the others, and they even provide jobs to non-Aboriginal workers. Specialized and advanced manpower is rare. Several positions available in the current Aboriginal structures are filled by non-Aboriginals, for lack of competent candidates.

The Quebec nationalist milieu finds it very difficult to understand the differences of language, mentality and status within the Aboriginal community. They tend to not acknowledge Aboriginal rights, even if they want us to recognize theirs. They really don't want Aboriginals to be governed by other laws, in spite of our cultural differences, customs and inherent Aboriginal rights.

The necessary understanding certainly cannot progress without mutually improving knowledge, communication and interaction with the other.

When that will happen, maybe then we can develop a mutual trust and start organizing reciprocal arrangements.

6. URBAN ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

6.1. The specific approach of the Native Friendship Centres

The Native Friendship Centres are basically organizations providing various services to urban Aboriginals (status Indians, non-status Indians, Metis, and Inuit). The Centres also rank among the few organizations attempting to bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures, in a situation of difficult relationships.

Our approach towards the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has to do with looking forward to the future, and to foreseeing the possibilities of Aboriginal self-government, specifically in urban areas.

The debate on Aboriginal self-government is not exclusive to Friendship Centre associations, or to local Friendship Centres. It greatly concerns political organizations at the national and regional levels, nations councils, and other organizations representing the various political, legal, and constitutional interests of the Aboriginals. However, the outcome of the negotiations on these matters, which should take place sooner or later, will have a considerable impact on the urban Aboriginal communities served by the Friendship Centres.

The Native Friendship Centres can play a role in providing the eventual Aboriginal governments with services. They could even form an urban Aboriginal government. In a big city like Winnipeg, the Friendship Centres movement recommends the implementation of Aboriginal governments structured around the Friendship Centres, which will not make any distinction between the legal status of the individuals nor their national origin.

The scope of the eventual self-governments' jurisdictions and the representation format of the members of the Aboriginal nations will have an impact on the individuals living in urban areas. The real needs of these individuals may be forgotten in this complex process, and it is up to the Centres to remind the Royal Commission of their needs.

Friendship Centres have an essential knowledge and an expertise in regards to urban Aboriginal issues. Apart from their primary role as service delivery organizations, it is up to the Centres to enhance their analyses of urban self-government perspectives. The role of the Friendship Centres is not to represent politically urban individuals, but the fact remains: the Centres and their Provincial Association defend the various rights and interests of the Aboriginals in the area where they are located. This responsibility could easily be described as political because numerous

political representations are made in relation to the existing programs and in relation to the needs of urban Aboriginals. We have to focus on self-government in that direction.

Les Centres ont développé une expertise permettant la flexibilité et l'intégration à une forme d'autonomie.

The Centres are not the only service agencies in urban areas. There exist others which are specialists specifically in the fields of housing, justice, health, women's condition, etc. Our advantage consists in considering the global needs of the members of the urban Aboriginal communities. On specific matters, our voice is joined to the voice of the other organizations. In general, we stand in an overall approach to the matter, between big "political" associations and specialized service agencies.

We simply hope to give our particular point of view regarding the self-government issue, in order to raise this very important debate for the future of the Aboriginal peoples of Quebec and Canada. Our privileged situation as interveners in urban areas gives us the ringside seat as speakers for implementing self-government mechanisms in these areas.

Here is an interesting fact about our neighbor: the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres has undertaken and concluded an agreement with nine other Aboriginal partners in services or political representation, in view of insuring that the interests of the urban Aboriginal communities are not forgotten in the overall debate on self-government. This perspective can also be examined at the local, regional, or national levels with organizations operating in Quebec. Our regular contact with the AFNQL helps us to do so. We will certainly try to work in this direction.

6.2. Prerequisites

The constitutional status of Aboriginal governments, if it was recognized, would make up a national, and even international recognition of these governments' legitimacy. It would consecrate, in everyone's eyes, the legitimacy of these governments.

Without this status, and following the recent constitutional failure, a political legitimacy can take over the legal approach, as long as there is a political will from the current governments to develop this relationship. In June of 1991, Ontario signed an agreement on political relationship with the First Nations of the province, which is interesting in this sense. Quebec, despite the fact that it adopted the principle in 1983, has never established its Permanent Forum on the Relationships with Aboriginals. It would certainly be beneficial that the Royal Commission reminds the Government of Quebec that their promises and the reality are two different things.

This political relationship must be based on the inherent right to self-government, on Aboriginal as well as treaty rights. The basic principle must be equality and equity. Aboriginal rights and citizenship must be recognized in the villages as well as in the urban centres where the First Nations live.

In the political and legal avenue, the status of Aboriginal government must be based on the possibility of a form of citizenship for each of the Aboriginal nations. This citizenship will have to co-exist with the Quebec and Canadian citizenships.

Insofar as there are Aboriginal citizenships within a sole government, they must be in harmony with the citizenship of the rest of the country; there must be reciprocity agreements between Aboriginal governments' jurisdictions and those of the other governments. These agreements can deal with numerous fields such as justice, health, education, culture, etc. This reciprocity, which must necessarily be negotiated, would enable each party to defend their interests and to protect what they have acquired.

Whether the status of Aboriginal governments is political or legal, their establishment and the negotiation of reciprocity agreements will take years.

In June of 1992, the National Association of Friendship Centres recommended as a short-term goal to the Royal Commission, that a national agreement between the Government of Canada and national Aboriginal organizations be made, in order to guarantee the services for the Aboriginal population living outside of the First Nations' territories, of Metis settlements, and of Inuk communities. We reiterate this recommendation our.

No matter the outcome of this debate, the particular problem between Aboriginals and Québécois will remain, and we will have to find some solutions in order to create harmony between our respective societies. Our definition of harmony resides in the satisfaction of the political needs and interests of everyone, including those of urban Aboriginals.

6.3. Urban self-government models

At first glance, there are three possible options for future urban Aboriginal self-government. An analysis demanded by the Native Council of Canada takes account of these three possibilities⁴.

The extra-territorial model

The extra-territorial model is based on the territorial governments of each of the Aboriginal nations and on the "purchase" of services from organizations for their urban "citizens".

This model is mostly related to a national Aboriginal membership. Individuals living outside of their home community or of the community to which they belong are and still remain citizens of a government which has a land base. This model makes a distinction between the national origin of the individuals.

Individuals who are citizens according to this government have the same prerogatives, whether they live on their government's land base or not, somehow in the same fashion that we can be a Canadian or French citizen, even if we don't necessarily live in this country. Within this context, nothing forbids double citizenship, Aboriginal and other, as it is currently possible between some countries.

The danger of this model is that it can create a confused set of standards as well as services of different quality and quantity.

It also creates a difficulty in the democratic representation of non-Aboriginals on Aboriginal territories. Civil rights of all individuals, regardless of their ethnic origins, must be guaranteed. This representation would depend on agreements and reciprocal recognition of their citizenship by the governments.

⁴Wherret, Jill and Brown, Douglas, *Self-government for Aboriginals Living in Urban Areas*, working document prepared by the Native Council of Canada, 1992: Intergovernmental Relations Institute, Kingston, Ontario.

Due to the complexity of the people involved in this model, it presents serious efficiency problems within the urban areas' context.

The "neighborhood" model

The "neighborhood" model consists in favouring the concentration of the residence and services in a well-identified and defined neighborhood, like some ethnic communities in big urban centres (ex.: Chinatown).

This neighborhood constitutes a cultural adaptation environment for the migrants, a kind of buffer like those used by divers in order to prevent a decompression accident. The cultural integration buffer made up by the neighborhood prevents the brutal shock from a new and unknown environment. It can be useful for the Aboriginal suddenly leaving his original environment to immerse himself in the city. This reference and mutual support environment, in relation to his original culture, helps to prevent discouragement and loneliness that could affect the individuals in their struggle for life, in a world so different from their usual one.

However, the danger with this model is that it creates a state of withdrawal or a ghetto that would increase dependency and poverty problems as well as their consequences, violence and despair.

Therefore, this model also creates problems.

The community of interests model

This model takes into account an Aboriginal population dispersed in the four directions of an urban area.

In this context, a cultural territory is considered, not a geographical one.

This model deals with the establishment of different institutions for a segment of the population, which could be the Aboriginals that wish so. Examples of this perspective exist according to the field of jurisdiction we want to occupy. We can compare this model to the principle of separate schools in Ontario, to a particular school board or a particular health service in Quebec, to a special court for the Aboriginals in civil actions and minor offences, as exists in Toronto, to an Aboriginal culture council, etc. These are particular accommodations that correspond to particular collective needs and rights.

This model's fields of jurisdiction must be discussed by the Aboriginal interveners in services and by political organizations; they have to be established in conjunction with the services already existing in urban areas.

Thus, it is a community self-government that comes with programs adapted to the specific needs of urban Aboriginals. This model is completely compatible and adaptable to individuals who claim citizenship to their nations, for instance, Cree, Metis, Montagnais, or Mohawk. However, it considers the participation of urban Aboriginals as a whole that does not distinguish the status of each person or his belonging to a nation.

This is the model that we recommend, due to its realism in relation to the current needs of urban Aboriginals, to the looseness of the administration structures that it supposes, and because it corresponds to the current Friendship Centres' understanding of this issue from their own real-life experience and from their knowledge of the urban Aboriginal communities. This model can be best established in a great urban area like Montreal, where the Aboriginal population is fairly important. It could also be established in the regions.

The development of communities of interests in the cities will allow a slow evolution, by stages, towards an increasing responsibility of the urban Aboriginal communities in several fields of the life in society, within the context of a permanent adaptation and constant adjustments to the needs noticed by this population.

This model also has the big advantage of being totally compatible with the possible territorial Aboriginal governments for the First Nations.

From our expertise and analysis, this model deserves to be further developed.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to some action plans already mentioned in the previous chapters, here are some recommendations, regrouped under certain themes, concerning the global mandate of the Native Friendship Centres and the analyses we just did.

According to some action plans identified by the RCAAQ and according to certain analyses made by the National Association of Friendship Centres, here are some recommendations we wanted to bring to the Royal Commission's attention.

7.1. Recognition of the status and role of the Centres

The role and responsibilities of the Centres as major and essential service delivery institutions to the urban Aboriginals have to be recognized by the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authorities.

The political organizations which represent the First Nations, the Inuit, and the Metis have to respect the right of urban Aboriginals to determine for themselves the services, structures and processes they believe to be the best to meet their needs, objectives and financial situation. According to some surveys conducted in Canada, urban Aboriginals don't want organizational models which are based on their status to be imposed upon them without their consent.

In general, urban Aboriginals don't have a structured membership in the national organizations that claim to represent their rights and interests with the political and constitutional authorities. They rather identify the Friendship Centres as the organizations that defend their interests due to the proximity of the services and to the fact that we listen to them.

The urban Aboriginal community should not be excluded from the process of defining self-government. In this process, urban Aboriginals have to be full and equal partners with the organizations working at national political levels.

When structuring an urban Aboriginal government, it would be desirable to bring the government closer to the population and not to erect a rigid, distant and cold bureaucratic structure. However, in order to show the advantages of Aboriginal or treaty rights, there has to be a link between the future urban governments and the political structures of the First Nations, non-status Indians, and Metis populations, even if they don't live in their base community.

Surveys also show that the implementation of non-status urban institutions is something to aim at.

The Friendship Centres request a mandatory consultation and research with the urban Aboriginal constituencies in regards to their services' delivery and structuring. This consultation should include the concerns of the youth, elders, and women, within a perspective of traditional values.

Urban Aboriginal communities have developed independently from the administrative and political structures of the reserves. However, for the well-being of the Aboriginals, some collaboration will have to be pursued and even increased with the Aboriginal political organizations.

7.2. Communication

More and more, the Centres have to be present and visible in their respective areas and with the media. It is mandatory to improve their relationships with the media and to reinforce the positive aspect of the singular message of the Centres to the media.

The Royal Commission has to remind the media of their social responsibility in regards to racial prejudices, particularly those concerning Aboriginals. It has to remind the organizations in charge of the media ethical standards of their mandatory vigilance in this sense, in order to avoid the degradation of the precarious and fragile situation in Quebec.

The Centres' representatives should continue to be present on the platforms that are used for raising public awareness on Aboriginal realities and that further mutual understanding. They have to continue to occupy the positions available in the organizations working in the same direction as the Centres and develop consultation and dialogue with those organizations. We recommend that the Centres continue to collaborate in cross-cultural activities in schools, colleges and universities and that the non-Aboriginals participate in the sociocultural activities of the Centres.

The Friendship Centres movement encourages the participation of the staff and directors of the Centres in various community of the milieu.

The Royal Commission has to recommend that the governmental agencies and political authorities be attentive to the impact of the message they send out to the public in relation to Aboriginal issues, to realize that some messages add something to discrimination or prejudices towards Aboriginals, and that they consider a policy of public communication which is objective, positive, and which will be able to establish the facts in relation to Aboriginal issues.

The Royal Commission should also recommend to the federal and provincial governments that all the officials working directly in Aboriginal matters mandatorily have a sufficient knowledge of the Aboriginal realities. If need be, they will have to spend some time in Aboriginal communities, in local communities or in urban areas.

7.3. Funding programs

The Royal Commission has to recommend that the services in urban areas be funded according to the growing needs of the Centres in the future. If not, we are exposed to a great increase in the difficulty of service delivery already existing in the big Canadian cities.

Up to now, off-reserve Aboriginals have been neglected by the DIAND, by the priority given to the available programs and budgets for the services of the urban Aboriginals of Canada. Urban Aboriginals should have access to the current programs of Indian Affairs which are strictly intended for on-reserve Indians. Even if funding of the services for status Indians is calculated on a per head basis, the resources are not allocated for those living "off-reserve". The Centres could serve as a location for delivering services to the Aboriginals living outside of their community base.

In Canada, statistics show that more than two thirds of the status Indians live off-reserve; in Quebec currently, it is more than one fourth. The accessible resources don't follow the migratory pattern of the Aboriginals into urban centres. But, the migration process of Aboriginals towards the cities is increasing everywhere in Canada. The Aboriginal organizations have to lobby at all levels of government in order that they obtain adequate resources to meet the social, educational and economic needs of the urban Aboriginal communities.

The Royal Commission has to draw the government's attention to this priority and should recommend policies accordingly.

Currently, Quebec offers few financial resources to the Friendship Centres. The Royal Commission should recommend, as far as its mandate is concerned, that the province put sociocultural funding at the Centres' disposal, supplemental to the available federal programs.

Due to the emergency and extent of AIDS in large urban centres, and due to the importance of raising the local communities' awareness of the social impacts of this curse, the federal and provincial governments have to facilitate access to specific resources for the local or urban Aboriginal communities and to further the current dialogue between all the interveners in this matter.

7.4. Education

The Friendship Centres are almost the only organizations that play an important role in linking the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Within the particular difficult context of this matter in Quebec, we wish that events and activities furthering the meeting of these two "solitudes" be established, that educational material on Aboriginal cultures and on cross-cultural relations be developed, and that training workshops on Aboriginal cultures be held. The Centres are already playing this role because they implemented community interaction programs, and this role has to be reinforced and expanded.

In some areas where the Aboriginal population is extensive, such as the large urban area of Montreal, the Native Friendship Centre wishes to develop basic educational services for the Aboriginals and popular education programs as well as customized training. These services would be added to the teaching activities already existing.

The Royal Commission should recommend that these kinds of activities be funded, particularly in Quebec.

We necessarily have to make all concerned Aboriginals aware of urban life skills, to give French courses to Anglophones, to work in collaboration with schools, colleges and universities in cross-cultural awareness activities. The school environment and the youth's activities are to be prioritized in order to make them aware of our mutual realities and to develop a mutual understanding in the long run.

The Royal Commission should recommend to all people eventually involved in these matters to give it all the necessary attention, be it in the form of school curriculums, of promotion of thematic events in schools or somewhere else, and the production of education material specific to the Aboriginal realities. Often, it is more an attitude of openness and tolerance to be developed than the need of particular funding.

7.5. Economy

In order to allow the Centres to be more self-reliant financially, and to no longer suffer from budget cuts that would have an impact on the services provided, the Royal Commission should recommend that the Friendship Centres have access to the governments' economic development programs in order to promote and supervise urban Aboriginal economic development initiatives.

7.6. Culture

In urban areas, the Native Friendship Centres have to continue to work to enhance the traditions and customs of the various Aboriginal peoples. They have to collaborate in events with the non-Aboriginal milieu which consist in promoting the Aboriginal cultures (ex.: volunteers' feast, celebrate an historical event, craftsmanship exhibition, book exhibition, etc.). They have to continue to use the expertise of the elders in the promotion of Aboriginal cultures and to create social and awareness interventions. They wish to bring out the traditional healing practices of our peoples and integrate these practices into the usual methods applied in urban areas.

The Royal Commission should recommend that the Friendship Centres have access to the cultural centres' government funding, which is not currently the case.

The Centres have to be able to implement a particular curriculum on Aboriginal arts, cultures and languages, for the needs of their users as much as for their awareness interventions with non-Aboriginals.

The Centres have a particular responsibility in furthering the feeling of belonging to the big Aboriginal family. They are particularly concerned with the youth and with the people who, for any kind of reasons, have wandered from their Aboriginal culture and identity.

The Centres have to be recognized for their role of bringing out the diversity and wealth of the Aboriginal cultures.

7.7. Our mutual relations

The Royal Commission has to worry, more particularly in Quebec due to its particular situation, about the emergency of establishing communication, exchange and permanent dialogue forums between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, and to that effect, Friendship Centres have to be recognized as the primary resources to achieve this.

This dialogue has to be planned at various levels: political, social, economic, educational, cultural, etc. The Friendship Centres cannot play this role at all levels, but they already are locations where meetings between Québécois and Aboriginals could be held.

The Centres have to be recognized as organizations providing popular education which help individuals to make sure that the charters of rights and freedoms and the laws regarding the protection of individuals are applied.

The Royal Commission has to acknowledge the importance of the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples proclaimed by the United Nations and denounce the lack of interest shown by the governments and by public and private institutions. The Royal Commission has to acknowledge the importance of the public and private financial contributions for the achievement of this event, which can further the enhancement of Aboriginal cultures and the reconciliation of our differences. The importance of doing a follow-up to this event has to be recognized.

The Royal Commission has to make sure that no major federal policy change regarding Aboriginals be made before the completion of its works and before it has made its recommendations, as planned in its original mandate. The recent budget cuts presented by the federal government to some programs intended for Aboriginals and its willingness to tax the revenue of Aboriginals working "off-reserve" for organizations which have their headquarters "on-reserve", are examples of decisions that do not go in the same way as the work of your Commission.

The Royal Commission has to remind the public opinion of the importance of respecting, at various levels, the differences in the Aboriginal peoples' cultures, the preservation of the original Aboriginal languages and cultures, and the wealth that this diversity brings into the world.

In addition to the matters we have identified above, our deliberation could have dealt with action plans in regards to employment, vocational training, housing, health, social services, and justice. We are content to make recommendations in the fields that concern our expertise.

8. OUR CONCLUSIONS

We sincerely hope that your Royal Commission will deem our analyses and recommendations clear and judicious in relation to the concern we all have regarding the future of urban Aboriginals.

We have tried to present the problem of the urban areas and its characteristics in the province of Quebec. We wanted to show you that several action plans are conceivable, and that the Native Friendship Centres are the best interveners in knowing and defending the interests of urban Aboriginals.

We have insisted on the possibility of a political evolution towards self-government of Aboriginal peoples and we found that urban areas are strategic locations to show that this pacific evolution is possible.

Added to the solutions that will be considered by the others participants in the works of the Royal Commission, we are hoping that our contribution will be deemed positive.