

TRANSLATION
FROM FRENCH

COMMISSION ROYALE SUR
LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

ROYAL COMMISSION ON
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

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November 19, 1992**

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Uashat, Quebec

---The hearing opened at 9:30 am on Thursday, November 19, 1992

(Opening Prayer)

(Welcome)

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Kwai (PH). Good morning.

I would now like to ask Mr Daniel Vachon to relate the history of the community.

Mr Vachon.

COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY DANIEL VACHON, PRESIDENT OF THE ELDERS, MONTAGNAIS NATION: Thank you, Mr Justice, and my thanks to all the commissioners as well as the Band Council of Sept-Îles and the entire population of Uashat/Mani-Utenam.

As I told you, Mr Justice, when we were talking here around the table, I am a person who has never been to school. I also mentioned where I was born, in a place called Mehenik (PH), 365 miles from here.

However, I have continually made

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efforts to improve myself: I learned French with the people in my community, the people of Sept-Îles. Since I am presenting the historical account, that is where I shall begin.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Excuse me, Mr Vachon.

I just want to be sure that we are getting off on the right foot with regard to translation. There must be simultaneous translation in Montagnais and English, and in French depending on the situation.

So there will be a breaking-in period, to be sure that we are functioning properly in that regard for the day.

--- (Short pause)

Excuse the interruption. Please continue.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY DANIEL VACHON: Ms and Messrs Commissioners, it is with immense pleasure that I open the hearings as president of the Elders of the Nation and member of the community.

We welcome you among us and hope that Tshishe-Manitu will watch over us on this day so that we may open our hearts and our minds, this being the objective of both the commissioners and the members of the Uashat community.

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In this brief presentation, I would like to relate to you the little history of Sept-Îles. Our ancestors moved about the face of this territory for many centuries. Called "nomads" by the anthropologists, they crossed this territory by land and sea in search of food. That territory extended from Schefferville, north of the 55th parallel, to south of the Laurentian wildlife preserve, and in the southwest to Saguenay/Lac St-Jean, Chibougamau and Chapais, the location of the Pointe-Bleue community and its hunting ground.

Jacques Cartier did not land here until 1535. The first mission was established by Oblate Father Dequen in 1621, and the first trading post in 1658. It is here that trading between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples truly began. The Montagnais exchanged their furs at the Hudson's Bay store for food or for hunting and fishing equipment.

I wished to present the foregoing in French; now I shall proceed in Montagnais. But this is a continuation of my account, not a repetition of what I have already said.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This is not a repetition.

COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY DANIEL VACHON: Correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Very well.

COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY DANIEL VACHON (translation of French via Montagnais): (No translation available for the first 45 seconds) The Indian Act was passed in 1951, marking the beginning of the problems between whites and aboriginal peoples.

The first company was established here to take whale blubber; I do not know exactly what it was used for, but this was one of the first things done here. That was at Pointe-Noire. At the time, they called it "mattiteho" (PH).

After that, other companies came, such as the mines, Iron Ore. Another company that set up here was a paper mill. And starting in 1951 Indian Affairs was established here.

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With their establishment came the delimitation of the aboriginal territory. Here in Sept-Îles, for example, aboriginal territory was a concept designed to make the aboriginal peoples stay on one closed reserve, with nothing else on that reserve.

They gave us this territory so that we could remain on it, live on it, while being unable to do anything else, such as run a store or find means of survival. Its sole purpose was to have the people live on that reserve, because the Quebec government had rights to this territory. They said that aboriginal peoples could always remain on this territory, but could not derive any profit from it.

That is why we have so many problems today, as well as because of drink, drugs, quarrels and poverty.

Whenever there is a desire to start something, it is always the white man who steps in, the white man who is bigger.

For example, the big companies that were here in the city of Sept-Îles, such as Iron Ore

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which operates in mining . . . the city of Sept-Îles grew more and more because of the companies that came to set up here.

This was the context in which the mayor of Sept-Îles attempted to round up the aboriginal people, to try and move them to Mani-Utenam, when they created that new reserve. Some people--I don't recall exactly how many--moved to Mani-Utenam while others tried to maintain their territory here in Sept-Îles. People did what they could to keep this bit of land, but a lot of other people worked together to try to have the aboriginal people moved to Mani-Utenam.

The priests here at the time found ways of closing everything down. For example, the old church was condemned. And when younger priests settled here the people began to try to repair this church.

I wrote a book in 1985 on the history of the aboriginal peoples of Uashat and Mani-Utenam. I was chief from 1964

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to 1973 and from 1975 to 1977 as well. When I was chief I did my best to help the aboriginal population so that everyone could get on together, Natives and non-Natives alike. Even when I was no longer chief, I persisted, trying to involve myself as much as possible in many organizations, such as the Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais. I was always ready to lend a helping hand.

I truly believe that a means can be found of attaining our objective, namely aboriginal self-government led by Native people.

I have been working for 15 years now for the recognition of our language, our culture and our way of life. That is why I have begun writing another book, to teach people Montagnais, as is stated in its title. Also I want to preserve my language and my culture. That is why I have written this second book, so that we may communicate better and also better preserve our

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language intact, that we may make our own way toward preserving our language, and that we may accord our elders greater respect in matters of language and culture.

I feel that we should be discussing this in much more depth, when we talk around the table. For today, as we speak, there are many languages present, and most of the time people do not listen to what is being said. For example, when one person is speaking, sometimes I don't know whether anyone is listening when he speaks about his own language.

I am not reading the full text of what I am now looking at, but I am very proud to be able to read it in my native tongue, because I respect my language and my culture. But what also happens, I think, when one seeks funding and assistance or one wishes to do something to preserve one's native language, is that the government acts as if it did not recognize that language. They will always find ways to avoid the issue. For instance, insufficient funding is given

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to do the work as it should be done, with the result that, little by little, the language disappears.

There are people who want to get involved in "amerindianization". This is not the task of just one person. It is a task for an entire population to try and preserve this language.

I think that you are going to receive a lot of comments on this, on the difficulties that we experience in trying to preserve our language, because not much respect is given to the opinion of aboriginal peoples. What I mean, so that everyone may understand, is, for example, that the work now being done is being performed by a "Royal Commission": this is something that is very important precisely because people can come and give their opinions. There is a lot of money involved in this process.

I am presently doing work in toponymy, to try and find ways of getting people to reflect upon what they are losing in terms of their culture and language. I will be seeking government funding, but it will be refused because this is something in which

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governments have little faith.

In our Montagnais culture, it is considered important that we be able to preserve the culture and respect for it. We believe that we should have assistance in maintaining our language and in helping our children to maintain our language and culture. Certainly our present situation in this regard is difficult, since we are not yet recognized, nor our rights. Nonetheless, we will continue to talk and to discuss, but if we are nowhere recognized, we cannot make much progress. What will happen is that we will end up losing our language and our culture, since the current leaders do not recognize the aboriginal culture.

You are seated here today at this table. I think that you should give this issue proper analysis, give our rights due consideration, and spread our message. We have respect for you and for the work you are doing, but you must give proper analysis to what is going to be said here. I think that there should be someone to defend our rights.

What we are presently lacking,

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in order to do the work that must be done with respect to our rights, is money. One would think that we have no right to receive money.

One would think that we have no right to be aboriginal. It is always a non-Native who ends up telling us what to do with this money.

I do not know what you think of what I am saying today, but for many years now we have endured leadership by persons other than ourselves; I don't know what the future holds for us, but the prospects are not good.

I know that everyone respects his or her own language, culture and employment. We have all the tools needed to attempt to preserve our language; what we are requesting is some financial assistance so that we can do our work as best we can, without governments telling us how to spend that money, for example, as a condition of the granting of rights and self-government.

I am not sure whether I have exceeded the allotted time, but I thank you and hope that you will be able to assist us.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you, Mr Vachon.

I think that you are certainly right to emphasize the fact that the Montagnais nation is an important and strong nation in Quebec, by virtue of the preservation and affirmation of its culture and language, and no doubt also right to dwell on the fact that it indeed remains necessary to ensure that this continues and that young people have the opportunity to both live their culture and benefit from the broader advantages of being Canadian citizens and residents of Quebec.

We are grateful for your historical presentation on the region. It is always important for us, in beginning a new session of public hearings, to be put in the picture, if you will, as regards the roots of the community in which we find ourselves. We are greatly appreciative that you have been able to do this, and above all we are very happy that you have done it in your own language. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER OF THE DAY DANIEL VACHON:

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Thank you very much. I may provide you with the text?

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Certainly.

I would now like to take just a few minutes, because we have a full day ahead, essentially to remind you of who we are, the creation of the Commission, its mandate, the way we have approached our work in the little more than a year that we have been in existence, and the way we would basically like to work with the various aboriginal communities and also, of course, with non-aboriginal people, the general public, all Canadians and Quebecers, to try to establish new foundations for the relationship between aboriginal peoples, governments and all Canadians.

The Commission was formed in late August 1991 as the result of a report submitted to the Prime Minister of Canada by former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Brian Dickson, who had been instructed by the Prime Minister to prepare and recommend terms of reference for a royal commission on the aboriginal peoples of Canada.

This marked the first time

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that a mandate for a federal royal commission had been prepared outside the public service, not by civil servants but by someone who had full authority to consult the persons most concerned, namely the aboriginal peoples, but also the general public, and to make a recommendation as to the terms of reference of the Commission as well as its composition and members.

Justice Dickson submitted his report, which was accepted in full and which was the subject of the order constituting the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples adopted on August 26, 1991.

As you may know, the Commission is composed of seven members, seven persons. I am the co-chair with Georges Erasmus, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and the predecessor of Ovide Mercredi in that position. My name is René Dussault and I am a judge in the Quebec Court of Appeal.

With me this morning are Ms Bertha Wilson, who sat in the Supreme Court of Canada through almost the entire decade of the 1980s and who

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retired from the Supreme Court early in 1991. Ms Wilson has had the opportunity to examine very closely the whole issue of aboriginal rights in Canada whenever litigation came before the Supreme Court.

Also, to her left is Paul Chartrand, a professor of law at the University of Manitoba and a Métis who lives in Winnipeg.

We are also sitting with a commissioner for the day. It is our privilege to have with us this morning Mr Daniel Vachon. The concept of commissioner of the day is one which met with much success during our first series of public hearings.

It is a concept which allows us better first-hand knowledge of the community in which we are sitting. Also, during the presentation of briefs we commence a dialogue with those presenting the briefs, and this enables us, often through the questions asked by the commissioners of the day, to gain a better insight; at the end of the day we hold discussions to ensure that we have truly understood the context in which

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a number of elements have been brought forth.

I would like to say that the Commission is also composed of Ms Viola Robinson, a Micmac from Nova Scotia who was President of the Native Council of Canada before joining the Commission, Mary Sillett, who is an Inuk from Labrador, and Allan Blakeney, who was Premier of Saskatchewan for over a decade.

We therefore consist of three non-Natives and four aboriginal people. Justice Dickson wanted and recommended such a composition precisely in order to ensure that the Commission might have maximum credibility and work with both aboriginal people and the general Canadian public in every province, and particularly Quebec.

We have a very wide mandate. It is set out in 16 points, each of which itself includes approximately ten other more detailed points. Naturally, the mandate covers the entire issue of self-government, of how

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future aboriginal governments will function in terms of structure, funding and membership, who will belong to the aboriginal government, what place will be provided for non-Natives on the territories of aboriginal governments, and indeed the entire question of territory, particularly the dispute settlement or land claim process. We know, for example, that there is a negotiation process that began in Quebec 12 years ago with the Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais and which has yet to produce any results. Two days ago we were in Quebec City, where there was discussion of the potential impact of appointing a new government negotiator, the former president of Hydro-Québec, Mr Guy Coulombe, to bring this negotiation to a conclusion.

It is clear that throughout the governmental negotiation process there has been at the same time a problem of political will, which is definitely associated with very real technical difficulties.

The Commission's terms of reference cover the entire social realm: the sectors of

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justice, education, health, social services; social problems such as alcoholism, violence against women, public health problems; AIDS, an increasingly major concern in aboriginal communities; and often the high suicide rate. Our mandate also focusses specifically on aboriginal youth and the whole situation of aboriginal women.

This latter point is extremely important to the Commission. The discussion paper that we published on the issues in question, which is on the table before you, is basically a report on the first series of public hearings; it mentions a good many aboriginal women and aboriginal women's groups, but not enough, not enough. It is extremely important to us that aboriginal women participate and be able to come and express themselves freely before the Commission.

We are presently considering a mechanism that would make it possible for this to take place

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more easily. We therefore emphasize that we will attempt to adapt our operation so that aboriginal women may feel comfortable in coming to discuss their concerns with us; and the same applies to young people.

Our mandate also covers economic development. Aboriginal economies are fundamental. If the notion of self-government is to mean anything, there must be a significant degree of self-sufficiency.

Also at the heart of our mandate are not only the protection of aboriginal cultures and languages, but their affirmation.

What all of this means is that there is hardly anything that is not covered by our mandate. Clearly, this lends the advantage of necessitating examination of the entire situation, but at the same time, after a certain point, it calls for a sense of priorities. Basically, what we are doing in this public education process is attempting to discover what the aboriginal communities of Canada, the various communities, consider to be the priorities.

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At bottom, every commission of inquiry has a consultation process and a research process. This one is a very special commission, because it is focussed on people. Possibly the only analogy in the past was the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, the Laurendeau-Denton Commission, in the early sixties. It is not the same thing to work on something in which people are at issue as it is to work on a subject field such as transportation, health or communications.

Since its creation, the Commission has toured the provinces and the two territories to consult approximately one hundred provincial aboriginal organizations and to meet with the premiers and ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs in each province, as well as the territorial leaders. Following these consultations, particularly with the aboriginal associations, it was agreed that it was absolutely necessary to set up a dialogue. We could not proceed in the normal fashion of commissions,

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that is, tour about 30 cities, mostly in the south, listen to people, and then go back to our offices to prepare recommendations. This is much more complex than that.

It seemed to us that we had to tour every region of Canada several times, publish discussion papers between each series of public hearings, and raise issues that we wanted people to get working on so that certain elements of response and solution could be offered.

It is our hope that we will increasingly focus on a number of priorities which aboriginal peoples will understand to be common, as well as priorities that are specific to certain regions and certain nations, so that in the end we will be able, concurrently with the research program--which is one of the most extensive ever undertaken in Canada and certainly the most important, on aboriginal issues--to put this all together and attempt to produce recommendations derived from these findings of the public participation mechanism

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and of the more academic research. These recommendations shall meet the hopes and expectations of the aboriginal peoples of Canada, but at the same time we will try to translate them in tangible fashion by responding to the difficult questions that are often of concern to the general public, so that this report is not consigned to the governmental shelves, but achieves a broad consensus as to its application, both in Quebec and in the other provinces.

This is an important task, especially since much scepticism exists. There have been many task forces on aboriginal affairs in the past whose work often received no follow-up. I think that what is different about this commission is not just the time at which it is sitting . . . we have sat for one year, at the same time as the constitutional process, which has lent a great deal of visibility to aboriginal issues. This has proven both an advantage and a technical disadvantage for the Commission, in that it may have overshadowed its work to some degree.

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We were pleased that this occurred simultaneously with the Commission's efforts, because we believe that these discussions which took place between the premiers, the Prime Minister of Canada and the national aboriginal leaders have made it possible to clear a very important hurdle in the aboriginal cause.

We do not believe that the referendum vote of last October 26 means a return to the starting post. On the contrary, there has been more thorough and accelerated popular education on aboriginal issues, though much remains to be done. There has also been an exchange of political will on the part of the leaders and governments, and I think that this will facilitate the application of the Commission's recommendations.

We hope to submit a final report to the Government of Canada by the end of the summer of 1994, around September 1994.

In the meantime--and this is the message we have attempted to convey from the outset to the various provincial premiers--the Commission must not be used as an excuse for not

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pursuing reform, for delaying things which have long been in hand, because the temptation may be there to say "We'll wait until the Commission's report comes out before doing anything". On the contrary, we invite and urge governments to take action, to which the Commission will adapt itself. Above all, we do not want to serve as an excuse for inaction.

This Commission was not created to determine problem areas or to identify what the problems are: the problems have been identified by many task forces, many previous commissions. It was created to respond to the need to find concrete solutions that can be applied tomorrow morning.

Consequently, we would naturally like the people presenting briefs to speak about links with the past--that is fundamental--but also to turn to the future as quickly as possible and to think in concrete fashion of specific elements, based on their everyday experience. We understand that certain questions are more difficult than others, but

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we think that often the answer to these questions is to be found in the communities, at the level of everyday experience. People intuitively know what will work and what will not.

In conceptual terms, we are attempting to do our work from the bottom up rather than from the top down. We are trying to start from the actual situation and to build on it. That is why we have felt it necessary to visit over a hundred communities across Canada, possibly 125--an approach which has never before been taken by commissions of inquiry.

In addition, we are visiting young people in schools, in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades. We know that education is a fundamental issue, and that the solutions do not involve money alone; there is also parental responsibility. The value attached to education by parents, communities, the aboriginal leadership and non-Native society as a whole, the value attached to reception structures to facilitate the progress of studies, the completion of

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high school and the transition to postsecondary education, this is fundamental.

We want to hear your views on this matter, as on all questions that may be of interest to you. Justice is one of these, which obviously includes everything from policing to sentencing, the probation systems and the whole issue of the prison system.

Of course, I could speak for a long time on the Commission's mandate and on how we hope to fulfil it. I simply wish to say that we have reflected on how to do this and planned with those concerned, and we remain eager for comments and additional suggestions on correcting our sights.

I spoke earlier of our concern to hear more aboriginal women. We are now considering a process that would truly allow us to be more accessible to these women. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please let us know. At bottom, this is a dialogue.

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What we shall hear today is just a beginning. We will be returning to Quebec--not necessarily to your community, but we will be returning to various regions of Quebec, and it is always possible to come back and make a presentation. For example, in Quebec City we heard the Montagnais of Roberval. They had the same message.

This is a process of reflection. It is our hope that, after our visit and the discussion that will have taken place, you will continue to reflect and to inform us of your views and of any additional thoughts you may have.

Once again, I would like to say that we are happy to meet with people in their community. We have relations with the national and provincial aboriginal associations, but we do not want to hear only the aboriginal leadership. It seems fundamental to us to hear people who are living through situations and conditions that are often difficult and painful in many communities. Naturally, it is the Commission's objective to work to improve the framework that will permit a better

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relationship with aboriginal peoples, but it is also its objective, in very concrete fashion, to improve the living conditions of a majority of the persons concerned.

Therefore I thank you. I am sure that we will have a very productive day.

At this time I will ask my colleagues to say a few words, and then, before moving on to the first brief, we will take a coffee break.

So I would like to ask Ms Wilson to address you.

[English]

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[English]

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[English]

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[English]

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Commissioner Chartrand.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Thank you

Mr Co-Chairman and good morning.

It is an honour for me to be a member of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and a special honour to be here today in Sept-Îles. It will be my pleasure this morning to make a few remarks, and to make them in French.

It is particularly interesting for me to visit an aboriginal community where French is spoken. In the West, mostly English is spoken. When I was young I lived in an old Métis community where French was spoken, but a French that I believe was

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different from the French I speak today that I hear around me, a French mixed with a little Chippewa and a little English: a unique dialect.

Apart from that, I have been living for over 30 years in Anglophone communities in Canada and Australia. So now I think in English. All my education was in English. It seems to me that I can understand a conversation in French, but when the time comes for questions, I occasionally feel the need to express myself in English.

I am pleased that we are here primarily to hear your recommendations for solutions, for the recommendations later to be made to the federal government. So I look forward with much pleasure to the presentations.

Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

We will break for coffee before resuming the session.

Thank you.

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--- Brief interruption at 10:30 am.

--- Resumption at 11:08 am.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: If you please, we will begin again.

I would like to ask Mr Marcel Blouin, chief administrative officer of the City of Sept-Îles, to join us at the table. There has been a problem; apparently the mayor of Sept-Îles, Jean-Marc Dion, is unable to be with us. Therefore I would like to give the floor to Mr Blouin.

Mr Blouin.

MARCEL BLOUIN, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, CITY OF SEPT-ÎLES: My apologies, Mr Chairman, Ms and Messrs Commissioners, but Mr Dion cannot be present today. It was impossible for him to join us.

We have read the documents. The Mayor read with great interest the documentation that you sent him. He told me that he will be mailing you the responses to the questions you asked in your paper.

I myself read certain parts of the questions this

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morning. I understand that we will be taking some time to reflect on our responses, particularly to item 18, which asks about relations in the urban environment between municipalities and aboriginal peoples. We will certainly have something to say about this because, in the course of our activities, we in Sept-Îles have numerous relations with the aboriginal peoples.

So I offer my apologies once again, and the Mayor will be forwarding the responses to you as quickly as possible.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Naturally it is unfortunate that we cannot proceed with a public discussion this morning. We are glad to learn that we will be receiving a brief from the City of Sept-Îles. Unfortunately there is no question of our returning to Sept-Îles itself, but we will be holding other hearings in Quebec.

We are extremely interested in the situation of cities which have Indian reserves within their borders or on their outskirts.

We think that listening to difficulties and problems--and often these must be

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talked about in order to see how to improve things--is a point of contact between the aboriginal communities and the general public that is very important. I think that past experience, both good and bad, must basically be laid on the table and discussed in order to try to find arrangements and solutions that will help to improve the situation, and ensure that it is directed toward better understanding and better relations in the future.

In that sense, we feel that a city such as yours has much to contribute. Not only would we like to see that contribution be of benefit here in the region, but we also hope that, on a broader level, it will enable us to arrive at recommendations that will take into account both the concerns of the cities and the concerns of the aboriginal peoples who live very close to the cities.

Therefore please convey to Mayor Dion our desire to receive a brief which not only attempts to respond to the questions--of which there are 58, as we know--but which truly focusses on the actual experience here and which would allow us to extrapolate and light the way for our broader future recommendations

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pertaining to situations such as that which exists here, where aboriginal and non-aboriginal people live side by side.

Thank you, Mr Blouin.

MARCEL BLOUIN: Thank you, lady and gentlemen.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I call upon Mr Eugène-Roméo Fontaine.

RÉAL VOLLANT, INNU TAKUAIKAN UASHAT MAK MANI-UTENAM:

Mr Eugène-Roméo Fontaine cannot be here. We have asked one of our directors to prepare a brief, but we have not yet received the text of the brief. The members of Innu Takuaikan have asked me to make a presentation all the same. If this is acceptable, I am ready.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: On behalf of the band.

RÉAL VOLLANT: On behalf of the band.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: On behalf of the Band Council.

RÉAL VOLLANT: On behalf of Innu Takuaikan Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So this will necessarily be a preliminary presentation

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which you will later be completing.

RÉAL VOLLANT: That is so.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Go ahead.

RÉAL VOLLANT: First of all, Ms and Messrs Commissioners, I bid you good morning and thank you for giving us the opportunity to express ourselves before your Commission.

Please excuse my French. I am not very accustomed to working in French; I chiefly work in Montagnais.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You may speak in Montagnais, if you wish.

RÉAL VOLLANT: No, I can speak French, though perhaps a broken French.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Feel free. We know that you speak French.

RÉAL VOLLANT: First, I believe that you have invited organizations to give not only their comments but also their solutions on how the Innu see

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the future.

Before I begin, there are three major subjects that are very important to us. These are land claims, the constitutional offers and self-government. For us the solutions proceed from these three main subjects.

In the matter of land claims, which are under the auspices of the camp, we definitely lay claim to our present territories, the communities where we live, and our hunting grounds. Our claim is to all of these territories as a whole.

We have heard the constitutional offers. This was an opportunity that was open to us. Now we do not know the status of the constitutional offers, or how we will be able to work with the latest offers we have received.

As has been said, what is most important to us, the only solution, is self-government. Development, education, justice, health and social services--all of these depend on self-government.

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In the matter of economic or community development, we can readily say that we remain prepared to develop the territories that are presently ours, but we should at least have the chance or the power to choose what is good for these territories. We are always ready to develop them, as I said, ourselves or even in partnership with other companies, organizations or whatever. We are always open to this, but we still want some choice within these developments.

For us, education is very important. Right now we have over 100 students at the postsecondary level, and we know for a fact that these people now taking courses cannot all work within our small community. Therefore there must be opportunities to work in different fields.

When there are major developments, such as the Alouette aluminum smelter

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which recently opened, very, very few aboriginal people are involved.

When there are projects, major projects, megaprojects or whatever, I think it is very important that there be studies or agreements with Innu Takuaikan Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam so that our population too can be assisted in finding work. In referring to autonomy, we always hear that autonomy begins with oneself. If we are able to work, we are already partly autonomous. At present you know that over 80 per cent of our labour force cannot find work.

The people are prepared to take training. So when there are major projects of this type, whether Alouette or others, there should be meetings, agreements, information provided preferentially to our Innu because they are part of the community and the region. This is very important for us.

Justice is also a consideration. At present all legislation is passed by the two orders of government,

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provincial and federal. We would also like the opportunity to create laws which are not opposed to the current laws, but ones which perhaps would better correspond to our aspirations.

In health and social services, we are already autonomous to some degree, but we still receive directives from governments, agreements and so forth. We would like to be able to truly have our own rules for social services. We know our community. We know who is sick, what sort of sickness it is, whether the person is on welfare, and so forth. We know what the people's needs are. If we were autonomous we could better meet those needs.

Certainly there is a great will on our part, but I think that the governments must also do their share.

Let me give you an example. People talk of federal-provincial duality. We well know that there are powers currently held by the province,

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in fact, 17 out of 21 such powers, such as roads and education. The province has jurisdiction over a huge list of matters. But we do business with the federal government. So it is very, very difficult for us to be able to sit down and say that we are negotiating.

All the same, we want to arrive at a policy that is directed toward this autonomy.

That is all I can say for now. As I indicated earlier, the brief will follow later.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you, Mr Vollant.

If I understand correctly, the community here consists of over 2,500 persons.

RÉAL VOLLANT: That is correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You tell us that you have approximately one hundred students at the postsecondary level.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ Can you give us any information on the completion rate for secondary studies as such? What percentage of students attend high school and finish it?

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RÉAL VOLLANT: I don't have the exact rates here, but I know that for some time, for three or four years, many people, even adults, have been returning to secondary studies afterward, to postsecondary or what is called adult education. This is now going on. The trend is toward training. We know for a fact that we require training and we are interested in seeing our people trained.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In terms of the educational system, there is a school . . .

RÉAL VOLLANT: Two schools.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: . . . two schools under aboriginal control.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Can you . . .

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes. We now have two elementary schools and one secondary school. We follow the normal academic program provided and controlled by the Quebec Department of Education. We follow the same rules as they do.

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All that we control is the administration, and not . . .

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The program?

RÉAL VOLLANT: . . . the program *per se*.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In the program are there Innu or Montagnais language courses?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes. At present we even have courses in Montagnais only in primary grades 1, 2 and 3.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The first three years of elementary are in Montagnais.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes, primary is in Montagnais. There are still those who want to take the normal program, and that is given as well. But the opportunity is there for those who just want to learn Innu. Education in Innu is also available to those not actually enrolled in the Innu classes: these are supplementary courses.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This morning, Mr Vachon mentioned the importance of

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language and of keeping the culture alive. In the present school system, even if, as you say, it is only the administration that you are in charge of, it is nonetheless remarkable that primary education, that is, the first three years, can be received in the Montagnais language. I presume that this is a case of the wishes of the community actually taking shape and being responsible for this state of affairs.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Correct. At the primary level, grades 1, 2 and 3, as I said, parents have the opportunity to enrol their children in Innu classes or regular classes. So it is offered. The service is there.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The teachers are Montagnais, naturally.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes, the teachers are Montagnais. They have to learn the Innu language, and that absolutely requires Innu teachers.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: On economic development, you spoke of the Alouette aluminum smelter. Are you telling us that there are no aboriginal people there at present?

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Are there people from your community who work there? "Very few" is what you said, but can you elaborate a little on that?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Very well. There are presently very few aboriginal people working at the Alouette smelter. We have received information for the second phase of Alouette. Young people are now taking courses--I believe there are about ten who are supposed to be taking courses--with a view to obtaining a job at Alouette.

This type of course is needed not at the end, when the project is finished, but during the construction phase; there is nothing preventing us from training aboriginal people to eventually have permanent jobs in these companies.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: And this was not done during the construction phase.

RÉAL VOLLANT: No. It is being done now, after the smelter has opened.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: What is the context of this specialized training that is offered? Does it have any community connections?

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Is it offered at the CÉGEP or at a school?

RÉAL VOLLANT: I think it's at the school board, but it is associated with all the jobs that are . . . specialized with the jobs in the smelter. These are jobs at which they will be able to work inside the smelter.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So it is customized job training.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: How is this funded?

RÉAL VOLLANT: It is funded by the provincial and federal governments.

In the matter of development, something that is very important to us is revenue sources. As sources of revenue, we now have some land claims, forms of taxation that we could draw upon, or even royalties within these developments. This is the real purpose of Innu Takuaikan.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: A word on land claims.

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Can you outline for us . . .

RÉAL VOLLANT: I couldn't give you the main lines, but I know for a fact that at present . . . the claims have been under discussion for a long time. The most recent development, I think, was the Department of Indian Affairs . . . not the Department of Indian Affairs but . . .

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This is part of the comprehensive claim being negotiated with the Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais.

RÉAL VOLLANT: That is correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: More specifically, what is at issue here in the region?

RÉAL VOLLANT: We now have certain specific claims, as they are called, if you look at SN3 (PH) or others, certain agreements or disagreements on the development of Uashat. There are cases currently pending within specific claims.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Turning to

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something else, I believe that you set up your own police force four or five years ago.

RÉAL VOLLANT: We are affiliated with the Amerindian police.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Is the Amerindian police responsible to a section of the Quebec Police Force?

RÉAL VOLLANT: No. There is an Amerindian police council which is presently controlled by its headquarters in Pointe-Bleue. This may be adequate for now, but we want to go further if possible. There is talk of autonomy, and we want true autonomy.

The goal sought by Innu Takuaikan is to provide our police officers with real training, whether by the Amerindian police or the Quebec Police Force, so that they may subsequently become municipal police officers controlled by our band, at both the administrative and operational levels.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: To help us understand the Amerindian police, here on the reserve you have members who belong to the Amerindian police and who

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provide policing services. Can you tell us something about how that works?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes. We are trying to get some regulations. These regulations are the working tools of the Amerindian police, but we have no control over the Amerindian police. Both operations and administration are controlled by the headquarters.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Of the Amerindian police, which are in Roberval.

RÉAL VOLLANT: In Pointe-Bleue, at present.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: But it is a Montagnais organization.

RÉAL VOLLANT: No. It is an aboriginal organization. The service is offered to the various bands who want to participate in the Amerindian police, from Restigouche to the Algonquins; maybe not the Cree, but different aboriginal nations who want to participate.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Do you think that this is a good direction to take?

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Is it producing the results you hoped for? When you say that you would like more local control, you seem somehow to be saying: "We have more or less the same problems as we had with the QPF or other municipal police forces. They're remote from us. It's the headquarters that. . ."

RÉAL VOLLANT: It is quite remote; it's impersonal. You see the municipalities operating with their own police officers. We want the same kind of autonomy: our own police, who have real control.

We are prepared to pass regulations, but we would also like control; we don't just want to pass regulations but to see them enforced by our own people. And I include judges among these people. Right now if a driver gets a ticket or whatever, we know that the money goes to the province. We would like to draw the revenue from these fines for ourselves.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:

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Tickets that apply to both Natives and non-Natives who use reserve roads.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Right.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I would like to return for a moment to the issue of police services. When you say, "We would like to have our own police force", how do you see the question of training? The Amerindian police was created to try to bring together a number of efforts that would make training possible. If we break up . . .

RÉAL VOLLANT: I believe that we are now obliging our young people to take courses for possible openings within our communities. We want to proceed in the same way: we would like our police officers to receive real training . . . we now have police officers with work experience. Most probably, all they would need is training directly by the province's police school, which is private now, I think, and not affiliated with the Quebec Police Force; it is a private school, École Nicolet.

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It is most probable that the persons now employed need only do a kind of memorization to be able to work in our communities. But we would like future candidates to be genuinely trained as real police officers.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Do you feel that the training of the Amerindian police is inadequate?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes, we believe that the training of the present officers is very inadequate. Certain specifications are lacking; one can talk about police investigators or even controllers or directors. All that the present director does--how can I put this--is he decides what will be done, but he is not the one who decides on the budgets or the full scope of activity. Suppose there is a major incident: he still has to work with headquarters. So he is always controlled by headquarters and, as I said, headquarters is too far away from our two communities.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT:

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Does the Band Council have a role to play in the Amerindian police at the general council level?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes. There are general meetings, which we attend. This is the only form of participation available to us, to Innu Takuaiakan. We are not on the executive. We have the right to speak at the general meetings.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: But basically, this is decided by elections. Certain band councils are on the executive.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes, but we haven't yet had the chance to have a member of the Amerindian police since the Amerindian police . . . since 1977 or 1978, I think, when it was formed. We have not had a single member of the Uashat/Mani-Utenam Band on the executive. Yet we are a large band, I believe.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Right.

I will ask Ms Wilson and Paul Chartrand to continue.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Very well.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

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[English]

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes. We presently have male and female aboriginal teachers employed in our schools. I know that those now at the postsecondary level are pursuing their Bachelor of Education so that they can come and work in our communities. I cannot tell you how many there are, but I believe there are between 10 and 15 aboriginal people working for us.

[English]

RÉAL VOLLANT: No. As I explained, because of the federal-provincial duality, the laws, it's the provincial government that

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offers all of the courses now given, the Quebec Education Act. So we follow the same curriculum provided by the Quebec Department of Education. This includes any and all subjects.

We do not have an education which is separate from the normal education.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Just to clarify, if I understand correctly, the first three years of primary . . .

RÉAL VOLLANT: Are in the Montagnais language.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: . . . it's the general program, but given in Montagnais.

RÉAL VOLLANT: That's right, the general program of the Quebec Department of Education given in Montagnais. That is correct.

[English]

RÉAL VOLLANT: That is true. We have no control of the community.

[English]

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[English]

RÉAL VOLLANT: In 1989 we held a symposium on the general policies of our population of Uashat and Mani-Utenam. This symposium covered education, hunting, all fields.

Recommendations were produced as a result, and we are trying to apply these. I believe that people spoke during the symposium--teachers, Innu, Elders--everyone could give his or her point of view. There were recommendations, and we are attempting to put these into application at present.

[English]

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes, it is still

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possible to get a copy of that document. We have it in our offices, and will be pleased to send you a copy.

[English]

RÉAL VOLLANT: You're welcome.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Commissioner Chartrand.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Thank you,

Mr Vollant. I look forward to studying the detailed brief to be submitted by your community.

RÉAL VOLLANT: And I thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I would like one last item of information.

Could you indicate to us the number of employees on the Council? I believe there are around a hundred?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Approximately 150 full-time employees work for us.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Essentially it is divided into a

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number of branches and services?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes. It's a little government in itself. Innu Takuaikan may look like a municipality, with all of its branches, but we still have certain peculiarities, such as education, the administration of which we control, health services and all. We have perhaps a little more administrative control than the municipalities.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Relations with the Department of Indian Affairs: if I understand correctly, its office here in Sept-Îles was closed a few years ago.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So you do business with the Quebec City office?

RÉAL VOLLANT: Correct. Relations consist of budget negotiations, pure and simple. We have been on AFA, alternative funding arrangements, for two years now. We negotiate a comprehensive budget figure and administer that budget to provide all services--education, social services, welfare,

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infrastructures, just about everything. One thing that we may not control is the DPJ, because we don't have it yet.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That is the Director of Youth Protection, for my colleagues who are not from Quebec.

RÉAL VOLLANT: Correct. This may be something that we don't have. We have no rights there.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So essentially, in administrative terms you benefit from a broad delegation of powers.

RÉAL VOLLANT: That is true. We may have broad powers, as you say, in administrative terms, but we would like a little more. I think we are now proving that we are capable of functioning administratively; so we want to go further and take a second step toward self-government.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Can you tell us if there are still families drawing their subsistence essentially from a traditional lifestyle, trapping in particular, and if so how many of them there are?

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RÉAL VOLLANT: Those involved in it for a longer time, perhaps? Is that what you wish to know? We may have over twenty families who are returning to this form of subsistence. It should not be forgotten either that most of our people engage in hunting and fishing periodically. This may last from one or two weeks to a month. When they have an opportunity to take their vacations, they go north instead of south.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So this is more recreational than it is a primary mode of subsistence.

RÉAL VOLLANT: No, it is not recreational. It is inborn in us.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I have indeed benefited from the openness you have just shown.

RÉAL VOLLANT: It is inborn in us. It is stronger than us.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So in fact it is not a mode of subsistence as such for the majority of people, but there are about twenty families which . . .

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RÉAL VOLLANT: Yes. But I still must say that, as workers, we may not be paid the same as people working in other fields, on the pretext that we pay no taxes. But we still have mouths to feed. At the same time, as I said, this is innate in us; it is stronger than us; we have to go hunting.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Agreed. But this still constitutes a supplement in terms of . . .

RÉAL VOLLANT: Correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Very well. Thank you.

I repeat once again that we would like to have a brief from the Band Council--this is a large council, with a large organization and a large administration--particularly on how people see the structures and financing of an autonomous government here in Sept-Îles.

I hope that this desire of ours will be conveyed to the Band Council. We need solutions. We cannot act alone in . . .

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RÉAL VOLLANT: Be assured that we will provide you with the brief at the appropriate time. At present it is not available, but it will certainly be provided. Once again I apologize for the fact that the brief is not ready.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Very well. Thank you very much.

RÉAL VOLLANT: And I thank you, sir.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We will now reverse the schedule somewhat. I would like to ask the aboriginal women of Betsiamites to come forth to make their presentation. Mèrilda St-Onge.

MÈRILDA ST-ONGE, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WOMEN OF THE MONTAGNAIS NATION: Good day, Mr Chairman, Ms and Messrs Commissioners.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Good day.

MÈRILDA ST-ONGE: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express the viewpoint of the aboriginal women of the North Shore, of the Montagnais women. I am Mèrilda St-Onge, representative of the women of the Montagnais nation.

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Before I begin, I would like to introduce Ms Philomène Deter (PH), whom I would ask to sit with me, Ms Thérèse Labbé and Ms Evelyne Matte, please. Ms Deter is a member of the provincial executive and its secretary-treasurer. Evelyne Matte is my daughter, in category 6(2). Ms Labbé is a mother, category 6(1).

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Excuse me, but when you refer to categories . . .

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: I wanted to have them at my side because you know that membership status is categorized under the Indian Act; as a result, they have been categorized 6(1), which is assigned to a person born of an aboriginal mother and father, and 6(2), which is assigned to a person born of aboriginal and non-aboriginal parents.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I think--and I am doing this intentionally--that this is important information for the public record. In that sense it allows us . . .

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It is very important.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Because

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the public is of course largely unaware of these questions and distinctions, and we think that it is always good for educational purposes to have this in the transcripts.

Thank you.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: To introduce myself, as I said, I am Mèrilda St-Onge, representing the women of the Montagnais nation. I have been a member of the Native Women's Association for 12 years.

The primary objective of the Native Women's Association is to defend the rights of women who consider themselves wronged. I became a member of the Native Women's Association because at the very beginning the Association worked so that women married to non-Natives might recover their Indian status. Women were discriminated against under section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act. I was one of these women; I married a non-Native and was discriminated against by the Indian Act.

In 1985 the Act was amended and so I regained my status, along with a number of other women. And yet the discrimination

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continued. This is an Act which has lasted 125 years, and it is difficult to change something that old because it becomes part of people's lives. It became a habit, a tradition for our aboriginal people to discriminate against these women. Today we are still suffering this discrimination even though the law has been amended.

We speak of discrimination because I returned to my community. The reinstated women had services in education, health and welfare, but there was a problem with housing. When the time came to apply for housing for the reinstated women, they were always told there was no land. Many excuses were given: "we have no money", "the band councils have no money", "the band councils don't have enough land". In my community I had to fight for six years in order to meet with the chiefs. There were four chiefs; over four terms of office I met with four different chiefs to tell them that I too had regained my Indian status, had returned to my community, was on the community's band list, was a full member

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of the band, and so was entitled to the same services as those called "regular members".

The amended Act became Bill C-31. I was speaking to you earlier about categories 6(1) and 6(2). With Bill C-31, we became "C-31s". We were no longer members of the band . . . before that, we were told "You are whites"; because we had married whites we were considered to be whites. After the Act was amended we became "C-31s".

I will also speak to you about the C-31s and the off-reserve Indians. There are people who cannot return to their communities for the reasons I have given you, because the bands do not accept them, because the bands cannot provide housing. These people live off the reserve. They are no longer called "Montagnais women" or "Micmac women", as the case may be: these women and their progeny are called "off-reserves". This is the big problem that aboriginal women are facing right now.

Also there is talk of the membership codes

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they are to have in the communities. Most communities talk about working on their membership code. This involves determining who will be Indian and who won't: who will be considered a band member.

At this time, it is a little dangerous if the membership code stipulates that it is the members who must determine who is to be a band member. It is like the "categories" issue. Category 6(2) is a child born of a non-aboriginal parent. We would not want any discrimination from that source either.

Also, the majority of off-reserves, of people living off-reserve, are women. We also see a lot of single parents. The single parents, once again, are women. The majority of single parents are women.

We talk about single female parents, and also about unmarried mothers. I will read you a report here on the registration of children of unmarried mothers which was issued by the Standing Committee.

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Since Bill C-31 came into effect, the Department of Indian Affairs has been carrying out a new form of discrimination, this time against unmarried mothers, who are asked to provide an affidavit signed by the father of their child in order to determine the status of that child. In its report of August 1988, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs recommended that this practice be curtailed, and said that a sworn statement simply indicating the father's status, without naming him, should be sufficient. We reported this problem to the Minister at the meeting of May 16, 1989.

The Minister seemed very interested in this issue and promised to give it more thorough attention. Last November 7, he sent us a copy of the response prepared for him by the Legal Liaison and Support Directorate of the Department of Indian Affairs:

The registrar cannot base a registration on information which he cannot verify. If the

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registrar were to add the name of a child to a band's list, that band could require him to justify his decision. The registrar might then find himself in a very delicate situation, one faced by very few public servants assigned to comparable tasks.

[UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION]

It is clear that the Department's concern in this matter is to protect its employees so that they do not find themselves in a delicate situation with respect to a band. It is especially outrageous to see that a father's statement is not questioned, but the registrar cannot accept a statement by the mother. Is a man's word more valid than a woman's?

We consider this practice to constitute flagrant discrimination against women, most of whom are already living in difficult conditions.

In my community in Betsiamites,

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I consulted the membership in 1987, after Bill C-31 was amended. In 1987 we already had 19 children categorized 6(2), on the pretext that the father had not recognized his paternity.

This means that a child born of an aboriginal mother and father but whose father cannot declare his paternity is considered to be in category 6(2). If in later years that child were to marry a non-Native, his descendants would no longer be aboriginal. Here is the discrimination, the cutting-back of the aboriginal nation that the government requires.

Nowhere in the world do I think a woman is required to declare the paternity of her child. No other nationality--whether Italian or English--has ever been obliged to name the father of the child.

Now that the Act has been repaired--the government has "repaired" this Act--the discrimination in our communities continues. This law introduced by the white man, the Indian Act, persists

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today in our communities.

We are not talking only about women who married non-Natives before 1985; we are also talking about the next generation who are also destined to marry non-Natives; we are talking about our grandchildren and our grandchildren's children, about our future generations.

I don't see why it should now be left to the government and our bands to say who is to be an Indian and how this discrimination is to continue.

We are demanding that women receive the same services as men, the same treatment as men. We are demanding equal rights. Equal rights have always existed, but with the Indian Act . . . we suffer today. This Act is very rooted in our communities. Our communities feel obliged to say to these women: "You are a white woman. We can't talk to you any more. We can't look at you any more. We can't give you anything any more. Or if we do, we do it reluctantly because this Act has to be enforced." There is much reluctance to enforce this Act,

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and as reinstated women we are forced to fight with our communities.

It's unfortunate. When I said that the Indian Act was rooted, I mean that it has changed the thinking of our aboriginal people from what it was before.

Here is the position of the Native Women's Association:

We must have faith in the ability of our nations to control our destiny. An aboriginal self-government must be responsible. Every form of government is judged on how its people are treated. Assuming control of a band's membership is the first step toward political autonomy. To become a people who govern themselves we must co-operate in developing institutions in our communities, with the participation of all our members. We must not repeat the injustices suffered by many of our members under the Indian Act. We must be a model of a more equitable system.

When I refer to a more equitable system

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and not doing injustices . . . I was speaking earlier about unmarried mothers. I have done a great deal of work on this issue, and each time I have an opportunity to speak I cannot allow myself to ignore it.

The unmarried mothers issue is similar to that of the discrimination that women have suffered. Under the Indian Act women were discriminated against by being told they had no more rights, no more Indian status because they had married non-Natives. Now that the government has repaired the Act, we find that it has made another attempt, this time at the grass roots: the children. Discrimination against the children of unmarried mothers puts us in the same situation as with marriage to a non-Native. It is outrageous, to attempt to diminish the aboriginal nation through its children.

We believe in the need for each band and each aboriginal nation to develop membership rules that respect the rights of the members, with no discrimination. Equality and full participation

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must once again become the foundation of our societies. We must stop ignoring the reinstated women. We must stop preventing reinstated women and their children from obtaining services, residence rights, education and employment. There is no admissible excuse for such practices. We must not deprive our children and our grandchildren of their Indian rights when at the bottom of our hearts we know that they do have rights as Indians, even if those rights are not recognized by the Indian Act.

This is what I meant earlier: these children will always be Indians. When one knows that one is of aboriginal descent, one is an Indian. I have been told this before. I have suffered discrimination. I lost my identity for many years: in my community I was told I was a white woman, and in the white community I was told I was an Indian, a "savage".

Today I have regained my rights and I have come back. But losing my rights did not mean that I was not an Indian; I have always been an Indian and I will be one for the rest of my life.

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MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It matters little whether I am classified in any numbered category -- C-31, 6(1), 6(2) -- I am not a number. I am Mèrilda St-Onge; I am the daughter of Joe St-Onge and Anastasia Vachon. Thus, I am an Aboriginal person. My father and my mother are Aboriginal persons, regardless of the number assigned to me. Even there, as a regular band member, we have a band number, which is ridiculous. So I have always said I would always be an Indian; classify me in any category, I will always be an Indian and my children will always be Indians.

We know that culture is passed on by the mother, language is passed on by the mother. I think this means women are very important in our communities. That is why we are recommending that the rights of women be examined in the communities. I find this unfortunate.

Today, much progress has been made. For example, I am a reinstated woman. Ten years ago, when I first became a member of the Association, I never would have thought that I could

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sit down at a Band Council table. I have had to fight to finally gain a seat on a band council, because I am now a council member with the Betsiamites band, even though I am a reinstated woman. I can continue to defend the rights of women on the Band Council and at the provincial, regional and local levels.

This has nonetheless been a reward for my efforts. I don't want to compliment myself, but we must not underestimate ourselves either. So I say what I think, when I feel it.

On the other hand, I find it disgraceful that things continue in this way in our communities. We were talking about housing, but when a woman who has never lost her rights -- after 1987, she married a non-Aboriginal person -- is told by her community: "You can wait for housing," this is flagrant discrimination by a community that tells her, this woman: "You'll wait because you're married to a non-Aboriginal person."

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The simple fact a woman is married to a non-Aboriginal person does not make her less of an Aboriginal person. The term "Aboriginal woman" has a very bad connotation in our communities. The Association des femmes autochtones is linked to Aboriginal women; all women in the communities are Aboriginal women, whether or not they are married to non-Aboriginal persons. But the term "Aboriginal women" is used to refer to women who have been married to non-Aboriginal persons.

I would now like to make it very clear to people that an Aboriginal woman is a member of the band to which she belongs, just like the men, the Aboriginal men. There should be no embarrassment in saying this. I am actually proud of being an Aboriginal woman. I am proud of being a combative woman. I am proud of working for all Aboriginal communities, of representing these women.

I think that's about all I had to say to you here today: we are carrying on.

It's too bad that discrimination is still going on. It's too bad that the *Indian Act* was used at this point to transfer

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this to us as Aboriginal peoples, and this is a point that Aboriginal peoples have maintained. We hate the *Indian Act*. We hate the fact the *Indian Act* still governs us today, but we accept these points of discrimination, we keep them, we maintain them. I find this disgraceful in our communities.

Many things are said about the *Indian Act*. If we look at wills, you can't make a will without the government deciding on its own whether your will is valid. We don't look at these things in the *Indian Act*; we hate them. We don't want to use them. We want to write another Aboriginal act, our own. But when we write this Aboriginal act, I hope our politicians, our leaders, our governments will ensure there is no discrimination, that there is fairness, equality, justice.

If you look at an Indian man who marries a white woman, it's odd that his children are considered Indians.

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When I referred to the case of single mothers, we have a major problem. This has to be handled through all the registers, from the birth of a child to the baptism of a child. If the father refuses to sign or acknowledge his paternity, that child, as I told you a moment ago, will be recognized as 6(2).

It is also a sad admission that in our communities today -- this is still going on now -- there are cases in which the mother has no way to force the father to sign an affidavit. There are many cases. There are cases where the mother has had relations with a married man. There are cases where the mother could not identify the father. These are real problems. This is no trivial matter. I have already spoken of this with our leaders, at a time when I was lobbying the chiefs, and telling them about the cases. There are cases where the mother -- because of serious alcohol and drug problems -- doesn't know who conceived this child. This is not trivial, it's no laughing matter. This is reality.

In these cases, the woman cannot name the father, and she is even forced to say in church... because we belong to the

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Catholic Church, we are required to baptise our children. Some communities refuse to baptise children because the woman cannot name the father. This goes on today, in 1992. It is unfortunate, because these women are forced to have their children baptised outside the communities.

There are many things we could see that involve mothers, women. I would really like to see some work on this matter, the case of single mothers. When we find that children have to be baptised somewhere else because the father cannot acknowledge paternity, that he is forced to acknowledge paternity, this is not a very human thing.

When we talk about baptism, we also find that some last names have been changed. The way I may spell my name, St-Onge... there are places where names tend to be Montagnais, such as Mesténapeu, Shikanabish (PH). People want to write their name in their own way, in their own language, and we reach a point... because the names have been extensively Gallicized. You know that

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the names have been Gallicized. I know I am a St-Onge, but my Aboriginal name is Shetush (PH). This probably sounded like St-Onge so we were given the name St-Onge. This is still happening today, with the spelling of names.

As I told you, I have no written presentation. I more or less say things as I think of them, from my everyday experience. You said there would be a forum this evening. I will certainly attend and I will come with more to say tonight. But I am pleased to make these statements. This is something that has been very important to us, to see that women in our communities still suffer discrimination.

Thank you for listening to me.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you, Mrs. St-Onge. I think it is quite clear to everyone in the room that you needed no written text to convey to us your concerns and the result of your experience. I believe your presentation is very important and without a doubt one of the most detailed we have heard to date on

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the issue of C-31.

We have heard a lot of presentations on the effects of *Bill C-31*. As I had an opportunity to explain to you a little at the intermission and as I said at the start this morning, in the preliminary remarks, we hope to hear more from women and women's groups, both about the problems experienced and on their vision of the future and solutions. I think you have just made a very important contribution and I thank you on behalf of the Commission.

There are many things in what you said that involve both Aboriginal band management and the public non-Aboriginal system. Just to be sure that I have properly understood, essentially *Bill C-31* was introduced in 1985 technically to correct the discrimination that had become established, by which an Aboriginal or Indian woman who married a white man lost her status. You have told us that it is fine to change the law, but mentalities

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and attitudes within the Aboriginal communities do not automatically change overnight.

I think we know that the progress that has led to passage of this amendment was difficult because of resistance, especially from Aboriginal leaders in several respects. So this in fact means that changing the act is one thing, but actual experience is quite another.

This legislation introduced this correction, but created another problem of discrimination by establishing the situation in which the children of an Indian man who marries a white woman lose their status. This is a problem that has been mentioned to us throughout our public hearings.

On this issue in particular, there is an almost desperate search for a solution. Some tell us: "Well then" -- and this seems quite natural -- "we must treat men the same as women, the children of men in the same way as the children of women."

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Others say: "If we do that, ultimately, after several generations, we will dilute the critical mass of Indians." This is a view that is voiced. So we hear: "Treat the children of men and women in the same way, and the children will no longer be Aboriginal if they marry outside the community." This poses another problem.

What I mean by this is that we could jointly consider how to solve this problem. I understand that your view is the one generally voiced, to give the same treatment, not just the same treatment but in a way that will permit recognition of Aboriginal children. I am simply pointing out what the other side has said, to try to see what type of solution might be possible, because there is also a concern over dilution after a few generations. People tell us: "Mixed marriages are increasingly common and will grow with demographic growth, which will ultimately lead to our disappearance."

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So that is my first question, and it is very difficult.

You also say that just because the law has changed does not mean the band councils have adjusted. If I properly understand, there is increased funding due to an increase in the number of bands under C-31, but you are not seeing the benefits.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: That is not what I mean. I'm saying that yes, funding has been provided so as not to disrupt the funding of regular members; funding has been provided in health, education and housing. I have had to fight with my Betsiamites Band Council for six years. It is the responsibility for implementing these services that is very difficult in the bands. In the field of health, it's not too bad, because it's not as obvious. Education is also less apparent. Housing is where the responsibility is most difficult, because you have to house these reinstated people and their children in the communities.

It is the responsibility for applying the law. As I

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told them, it cannot be applied in half measures. You are applying it only halfway; why not apply it in full? Being responsible is also a factor. Being capable of making decisions and saying "Yes, we had so much time to accept them and we didn't do it. We didn't..." in any event, I will speak the words I have to and accept the consequences. They have not been responsible enough to say "We have two years. Do we choose to accept them or not accept them? Since this was not done, the law was applied, the law was amended. Now we are suffering the consequences. Okay, we will accept our own responsibility." It seems to me that this would be to accept your responsibility as a local government. And when you're responsible, you accept your responsibility for everything involved.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This is something we are hearing across the country from women in particular who have regained their status under the 1985 amendments to the Act covering housing, because you in fact are right is saying that this is where... and this is basically the most significant symbol of application of the Act.

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Before going further on the prior issue I mentioned, how to correct the problem, essentially discrimination was corrected at one level but another form of discrimination was created against the children.

Your recommendation, if I understand it properly, essentially is to ensure that the children of both women and men who marry non-Aboriginal persons are recognized as status Aboriginal persons.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Aboriginal persons... whether classified as 6(1) or 6(2), that both are the same. When we talk about justice, equality rights, that's it.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Now, the concern that was voiced to us that after a few generations, with mixed marriages and growth... is this a genuine concern for you with which we must deal? What is your point of view on this?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Perhaps I could backtrack a little

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further; I'm going to go back a few years, even hundreds of years back.

When we talk about mixed marriages or mixed births, I do not believe we are able today... in any event, I am personally unable to say that I'm a pure Aboriginal person, that there have never been any whites in my family. It's not true, I would be lying. As I have already said, I defy an Aboriginal person to tell me today: "I have no white ancestors in my line."

It's simply marriage that changes matters. I had a child before marrying, and I had her by a white man. My daughter is classified 6(1) because I had her out of wedlock. I have had three other children after my wedding; those three are classified 6(2). What makes a difference is the desire to set things straight with the Church, set things straight with the law, which completely disrupted your life. But what happens then?

There have been children born of non-Aboriginal parents -- this has gone on for hundreds of years -- and they are

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considered category 6(1) Aboriginal persons. It is only the contract, the signature on a marriage register, that changes everything. I see no logic in that.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Then your recommendation to the Commission is to treat everyone in the same way with regard to children.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: That's right, especially with regard to children.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: My colleagues will certainly have a lot of questions to ask you, but two specific issues, those of single mothers and the requirement for an affidavit on paternity, actually are extensively linked with the first problem we have just discussed. If we could solve the first problem, that would take care of the second.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: That would solve that problem.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We understand each other.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: The problem of single mothers should not even exist. There is no reason for this request to sign

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an affidavit to exist. It serves no purpose.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In the current context.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: In the current context. These are simply government requirements. It is still the government that wants to identify who should be Indian and who should not. It worked in the same way... I spoke to you of my personal case just a moment ago. This exactly the same case for single mothers, except that today, they are asked for an affidavit from the father.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I understand, and this is done in the context of strict application of the law as it is understood. Basically, all these shortcomings result from the underlying problem.

But what you are saying is that in the current context, your recommendation is essentially that this should not occur.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It should not.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: And that in some cases, it is for social problems or problems... women are placed in impossible situations.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Impossible. When we talk about anything today... we talk about management jobs. You will certainly meet several band councils today. How many women might you find in senior positions on a band council? Very few. Yet we hear that more women than men work on most of the councils. But you won't see women in senior positions. So we look at everything.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Basically what you are saying is that life within the councils...

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: The communities.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: ...or the communities is still marked by serious discrimination.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: That's right, very serious.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: At many levels.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Many. We are even proud to say we

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belong to the Betsiamites Band Council, on which women are the majority; this is a first. As I have always said, it's not that we are better, but at least there has been some progress. We are moving toward change, but change is very, very difficult to achieve.

As I told you, I am a reinstated person. When I talked about running for Council, one man stood up and said: "I don't see that woman. She's married to a white man." This is hard to take. I told him: "I'm sorry, but a law has been passed which says I can do this," but it's a very trying experience in one's community, to continue to see these things and still suffer them today, in 1993. This law has existed for 125 years... and we talk of progress.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Quite right.

I would like to return to two specific points, which were very surprising to me. I would like to be sure I have properly

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understood what you said about the issue of baptisms and the impossibility of having a single mother's child baptised when she cannot name the father.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: For my information, I'd like to know why this is impossible. Is this a problem with the Church or with the community, because you say the mother has to go outside the community to have her child baptised. Could you clarify this?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It is first and foremost a problem with the Church, I think... well, a problem with the Church; in other words, the Band Council requires that the father's name be registered. So when you go to baptise your child and you can't name the father... for example, if you had a child by a married man, you can't break up a family, and the father certainly won't agree to sign an affidavit acknowledging paternity. So there are some communities where a child cannot be baptised because the mother cannot name the father.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Does this mean that the church minister, Catholic priest or other clergyman is denied...

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: They refuse to baptise the children.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: They refuse to allow the minister or priest to perform baptism? They are asked not to baptise the children?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: I don't know if the ministers are asked, but I know for example that the priest refuses to baptise a woman's child. So most of the time, these women are forced to obtain baptism outside their community.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So you are telling us that the Catholic priests in some cases refuse to baptise children.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: But you don't know if this...

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: If this is a demand they have received from the band council or if it is a demand they have received from the government, we haven't checked it that far, but

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we know this happens. We know there are women who come to see us and explain their case... I'm still talking about the cases of single mothers.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Look, that issue is certainly something we will look into, on our side, with Catholic Church officials.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It's also what we are going to do on our side as well.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I think that if you can give us some additional information... I think we must clearly establish what the situation is and what is happening in that regard.

The other issue is: You told us that names were still being changed on the civil status registers, on baptismal records, for practical reasons.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: The spelling is changed.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The spelling.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: The spelling. Let's say "Mestnapeu"

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is spelled M-e-s-t-n-a-p-u [sic]. It will be gallicized. The "u" is pronounced by us like an "o"; so it will be spelled "p-o" instead of "u". That's what I mean. The woman who talked to me about this said: "My name is spelled 'Mestnapeo', but it's 'peu'." But she said: "I haven't been able to get it changed. The priest wrote it that way and told me it would be written that way." This is our identity, the only thing that can be identified.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Do you know if this is an isolated case? Was it a random incident, or do you believe this is a more widespread problem or phenomenon?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: To date, we have not checked whether this was a random incident or a phenomenon, but the woman who talked to us about this spoke publicly at a meeting of women. I don't know if this happened just to her.

I know, for example, that I could never trace my family tree, never, because my name is St-Onge yet I cannot have any French ancestry, from a Mr. St-Onge... whomever. So this could

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never be. The people who have kept their Aboriginal name will one be able to trace their family tree. This is why we say that our names must be preserved, our Montagnais names.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Quite right. When we were among the Inuit in June -- and Mrs. Wilson was with me -- one problem, which was experienced in northern Quebec, was that the Inuktitut names were changed, not just the spelling but the actual name, in the civil status register, and there is now such a mess that it will basically take very, very hard work to try to restore names, with the danger of intermarriage this involves, and so forth. This is a problem that was discussed extensively by the Inuit.

It is my understanding that here, among the Montagnais, in the past you have experienced somewhat the same situation and today, there are still after-effects involving spelling; in any event, there may be after-effects on the way names are spelled.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: I do not want to a nit-picker

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either on how names are spelled, but my name is not spelled "M-a-r-y-l"
but "M-è-r-i-l-d-a".

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Please accept our very humble
apology. But this shows some of the importance. I think in fact that
we have all experienced the feeling of our name being mistaken.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: That's right.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you. I would like to
ask my colleagues to ask any questions they have in mind. Thank you.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Mrs. Wilson.

[English]

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MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: In Betsiamites women make up more than 51 percent of the community. In a population of 2,500, 51 percent are women. The band council has six women and six men, plus a woman chief.

In most communities, more than 51 percent of the

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members are women.

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[English]

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Seven women on the Betsiamites Band Council; six women and one chief. In the other bands, I know that in Sept-Iles there is one woman council member; in Schefferville, there is one woman council member, one or two; in Mingan, there is one woman council member; in Natashquan there are none; in Pointe-Bleue I don't think there is one, nor are there any in Les Montagnais and Les Escoumins.

[English]

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: There are 12 council members and one chief; thus, 13 members in all.

[English]

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: I would tend to answer "yes".

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Definitely, yes. We mustn't hide the fact. We hear that it is good

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to have women on council. I'm very happy with the composition of the Betsiamites Band Council. We have a young member, one elder, six men, six women, and a woman chief. So the community is represented. This makes it very interesting. The discussions are very interesting, the positions are very interesting, because the population is represented on the Betsiamites Band Council.

I was joking a moment ago, when I said "yes"; I hope so. I do believe women have a different point of view. We see a lot of social problems. I think that women have many decisions to make; they are very involved in decision-making. They are very responsible. Women have been used to taking responsibility, especially in our society, for raising children, making a budget. I think that when we look at everything that involves women, they have a heavy responsibility and have always accepted their responsibilities.

This is why it is important and interesting to have women on council, to help and encourage them to serve as council

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members... not just council members, but members of other committees as well, in other organizations. Today, women want to take the place they had before.

[English]

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: On the issue of housing... this is my prime responsibility on the Band Council. I was elected in August 1992. Long before that, since 1987, I had had to meet with four chiefs -- four different mandates, four different chiefs -- to talk to them about housing. As I told you, this has not been easy. This is a heavy responsibility to accept for members, those who govern a community. It is very difficult because there are other members who disagree; as I was telling you, discrimination is seen, is experienced every day.

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So to go live in a community, and for someone who governs a community to decide that these people are returning when they are reinstated, when he decides to bring them back into your community, this is a major responsibility. This represents an enormous new awareness in a leader. We know that politics is often motivated by the desire to please voters. So if the majority of your voters are people who discriminate, you will tend to discriminate, even if you don't want to.

I have in fact worked with the community for six years: meetings with the Band Council almost every day, meetings with the Chief, to discuss reinstatement of people and application of the law. In last year's construction program, homes were built in Betsiamites for five reinstated members. This year, five more have been built, including my own; I live in a house that was built in Betsiamites. As a reinstated person, I have a house, and five more will be built this year -- that is, three new houses and

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two vacant houses -- for reinstated people.

I think that as a member of Band Council and the Association des femmes, and by working for the good of the community, I have a lot of influence. We can talk about this, discuss it. This year, for example, there was a case where housing was going to be denied to reinstated people; everyone said housing was to be denied under C-31. The Band Council simply asked if the Council would like to return the money or funds reserved for reinstated people.

I think that precisely because I am a person covered by that act, who has suffered discrimination in housing, I was able to say: "No, we are not sending that money back. That money is for reinstated people and you're going to apply the law," except that concessions must be made. This is perhaps why the influence of being a Council member... yes, we have some strength in that because we can talk about problems of discrimination.

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I belong to the membership code committee and I am certain I can contribute a lot to the membership code committee and the Council members and most of the population because I have suffered injustice and because I don't want this to happen any more to people in the community. Essentially, something good has come out of the injustice I suffered because I now realize that I don't want those who are now members to suffer any injustice; I don't want them to suffer what I have gone through. That is the usefulness of being a band member and sitting on a band council.

[English]

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MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: We were talking about social problems. Yes, there is a problem with violence, with drugs, with alcohol in our communities as well. We have problems of sexual abuse. Yes, we have them, this in all the communities. It's everywhere else. I think this is not experienced just in the Aboriginal communities, it's experienced everywhere. It's in society. This is a problem of society. So we have suffered these problems as well.

We are working hard on these matters. As women, we are doing a lot of work on the issue of violence. In the past four or five years, the Association des femmes autochtones has done a lot of work on the issue of violence. This is being discussed in the communities, more openly now. People are also talking about drugs.

I have been president of the Betsiamites local. We have tried to meet with the people in charge, PNADA, Violence familiale; we have had resource people come in to talk to us.

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I think the women are aware of this problem and, as we say, we are ready to work with other people who want to work with us on violence, drugs, alcohol and all the other related problems. If there are drugs, alcohol, violence, stress, they all affect health. All these social problems are linked, they're a whole. You can't work just on a violence program and forget about the drug and alcohol programs. Everything is connected. So if you want to bring back a community's health, you have to work on all these points. And the women are very aware of the existing problems.

[English]

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: As members of the Association des femmes autochtones du Québec, the government gives the North Shore region \$10,000 a year to hold what we call a regional meeting. A regional meeting includes women from Schefferville, Montagnais and

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Naskapi women, women from Pointe-Bleue, Les Escoumins, Betsiamites, women from Natashquan, La Romaine (PH) and women from Mingan/Saint-Augustin. So we have 10 Aboriginal communities that meet each year, and we must pay their travel, lodging and meal costs. We have \$10,000. If you calculate the distance between Schefferville and the Lower North Shore, all the travel that must be covered with \$10,000, you must realize that we run a deficit each year. This is the only grant we receive from government.

We have tried to obtain grants from the band councils, by arguing: "For women's participation, a certain amount should be granted, at least for our meetings;" but we have never received an answer.

This year, to attend the regional meeting in August, the women of Betsiamites held an activity organized by the women. We ran a restaurant to do a little fund-raising. We had a bake sale to gather funds to be able to attend other meetings, because we are also members of the Regroupement des femmes de la Côte-Nord.

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We never have enough money. We get no help of financial assistance from either the band councils or the government, except the \$10,000 each year from the Secretary of State Department. This means that as a representative, I cannot afford to travel to help women on the Lower North Shore, for example. When you consider that just to go to Schefferville costs \$900, I cannot pay \$900 out of my own pocket to go there, I don't have the money.

Even for representation -- I'm coming to the Royal Commission of Inquiry -- I know my travel is not covered. I have no travel budget, no hotel budget, no meal budget. This is money I must beg for from other sources, to come and present a brief to the Commission. It was the same thing for the Commission on Rights and Freedoms. Each time we present a brief, we have to find funding to cover our costs, which is unfortunate.

A moment ago, you were saying -- I'm backtracking --

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there are not many Aboriginal women who have come to present their brief. This is just it: I ask women from Natashquan and Schefferville to travel; I can't tell them to come to present a brief. You won't go to Schefferville and they can't come here. Women from Pointe-Bleue may have had the opportunity, but this still has involved travel. The women from the Lower North Shore couldn't come.

There's always a shortage of money. This was the case with the Constitution as well. For each presentation... we can't. We don't have any money. We're always told there's no money. The money we receive amounts to very, very little, the financial assistance we may receive for representation or submissions as women. We are forced to do two things at once. When you travel, you have to travel for several activities at the same time, to meet with several people and use that time, otherwise, you can't.

I know for example that the women from the Lower North Shore ask their representative to visit them, but are told:

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"Hold bingos, bake sales, do something. Otherwise, we have no funding."
When I come to speak here, I do so on my own account, because I know
I cannot count on any funding. There is no money.

[English]

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Commissioner Chartrand.

[English]

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MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: When we refer to section 12(1)(b), we now say it is a former act... because that act as been amended. Today, when an Aboriginal woman marries a non-Aboriginal man, she no longer loses her rights; she retains her Aboriginal rights. When a man marries a non-Aboriginal woman, she no longer gains Aboriginal status.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Perhaps there is a problem. I will speak in French to the best of my ability.

You are using the term "Aboriginal" to indicate a person registered as an Indian under the terms of the *Indian Act*, aren't you?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Yes, that's right.

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COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Thank you very much.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Did that answer your question?

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Yes, that answers my question. Thank you very much.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Am I the one asking the questions?

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: That's very good. This is a dialogue, which I greatly appreciate.

[English]

Thank you.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: I know that in the Montagnais communities, there is a tribal council. The tribal council must now

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work on a membership code. At this time, I think all the communities are going to work on their membership code.

This work started here, in Sept-Iles, one or two years ago. I don't know if they have finished; I know it's not being applied yet, the membership code, in Sept-Iles. In the Betsiamites community, we are starting; we are forming a task force on the membership code.

As we said, we are going to work primarily with the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* when we work on the membership code. There are recommendations that have been made by Aboriginal women; as we said, we want the code to be as fair as possible.

I think the Aboriginal women are working a lot on the code, and many communities have also developed their membership code; we are referring to these codes. I think it was said that 255 codes have been developed and I don't know how many have been accepted. Some have been rejected as well. I know that in

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Betsiamites we are referring to these memberships codes, working with them, changing them, adapting them more to our communities.

[English]

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It certainly would be preferable if we didn't have to refer to the *Indian Act*. But we also must not forget that at present, as long as there is no act on Aboriginal peoples, we must work with the *Indian Act*. However, if we want to form a government one day, with governmental autonomy, these are things we will have to think about and work on: codes, justice, and all, for the good of our communities, for the good of our nations. It is not someone else who is going to refer us and tell us, like the *Indian Act* forced us to work with those laws, forced us to experience. So

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as long as we have nothing else to work with, we will refer to what has been done for the government's satisfaction. But it definitely would be preferable for the satisfaction of the nations if we could do something.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Thank you very much. Many have suggested that we must get rid of the *Indian Act*. If we are going to suggest that, we must find something to replace the definition, I assume.

Thank you very much, and thanks to the other members of your association.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It is we who thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Mrs. St-Onge, in closing, I would like a piece of information, and unfortunately, I think I have it.

Last spring, the Commission set up a financial assistance program for speakers.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Yes. I obtained information.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Yes? That's what I was going to say.

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It was specifically with a view, in part, to allowing groups like yours, especially Aboriginal women, to draft a brief and some to present it.

I don't think you submitted an application. Were you aware of this program?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: What I was told with regard to funding for speakers -- I first determined whether I was going to be a speaker -- is that this money or funding was reserved for the provincial association, for example, which would be presenting a provincial brief. But anything that was regional... I represent the Montagnais women of the North Shore region. At that point, I think the funds remained at the provincial level.

If there had been other women -- or other people; not just women, but other people -- who had submissions to make in other fields, in health, education... because we have many, many

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problems in education too. I'm forgetting the women who live off the reserve, who have many educational problems and many housing problems. When we are talking specifically about funding for speakers, these women cannot travel to come here.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This program is managed for us independently by David Crombie. Did you contact our offices?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That means this information came from his offices?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Yes, I called Ottawa, I called Sept-Iles, I called everywhere, but I didn't get any money, and I'm asking you today if you have any funds.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This is something that is managed separately from us, precisely because we didn't want to have to make this type of decision. But I know that Aboriginal women in Quebec have received the grant they requested.

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MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: It's for other submissions later,
I think.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Did you have any contact with
Les Femmes autochtones du Québec?

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: Yes, I called and I was given \$70
to come here.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Listen, we wish to thank you
as well as your colleagues all the more for coming to present your
views. This will certainly influence our deliberations and no doubt
the Commission's recommendations.

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE: I wish to thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We will resume at 2:00 pm with
the brief from the CEGEP de Sept-Iles.

--- Adjournment for lunch at 1:08 pm

--- Resumption at 2:30 pm

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We will resume the hearings,
please.

I would like to ask the Director General of the CEGEP
de Sept-Iles, Octave Desraps, and Mrs. Bernier, who is accompanying
him, to join us.

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Good afternoon and welcome.

OCTAVE DESRAPAS, DIRECTOR GENERAL, CEGEP DE SEPT-ILES:

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You may proceed with your submission when you are ready.

OCTAVE DESRAPAS: Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, I would first like to thank those responsible for the Commission's work agenda for providing an opportunity for the Collège de Sept-Iles to address the Commission. We know how important and complex the issues before you are; we hope our modest contribution to your deliberations will be of some use.

Our institution, the Collège de Sept-Iles, for more than 10 years now has accommodated a fairly large number of Aboriginal students, mostly Montagnais. We would like to talk to you about the origins and progress of our involvement in college education of Aboriginal persons.

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First allow me to mention that the presence of Aboriginal persons, and Anglophones, in our college has been identified in our latest strategic planning statement, as one of the two distinct characteristics of our facility. Viewed as an inestimable opportunity for enrichment of all members of the college community, this presence is desired by the College, which has the firm intention of continuing its partnership with this important part of the population in our area.

I would like to say a few words about the College's experience in college education of Aboriginal persons.

A study conducted in 1981 by our offices pointed out the difficulties encountered by Aboriginal young people in our area gaining access to a college education and staying in school. The following year, representatives of the communities and the College met to develop and implement a training program designed for Aboriginal students. This program, which was named "Indian Studies", focused simultaneously on the objectives of preparation for

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university and acquisition of basic technical skills in administration for working in the communities.

The student response to this proposal was quick in coming and has not abated: since then, on average, about fifty Aboriginal young people have attended the College. To these young students must be added the adult students who occasionally come to take development or training courses. While most were initially registered in the Indian Studies program, students are now found in practically all programs taught by the College. In the pre-university education sector, most are in the humanities; in the occupational training sector, they are primarily in techniques related to administration, office automation and computer science. Their numbers are quite small, however, in science and physical technology programs.

To ensure progress of this experiment and to improve

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the quality of education provided to Aboriginal persons, we have conducted considerable research and experimentation with the content of some courses, and particularly on teaching methods, with the objective of making college education as consistent as possible with Amerindian life and culture while maintaining comparable standards of quality, similar to those used for non-Aboriginal persons.

In addition to the pedagogical adjustments, we agreed with our Aboriginal partners on the importance of providing social support or supervision for students. In particular, we have provided students with a resource person capable of guiding and supporting them through their time at the College. We have also agreed to act as intermediary between Aboriginal students and services available in the city, again to facilitate life for students, especially those from communities outside Sept-Iles.

The rise in the number of students registered at the

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College supports a positive finding on this experiment. However, encouragement must also be drawn from the record of the past 10 years in the rate of those staying in school, which has grown by more than 50 percent, and in the rate of students passing their courses, which has risen by 100 percent.

The relationships model, I believe, characterizes the Aboriginal studies sector at the College. I therefore believe this merits a few comments.

The traditional relationships model at the college level between the actors involved in student development essentially is based on involvement of the students themselves, the College and, to a lesser degree due to their age, the students' parents. In the case of Aboriginal students, we have promoted a different model in which three actors have clearly defined roles: the students themselves, the community to which they belong, and the College. This model can be depicted by a set of three circles that overlap, defining areas of interrelation between two actors and areas of responsibilities or realities specific to each. At the

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centre of this system, belonging to all three circles -- thus, to the three actors -- is the objective of the model, the personal and professional development of the clientele.

The following page shows the model I have just described and which we will develop in some detail.

First, the communities.

The communities are represented in the model with the weight of their history, cultural heritage, language, values, as well as their objectives and orientations for socio-economic and political development. It is the communities that take on a certain number of responsibilities toward the students, specifically by taking care of funding, providing the support of liaison officers and promoting employment of graduates.

The communities also work in close cooperation with the College to define the orientations of programs and services, to promote higher education and to ensure follow-up of services provided to their members.

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The clientele has its own specific individual and collective characteristics, which must be recognized to be able to provide quality education. For example, the average age, social status and previous educational preparation are factors we must consider.

The specific role of the College is to provide educational services and personal assistance and to manage the programs and systems. To better serve its clientele, it carefully adapts the way its services are delivered. The organization of teaching, pedagogical research, supervision and personal assistance for students, and harmonization of some course content are examples of activities influenced by the clientele.

These various interactions have fostered the development of several joint projects. In addition to the Amerindian Studies programs, we have trained a group of people in specialized education, created an "Innu Culture and Society" profile in the humanities program, which is available equally to

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Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons, set up the college and university preparatory program currently available in second year at the College, and taken several initiatives to assist with community management.

The College, the communities and the students are also pooling their efforts to ensure a certain dissemination of the Montagnais culture. Each year, for example, an Innu cultural festival is held, with various celebrations of the ancestral and modern culture of Aboriginal communities on the North Shore. This provides non-Aboriginal people with a unique opportunity to make contact with some of the most dynamic cultural elements.

The brief overview we have just provided should not be interpreted by the Commission as an indication that we have achieved all our individual and community development objectives. Staff and students at the College are to some extent a reflection

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of our society; thus, they are not completely free of the misunderstandings and half-truths that tarnish relations between Aboriginal persons and other Canadians.

We still must work to improve these relations. In this regard, our reciprocal efforts have not yet eliminated all barriers and our objective -- perhaps I should say our dream -- of leading each group to take advantage of the other's presence still remains out of reach for the moment. We are determined to continue, however, with the effective support of many of our employees, teachers and other staff members, who find great professional satisfaction and human enrichment in their duties of guiding young Aboriginal students.

In the Aboriginal communities this presupposes the willingness to maintain bonds of trust and mutual respect with the College, thereby recognizing our reciprocal responsibilities. We also believe it is important that chiefs, councils and elders continue to associate the social and economic development of Aboriginal peoples with education and quality of the labour force

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and that they be committed to supporting their members throughout their studies and develop models for success within their communities.

The students, whether young people or adults, are instrumental in improving relations between our respective groups. We understand the difficulties and challenges they face. The fact these people must study in a second language, in a system designed for people with a Greco-Roman western cultural background, where philosophy is based on reason, involving extensive manipulation of concepts, presents a host of factors quite foreign to Aboriginal culture and traditions.

Thus, people who study at the college and particularly the university level afterward encounter problems as they are faced with major challenges. We are therefore aware of the determination they need to take charge of their personal and professional development. We must hope they are increasingly convinced that their course of action will make a brilliant

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contribution to the progress of their communities and their nation.

By way of conclusion, I would like to make the following remarks.

The experiment in cooperation between the Collège de Sept-Iles and the Montagnais communities on the North Shore is producing a certain number of interesting results and, in our opinion, shows that it is possible for a non-Aboriginal organization to provide worthwhile services to Aboriginal people. Two conditions must be met, however: first, recognition of each partner's responsibilities by the other partners and second, mutual respect and reciprocal trust between those involved.

This approach to cooperation between Aboriginal communities and an institution not under their responsibility is coloured, in our opinion, by a realism that is a credit to the leaders of these communities. While pursuing their legitimate objective of taking control of education at all levels, which can only be achieved with skilled, properly trained human resources, they are cooperating with the College to provide their young people

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and adults with immediate access to a college education. Through cooperation between the College and community spokespersons, and efforts to adapt education to Aboriginal culture, this solution -- no doubt temporary, but necessary in our view -- provides an adequate response to the development needs of Aboriginal individuals and communities.

Can our experience, Mr. Chairman, limited to a small number of communities and a single sector of activity, contribute to your deliberations on the much broader and very complex problems facing the Commission? We cannot say for sure, but we hope it can. In any event, it has been our great pleasure to discuss this with you this afternoon.

Thank you for your attention.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Desraps. This was an important submission. It is the first in Quebec from a CEGEP, a collège d'enseignement général

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et professionnel, specifically in a region with a wealth of experience, given the College's proximity to many Aboriginal communities.

I would like to begin with a request for some technical information. How many students attend the College?

OCTAVE DESRAPAS: The total is just under 800 students in regular programs.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So as a proportion of that... there are 50 Aboriginal people.

OCTAVE DESRAPAS: Yes. The number 50 refers to the so-called regular students.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I see.

OCTAVE DESRAPAS: To this must be added about 25 students in the preparatory program for college and university studies which I mentioned, as well as the groups of adults who periodically take training programs. In fact, one will be starting next week in the field of training in radio communications.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I see.

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You mentioned that you have a resource person to try to provide orientation and guidance for students. I understand that you have students who come from a range of communities, and many of whom arrive in Sept-Iles with housing problems, and basically must find a place to live.

Can you provide more details on the proportion of students who come here from Uashat compared with the total number? What is the breakdown by community?

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Here it is. You are right -- most of our students in the regular program come from Sept-Iles/Malioténam or Uashat/Malioténam. So there are 31 of the 50 who come from the community of Sept-Iles/Malioténam. We have some from Betsiamites, Mingan, Schefferville, Natashquan and La Romaine (PH), and one from Port-Cartier, probably an off-reserve Indian. I imagine we have roughly the same pattern in the PPU, the preparatory program.

MRS. BERNIER: Yes, quite right. The majority of

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students in the college and university preparatory program come from Sept-Iles and Malioténam. We also have students from the Manetenuac (PH) organization, which covers the communities of Mingan, Natashquan, La Romaine (PH) and Saint-Augustin, and we also have one student from Les Escoumins this year.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Good.

OCTAVE DESRAPAS: So perhaps to complete the answer to your question, for students who come from outside the area, there definitely are different organizational problems that for those living in the community of Sept-Iles/Malio-ténam. We therefore have guidance services to help them find housing, for example. We even have agreements with a certain number of landlords, under which we act as intermediaries, in that we guarantee payment of rent, and to cover ourselves, we in turn have agreements with the communities of origin.

We play this type of intermediary role and we find

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this is important.

I would say we have roughly the same internal model as well. I should have stated in my submission that college education for the Montagnais is a fairly recent experience. Before 1981-1982, there were virtually no students at the college level in our region. So these people have some ground to cover, I would say, to reach the college system.

We have found the availability of a resource person to be vital. In fact, we have two, one of whom focuses on regular students; Mrs. Bernier focuses on the college preparatory program in addition to handling community liaison. We have found that a reference point is important for students. This does not mean this person is a resource person for all student needs, but she does steer them, after initial contact, to specialized services in the College, be they orientation, financial assistance, etc.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: There is no residence at the CEGEP de Sept-Iles.

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OCTAVE DESRAPS: No, we don't have an actual residence. There is a building right next to the College with a majority of Aboriginal residents.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Among non-Aboriginal students, do most come from the immediate area or do you also have people who must adjust? I presume you must.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes. If we include Aboriginal students, about 25 percent of our clientele comes from outside the city, the immediate area of the city of Sept-Iles.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: For Aboriginal people, but for the public...

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes, as well.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In the same way.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So its about the same proportion.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes, We have Anglophones from the Lower North Shore, the area east of Natashquan.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In terms of orientation services, you mentioned a resource person who acts somewhat as the single clearing-house for all problems.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes, you could say that.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This is specific to Aboriginal students. I presume you have some equivalent service for other students who also come from outside the city?

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes; that is, the regular services handle them.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I see.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: We have a comparable or similar model for Anglophone students. We have a reference point for them.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Yes, I see.

For the pre-college program, if I understand properly, this program helps provide a bridge between the secondary school diploma and college for Aboriginal students?

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MRS. BERNIER: It's for Aboriginal students. It's the second year that is given at the CEGEP de Sept-Iles. We have 25 students again this year. This program enables adult Aboriginal students to complete their secondary school diploma and, at the same time, obtain an introduction to college education. So the program is given in the second year.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So it's for adult Aboriginal students.

MRS. BERNIER: Adult Aboriginal people.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I see. The others who have completed their regular secondary studies go directly...

MRS. BERNIER: Quite right, into the programs.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: ...to college without passing through this program.

MRS. BERNIER: Without passing through this program.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: OCTAVE DESRAPS: I see.

Your experience, which dates back to 1981, with the

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cooperative structure, involves what? Did you set up a type of Aboriginal advisory committee to give you advice or to talk about its concerns? In your diagram, you state that you work with the communities to obtain advice, how is this organized? Have you developed anything?

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes. We should first state that we worked with the IECAM; today's ICEM was known as IECAM at the time. It was actually with them that we developed the first...

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Just for the record, that is the Institut éducatif et culturel autochtone du Québec.

MRS. BERNIER: Montagnais.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In fact, we received a brief from them.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: They were called "Atikamekw-Montagnais" at the time.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That's right.

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OCTAVE DESRAPS: So we began to work with them and we did in fact have regular meetings. They had a mandate from the North Shore communities in this area.

The IECAM then withdrew somewhat and we now actually work directly with the community representatives. The advisory body to which you essentially refer does exist and consists of all liaison officers or persons handling education in the various communities. There are regular meetings with these people to obtain feedback and so forth.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: This morning, we were told with regard to the Alouette aluminum smelter that a work training program was being started for Aboriginal workers, Montagnais.

Is the training provided in the various professional technical skills at the CEGEP used or applied by the aluminum smelter? In other words, do you provide training to young people in

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certain technical skills that will prove useful to this specific company? I am using it as an example because we were told about it this morning.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes. It is obvious that in the programs we offer, there are at least four professional programs, say, that train people for existing occupations -- not necessarily occupations with vacancies, but occupations -- at Alouette. In administrative techniques, for example, we find a large Aboriginal contingent. In fact, 20 percent of regular students are currently in administrative techniques, or about 20 percent. There is also computer science in office techniques.

So there are essentially three programs that might match the needs of the Alouette aluminum smelter. There are Amerindian students in these three programs. There are not many in computer science, which is new. This may be a good sign.

We also have another program that is directly related to the needs of Alouette and other firms in the area, and

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that is electrical technology. We have never had Aboriginal students in that program.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In electrical technology.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: No.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Are you advertising? Are you taking extra steps, since this is a sector that can lead to fairly specific opportunities in the region, to try to attract Aboriginal young people or through adult education?

MRS. BERNIER: I must point out that I am also responsible for school information tours. I travel to the communities and meet with young people. When we talk to them about the programs, we definitely try to introduce Aboriginal young people to all the programs that may be lacking.

The prerequisites are more extensive in mathematics and science, and in some communities, secondary schools do not

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offer these prerequisites. So this may be the problem, and may explain why we still have no Aboriginal students in electrical technology.

I must tell you that this year, with the preparatory program, there are Aboriginal adults who are preparing, who will complete their prerequisites -- because we have them at the CEGEP -- specifically with a view to entering the electrical technology programs.

So this is new, but progress is being made.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I think we have identified here a very specific point that may create serious problems with regard to a source of employment. When you talk about secondary prerequisites, is this in the general system? Because there is a secondary school here administered by the Aboriginal people. There are Aboriginal young people doing their secondary studies at the secondary school here, in Sept-Iles, outside the secondary school...

What I want to know, basically, is whether the option of taking the prerequisites is available. Do students choose

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not to take the prerequisites because their in the field of science? That would raise the issue of encouragement.

MRS. BERNIER: There is also often a lack of models. We know here in Sept-Iles that young people have an opportunity to take these prerequisites, but there is a lack of models. There is also the difficulty, the whole spectre of science, that may frighten them. This is a new world that is opening slowly. So I believe it is truly the Aboriginal adults who will manage to enter the very scientific fields and the young people will then follow their lead. They will have models. They need models.

OCTAVE DESRAPS: There is a factor that may help to explain the absence of young people in the fields of science and technology, in the field of physical technology. I think this is also related somewhat to employment opportunities in the communities.

To date, jobs in the communities have mostly centred around administration, the entire administrative system. Thus, to

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consider a career in the field of physical technology -- at least for now, in our North Shore communities -- a young person clearly must plan a career elsewhere, in a company. So I would say that an extra step is involved.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Do you offer health technology here at the CEGEP?

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Nursing?

OCTAVE DESRAPS: Nursing, yes. There are not many students registered in this program.

MRS. BERNIER: This year, no one has registered in this program. I must tell you that in previous years, there have been a few students registered in nursing, but the drop-out rate is quite high. Students often leave their program in second or third year for the humanities or administrative techniques.

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OCTAVE DERAPS: If my memory serves me correctly, a few nursing care units have probably been established in the past 21 years. Such units are rare. This is unfortunate because this is obviously a sector where the communities would like to assume responsibility and in some cases steps have been taken to do so. Unfortunately, this is also a difficult program, as we must admit. There are also certain prerequisites involved.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: It is a program which may also provide job opportunities in the communities as well.

MS. BERNIER: Quite so.

OCTAVE DERAPS: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The problem we discussed earlier is not present in the same way.

MS. BERNIER: No.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I imagine that you are called on, as an institution, to reflect on this issue. It is one of the concerns. The Commission, during its public hearings, has so far come to realize that there are many problems in getting aboriginal young people interested in and encouraging them to train in the health sciences generally. Yet, we see the

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need and even the potential jobs involved. We are aware that the problem here is not solely one of money. It is something more fundamental than that.

Do you have any thoughts on or another specific approach as to how to overcome this obstacle with respect to jobs in the sciences and in a field such as the health sciences, which obviously is partly scientific. Because there are many aboriginal young people and their number is growing. This certainly seems to be a priority.

What I have just said is perhaps more a suggestion than a question. It is one of the Commission's concerns. Basically, we realize that this is a relatively widespread and universal problem.

OCTAVE DERAPS: Certainly, if you make the connection, as you quite rightly did, between technical careers in the physical sciences and those in the health care sector, I believe that the common problem lies in the high school prerequisite requirements.

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There may certainly be grounds -- having considered the issue only very briefly; I am, as it were, thinking out loud here -- for secondary education officials to seriously examine this issue. On the one hand, there is a problem with career guidance; that is, of choosing a future career, which is difficult for all our young people, for young Quebeckers, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike. That is how our school system is structured: students must decide very early on if they wish to pursue these career paths. Hence, there is undoubtedly some promotional work to be done; perhaps information could be made available in the high schools and young people who have the requisite intellectual potential could be encouraged to pursue such career paths... or at least not to rule them out by failing to take physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics courses in high school; these essentially seem to be the doors that lead to these careers at the college level.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

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I will ask my colleagues to continue.

Commissioner Wilson.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: Yes. We have numerous relationships with all the major employers and even with the minor employers, but we do not have any special relationships as regards our aboriginal graduates. We have many relationships to foster the placement of our regular students, those who graduate in the technical field, but at this time we did not feel it was important to have a special program to promote our aboriginal graduates because their number was not very high and, unless

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otherwise indicated, these young people tend to choose to work in their community.

It is only fairly recently that we have had a large number of students in the technical field. Until a few years ago, the vast majority of our students took university preparatory courses and thus planned to attend university. We lost sight of them once they went to university, but the majority, I believe, went into careers related either to teaching, especially at the primary level, or to administration. I believe these essentially are the two main areas.

I do not know if that answers your question Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

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[English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: No. I believe it is the communities, the councils of the various communities that are mainly involved in efforts to encourage companies to hire aboriginal people. At this time, we are not involved in such efforts.

In reply to your second question, there are some companies that provide scholarships. It varies. Some provide scholarships to the sons and daughters of their employees. This tends to be the rule... perhaps not the general rule, but most scholarships are awarded in this manner. In other instances, the College receives scholarships which it frequently

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awards according to certain criteria which, obviously, exclude no one but which are not based on origin or membership in a particular community. I do not believe that there are specific scholarships for aboriginal students, but they do have access to all the scholarships.

Moreover, I do not believe that there are any aboriginal students who are deprived of or prevented from going to college for financial reasons. I believe that the communities have sufficient funds or at any rate attach sufficient importance to this now to financially support all community members who wish to pursue a college education. To my knowledge... I have had no indication that this is a handicap.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The situation varies from community to community. We were in Wendake, in the Quebec City area, earlier this week and we were told that there were a number of students who were prepared to pursue post-secondary studies but they did not have the money because of cuts at Indian Affairs.

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OCTAVE DERAPS: That's possible. They have come farther in terms of education than our communities. The number and level are therefore probably different; there are undoubtedly a number who are ready for university.

I would like to add a comment, if I may, to what you said Madam Commissioner. I do not have any figures, but I have the impression, which I submit to you as exactly that: I believe that the high level of unemployment in the communities tends to affect the less well-educated -- as is true in white communities, moreover.

Unless I am badly mistaken, I do not believe that there are many educated aboriginal people in the region who are unemployed. But I could be mistaken.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: No. I cannot say that I

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have either personal knowledge -- as a lawyer would say -- or have heard of any instances of discrimination in terms of employment. There may be. There probably is; these things are always rather subtle. I am not saying that there are no cases, just that I have no knowledge of any. However, I also do not believe that there is an active program or active, or rather positive, discrimination in favour of aboriginal people. To my knowledge, this does not exist.

It is rather neutral. I know companies that have aboriginal employees and I know others that do not. Is this because of discriminatory practices? I could not say.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

MS. BERNIER: I must admit that with the Innu culture and society program, which is also offered to our non-aboriginal students, it has been difficult. We have not yet had

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any non-aboriginal students in the program. Despite our efforts to promote the program, despite the information we provide to non-aboriginal high schools, regrettably, we have not yet had any students. We hope that perhaps this year, for the coming fall, that we will have some students registering in the program.

Obviously, this is a program with a cultural component. The presence of an aboriginal culture, the presence of aboriginal students at our College is therefore important. The presence of non-aboriginal students is therefore desirable.

OCTAVE DERAPS: This is part of the uncompleted work I spoke of near the end of my presentation. It is difficult, even in a microcosm; the fact remains that the microcosm reflects the cosmos. It is therefore rather difficult to achieve mutual insight and enrichment of the two cultures. There is still a great deal of work to be done.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: [English]

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

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OCTAVE DERAPS: Yes, a prospectus, information brochures; we could send you a copy.

MS. BERNIER: Unfortunately, we have none, but...

OCTAVE DERAPS: We could send them to the Commission, certainly.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: We will certainly do that.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Commissioner Chartrand.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Thank you. I have only a few short questions.

OCTAVE DERAPS: The replies are often longer.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: First, is this

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resource person you mentioned an aboriginal person?

OCTAVE DERAPS: No. Unfortunately, when we offered the position -- and we offered it at least twice because the first person left, etc. -- none of the applicants met the criteria. To my knowledge, we did not even have any applicants from the aboriginal community. We would have liked to fill this position with an aboriginal person because he would have effectively been a valuable liaison officer, but the position is currently held by a white man.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Are there any aboriginal professors on staff at the College?

OCTAVE DERAPS: No.

MS. BERNIER: Unfortunately.

OCTAVE DERAPS: Unfortunately. The pool of university graduates is very limited, in our region at any rate.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Does the aboriginal population, do the students, have an aboriginal students' association or, if not, has someone thought of this idea? Have the students spoken to you about an association?

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MS. BERNIER: I must admit that there is no association at the College. However, we are very open to this idea and the students are aware of this. This year, however, one student is a member of the College's student association. The aboriginal students are therefore already being integrated into activities, into the committees. That is happening now.

OCTAVE DERAPS: Perhaps to complete the answer to your question, I should explain that there is no formal association per se, but when activities that are specifically aimed at or that involve aboriginal students are being organized, the aboriginal students, because there are not very many of them, are consulted and invited to become involved in the organizing, etc., almost as if they had a formal organization.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

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[English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: No. We have a Board of Directors. Colleges in Quebec are public corporations. We therefore have a Board of Directors, half of whose members come from outside the College and half from within the College. Six

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of those from outside are appointed directly by our department, the Quebec Department of Higher Education and Science, over whom we have absolutely no control. The other members are also appointed by the department but are nominated by groups, essentially parents or students.

Unfortunately, to date we have been unable to interest aboriginal people in becoming Board members; theoretically they could be nominated by parents as parent representatives; there are four such representatives. Unfortunately however, we have still been unable to interest anyone.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: Yes, essentially. Just to summarize, the six people from the "socio-economic" community

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are appointed directly by the department after consulting a list of organizations. These include municipal councils; I imagine that the department also consults the band councils. Hence, through this avenue there are aboriginal political structures that could possibly influence the nomination, but these bodies simply make recommendations to the department.

Aboriginal people could also be represented within the parents' association, which is responsible for nominating parents, because this is a general meeting and aboriginal people could attend. I say "could" because to date there have been two constants regarding most of the meetings during which the parent representatives are nominated: one, very few people attend; two, no aboriginal people and no Anglophones attend; it is really only the white Francophone majority who attend.

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COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: Yes, I think we can conclude that to be the case, we can deduce this from the situation, from the reality. There was one occasion when we perceived from the community, which was represented at that time by the Institut éducatif et culturel atikamekw-montagnais (IECAM), a desire to be involved in what could be called a program structure, that is, a structure to manage a program. Unfortunately, this did not materialize because there were several colleges that were competing, so to speak, to provide this program and another college obtained the IECAM contract.

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Apart from this example, the aboriginal community has never expressed a desire to become involved, basically, in the College's administrative structures.

To be sure that we are properly understood, I should point out that there is absolutely nothing in the Quebec General and Vocational Colleges Act or in the College's practices to prevent this; however, there is also nothing in the act to encourage it. It is really left up, how should I put it, to free competition, if you will, or somewhat to chance.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: Go ahead.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

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[English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: That's a difficult question to answer. We do not have many examples to give you because the fields in which our students enrol are fields in which I would say that the work in the communities must be... in any event, we believe it is similar. And we have not had any information from our contacts in the communities. We believe that the work is

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fairly similar. We are thinking of the field of administration. Obviously, the legislation is not exactly the same, but technically, for example bookkeeping or text entry on a word-processor, I believe that exactly the same skills are required.

Our efforts have focused more -- if I may complete the answer -- on adaptation, or what is called harmonization of course curriculum and teaching methods in a number of courses that affect all aboriginal students. As you probably know, at the college level, certain courses are compulsory for all students, for example, French, philosophy and physical education. In these three subjects, major efforts have been made to help aboriginal students to properly apprehend -- in the philosophical sense of the word -- the curriculum, to assimilate it by relating it to their cultural reality; whereas if the courses were taught exactly as they are taught to white students, this would be more difficult.

Earlier, I mentioned the fact that

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philosophy, for example, is a Western-inspired philosophy: Aristotle and company. It is therefore quite far removed from the rather concrete and illustrative culture and thinking, etc., and from the rather object-based approach... what I know of it, at least. Obviously, I realize that you are of aboriginal ancestry yourself, so I am probably just talking a lot of nonsense here.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: Not only of aboriginal ancestry. I am a Metis.

OCTAVE DERAPS: You are an aboriginal person yourself.

So, our efforts have focused primarily on this, to help our aboriginal students to really be able to overcome these problems, which seemed the most important to us, not only because they concern all the students, but also because they are probably the most serious problems and students are faced with them upon their arrival at the College, right from the first session.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

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[English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: Yes, there are a number of documents. There are research papers and reports which have been prepared over the last few years. There are also various documents of a pedagogical nature. One of our professors even recently prepared a teaching guide for post-secondary education of aboriginal students; this is basically a guide for all teachers working with aboriginal classes. I believe this document may interest the Commission.

We can, at least generally, draw up a short

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list and we would be delighted to send anything which interests the Commission.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

OCTAVE DERAPS: Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: May I perhaps just make one small final point before you leave.

Is your Innu culture and society program a program or a course?

MS. BERNIER: It is a component of the humanities program. There are four components in the College's humanities program and this is one of them.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So, it involves a certain number of courses.

MS. BERNIER: Yes, that is correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: When you said earlier that to date no non-aboriginal students have registered

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for this component, I wondered whether your College considered having a two- or three-credit course for example which would, essentially, be applicable to just about all of the College's students in order, basically, to help the College's two communities to understand each other. Have you considered this type of approach, that is, having a course on Innu culture, Montagnais society, which would be compulsory for non-aboriginal students?

OCTAVE DERAPS: I would just like to make one clarification here: we would not be able to make this a compulsory course...

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In the program.

OCTAVE DERAPS: ... because compulsory courses are determined by the department.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: By the department.

OCTAVE DERAPS: However, I think this is an excellent suggestion which could be studied as a supplementary course, that is, as an optional course, if you will, or an elective that could be chosen by the student. We might not have

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any more success, mind you, than with the component, but a single course might attract a few curious students. This is a good suggestion and we will study it.

MS. BERNIER: We nevertheless have a few courses, for example the course entitled Amerindians of Yesterday and Today, Races or Racism, that are also offered to our non-aboriginal students...

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In the humanities.

MS. BERNIER: ... and the non-aboriginal students in the humanities register for these courses. A few years ago we had Montagnais courses. There is a less obvious need, but we could also bring back these courses if there were a need. Perhaps the College could take up the task, maybe next year, of organizing such a course.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We have been thinking out loud with you. We know that changing attitudes and mentalities, education in the broader sense, understanding, is a

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long-term endeavour, but one which must be prepared everyday.

I believe it has been very helpful to receive you, to receive your brief and to have this discussion. It is a dialogue that is just beginning. Should you have any additional ideas, please do not hesitate to pass them onto us; we are willing to listen.

MS. BERNIER: Thank you.

OCTAVE DERAPS: Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

I would now like to ask Mr. Réginald Vollant, representative of the Centre de formation Nutshimiu Atusseun (CFNA), to come and meet with us and to make his presentation.

Welcome.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT, CENTRE DE FORMATION NUTSHIMIU ATUSSEUN (first paragraph translated in part from Montagnais): I am delighted to have this opportunity to present our brief. We would like to thank you for travelling all the way to Sept-Iles to learn more about aboriginal culture and the problems and difficulties which aboriginal people face. I am

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delighted and I would once again like to express our thanks.

We are delighted to be here. We would like to thank you for allocating us time to speak briefly about what we are doing not only in the community but also in all the North Shore communities.

We represent the Centre de formation Nutshimiu Atusseun. I am accompanied here today by my friends Mr. Ben Sylvestre McKenzie and Mr. St-Onge. We work together. It is not only the three of us who work at our training centre; there is a whole group of people working for the centre.

The objective, if you will, of our training centre is to help young people, from all the Uashat/Maliofénam communities and other communities as well, to rediscover their identity, to help them get back to their roots and to help them take charge of their lives.

Our main activities are traditional activities, if you will. We provide traditional wilderness

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skills courses, activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, particularly life in the wilderness. These activities are taught by elders, elders of the community, elders who still today have many values and skills to pass on. Through the elders, we help young people to discover themselves, to take charge of their lives.

Our training centre is now in its eleventh year of operation. For 11 years, we have been working for the Uashat/Malioténam community and -- as I said earlier as well -- for all the communities as well for nearly four years now; the service we have in the community, we offer to all young people in the community. I should say that we used to offer this service to all the communities because shortly we will speak briefly about the problems our training centre is facing. For the last four years, we offered this service to all the communities; this year, things have changed considerably.

Over these past 11 years, nearly 400 young people have passed through our centre; young people from

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Betsiamites to La Romaine (PH). All the North Shore communities have participated to some degree or other in our training program.

The past 11 years have enabled us to go and seek expertise, if you will, to go and seek experience. We have acquired experience in training, if you can call it that. During those years of work we also succeeded, if you will, in identifying the problem of young people: the problem of idleness, the problem of dependence on many things. I will not describe what young people experience in the communities; I believe you are aware of this. But our centre is there to find solutions, and I believe we have succeeded in doing so.

During these 11 years, we have succeeded in, how shall I put this, in finding a balance between what young people need to develop more harmoniously and what they experience. We have succeeded in helping these young people to do things. We have also found that these young people have tremendous potential. They are grappling with problems, obviously, of idleness, inactivity, but these young people

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nevertheless have tremendous potential; it is just that they do not have the opportunity to be able to make the most of what they have.

I believe that the CFNA, the training centre I represent, can serve as an example to all communities. Frequently, communities come and ask us for information about our training programs and methods. Many people from our community who make representations in various places speak of the CFNA as an example.

One of the problems, if you will, that we are currently facing is that we are not recognized as a training centre.

We provide personal training, if you will; we pass on values. It is very difficult for us to quantify the degree of respect that a young person has acquired from our training program, following participation at our training centre.

This type of learning is hard to quantify, hard perhaps -- in the eyes of those, in the eyes of the organizations that sponsor us, that subsidize us -- because we

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cannot provide figures. However, we know that the young people who have come to our centre have matured enormously. Many of them have succeeded in doing things that are truly... even we are surprised by what they accomplish after their training at our centre.

We have had young people who dropped out of school very early, who, after training at our centre, later went back to school. They took the regular program; some have graduated from CEGEP and even some from university. These are not the majority of our young people, but we know that it is because of the CFNA, because of the values that they have learned from our program that they have accomplished these things. Some of our young people are now nurses or are finishing their training to become nurses. Others have become bush pilots. These young people have taken a huge step. For us, this is important. For us, this is a question of survival.

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The problem we currently face is that we are not recognized by government agencies, either provincial or federal.

In the past, we have constantly had to negotiate.

We have made representations at many levels, at conferences and meetings where education, social development and other such issues were discussed. We have made various representations. But this requires a great deal of time on our part and we are still negotiating.

Again next spring we will be forced to sit down and prepare documents, documents that will be similar to those of previous years because we have been doing the same thing for 10 years now. We realize that this is good, that this gets results. But it is still a great deal of work.

Recognition as a training centre and recognition of the knowledge and experience gained at our centre would enable us to devote more of our efforts to maximizing, if

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you will, our objectives, maximizing our objectives of helping young people take charge of their future. And we believe that if action is to be taken, it must not be in six months or one month; it is important that it be taken right now.

There are many young people in the communities who are suffering a great deal. We are striving to obtain as much as possible so that they can take advantage of what is being offered to them. Hence, there is much work to be done in this regard.

The exercise you are undertaking, or that is being undertaken... I believe we are preparing for the future. Efforts are being made to establish ties between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. I see this as a portage, if I can use this metaphor. We must bear the burden of all the briefs to this Commission to begin the portage.

We can bear this burden. There are people who are willing to carry this baggage to the other side of the portage.

We are preparing the future of our young people. However, having arrived on the other side of the portage and turning around to see who is following behind us, I believe we will see young people carrying their baggage but they are going

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to stumble because they are not yet prepared to take responsibility.

I believe that there is essential work to be done with these young people to make them stronger so that they can take charge of the future of the Innu, the future of aboriginal people.

We are successful in this kind of work. We succeed. We achieve concrete results. But we have problems. We face problems of recognition.

We have great expectations of this Commission.

As I mentioned earlier, we have had many opportunities to present and discuss our work, but frequently this has not produced the results we had hoped for. If this Commission can accomplish things, can take action, we would truly be happy, for the young people of our communities.

During our negotiations with the various levels of government... perhaps I should explain briefly that our operations are made possible through government programs -- we have been receiving funding from these programs for 10 years -- there were a number of changes recently; there were changes last year.

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Over the past 10 years, we have negotiated contract renewals to ensure the centre's survival. Then, last year, changes were made in these programs and our budget was cut drastically -- it often comes down to a question of money. This has been very difficult for us ... not for us personally, but for the young people, because they are the ones who have been penalized by the program changes.

The Employment and Immigration Canada budgets were decentralized and by decentralizing these budgets, those far from the centres have been somewhat... everyone tried to take the funds for each community. We too, we had our grants cut, and this has had an effect on our operations.

We usually accepted young people from outside, from Betsiamites and other communities. Many young people from Betsiamites applied to our centre, but we were unable to accept them because of administrative changes in these

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programs. When we think of the young people in Betsiamites who also need help and support, it is disheartening for them. It is disheartening.

I would also say that we have resources, experience and expertise. We can take responsibility for our own people. We can help these young people. We have had results. We did not present results in our brief, but we have results. Reports and studies have been done on our centre. There have been television programs and newspaper articles about our centre. We have a very good success rate.

We could have presented our results in our brief, but we decided instead to prepare a brief that deals more with maintaining our culture and traditions. In our brief, we also endeavoured to point out that the elders have a major role to play in the development of our young people. This is important to us.

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We are privileged to still have the opportunity today to be able to speak our language, to be able to pass on these values, values of respect, values of sharing, values of mutual aid.

These values will help the young people who come to our centre to forge ties with non-aboriginal people, to build bridges with the non-aboriginal community... even if there are barricades from time to time, this will not hinder matters much. However, I believe that it is important that we survive for the good of our young people.

I will now give the floor to my friends. I believe Bernard has a few points to add as well. I realize we have limited time.

BERNARD ST-ONGE, CENTRE DE FORMATION NUTSHIMIU ATUSSEUN (translated from Montagnais): What Réginald submitted to us.... we must negotiate with the government every time to request a certain amount just to give courses to Montagnais people.

I have frequently noted that government grants... that they always try... while watching the rest of Canada concerning the budgets. Today, when we received Employment and Immigration grants, we were told that it will now

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be up to Amerindians to administer the grants themselves. The aboriginal peoples have taken over their administration. They wanted to purchase adult training courses. I therefore believe that we were still not autonomous. We took this money and gave it to the school board to purchase the courses we wanted.

We were given a grant which was transferred to the school board. We now need funding and cannot get it. As Réginald just said, our training centre is not even recognized. There is simply the word "certificate." Our students do not obtain credits for the training they receive at our centre. Even though we issue a certificate, the government does not recognize it. This is our biggest problem.

What we are trying to get to... I am pleased that you are here today so that we can make our views known. We have been experiencing these problems for 10 years. We are now asking you to recognize our skills certificates like those of the white man, like the one that was here before us, those of the Sept-Iles CEGEP; we are asking that our certificates be

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recognized by the Department of Education. This is our aspiration. This is what we are asking.

We are working in this way to achieve recognition, but we must climb so many rungs on the ladder before we reach our objective, before we get an answer, before we reach the Minister of Education to give us an answer, whether positive or negative. We still have a long way to go.

This is a very long and difficult process. We have even been asked to form a school board. I do not believe that our organization alone would ever obtain a school board. Perhaps they would give us a school board if the whole Montagnais nation wanted it, but we would still have to go through the politicians.

If our politicians agree to achieve our objectives to be able to go and seek grants to help us with our programs, so that we can work together with those who manage the program... and you, too, to encourage us in our efforts.

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This is what I had to say to you today. I would like to thank you for listening to what I have had to say and I would like to congratulate Daniel on being appointed Commissioner today.

BEN SYLVESTRE MCKENZIE, CENTRE DE FORMATION NUTSHIMIU ATUSSEUN (translated from Montagnais): Greetings everyone; I do not know your names. I would also like to thank Daniel, who is sitting opposite me.

What I have noted... at Nutshimiu Atusseun... I have been here since the beginning. All three of us were here.

I will begin with myself, personally. I grew up in the bush. I was raised in the bush with my father. I did not go to school, but when I see the school... I believe that I got my education from the bush.

In the past, there was no work here in Sept-Iles. The Indians used to go into the bush for the winter. I believe that even Daniel also experienced this method. I believe that everyone was affected. It was there that the Indians raised their children; this was their life. In order to preserve this culture, my father took me into the bush.

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After I was married, I began working for companies. I have raised my children and I have grandchildren; I have a dozen. My children went to school. That is why our young people today know absolutely nothing about traditional wilderness skills.

That is why our training centre wanted to preserve our culture, to set up courses so that the culture would be preserved among the Amerindians. But if we continue to sit here, I believe that we will never know the real culture that we have experienced.

In the past, the Indians did not have the problems we are experiencing today. If later there is no work, nothing to eat, no subsistence here in the city, what will our young people do to survive in the wilderness? This is why we wanted to show these young people how to provide for their needs.

Even before Schefferville existed, I had gone there with my father. We walked from Sept-Iles to Schefferville and back again.

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That is why today we are asking the government to help us preserve Nutshimiu Atusseun so that we can teach our young people so that one day they can take charge of their lives.

I am speaking to you in Montagnais because if I used another language I would lose my culture. It would be as though my tongue were cut in two if I used two languages.

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I would like to thank you, each of you, for the presentation you have just made on behalf of your training centre. Your presentation was not only interesting but also fundamental. I believe that basically what you have said -- about building a bridge between the past and the future, of being able to move into the future while still preserving what you are, tradition and culture -- is more or less what we've been hearing all across Canada, namely, this fear that by moving toward the future, we will lose our souls, that we will lose what we are, we will lose our age-old skills.

I would like to begin by asking you a number of questions to supply additional information.

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The recognition you are seeking is recognition of the certificates you issue by the Quebec Department of Education, is that correct?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In fact, in your brief... you submitted a document briefly describing the program and its conditions of admission. I see that your programs are four or eight weeks long.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You mentioned in your brief that the Arpin Report, prepared by Roland Arpin, on a new cultural policy for Quebec, disregards aboriginal reality.

I would like first of all perhaps to ask the following question: Were you aware that consultations were being held when this policy was being drawn up? Were aboriginal communities consulted?

BERNARD ST-ONGE (translated from Montagnais):

There are several reports. We always see them late. The

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reports are already finished by the time we find out about them. Sometimes we are invited at the last minute. We didn't even know that you were coming; we found out about the Commission's visit here less than a week ago. How can we be expected to prepare a proper brief?

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I believe that this is in fact always a problem. I know that the deadline was relatively short. We published various notices in the newspapers. Our approach is to try to have local representatives who provide information locally, in the communities. In any event, I must say that in this case the result is still significant. I believe you have presented a very important point of view, with supporting documentation.

My question essentially... and I understand from your answer that you read the Arpin Report once it was completed. Thus, you were not consulted during the consultation phase.

The question I would like to ask you at this

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time is the following: You have discussed the certificates you issue with the Department of Education. I presume that this is not in keeping with existing programs, regulations and standards. You held this discussion as a centre, individually?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: No. Our program -- you have a description of the program -- comprises 16 weeks of training, four of which are for preparation for the traditional wilderness skills course. We don't have too much trouble with this first component of the program because it includes first aid training. This works very well; these training courses are recognized. The problem lies with the wilderness skills component, with the skills and values the elders pass on during this component. These is where people have problems accepting, if you will, this teaching method. That's the difference.

We can't just arrive and explain a program... it's a way of life. It's a way of life, a way of thinking.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Quite right.

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RÉGINALD VOLLANT: It is also difficult for us to arrive and present a program to the Department of Education and say: "The young person has acquired 50 percent respect or 80 percent respect." These things cannot be measured. The big problem we have is with this component, with the traditional wilderness skills course. And this component accounts for eight of the program's sixteen weeks.

As regards the other component... there are three components. Module 3, as we call it, includes creative job search training. Again there is no problem with this component. We can obtain Department of Education approval for this component, the number of hours, and all that; this is not a problem.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So the problem is really with the eight-week wilderness skills component.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: The problem is to gain recognition, to have our elders recognized as teachers. This is where the problem lies.

For our part, we can arrive and say that the

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young person has learned... in terms of the actual technical skills, at this level, there are forms, reports that say that so-and-so has learned a technical method of setting a trap or a technical method for setting up a net in the water. We do these things. However, our aim is not essentially technical training. Our centre's goal is personal training, training of the individual. This is where the problem lies.

We have a teaching permit from the Department of Education, but it is for personal training.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Personal and social?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Exactly, and it is limited to that.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Now, once again, the problem is not linked to funding; the problem is really quite simply associated with the academic content.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: We issue certificates to our students. We will be issuing some next week; we had a group of young people. They will leave with these certificates. But if they apply to a CEGEP, they will not receive credits for this

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training. That's the stumbling block. Yet, the young people are so proud of having received their certificate.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So, once again, as regards the Quebec Department of Education, the problem is really with the validity of the certificate, to recognize its validity as a certificate because there is one component of the training that is taught by the elders, in a different context. But this has nothing to do with the actual funding of the course you teach. The funding, if I understand properly, comes from Employment and Immigration Canada.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: That's correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Secretary of State Department?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Right. We meet with committees every year to negotiate contract renewal, but this year we were told to look for, if you will, alternatives in an effort to see what the centre's status might be so that it can continue to survive.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: To your knowledge, there is no specific unit in the Quebec Department of Education which deals with aboriginal reality?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: No, not to my knowledge.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: It is the general program certification.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Yes, that's correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Moving on to the question of funding, which you mentioned, in your brief you indicated that for Quebec, for example, the Secretary of State Department allocates \$1,500,000 in funding for cultural communities but only about \$70,000 for Quebec aboriginal nations.

I believe this is a point that comes up frequently in our public hearings, not in the sense that there should be less money for the cultural communities but simply to highlight the difference and, to a certain extent, the failure to recognize aboriginal reality.

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When you said that Employment and Immigration has decentralized the LAMB program, if I understand correctly, this means that the money is now allocated directly to the communities and this has had an impact on your centre's self-financing capability.

BERNARD ST-ONGE: This is where the problem lies in terms of recognition of what has been learned. Employment and Immigration has decentralized the funds, allocating them to the LAMBS which are overseen by aboriginal people working as outreach officers in the communities. But because no Montagnais community is recognized as a school board, we cannot provide adult education programs. This means that the LAMBS take the money and purchase this training outside the communities, for example from the CEGEP, whose representatives were here earlier or from the regional school boards. This means that we lose something, that some of the money does not remain in our communities.

If we were accredited to provide this type of training, I believe we could say: "Fellow Indians, come purchase

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courses from us; we are authorized by the Department of Education to give these courses." Something along those lines.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So, if I understand correctly, the communities, with the money they receive from this decentralization, purchase courses from the school boards and the CEGEPs and not from your centre because your courses are not recognized and your students do not receive credits for them.

BERNARD ST-ONGE: That's right. Exactly.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In fact, that's the crux...

BERNARD ST-ONGE: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: ... and hence essentially the link is between this recognition by the Department of Education and your centre's self-financing capability.

BERNARD ST-ONGE: Exactly. I believe we could survive and attract a larger number of students, not just 15 or 18 a year. We could go into the communities, even outside,

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reach agreements with the Atikamekw or with other nations.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Now -- and this was my other question -- what type of relationship does your training centre have with the various Montagnais communities?

BERNARD ST-ONGE: I think that relations are fairly good with the various communities. There are nine Montagnais communities in Quebec. We also do business with the community in Labrador, the Tshesahit (PH). These Montagnais communities also benefit from our training centre. I think things are going fairly well in this regard.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: We have had students from outside. We have had many young people from Betsiamites, which provides a large pool of students for our centre. However, we can no longer accept them because the programs do not allow us to accept them at our centre. This has changed, these programs have changed.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You can no longer accept them because...?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: They are not part of the regional LAMB; this includes Sept-Iles and the North Shore communities.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Hence, the communities do not receive money for...

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Exactly. They are independent LAMBS. There is an independent LAMB in Betsiamites and in Pointe-Bleue as well. But oddly enough, we will be receiving students from Pointe-Bleue. The Pointe-Bleue LAMB is prepared to refer young people to us who have registered for our courses and we are obviously willing to accept them at our centre. The Pointe-Bleue LAMB is willing to contribute, if you will, financially -- using their Pointe-Bleue LAMB budget -- to our centre. However, the situation is different at Betsiamites. I believe they probably have other priorities.

I don't want to come out and say that this is the fault of the communities as such. It is the whole program that has changed the situation.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Just for information purposes, for the record, what does "LAMB" stand for?

BERNARD ST-ONGE: Local Aboriginal Management Board.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So, they are boards in each community.

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RÉGINALD VOLLANT: That's correct. They've called this the "Pathways to Success."

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That's right. It's under the "Pathways to Success" program.

How many employees or people do you have, part-time or...?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: In the office, at the administrative level as such, there are five people working as administrators, if you will. There is the director, a secretary-accountant, a counselling officer who works with the young people and purchasing clerks when the time comes for the traditional wilderness skills courses and these things. There are five administrative staff. But we have a teaching staff that includes elders. There are eight... no, sorry, six. There used to be eight but budget cuts forced us to reduce the number of instructors because we could not accept some of the young people. So, we now have six instructors.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Who are working full-time at the centre.

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RÉGINALD VOLLANT: They are with us for the wilderness skills course, that is, for 12 weeks per session. We have two sessions a year. So they are with us for 24 weeks.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Your funding comes from...?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: From the LAMB this year. From the LAMB this year, which has provided us with this funding.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The LAMB here?

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: The local LAMB, yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Local.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Yes. And we offer the service to other communities because the LAMB... well, I say "local"; it's all the communities. Mingan is part of the Uashat LAMB...

BERNARD ST-ONGE: There are seven.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: There are seven communities.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Seven Montagnais communities.

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RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Yes. We also offer the service to the other LAMBS, obviously, because they contribute to the funding of our training centre. But I know that they have other priorities as well. The other communities have other priorities and in the future the centre's budget could go to develop their community as well.

So it is by no means certain that the centre will still be here next year. It's not obvious to us. I know that the others probably have training priorities, things like that. Even if we offer them the service, invite them to come to Sept-Iles and be part of the centre, the young people at any rate, things will be difficult for us next year, next spring. We are already hearing things such as "Prepare yourself. Try to find other alternatives."

Our mandate, our mission this year is to try to find alternatives to ensure the centre's survival.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The survival of the centre itself.

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RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Yes. At the LAMB level, I find this a little difficult, if you will. Even at the local level as well, sometimes we have problems agreeing on what the priorities will be. There is a great deal of awareness-raising to be done.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In education, we see that this is a problem that exists elsewhere. Yesterday, we received briefs from the Institut éducatif et culturel and from the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, and we were left wondering. We heard two versions of what the Montagnais communities would like and we see that there is a certain transition.

The goal of your program seems very clear. And, if I understand correctly, the gist of your message is: "The key for us would be recognition for course credits."

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Precisely.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The department should be able to take into consideration the whole reason for this program and its special features and hence the need for

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teachers who do not fit the department's traditional or general standards.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: That's right. Our teachers, too, must be recognized because they are perhaps the most qualified for passing down to our young people what we have to pass down, namely values.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I will ask my colleagues to continue.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

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[English]

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Commissioner

Chartrand.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

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[English]

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[English]

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[English]

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you. I think and I hope that we will be able to submit recommendations precisely on this whole cultural question that will lead to a better understanding on the part of the departments concerned and that will enable your organization and others like it to have their place in the sun.

Thank you.

RÉGINALD VOLLANT: Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We are running a little behind schedule. Before we take a break, I would like to ask the Corporation de développement économique montagnaise, Stéphane Bacon, with two colleagues, I believe, to come and meet us to make their presentation.

Welcome. Would you please identify yourself for transcription purposes.

**STÉPHANE BACON, CO-ORDINATOR, CONSEIL RÉGIONAL
DE CONCERTATION ET D'INTERVENTION EN MILIEU AMÉRINDIEN:**

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Stéphane Bacon, Co-ordinator of the CRCI amérindien, that is, the Conseil régional de concertation et d'intervention en milieu amérindien.

ZACHARIE MOLLEN, CHAIRMAN, CONSEIL RÉGIONAL DE CONCERTATION ET D'INTERVENTION EN MILIEU AMÉRINDIEN: Zacharie Mollen, Chairman of the Conseil régional de concertation et d'intervention en milieu amérindien.

PAUL A. FOURNIER, CEO, CORPORATION DE DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE MONTAGNAISE: Paul Fournier, CEO of the CDEM, the Corporation de développement économique montagnaise.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You may proceed as you wish when you are ready.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Okay. I would perhaps just like to say a few words before giving the floor to Mr. Zacharie Mollen, Chairman of the CRCI, who is accompanied by the CRCI's Co-ordinator, Mr. Stéphane Bacon.

I would like to thank the Royal Commission for allowing us come and present a brief on economic development.

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Our brief was prepared with a considerable care. Our presentation will be made by Mr. Zacharie Mollen and Mr. Stéphane Bacon. Thank you.

ZACHARIE MOLLEN (first paragraph translated from Montagnais): I would like to thank you for the opportunity you have given us to speak about economic development, about how we can help the communities and develop the reserves from an economic perspective.

The recent constitutional debate between Quebec and Canada has led the aboriginal communities to reaffirm their desire for self-determination. We are demanding that our inherent rights be respected, namely that we are the first peoples who inhabited the land, who have lived off that land and who have been its stewards since time immemorial.

Although the Europeans came and shared the land and resources and although we signed treaties with them, in our minds, we never traded away the independence of the peoples.

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Yet, when wealth was created from the land and resources, we were reduced to an intolerable state of dependence.

Encroachment on our land, threats to the resources, the upheaval of our traditional ways of life and the reduction of our rights now threaten our very physical survival. The mentality of subordination and control which is exerted over us through the Indian Act, instead of protecting our rights, as it should, is hampering our development and preventing us from obtaining self-sufficiency.

Other peoples have shared our land and resources and have acquired wealth from them through their ingenuity and efforts. We believe that it is only fair that they help us accelerate our development. But this new sharing must be done on a basis of equality and respect.

Efforts to help us correct a situation that has resulted from hundreds of years of imposed tutelage must, however, also be accompanied by unequivocal recognition of our right to self-government and the exercise of full control over our development so that development takes our values into

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account and is in keeping with the real needs of our communities and so that we can, in our own way, participate in the necessary economic interdependence of peoples.

The economic situation and its effects.

According to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the aboriginal population, particularly the population on the reserves, continues to be one of the most economically disadvantaged groups in Canada. Aboriginal people, who within ten years will make up four percent of the Canadian population, still live in economic conditions that few other Canadians experience. The incomes of Montagnais families, which have more members and more children, continue to be far below the Canadian average. Unemployment is omnipresent, jobs are virtually non-existent and there is a high rate of dependence on social assistance.

These precarious economic conditions lead to social problems which further affect the communities: alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide, violence, crime and a high school drop-out rate.

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The aboriginal population growth rate is nearly double that of the Canadian population as a whole, and children under 15 make up 40 percent of the population of aboriginal communities.

The average age on the reserves is 19, compared to 30 for the Canadian population, and this rate is frequently higher in some Montagnais communities.

Imagine the tremendous pressures that will be brought to bear on the Montagnais communities' social and economic burden in the next decade with the massive arrival of these young people on the job market. Many more job opportunities must be made available for them in most of the communities if the communities are to avoid seeing their young people who are better educated and better able to help with development leave the community. All our efforts already devoted to education and skills development must prepare the way for our young people, without taking away from the urgent and immediate need for economic development.

Aboriginal people who live off the reserves also rely on the support, at least moral support, of their

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people. The scope of existing assistance mechanisms will likely have to be broadened in order to more effectively reach those who choose, frequently out of necessity, to leave the reserves. We can provide them with the cultural link which fosters identity and a sense of belonging.

Dependence and tutelage. Constraints on economic development.

The Montagnais, confined to reserve lands, limited in their access to resources and faced with the depletion of natural resources and threats to the environment, cannot return to the subsistence economy practised by their forefathers. We must turn to a more modern, competitive economy capable of meeting our needs yet without destroying the values and traditions associated with our way of life. To develop this economy, we must, however, have control and decide ourselves what we want to do for our peoples.

The attacks on our way of life resulted in a state of dependence which led to the tutelage of the aboriginal peoples. Even the Indian Act, which was supposed to protect our rights, has reduced us to mere wards of the Crown and controls

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many aspects of our lives. It also gives rise to many constraints that affect our economic development.

The self-government the First Nations are demanding involves, at present, scarcely more than the mere transfer of government authority over the administration of programs and related budgets. The department views the band councils as an extension of its administration and the formalities required to justify the use of aboriginal funds give rise to considerable red tape and complicated structures despite the fact that a number of band councils have demonstrated their ability to manage their affairs; the band councils find themselves urged to adopt a policy of small steps with regard to development.

In many respects, the band council becomes the government's representative responsible for overseeing local administration of decentralized government programs and services.

The communities have very high expectations of self-managed basic services, and the bands sometimes barely manage to meet demand.

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Because the programs are aimed primarily at social development, funds go to these priorities first and economic development is slow to come.

Even if the band council manages community businesses -- which is quite common in the more remote regions -- it cannot obtain limited liability because of legislation governing municipalities. Moreover, development agencies and organizations established to finance individual projects must incorporate and thereby lose their aboriginal identity, the right to a business location on the reserve -- unless they obtain a land use permit -- and the possibility of offering start-up capital to entrepreneurs in exchange for a guarantee since seizure becomes impossible. Political dependence thus becomes very great because the band council remains the only aboriginal organization recognized by the government. The start-up of projects is frequently compromised by red tape, political unknowns and lack of capital.

Since access to the use of land and resources is limited, aboriginal people are deprived of the basis needed

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for broader business development. However, claims concerning the usufruct, if not the ownership, of resources on Crown land are increasingly being heard. The negotiations should bring some results. In the meantime, concrete actions must be taken to provide the initial bases for economic self-sufficiency.

For the recommendations in this regard, for the conclusion, I will give the floor to Stéphane Bacon, who will continue to read the brief.

STÉPHANE BACON: To enlarge upon the recommendations of the Corporation de développement économique montagnaise, to correct a continuing unfair situation that is affecting the First Nations and their development, we recommend:

- that our inherent rights as the first peoples who inhabited this country, who have lived off the land and have been its stewards since time immemorial be recognized and clearly publicized;

- that we also be released from the

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tutelage constraints imposed on us, that our right to full self-government be restored and that new relationships be forged with us in good faith and on a basis of equality;

- that our right of access to resources and to the development of resources and land be unequivocally returned to us so as to ensure development of our economic self-sufficiency;

- that our legitimate right to be consulted about the use of resources and land be recognized for the good of present and future generations, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, and that our right to protect the environmental heritage for our grandchildren be recognized;

- that the distinctive elements we hold dear -- aboriginal identities, languages, traditions, values and cultures -- be restored to dignity and promoted because the diversity of peoples contributes to the wealth of a nation and because many people in this country also share our views.

In order to expedite our development, facilitate our achievement of economic self-sufficiency and our

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participation in the interdependence of economies, we also recommend:

- promoting programs focused on regional economic development, facilitating access to aboriginal projects and considering criteria which take into account the particular features of developing reserve economies;

- studying solutions which enable us to eliminate obstacles associated with the identity and liability of aboriginal organizations and businesses;

- facilitating the establishment of aboriginal financing structures for aboriginal businesses;

- supporting off-reserve expansion of aboriginal businesses;

- encouraging proposed strategic partnerships with non-aboriginal partners;

- emphasizing the development of activities associated with aboriginal culture, traditions and identity, features often sought by consumers, as well as encouraging smaller-scale projects but which are well integrated with

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aboriginal values and which take into account community characteristics;

- encouraging the development and adaptation of tools to foster aboriginal entrepreneurship, business familiarization and management training in the community.

Hence, in conclusion, as regards young people and opportunities, aboriginal development will be achieved through the development of aboriginal human resources. Youths and young adults, who make up more than 60 percent of our populations, must be our number one targets. Future prospects must open up for them in our communities so that their efforts and talents can contribute to aboriginal development.

We must ensure that our human resources are better skilled and trained, but we must also provide them with employment opportunities on the reserves. These opportunities may be in the development of community projects, co-operatives,

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private businesses, family activities and self-employment.

All these sectors must be studied. Whatever the community, a viable economy cannot develop solely on the basis of community-based businesses. For example, we must encourage entrepreneurship among our young people in order to produce project initiators, business leaders, group activity leaders and self-employed individuals.

All opportunities must be examined in order to provide room for our young people in the communities because their activities in the communities will contribute to development. By stimulating initiative, self-confidence, perseverance and the willingness to take on challenges in our young people, the communities will be able to benefit from their creativity and efforts, which will bring new opportunities to the community.

In closing, we would just like to say that consultation and co-operation constitute an important aspect of development for our communities. Consultation and co-operation between the North Shore aboriginal communities must become a

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priority and we must harmonize our efforts in order to join forces to stimulate the socio-economic emancipation of our communities that need it most. The presence of an organization such as the Conseil régional de concertation et d'intervention marks a milestone that will help us achieve this objective.

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you for your presentation. Briefly, I have a short question about your organization.

The Corporation de développement économique montagnaise is a corporation set up by all the Montagnais communities and its head office is located here in Sept-Iles; is that correct?

STÉPHANE BACON: I will ask our CEO to answer that question.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Yes, okay.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: The Corporation de développement économique is part of a strategy developed several years ago which comes under the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy. The CDEM is an aboriginal capital

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corporation or ACC. It has two functions: it provides capital for Montagnais entrepreneurs and it provides economic development support to local economic development organizations. It has offices in Sept-Iles, Les Galeries montagnaises, Quebec City. Its address according to its official by-laws is in Mashteuatsh (PH), in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So, it is funded by the federal program?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes, that's correct.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: How many employees do you have?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: We currently have three employees here in Sept-Iles and six in Quebec City.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Full-time?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes, full-time.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Could you elaborate on the Corporation's concrete day-to-day role?

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PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes. It receives funding applications from Montagnais entrepreneurs. It serves the aboriginal community through various programs for which we have been given responsibility by the Department of Indian Affairs; for handicrafts, we serve both the Montagnais and the Atikamekw. We also serve the Montagnais communities in terms of providing economic development support to economic development officers.

The CDEM is also signatory to a memorandum of understanding concluded between the QPDB...

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: The Quebec Planning and Development Bureau?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes, that's correct, which has since been dissolved and reconstituted as the Regional Affairs Secretariat ... for the creation of the CRCI, a body which promotes consultation and co-operation and includes not only the North Shore Montagnais, but the Naskapis as well.

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Simply, this means that we are a corporation working on behalf of Montagnais people, providing capital and economic development support.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In your brief you placed considerable emphasis -- and rightly so -- on the need to stimulate entrepreneurship among aboriginal people.

You have been operating in Mélistas (PH) for a couple of years. Is the number of applications you receive increasing? Are there more projects than before coming from the grassroots level, from the aboriginal people themselves?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes, the number of applications is currently increasing. The Corporation has been in existence for about four years and we are presently seeing fairly substantial progress, except that this is occurring within a very difficult framework because -- as we mentioned in the document -- of the Indian Act, which is a kind of straightjacket preventing us from providing guarantees. This also prevents us, as a capital corporation, from going any further with Montagnais entrepreneurs, either to collaborate in their projects or to help them negotiate outside financing as well with area banks or credit unions.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Precisely; let's talk about this point for a couple of minutes because I believe we are at the heart of problems on which the Commission could undoubtedly have a real impact in its recommendations; we hope so. This is a problem that is frequently raised. You spoke about it in the first paragraph on page 4 of your brief, I believe, and I would like to be sure that I properly understand what you said.

In the first paragraph you said:

"Even if the band council manages community businesses -- which is quite common in the more remote regions -- it cannot obtain limited liability because of legislation governing municipalities."

If I understand you correctly, community-

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based businesses are created but they are not incorporated.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That's right, because if they do, they lose their identity and their unique aboriginal status. Once a business incorporates, it no longer has the same rights that Indians as such have.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That was what I wanted to clear up. Reading a little further, you say:

"Moreover, development agencies and organizations established to
finance individual projects must
incorporate and thereby lose..."

-- what you are saying --

"...their aboriginal identity, the right to a business location on
the reserve (unless they obtain a land use
permit)..."

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That's right.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: It would appear at first glance that if a band council which sets up a community-

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based business wishes, for reasons of ensuring its limited liability, incorporates that business, it would normally have to give it a right to a business site on the reserve. I am trying to understand what happens.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: It is because the Act does not apply in the same way. It is fairly complicated; it is a very, very technical point.

Based on what I know about it, I can tell you that there are very few communities where land use rights really exist. It is really the band council which administers and manages the land. In most instances, it is impossible for a promoter to become the owner of his land.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: An aboriginal promoter?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes, that's correct, precisely because of the Indian Act.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: To become a property owner... but you could have a site on the reserve, land use

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rights, a land use permit?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes, but not all communities can do this. I think that, in the Montagnais communities, and in particular Mashteuatsh (PH), which has this possibility of offering land use rights...

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: But when you say that not all communities can do this, does the obstacle come from the communities themselves in terms of their regulations or does it come from the Indian Act? I understand that this is a little technical, but...

ZACHARIE MOLLEN: I will try to answer. There are nonetheless two ways of looking at it. One, when creating a reserve, you cannot have an urban development plan. You are limited from the start. You cannot have industrial and commercial sectors. That is one of the major elements to look at, among others. You cannot draw up an urban development plan, a land use plan for the reserve.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Why? This is not an ownership-related issue. Why couldn't a reserve draw up an urban development plan to say: "If there is industrial development, it will take place in this part of our territory"?

ZACHARIE MOLLEN: Because of the order to create reserves. Under this order, no legislation has been drafted to say that there will be industrial, commercial and other land. Therefore it was all just residential land.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: With your permission, just to add to what Mr. Mollen said, in practice, when we want to provide financing, it is always very difficult for the promoter to get everything together to carry out his project. He has to get a whole series of authorizations from the band council. This creates serious delays. Finally, it is always the band council which must intervene in a three-way agreement.

The legislation is drafted in such a way that at a given moment it is virtually impossible to be an owner. And

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it is not easy for a band council either, at a given moment, to designate a territory as such for business or industrial use because of the facts and the current legislation. That is what I know about it, myself.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Very well. Already, this identifies a very specific question which we will certainly look at.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That is precisely the point we're raising.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Yes. I simply have one last question. In the same paragraph you speak of the difficulty of "offering start-up capital to entrepreneurs in exchange for a guarantee (since seizure becomes impossible)."

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That, that's the Indian Act, it's section 89, which prevents us from doing so.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Because it is not a corporation and because the band council...

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That's right, because the Indian cannot...

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Another problem which is well known is the impossibility of getting a mortgage and mortgage financing because the property belongs to the band.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That's right, to provide guarantees as such.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That is a point which is raised regularly during our public hearings. But here, you raise a broader question in terms of economic development, and we shall certainly look at it from the technical viewpoint to see what is the nature of these obstacles and how they could be alleviated.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Perhaps to further assist the discussion, the problem is that the entrepreneur, whether private or community-based, must refer constantly to the band council, with the result that the band council bears the whole burden, not only political but also economic. It may not necessarily have all the tools to meet promoters' demands, with the result that at a given moment this creates enormous delays, as the brief states, and this is discouraging.

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I can tell you something, and that is that a Montagnais entrepreneur who starts a business at the present time in his community faces a daunting task because of these constraints.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I see.

This program is managed by the federal department. In fact, your financing comes from...

PAUL A. FOURNIER: In fact, the Corporation, our funds come from the Native Economic Development Program, which is run by ISTC, Industry, Science and Technology Canada...

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: That's right, Science and Technology.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: ... while the Indian Act and the band councils, that's the Department of Indian Affairs.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In other words, we shall take a look at Science and Technology, which should normally have an interest in ensuring that its program works.

It funds you?

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PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes, except that it faces the same problem we do.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I understand.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: It transfers the problem to us.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: It is caught in the same bind vis-à-vis the Indian Act, which is managed by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That's right.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Well.

I think that this nonetheless enables us to see a little more concretely the type of problems you face, and that seems to cast some light on -- and that's more or less what you tell us in your brief -- how you function efficiently. Very well. Thank you.

I will ask my colleagues to add something.
Commissioner Wilson.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

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[English]

PAUL A. FOURNIER: I understood the last part, but I think I have enough elements to answer your question.

Success at the present time in terms of the businesses that we have financed is excellent. We have a very low delinquency rate, which compares advantageously with any traditional financial institution. However, we are in our initial years; still, we have been in existence for two or three years. But I can tell you that at the present time it corresponds very well to the level of obligations of each of the Montagnais entrepreneurs who are repaying loans they owe to the CDEM.

COMMISSIONER BERTHA WILSON: [English]

PAUL A. FOURNIER: The type of businesses that we finance, these are basic service businesses in the communities: convenience stores, service stations, transportation companies, outfitters, communications also.

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That's essentially it. But it is really, at the present time, basic services projects.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Commissioner

Chartrand.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

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[English]

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[English]

PAUL A. FOURNIER: The CDEM, which is an aboriginal capital corporation, is funded by the Native Economic Development Program. In English, I believe it is ...

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

PAUL A. FOURNIER: That's right.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: That's right?

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Yes. [English]

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

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PAUL A. FOURNIER: I am very happy that you have asked that question because it is a concern at the present time in its medium-term programming to effectively create a Montagnais financial institution which would have a role not only in financing businesses, but would also be an institution for receiving the savings of the Montagnais, and would become a

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genuine business bank, a financial institution like the credit unions or banks which currently exist in Canada or in Quebec.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

PAUL A. FOURNIER: Indeed, there has been discussion of it locally, regionally among the nation. Talks with the other nations, to my knowledge, have not yet taken place, but I know that it is a concern for the other nations to have their own financial institution.

Moreover, at the present time the Native Economic Development Program does not enable us to use tools from

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this program so that we can advance in this area. I have personally approached the officials in Ottawa and been rebuffed. This prevents us from advancing in this project.

For our part, we think that the CDEM, which is an aboriginal capital corporation, with its funds, with its credibility, with its expertise, could greatly assist in advancing this matter if we had the OK from Ottawa; but at the present time it is very difficult to convince them. They even told us that we could not use current funds to guarantee certain funds to create a financial institution. There have already been talks, moreover, in the past with the Mouvement Desjardins which, at that time, demanded a large deposit which the nation could not then provide.

But now that we have our own aboriginal capital corporation, we could use the CDEM's funds to provide the guarantees to establish a Montagnais financial institution.

COMMISSIONER PAUL CHARTRAND: [English]

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Well, I would like to thank you for coming to make this presentation. I think that the discussion has led to some very concrete elements which will help the Commission in terms of its studies and its research to ensure that economic development and the instruments of economic development are possible, not only for the Montagnais, but more generally for the various aboriginal communities in Canada and particularly in Quebec. Thank you.

We shall suspend the proceedings for a few minutes in order to take a break, and we shall resume with the free forum, in which a number of people will participate. Also, we have two presentations from Jacques Fontaine and the Regroupement des Montagnais hors réserve de Sept-Iles et Malioténam. Thank you.

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--- Short suspension at 5:10 pm.

--- Resumed at 5:40 pm.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We are behind schedule on the agenda. I would therefore ask each of the speakers to try to be as concise as possible. We shall try to do likewise.

I would like to ask Mr. Jacques Fontaine to make the first presentation.

Welcome, Mr. Fontaine.

JACQUES FONTAINE (translated from Montagnais):

Good evening.

Before beginning, I would like to greet those attending. I would also like to ask a few questions. I would like to ask a question concerning... will it matter if sometimes I speak in French and if I also speak in Montagnais? Will that pose a problem?

TECHNICIAN: No, that's all right.

JACQUES FONTAINE (translated from Montagnais):

My name is Jacques Fontaine. I live here in Sept-Iles. What I would like to submit would be concerning internal

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and external justice, on and off the reserve.

I will begin with the time when I worked for the council, seven years ago; I worked for economic development. At that time the office was not as big as today. It was called the "band council." During the time that I worked for the council, I supervised projects worth three-quarters of a million dollars for the band council. What happened is that there was not a lot of staff in those days. I supervised seven projects.

What happened in the project... there were consultants and there were also foremen in that project. When I observed that the project was not advancing much, I knew that if I wanted to organize other projects, to go on to other projects, I had to complete the project I was currently working on.

What happened is that I asked a foreman who was at the same time a consultant: "I want you to go a little bit faster and I would like for you to participate in the work as

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well." What he replied was that it was not his job to work; he was the foreman, it was his job to supervise the work.

For my part, I knew that if I did not finish that project I would not have other projects. That is why we convened a special meeting to discuss it. We discussed the consultant-foreman, what I said to him. That's when things started to go badly in my work.

There was another person who worked with me. That's why I had also requested a grant so that I could take courses concerning the job he was doing. I also had other employees who did not do much work. That's why I went to see the chief to submit this question to him, that there were certain employees who were doing nothing. I wanted to ask them to lay off certain employees.

What he replied, what he told me was: "No, we're going to leave things as they are." That's why I committed an offence. In order to get their attention, I ended up stealing three cheques from the band council. After stealing these

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cheques, I was arrested and tried, but I had asked for a meeting to reach an out-of-court settlement with the council. Once the matter reached the courts... I think that, in court, cases are never finished, because what happens in court... the arguments are always finished outside the court.

What happened afterwards, I only knew about it afterwards. That's why my lawyer had told me that I could make arrangements without going to court. I was punished for that, but after several months -- because I also lost my job at that time -- I heard that there was another person who had experienced the same situation as me, who had committed an offence and who stole even more than I did. After hearing that he had not gone to court, that the individual was not punished... I did not pursue my inquiries any further. All I know is that he was not punished like me. I think that the population is fully aware of these facts.

After all that happened, when I learned that the other person was not punished for the same offence I had committed, after a few weeks had passed, he took the position I

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had held earlier. I thought that the population was aware of what had happened in my case.

This made me feel very bad. That's why I kept silent. I kept to myself at home. I was like someone tied to a ball and chain. That's why for years I could not escape from this trap. When I saw that he was doing the job I used to do, after a year and a half, I began gradually to emerge from my silence. After three years, I was able to get rid of the ball and chain.

What is happening today, what has happened, is that about two months ago, the same individual, who was not punished, who worked for the council, committed the same offence and, once again, he was not taken to court, he was not punished.

After everything that has happened, during a year and a half that I felt chained, when I felt delivered, I went around here and there to make inquiries. I even went to see the Amerindian police, the city police, the Quebec Police Force.

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I even communicated with Montreal. I contacted many sources, even the Civil Liberties Union, to find out what I had to do to bring out what I have inside me, to escape from this trap.

The only place I received help was from the Quebec Police Force. I was told that it was a case of economic crime.

I was told that within three years an investigation could be opened.

After having gathered all the information, I also met with the MNAs and MPs, and they told me that they did not have any business in this matter because they did not have jurisdiction on the Indian reserve. Even in 1991, they said: "After the Oka crisis, we can no longer go onto the reserve to interfere."

I think that since the government does not provide a large enough budget on the reserve, many things are lacking.

If I come to speak to you today, it is to obtain justice. I say that the government does not provide a large enough budget to, let us say... when there are band council meetings, general assemblies, the regular meetings of the

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council, budgets are lacking to have assembly chairmen, because it is always the chief who has two powers in the meetings: as chief and as chairman of the assembly. I think that he has too much power.

There are many things, in the final analysis, which concern the government, where they could provide larger budgets for the proper operation of the whole business.

I think that what is happening on the reserves suits the government, concerning the Department of Indian Affairs and the provincial government concerning native issues.

I could say many things to you, but I do not want to take more time than necessary. I think that you should understand what I have just told you. If you understand me, I think I will end here. If I am asked to produce documents, if I must produce a brief, if you want one, I can prepare one and send it to you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you,
Mr. Fontaine. You have informed us of a problem which is

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personal, which you have experienced. You are not the first to do so; during our public hearings it does happen that personal cases are also presented to the Commission.

I must point out -- and you are undoubtedly aware -- that the Commission cannot become involved in trying to solve each individual situation, whether it involves land claim disputes, problems between organizations or institutions or personal problems.

However, inevitably, since we are travelling across Canada and we are seeing many people, it is normal that this is seen as an additional opportunity to make oneself heard, as you have done this evening.

What we are trying to do is to see whether we can be of help, in many cases to provide information which is often deficient about what has happened in terms of events, to try to clarify or to check with the federal bureaucracy to ensure that the response has been provided, etc., to try to steer matters toward sources of solution.

So, what I suggest at this point is that you inform someone on the Commission perhaps in a somewhat more

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detailed manner, and above all that you provide your address and telephone number, to try to specify, so we can understand exactly what you have in mind.

Once again, if I understand correctly, you were charged before the courts and you were sentenced. You say that there is someone else who did the same thing or perhaps more and who was not charged, etc., that you have spoken with the Quebec Police Force, the Civil Liberties Union, the Quebec MNAs and federal MPs.

So, simply in order to avoid taking up time which, as you mentioned, is short -- it is now 5:55 pm -- I am going to ask Mr. François Cadieux, whom you see here, to meet with you after the hearing, to take your address and telephone number, and perhaps it would be useful if you gave us some more specific details.

We cannot solve your individual problem, but we can try to see whether from our point of view everything has been done to give you an answer by the organizations concerned.

That is about all that is in our power at the

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moment, and I would like to thank you for coming to speak to the Commission. If you wish to remain available, we will see you afterward.

JACQUES FONTAINE: Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you.

We will now hear the next speaker, representing the Regroupement des Montagnais hors réserve de Sept-Iles/Malioténam, its president, Raymond Hamilton, and Ms. Cécile Turgeon... or Mr. Hamilton alone.

Good evening.

**RAYMOND HAMILTON, REGROUPEMENT DES MONTAGNAIS
HORS RÉSERVE DE SEPT-ILES/MALIOTÉNAM:**

Good evening. What has happened is that I was unable to reach Ms. Turgeon at the last minute, since there was a room change; we were unable to contact each other. I would ask you, for example, if it would be possible for Mr. Raymond Mainville to accompany myself and Ms. St-Onge.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Hello again.

MERILDA ST-ONGE: Hello again.

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RAYMOND HAMILTON: To try to give a short history of our movement... at the very beginning there was an association which represented all the Metis and off-reserve Indians; this was the Native Alliance of Quebec, which changed its name at one point to the Laurentian Alliance of Metis and Non-Status Indians. Most of the time, since the Constitution was amended, there has been a certain group of these people who have obtained an Indian status card and who are registered with the Department of Indian Affairs. It is this principle of a card that you can examine here; I will show it to you.

These people, without going so far as to say that they were not served or were poorly served by the Association which represented all the off-reserve Indians, felt a need to band together and to have more specific representation for the group, namely the off-reserve Indians who were registered with the Department of Indian Affairs, again since 1985. That is the reason for the Regroupement des Indiens hors réserve de Sept-Iles/Maliofénam.

During the entire day, we have had the opportunity to hear a great deal of discussion. Almost everyone

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came to testify about problems experienced with the aboriginal communities, and some came to say that they had services to offer to the aboriginal communities. Unfortunately, it was never specified, in the aboriginal community or in these talks, that we were not included.

All the services that are provided on the reserves, where there are aboriginal communities -- and we may take as an example the CEGEP and other groups like that -- are aimed mainly at people in the aboriginal community, and as for ourselves, we do not exist. I can take my card and place it with that of any other person who lives on the reserve, and mine is as valid as anyone else's. We are entitled to receive the same services.

That is to some extent why people, after years, if we take 1987 ... it is now 1992 and the time is passing when people are willing to wait, they are tired of waiting and they want to see some progress. But it would appear that things are still not moving fast enough.

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I will take the example of the meeting held here this morning. There was an article in the newspaper about two weeks ago which stated that the meeting was to be held in the Kamamukan Room on Blandine Street. This morning, the meeting was here. My first reaction was to go there and wait. Afterwards -- there was nobody there; I waited until 9:00 -- I went to the band council, where I learned that the meeting was here. This demonstrates right away that there is a certain number of our people who will never know that we met here today, because they were directed to go to the Kamamukan Room. This sort of thing happens fairly often. Whether it is intentional or not, at some point this should be known.

We are too often, almost always, kept at arm's length from any meeting where we might have something to say, where decisions might be taken. We are completely ignored, whether it is by government representatives, band councils or

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other groups we might belong to. For example, at the present time, one need only look at who can be served by services that could be obtained from governments, and it is the band council. Before that, the Department of Indian Affairs was here in Sept-Iles. We could go to them and get information that we can no longer get anywhere.

I can tell you that as a representative of the Regroupement des Montagnais hors réserve de Sept-Iles/ Malioténam, I cannot sit by and accept nothing. The latest list of people registered with the Department of Indian Affairs which concerns us, the off-reserve Indians, dates from 1991. We have made regular requests, including again yesterday evening, when I had a meeting with my executive, to verify whether we had obtained the new list, because regularly there are people who register on the band council list who are off-reserve Indians. We are entitled to have that list and we are entitled to know who belongs to our group.

The only way to get it, the only group which can give us this service today, is the band council, which

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replaces the Department of Indian Affairs. Today, it is the council which serves the aboriginal population.

We cannot always communicate with Quebec City.

If we want to speak of budgets, we could return to this subject later; our budget is zero. Yet, there are funds which go to the band council for the off-reserve Indians. We cannot give you figures, we do not know what they are, but we know that there are services that should be given to us, that there are funds which go to the band council for the off-reserve Indians. Things are always in stalemate.

In terms of health care, in terms of education, perhaps people will say: "You can't say that. There are certain people in your group to whom we have provided services." That's true. But the population in general is not aware of that and -- it is almost risky to say so -- I wonder just how far that can go.

Must there be a family relationship, a certain friendship, a certain contact with the clan in order to receive services? We know who they are, the people who get

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services. I am not in a position to name names; I do not think that I will do so either. But we know them. And there will be another service that will be applicable tomorrow and it is still these same persons who will get them, because they have good contacts. But our entire population, the rest of us, who are entitled to receive them, where are we? And this has been going on for seven years.

There was talk of housing at one point, of aboriginal housing and such things. There are band councils that are fearful. I have had meetings with these people. I have had meetings with many other movements. This year marks the twentieth year that I have been in the aboriginal movement.

The response that we've received most of the time from the communities in general is that we were going to steal what belonged to them. If I remember correctly, for example, when the constitutional amendments were made, provisions were also made for off-reserve housing. We are therefore not stealing anything from anybody. If today there were an agreement

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whereby we would come and settle on a reserve, I would not come and take the neighbour's house.

The band councils have information to give to the population in general. I have already had contacts with certain band councils, and that was it: the basis of everything; it is your responsibility to inform the population that lives around you that we are there and that we are not coming to steal from them.

We know that this will not be done because at the present time the band councils receive grants or funds, if you will, on a pro rata basis according to the number of members registered with the band. Barring notice to the contrary, this is the latest information I have received. So, if there are 400 or 500 of us off-reserve Indians registered with the band council, they have been able to get the funds for these 400 or 500 people. But the services are not provided, whether administrative, health care or education.

Some people in our group who are off-reserve Indians have, if I may put it this way, had the good fortune,

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because they were part of another group, to receive a little more education than I have had or that other people in our group have had or that the aboriginal community has had. When there are job openings, these people, no one even thinks of questioning them, no one even thinks of letting them know that there are job openings.

I have myself tried to apply for job openings.

I am a heavy equipment operator. Construction work is done here. I have been on a work site on the reserve where there were four machines. There were three aboriginal operators and one non-aboriginal operator. I had my card; I am an Indian. I had the right to work. I went to apply for it; I received the answer you heard this morning: "You're a C-31, you're nothing." That's the climate we experience every day. We have been hearing about problems since this morning, but they're nothing next to what we experience every day.

When we speak of the aboriginal movement and aboriginal communities, we neglect those who are outside. We do not speak of them.

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There are some fine programs at the CEGEP. We have already had contacts with the CEGEP. At one time they were teaching the Montagnais language. We tried to send some people there. We had to go through the band council. The band council would not deal with us; we could not go to the CEGEP.

There have been agreements with the Quebec Department of Recreation, Fish and Game concerning hunting and fishing on the Moisie River. I participated in the negotiation of this agreement without anyone being aware of it. We are party to this agreement. There are rights for the off-reserve Indians. We are supposed to participate in it. The catch is divided up, but we are still excluded from all these things. Our communities, our members, each of the families, they have as much right to eat as anyone.

If, for example, we want to talk about fishing, they have -- we will take an example -- about eight nets that they can install on the Moisie River for the aboriginal community, including ourselves. In our families, there are some who are hungry. We know that in the spring, this kind of fishing goes on. We know that the catch is divided up. We are still

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waiting. We are party to this, but we don't see it. We are not even consulted.

Let no one say to me that everything is fine for us. It isn't true. It's bad enough that we have to fight government officials, we also have to fight our communities, who are also our leaders. The band council, whether it likes it or not, as long as I have my card, I am an Indian, and it is the council which should defend me today; it is the council which should represent me, in the same way that it should for my mother and for my sisters and the others.

A group of aboriginal women spoke this morning.

I asked the lady to accompany me. I said to myself, when they spoke about aboriginal women, they forgot a part of it. They forgot the women who are identified as aboriginal women by the community.

Among aboriginal women -- you always have to refer to the band council -- there was a problem at one point at Les Escoumins. There were two aboriginal women's movements for the same community. I contacted the representatives at the time,

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I do not recall, in 1982 or 1983. We organized a special meeting at Les Escoumins where the chief was present, the representative of the aboriginal women, to solve the problem because there should be one association to represent the community and not two within the same community.

We are experiencing the same problem again today: within the communities a distinction is made, that if you are inside you are an aboriginal and if you are outside you are not. That is something you experience inwardly as well.

I am proud to be able to say that we have an aboriginal woman whom I consider a member of our off-reserve movement who sits, as I have learned today, on the Betsiamites council. I wanted to tell her. I wanted to have her beside me to tell it. But when are we going to see that here? We are not close.

We regularly submit applications for housing. We are told: "Submit applications for housing. That's good. We will submit applications for housing and you will have houses." We know that we will not receive any houses, but we fill out the

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forms. If the community here totals 2,500, take away our 500, they are 2,000. But if we make housing applications for 200 or 250, including ourselves in that number, those who fill out the forms, we are part of it.

The need is better proved, that there is a need for 250 houses, than if it is limited to perhaps 10 or so within the community. Therefore a larger budget is provided, but we do not get the houses.

My father died in 1990, if I remember correctly.

My father was a white man -- we have to put it that way -- and my mother is an Indian. We had to wait until my father died for them to tell my mother that she could return to the reserve. This is what they said to her: "Now that he is dead you have become a real Indian. You can make a housing application." I cannot accept that.

What they don't say behind that, is that I, for example, as a descendant of my mother, she's my mother and my card is good, but I do not have the right to enter the reserve.

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In terms of health care, I regularly suffer from fairly severe migraines. My wife suffers from them as well. We have three asthmatic and hyperactive children. That makes for a lot of commotion. Regularly, I am forced to go to the dispensary to get medication. They give us Tylenol for the headaches. In a small bottle about so high, there are twenty Tylenol. If you take two or three, every four hours, depending on the dose, a day, you use up almost half the bottle in one day. After two days, they're all gone.

It's reached the point that they ask me when I take my Tylenol, if I give any to my wife, because she is not entitled to them. In other words, if she has a headache at the same time as me and she doesn't have any pills for herself, I cannot give her mine. It's ridiculous.

They've received directives; they won't confirm whether they come from the government or the band council or elsewhere. They tell me only that they've received new directives. But my family, that lives under the same roof,

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that eats the same food, and whether they are yellow, white or black, they live with my culture. My children participate in hunting and fishing; perhaps there is a high percentage of others who do not. Except that they do not live on the reserve.

We have the same needs for food, housing, education and health care. But we do not exist. We are a number in the files at the Department of Indian Affairs, and afterward we do not receive any services.

I could go on for hours on this subject, but I would like to return, before concluding my presentation, to a problem case with a family, and there is a representative of this particular family here, Mr. Raymond Mainville.

Mr. Mainville is a direct descendant -- some people around here may be startled, but they know it -- of Philomène la Formidable. A book was written about it. Mr. Vachon, you are aware, and many others.

In the same way and perhaps even more than me, Mr. Mainville is an Indian. He is an Indian, except that

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they refuse to issue him his card. That's the problem. For the past two years, Mr. Mainville has asked me to look into his case; before, it was others. In his family, there are other people who have taken a different approach. At one point they filed what they call a protest to freeze the case pending a later decision, but Mr. Mainville is not involved, because the protest is in the name of another person in the family. Hence, his actions are not blocked.

I have been looking into this matter for almost two years.

We went so far as to search... we are on the verge of being in the same boat as Jacques Cartier. It is impossible, everything they are demanding of us. I call it nonsense. We've done everything. We went so far as to contact the priest who wrote the book "Philomène la Formidable." We have contacted the archives, we went looking for everything we needed.

I will take advantage of this situation, Mr. Dussault; I heard you say this morning that you were a judge somewhere. Is an affidavit a legal document? If so, three

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should make it even more legal. Is that the case, yes or no?

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You can't add things up like that. If it's legal, it's legal.

RAYMOND HAMILTON: That's right. Is an affidavit legal? If it is legal, the gentleman has taken all the possible steps. He had these affidavits signed by one of the most respectable persons in the community here on the reserve, a descendant of his family, Ms. Blandine Jourdet. Everyone respects her; everyone knows her.

These affidavits are countersigned by her descendants, by relatives living in the community on the reserve, who recognize Mr. Mainville, his line, his parents, his family as aboriginals. At the department, they said: "No, find us your great-great-great-grandfather's baptismal certificate." He may have been in Cartier's boat, we don't know, but we can't find him.

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The closest we've come is a Mr. Jérôme. It would appear that the dates differ from one document to another or that the name is not written the same way. We can see that it is the same line, but there may have been a mistake and they cannot give him his card.

This gentleman has been denied his rights, to which he is entitled, for six or seven years. Even if we don't have much, what little we have, he is also entitled to have. We fought to get salmon fishing rights on the Moisie River, and we got them.

It's not a lot, but when we catch a salmon we're not spending our money in the store. The children are quite happy to eat it.

Mr. Mainville is denied these rights.

If he has the right to make purchases within the Indian community and to be exempt from taxes within the community, he is still denied these rights. We find this unjust.

Somewhere in the department there is an official... who is going to tell him to stop. I, personally, am fed up. Mr. Mainville has done essentially everything that it was humanly possible for him to do. It is all very well to turn

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to this or that authority... who is going to help him?

As I said earlier, I could go on at great length.

All I want you to note is that all the problems that people have said they experienced within the community, quite frankly they're nothing compared to what we experience outside.

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Hamilton. You have informed us of two problems, two problems we often hear discussed. The first is general: the way the Indian bands, the Indian band councils, treat members who have their card, who have their recognized status, but who live off the reserve. This morning, one of the most spectacular groups, undoubtedly, was made up of women who recovered their status in 1985, with the amendments to the Indian Act, the C-31s, because they were living off the reserve and they were given their status. There are about 85,000 in Canada. A number of these persons have asked to return to the reserve, to

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have the right of residence, etc., a house. Certainly, this places pressure on the budgets, but there is more than that; we discussed it this morning.

So, I think that this reality highlights a reality in which you rightly point out that it is not only women who have recovered their status under the 1985 Act, but there are many C-31s. There are many people who have their status, who have a card, but who for some reason or other live off the reserve and have difficulty getting information, receiving services while living off the reserve, and even more so of course in trying to gain access to space to return to the reserve.

It is a problem which is often raised at our hearings. I think that you have described it very clearly and concretely. For example, we are aware that there are health services which are accessible to you to some extent. You have informed us of the difficulties experienced.

When you mention the eight nets that have been allocated for the reserve and its members, including those

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off the reserve, and the difficulty that you have had in getting a share of that, I think that highlights the problem, and it is certainly a question that we, as a Commission, shall have to examine.

It is a difficult question, which is particular with regard to the women who regained their status in 1985, but which is more general than that, and I think you've highlighted it well.

You raised a question in my mind when you mentioned the CEGEP. I am trying to understand. The CEGEPs in Quebec are public institutions. There are no tuition fees. When you say that the off-reserve students do not have access to the CEGEP, it is with reference to the post-secondary education benefits which the band council controls. It is not the CEGEP itself that refuses to accept you. Would you like to clarify that, please.

RAYMOND HAMILTON: Yes. I do not think that is what I meant. It was with reference to a specific course. At

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a given point -- I do not know if it was at the CEGEP; I said the CEGEP, perhaps -- courses were being given in the Montagnais language.

This was mentioned again this morning; Mr. Joncas (sic), I think, said it. We wanted some people from our group to participate, but they were unable to go.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Once again...

RAYMOND HAMILTON: You don't understand?

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Yes. I would like to understand.

RAYMOND HAMILTON: We don't understand it either.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Were they unable to attend because they had to pay for these courses and you did not have funds from the band council?

RAYMOND HAMILTON: The reason was that the courses were given to aboriginal people, and again their view was that the aboriginal people are within the community, on the reserve. Our group was therefore never able to participate.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Whether it is a public school board or a public CEGEP, I think that it would be very important for us to know whether courses are offered in a context which is solely related to those who live on the reserve.

MERILDA ST-ONGE: To answer in this respect, when we speak of off-reserve Indians, in the case of Mr. Hamilton -- we were speaking of categories of status Indians -- he is in category 6(2). Therefore, since his mother did not have the right to live on the reserve because she was still living with her husband, until the death of her husband... Mr. Hamilton has already told you the whole story.

These children, the children of reinstated registered Indian women, often do not have access to the educational services provided by the aboriginal communities, such as teaching of the Montagnais language.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So these were courses given by a school under the control of the reserve?

MERILDA ST-ONGE: Under the control of the reserve.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Very good. I understand.

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MERILDA ST-ONGE: It is these cases.

We were speaking of the off-reserve Indians. There are many people in the 6(2) categories, the children of reinstated registered Indian women, who live on the reserve. There is also the case of people who have never lost their status but who are forced to move to the cities and who do not have these services either. As soon as you leave your community, you are automatically rejected by your community because you are living off the reserve. You no longer have the services that the members of the community receive.

There are people who have lived and worked in the city for 25 years and, in order to have access to the benefits of a community, to the services of a community, even the right to vote... you do not have the right to vote when you live off the reserve.

Whether your status is 6(1) or 6(2), if you live off the reserve you do not have the right to vote. Your name is registered on the band list, but you live off the reserve, you cannot go vote in your community during the elections of chiefs. You cannot.

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You cannot be served in terms of education also, a certain education where the women... I always speak about the women because I know the women. There are certainly also single-parent fathers who live off the reserve and who have young children who have to go to school and who do not have access to educational services because they live off the reserve. These people are not all 6(2)s.

They are status Indians, recognized, who have a band number, who are on the band list of a community. As soon as you live off the reserve, you are no longer entitled to services.

We are on the alternative funding arrangement in the communities. The best example is Sept-Iles. On one side of the street you are on the reserve and, on the other side, you are off the reserve. If you have the misfortune to live on the other side of the street, that's all well and good, but all your services are cut off because you're living off the reserve.

This is what you experience when you live off the reserve. As I mentioned earlier, you have the C-31s, the 6(2)s, the various categories of people, and the off-reserve Indians as well.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Well, there are many things in what you have just said. On the issue of voting rights, are you telling us that as a C-31 living off the reserve you do not have the right to vote for the band council after recovering your status?

MERILDA ST-ONGE: No. Even those who have never lost their status, if they live off the reserve they do not have the right to vote. In certain communities, they do not have the right to vote.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: In certain communities.

MERILDA ST-ONGE: In certain communities.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So, it is not the Indian Act which stipulates this since there are communities which grant the right to vote...

MERILDA ST-ONGE: There is the Indian Act which also mentions residence rights. If you reside in a community, yes, you have the right to vote. It is the Indian Act. Those who permit aboriginal people who live off the reserve to vote, this is under the traditional law or according to

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custom. They vote according to custom. Here, we are speaking of the Indian Act.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: We shall clarify this because yesterday we were in Wendake among the Hurons in Quebec City and there was an election recently, and the people who live off the reserve, the women in particular who have recovered their status off the reserve and who are still off the reserve, came to vote in September for the band council election.

MERILDA ST-ONGE: Those people can say that they voted according to custom. But according to the Indian Act, if you live off the reserve, you do not have the right to vote.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: You are creating some doubt in my mind which we will undoubtedly verify.

But what you are telling us, and what the gentleman told us, is obvious -- and we know, we heard it when we held hearings in the cities -- that people who have aboriginal or Indian status and who live off the reserve tell us: "We do not have access to services, whether we are 500 miles south or only

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several kilometres away." It is one thing and it is a problem. But what you are describing to us is an even greater problem because, basically, when you say: "We want to go take a course in Montagnais at the reserve school, where the course is given," because there aren't any given in Sept-Iles, at the school board, "and we do not have access," in fact, it is an example that you give us to illustrate the problem which you have just presented and which is very concrete.

RAYMOND HAMILTON: I would like to return to the matter of the right to vote on the reserves. Before 1985, before the amendment of the Constitution, they even let people vote, it's funny, who lived as far as the corner of Smith Street, a part of town almost in the centre.

In 1986, I believe, there were new elections. We were barred. This had always been allowed. The people who lived outside the reserve up to that street could vote. But our people, the off-reserve Indians with cards, we came on the scene in 1985.

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I do not think we are ready to have a candidate, because that would be dreaming a little, but that might perhaps have been possible. So, then, they barred everybody; no candidate.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I think that you have drawn our attention to very concrete elements that we are not only going to verify but which are part of the issue, the basic problems of the status Indians who live off the reserves with respect to services, with respect to voting rights, etc. It is a problem which may arise in certain respects perhaps from the Indian Act, but primarily, in the final analysis, from the band councils.

RAYMOND HAMILTON: For us, for the time being, it is the band council which serves the aboriginal communities, replacing the Department of Indian Affairs, which is now too far away.

There are two other points that I would like to make. We were asked whether we might have any recommendations to make after our presentations. I would like to make two.

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CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Well, if you wish, but do so fairly quickly since time is passing.

RAYMOND HAMILTON: Very quickly.

We could perhaps suggest, given the fact that in our communities, as we have said, there is a very high percentage of off-reserve residents who have never experienced life on the reserve, Indian culture on the reserve -- inside a community and outside a community, it's different -- what we suggest is that perhaps the Indian Act should be re-examined, where it says that you have to be a resident on the reserve. What we suggest is that the rights be attached to the card, regardless of where you live. If I live on Monseigneur Blanche Street in Sept-Iles, that does not make me less an Indian than another because I live in town. My rights should follow me wherever I live. If one day I am able to return to the aboriginal community, this would mean fewer problems for the government, but in the meantime, our rights are being denied.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Your second recommendation?

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RAYMOND HAMILTON: The second is that perhaps when the public servants -- or I don't know what you call them -- come to verify things in the band council or come to announce programs for aboriginal people, that they be informed that we exist and that there is surely checks to be done, not within the band council, strictly to determine whether the funds or the needs have really been fairly divided among the entire group, but to come and consult us also.

Today, I can appear before you as president of the off-reserve Indians. Hence, I am entitled to ask that these people come and consult me to ensure that our groups really receive the benefits they are entitled to. We have the impression -- and that's how it works -- that the only organization which represents an aboriginal group and which has the right to speak on our behalf is the band council. It is the council which constitutes the Department of Indian Affairs today on this territory. But we are here too. We are incorporated. We presented you with a legal document -- I think that you have

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it in your hand -- and we are entitled to expect something other than a card with no funds attached; it's a little like a bank card with a \$10 credit limit. That's all we have.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Mr. Hamilton, I think that you have presented to us in a very eloquent and concrete fashion the problems that you are experiencing; and when I say "you," I mean the people you represent. We thank you for doing so.

You can be certain that, as a Commission, we will examine the situation you have described. It is a situation which has been pointed out to us on numerous occasions, but you have added certain concrete elements and suggestions, like the fact that the departmental officials basically deal only with the bands and the bands do not relay the information to you, with the result that you are left out in the cold. At least, that is the presentation you have made. With certain concrete suggestions we are going to examine this and we hope that the recommendations that the Commission may make will be able to improve your situation.

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I would like to thank you.

MERILDA ST-ONGE: Just before leaving I would like to add one final thing. It is that this goes so far that there are people who live off the reserve who have left their jobs to be able to work in their community. They are forced to leave their jobs to work in their community, to run as council members. We have the example here of Ms. Deter (PH) who was forced to leave her job to be able to run as a council member on the Betsiamites band council. Otherwise, if she lived off the reserve, she would not have the right to run for council. It goes as far as that when one lives off the reserve.

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: I do not wish to prolong the proceedings unduly, but what you have told us... the fact remains that if someone is earning a living off the reserve... does the band council demand that that person leave his/her job if he/she wishes to run for council? I do not understand.

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MERILDA ST-ONGE: It is because you cannot run as a councillor on the band council if you live off the reserve. As a chief, you can. But as a councillor, you cannot run if you live off the reserve. Hence, they are obliged to leave their job to be able to run as councillors in an aboriginal community.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: But leaving one's job does not mean that one no longer lives off the reserve.

MERILDA ST-ONGE: Yes.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: So they move to the reserve?

MERILDA ST-ONGE: Leaving one's job... that means that you have to live on the reserve to be a councillor.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Good, I understand. Perfect, thank you.

MERILDA ST-ONGE: Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR RENÉ DUSSAULT: Well, this brings us to the end of this first day of public hearings in the region. We shall resume the hearings tomorrow morning at 8:30 in Malioténam. Everyone is invited.

Before bringing the session to a close, I

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would like to thank the translators, particularly the Montagnais translators. I think that their work has been appreciated throughout the day, as well, of course, as the French-to-English and English-to-French translators. It is a formidable task under difficult conditions. I think that we owe it to them that we have been able to conduct this session in such a productive fashion which has enabled every one to express himself or herself.

I would like to thank the staff of the Commission who have worked hard to make this hearing possible: Deborah Hanley, who is responsible for the note-taking; François Cadieux also... I have a temporary memory blank; this is not possible... Roger. That's it. These things happen to everyone. It's extraordinary.

I would also like to thank Dan Gaspé, our director of communications, Danièle Labonté, who looked after the registration, and Marie Dansereau.

I think that our work has been made possible by team work and, once again, I hope that we can continue this dialogue tomorrow in Malioténam in an equally constructive and efficient manner.

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I would like to conclude by thanking, of course, our commissioner of the day, Daniel Vachon, and by asking Father Pierre Bergeron to say the closing prayer.

(Closing prayer)

--- The hearing was adjourned at 6:38 pm.