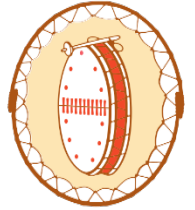


G. C. C. E. I.  
est. 1974

ÀσVΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔΔ (ΔΔΔΔ ΔΔΔ)  
Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)  
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

ΔΔ/ΔΔΔΔ ΔΔΔΔΔΔ  
Cree Nation Government  
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie



C. N. G.  
G. N. C.  
est. 1978

# **NOTES**

**FOR**

**GRAND CHIEF DR. ABEL BOSUM**

**FOR A PANEL DISCUSSION AT THE**

**CREE NATION/ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE ECONOMIC**

**ALLIANCE**

**NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

**VAL D'OR**

**JUNE 14, 2018**

Good morning, Bonjour.

I would like to make some comments this morning that are somewhat related to what I suggested at yesterday's luncheon as a set of potential principles that could guide us into the future as we try to improve the lives of our various communities and business interests, and also, to guide us as we try to enhance the nature of the collaboration among all the interests in the region.

I suggested yesterday that having a few guiding principles would be helpful to us all as we work to ensure that the nature of the collaboration that we talk about, and the way in which we go about hearing each other, is effective and genuine. So, I thought it might be useful to talk more basically about how we, in fact, hear each other and how we can make our dialogues more useful. I think we need to continue our dialogues about collaboration based on reality.

To do this, I thought it might be useful to explore with you, given the diversity within our region, what we have in common as residents of the northern region of Quebec, and then, exploring the differences among our diverse inhabitants of the region. In this way, I think we might be able to better appreciate the landscape that we are all working in so that we can have the right dialogues at the right times, and have dialogues that will be helpful to us all. I also think that, in this way—and it may seem outrageous to some of us—we may actually be able to learn from each other.

So, what do we have in common?

Obviously, the fact that we are all northerners is the starting point. We inhabit a region whose climate is much harsher than it is in the southern portion of the province, and the physical landscape is different than in the south.

We have all learned to adapt to living in this environment so that we can be comfortable while, at the same time, being able to work and play in this physical context.

Because of the harshness of the climate, we have learned to take upon ourselves a certain personal responsibility so that we can deal with the challenges that the climate presents to us. So, we have a certain resourcefulness combined with a strong resiliency which is what it takes to survive in this physical environment. We are not helpless in dealing with weather and the climate. We just do what needs to be done....we don't wait for CAA.

Because we are so dependent on successfully negotiating our relationship with the environment on a day-to-day basis we have developed a deeper connection with the environment.

Recreational activities embedded in the environment are common for us all. In general, people in the north have a more immediate and meaningful connection to the land....simply because we need to.

There are things we understand, together, about what it takes to survive in this climate that people in the south do not understand.

Because of the vast expanses between our communities, we have a common way of dealing with distances. We measure distance more in terms of how long it takes to get places than in terms of the number of kilometres. We measure distance by hours, not kilometers. The kinds of vehicles we tend to have, and our connection to our vehicles, sets us apart from people in the south.

On a macro-economic level we also have commonalities.

Ultimately, the driver of the economy in the north, as is the case throughout the Canadian north, is resource development.

And because resource development tends to be carried out by larger companies based primarily in the southern part of Canada, we all tend to experience the indifference many of these large companies have for the realities in the north—indifference to our communities and to their sustainability, and indifference to the quality of life in our communities. Southern-based resource development companies tend to view the north as a source of profit, rather than as a source of investment—investment in communities and investment in the region.

We in the north have a common interest in the sustainability of our communities. We are concerned that the draw of southern cities will drain away our youth and our talent. We have concerns that our local economies are not sufficiently diverse and robust to endure the cyclical nature of resource development. At the levels of our local and regional economy, therefore, we all want sufficiently diversified economic activities so that we can even out the ups-and-downs associated with resource development.

These economic commonalities are, in my view, sufficiently strong that they should be the basis of concerted and joint efforts to ensure that development projects take greater account of the realities of our communities and the need for development to be more than just the extraction of resources. We probably would agree that development needs to take into account all the needs of our communities.

So, now as to our differences.

Our region is, first and foremost, very diverse. It is this diversity which is the key to both our strength and our challenges. Our communities consist of Quebecois, Cree, Algonquin, Innu, Atikamekw, Inuit and Metis. Our communities include settlers and colonized, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and combinations of all the above.

Our communities are very diverse linguistically. We have primarily francophone communities, primarily Indigenous-language communities, and communities where there are unique mixtures of French, English, Cree, Algonquin, Innu, Inuit. Among our people, there are those who are unilingual, those that are bilingual, trilingual and, in some cases, quatorlingual.

Our peoples have different ways of viewing the environment. Francophone Quebecois communities tend to see the environment in terms of its capacity to create wealth and to create jobs. The environment is something to be adapted to the needs of individuals and communities. Indigenous communities tend to see the environment as something to adapt to and to take from the environment what is essential for survival without jeopardizing the environment. Indigenous communities have lived for thousands of years learning to adapt to the environment. Quebecois communities were established relatively recently with an attitude of determination to make the environment submit to their needs.



Both communities see that there is a relationship between economics, the environment and job creation. There is a difference however of emphasis which is cultural in origin.

And there is, of course, the difference in history between the settlers and the colonized. As the quest for natural resources came to dominate much of the landscape in northern Quebec, and with the development of towns and cities, the Quebecois represented the interests of resource development, and the Indigenous communities were, by and large, viewed as being in the way. These historic roles have characterized much of the relationship between our two groups and has been a source of friction and challenge to this day. These historic roles, however, have thankfully begun to shift as we have had fundamental rights acknowledged and we have started the process, through forums like this, of exploring our commonalities.

It has often been said within our region that, in the context of the diversity that our region reflects, we have more in common than there are things that divide us. This may or may not be the case. Maybe yes, maybe no. It is hard to do the math on that question. But one thing is clear to me is that even with our differences there is **enough** that we have in common to form the basis for lasting partnerships, lasting friendships, and lasting relationships. And, there are enough of us to appreciate that understanding, and there are enough of us to put that understanding into practice so that we can demonstrate that mutual respect is a better option than looking for differences that divide us.....that genuine partnerships are a better option than looking to take unfair advantage.....and that because we are all here to stay, promoting harmonious relations is better than promoting continuing divisiveness.

Miigwetch.