

QUEBECERS and the INNU

CONTINUATION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE INNU

AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A TREATY

Québec

Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones

Québec

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS

The Government of Québec has put in place a participation mechanism that allows the populations of the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean and Côte-Nord regions to make known their opinion at the negotiating table.

Québec's negotiations team includes a representative of the regions who attends all of the negotiation sessions. He is the regions' spokesperson at the negotiating table.

The representative of the regions can count on the assistance of one delegate in each of the regions in question.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REGIONS AND THE DELEGATES?

- 1 To keep you informed of the progress made in the work of the negotiating table.
- 2 To consult you and obtain your comments.
- 3 To convey your proposals and concerns to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and to the special negotiator for the Government of Québec.

WHAT IS THE AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE?

The agreement-in-principle reached by the Government of Québec, the Government of Canada and the First Nations of Betsiamites, Essipit, Mashteuiatsh and Nutashkuan will serve as a basis for negotiating a final agreement that will compromise a treaty and complementary agreements. In other words, it is a framework that will orient the pursuit of negotiations towards a treaty over the next two years.

WHY NEGOTIATE?

Quebecers and the Innu have lived together on the same territory for 400 years without ever deciding on the aboriginal rights of the Innu. Consequently, the government has chosen to clarify the situation through negotiations.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ABORIGINAL RIGHTS?

In 1996 and 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada handed down two rulings that define aboriginal rights and aboriginal title.

An aboriginal right is an activity that stems from a custom, a practice or a tradition which, prior to contact with the Europeans, formed an integral part of the culture of an aboriginal group. Hunting, fishing and gathering are examples of this right.

Aboriginal title is a subcategory of aboriginal rights. It grants certain rights to the aboriginal peoples present on a territory when the Europeans arrived and who have frequented the territory on a continuous basis ever since. These rights concern the use and occupation of the territory by an aboriginal nation.

WHO IS NEGOTIATING?

At the present time, seven of the nine Innu communities are involved in the territorial negotiations with the governments of Québec and Canada. These communities are divided into two negotiating tables:

The Mamuitun table, which includes the communities of Betsiamites, Essipit, Mashteuiatsh and Nutashkuan;

The Mamit Innuat table, which includes the communities of Mingan, La Romaine and Pakuashipi (Saint-Augustin).

The agreement-in-principle of a general nature was signed with the Mamuitun table. Negotiations with the Mamit Innuat table are continuing.

The community of Matimekosh, near Shefferville, and that of Uashat-Maliotenam, near Sept-îles, are continuing their consultations with their respective populations to determine if they will join the negotiating table.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF NEGOTIATING?

FOR THE INNU

The negotiations will lead to the recognition of the aboriginal rights of the Innu, but the conditions of application of these rights will be defined in a treaty that will provide a framework for exercising these rights.

The participation of the aboriginal peoples in the management of the territory is another major stake of the negotiations. Talks will make it possible to determine the nature and the way in which the aboriginal peoples will take part in the management of Québec's natural resources.

Finally, the negotiations will help clarify and determine how the Innu will exercise self-government on clearly defined territories.

FOR THE REGIONS

The negotiations between the Innu and the governments of Québec and Canada will make it possible to reconcile the rights of the aboriginal peoples with those of Quebecers. Negotiations do not seek to reduce the rights of one group to the advantage of the other group.

Ultimately, the negotiations will make it possible:

- to define the effects and terms of application of the rights of the aboriginal peoples to obtain certainty when it comes to the exercise of these rights;
- to harmonize practices, in particular in the field of hunting and fishing, between the aboriginal peoples and Quebecers;
- to ensure the harmonious and orderly development of the territory.

Following the negotiations, the territorial claims of the Innu will be settled. The Innu will have autonomy, while remaining citizens of Québec. Progressively, they will take charge of the funding of programs that will be part of their new responsibilities.

TOGETHER, WE WILL SUCCEED IN SIGNING A TREATY HAVING A UNIFYING EFFECT

www.versuntraite.com

To contact your team in the region or to obtain a copy or a summary of the agreement-in-principle:

info@versuntraite.com

CÔTE-NORD: 1 877 463-5781 (toll free)

SAGUENAY-LAC-SAINT-JEAN: 1 866 547-2102 (toll free)