

NATION TO NATIONS TOUR



**LISTENING,
UNDERSTANDING
AND BUILDING
TOGETHER**

On the field, serving dialogue

By Manon Massé

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Title

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LISTENING, UNDERSTANDING AND BUILDING TOGETHER

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serving dialogue

Editor

Manon Massé,
Member for Sainte-Marie-Saint-Jacques





This document reports on the ***Nation to Nations*** tour, launched in 2019 at the initiative of Manon Massé, Member for Sainte-Marie–Saint-Jacques and, at the time, House Leader of the Second Opposition Group. The tour took place while she was the Second Opposition Group Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, a role she held for 11 years and which, over time, resulted in numerous meetings, exchanges and policy statements, adding to the milestones of the tour.

Rooted in a tumultuous context in which women’s voices refused to be silenced, from the Val d’Or tragedy to the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan and the still vivid memory of Indigenous residential schools, the tour was designed as an essential act of recognition: to meet with the Native Peoples with whom we share the land, on their land.

Eleven years later, and despite the pandemic, Manon Massé has met with the 11 Nations and visited more than 20 northern communities and villages, making this initiative part of a broader, long term political effort.



When I had the intuition for this tour, I first asked myself if I was legitimate. I therefore brought together a circle of Indigenous, non Indigenous and immigrant women, both young and elderly, to share my idea and collaboratively shape the framework of this initiative. They told me: Yes, you are legitimate, as long as you act with openness and humility.

It was with these two words in mind that I set out to meet with the First Nations and Inuit on their lands. For me, it was an essential sign of respect. Too often, politicians summon the chiefs to Québec City. I wanted to do the opposite. Going to meet with them is to connect with their identity, their culture and what makes them who they are.

Two main topics guided my initiative: Environmental protection and Quebec independence. I felt a responsibility to address these issues with complete honesty, acknowledging from the outset their right to self determination. I wanted to break the cycle in which, as I was told, “People come to study us, leave with that, and we never hear about it again”. When I asked how we were going to do this together. I was surprised at the openness of many leaders to talk, precisely because our approach is based on the right of all peoples to self determination, I was surprised at the openness of many leaders to discussion.

From Mashteuiatsh to Kuujjuaq, from Gesgapegiag to Kahnawake, I met with women and men who vigorously defend the well being of their community, their culture and their language. I hope they inspire you as they have inspired me. After each visit, I returned with a head full of ideas and always more motivated to work on building a relationship of trust. This Travel diary is a record of that journey, but above all, an invitation for our parliamentary

Manon Massé
*Member for Sainte-Marie-
Saint-Jacques*



The ***Nation to Nations*** tour led by Manon Massé is an inspiring example of listening, openness and concrete action taken with First Nations and Inuit. She has shown in a tangible way that building strong and respectful relationships requires travelling to communities, engaging in dialogue, and fully acknowledging each community’s history and rights. I am proud to take up the mantle of Second Opposition Group Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit and, with the support of my colleague Ruba Ghazal, to reaffirm our commitment to continuing this work for Quebec.

For the Second Opposition Group, Quebec sovereignty is built on respect for the sovereignty of all peoples. Building this country together with the First Peoples is not a slogan, it is an essential step to building a just, inclusive, green and sustainable Quebec. This requires respect for their rights and self determination, the application of Joyce’s principle and a willingness to make the nation to nation relationship a cornerstone of our political action. This is how the Quebec of tomorrow can be built together, and not at their expense.

Sol Zanetti
Member for Jean-Lesage
*Second Opposition Group Critic
for Relations with the
First Nations and the Inuit*

11 Nations visited

Anishinabeg ♥ Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok

Eeyou ♥ Innus ♥ Inuit ♥ Kanien'kehá:ka

Mi'gmaq ♥ Naskapis ♥ W8banaki

Wendats ♥ Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk

2 Northern Inuit villages

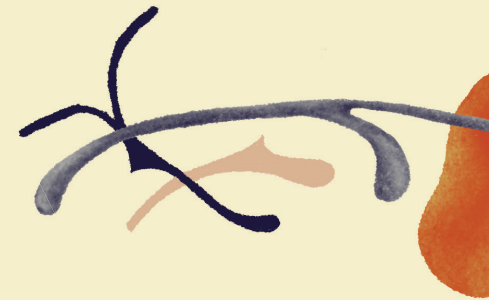
20 First Nations Communities

6 Indigenous Friendship Centres



TRAVEL DIARY

This section is intended to be the travel diary of the *Nation to Nations* tour. These accounts bear witness to the resilience of Nations facing a convergence of crises; from the existential threat of climate change to the daily struggle for the survival of culture, language and ancestral knowledge, to systemic underfunding and the persistent legacy of colonialism. They also reflect other meetings and exchanges held throughout the eleven years of my role as Second Opposition Group Critic on these issues, which complement and enrich the tour.



Women's Circle

Even before going on the road, a foundational step was necessary. On May 20, 2019, I met with a circle of Indigenous and non Indigenous women from different nations, generations and backgrounds to share with them the idea of launching a Nation to Nations tour aimed at addressing the themes of climate change action and Quebec independence. I wanted to validate the approach, assess its accuracy and understand its blind spots. That circle played a decisive role. The exchanges, marked by honesty, kindness and high standards, helped establish a clear stance for the tour: listening, humility and respect. I sincerely thank these women for their generosity, their clarity and the trust they placed in me from the very first steps of this initiative.

Kuujuuaq, Nunavik, Inuit Nation

The visit to Nunavik made the impacts of climate change tangible. The effects of thawing permafrost, which weakens buildings, roads and runways, could be seen and felt. The arrival of species not there in the past, such as the beaver, disrupts ecosystems and threatens essential food sources. Many people with whom we met told us that these rapid changes jeopardize the transmission of Inuit practices, knowledge and, ultimately, culture. In the face of these challenges, the work of the Nunavik Research Centre is truly admirable. It is able to create dialogue between traditional and scientific knowledge to address very real issues, here and now.

The social and political issues are just as striking. The housing crisis is seen in chronic overcrowding, waiting lists of several years and impossible choices between housing and food. The impacts on health and the social fabric are very real. The shortcomings of the justice system, notably the transportation of inmates thousands of kilometres to the South, and a persistent tuberculosis crisis — with an infection rate about 300 times higher than in the South, and still rising — are evidence of systemic neglect. And then there is the lack of access to healthcare with dignity.

Finally, a memorable discussion with Charlie Watt, then President of the Makivik Corporation, gave me a better understanding of the parallels between Nunavik's quest for autonomy and the Quebec independence project: the same desire to make their own decisions and to break away from structures that perpetuate injustice.

JULY 2019

Mashteuiatsh, Pekuakamiulnuatsh Nation

First stop: Mashteuiatsh, on the shores of Pekuakami (Lac Saint-Jean), while the First Nations Great Gathering was in full swing. This pow wow, the largest in Quebec, provided a vibrant setting for many meetings. During a formal interview with Chief Clifford Moar, discussions focused on protecting the planet and community partnerships in small hydroelectric projects, seen as a source of revenue for local development.

In addition to the energy issues, I was particularly struck by the community's effort to establish its own constitution. That initiative is not just an internal matter; it is a powerful assertion of inherent sovereignty that offers a fascinating parallel to Quebec's own constitutional aspirations. Their approach demonstrates that the path to self determination is not monolithic and can even provide mutual inspiration. The many informal exchanges during the pow wow also highlighted the importance of arts, crafts and dances as powerful means of affirming their pride as a Nation and reclaiming their culture, especially for the youth!



OCTOBER 2019

Gaspesia, Mi'kmaw Nations of Gesgapegiag, Listuguj and Gespeg

In the Gaspesia, meetings with the Mi'kmaw Nations were marked by a clear and determined defence of the lands. In Gesgapegiag, opposition to oil projects like Galt or Belle Dune, mobilization around responsible fishing — notably by the Ice Committee to protect whales — and initiatives like Salaweg, a seaweed processing company stemming from the Indigenous Fisheries Management Association, illustrate a clear commitment to sustainable development and autonomous resource management. As summarized by Chief John Martin: “*You're shocking Mother Earth. There is no air in money.*”

The exchanges also revealed deep tensions with the Quebec government. In education, the requirement for Mi'kmaw students to pass the French-second-language test to obtain their diploma is seen as a structural injustice that hinders academic progress and affects self esteem. I learned this the hard way from a young activist from Listuguj who, very angry, reminded us that it takes more than good intentions when you want to work as equals. That lesson equipped us to better defend that point during the study of Bill 96, but the government refused to listen. The injustice continues.

Finally, the discussions about Quebec independence were frank. They reminded me that there can be no process of emancipation without genuine recognition of unceded territories and the right to self determination. Here, sharing the land is a matter of justice.



JUNE 2021

Odanak, Abenaki Nation

In Odanak, the exchanges highlighted issues of identity and belonging. A highly urbanized Nation, on land that is almost all privately owned by outsiders, the Abenaki are greatly affected by identity appropriation and the phenomenon of “*pretendians*”. Indeed, some people claim rights without any family or birth connection, thereby taking opportunities that should belong to members of the community.

The visit to Kiuna College, the only Indigenous college in Quebec, also had a profound impact. Despite governance under the supervision of two CÉGEPs— one anglophone, the other francophone, reflecting Quebec’s difficulties in fully recognizing the autonomy of First Peoples — Kiuna fulfills its mission of offering First Nations students a safe environment that promotes perseverance and graduation. The photos of graduates lining the walls give a human face to this success. I also ran into these people over the years in different roles, different functions. It works!



JUNE 2021

Manawan, Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok Nation

In Manawan, an Atikamekw community isolated at the end of a long forest road, land and economic development issues are immediately apparent. I heard band council members describe tense relations with forestry and mining companies, including Nouveau Monde Graphite, and unproductive discussions with Hydro-Québec, while there has never been compensation for the flooding of their lands. Respect for ancestral rights remains an essential condition for any project.

The visit was marked by a moving meeting with families of children who disappeared in the healthcare system, concerned about the limitations of Bill 79 and access to their loved ones' records. These traumas combine with urgent social crises, such as the shortfall of 300 housing units and the dangerous condition of the road, which affect safety, health and development.

Despite everything, by visiting the Matakan site, a project for healing and reclaiming the land, I was able to see the community's deep desire to pass on its culture, to reconnect with the land and to build the future on its own terms.



SEPTEMBER 2021

Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Anishinabeg Nations of Winneway, Lac-Simon and Pikogan

In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, meetings with the Anishinaabeg Nations revealed persistent structural challenges, while dialogue with the Quebec government remains difficult. The issue of land base crystallizes these tensions, as does the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, where communities still suffer the impacts on their ancestral lands without being signatories.

From a social standpoint, the issues run deep. In Lac-Simon, we are told that there is a social crisis due to the lack of housing and the presence of drugs in the community. In Winneway, the issue of public safety is urgent, and there is a feeling of going in circles due to the government's inaction in funding an adequate police service. In Pikogan, there is an urgent need for basic infrastructure such as an expansion of the school, a new daycare and a shelter for abused women.

Yet I was able to observe these communities great strength and capacity for action. The Mino Obigiwasin initiative, which allows four Anishinaabeg Nations to take charge of youth protection, illustrates this potential and shows that, when communities have the space and resources they need, they develop sustainable solutions tailored to their realities. The government must do more to fully recognize and support these initiatives.





OCTOBER 2021

Wendake, Wendat Nation

In Wendake, the meeting with the Wendat Nation took place as part of the presentation of a CHSLD project funded by Quebec. The exchanges with the women and men in the health network were rich and enlightening. What was particularly striking was the strength of the ongoing campaign to combat violence against women, a true source of inspiration. The visit was also an opportunity to fully appreciate the extent of the responsibilities that rest on the Band Council, a small team carrying a huge load. Impressive.

It was also in Wendake that I learned something important. During a visit there, our group presented a project without prior consultation with the Council, quickly revealing how essential dialogue and protocols are. That lesson, learned with humility, is precious and has been duly recorded for the future.

SEPTEMBER 2022

Ekuanitshit, Innu Nation, and Chisasibi, Eeyou Nation

During the 2022 election campaign, as the Second Opposition Group Critic, I went to Ekuanitshit and Chisasibi to support First Nations candidates from our party. These visits took place at a significant time for the party, which was presenting a record number of Indigenous candidates, six, at that time. On the field, beyond the announcements, I especially felt the political and symbolic significance of that gesture. Those meetings reminded us that representation is not just a discourse, but a presence, a commitment and a shared responsibility. Building a fairer and greener Quebec necessarily involves a real Nation to Nations relationship, on an equal footing, and the concrete recognition of the self determination of the peoples.

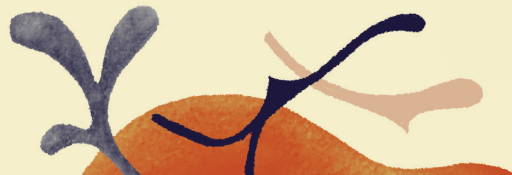


OCTOBER 2023

Kahnawake, Kanien'kehá:ka Nation

My meeting with Grand Chief Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer highlighted the pride of the Kanien'kehá:ka nation in its autonomy. However, that autonomy is undermined by failures by the Quebec government. The community hospital has not seen its funding indexed since the 1982 agreement, compromising access to culturally safe care.

Following our exchange, the Grand Chief also indicated her intention to submit the issue of Quebec sovereignty to her Council, stressing the importance of recognizing the rights and self-determination of her Nation, as presented by the Second Opposition Group. I was struck by the intensity of the Kanien'kehá:ka's commitment to preserving their culture and environment, particularly in the face of challenges related to climate change and energy management. "*Earth mother is sick. We need to view our world differently*" said the Grand Chief.



OCTOBER 2023

Cacouna, Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk Nation

In Cacouna, Grand Chief Jacques Tremblay welcomed us with pride, and rightly so. The Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk community operates a thriving economic model based on fishing and wind energy, in partnership with other Indigenous Nations, which allows for, among other things, investment in language, culture and education, while developing scientific partnerships and land reappropriation projects. The community is well positioned to observe the visible impacts of climate change on the St. Lawrence River. In addition, the disappearance of shrimp and the discharge of untreated water deeply worry the community.

The Grand Chief also expressed the desire to see Quebec adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Some members spoke to us about tensions around governance and citizenship, reminding us that economic success and social equity must go hand in hand.





Kawawachikamach, Naskapi Nation

NOVEMBER 2023

In Kawawachikamach, the welcome was initially reserved, marked by understandable mistrust. Gradually, exchanges opened up, especially with the Elders, whose role is essential in easing tensions and maintaining community cohesion. I was touched by their patience and commitment, and by the way they pass on culture and knowledge despite the challenges.

The reality of the Naskapi Nation is complex. Not recognized as a remote community, it is deprived of essential food security programs. The health challenges are glaring: a single doctor serves the entire region, and travel to Sept-Îles is long, costly and exhausting. The cost of living forces difficult choices between food, heating and housing. There are also ongoing territorial tensions with the Inuit. In that context, Kawawachikamach embodies both the fatigue of repeated abandonment and a deep desire to preserve its dignity, culture and autonomy.

Matimekush-Lac-John, Innu Nation

NOVEMBER 2023

In Matimekush-Lac-John, the welcome was warm despite the concrete challenges: a high cost of living, insufficient infrastructure, overcrowded houses, fragile health services and the red dust from the old mines that covers everything. I was struck by the resilience and determination of the community members, who are striving to face these challenges while preserving their culture and autonomy.

Conrad André, an Innu traditionalist, cultural agent and living memory of his community, passes on the language and knowledge of the land to the youth, reminding them that the survival of the culture depends on reclaiming ancestral practices and the connection with nature. He shared with us his deep concerns about the impact of the old mines on wildlife. The image is striking: A white partridge with feathers turned reddish, a testament to the contamination in the area.

The women's shelter and the Maison des hommes illustrate solidarity and the will to heal, where concrete solutions are designed by and for the community. At Matimekush-Lac-John, every action and every project bear witness to the determination of Indigenous peoples to build a just, sustainable future rooted in their culture.





OVER THE YEARS

Own-initiative Mandate on “Indigenous Women’s Living Conditions as affected by Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence”

With members of all parties, we took on this own-initiative mandate even before the Quebec government launched the Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Québec (Viens Commission) in December 2016, and before Canada launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in December 2015.

After meeting with workers at the Missinak Community House, a Québec City shelter Indigenous women victims of domestic violence, and after a day of training at their Meshkenu healing site, we set out for four communities.

I have already mentioned Lac-Simon, Wendake and Kuujuaq; allow me to share my visit to Inukjuak.

MARCH 2017

Inukjuak, Inuit Nation

During our visit to Nunavik, we met with people who live in the northern village of Inukjuak. The vastness of the space, with an endless view of the sea of Hudson Bay on one side and the tundra stretching to infinity on the other, forces us to recognize the extent of the isolation experienced by the people who live there. That isolation is made worse by the regular cancellation of flights due to bad weather.

The testimony of an Elder about the loss of cultural landmarks among youth with the arrival of the Internet shook us: the loss of language, the loss of the transmission of millennia old knowledge, the loss of culture, the loss of the bonds that weave communities together. It affects their ability to survive and sends chills down the spine.

Discussing issues of intrafamily or sexual violence is not easy task. At the Family resource center, we saw how these topics are discussed very discreetly because they are taboo. Moreover, there is a glaring lack of resources. Where can a woman who is a victim of violence seek refuge with her children in this municipality, where there is a shortage of housing and where up to three generations sometimes have to live in the same house?

Resilience and creativity are the cornerstones of this small community: creation of community justice groups to prevent the displacement of people awaiting trial, local training of Inuit women who want to practice as midwives, development of a hydraulic project to eliminate dependence on diesel for electricity generation are just a few examples.

**Visits to Aboriginal friendship centres:
Val-d'Or, Joliette, Trois-Rivières, Sept-Îles,
Native Montreal and Mamuk in Quebec City**

Over the years, I have visited several Aboriginal friendship centres. I found the same spirit there as in the communities: a civil society that organizes itself, self-determines, and meets its needs, outside of imposed frameworks.

I was able to clearly see that culture is not limited to languages or crafts. It is experienced in how things are done, in how the living environment is cared for. In a context of systemic racism that is still very real, for example in health networks, child protection services or the police, these centres offer culturally safe health, early childhood and even student housing services, like in Trois-Rivières. I saw how these services allow individuals and families to fully thrive.

They are also places of welcome and gathering for all First Nations and Inuit members living off reserve. In Sept-Îles, for example, there are Innu, of course, but also Naskapi and even people from Nations outside Quebec.

**Presentation of Annual Reports
of the Bill 79 Monitoring Committee:
Pakuashipi, Manawan, Pikogan, Mistissini**

The purpose of Bill 79, adopted in 2021, is to finally allow Indigenous families to access information held by institutions about children who went missing or died following a stay in a health facility. Specifically, it requires that the government, institutions and certain congregations open their records and give the minister the responsibility of supporting families in this process of truth.

For five years, I had the opportunity to be part of the monitoring committee for that law and to visit four communities to present the annual report. I went to Pakuashipi, Mistissini, Manawan and Pikogan. Each time, the trip had a profound impact.

I met parents and relatives who were learning, sometimes fifty years later, what had happened to their child, where they had been buried. These meetings leave marks. They remind us that these tragedies are not accidents in the past, but the direct consequences of systemic racism and institutional silence. These moments strengthened my conviction that political work here cannot be separated from listening, humility and the duty of repair. However, there cannot be reparation without first recognizing, as Quebec society, the atrocities inflicted on these families, admitting that they were made possible by systemic racism and, now that the truth is known, assuming our responsibility to make amends. There is still a long way to go.



WHAT I TAKE AWAY

After years on the road, on the lands, around Council tables and in kitchens, certain conclusions emerge. Following are the ones I want to leave here, not as a cold summary, but as **policy markers** for what comes next.



First, pride and autonomy

Everywhere, I encountered Nations standing tall. Leaders, Elders, young people who refuse resignation and who build, often with too few resources, their own institutions, their own development models, their own responses to crises. This pride is not symbolic; it is the driving force behind autonomy and proof that solutions already exist in the lands.

Next, the land and self-determination

For First Nations and Inuit people, the land is not a resource to be exploited, but a relationship to be protected. Conflicts over mines, dams, forests, caribou or roads are never abstract; they affect the cultural, economic and political survival of Nations. Self-determination is not an ideological claim; it is a right recognized for all the peoples of the earth, the right to decide for themselves.



Thirdly, colonialism is still at work

Chronic underfunding, overcrowded housing, insecurity, inadequate public services, missing children or children taken from their environment; none of this is accidental. These are the direct consequences of colonial policies that persist, despite reports, despite commissions, despite promises. As long as this reality is not named and confronted head on, there can be no reconciliation.

Finally, culture and ancestral knowledge

I saw extremely rich living languages, precise land knowledge, governance and environmental protection practices. In the context of the climate crisis, this knowledge is not from the past; it is a key to the future. Ignoring it is to collectively deprive ourselves of essential solutions.

What I have heard throughout these years is a request that is both simple and demanding: to be recognized for who they are, full fledged peoples, capable of deciding for themselves and regarded as equal partners. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is clear and should serve as a guide for any government that truly believes in equality among our peoples. That is precisely why the Second Opposition Group adhered to that Declaration as soon as it was adopted in 2007. That is not the case for the other political parties.



“We are ready for our Paix des Braves”, we heard in Lac-Simon. This is a call to negotiate a future where sovereignty is expressed in the plural.

Will we have the courage to respond ?



The commitments from our party's parliamentary caucus moving forward

By receiving this legacy, our parliamentary caucus acknowledges that the relationship with First Nations and Inuit cannot be based on one time actions or symbolic words. It must be sustained over time, embedded in political structures and reflected in concrete decisions.

Following this tour, and in line with what was heard in the lands, our parliamentary caucus commits to making the Nation to Nations relationship a cornerstone of its political action and its vision for society.

As such, the parliamentary caucus of our party commits to:

Build the project of a country for Quebec within a logic of co-construction, from Nation to Nations;

Make the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a key pillar of government action;

Recognize the inherent rights of First Nations and Inuit to self-determination;

Refuse any development project imposed on the First Nations and Inuit without free, prior and informed consent;

Recognize and implement Joyce's Principle to ensure public services that are free from racism and culturally safe for First Nations and Inuit.

These commitments will be politically supported by a spokesperson from our parliamentary caucus to ensure their continuity, coherence and concrete implementation in action.

The commitments by our parliamentary caucus are neither utopian nor improvised. Other societies with colonial history have undertaken, with their limits and contradictions, a genuine shift in their relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Our party's parliamentary caucus is committed to embedding this ambition in its actions, convinced that a Nation to Nations relationship is not only desirable, it is possible.




Passing the mantle

This journey has convinced me of one thing: listening is not enough. If this tour has a meaning, it is to set clear commitments for the future and to collectively entrust them to our parliamentary caucus.

This passing of the mantle is not an end, but a political choice. The choice to ensure that the Nation to Nations relationship is upheld with consistency, humility and responsibility, and that it remains an essential pillar of our parliamentary caucus's political project, beyond individuals and mandates.

Manon Massé
Quebec City, May 2026



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