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Commission de la Présidence
Tuesday, June 9, 2011, 7:00 PM
City Council Chamber
275 Notre Dame Street East
commissions@ville.montreal.qc.ca

Dear Sirs,

I received permission from the Bureau des Commissions to put forward my ideas on what the Commission de la Présidence should be working on in the years to come, at a date later than the June 9 meeting, due to the sudden passing of my brother, Dr. Robert Moore.

I wish to address the Commission on the topic of interculturalism, which is certainly an area of concern for both the present and the future. I have done a small amount of work in this area as president of a tenants' committee in a multicultural building.

First of all, I'd like to consider the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturalism, separate and combined. Multiculturalism, as I understand it, allows for the full expression of different cultures but pays little attention to how these cultures may or may not interact. Interculturalism, however, while not ignoring the full flowering of individual cultures, attempt to integrate these cultures, either with each other or with a majority culture, which in Quebec is, of course, francophone.

My building is located in Notre Dame de Grâce in Montreal. Though originally francophone, this area is now largely Anglophone with large pockets of allophones as well. The cultures in my building are mainly allophone and francophone. Since francophones are not numerous, they tend to be seen as one group among the allophone majority, and not as the dominant culture. Since our type of interculturalism combines the various cultural groups in the building, it is not a question of interculturalism integrating groups into a larger culture, but one of integrating groups with each other, with the aim of a larger understanding by all of the variety of patterns of culture involved.

Our intercultural experimentation has consisted largely of cultural evenings, each focused on a different group but open to members of all groups. We have had considerable success in having a cultural event about one group being shared by members of all groups, resulting in a better understanding of what each particular group is about. We are still a small building, but we have managed to hold events on the Middle East, the Caribbean, Poland, China, Italy, Quebec and Canada. The Middle East and the Caribbean represented the 2 largest groups in the building and events concerning them were repeated each year, due to both popularity and the need to present a high profile. A Canadian event tended to be a hodge-podge and was used to foster an identity which was somewhat patchwork in practice.

Our intercultural project was a large success in fostering integration and overcoming alienation.

Yet, it remained a small project, a microcosm. I am aware of the larger context of interculturalism in Quebec society and of the myriad groups – laborers, professionals, businessmen, for

example – who make it up. Just north of Notre Dame de Grâce in Montreal, is Côte des Neiges, with its much greater concentration of immigrants all struggling for a place in the greater Montreal area. A place in which their languages and cultures must continue to thrive, be heard and be practiced. There is no contradiction in this and the adoption of Québécois citizenship. Indeed, only with the full expression of original cultures can the sense of identity which leads to participation in Quebec society be achieved. Original culture is vital to the understanding of who one is, and only with a rich understanding of this is one free to participate in the majority culture, if this is what interculturalism is deemed to be.

Otherwise, it is still a fun game of interaction between people of different groups, leading to a broader understanding and sophistication.

Grace Moore