

Conversely, but equally important, cultural development and expression within Quebec must also provide for its English-speaking citizens, its native peoples and its multicultural communities. Minority languages and cultural rights must be a commitment in every part of Canada.

The preservation and, indeed, the growth of the French culture in Canada should continue to be a priority for the Government of Canada. Not only does it bring distinction to all, but we must recognize that in the larger English-speaking world of North America, our French-Canadian culture is at risk of assimilation and absorption by the overwhelming majority of competing cultural influences. Therefore, our Committee feels it is imperative, and entirely in the interests of national unity, that the cultural integrity of French-speaking Canadians be nourished and developed for its own sake, as well as for the fundamental contribution it makes to Canadian life.

Canada was a multicultural and multilingual country long before the Europeans arrived. The aboriginal peoples are in fact as diverse with respect to language, tradition and history as the people who were part of the modern waves of immigration. The rich and varied cultural life of the aboriginal peoples is a reflection of their migrations, their exchanges between settlements and of their fight for survival against the elements.

*The survival of the First Nations as unique and distinct peoples in this land is intimately linked to our heritage. Even after untold assaults on our cultures, we survive in Canada today. We survive because, unlike European-based societies, our people draw our identity from a cultural collective... While our communities may be dispersed across the country and our cultures varied, aboriginal people share common spiritual beliefs and values. These things have sustained us. — National Association of Cultural Education Centres, Brief, p. 2.*

While other Canadians can take cultural comfort in the knowledge of their origins and can even access those sources for inspiration, aboriginal peoples must depend on their own native heritage:

*The aboriginal cultures of Canada have no other homeland. If they do not survive in this country, there is not opportunity for renewal elsewhere. — Ibid., p. 6.*

Cultural values have always played a central role in the survival of aboriginal peoples. These values are also what define Canada's first peoples:

*As dedicated producers of Inuktitut language television programming, we consider ourselves to be both Inuit and Canadian; as aboriginal peoples, we are the first Canadians. Traditionally, the Inuit values of sharing, equality, co-operation and respect were essential for the survival of the group. Today, we recognize that these values play a key role in our continued survival. Canadians across the country recognize that these same values are what define us all as Canadians and set us apart from any other country. — Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, Brief, p. 2.*