

QUÉBEC AND NEW BRUNSWICK: INTERNATIONAL ROLES

Québec and New Brunswick, the two provinces that have the largest French-speaking populations, have carved official roles in La Francophonie.

Since 1971, Québec has had "participating government" status in ACCT. This means it has its own place and name plate at the discussion table. New Brunswick has had similar status since 1977.

The provinces and the federal government consult with each other about issues and programs so that they can work more effectively toward the same goals.

These provinces also partici-

pate in two other organizations of La Francophonie: the annual conference of national ministers of education and the annual conference of youth and sports ministers. Usually only for the Conference of Ministers of Education, the head of the Canadian delegation is a provincial minister who speaks in the name of Canada.

In the 1980s, Canada was faced with the problem of how to give Québec a role in the proposed francophone summit meeting. This would be a meeting of heads of sovereign states, and the issues would deal with external affairs, a

matter of federal jurisdiction.

In 1985, then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and former Parti Québécois premier Pierre Marc Johnson reached an agreement. Québec participates fully in matters of co-operation and development. In issues concerning world politics and economics, Canada has the primary role, while Québec is an "interested observer." The federal and provincial delegations discuss their positions and co-ordinate activities. A month after reaching this accord with Québec, Ottawa signed a similar agreement with New Brunswick.

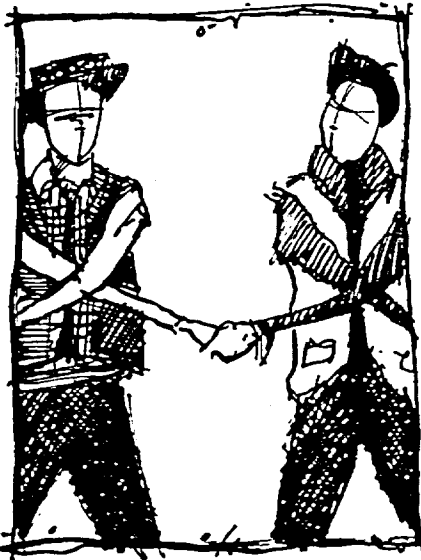
discuss international issues and set priorities for La Francophonie's activities.

The idea of international co-operation among francophone countries was first put forward by Leopold Sedar Senghor, then president of Senegal, in the 1960s. The notion was that, despite their differences, these countries share a common culture and language. By meeting together, they could pool resources and help each other to solve problems they couldn't solve alone.

During the 1960s, the ministers responsible for education and for youth and sport in francophone countries started holding annual conferences. These conferences continue today.

The first major intergovernmental conference took place in Niamey, Niger, in 1969. The following year, the l'Agence de coopération culturelle et technique (ACCT) was set up. Its objectives are to promote mutual co-operation in education, culture, science and technology,

and to form closer ties in these fields through the use of the French language. It aims at creating new ties between northern (developed) countries and less-developed nations in the Southern hemisphere. It also tries to promote cultural diversity and understanding.



There are also many private francophone associations and non-governmental organizations

within La Francophonie. Most are professional associations or were created on the basis of common goals. Examples include the International Union of French-Language Journalism, the International Association of French-Speaking Mayors, and the International Association of French-Speaking Physicians.

Canada regards ACCT as a keystone of La Francophonie and has played an important role in this organization. Both its first secretary general, and the current secretary general, Jean-Louis Roy, are Quebecers. Today, ACCT has 37 member-states, five associate states, and two participating governments: Québec and New Brunswick.

During the 1970s, Senghor continued to push for a leaders' summit. The presidents of two other African nations, Tunisia and Niger, supported him. The first summit took place in 1986 near Paris.

At the Paris Summit, the leaders of 41 countries and governments discussed the world