

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

465 Je vous en prie. Alors, nous allons dans quelques instants recevoir Nakuset, du Foyer pour les femmes autochtones de Montréal.

Alors nous allons reprendre l'audition de madame Nakuset, du Foyer pour les femmes autochtones de Montréal. Good evening, Nakuset.

470 **Mme NAKUSET, directrice générale, Foyer pour les femmes autochtones de Montréal :**

Hi.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

475 We are very happy to welcome you, and you have 10 minutes to say your opinion and we'll be listening.

Mme NAKUSET :

480 I don't know if it's going to last 10 minutes, I just have a couple of things to say.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

485 O.K.

Mme NAKUSET :

490 So, first off, you know I'd like to give an Indigenous perspective to all of this. So, my name is Nakuset, I'm originally from Lac la Ronge, Saskatchewan, Treaty 6. I was adopted out through the sixties scoop, to a Jewish family here, in Montreal.

495 So I think that our history is really important. Why are there Indigenous people in the cities? There's no community... The closest one is Kahnawake or Kanesatake. Because of all the different assimilation processes that the government forced on to Indigenous people, we have ended up in the city. One of the largest populations we have here, as well, are the Inuit. If you knew about what happened in their community, with the dog slaughter, the fact that they were forced out of their homes into residential schools, and come to the city try to find a better life.

500 So, I think it's really very difficult, and most Indigenous people, First Nations, that lived on reserves, weren't allowed to leave the reserves until the sixties, because they were not allowed to leave, they literally had, like, an Indian agent, and they needed a pass in order to leave. So, it's a new thing that we've come to the cities, but there is an enormous amount of difficulties for us to survive.

510 Now, if you look at the whole population of homeless, the highest population is Indigenous people. So, the Native Women's Shelter was created by a needs assessment that was done by the Native Friendship Center. And they did this assessment because they found that Indigenous women were going home with strange men because they had nowhere to say. Through that, they created a needs assessment, the Native Friendship Center, then, was able to help with getting funding to create the Native Women's Shelter. Alanis Obomsawin is one of the original board members of the Native Women's Shelter. She's a filmmaker.

515 So, I started working at the Native Women's Shelter in 1999, and the shelter was quite small. But we've had to create our own solutions because the government isn't doing it. When I started, in 1999, I started to do other projects.

520 One of the first cohabitation projects I did was at Cabot Square. We had to do... Again, the City likes to have these reports, so we created, you know, a working consultation group within Indigenous people organizations in and around Cabot Square, took us almost a year to do it, presented it to the City, and then the City said yes, you can have an outreach worker and a mediator at Cabot Square. Because that's what we need.

525 Because there is no reservation in the city, the closest thing is, really, Cabot Square, because we used to have the Children's Hospital, we used to have Module du Nord, a lot of Inuit people would come here and congregate, but then, a lot of predators would also show up and take advantage.

530 So, by having the Cabot Square project, we were able to have activities there, like Indigenous Fridays, and National Indigenous People's Day, but always having support to help the people.

535 And I was really pushing to ensure that we had Indigenous people doing the job, because we respond better to people who have had a similar history of colonialism than those who are not. Not that we... We can get along with non-Indigenous people, like David Chapman is a good example, but still. I would rather speak to someone Indigenous than someone non-Indigenous, so we try to lead projects.

540 And the thing is that, you know, throughout my career, I've been to multiple inquests, so I've shared at the Viens Commission, I've shared at the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's inquest... What else do I do. So many things. It's a lot.

545 And the thing is that you show up, and you present. And then they take your information and it goes into a book or some kind of catalogue, and nothing gets done. So, if we're looking at the TRCs, it's been almost 10 years. Eleven out of 94 have been completed. Viens Commission, I know Ian Lafrenière likes to say half of them are done... No. They're not. And especially with youth protection, right. It's the number one. Batshaw is not applying any of the changes. And Missing and Murdered, 231 calls to justice. We have two done, in five years.

550 And so, what are we supposed to as Indigenous people when we keep bringing forward our truths, sharing best practices, and either the municipal, the provincial or the Feds don't do anything. It's really difficult. It's really difficult, and it's really... It's hard, because people want to give up.

555 The Native Women's Shelter helped... When Raphaël André passed away, it was the
Native Women's Shelter that worked with the City of Montreal, Michèle Audette and Ian
Lafrenière to put up a tent in the middle of Cabot Square. And even though we thought it would
be there for a month, it was there for almost 18 months. And we were able to keep people safe,
right?

560 The area where he passed away is still the same. There are people that are on the streets
that have no help. Like, nothing. Like my outreach worker, Irene, was on the street during the
storm. There's an Inuk man in the snow trying to survive, and just, people... everyone just goes
by and no one really helps.

565 We also see a lot of brutality from the police, and she's already so concerned that she
just watches to ensure that, when an Inuk man, again, is on the ground, the police... they check
on him, they kick him. If he responds, then, they know he's alive and they walk away. It breaks...
It breaks our hearts that this is what happens.

570 I don't know how many Indigenous people come to this, but if there's not many, it's
because we keep coming and nothing happens, right?

575 So... What's really difficult too is, we know that right across from Cabot Square, there is
a new building, and there is a two-level community centre called Sanaaq, which is quite lovely,
that you're using a name that is based on a book written by an Inuk. But you have people in the
park that are starving, that have no place to go, and you're creating this multimillion-dollar
community centre in the name of someone that is Inuk but not actually reaching out to the
community to find out how you're going to engage them.

580 I've had many talks with the City about this, and, you know, it... I no longer sit and talk
at those meetings, because you can only do so much. You can only say the same thing over and
over again and see that you're ignored. And then you just stop coming to the table.

585 And it's the same thing with the people that are on Parc Street, that are homeless, that have nowhere to go. If they sit there and you wait long enough, they might die, and then you don't have to deal with it, and sometimes, that's how it feels. You're just waiting for us to either give up or that.

590 So, I know the City of Montreal decided to give 5,9 million dollars to Sanaaq, which is empty. Could you imagine if they had used that money to create services on Parc? Or to help the shelters that are overloaded?

 I know there is also this whole thinking of, I was in first, we have to put people in houses, but... There are people that are in crisis that need emergency services first.

595 For instance, at the Native Women's Shelter, we can't let anyone in who's under the influence of alcohol, because we have women and children there, they might have mandates with Youth Protection. We can't afford to be in a place where Youth Protection will, again, take the children away. So there's few places... You need to take those steps before you get to housing first, and having shelters... If you can have a Raphaël André memorial tent that supported hundreds of people, why can't the City do something like that just to support them on Parc? Because we worry. Anyway, I know, I have probably gone over my 10 minutes.

605 **LA PRÉSIDENTE :**

 No, no. One minute left.

Mme NAKUSET :

610 Oh, one minute. That's it. Sorry. That's all I got.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

615 OK. Thank you. Je vais vous parler en français, je sais que vous comprenez bien. Judy va faire la conversation en anglais sans problème.

620 Ce que je retiens, c'est que vous semblez dire que la Ville de Montréal n'appuie pas suffisamment vos projets et en développe sans vous en parler, et qu'il y a beaucoup d'argent qui est perdu dans des projets moins optimaux pour rendre des services aux communautés autochtones et Inuit. C'est ça? C'est qu'au fond, on dirait que le courant passe mal entre ce que vous demandez à la Ville et ce que la Ville peut vous offrir. Could you translate it for me?

Mme NAKUSET :

625 I think I understood.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

You understood? OK.

630 **Mme NAKUSET :**

635 So the thing is that, we passed this street, Atateken. How does that help us? Right. The City did a big thing where they had to change the name. Now, of course, the person whose name used to be there was very, very...

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

640 Bad.

Mme NAKUSET :

645 ... horrible, right? But all the time and effort you put into that doesn't save one Indigenous person. Right? And I think that the City has this, you know, reconciliation file? When I saw that file, I'm like, are you serious? Like, is there an action plan, is there a time you're going to do it, what are your priorities, is there any money... Is there any money? There is no money. I'm like...

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

O.K.

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Mme NAKUSET :

So, it's frustrating, right. And again, 5.9 million to an empty building, to give money out. Like, who planned this? People... If it was me, I'd get fired. But... can you imagine? You know?

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LA PRÉSIDENTE :

We'll listen to another question. Judy?

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Mme JUDY GOLD :

I have a few questions. Police brutality... You've been involved for quite a number of years already. You see no improvement in terms of police brutality? Is it what it was 10 years ago, still?

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Mme NAKUSET :

OK. We just had a march for missing and murdered Indigenous women. We had some nice police that showed up and supported us, right? So I don't think it's everyone. But I think that, also, if you don't have the proper training...

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There are some people that have a negative perception of Indigenous people, and that is never going to change. And then you have a Premier that also doesn't believe that it's a discriminatory thing. But the statistics show that Indigenous women are 11 times more likely than any other background, racial background, to be racially profiled.

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And I have been trying to get Fady to have a conversation? He's ignoring me. And he knows who I am, because we signed an agreement in 2015 on behalf of the Network to have a better working relationship, so... Maybe through this he'll call me, but otherwise, he won't.

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Mme JUDY GOLD :

And in terms of... In English, judicialization... The police have actually told us that they've changed their approach. Have you seen this on the ground?

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Mme NAKUSET :

David would probably have a better answer than I would, but you'd need to also ask Parajudicial Services, they are the ones, right?

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Mme JUDY GOLD :

We will do that.

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We had met previously, though... when we did our preconsultation, we spoke to you virtually. And there is something you mentioned that no one has mentioned yet: the need for wet services. I wonder if you could just publicly say that, so that we can understand why the need is there.

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Mme NAKUSET :

Well, if you look... I like to look at best practices, right, and we know that in Ottawa, they have a wet service, wet shelter. CBC did a documentary on it called The Drink. And it's about... when people are, like, have heavy addiction issues, they can't just abstain. That you have a shelter that offers small bits of alcohol, that is monitored by a nurse, and slowly, gets them through that addiction, and then you have the additional help through AA, or whatever, you know, the whole idea is.

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710 When Resilience was built, that was sort of the idea. But unfortunately, Resilience has 500 ideas of best practices, and we're only starting at the very, very beginning. But that's what we need. We need that. We also need, like, a hospice, for the homeless. It's another thing that we need. There are a lot of people who pass away, and of course, David has talked to you about that, also, but... you're going to have to listen to 20 minutes if he talks about everything.

715 I mean... The thing is that... We are so behind for Indigenous services in Montreal, and the most obvious ones are things like what's happening in Toronto. We need to copy that and implement that here, and it could be through a larger organization... but someone needs to step up and do it. I know PAQ has one, but it's very limited in terms of... they can only have, maybe, 8 to 10 people. That's like, you know, a drop in the bucket.

720 **LA PRÉSIDENTE :**

Veux-tu poser une question en français? Non? Vas-y.

725 **Mme JUDY GOLD :**

If you could just say a few words about the problems of Indigenous women who are homeless, if you don't mind.

730 **Mme NAKUSET :**

It all depends on... It's really overwhelming, the fact that Native Women's Shelter doesn't have enough space. We have a waiting list for people who want to come in. We have families that are in crisis. So where are the families going? There is no other shelter in Montreal, except for the Native Women's Shelter, that allows families.

735 We have women that are in crisis that don't feel comfortable going to different shelters, if it's not an Indigenous shelter, they may not feel comfortable to go. The idea of having a mixed

shelter, with men and women, is not always something that they want to go to. But we have so many phone calls, emails, saying: I'm in crisis and I need somewhere to go.

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There is... If you look at all the kinds of discrimination that we face, there are multiple reasons, it's never for one. A lot of people think the Native... that women come to the Shelter because of violence. It's not because of violence. It's usually because of homelessness. But every single Indigenous woman has faced violence at some point in their life. Our children are taken away at an alarming rate. Every time we see that happen, the mom just spirals down. She loses a child, then there's a birth alert. So if she gets pregnant again, they take that baby away. So, through...

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We started a second stage housing called Miyoskamin, with a social pediatric centre called Saralikitaaq, we are reversing that. It's only been open a year, and we're already seeing moms getting their families back. But again, it's an Indigenous-led project. If we didn't do it, no one would do it, right? And now we're like, hey, if I can do it, everyone can do it, like, across Canada, we should all be doing this, but... it took 10 years to get off the ground. It takes time, so, you have to have perseverance.

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We would love if other non-Indigenous institutions would be, like, hey, I like that, I'm going to do it too. So maybe they will now.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

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Je vais poser la question en français. Nakuset, vous opérez un deuxième shelter. C'est quoi les problèmes de cohabitation? En vivez-vous, avec les gens qui vivent autour, puisque les ressources dans votre coin de la ville, souvent, Mitsuap ferme avant que vous puissiez ouvrir, donc il y a un moment où les gens doivent errer quelque part. Est-ce que vous avez des problèmes de cohabitation avec les riverains?

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Mme NAKUSET :

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That is a question more for David, because Resilience is near Mitshuap. Native Women's Shelter, because we are a sober environment...

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

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No problem.

Mme NAKUSET :

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Or maybe they just don't want to give me a problem, but so far, people don't usually come to me complaining. So, like, Miyoskamin took years to build, the community saw us building it, you know, they were happy that we were here.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

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On a remarqué que généralement, les ressources pour femmes ont moins de problèmes perçus par les riverains.

Mme NAKUSET :

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Oui.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

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C'est ce qu'on a entendu.

800 **Mme NAKUSET :**

I know that in Montreal, or the province, we have very powerful women's organizations, like Quebec Native Women. We don't have one just for men. We don't have, like, the Native Men's Shelter.

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LA PRÉSIDENTE :

Non.

810 **Mme NAKUSET :**

I would love for that to be created. I think we also need to have a shelter just for the kids that come out of Youth protection, because we're overrepresented. What happens is that they leave Youth protection, they leave the foster homes, they get kicked out, they are immediately on the street. In the Cabot Square project, our mediators, like, 40% of their cases are youth coming out of the system, having nowhere to go, wanting to commit suicide, just, so unhappy.

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We need to have a shelter for them where they can have respite. Like Miyoskamin, living there, up to five years, getting all the tools that they need so they can move forward. And it feels like it's always the Indigenous people that are creating the solutions for our own. We get tired.

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So it would be nice if we could also have the community come in, because, back in the day, when the big boats came, and the Europeans got off, it's the Indigenous people that helped out. And now, we're the highest population on the street, so if we could reverse that as well, that would be wonderful.

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LA PRÉSIDENTE :

835 Merci, merci beaucoup de votre présentation. Ça va se retrouver, avec des bouts de traduction, peut-être, sur notre site Internet. Je vous remercie de votre présentation et à la prochaine.

Mme NAKUSET :

840 OK, thanks.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

845 Au revoir. Nous allons recevoir dans quelques instants David Chapman, qui est responsable de la maison Résilience Montréal.

Alors, nous reprenons avec l'audition de monsieur David Chapman qui est le directeur général de Résilience Montréal. Bonsoir, monsieur Chapman. Nice to see you. So, what would you like to say to us?

850 **M. DAVID CHAPMAN, directeur général, Résilience Montréal :**

855 Well, thank you. It's good to be here, and I'm happy that we're talking about cohabitation, that you're doing this consultation. It's not a simple issue. It's an obvious point that homelessness is growing in the city of Montreal. Anyone can see this. The people who do the statistics will tell us that indeed, it's true. And the city is only so big. So the question becomes an obvious one: if homelessness is growing, despite all the talk about ending homelessness, which we... we're here, well, then, what's the plan going to be that deals with this direct and very real thing that we're watching?

860 In short, I think some of the ideas from the City of Montreal already that I've heard on this topic, are right. What you need are accessible resources in every neighbourhood, so that you