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Being *Branché*:
A Story of Refugee Advocacy and Networking in Montréal and in Cyberspace

Valerie Shamash

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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• Abstract •

Being *Branché*
A Story of Refugee Advocacy and Networking in Montréal and in Cyberspace

Valerie Shamash

This is an ethnographic study of Montreal's community of refugee advocates who work on behalf of refugees making requests to the Canadian government for asylum. The goal of this thesis is to portray who refugee advocates are, what they do, how they do it, and why. The study reveals that the work of advocacy requires building and maintaining networks through information exchange and that the successes of these networks are dependent upon the individuals in them.

This thesis makes contributions to three areas of literature and research: 1) Refugee studies: Most research in this field has been undertaken within development discourse and conducted in the so-called "Third World". This thesis locates refugee rights as a "First World" issue and makes visible the work of refugee advocacy in one North American urban setting; 2) Advocacy anthropology: This thesis is based on grounded, collaborative, ethnographic fieldwork and responds to the expressed wish of advocates for a qualitative study- previous evaluations tended to be quantitative. This approach helps ensure that the research be done *with* and *for* rather than *on* the community; 3) Cyborg anthropology: The thesis describes and analyzes the use of communications technology for community activism using the ethnographic example of TIM- a local bulletin board system where information on refugee advocacy is exchanged.

Methodologically, the thesis is innovative in that research is conducted both off-line and on-line. Also, life history narratives are recorded which reveal a community that identifies on the basis of conscious coalition, political kinship, or affinity.

• Acknowledgments •

This thesis has been made possible thanks to various networks of people and machines. I am especially grateful to the entire community of refugee advocates who have welcomed me among them and who have patiently answered all my confused questions, particularly those who have taken time from their busy schedules to share their ideas and experiences through the interviews: Rivka Augenfeld, Marie-Louise Côté, Janet Dench, Rosemary Hnatiuk, Stewart Istvanffy, Ber Lazarus, Natasha Normand, Stephan Reichhold, and Marie Claire Rufagari.

I am also especially grateful to Professor Sally Cole for being a thesis advisor who helped with ideas and encouragement from the very beginning and who read through this lengthy document at all of its stages and each time patiently provided tremendously helpful and inspiring comments. Great thanks also go to Janet Dench, the Executive Director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, who agreed to be the first ever person in the Anthropology department of Concordia University to sit on a graduate thesis committee as a member of the community with whom the research was conducted. She provided valuable insight as to how to ensure this thesis will in fact be useful for refugee advocacy and cleared up many of my confusions pertaining to policy issues. I am also grateful to Professor Homa Hoodfar who agreed to be on the committee so soon after her return from travels abroad- and who gave suggestions on how to make the data more accessible to the advocacy community in the future.

This research was also made possible through the financial contributions received from *Fonds* FCAR and through the Concordia University Graduate Fellowship. Thanks also to Josée Blanchet for editing the French grammar. Last but not least, my thanks to all of the computers, modems and other machines who made the entire process possible, particularly my Macintosh computer who sat by me for countless days and nights through the best and the worst of times.

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• Acronyms •

AQAADI	Association Québecoise des Avocats et Avocates en Droit de l' Immigration
CAMO	Comité d' Adaption de la Main d' Oeuvre
CAR	Comité d' Aide aux Réfugiés
CARI	Centre d' Acceuil et de Référence pour Immigrants
CCPP	Consultative Committee on Practices and Procedures
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CLAM	Carrefour de Liaison et d' Aide Multiethnique
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CNIC	Conseil National Indo-Canadien
COFI	Centre d' Orientation et de Formation des Immigrants
COPSI	Centre d' Orientation Paralégale et Sociale pour Immigrants
CQRS	Conseil Québecois sur la Recherche Sociale
CSAI	Centre Social d' Aide aux Immigrants
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board
JIAS	Jewish Immigrant Aid Services
LAN	Local Area Networks
MRCI	Ministère des Relations avec les Citoyens et a l' Immigration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAEI	Programme d' Acceuil, Établissement, et Installation
PIF	Personal Information Form
PSIE	Programme Soutien Insertion Emploi
RAMQ	Régie de l' Assurance Maladie du Québec
RCO	Refugee Claims Officer
RIVO	Réseau d' Intervention auprès des personnes qui ont subi la Violence Organisée
ROLF	Right of Landing Fee
ROSNA	Regroupement des Organismes au Service des Nouveaux Arrivants
SACA	Secrétariat à l' Action Communautaire Autonome
TCMR	Table de Concertation des organismes de Montréal au service des Réfugiés
TIM	Tabl' Info Montréal
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

• Some characters •

in alphabetical order by first name

Ber Lazarus *Role: Employed at Jewish Immigrant Aid Services(JIAS)*

I'm an artist whose work includes working with new immigrants and refugees and I see my advocacy work as an extension of my artwork- in that I approach it in the same way. In an intuitive way. And I've been doing this particular advocacy for about six years. I work for a Jewish organization which is an accident. I could be working for any organization.

Brenda Plant *Role: Employed at Projet Genèse*

I'm 27 years old, I've been involved in community activism for about four years now. In my free time I do activist theatre with the Social Justice Committee of Montreal writing and performing on issues of world debt and the implications of IMF and World Bank policies on human rights and development (It is also not insignificant that on my women's hockey team I play Left wing).

Janet Dench *Role: Executive Director of the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)*

I guess the most important thing is that I work for the Canadian Council for Refugees. Refugee advocate. And I live in Montreal.

Marie Claire Rufagari *Role: Employed at the Table de Concertation des Organismes de Montréal au service des Réfugiés (TCMR)*

Le dernier travail que j'ai fait, ça s'appelle 'Le dialogue comme interface universelle entre les différentes cultures'. Donc quelque part, je suis très intéressée par les relations humaines. Si quelqu'un voulait me demander comment je définirais mon travail, c'est que je fais des ponts. J'aime ce que je fais.

Natasha Normand *Role: Employed at Centre d'Acceuil et de Références pour Immigrants (CARI) de St. Laurent*

Rivka Augenfeld *Role: President of the Board of Directors at TCMR*

I'm a person who likes to understand how things work. I was brought up by refugee immigrant parents who were of the approach that 'when I came to Canada things were very difficult so if I could make it easier for others I will'. In another world I always wanted to start a laundromat café. The only other thing I do well is recite Yiddish poetry but there's even less money in that than there is in refugee work.

Rosemary Hnatiuk *Role: Refugee lawyer*

When I was in Law school, [I didn't want to do refugee law] because I noticed that I couldn't watch television about any kind of crisis situation anywhere in the world without getting really really really upset, and I just thought 'well, there's no way that I can do that kind of work because it'll just kill me'. When I started doing the work I said 'Oh my god, I don't feel this way at all!' I feel empowered. I've always been politically interested and involved.

Stephan Reichhold *Role: Directeur général at TCMR*

Je travaille à la Table, ça va faire dix ans que je suis au Québec, j'ai 42 ans, j'ai toujours travaillé dans les milieux communautaires, j'ai toujours essayé de faire le lien entre mon travail et mon implication politique. C'est important de donner un sens à mon travail en faisant ce lien-là. Et en même temps, ça me permet de garder de l'espace pour ma vie familiale, pour ma vie quotidienne.

• Preface •

I would like to take a moment to explain the evolution of this thesis. At the starting point, I intended to write a thesis with an ethnographic focus on TIM- an on-line information network- as a virtual community, making a theoretical contribution to cyborg anthropology. As I began the research process I found that TIM was not in fact a virtual community but rather more of a technological tool (which nonetheless played an important part in the advocacy community). As well, I soon realized that taking such an approach would result in a more theoretical and abstract thesis when in fact I wanted to contribute to the community as well as to the anthropological literature.

When talking to the advocates with whom I was conducting the research, I asked them what they would consider to be a useful approach, and heard their comments and recommendations for a qualitative study. At the same time, I was reading the literature in the field of refugee studies. I noted the missing domain of refugee advocacy work- other studies tended to be about policy or about refugee experience or about the global situation of refugees. I decided that this thesis would be a grounded descriptive story of refugee advocacy. Making the community, its work, and its networking and the importance of individuals visible through a qualitative study became the primary focus of this thesis.

The challenge I undertook in writing this thesis then, was to be both an advocacy anthropologist and a refugee advocate (or an apprentice refugee advocate) at the same time. I hope that it will in fact be useful- that this primarily ethnographic study can be revealing for anthropologists, for policy makers, and for the advocates themselves.

Chapter One: Introduction

i) The Research Problem: Refugee Advocacy- techniques and technologies

Montréal's community of refugee advocates are those who work on behalf of refugees[1]. They work through non-governmental organizations lobbying for refugee rights, organizing sponsorship efforts, helping refugee claimants find a place to stay, to get oriented and settled, and/or to deal with the ongoing bureaucratic procedures which immigration to Canada involves. In 1995, I began doing volunteer work at an umbrella organization with 95 member organizations in and around Montréal that work with issues of refugee advocacy- and/or anything having to do with newcomers in general. This organization is called *Table de Concertation des organismes de Montréal au service des Réfugiés*. The name is a long one and although the acronym 'TCMR' is used in written documentation, I have found that in French speech it is referred to sometimes as "Table de Concertation" but mostly as "la Table", and in English it is "the Table"- with 'Table' pronounced as it is in French [tabl].

By October 1995 I found myself to be a volunteer co-administrator of an on-line information network named Tabl'Info Montréal, or TIM. TIM is a bulletin board system (BBS), that is, an information bank accessible to the members of the Table (i.e. refugee advocates) who have registered to have access, via a computer and a modem.

On January 13, 1998, after not having access to my computer and modem for over a week, due to the ice storm which meant no electricity for much of the city of Montréal, I logged on to visit TIM. I knew that there would be some big news due to the expected release of the report commissioned by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to

[1]Although 'refugee' is a term with an enormous variety of definitions, for my purposes here I am talking about refugee claimants or asylum seekers, and Convention refugees. By 'refugee claimants' and 'asylum seekers' I mean specifically people who make requests to the Canadian government for asylum within Canada's borders on the basis that they fear persecution if they return to their home country. 'Convention refugees' are those who have been recognized by authorities as being refugees. Unless specified, throughout this paper I am not interested in distinguishing between those who have been recognized as refugees and those who have not. In other words, I am prioritizing self-perception enacted in the form of applying for refugee status in Canada as being the most legitimizing criteria. I will further discuss the definition of 'refugee' in the next chapter of this thesis.

review current immigration legislation. Indeed, there were several postings in the section of TIM entitled "Nouvelles du Jour", a couple of which are presented on the following pages[2].

The first message (Illustration 1) was posted by Stephan Reichhold, the *directeur général* of the Table, and is a reproduction of a Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Press Release. It is the announcement of the Legislative Review report entitled "Not Just Numbers", a title which implies a shift towards people-oriented policies and practices. The second e-mail message (Illustration 2) is a press release which was posted by the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), a coalition of 140 non-governmental organizations across the country that include refugee advocacy as a part of their agenda. It is a response to the information in the CIC Release. It is a critique of the consultation process, pointing out the contradictions between the government statements (that they will be 'extensive') and their actual recommendations (five days in five cities). It is also a critique of the general content of the report itself, pointing out again the contradictions between the statements ('Not Just Numbers') and their recommendations (almost all disadvantageous to refugees).

In this thesis I tell a larger story of refugee advocacy in Montréal (and in cyberspace). I intend to illustrate the merits of networking, of the network itself, and of identification on the basis of conscious coalition, political kinship, or affinity. This introductory chapter is meant to set the stage by providing an example of an off-line/on-line situation taking place in the networks of refugee advocates. As well as describe the methodologies I used to conduct this resaerch, I introduce existing literatures which are relevant to this thesis and situate my work among them. Before the story begins, I describe the contributions which I intend to make to refugee advocacy and to anthropological literature in general.

---

[2] I have reproduced the e-mail format, with the actual dates and times that the messages were sent. The content of the messages are mostly excerpts from the actual messages, for the sake of brevity. The message from CCR was first posted to ccrlist, an on-line mailing list, and then transferred on to TIM.

Illustration 1: Not Just Numbers

Thursday, January 8, 1998 10:07:06
Nouvelles du jour Item

From: Stephan Reichhold

Subject: Rapport Trempe /Communiqué

What follows is the announcement of the release of the Trempe report as well as the announcement of a consultation.
You can obtain the Report at the TCMR office (170 pages) or at the next monthly meeting January 14 at 6pm!!! It is also available on the CIC [Citizenship and Immigration Canada] website:
Website: http://cicnet.ci.gc.ca/legrev

Stephan Reichhold

98-01

MINISTER LUCIENNE ROBILARD LAUNCHES EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION

OTTAWA, January 6, 1998 -- The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and MP for Westmount-Ville-Marie, Mme Lucienne Robillard, made public today the report of the Legislative Review Advisory Group, entitled "Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration", and has just launched public consultations on this report.

"A little more than a year ago, I asked this group to analyze the current legislative provisions regarding immigration and refugees to determine whether they remain sufficiently flexible and complete to provide an optimum response to emerging issues and migration trends.

First of all, I want to thank the chairperson of the Advisory Group, Mr. Robert Trempe, and the group's members, Ms. Susan Davis and Dr. Roslyn Kunin, for the diligence and enthusiasm they have shown in carrying out their mandate," the Minister said.

Mme. Robillard intends to hold, beginning February 27, 1998, five consultation days, during which she will discuss with some sixty organizations in the immigration sector, as well as other sectors involved, the various issues examined in the report. These consultations will be taking place on February 27 in Vancouver, March 2 in Winnipeg, March 3 in Toronto, March 6 in Montréal and March 9 in Halifax.

[...]

[Information provided here on deadlines to apply to be invited to the consultations and addresses and phone numbers]

Illustration 2: Not Just Numbers??

Wednesday, January 7, 1998 19:17:58
Message

From: Canadian Council for Refu,CCRLIST@YORKU.CA,Internet

Subject: CCR Press Release re: Legislative Review -resend

The Montréal CCR office is plagued by hydro problems during this ice storm! We are therefore relaying via Toronto- apologies for any duplication.

CCR URGES MINISTER TO HOLD MEANINGFUL CONSULTATIONS

7 January 1998

The Canadian Council for Refugees today called on the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to hold broad and comprehensive consultations on the immigration legislative review report released yesterday.

"The five days of consultation promised by the Minister yesterday are utterly inadequate for a promised reform of such enormous scale", said Francisco Rico-Martinez, President. "To call it an "extensive consultation", as her press release does, is an insult".

The hasty consultation is particularly perverse since the report calls for more meaningful partnership and consultation with affected parties outside the federal immigration department. "How ironic to rush into an "improved" model of partnership without bothering to consult the proposed partners properly!" said Francisco Rico-Martinez.

[...]

While the report contains much that is of interest and worthy of study, the limitations on the group are obvious in the details which show many gaps and inconsistencies. There is on many occasions a lack of coherence between the principles enunciated and the particular recommendations. For example, the report recognizes the importance of quickly reuniting spouses and dependent children, but then excludes from such reunification anyone who has been on welfare in the last 12 months.

While most of the sections of the report show a certain balance, the recommendations regarding the refugee determination system are almost all disadvantageous to refugees. The report effectively throws aside the accumulated experience and expertise developed over the past years during which Canada has become a respected world leader in refugee determination.

The recommendations betray a profound lack of understanding of what is concretely involved in deciding whether someone is a refugee. The report sacrifices justice and human rights to speed of determination, solving the problem of delays simply by legislating speed. 'It makes about as much sense to try to legislate fast refugee determination as to legislate that patients get well faster. The result will inevitably be injustice - and refugees returned to imprisonment, torture or death.'

The CCR will be consulting among its members and other stakeholders to develop a substantive response to the report.

I begin the story by explaining *why* refugee advocates do what they do: why there is a need for refugee advocacy in the first place. This will consist of a brief introductory critical look at what current Canadian refugee determination policies and practices are, as well as at service provisions offered to refugees in Québec and controlled by the provincial government. We shall see how the advocates introduced perceive what the problems with the system are.

In chapter 3, I introduce the Table and CCR. In order to illustrate *what* they do, I present my participatory and observational experience with them in the form of ethnographic description of events which took place in the refugee advocacy community in the last two years. This is where I intend to illustrate how the network works and that it is a community based on the sharing of information.

In the fourth chapter, I discuss TIM, as I see it, as well, to be a network made up of people- Following Haraway (1989, 1991), Downey, Dumit & Williams (1995) and others, I define TIM as a cyborg refugee advocate. That is, I consider the technology of the on-line network inseparable from the advocates who use it. TIM would not be TIM if it were not for the human agency in its creation or in its being. I present TIM ethnographically, in order to document my perception of how TIM is part of an attempt, on the part of a specific group of refugee advocates, to maintain an understanding and an ongoing critical analysis of Canada's refugee determination system. Asking the question of whether TIM is indeed a virtual community, I present my story of getting people in the various community organizations hooked up, discussing why they do or why they don't spend time with TIM. In this way, I will discuss the merits and disadvantages of communications technology for the sake of community activism.

For a close-up meeting with some of the principal actors in my story other than TIM, in Chapter 5, I present profiles of five more refugee advocates. These profiles are in the words of the advocates themselves, obtained through open-ended interviews. Here I illustrate how a group of people with different backgrounds in terms of age, gender, race

and nationality have found a community of peers in refugee advocacy. The life story of each of these advocates has played a role in motivating them to do the work they do today, and the networks they are a part of exist because of their common goals.

The objectives of my story, as I perceive them, will be spelled out in chapter 6 where, following Donna Haraway's theory of cyborg consciousness (1989, 1991, 1995), I discuss the merits of including machines in the 'anthropos' of anthropology and thus blurring the boundaries of anthropological discourse. Haraway explains that "with the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity. There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women" (155). It is not an innocent category and "cyborg feminists have to argue that 'we' do not want any more natural matrix of unity and that no construction is whole" (157). As such, there has been a "response through coalition-affinity, not identity" (155). I will conclude this story of refugee advocacy (and cyborgs) by explaining why I agree with Haraway's slogan: 'Cyborgs for earthly survival!'.

ii) <u>Methodology</u>

There are two different 'field sites' in which I have been conducting my research: off-line, or face-to-face; and on-line, or computer-mediated. Although there is considerable overlap between the on-line and off-line realities, they nonetheless require different research approaches.

a) Off-line Research:

As a volunteer at the Table, I have been regularly present at the monthly meetings which are generally attended by at least one representative from many of the member organizations. This has been a primary focus of my off-line informal participant observation method. These meetings tend to last around three hours each, with between approximately 35 and 60 people in attendance. There is a pre-planned agenda every month, generally highlighting one issue with one or more guest speakers who, depending on the issue may be a government representative, a refugee advocate, or a professional in a

relevant area (for example, at one meeting, a doctor discussed the implications of health care limitations for refugee claimants). There is also regular coverage of general policy changes as well as an open forum for advocates to ask questions of the group, announce events, or voice their concerns.

'Table de Concertation' means "round table for discussion" and it implies a certain commitment to work together. In my opinion these monthly meetings are where this vision of the Table is most literally realized. As well as permitting me to report on the concerns and strategies of refugee advocates, I believe that participant observation at these meetings has enabled me to document the absence of a shared purpose and discourse between advocates and government representatives. I will relay examples of government explanations of the status quo regarding current refugee determination procedures and advocates' concerns to change these procedures to be more humanitarian ones, as evidence of these differing agendas.

In addition to participant observation, I have also been collecting and recording life histories of refugee advocates. I selected five refugee advocates, and conducted open-ended interviews around the general topic of their work in order to present their perceptions of their own profiles as refugee advocates. I asked them to tell their stories of why they do this kind of work, how they define it, and how it fits into their lives. I also asked them to describe their perceptions of the usefulness of technologies such as TIM for their purposes. The life history method of documentation can be defined as "an extensive record of a person's life told to and recorded by another, who then edits and writes the life as though it were autobiography" (Langness 1965: 4-5). This method allows research to maintain an orientation towards people and experiences rather than consisting of data obtained from interviews with no personal meaning for the sake of statistical comparability. It also allows for the documentation of personal experience as it is perceived by the interviewee; this method has been appropriate for my research in that it results in a study of not merely the organizations in question but also the people in them (Geiger 1986, Oakley 1981, Bertaux

& Bertaux-Wiame 1981). The open-ended nature of the life history interview method has ensured that the voices and concerns of the advocates are represented with priority over the voice and concern of the interviewer. Although each interviewee has been offered the option of remaining confidential, I have received verbal permission from each to use their real names. None of the names in this thesis are pseudonyms unless it is so stated.

b) On-line Research

As well as being present in the 'real world' or 'off-line', or 'face-to-face' community of advocates, as co-administrator of TIM I have been 'present' in what may be considered a virtual community, or 'neighborhood' (Rheingold 1992). Virtual communities are computer-mediated communities: formed by groups of people who relate to each other mainly through a computer medium such as electronic mail and specialized networks such as TIM. The definition of community as a complex of social relationships has been an element of computer-mediated communication (CMC) since as early as 1968. J.C.R. Licklider and Robert Taylor[3] in that year, for example, recognized that the computer mediated community will affect our considerations of space:

> What will on-line interactive communities be like? In most fields they will consist of geographically separated members, sometimes grouped in small clusters and sometimes working individually. They will be communities not of common location, but of *common interest*. (30-31).

Bender (1978) defines communities not as places but as social networks. According to Jones (1995) , there are two reasons why Bender's definition is useful for the study of community in cyberspace: "First, it focuses on the interactions that create communities. Second, it focuses away from place" (24).

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[3] Licklider and Taylor in 1968 were the research directors for the U.S. Department of Defense. With the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) they had set in motion the research that resulted in the creation of the first computer-mediated community- the ARPAnet- designed for military purposes- a system for use by military control and intelligence. It was to serve as a means of communication for military authorities, and would enable them to remotely control weapons in the event of a nuclear war. The engineers had been working with the problem that in the event of a war, if there were any central control point, it could be destroyed by the enemy- the solution was a network structure that had no central point. Each node of the network could potentially operate as a central point, and messages could take any route to get from one node to another- if one node was destroyed, messages could simply take another route. This system was extremely resilient, and ensured that even if large portions of the network were destroyed, information could still be transmitted (Sterling 1993).

According to Howard Rheingold (1992), an anthropologist who has spent years on-line, "a virtual community... is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks" (1). These communities, which Rheingold likes to refer to as 'neighborhoods' are not based on shared geographical location, nor on shared meeting times, but rather on common interests, or affinity. As Haraway explained, group formation based on affinity avoids the naturalization of categories such as race, class or gender as essential wholes (1991). Rheingold explains that with CMC, computers, modems and communication networks furnish the technological infrastructure, while it is words and human relationships which create cyberspace, the conceptual space manifested by the people using CMC technology. He also points out that people are using the technology of CMC to do things with each other that weren't possible before:

> People are going to do what people always do with new communication technology: use it in ways never intended or foreseen by its inventors, to turn old social codes inside out and make new kinds of communities possible. CMC will change us, and change our culture, the way telephones and televisions and cheap video cameras changed us- by altering the way we perceive and communicate (2).

Stone (1991) says that virtual communities are "incontrovertibly social spaces in which people still meet face-to-face, but under new definitions of both 'meet' and 'face'...Virtual communities [are] passage points for collections of common beliefs and practices that united people who were physically separated" (85). So, as Jones (1995) explains,

> cyberspace hasn't a 'where' (although there are 'sites' or 'nodes' at which users gather). Rather, the space of cyberspace is predicated on knowledge and information, on the common beliefs and practices of a society abstracted from physical space. Part of that knowledge and information, though, lies in simply knowing how to navigate cyberspace. But the important element in cyberspatial social relations is the sharing of information. It is not sharing in the sense of the *transmission* of information that binds communities in cyberspace. It is the ritual sharing of information (Carey 1989) that pulls it together (19-20).

I have been spending time with TIM since the inception of the idea in 1995. Since this is an electronic database, I have been able to download any information needed directly into my own computer's information bank. I have been able to print the electronic

communications as they were transmitted, with the sender and date sent clearly marked. Conducting research as an invisible participant has allowed me to obtain information in an informal, unobtrusive manner. At the same time, it entails important ethical considerations. Although TIM is only accessible to a closed group of advocates who have subscribed memberships, anyone who uses the Internet is able to send mail which might end up becoming part of TIM. I did not use material contributed by users without first acquiring their consent and anonymity has been guaranteed to those who desired it.

The users themselves, the advocates, have a large say in determining the structure and content of the data base. The monthly meetings, as well, although planned by the staff of the Table, are easily alterable by members who are present. This research situation parallels that advocated by Kirby & McKenna in Experience, Research, Social Change (1989). Believing that research activities should empower the people who are often merely the objects of research, they advocate that paradigms and rules of the research process should mirror the concerns of the community one is working with rather than the concerns of the academy. Following Kirby & McKenna I aimed to work *with* the refugee advocates to contribute to the research process and content, ensuring that the research was done *with* and *for* the advocacy community, rather than *on* them. The topics discussed endeavor to represent their current needs and concerns reliably.

ii) Literature Review

a) Literature on Refugee Advocacy:

York University's Centre for Refugee Studies publishes a periodical entitled Refuge which was founded in 1981. It is independent and multidisciplinary, providing a forum for issues such as: refugee status determination; sponsorship; and ongoing resettlement needs and programs. Otherwise, searching for critiques of the direct outcomes of current refugee determination policy and procedures in Canada, one can find the majority of data at the grassroots level, spoken or published by refugee advocates. Advocates indicate that a large part of their work is in opposition to government policies and practices. In an interview

reported in Montreal's Hour Magazine (Kumar 1994), Stephan Reichhold said "Canada's refugee determination policy looks good on paper, but the way they are treating refugee cases is disgusting. The worst thing about the matter is that they are getting away with it." He then brought up the case where a Salvadoran woman diagnosed with HIV was to be deported along with her child. A media blitz led to then Prime Minister Kim Campbell stepping in to suspend the deportation. Reichhold said, "It was bad what they did- to try to deport her and her child- but it took the media to drive the point home that what they were doing was inhumane. The worst part of it all is that the case hasn't been solved. They have only put off her deportation temporarily." According to him, the problem is that the government's hard-line approach is sending a message "to the extreme right that they are keeping an eye who gets in [to Canada]".

The quarterly publication Refugee Update (produced in Toronto) provides an ongoing analysis of Canadian refugee policy and "attempts to promote fair treatment of refugees". The Spring 1997 issue features an article by Sharry Aiken, the former president of the CCR. The article, entitled "Illiberal Immigration Policies" consists of a direct critique of the Liberal Party's assertions in their election platform (the Red Book) that they are committed to fulfilling Canada's international legal obligations and humanitarian tradition with respect to refugees, the displaced and the persecuted. In five pages, Aiken gives a 13 point breakdown of why she argues that the key policy initiatives undertaken in the past three and a half years demonstrate that the Liberal's promises have not been kept. These include, for example, that although while in opposition the Liberals spoke out against immigration processing fees, they have now imposed a 'right of landing fee' of $975. Also, a 1994 government strategy document promised to ensure that immigrants have access to labour market training- instead, Aiken points out, newcomers to Canada have been made ineligible for virtually all labour market training.

A message posted on TIM on March 27, 1997 from Janet Dench, now executive director of the CCR, was titled "Deportations to Zaire". This electronic communication was

meant to instigate readers to become active in fighting a governmental decision to deport three Zairois who at the time of writing the message were being held in a detention centre in Montréal. After describing the situation she writes "Anything you could do to put pressure for a suspension of removals would be great. Suggestions would be phoning your MP, faxing the Minister [of Immigration] (fax 613-957-2688) or getting journalists interested in covering the issue".

b) Literature on 'Refugee Studies':

The field of research generally labeled 'refugee studies' is a wide and multidisciplinary one. Toronto's York University, for example, describes the interdisciplinary character of its programme in 'Refugee and Migration Studies' as drawing on faculty members from Law, Environmental Studies, Sociology, Social Anthropology, Political Science, Geography, History and Philosophy. They have organized research into four related programmes, each with its own research unit: 1) Gender (focus on development, ethnicity, identity and citizenship as they pertain to gender); 2) Resettlement (aspects of the newcomer's adaptation and coping in the host society); 3) Repatriation and Development (the relationship between development and underdevelopment and the possible connections between (under)development and refugee-generating conditions-conflict resolution, 'durable peace,' conditions in host and home states, human rights and basic human needs of returnees, participatory development initiatives, empowerment and equity, reintegration of returnees and self-sufficiency of those having stayed behind as well as of the returnees, and socio-economic and environmental impacts of refugee settlements on the host state(s) before and after repatriation); and 4) Refugee Law Research (to promote the reconceptualization of refugee law in consonance with principles of international human rights law, respect for distinct national and community values and meaningful international burden-sharing within a development focused context).

In January 1990 the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University invited 60 delegates for a five day meeting in order to discuss an agenda for 'refugee studies'. Based

on the underlying concept of forced migration, some of the issues addressed at the meeting included: the scope and definition of the label 'refugee'; emergency relief; development; the relations between and roles of humanitarian organizations, inter-governmental and governmental agencies; prevention of forced migration; training of people who work with/for refugees; refugees and geopolitics; special needs of refugee women; and psycho-social issues (Robinson 1990). Roger Zetter, in an editorial introduction to Oxford's *Journal of Refugee Studies*, wrote that examples of the scope of theoretical work in the domain included:

> exploring the many characteristics of rapid social change; revealing the complexity of host-migrant inter-relationships; analyzing the disjunctive and paradoxical patterns of responses and behaviour in individuals and groups afflicted by refugee status; tackling the prodigious agenda of public policy and legal matters; and addressing important philosophical questions on equity, on distributive and procedural justice, on rights and blameworthiness (1988: 2).

Much of the research done in refugee studies has been done within the field of international relations. As explained by anthropologist Lisa Malkki in a mapping of the anthropological constructions of 'refugee studies': "Seeing large, worldwide patterns and adopting, in many cases, an administrator's gaze on the phenomena under study, international relations produces very different kinds of knowledge than say, long term ethnographic research" (1995: 505). Anthropologists are unaccustomed to writing with a standpoint which is political, she explains, albeit it is an important one, as Loescher (1992), Zolberg et al. (1989) and others insist (and as I do as well).

There is also much research on the subject of refugees published by the United Nations (UN), particularly the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). These bureaucratic and self-proclaimed 'non-political' documents have been an "important source of the forms that social-scientific questions and assumptions about 'refugeeness' have taken in recent decades" (Malkki: 505). Also,

> much social scientific research- whether resulting in policy recommendations, development reports, or academic articles- has been conducted in more or less formal connection with (and often funded by) the UN or other international organizations. It can hardly be surprising that these institutional, organizational settings have had subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) effects in shaping the

> questions that scholars have formulated about displacement and refugee settlement (506).

These questions have been predominantly in the area of development discourse (for example see: Chambers 1979; Hamrell 1967; Harrell-Bond 1986; Scudder & Colson 1982). These as well, are mostly established in conjunction with the UNHCR. These studies are also mostly located in the Third World- and notably, as Malkki points out, "not in the First World, where the vocabulary for managing the movement of people is quite different" (506).

In anthropology, 'refugee studies' is a relatively new research domain (for example see: Black 1993; DeVoe 1992; Hopkins 1993; Robinson 1990). Anthropologists have been most active in the area of refugees and development, for example the argument that assistance to refugee crises should consist not just of emergency relief but of long-term development to improve conditions (for example see: Biery-Hamilton 1993; Hansen & Oliver-Smith 1982; Harrell-Bond 1986; Hopkins 1993).

Malkki also notes that there has been a tendency within anthropological inquiries into refugee studies to want to define "'the refugee experience' [as]... a single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition... Almost like an essentialized anthropological 'tribe', refugees thus become not just a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status, they become 'a culture' 'an identity'" (511) (for example: Stein 1981).

There are evident consequences stemming from this sort of essentialism in terms of interventions in refugee issues: "Visions of an identity that can only be whole and well when rooted in a territorial homeland (for example: Verhelst 1990) reinforce the assumption that state sovereignty as we know it at the close of the twentieth century is part of a natural or necessary order of things" (511). This in turn, among other problems, leads to arguments that the sealing of borders against applications for asylum is 'natural' and 'reasonable'. Malkki suggests that new directions for refugee studies are in order- directions that question this perceived "natural order of things" and recognize that the

international refugee situation is inseparable from this perception. This thesis is a study of refugee advocates who work to challenge this perception of a "natural order of things".

c) Situating my Research in Refugee Advocacy/ Refugee Studies:

Refugee studies is a very broad field which needs to be multidisciplinary by the very nature of refugee issues themselves. My research, which among other things includes voicing current concerns of refugee advocates in relation to Canadian refugee determination policies and procedures, fits clearly into the realm of refugee studies as well as refugee advocacy. As pointed out by Malkki, published works tend to focus on refugees in the context of development and the 'Third World'; as well, there is a tendency to essentialize 'the refugee situation' as if there were one single such situation. My work is innovative in that it is anthropological and is a look at 'First World' management of requests for asylum, and in that I situate the policies and procedures within a global political context. As such, I avoid a stance which naturalizes the current realities such as sealed government borders and I am aligned with the refugee advocacy stance in that the research data consists of the concerns of refugee advocates. As well, I put into question the hegemonic perception of the natural order of things (i.e. current policies and procedures), and I humanize those who can be deemed as 'refugees'- by contextualizing their situations as political. By exposing the 'situated' nature of Canadian policy and procedures with my research, I can hope to broaden perceptions of how they can be changed.

d) Advocacy/Activist Anthropology

Advocacy anthropology emerged in the context of perceived social problems of contemporary society. It uses anthropological knowledge and techniques for practical purposes. In Advocacy and Anthropology, Robert Paine writes that advocacy anthropology "arose out of a concern that anthropological knowledge about 'other cultures' should be pressed into service *for* those other cultures" (1985: xv). According to Paine, advocacy anthropology is a type of applied anthropology which can be defined as becoming an active supporter of a particular group of people. This role, usually involving some political action

can be combined with other applied anthropology roles such as policy researcher (providing cultural data to policy makers so they can make the most informed policy decisions), policy evaluator (using research skills to determine how well a program or policy has succeeded in its objectives), or cultural broker (serving as a liaison between the program planner and administrators on the one hand and local communities on the other) (Ferraro 1995: 40).

In her introduction to the book Decolonizing Anthropology (1991), anthropologist Faye Harrison writes about some of the issues of concern to anthropologists committed to applying knowledge to action and struggle. She defines activist anthropologists as those "committed to and engaged in struggles against racist oppression, gender inequality, class disparities, and international patterns of exploitation and 'difference' rooted largely in capitalist world development" (2). In her contribution to the volume, entitled "Ethnography as Politics", Harrison describes ways that anthropologists could engage themselves politically with the peoples and communities hosting the ethnographic investigations. This is not only about involvement on the scene, she explains, but about the use to which one's research data is put. Recognizing that ethnographic data is political capital, one can take responsibility to ensure that the capital is useful to and used by the community one is working with, rather than against it. She writes of her experience as an ethnographer in a politically charged Jamaican community:

> If the struggle for radical transformation is to move beyond a haphazard or mechanical cook book recipe approach to mobilization and insurgency, politicos need a reliable database. Strategies and tactics must be grounded in systematic and comprehensive analyses of social conditions. I wanted my research to contribute to an understanding of the political potential of a population too often subjected to egregious misrepresentation and excluded from the benefits and rights of Jamaican democracy (95).

In an essay entitled "Confronting Advocacy Confronting Anthropology", anthropologist Penny Van Esterik (1985) recalls how when she was a student she was "often swept along by current concerns- civil rights, anti-nuclear war, protests against the war in Southeast Asia- but seldom allowed personal protests to influence the serious study

of anthropology" (59). She gradually came to consider herself an advocacy anthropologist because for her, the distinctions between personal politics and professional pursuits - between advocacy and anthropology- became increasingly difficult to sustain. As Van Esterik points out, the dilemma for anthropologists is that there are no universally held advocacy assumptions: "Disciplines such as anthropology have only concepts such as cultural relativism to inform advocacy actions" (59).Van Esterik defines 'advocacy' as "the act of interceding or speaking on behalf of another person or group. However, within the experience of anthropologists, there are a number of ways to 'do' advocacy and a number of roles for anthropologists who 'do' it" (60). She defines two different approaches to advocacy within anthropology (she does so for heuristic purposes, acknowledging that there is in actuality a continuum of different degrees of involvement): small 'a' and large 'A' advocacy. Small 'a' advocacy, she explains, is passive advocacy as it is built into the discipline of anthropology. By translating cultural differences to a larger audience, by helping define the situation in which people find themselves, by creating forums for the discussion of issues, "and making resources available- including information- anthropologists may challenge stereotypes and cultural categories which constrain options for individuals and communities" (62). Similar to the advocacy roles played by social workers and community organizers, this is a gentle advocacy, which, rather than intending to threaten powerful institutions, "centres around the handling of information and the production of useful knowledge" (63).

Large 'A' Advocacy "requires taking a more active position with regard to a well-defined and often narrower goal" (63); for example, this could involve an anthropologist recruited to speak on behalf of her clients, perhaps making recommendations of use to policy makers. Large 'A' Advocacy could also include an anthropologist making a personal choice to become involved in a cause- in a response to perceived injustices. According to Van Esterik, this type of advocacy is seen by the discipline as being "unrelated to academic research and outside our professional role" (74). She argues, however, that involvement in

advocacy issues is very much within the anthropological domain and is critical in raising basic questions about social change.

Discussing method in social advocacy in the Afterword of The Future of Anthropological Knowledge, Peter Harries-Jones noted that the issue of 'value-neutrality' has been presented as methodologically necessary in the realm of professional research because it "supposedly guarantee[s] the truth of observation" (1996: 166). But, as pointed out by Gareth Morgan, "the assumptions of 'value neutrality' hide two doubtful propositions. They assume that the researcher is independent of the world and, reciprocally, that the world is external to the observer" (in Harries-Jones: 166).

Harries-Jones wrote of one of the potentials of doing anthropological research with an advocacy approach in social movements:

> Because advocacy addresses percepts as well as concepts, is active rather than passive, is experiential in addition to being cognitive, advocacy has a variety of reflexive forms. One useful result of social advocacy may be to remove deeply embedded patterns of communication which hinder appropriate construction of knowledge. In short, advocacy is a type of 'applied epistemology' covering a range of issues about how information is constructed into 'facts', which are then taken as being 'objective knowledge' and lead to denial or refusal to consider alternatives (161-162).

I situate my research in advocacy/activist anthropology: I use the research process as well as the data for practical purposes- specifically, towards social change in concert with the opinions of those with whom I am working. Conducting participatory research, among a group of social activists, I have been committing my time and energies towards the shared concern. As much of the data which flows via TIM, and which is shared at the monthly meetings is critical assessment of government policy, my role as an anthropologist in this setting does include policy research and evaluation. Since the people whom I have been working with play the role of liaison, my role could be seen to include serving as a liaison between the policy planners and the communities for whom the policies are planned. Following Paine and Harrison, I also intend that the research data will be useful for the refugee advocates- the community which is hosting my research. By representing the struggle of the activists and by situating the policies discussed within larger government

and anti-government discourses, I am hoping that the research shall contribute to, as Harrison put it, the "struggles against racist oppression, gender inequality, class disparities, and international patterns of exploitation and 'difference' rooted largely in capitalist world development" (1991: 2). Following Van Esterik I have been allowing for my personal politics to guide my academic choices and thus I have been working beyond the small 'a' advocacy goals with the intention to work towards social change. My research endeavors to fit within the paradigm of activist anthropology, or large "A" Advocacy. I am not claiming to be value-neutral and thus implying that I am an entity separate from the world around me. I have a goal to explore how current realities have been constructed and presented to be 'facts' and 'objective knowledge' as I have the intention to maximize possibilities to consider alternatives.

e) Cyborg Anthropology

Downey, Dumit & Williams (1995) have defined cyborg anthropology as three areas of study and critique: 1) the construction of science and technology as cultural phenomena; 2) a critique of the adequacy of 'anthropos' as the subject and object of anthropology; and 3) a recognition of how technologies participate actively in every existing realm of anthropological interest.

Cyborg anthropology, as an interest in the construction of science and technology as cultural phenomena, "explores the heterogeneous strategies and mechanisms through which members of technical communities produce these cultural forms that appear to lack culture, e.g. scientific knowledge that is objective and neutral, the product only of empirical observation and logical reasoning" (Downey et al. 1995: 342). It brings science and technology into anthropology as legitimate realms for inquiry. It is the study of how people mobilize (construct discourse about) science and technology in order to make these meaningful in their lives.

Through a broad critique of the adequacy of 'anthropos' as the subject and object of anthropology, cyborg anthropology "poses a serious challenge to the human-centered

foundations of anthropological discourse" (op. cit.: 343). Recognizing the usefulness of studying "the skin-bound individual, autonomous bearer of identity and agency," as the subject of culture and cultural accounts, cyborg anthropology insists that alternate accounts of history and subjectivity are also possible:

> Cyborg anthropology explores a new alternative by examining the argument that human subjects and subjectivity are crucially as much a function of machines, machine relations, and information transfers as they are machine producers and operators. From this perspective, science and technology impact society through the fashioning of selves rather than as external forces. For example, the establishment of anthropological subjects and subjectivities has depended upon boats, trains, planes, typewriters, cameras, telegraphs, etc. How the positioning of technologies has defined the boundaries of "the field" as well as the positioning of anthropologists within it has been a notable silence in ethnographic writing" (*ibid.*).

Looking at how technologies participate as agents in producing and/or reproducing the diverse features of social life, Downey et. al. argue that "cyborg anthropology holds that machines and other technologies are attributed agency in the construction of subjectivities and bounded realms of knowledge" (*ibid.*). Within this realm of inquiry, questions are asked such as how machine agency serves to contrast and maintain desires, rationalities, nationalisms, militarisms, races, genders, sexualities, etc. This theory maintains that "from computer visualization to mobile homes to forks, technologies participate actively in every existing realm of anthropological interest" (*ibid.*). Cyborg anthropology prepares the ethnographer to deal with a wider category of 'human beings', which may not always be 'human': the category may encompass machines, androids and artificial intelligences as well. If anthropology wants to offer analytical and critical understanding of current diversities, "it must blur its own conceptual presuppositions that exclude machines from anthropos"(*ibid.*).

In "Welcome to Cyberia" (1994) anthropologist Arturo Escobar presents an overview of "the implications of technoscience for both anthropological theory and ethnographic research" (211). Escobar argues that in order to understand the processes and politics of cultural change and diversity of which technology plays a significant part, it is necessary for anthropologists "to open up to the idea that science and technology are crucial

arenas for the creation of culture in today's world" (211). According to Escobar, "any technology represents a cultural invention, in the sense that it brings forth a world; it emerges out of particular cultural conditions and in turn helps to create new ones" (*ibid.*).

The social constructivist view that social processes are inherent to technological innovations, is a contrast to the previously popular technological determinist view that there is an alleged separation of technology from society and both of these from nature (*ibid.*). In the conventional technological determinist view, Escobar explains,

> technology is narrowly identified with tools or machines and the history of technology with the history of these instruments and their progressive efficacy in contributing to economic development and well-being. As a form of "applied science," technology is held to be autonomous from society and value-neutral; since it is seen as neither good nor bad in itself, it cannot be faulted for the uses to which humans put it. The underlying theory is that science and technology induce progress autonomously- a belief represented by the metaphor of 'the arrow of progress.' The arrow of progress, which pervades studies in a variety of disciplines, embodies an evolutionary determinism that goes, roughly, from science to technology to industry to market, and, finally to social progress (211-212).

Cyborg anthropology goes beyond the social constructivists, maintains Escobar, by asserting that "nature and machines have become important actors in the historical processes that determine technological change" (*ibid.*).

A 'cybernetic organism,' or cyborg, can be seen as "an entity that mixes the machinic and the organic, for example a creature that is part human and part machine" (Gray 1995). This means people who have implanted pacemakers or attached prostheses, including a pair of reading glasses (Rawdon Wilson 1995), as well as people whose immune systems have been reprogrammed to resist disease can be considered cyborgs (Gray 1995). 'Cyborg' could also be understood to mean <u>any</u> conflation of the machine/human boundary within perceptions of reality. This is based on the assumption that "technology is more than a set of physical objects or artifacts. It also fundamentally embodies a culture or set of social relations made up of certain sorts of knowledge, beliefs, desires, and practices" (Wajcman 1991: 149). Since all of our every day reality is merged with the effects of science and technology whether we're talking about material or conscious realms, we are all cyborgs, we inhabit a cyborg world.

According to Donna Haraway, cyborgs "are about particular sorts of breached boundaries that confuse a specific historical people's stories about what counts as distinct categories crucial to that culture's natural-technical evolutionary narratives" (1995: xvi). Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (1991) uses cyborgs in an attempt to de-center the hegemonic perceptions of 'nature'. Rather than keeping organism and machine as a binary opposition, Haraway wants to look at the merging of the two, the confusion of boundaries with a pleasure in the confusion of the boundaries as well as with responsibility in their construction (the cyborg, she points out, is our flesh too). The cyborg has no origin story in the western sense. The cyborg also represents "the apocalyptic telos of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space" (150-1). In other words, the cyborg- with no story of original unity, also does not identify with nature in the Western sense- thus nor with resistance to culture as an opposition to nature. Although its creation is in the context of– or as Haraway puts it, its father is –militarism, state capitalism and state socialism, that it does not identify with Western nature is what might lead to subversion of this teleology- Cyborgs are the illegitimate offspring of militarism, state capitalism and state socialism- "but illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential" (151). That's the function of Haraway's cyborg. It is a creation that does not subscribe to the same notions of nature as its fathers and thus may be the tool to subvert its fathers' destructive ways.

Cultural technologies are far from neutral, for they are the result of social processes and power relations. They need not be either demonized nor celebrated, for there are dangers and possibilities which need equally to be recognized. As Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (1992) explain:

> Like all technologies, [cultural technologies] are ultimately developed in the interests of industrial and corporate profits and seldom in the name of greater community participation or creative autonomy. In many cases, the inbuilt principles of these technologies are precisely aimed at deskilling, information gathering,

> surveillance, and the social management of large populations. As a result, the research and development- mostly under military auspices- and the large-scale deployment of the new technologies tend to perpetuate capitalist modes of production and accumulation, and the expropriation of cultural and technical skills, the international division of labor, social fragmentation, the policing of bodies, and the rationalization of nature. These perceptions have to be brought to bear against the picture of utopian social harmony promised by postindustrial ideologues, who preach that the new information and media technologies will bring an end to centralization and Fordist standardization, and will usher in participatory democracy based on interactive communications, electronic plebiscites, and culturally diverse communities, all achieved through the user-friendly agency of 'clean' machines (xii).

In his essay "Hacking Away at Counterculture," Andrew Ross (1992) elaborated how the story "told by the critical left about new cultural technologies is that of monolithic, panoptical social control, effortlessly achieved through a smooth, endlessly interlocking system of networks of surveillance." But, he writes, this "is not always the best story to tell" (126). Reminding us that the meaning of any technology is constructed through a struggle among competing systems of understanding- those determined by broader social and institutional forces as well as those produced through individual subjective encounters, Ross argues that while we need to maintain a healthy "technoskepticism" we must also understand that "technology must be seen as a lived, interpretive practice for people in their everyday lives" (131-2). With this in mind, he encourages cultural critics to

> make our knowledge about technoculture into something like a hacker's knowledge... capable of... rewriting the cultural programs and reprogramming the social values that make room for new technologies... capable also of generating new popular romances around the alternative use of human ingenuity (132).

Following the work of Downey, Dumit & Williams (1995), and Haraway (1989, 1991), Escobar describes the goal of cyborg anthropology to displace 'anthropos' as the subject and object of anthropology, [and to] conduct ethnographic studies of the boundaries between human and machine- pursuing the notion that

> human and social reality is as much a product of machines as of human activity, that we should grant agency to machines, and that the proper task for an anthropology of science and technology is to examine ethnographically how technology serves as agent of social and cultural production (1994: 216).

I locate my research within the framework of cyborg anthropology: 1) In the collection and analysis of life histories I pay attention to the advocates' experiences with

and constructions of TIM; 2) By including TIM as a 'subject' and by defining TIM as a cyborg rather than a machine which is distinct from human, my ethnographic study considers machines to be part of human subjectivities and vice versa- I am examining TIM as an agent in social and cultural production, and I am including machines in the 'anthropos' of my anthropology; and 3) Following Haraway, I am considering all of the actors in my study to be cyborgs. I am acknowledging that all of our everyday realities are merged with the effects of science and technology, conceptually as well as practically.

By situating TIM as an activist in opposition to governmental discourse, this research provides an example of how, as Haraway and Ross & Penley argue, cyborgs can work to subvert the ways of the creators of technology and hegemonic discourse. By subverting traditional conceptions of nature (which keep organism and machine as binary opposition), and pointing out how the organism-machine merge works in a direction different from the intentions of those who created the machines (telecommunications were designed for military purposes), the function of the cyborgs in my research mirrors the function of Haraway's cyborgs- to subvert their 'fathers" ways.

v) Contributions

In December 1997, Stephan sent me a message on TIM telling me that the Table had just received a $50 000 sustaining grant (*financement de fonctionnement*) from the provincial government[4] to be put towards salaries for coordination, and all the costs of functioning. Such money entails possibilities for expanding the organization to be province-wide (this is a possibility), and now rather than scrambling for funding from many different sources, for each individual project, Stephan can count on this one source

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[4] Harries-Jones has noted the relative commonality of government funding for social advocacy groups in Canada (as opposed to groups in the U.S. or England, for example):

> As to why Canada has embedded social advocacy groups into its political process, so that the government actually pays the representatives of social collectivities to oppose them, is an interesting question... It is significant that the development of this phenomenon is closely tied to a range of constitutional questions, including the perennial question of the Francophone majority presence in Québec and the minority presence of First Nations, or aboriginal peoples in Québec and elsewhere in Canadian provinces. It is also tied to the recent creation of civil liberties in Canada by means of a formal constitutional instrument, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which came into existence in 1982. And it is tied to the support of muliticulturalism as a national policy stemming from the early 1970s (1996: 164).

for this fiscal year and maybe (probably) for the next years as well (though he will continue to go to all the sources possible, he told me). One more significance of this funding from the *Sécretariat de l'Action Communautaire* is that it means the Table has finally been officially recognized by the government, as a legitimate representation of Montréal's refugee advocacy groups. Although providing money is not the only way to recognize legitimacy, not being funded by any one source for the first 18 years of its existence, the Table has had little other than their own membership feedback for reassurance.

When I had asked Stephan what he thought could be the merits of an ethnographic study of refugee advocacy and networking, he told me that it would be the first time someone documented the perceptions of the people around the Table, on the subject of their work and of the Table itself, and the way they see the network they are a part of. He said that it would be useful for the people in the organization to have an analytical look at their practice. Like a lot of community organizations, he explained, they are often insecure about how useful or effective they are. It would be good to be reassured scientifically that the work they are doing as a community organization is deserving of the same mainstream recognition as CLSCs or school boards.

Another important point Stephan made in answer to my question was the importance of doing a qualitative study of the organization. There have been many reports written on what the Table does, has done, on what was won, what was lost- yet no one has written a report in a critical way. Like other community organizations, he said, the only evaluation they do is for the sake of funding- Grids of analysis, how they spent two million dollars for 30 million clients, how much it costs for one hour of counseling an immigrant- very quantitative. Then the government looks at it and says, "OK, what you do- you help refugees, and in fact, it's a bit of a loss of money and...". They make their quantitative evaluations- they say "c'est pas rentable ce que vous faites". Stephan says he can reply "yes, but socially, year by year, for the society, it *does* pay", but he can't prove it.

By presenting an ethnographic look at the Table and refugee advocacy in Montréal, I am looking qualitatively at an area which is too often looked at quantitatively. I am bringing the people into the picture of refugee advocacy organizing and thus into the entire refugee situation. Ironically, the Legislative Review report which I introduced earlier also talks of putting people into a context which has too often been about numbers (although, according to the advocates, it still objectifies refugees and immigrants). This has been the role of those fighting for refugee rights since the government policies existed- to take the policies, which are designed and implemented based on quantitative concerns, and try to change them to better work for the people they affect. They have been working to move away from the inevitable objectification this entails and trying to humanize as much as possible. As Stephan told me:

> Nous, comme on travaille directement avec ces gens-là [refugees and immigrants], nous on est plus préoccupés par l'aspect humain des choses parce que nous, on est confrontés quotidiennement avec ça, parce que les gens qui font la politique, ils ne voient jamais les immigrants, ils ne savent pas qu'est-ce que c'est un immigrant.

Rivka Augenfeld, who is the president of the Table, had this to say to me about her role as an advocate and considering people not numbers:

> Well I think what we try to do first of all , is look at everything in terms of the human consequences- look at things and how they affect human beings, try to suggest- from being at the grassroots level, from being at the front lines and all those other terms- what is going to be the real impact on people of various policies. [We say to policy makers] 'this is how you say it's going to work but based on our experience this is what's really going to happen in real life as far as we can see.' And far too often we're right, just because, you know- when you've been on the ground for a long time, you know how- you just see that it ain't gonna work the way people suggest. Yeah we do try to humanize it- you try to humanize it so that people become aware of the impact on human beings, policies that look good on paper.

This thesis is the first ethnographic study of Montréal's community of refugee advocates. I am studying refugee advocacy and not refugee services and thus cannot argue that this study will show the effectiveness of their work in the quantitative domain as the government would like to see. However I intend for this study it to prove that although the government had hesitated so long to recognize it, and although they'll tell Stephan that what

he does "n'est pas rentable", the people I present here, and the actions they do, are in fact of great benefit to society as a whole.

In looking at TIM and the monthly meetings, and the other methods generally used for refugee advocacy to be most effectively put into action, I am spending some time in looking at something, and thinking about something which many of the very busy refugee advocates simply don't have the time to do. As Janet Dench explained to me when I asked her what she thought could be the merits of this study:

> We're fairly few people really within our network that spend a lot of time thinking about that network, the networking question, and in a way it is something that's important for us in terms of effectiveness. We tend always to be focused on the issues and thinking about how we go about doing our work and not thinking about what in particular we're doing.

I would like to highlight here that with this research I seek to be participatory towards the goal of advocacy anthropology. This research makes a contribution to refugee studies and refugee advocacy. A presentation of the concerns of refugee advocates does expose the need for change in the way the current refugee determination process in Canada is approached, and perhaps could help persuade the administrators of refugee determination policies to shift their priorities more towards the needs of those seeking asylum. I intend for my work here to be a direct contribution to the struggle for refugee rights.

Chapter Two: Why Refugee Advocacy Exists

A brief look at Federal refugee determination and Québecois service provisions

When I asked Stephan to tell me why he thought there was the need for refugee advocacy to exist, he said "Parce que si nous on ne le fait pas, il n'y aura personne d'autre qui le fait". Immigration and refugee issues are relatively marginal issues within the current politics in Canada, and in each province, he explained. Refugee advocates like Stephan have in their busy agendas to make efforts to ensure that their concerns will come up in the discussions in the Minister's cabinet, so that the needs of refugees and newcomers will not be forgotten. I asked Rivka the same question:

> Because refugees cannot speak very much for themselves. The ideal is that people who have problems can speak on their own behalf. But because refugees, and especially refugee claimants, are just coming here, they have no status, they don't vote, they don't influence politicians very much, I think the more that you have a constituency with people and organizations - the more widely based the better to speak- not instead of them, but in support of them. The more chance you have a) that the people in public education have an influence and b) people in power can make changes. It's an international concern, refugees move between countries so the whole issue of refugees and refugee claimants is of concern to governments in an international forum and have to be organized accordingly. I think also because sometimes- you could be the most brilliant person and not understand the process that you're in. The process here is so complicated, that when you first arrive, it's just very difficult to understand it. And even if you've been here for a while, it's very difficult, and there are people who can go through it successfully and can't necessarily describe to you what happened to them. It is very complicated, and governments tend to try to describe it in simple terms and sometimes they'll make a change and they say 'well now it's a simple 1-2-3 process it's so simple' Well it's not simple. The example was when in 1989 they introduced the then backlog program. And it was described as very simple. You know 1-2-3 and out, no problem. And by the time we got the whole schema- whatever it's called- from the officials, it was so unbelievably complicated to the point that the guy here that was in charge of it put out something called a 'fluxogram'. It sounds like a remedy for some unmentionable illnesses. It is eight pages long. It kept spreading and spreading. Stephan took the whole thing, and blew it up, and made it into a- it was huge. Like there were things branching off- if the answer here is yes, then blablablabla, and if the answer is no you go here, at the end of the day, you finally get accepted or you have to leave. And it was right around the time also where there had been a few incidents of people being drugged and being taken out- deported in a drugged state, and there was a whole protest about it, so he put at the end, it was either that you were accepted and it's 'welcome to Canada', or on the other end there were two Valiums, for deportation- he put it on the paper. And he blew up the whole thing, and put it on the wall. The CCR conference that year was in the Spring we were at Glendon College in Toronto, so he put it up on the wall behind the coffee machine. And it's huge, right? And I remember very clearly one of the officials from higher up in Ottawa- very nice guy- who had been overseas, he knew

> a lot about refugee selection, and he looked at this thing and he said 'what is that?' We said 'well that's the backlog' he says 'no, come on it can't be. It's not like that' We said 'yes! It's the backlog!' He said 'Come on! This is impossible!' Because he wasn't in that area and finally we said 'look , could we make up a such a thing that's this ridiculous?' And he went and looked at it a little more closely. He couldn't believe it. He couldn't believe it and he was a very high up official in the department. And because he wasn't dealing with that he couldn't believe how complicated they had made this thing. So, all of which is to say that most people who are in it, don't have a clue of what they're going through. Some of them have some clue, and some people by the time they get to the end, become quite knowledgeable. And the interesting thing is, refugees or refugee claimants that then get involved in helping other people, end up understanding the system. Because when you're trying to explain, when you're trying to learn it, then you learn it, but sometimes you go through it and you don't know what happened, you can't really describe it. So I think to go back to your question, I think we have a responsibility to speak up for people who are not in the position yet to speak. People are very vulnerable, people who are the lowest- it's like with any issue- the more people who are outside the group most directly concerned, the more people support them.

In order to continue to illustrate why refugee advocates perceive that there is the need to work to change things for the better for newcomers and especially refugees who have their specific needs, I will present a brief introduction to the origins, and the contemporary situation of Canadian refugee determination policy and practice, and to Québec's role in it.

i) The United Nations and the definition of 'refugee'

In succession to the League of Nations, which was established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles (at the instigation of the US President Woodrow Wilson), the United Nations was set up in San Francisco in 1945. An international organization of countries, it was established in response to the needs which arose with the end of the Second World War to promote international peace, security and cooperation. Shortly afterwards, in 1947, the UN Commission on Human Rights held its first session in order to create a document which would define "human rights and fundamental freedoms to be applied universally". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (see Appendix A for excerpts), was completed and made official on December 10, 1948. The individuals present at these sessions were male government representatives, with the exception of two women and although there were some representatives of non- governmental organizations (NGOs) present who were allowed consultation, none were allowed to vote (Tolley 1987).

There were lengthy debates which revealed profound ideological differences within the committee over what constituted universal rights. Nonetheless, it proposed the text of the UDHR by its third session in 1948, "because the commission had only eighteen members subject to the control of a single-minded [Western] majority" (Tolley: 21).

Anthropologist Evelyn Kallen (1989) has described the general critique of the content of the UN human rights lists:

> Scholarly critics of current, internationally recognized human-rights instruments- especially the UDHR, which sets out in detail the various individual human rights and freedoms - have argued that these instruments, with their highly individualistic focus, clearly reflect the Western liberal-democratic ideological bias of their drafters and supporters. Thus, they promote individual rights and freedoms at the expense of any real guarantees for collective rights. Put another way, the argument put forward by critics is that, in these instruments, the principle of human unity clearly is given priority over the principle of cultural diversity (1989: 13).

It is generally acknowledged among scholars and activists that "the concept of human rights is indigenous only to one part of the Western tradition of political thought" (Donnelly 1985: 35).

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an example of an attempt to define a universal standard to determine a set of principles meant to be applied in all contexts. However, it is left to the Member States to determine when a human right is violated to the point of persecution (as relevant to Article 14 which will be discussed soon). Although the Declaration is meant to have been written through joint effort by representatives from all parts of the world, it can be made apparent (see, for example, Howard Tolley 1987) that this is not so. Rather than the purported deliberation between "mutually respectful people", the UDHR had been devised primarily by men, and the Western ideology was dominant, and these Western male perspectives were also those of government representatives. Objections to the dominant group's point of view were overruled, not because of any fundamental truths being recognized, but because of the existing power dynamics. Having been developed predominantly from one perspective, the universalism proposed by the UDHR excludes an infinite number of other perspectives. Although the document was quite revolutionary in a positive way, it is not universally

deliberated- it does not represent all people of the world. Thus, whether it is universal, i.e. whether it would prove useful to all people in all contexts, is highly questionable.

Refugee protection is one of the aspects of the (purportedly) universal human rights lists. Article 14 (1) reads: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution".

In 1951, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was established. Concurrently, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter referred to as the *Convention*) was drawn up. The Convention, a legally binding treaty, imposes the obligation on states to give legal protection to refugees and defines their status. It is meant to establish a generally applicable international code of rights for refugees (UNHCR: 163). Article 1 of the Convention; "Definition of the Term Refugee", contains the following:

> A. For the purposes of the present Convention the term 'refugee' shall apply to any person who:
> (2)... owing to a well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (as amended by article 1(2) of the 1967 Protocol)

Paragraph 51 of the UNHCR Handbook states the following:

> There is no universally accepted definition of "persecution", and various attempts to formulate such a definition have met with little success. ... [I]t may be inferred that the threat to life or freedom on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group is always persecution. Other serious violations of human rights –for the same reasons– would also constitute persecution.

Andrew Shacknove (1985), in the article "Who is a Refugee?," intended to problematize an essentialized notion of what the term 'refugee' represents. He did this to illustrate the over-simplification of current refugee definitions, and thus to broaden the possibilities of who should have rights as a 'refugee'. He explained that even concrete definitions which can be presented on paper are predicated on implicit conceptions which purportedly stipulate what is essential and universal about 'refugee'hood, 'persecution;'

and 'basic needs'. He defines 'refugee' as such: "persons whose basic needs are unprotected by their country of origin, who have no remaining recourse other than to seek international restitution of their needs, and [notably] who are so situated that international assistance is possible" (277). By suggesting basic needs as a criterion for being considered a refugee, he reformulates the persecution-based definition to include the notion that the lack of capacity for the state to provide basic needs for its citizens could be considered a reason with the same validity as fear of persecution. He makes clear in his article that determining refugees is a political act, and the displacement of a refugee is ultimately "a political relation between a countryman and his homeland" (283).

Here Rivka tells me about the use of the word 'refugee':

> For starters when you're looking at people's rights, anyone who comes and claims to be a refugee has a right to be heard, so the first sense is protection for asylum seekers or refugee claimants. Different terms are used in different places. Technically in Canada we use the term 'refugee claimants' because they're people coming and seeking refugee status. It's interesting when the word refugee gets used, generally. There's times when the media or government objects to 'refugee' being bandied about but other times- during the ice storm [January 1998] there were people who were 'refugees from the Ice Storm'. So that seemed to be ok. When refugees- when people flee across a border, let's say Ethiopians went to Sudan, everyone seemed to agree they were refugees, but of course when the same people tried to then go on and decide that they wanted to go to the next place they suddenly became an 'irregular movement'. And then they were done. So there are situations where they don't do individual assessments, and a whole group is considered to be refugees, or in a refugee-like situation, and get help accordingly, but when people sometimes try to move on to a next place then they become subject to individual determinations and then all kinds of decisions are made about whether they are really a Convention refugee or not. I think here we're trying to say, and I think maybe it's part of what we're trying to do to educate the public, is that anyone who comes and makes a claim, says they are a refugee, has a right to be heard fairly. One of the problems right now is that things are taking a long time so that it creates a very bad situation. So what a refugee needs is a just fair but expeditious hearing. But no so fast that they don't have time - there's always that discussion about how fast is too fast, but you could be a person in need of protection as far as we're concerned, and that's where it gets complicated, for reasons that go beyond the narrow definitions of the Geneva Convention. So you can be technically not a Convention refugee, and still somebody that we should be allowing to stay here. People who are victims of torture, people who are victims of other human rights violations, because the Convention is very narrow in is definition, and a lot of the modern situations that people are legitimately fleeing from, don't quite fit into the Convention. You have other definitions - the Africa definition, the Carthagena definition, which is a wider definition, that covers people who are victims of all kinds of human rights violations.
>
> There's a lot of terminology that's out there. You know, we could talk economic refugees, and they talk about false refugees, and I say 'what is a false

> refugee' I mean you're either a refugee or not. There's no such thing as a false refugee. But the word gets used a lot. And sometimes people use it and it's ok, and other times, they'll dispute the term being used. The same people. I think part of what I try to do, whether I'll be giving talks, or talking to different groups, is to explain the distinctions legally because it's important for people to understand the process that people have to go through. So then when somebody comes here and says 'I am a refugee' they have to satisfy a Canadian process as to that, but they already have certain rights as a person who has claimed, and that's something we try to explain. But it's a lot of stuff that's not easy to do in 20 second sound bytes.

ii) The International Refugee Situation:

There are millions upon millions of refugees and displaced persons in the world today and the number grows constantly. As explained by Daniel & Knudsen:

> Among the conditions that have made this apparently never-ending crisis of refugees possible are colonial and postcolonial politics and geographies, the rise of the nation-state as a reality, the rise of industrial capitalism and industrial socialism with the accompanying development and spread of arms, and finally, cold war and post-cold war politics (1995: viii).

Although refugee statistics are generally highly problematic in terms of availability and quality, according to the UNHCR there are over 50 million people who have been forced from their homes.

As for asylum, looking at the ratio of refugee population to gross national product per capita, the greater economic burden of refugees is not borne by nations of the developed world but by nations such as Malawi, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Sudan, Iran, Zaire, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, and Bangladesh (UNHCR 1993).

As well, something which is not always represented in the statistics, is that women comprise over half of the world's refugees (see Table 1).

iii) Canadian Refugee Determination:

Canada's refugee determination policy can be divided into two parts. One aspect concerns individuals outside Canada seeking to gain entry as refugees through application and processing at immigration offices around the world. This is the overseas determination process, which includes resettlement issues[5], managed and regulated by officials at the

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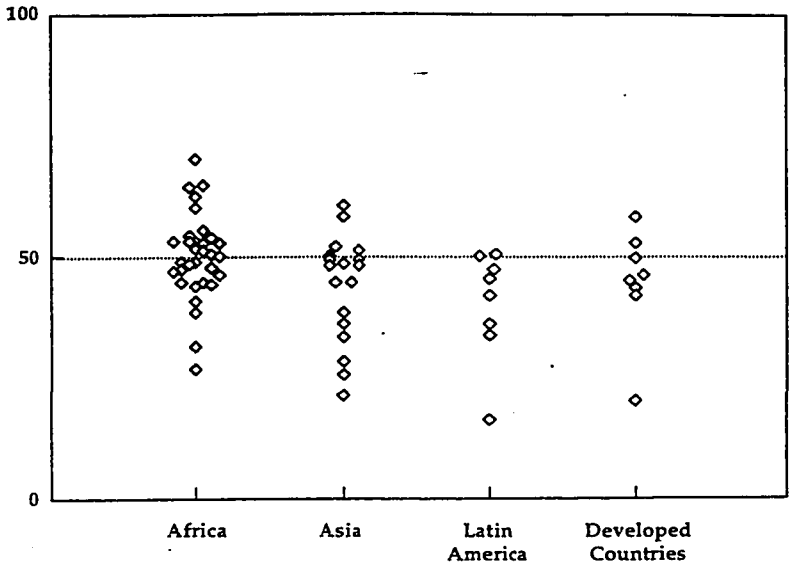
[5] There are numerous criticisms of Canada's overseas determination process and of the resettlement program. For an example of one critique, see the film "Who Gets In?" (Greenwald 1989) for information about the shortage of visa offices in Africa, and the criteria one would have to meet in order to be eligible for a Canadian visa. Also, Gilad notes that in the 80's and early 90's most of Africa was served by the one

Table 1: Proportion of Women in Total Refugee Population by Geographical Region, Early 1997 (%) (source: UNHCR *in* Osaki 1997: 12).



overseas posts through the provisions of the 1976 Act and subsequent regulations[6].

The second aspect of refugee admissions policy relates to persons already within Canada, or at the Canadian border, who wish to remain and base their requests on a claim to being bona fide refugees as defined by the Convention (inland determination). Not all refugees are *Convention* refugees (fit into the Convention definition). Non- Convention refugees in government policy include those whom anthropologist Lisa Gilad (1990) termed "refugee ideologues", defined as "people who believe that their political values and personal interpretations provide compelling reasons to flee their countries" (42). Also included as non-Convention refugees are those who have been displaced from their home

visa office in Kenya. By contrast there were 11 offices in the United States, three in the United Kingdom and two in France. As well, there were 13 offices in Hong King, reflecting Canada's interest in business immigrants who were vetted on the basis of how much money/capitol they were bringing with them. This, situation, which has not changed for the better since then, is related to Canada's mandate to fulfill its social and economic needs, "which excludes the majority of citizens from developing nations" (1990: 128).

[6] Each year the Canadian government selects a certain number (approx. 7,300) for resettlement. It is also possible for private groups to sponsor the resettlement of a refugee or a refugee family, once it is approved by the government. Governmental approval requires that the refugees must be interviewed and processed overseas by Canadian visa officers. This process is sometimes very long. The private group is responsible for the sponsored refugees for one year after their arrival.

country for reasons such as war or famine but who do not fall into the Canadian definition[7] (which is the international definition). The following discussion will only be considering the issues surrounding *inland Convention* refugee determination. By *determination* I mean "the process and procedures selected and developed by the government to determine the validity of claims by individuals to refugee status" (Dirks 1984: 301).

The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) began operations on January 1st, 1989, under the Conservative government, as part of a major overhaul of Canada's refugee determination system. It is a quasi-judicial independent tribunal created by parliament under Part IV of the 1976 Immigration Act. The Chairperson of the Board reports to Parliament through the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The IRB carries out three main functions: immigration inquiries and detention reviews; immigration appeals; and refugee determination. Decision making is carried out by three divisions: the Adjudication Division, the Immigration Appeal Division, and the Convention Refugee Determination Division (Refugee Division or CRDD).

The Immigration Act of 1976 has given legislative force to the main provisions of the 1951 UN Convention, creating the legal concept of Convention refugee using the Convention definition and providing a procedure for identifying refugees (See Appendix B). The Refugee Division of the IRB is responsible for refugee determination. The IRB purports that the Refugee Division determines refugee claims "in a manner which is both flexible and informal in accordance with the *Immigration Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, and Canada's humanitarian traditions" (IRB 1993: 3).

A claim to be a Convention refugee can be made by notifying an immigration officer at any port of entry into Canada (at an airport or the Canada-US border), at a Canada Immigration center if the person is already in Canada, or at an Immigration inquiry. A senior immigration officer will determine whether the claim is eligible to be heard by the

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[7] See Gilad (1990) for discussion of non-convention refugees.

Refugee Division. The claim is not eligible if, for example, the person has already been recognized as a refugee by another country, or if the person raises serious criminality or security concerns. There are between 20,000 and 30,000 claims referred to the IRB's Refugee Division each year by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (see Appendix C).

When one makes a claim to be a refugee, whether it's at the airport, or the border, or if they are already in Canada, claimants are given a kit containing the forms they need to fill out. In some parts of the country, the first form claimants receive is the CIC form to determine eligibility for the process. Of the most important of the forms to be filled out (it will be the main reference document of their claim throughout the entire legal process) is the Personal Information Form (PIF) which they have 28 days to fill out and deposit (once their eligibility is determined). At the moment of making the claim they are fingerprinted and if they have a passport it will often be seized. Once they have made the claim, they are eligible to apply for welfare and they may be offered temporary lodging (at the Montréal YMCA, for example) until they receive their first cheque.

The refugee determination hearing normally takes place before a panel consisting of two Members of the Refugee Division although a claimant may consent to have just one member hear the claim. The panel applies the definition of "Convention refugee" to the evidence presented, and in most situations, only one member of the panel needs to decide in favor of the claimant in order for the claimant to be found to be a Convention refugee. A unanimous decision of the two- person panel is required in some situations; where

> there are reasonable grounds to believe that the claimant, without valid reason, has destroyed or disposed of his or her personal identity papers or documents; there is evidence that the claimant, in the period since having made the refugee claim, has visited the country from which he or she claims to have fled by reason of fear of persecution; or the country from which the claimant has fled is a country that respects human rights (IRB 1993: 6).

In some circumstances, claimants may have their claim determined by a single member without a hearing. This is called the expedited process and it is used where there is a high degree of certainty that a panel hearing would result in acceptance of the claimant

(For an IRB-designed flowchart of the refugee determination process, refer to Appendix D). The IRB documents repeatedly assure readers that the refugee determination hearing is "non- adversarial in nature" (IRB 1993: 7, 3; 1994: 2), and that "every effort is made to ensure that claimants can put forward their cases as thoroughly and completely as possible" (IRB 1993: 7; 1994: 2)[8].

It is part of policy that when a negative decision is made, a written reason must accompany the notice of decision. If a claimant is refused, they can apply to have their cases reviewed by immigration officials. These officials then decide whether the claimant should be deported (whether there is a risk of danger), or whether they can remain on Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds- if the claimant makes a request for a Humanitarian and Compassionate review, which costs $500.

iv) An appointment with a Montréal refugee lawyer

Montréal refugee lawyer Rosemary Hnatiuk described to me what goes on in her office when she first meets with a refugee claimant:

> [I met with a claimant today who had been tortured in Cameroon.] A friend of his father saved him from the prison and he was locked in a room for months until he healed. They came with a passport [and said] 'ok you're going to Canada' - bang he was on a plane. He didn't know anything, he arrived in Ottawa he didn't know a soul, didn't know what to do, he was sort of wandering around. When he came into the office he said it was the first time anybody had ever asked him his story. He just broke down crying uncontrollably.
>
> You have your people that come that are really really fresh like that, and the procedure, the method that I follow, I develop, is basically - they have to talk about what happened to them first. And then I'm listening to them, and I take notes as much as I can, and sometimes I just listen because they just want to get it out, and then I explain to them, either then- or depending on their condition at subsequent interviews, what the proceeding is.
>
> I agree with the philosophy of explaining to people as much as possible, giving them as much information as possible and I also really agree with [the] strategy of telling people that they have to work on the file, and that they shouldn't put their lives in the hands of a lawyer. That they have to really be aware of everything in their file as much as possible. And I try to follow that principle as much as possible, to give them as much control as possible, as much information as possible, so that takes a hell of a lot of time.
>
> I guess I've always been really bad about money, this is one of my personal things, but because virtually all of my clients are on welfare it's hard to get paid for the work you actually do on a file. Because of the way legal aid is structured, and

[8] That the IRB is independent, non-adversarial, and makes efforts to ensure the cases are thoroughly put forward are disputed notions, and shall be discussed later.

also because of jurisprudence, the personal information form is a separate mandate. There was an agreement between the lawyers and [Québec] legal aid that there would be a separate mandate for the PIF, and a separate one for the hearing.

Each jurisdiction has its own legal aid, Québec is probably one of the worst paid, for refugees, for anything really. The system has basically been gutted. The only people that can really be on legal aid are on welfare and I must say that the people who are in the legal aid offices really try to bend the rules as much as they can so that as many people as possible can come in. If the rules were applied to the letter, there would be very very few people with legal aid. The amount a refugee lawyer gets paid is ridiculous, it's really a token. $250. It's absolutely absurd [see pages 46- 47 for more discussion of legal aid cutbacks]. Some lawyers basically just give the PIF to the client and say 'can you fill it out', and they sign it.

I always ask for $50 dollars a month. And I charge, well it used to be $500 and now I have to have it at $750 so it comes out to $1000 for everything with the legal aid included. [$750 fee plus $250 legal aid]. They pay by contract for $50 a month. I've even put in a $5 penalty for people who pay me late. But people still don't pay. A lot of people are still paying me from 1996.

They write their story. Usually they tell me, and then I have them write it down. And then I type it up, usually I type it up with them, because then I could do corrections right on the spot, as they read it to me, so it's a faster way of doing it, or less arduous. It's actually not faster because we end up talking a lot [laugh]. And I explain the whole system to them. All the appeals, how the hearing works, and the appeal. I explain it in terms that are appropriate to the understanding of the client as much as I can.

After you fill in the PIF you wait for three years [laugh]. It varies because sometimes they do blitzes on certain countries, and they'll have special panels, for everybody who's been here for three years, or three months. With the Chileans they had a special express lane, because there were a lot of false claims, and that was not fair. What they've done, they changed the procedure at the beginning of 1997, so that they left the backlog, and they started taking half of the roll for the people that were coming right now. So this is where I have problems with [some] clients [who say] 'well we know a client of yours that went months and months ago and was accepted, and here we're still waiting, why is that?' Well that person happened to have been in Goma when all these incredible things were happening in the east of Zaire, and she had [been] raped and her home burnt down and she was in some mass of refugees that were escaping and that was really hot at the time, so she got put on right away. She was on the fast track without me even asking for it, and she got accepted without- she didn't need to say anything. She just went to the interview and was asked two or three questions.

So you fill out the PIF form, and you wait three years or three months, and you can get called to the fast track by the IRB themselves, they do a triage of the forms that come in. And [you] have to wait, and it's part chronological, and part country , and they can do whatever they bloody well please with it, and then your lawyer can also ask for a fast track. I always charge $100 extra for that, it means you have to photocopy all the proof and write a cover letter, and accompany the person to the hearing, then if that happens, then it's an agent, a hearing officer that interviews you in her or his office, and it used to be that if you got an appointment, usually you would be accepted, it was rare that you'd be refused. But now they've really screwed that up too. There is a commissioner in charge of all fast track decisions and there are several agents that actually interview the people and look at the proof and so on and then they leave their office and go and talk to the commissioner, there's one commissioner, who is responsible for these fast track hearings, and these agents present the proof to him, and he decides yes or no. And if it's no, that means the person has to go to the regular hearing, and there's no-

supposedly, no prejudice, supposedly the proof is all returned to the person, [without them keeping anything on file about it], and the interview is not recorded.

The other thing they've done now, because there's such a backlog, they've instituted a pilot project on Fridays which is an extended fast track hearing [and] you can be accepted at it. Basically the agent looks at your proof in an extended interview- it can be up to two hours, questioning and examining of proof by an agent, your lawyer's there and can get a better idea if there are any problems and what additional proof might be useful to shore up the case. Then you're scheduled in the next block of cases. What they do is they schedule the hearings in three month blocks. There are two commissioners, and there is always a hearing officer assigned to those two commissioners and they're always together in all the cases in that three month block. Which I find can be problematic, there's kind of a collusion that goes on, if you're an officer who's very negative, anti-refugee, very suspicious, then to have a good relationship to the commissioners, whatever that person's opinion is, has a lot of weight. They also specialize in countries, the commissioners. Either French Africa, or English Africa, or Pakistan, whatever. Chile. Which makes sense in a way, administratively. Because these are lay people that are appointed for short terms, and if they're hearing cases from all over the world, and they hear two a day, that's a lot of information to be processing, to be really doing justice in the evaluation. So it makes sense to focus on countries or regions. On the other hand, if you get a bad panel, it's a problem. Anyway, if you're accepted in fast track, that's fine- you can go directly to make your application for permanent residence.

When you get to the hearing, it's two commissioners, as I said, unless you agree to go with one. It's usually not a good idea to go with one because if they are two commissioners, and one says 'yes' and the other says 'no', the 'yes' always wins.

Then, there's the refugee claim officer [RCO], who's supposed to be there to assist the commissioners and to provide them with information and guidance. Often, that person acts as a prosecutor. It's supposed to be a non-adversarial proceeding, but because of the behavior of the RCO, it often becomes really adversarial.

The commissioners are political appointees. The RCOs have to have a certain competence [laugh]. And a hearing usually takes half a day, and how it usually goes is that the claimant presents his or her story [through] the questions of his or her lawyer, the RCO then asks questions, presents any other evidence there might be, and the commissioners can ask questions at any time. At the end the claimants have been questioned quite a lot. At some hearings- they started to do this a while back, with Chileans in particular, they would say- 'we'll start with the RCO instead of the claimant because we read the PIF, we know all the information, we're just going to ask questions'. [This is] supposedly to try to speed things up but what that does is it really disorients the person. They ask the RCO to ask questions and that really distorts the proof. Because the person is nervous, and also it provides much more of an opportunity for confusion of facts and of narrative. [The RCO has read the PIF form and] whatever proof has been presented as well [which includes proof about the country], and you present also any kind of personal documentary evidence you have. It depends on the strategy of the lawyer. I like to present mine ahead of time, you don't necessarily have to, but it's usually a lot better. It provides for better atmosphere.

The RCO has to [do research], [usually] has to submit [proof about] country conditions. Sometimes if the person came with a visa, they'll submit documents in the immigration file, and the documents are available through immigration. Sometimes [a] really dirty [thing they will do is they will] do all kinds of searches and stuff. One of the big scandals of files that [Montréal refugee

lawyer] Walter Tom was working with was that an RCO attempted to contact Interpol, went to Interpol, said she did it all the time. Walter objected because Interpol contacts the police in the country. So it's sort of like asking your persecutor to confirm that they persecuted you.

If you're not successful then you have 15 days to [apply for] a leave to appeal at the Federal court. Appeal is not yours as a right. Then you have 30 days to file a memorandum of argument. And then the Minister of Justice has 30 days to file a response, and then you have 10 days to file a reply. And then you wait for three or four months for the Federal court to say yes or no, if the Federal court says, yes, that means you have leave to appeal. So then you're given a court date. And then [your lawyer has] to argue the case in front of the judge. And the appeal is not a full appeal, it's an administrative appeal because the IRB is an administrative tribunal, and it's only on questions of the law. What it means is that they're only looking at the way the decision was made. Not whether the decision was right or wrong, they don't revise the decision. If they decide there was a flaw in the way the decision was made then they send it back to the IRB to another panel, and it starts from the beginning again. Although they can give specific instructions of the way the proof is to be interpreted, people have been refused on the second round. And there's no appeal from a negative decsion of the Federal Court unless the judge has certified a question. And the appeal is only on the certified questions. There used to be an appeal of negative decisions to the Immigration Appeal Board.There was the Commission and there was the Appeal Board and all cases could go to the Appeal Board. From there they could go to the Federal Court. There was no leave provision, you could just appeal. And because of the filter mechanism, not as many cases went to the Federal Court so they were more generous at that time and now they're very very very parsimonious.

I work very closely with NGOs, I work with the Table [and others]. The goal is information exchange generally, and also specifically I use them with my clients. For example, yesterday I sent [a client] off to- I said 'ok he's talking suicide'. I said 'ok, you belong to a church,' and so I told him 'go talk to Patricia at the Maison d'Amitié, she'll direct you to the right church, here's the card for the CLSC Côte des Neiges, you can go there, you see the doctor', and I made an appointment for him. I called Angelica at RIVO right away, and I said 'what can you do for this guy' and she's really great, she was very on top of things right away. And really plugging people into services. I really enjoy doing that work very very much.

v) The Relativity of Refugee Determination:

In her book The Northern Route (1990), Lisa Gilad discussed the importance of exposing the different levels of interpretation and re-interpretation which occur in order for a claimant to achieve refugee status. She argues that Canadian bureaucracy is far from impersonal; that each person a refugee meets will use his or her individual interpretation and judgment in making decisions which will directly affect a claimant's future.

In "A Policy Within a Policy: The Identification and Admission of Refugees to Canada", Gerald Dirks writes:

> Since the refugee status determination process was put in place under the provisions of the present Immigration Act, lawyers, civil libertarians, claimants, and representatives of interest groups have argued that prevailing procedures are not humanitarian, open nor fair. Critics persist in the view that factors other than humanitarian considerations play a role in the deliberations of officials responsible for judging the validity of the claims" (Dirks 1984: 301).

and

> Any flight of people from one country to another in search of a haven from intolerance and persecution generates numerous political, social, and legal consequences. In terms of international politics, relations between the state of origin and that receiving the refugees may become strained should either government deplore the exodus or object to the acceptance of these people (Dirks 1977: 2).

Through the work of these scholars and others, it has become clear that the Canadian government's policy for accepting refugees is very much a creation of its relations as a nation state to international politics, as well as to the people of Canada. This argument is summarized by François Crépeau (1996) in his article "Refugee Policies are Globalized and They Must be Improved". Here he argues that asylum and the related immigration policies must be understood as "as much a part of globalization as the trade agreements to which they have always been related" (1).

Gilad (1990) urges that those who hold the power to open the gates to persons seeking asylum must be "persuaded to relax procedures which are presently designed to promote national interests above all else" (4). This would be done, she explained, by broadening their understanding of the people who are refugees and the experiences which they have been through in order to arrive in Canada where they are when they first come into contact with them. The (mis)conceptions of the Immigration and Refugee Board members need to be redefined in order to allow more room for the refugees to be able to define themselves as worthy of asylum. This, according to Gilad, is where anthropologists, or anthropology in general, could play a role.

Stewart Istvanffy, a Montréal refugee lawyer who is also an international human rights lawyer explained at a talk given at McGill University in October 1997:

> In theory, in refugee law, if you can show a balance of probabilities that there is a serious possibility or reasonable possibility of persecution for you, you should be recognized as a refugee and the test to know whether you're a refugee or not is partly subjective, based on your own experience, own personality, partly objective,

> based on the situation in your country or people like you and whether what you fear would be persecution - whether it qualifies as persecution. Now the test is relatively clear but it can be applied in a very narrow or a wide fashion - what I have seen over the last ten years of practice is that it used to be that it was applied generally in a fairly fair fashion, and we had things slide to the point where right now there are very serious problems at the Refugee Board... Partly there are historic reasons for the fact that they are becoming more restrictive now. The refugee Convention was drafted after W.W. II, after the great crimes of the Nazis which partly inspired the refugee definition and at the time that Stalin had taken over Eastern Europe and they thought that there was a great danger that the communists were going to take over all of Europe, and so the refugee definition was designed to protect the victims of the Nazis and of the communists, and it was meant to show that these Western democracies were better at respecting human rights and respecting democratic values than our communist adversaries. So part of the problems with the application of the definition today have historical roots. After the Berlin wall fell in 1989, and the main communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell one after the other and then the Soviet Union ceased to be the Soviet Union in 1991 some of the ideologically driven reasons for wanting to protect refugees were lost and now the world in the eyes of the people who are deciding our national security and our place in the world is basically the rich countries or the supposedly free market countries versus the great unwashed- the third world countries and 'why do we really want to let these people come into the first world anymore? There is no longer any real danger of communism and really what is important is to safeguard our investments and free flow of trade' and the ideas that we must stick to protecting refugees and sticking up for international human rights and values aren't as important to Western countries.

Canada's refugee determination system purports to be built upon the foundation of "fairness, compassion and openness" (IRB 1993: 1). Observing the day-to-day activities of those in charge of the determination procedures and those who work as advocates (legal or community based) for refugee applicants, however, reveals discrepancies between that statement and the actual determination process. Section 3g of the Immigration Act states that one of the objectives of the Article is: "to fulfill Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees and to uphold its humanitarian tradition with respect to the displaced and the persecuted". Implementation of the Act in actual cases suggests instead that the objective of Canada's determination system is less to grant asylum to those in need of humanitarian protection than it is to determine who is a Convention refugee, narrowly defined. Thus, Canada's refugee policy does not protect persons who lie outside that definition from serious harm for reasons outside of that scope (Lisa Gilad, personal electronic communication, 1995). There are a multiplicity of factors which come into play in Canada's refugee determination process, some of which are: the interests of Canada as a

nation within the global order; the human and material considerations which orient the varying individual and collective perceptions of the refugee definition; the objectification of those applying for refugee status by the judicial definitions; as well as the situated personal interpretations of all levels of the determination procedures.

vi) Québec and Refugees:

Although Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has made agreements with a number of provinces, the agreement with the Québec government is the most comprehensive of these. The agreement provides for cooperation in all areas relating to immigration, demographic and employment questions as they apply to Québec. In 1991, with the Canada-Québec Accord, the governments of Canada and Québec agreed to divide responsibilities for immigration to Québec. The federal role is "to determine national standards and objectives and to have responsibility for the family class immigration and for refugees" (CIC 1996:4). The role of the government of Québec, through the *Ministère des Relations avec les Citoyens et de l'Immigration* (MRCI), became full responsibility for linguistic, cultural and economic integration services for permanent residents, with exclusive responsibility for the selection of independent immigrants. As of 1997, Québec has full control over collective sponsorship efforts, i.e. groups organizing to sponsor individuals from abroad, for example from refugee camps, to come to Canada as refugees. Québec is one of the only provinces in Canada (British Columbia has recently signed a similar agreement) which assumes full responsibility for the settlement of immigrants, as well as the only province with full control over collective sponsorship. Québec receives about a quarter of the refugees selected from abroad by the federal government.

vii) Some specific issues of concern to refugee advocates:

1. Right of Landing Fee

One policy development which has caused much stir among refugee interest groups, is the $975 Right of Landing Fee (ROLF) or "head tax" applicable to all who become permanent residents in Canada, whether they come as an immigrant or as a

refugee. A person who is recognized as a refugee in Canada had already had to pay $500 for the processing of a permanent residence application per adult, and $100 per child. Announced on February 28, 1995 as part of the federal budget, this policy means that the total cost of permanent residence now will be $1,475 per adult. Refugees have six months from the date of a positive refugee determination to make their application for permanent residence.

According to David Matas and Nancy Worsfold, the former president and executive director, respectively, of the Canadian Council for Refugees, this is an anti- refugee policy (1995). Minister Marchi justified this as being within the context of "the necessity for compassion, integrity and the need to do things better and still show fiscal responsibility" (*Statement:* 1995). Matas and Worsfold, however argue that Marchi's continued imposition of restrictions for refugee acceptance is not only motivated by budgetary concerns: "In the face of right-wing pressure, the government has adopted a hostile attitude toward refugees and toward their international obligation to protect [them]" (Toronto Star, March 8, 1995). Refugee advocates oppose the fee as being discriminatory, because of the vast variance in country and individual income around the world. Refugees, particularly, coming to Canada with special needs and problems, are the most likely to not have the resources to pay it.

Refugees, often having used up the savings they had in order to flee, or having lost them in the course of persecution, face quite a few expenses once in Canada. Before ROLF and other than everyday living expenses, refugees must pay: Fees to the lawyer who will represent them in their claim (cutbacks in legal aid will be discussed below); the cost of setting up a new home; health costs and expenses incurred as a result of social assistance cutbacks (this will be discussed below); and often remittances to family in home country or in refugee camps who depend on them for survival. As for trying to make more money, refugees cannot get permanent residence until they pay the ROLF, and are bound to have great difficulty establishing themselves well enough to make money, as long as they are not permanent residents (discussed below).

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has criticized the sexist and racist potential of the tax: "given that we live in a world of great disparities between women and men; between rich and poor; between the 'Third World' and the 'First World', this head tax will make it difficult for many women, particularly women of colour, to enter or remain in Canada as permanent residents" (*in* CCR 1997:1).

There is the possibility of obtaining a federal government loan for the $975 (not for the $500/$100), if the government has evaluated the applicant as being able to repay the loan. The difficulty in obtaining the loan is heightened by the lack of information refugees generally have about the process, and women and children face particular difficulty in meeting eligibility requirements.

2. Québec's cutbacks:

Although refugee determination is federal responsibility, Québec plays a large role in the lives of refugees in the area of resettlement. In the last few years there have been drastic cuts in social aid, legal aid, health care coverage and employment programs for refugee claimants.

As of November 1st, 1996, while waiting for their refugee status, which could take a number of years (this will be discussed below) refugee claimants are faced with the following situation:

- They are not eligible for special programs in Social Security, receiving the lowest amount possible, the amount allocated to 'non-participants' (rather than being deemed 'unavailable' and thus receiving a higher amount). As of November 1996 the refugee claimant's welfare cheques were cut from about $1,200 a month for a family of four to $900;
- They are excluded from all government employment programs;
- They have no access to free French courses
-They are not eligible for any allowances (family, daycare, rent, etc....);
-They must usually come up with $1 000 to $2 000 to pay a lawyer within the first 30 days in order to defend their case before the IRB, despite the legal aid available to claimants;

-They are not covered by Medicare (this will be discussed below) other than emergencies, which are covered by the federal government;

-Their work permits, issued by the federal government are often issued after delays of several months;

-No access to government-funded orientation or information services, except for housing referral services offered by some community organizations.

On top of all this, are the fees- once accepted as a refugee, they will have to pay the ROLF plus $500 per adult and $100 per child in order to make their application for permanent residence status and thus to be able to bring/be reunited with their immediate family, among other things.

Children born in Québec, thus of Canadian nationality, with parents who are refugee claimants, are treated the same as their parents. In other words, they are excluded from all regular services, allowances, social and medical coverage, etc., as they are labeled 'non-residents'. This is the case in British Columbia as well. The *Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec* (RAMQ) withdrew Medicare privileges for Canadian-born children of refugee claimants (and not the Immigration Minister or the Health Minister).

Also as of October 1996, the provincial government decided to cut the amount paid to immigration lawyers who handle legal aid refugee cases. Their fee per case was cut to $200 from $496.50. This is regardless of the number of hours put into any case, which could mean five to six hours on the case itself, and then another 15 to 20 hours working with the witnesses. In B.C., refugee lawyers who take on legal aid cases are paid $80 per hour, and in Ontario, lawyers are also paid by the hour, and could make an average of $1,625 per case. According to the statistics released by the federal government, the average annual salary of a refugee lawyer is $62,000. The average for civil law criminal lawyers is $150,000 per year.

Stewart Istvanffy, who takes on many legal aid cases describes the situation:

> Much of lawyer's work is paid by the Québec government. The economic basis has been pulled out from under. It's really difficult to get by, you have to be a little bit of a charity worker, like sort of working for a cause to do this work.
> Legal aid is under attack in Québec and has been for the last 2 or 3 years. They cut the basic payment for representation very strongly starting October 1st 1996, but before that, for a year and a half, two years, they had been attacking the level of remuneration in numerous ways, making it very difficult to accept claimants on legal aid, to the extent that one has to ask for some payment outside the legal aid process, and hope one gets paid, because many people arrive here with almost no money. If you can go in and do three cases in the morning and three in the afternoon, you're going to be paid six times as much as somebody like me who might do one case a day, so there is a strong economic pressure in favor of incompetence (1997, talk at McGill).

There is constant negotiation between Québécois and federal governments as to how to share the refugee related responsibilities. In the meantime, the task is left to underfunded community organizations and to a few charity efforts to assume, at a voluntary level, for better or for worse, somewhat of a support to those who had been left to fend for themselves.

3. Delays & Scheduling

Two to three years can pass before a claimant hears a decision (unless it's a case treated in the expedited process). During this time, those people who have come to Canada needing help and protection are left in uncertainty and insecurity. As described above, this can cause physical and psychological problems, as well as problems linked to malnutrition, poverty, education problems for children, and problems with linguistic and socio-economic integration. In July 1997, there were 13, 092 claimants waiting for their refugee status, a large number of whom were on welfare without access to work programs. Although claimants have work permits, it is difficult to find work while going through the claim process. Without permanent resident status, young people finishing high school are effectively barred from pursuing their studies. Claimants cannot travel outside Canada for any reason.

Refugees cannot apply to be reunited with their families until they have obtained Convention Refugee status (at which point they can put their spouse and minor children on their application for Permanent Residence), and during these long delays, often refugees

are separated from their spouse and children. Family members who are left abroad are often in situations of risk and this puts tremendous stress on all concerned, sometimes leading to family breakdown. Here Stewart Istvanffy gives his view:

> For some people this [delay period] was a good thing. For the real refugees because they were able to have protection for years before being sent back and eventually they'd get landed, even if it lasted for may years. But in spite of the belief of immigration officials that they were all being taken advantage of [because people would claim to be refugees just to stay in Canada for the delay], this was not true for many people. If you're a young single male, being stuck in Canada without your family is OK, you can start a new life. If you left a wife and three children behind, and you spend eight or ten years waiting for them, this is a terrible thing. In particular when you're afraid for your family's security. And then to try and restart, to become a father again, to someone who is now 15 or 17 years old, who you haven't seen in ten years, who maybe feels resentment of you running off to Canada to live the good life, or in this case a life of misery, it's very difficult to rebuild a parental relationship, and there has been a great deal of human suffering because of this. It's not true that it was an advantage to the real refugees to wait here for years. For many people this meant great suffering.

In order to have less of a backlog/ waiting list for claimants to have their hearing, a pilot scheduling program was devised for Montréal in 1997. This program re-ordered scheduling priorities- a previously first-come-first served system was changed to become last in, first out- newly arrived cases get priority, and will be processed within six months of filing their claim. 'Older' cases are given a hearing date when the claimant agrees to an interview with a Refugee Claim Officer (RCO) to test if in fact the case is ready. This means that people who arrive after a certain date have their claim heard at an earlier date than those who arrived before that date. The people who had arrived before that date, although lawyers can press that they are ready for their hearings, may have to wait even longer. Done with the positive objective of having less of a waiting list, it is nonetheless done on the backs of the people who have been waiting the longest, and leaving them in a position of extreme anxiety. Many of the 'older' refugee claimants do not know about the possibility of asking for their hearings, and much responsibility is left to the lawyers and community organizations to get the word out. According to Istvanffy, there is a great problem in finding time slots for the older cases when people are ready. Lawyers are told that if they want their clients to have their hearings they can try for slots on evenings and

weekends. With this plan, there are tight deadlines for newer claimants (or more rigid application of existing deadlines), leaving not enough time for people to fill out their PIF properly. These forms, of great importance at a hearing, require a lawyer's help to be filled out most effectively. A claimant usually can't pay a lawyer before they receive their first welfare cheque, which can take over a month, and thus the claimant is left in a compromising position trying to meet the deadline for submitting their PIF.

There has been tremendous opposition by refugee advocacy groups to this system, but nonetheless, in November 1997 the IRB announced that they were to apply the Montréal pilot nationally. The IRB, being criticized by the 1996 Auditor General's report and indirectly in the 1998 Legislative Review Report as being too slow and too costly, argue that the new scheduling plan will resolve these problems.

4. Identity documents

In 1993 the federal government implemented Bill C-86 which requires refugees to produce a "satisfactory identity document" before being able to acquire landed immigrant status. After the bill was passed, Immigration Canada recognized that there had been no functioning government in Somalia for almost seven years yet they nonetheless decided to insist on obtainable documents in the name of weeding out criminals. This indicates, advocates insist, that Canada, while allowing access to the refugee determination system, makes a presumption of non-credibility against claimants who don't have documents.

Refugees arriving from countries with no functioning government, such as Somalia, have no means of obtaining documents, as there is no government to issue them. In some countries governments refuse to issue documents to certain nationals. If the country is at war, there may be no functioning bureaucracy, as well it is possible that existing documents will have been destroyed. More women arrive without documents than men, because in many societies, women have limited access to identity documents in the first place. Even if it is physically possible to obtain documents, asking refugees to

approach the government of the country they have fled could lead to great danger for the refugees, or for their families who are still in the country.

Even once refugees may have successfully met their own ID requirements, if they are seeking to be reunited with family members overseas, including spouse and dependent children, they must be able prove these relationships. For the same reasons as there are hardships in obtaining identity documents, there are great constraints in obtaining documents proving relationship. As for marriage, in many parts of the world, these certificates are simply not issued. As for parentage, CIC is increasingly calling for DNA testing to confirm these relationships. This testing is very expensive and time-consuming, and not equally available to all (This will be discussed in more detail in chapter III).

CIC is implicitly assuming that because they have a culture which relies heavily on paper documents to establish identity and relationship, they could expect the same from all other parts of the world, whereas there may in fact not be such reliance on paper. Often, births, marriages and deaths are not officially registered- there may be other ways of confirming relationships, such as through testimony of witnesses. This therefore leads to a discrimination against people from parts of the world where written documents are not issued for every event, and who are applying for refugee status in Canada. Within this population, women, rural people and youth are most discriminated against as it is the least likely that they will have access to such documents.

Another issue of concern to refugee advocates in this area is the subjective manner in which CIC define what "satisfactory documents" are. There are many refugees who arrive with some documents but are nonetheless refused because the immigration officials who received them were not "satisfied" with their documents. As explained in a 1997 publication put out by the Canadian Council for Refugees on the subject:

> The decision making is very inconsistent- between offices and between countries of origin. People have been refused when there was absolutely no question about their identity -- it was their documents which were unsatisfactory. For example, a former member of the Somali Olympic team had ID, magazine photos, etc. and was still turned down as he had no passport (2). In Ottawa the ID requirement is routinely waived for minors whereas in Toronto whole families are refused landing because

> one young child (e.g. six years old born in the camps) has no ID documents. Sometimes birth certificates, municipal ID or diplomas are accepted. Sometimes the officer insists only a passport will suffice. The immigration officers can be very capricious, for example a woman's ID was refused because in the section for nickname on her ID document (in Somali language) it was marked "male". "Male" means 'not applicable' in Somali, it doesn't mean that she's a man (4) .

The requirement for "satisfactory" identity documents has serious legal and psychological effects on the lives of refugees. As we saw in the section above discussing the problems with not having permanent resident status, refugees in this limbo have little access to resources and services.

On November 13, 1996 Immigration Minister Lucienne Robillard made an announcement that there would be new regulations for Convention refugees in Canada who had previously been unable to apply for permanent resident status because they did not have "satisfactory" proof of identity. This would be specifically for those refugees from Somalia and Afghanistan, whom, she agreed, were in a bad situation because of their inability to obtain the required documents due to the sustained civil wars. The new regulations were to mean that those from Somalia and Afghanistan could apply for permanent resident status, but only after a five year wait starting from the date on which they have received refugee status. Refugee advocates, recognizing the implications of an added five year wait in limbo for those who were in fact deemed to be Convention refugees by the IRB, pushed hard for these regulations to be changed to a two year wait at most. Nonetheless, on January 30, 1997, the regulations came into force.

The Minister explained in her Press Release:

> En ma qualité de ministre responsable de l'immigration au Canada, je dois m'assurer que toutes les dispositions nécessaires sont prises pour établir les antécédents et la moralité des personnes qui demandent la résidence permanente. Par ailleurs, il faut faire en sorte que nos pratiques en matière d'asile ne fassent l'objet d'abus de la part de ceux qui cherchent à dissimuler leur identité et que le Canada continue de faire preuve de générosité à l'endroit de ceux qui méritent notre protection (Communiqué 97-05: Jan. 22, 1997).

The Minister is saying that there may be some immoral people among those without documents so we had better punish everyone to make sure that we don't land any immoral ones by mistake. However, the way these measures are taken, it could seem she is talking

about the lack of morality of people just because they are in situations, very typical to refugees, where they do not have the kinds of ID documents the Immigration Officials are satisfied with. The problems of family separation, lack of access to professional training, bank loans, higher education and such, could be a part of the lives of refugees in the unfortunate situation of not having "satisfactory" documents for as long as ten years.

5. Carrier Sanctions

Another aspect of Bill C-86 which is of concern to those looking after refugee rights, is the implementation of a system whereby transporters, such as aircraft and sea vessels, are required to pay "administration fees" to cover expenses incurred by the government when a person is brought in improperly documented[9]. The fees amount to $5,000 to $3,200 for each passenger or stowaway brought in. Airlines who sign a memorandum of understanding with CIC would have reduced fees, and would accept the responsibility of checking the passengers' documents.

On May 29, 1996, six Taiwanese sailors, the captain and crew of a Taiwanese cargo vessel were arrested in Halifax for the murder of three Romanian stowaways. When the ship had docked in Halifax, four Filipino crew members jumped ship and told the tales of murder. On March 6, 1997, a Canadian judge discharged the sailors because he decided he had no jurisdiction to extradite them to Romania to face murder charges.

At a meeting with CIC officials, the CCR pointed out that they "should be concerned with the possibility that fines create incentive for murder, or other forms of violence short of murder" (in Musa and Mossallanejad 1997:9). The government officials responded that if they were to remove the fees, then they would "remove the incentives for carriers to implement restrictive measures and significantly increase the number of stowaways (including refugee claimants) brought to Canada" (op. cit.: 9) Thus, despite efforts by advocates to illustrate the "link between carrier sanctions and increasing reports

[9] This is not the same concept as needing ID documents for landing. One is improperly documented if they do not have the right papers for landing. For example, one could have a passport but no Canadian visa.

around the world of ship captains' resorting to harsh treatments, violence and even murder of stowaways to avoid paying fines" (op. cit.: 9), the officials fail to take responsibility.

6. Appointments to the IRB

A problem also exists with the appointment of IRB members. Many of the members of the Convention Refugee Determination Division are there by way of patronage appointments rather than due to their qualifications for the position. Nancy Worsfold of the CCR pointed out in an interview with the media that "it's pork-barrel appointments where people are named to jobs [that pay] over $90,000 a year" (*in* Kumar 1994). Rather than experience with human rights or refugee issues, she says, their only qualifications are their connections.

Stewart Istvanffy has a parallel view:

> There are people who are political nominations to the IRB. The problem is particularly severe in the Montréal area. There are some people who are completely incompetent, who are against refugees who have been named to the IRB who just should not be there. There are people who have no sympathy for refugees at all, do not believe in human rights, and just think that there are too many colored people who are trying to get in to this country.
>
> The Board is supposed to be an independent body. I do not believe it is fully independent. I believe that there is fairly open communication between government and the IRB, and that the perceptions of the immigration department (i.e. that they're accepting too many people, that it's too easy), are now shared to some extent in the IRB. So yes, in law, it's independent. In practice there are great political and institutional pressures being brought.

There exists an advisory committee on IRB nominations which includes non-governmental representatives. Although CIC claims that this committee has input on the appointments, the non-governmental contingent argue that they don't. They have input only on the very first round of eliminations. They can eliminate the worst candidates, but after that there is a huge list left for the Minister's discretion. Minister Robillard has consistently undermined the input the committee has on who is appointed. The non-governmental contingent see this as a sort of a trick - the Minister is able to say that the committee has input on who is appointed. She uses this as a rubber stamp for the appointment process when in reality it is still mostly at the discretion of the Cabinet.

7. Skepticism and (mis)conceptions of Board Members

Marie Louise Côté, a Montréal refugee lawyer here tells of some of the problems at refugee hearings:

> We mostly have problems with Board Members saying 'I don't believe you. I don't believe what you're saying.' More than a problem with the definition is applying it. The discretionary power of the decision maker is to determine if -well, the easy thing is 'does this person contradict himself or herself within the same hearing?' but then the nasty one, is "is what you're saying possible, reasonable, coherent, can what you're saying really happen?" and this is where I find that we have the most difficulty. 'I don't understand, I find it strange that you would not do such a thing, or that you did such a thing, and I don't understand why you think this way'. So that's pretty nasty, and I figure this world is so weird: reality is often- it goes beyond what you can imagine. And yet when you get into a hearing, reality suddenly has to fit in this rational box, that includes the definition. You want to fit things in it. So the problem is more- I think it goes beyond the definition. It's how to perceive reality and be aware that reality is complex, especially outside of this place. So it's very restrictive. So I don't see how, for example, changing the definition would solve the problem. It's much more a way of perceiving reality.
>
> I find that the Board Members are coming from usually powerful positions in the society. They're taught to believe the state because the state has been good to them. The presumption is that the state does not do wrong. So prove to me that the state is doing wrong. The more a state is repressive, the less evidence that we'll manage to get (interview, 1995).

Stewart Istvanffy pointed out (in a 1995 interview that I conducted with him) that he also came across problems with skepticism at the IRB hearings:

> Basically I find that they'll hypocritically look for small contradictions or incoherencies in order to find a reason not to believe, that they have a very intense level of skepticism, where they're looking for almost anything that can be turned around to attack the person's credibility and they're really thinking of themselves as sort of – the bad ones, I mean-- are thinking of themselves as sort of immigration police, who control our borders- and they're not thinking of what they do as part of a framework of international human rights where they're protecting people who are fleeing from serious human rights abuses, They don't see the connection between their work and political regimes and human rights problems in other countries. They have a very unimaginative and banal view of what their role is.

A couple of years later, in 1997, Istvanffy still had tales to tell of the IRB:

> Often, they're asking lawyers, even lawyers of experience such as myself, they're saying- 'listen, we would like the Refugee Hearing Officers to start with questioning, and you question afterwards, because we admit that the person's going to say the same stories as in their written declaration'. I say 'no, but just a second- do you admit that [their story] is true?' They say 'no'no we don't admit that it's true, but we admit they're going to say the same thing'. I say 'listen, credibility is the issue. I want my client to be able to tell his story, for you to be able to evaluate his credibility fairly'. Now there's often a discussion, an argument on this point, and generally they let me have the person tell their story, but it creates bad feeling at the beginning...When you start with just questions about detail, it is

> not a natural way for the people to tell their story. I have the most recent book by Guy Goodwin Gill[10], one of the international authorities in refugee law. He quotes international studies that say the best way to get at the truth with refugee claimants is to have them in a free flow narrative where they are allowed to tell their story.

Rosemary Hnatiuk told me that some of the Board Members may give negative responses due to personal beliefs:

> In the 40's there was a guy in Immigration Canada [Blair- a top immigration official] who personally was responsible for refusing Jewish refugees from the Third Reich- that saw to it that every [request] for asylum in Canada came to his desk. He said no to every single one. And the only way that you could get in [was] people that knew this would take advantage of this when he was on holidays. When somebody else was doing his caseload. This has been documented in a book[11]. So that's the kind of mentality that still exists in the Immigration department. It's still very much alive.

Aside from skepticism from the Board Members, lawyers are also dealing with misconceptions. Gilad (1990) states that it is critical to note:

> that "experts" in government, in the legal profession, and in the settlement arena are also frequently wrong in their assumptions, beliefs about the origins and motivations of refugee flight, the misunderstandings which arise when settlement workers and civil servants interact with refugees, and cultural assumptions about refugees are frequently founded upon inaccurate sources of information, and sometimes, upon ethnocentrism (300).

Istvanffy has a related story to tell:

> There's a question how you evaluate people- they could ask me after this meeting 'how many people were there?' At a glance, I would say, 20 to 25 people. Now at a meeting, there could be a hundred, two hundred people, now you ask people from some parts of the third world, they'd say 'many'. 'How many?' 'Oh a great deal'. When you want them to quantify, this is not part of their cultural background. And you push them and push them to quantify, and finally they will quantify, but they won't necessarily be right, because the numbers aren't that important to them. What is important to them is the truth of what happened, the event, but when the fixation is on these secondary points, it is easy to say 'well, there were only a hundred people there, how would the government have found out about it?'

Marie Louise Côté told me of the following case, which was at first refused, and then due to an administrative oversight, was re- assessed:

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[10] Goodwin-Gill, Guy S. 1996. The Refugee in International Law. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[11] Matas, David 1989. Closing the Doors: The Failure of Refugee Protection. Toronto: Sumerhill Press. *Also* Abella, Irving M. and Harold Troper 1982. None is too many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948. Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys.

> She came from Germany but was a Turkish citizen. She had moved from Turkey [to Germany] with her family when she was four, She comes from a very religious Muslim family, with a tendency to be slightly orthodox about it. She has two brothers, father mother, and she starts being abused sexually by her father and her brother. A series of horrible things. And you just look at her, and she carries these aggressions in her eyes. I remember when I looked into her eyes the first time I just thought, it's nearly intolerable to look into her eyes because there's so much pain. And her whole demeanor, you could see she was so insecure.
>
> A series of incredible things happened to her - straight clear heavy duty abuse for several years. She was prevented from going on with her education because they decided that she would make a good wife, so why waste the time. Then her family decides to marry her to a 70 year old Turkish man who lives in Turkey, and she will be spending the rest of her life in Turkey. A forced marriage, so she gets out. She runs away, comes here.

Her claim was based on forced marriage, as that would possibly comprise a criteria to fit into the category of 'persecution' as would be necessary for refugee status. Also because the refugee definition requires it, there needed to be evidence that if she did return to Turkey, she would not receive protection from the state. Côté could not find evidence easily. She wrote to Turkish groups, and they had nothing. She managed to find three little newspaper articles saying that a woman in her situation would not be protected- and this was small but crucial evidence. Marie Louise said:

> The hearing lasted all day, and she cried through it. The hearing officer who works for the government was going on and on about why can't you go to Turkey? You don't know, you've never lived there, just don't marry the guy, forget about it.

Many of the administrators of Canada's refugee policy generally lack this type of experience of social subjugation, therefore they are unable to understand the discourse of the claimants as they describe the persecution they have experienced. There are also the problematics of ethnocentrism with the issue of cross cultural understanding, as well as the self- interest of some government members who wish to keep their jobs by catering to the political demands of the current Liberal government. This combination of factors has hindered many of the members of the Immigration and Refugee Board to be as objectively humanitarian and compassionate as they claim to be.

Gilad urged those who hold the power to open the gates to persons seeking asylum and "relax procedures which are presently designed to promote national interests above all else" (4). This would be done, she explained, by broadening the knowledge and

understanding of the people who are refugees and the experiences they have been through prior to arriving in Canada.

viii) Conclusion- Not Just Numbers?

The Canadian refugee determination system has claimed to apply principles which are valid universally. Whether these principles are, in fact, universal is questionable. The application of these principles in the legal system does not entail an objective assessment of whether someone is "a refugee" or not. It's clear that rules such as the requirement of "satisfactory" identification documents are not designed for the sake of protecting refugees. The administration of the system has clearly had self- interested motives within its humanitarian facade. There are problems not only of discrepancies in the multiple discourses but also with the situatedness of the Canadian government and the government representatives within the global order. As seen by looking at some of the administrators of Canada's refugee policy, lack of experience of social subjugation, self-interest and ethnocentrism have hindered them to be objectively humanitarian and compassionate. Even when there are members who try to be humanitarian and compassionate (subjectively) there is still a discrepancy about which individuals have credible stories, what the overall aim of accepting refugees should be, and which situations should fit into the categories laid out in the refugee definitions. The humanitarian element touted by the CIC is undermined by their inability to take into account the many diversities they are dealing with.

Policies and funding cutbacks, as we have seen, are creating some very devastating situations for refugees coming to Canada. As Stephan said, if the advocates were not making the effort to assess how these situations affect refugees- to bring the human elements into a look at government policy and practice- and to fight for a better situation, then the government certainly wouldn't do so either. By looking qualitatively at the policies and procedures rather than quantitatively, as the government representatives seem to do, these advocates are able to perceive where the system doesn't work for the people it is purportedly designed to work for.

The advocates we have met so far, Stephan, Rivka, Janet, Rosemary, Stewart and Marie-Louise, are all active in this struggle for refugee rights. By sharing their stories and assessments of the current policies and procedures they are a crucial part of the network of information sharing which empowers them and other advocates and ultimately those who are refugees. The motives of these characters are part of what create the affinity group that is a community of advocates which is based less on place than on social networks. Their qualitative, or people-based critical analyses question the status quo, the perceived 'natural' order of things, de-center the hegemonic perceptions which are currently making life difficult and often painful for those who have come to Montréal seeking protection and trying to be accepted by the authorities as worthy of the label 'refugee'.

Now that we have seen why these advocates do what they do, the next part of my story will be a closer look at this social network of information sharing which is in place and functioning the way that it does due to the concerns and energies of the advocates who, in combination with the information spreading mechanisms, *are* the network.

Chapter Three: Refugee Advocacy and off-line networking

i) Meet the *Table*

I'll begin this part of the story by introducing the Table off-line as I know it. The *Table de Concertation des organismes de Montréal au service des Réfugiés* (or TCMR or the Table, pronounced [tabl] as the French word would be) is an umbrella organization for, as the name suggests, organizations in Montréal who are at the service of refugees, more particularly applicants for refugee status, and more generally, newcomers. There are 95 member organizations (as counted June 1998[12] - see appendix E for list) with great diversity in terms not only of backgrounds and specific focus, but also of needs. The Table was founded in 1979 and since then the organization has undergone a considerable expansion in terms of its mandate, as well the amount of influence and recognition it enjoys. Having begun as an organization focused only on the reception and resettlement of the South East Asian Boat People arriving in Montréal they now include assistance to refugees from any part of the world and newcomers in general (i.e. including non-refugee immigrants) as part of their scope and a variety of different projects which I shall introduce in the following pages.

There are five people employed by the Table; the director, the administrative secretary, the coordinator of the training sessions, a researcher and a research assistant. There are seven people on the board of directors, who are all volunteers for that role, and one volunteer who helps in the maintenance of TIM (that's me!).

A large part of the work of the Table relies upon the volunteer work of members, the board of directors, and the extra hours put in by the staff, which are crucial for the functioning of the Table, and which are unpaid due to financial constraints. The Table is a non-profit, independent, incorporated organization. Like the great majority of community organizations in North America, the financial situation is constantly precarious. It is only as of January 1998 that the Table has received a sustaining grant from the *Ministère des*

[12] This number fluctuates with time.

Relations avec les Citoyens et de l'Immigration du Québec (MRCI). For 18 years, neither the MRCI nor any other governmental bodies had financially recognized the role and the work that the Table had taken on as a coalition and umbrella organization, meaning that there was no financial government support for the general functioning of the organization. The Table had been receiving funding from the *Conseil Québecois sur la Recherche Sociale* (CQRS) for a research project, and there has been some revenue received from the MRCI for training sessions. This did not provide an adequate budget. Even now with the sustaining grant from the MRCI, the Table is not dependent on any single financial source which would support all the work which takes place through the organization; instead, the funding sources continue to be diverse.

The main objectives of the Table are: to facilitate the exchange of information, as well as concertation and collaboration among those who work close to refugees and immigrant persons; to identify the needs and the available resources to defend the rights of refugees and to bring them the necessary aid to assist their settlement in Québec; to promote the development and bettering of services offered to refugee claimants, to refugees, and to newcomers; to sensitize and inform the receiving community about the reality of newcomers and to stimulate intercultural dialogue.

The Table office is open weekdays from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and receives numerous calls for information and referrals pertaining to refugees and newcomers, on topics such as the legal process, governmental services, the community and ethnocultural organizations, etc. The network of contacts, across the network of member organizations and governmental services, permits the Table to refer people according to their needs and their requests.

Here is how Stephan, the general director of the Table, described 'what he does' ;

> Moi je coordonne, je m'occupe de la coordination. Ce que je fais moi, c'est tout ce que les autres ne font pas <laugh> donc je m'occupe beaucoup d'administration, de financement, trouver l'argent pour faire fonctionner l'organisme, assurer cinq salaires, donc il y a toute la question de demandes de subventions, rapports pour les bailleurs de fonds, trouver de l'argent chaque année. Ensuite, j'organise: je m'occupe d'organiser les activités régulières comme les réunions mensuelles tous

les mois, planifier, organiser les réunions mensuelles, et en plus on a tous les mois des réunions juste avec les organismes de services [Regroupement des Organismes au Service des Nouveaux Arrivants, ou ROSNA]. Ce volet-là est devenu très important, en fait, pour la Table. Au cours des années, on crée un comité aviseur avec le Ministère de l'immigration du Québec qui est le lieu de concertation entre les organismes communautaires et le ministère sur toutes les questions d'accueil, d'établissement, d'intégration des immigrants et des réfugiés, donc il faut alimenter le comité aviseur. Oui, donc il y a ce volet-là, et depuis deux, trois ans aussi - c'est moi qui a un peu poussé ça - notre réseau communautaire qu'on appelle secteur immigration et communauté interculturelle, c'est arrivé au réseau communautaire. Historiquement, notre réseau était toujours un peu à part, marginal, par rapport aux autres réseaux communautaires comme les femmes ou écologistes ou la Santé Services sociaux - il existe au Québec plusieurs réseaux comme ça de groupes communautaires depuis les années 70, donc [des groupes] qui ont des structures. Nous, on a toujours été un peu à l'extérieur, donc on a essayé de se rapprocher de ces réseaux-là. Aussi de partager des informations, de mieux se connaître, parce que le réseau communautaire québécois était traditionnellement loin des immigrants. Le réseau des organismes communautaires immigrants ne se s'ont jamais identifiés à l'histoire communautaire québécoise. Depuis deux, trois ans, il y a eu un rapprochement et je suis assez actif dans le regroupement de tous ces réseaux-là. Je défends un peu les intérêts des organismes communautaires interculturels à ce niveau-là, aussi au niveau du gouvernement du Québec. En ce moment on est en train d'élaborer avec le gouvernement du Québec une nouvelle politique de reconnaissance du communautaire. Nous sommes très présents dans cette démarche pour être reconnu, alors ça aussi ça prend beaucoup de temps. Sinon, on est très sollicité, bien sûr, à tous les niveaux: ville de Montréal, gouvernement du Québec, Régie, ou enfin, toutes les institutions qui veulent avoir des représentants des organismes communautaires. C'est un peu nous qui jouons toujours le rôle d'envoyer des représentants, des fois c'est moi, des fois c'est quelqu'un d'autre de la Table qui y va. Je pense qu'actuellement on siège sur 11 comités consultatifs réguliers avec les différents gouvernements (fédéral, provincial, municipal, local), enfin tout.

Un gros travail aussi, c'est de faire connaître toute la question d'immigration. En fait, s'il y a un problème - soit les médias, les journaux, télévision , radio - dès qu'il y a un problème au niveau de l'immigration, on nous appelle pour essayer de comprendre c'est quoi le problème, ou notre position. On écrit des communiqués, on écrit des mémoires. On transmet beaucoup l'information que nous recevons d'Ottawa ou de Québec qui n'ont souvent pas le temps d'être vraiment à jour, surtout sur la question du dossier d'immigration et des réfugiés qui est très complexe. Donc cela demande au moins une mise à jour qui est vraiment quotidienne, puis ça évolue tellement vite. On s'assure d'être toujours à jour et puis de diffuser cette information, de donner accès à cette information aux organismes qui, eux, ont besoin de cette information pour travailler auprès de la clientèle. Nous, on ne travaille pas auprès de la clientèle, on n'a pas de services directs, mais des fois, on a des clients qui appellent, des réfugiés qui ont des problèmes, des fois ils appellent chez nous. Si on peut les aider au téléphone, leur donner des conseils, on le fait, mais on essaye de les référer vers un organisme qui prend charge ou s'occupe de leur dossier.

Au niveau gouvernemental, les différents ministères, les différents secteurs gouvernementaux, ont des problèmes de communication horizontale. Souvent on joue un rôle de lien entre le ministère de l'Éducation, le ministère de l'Immigration, le ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, le ministère de la Culture. Si il y a un problème lié aux immigrants, ils nous appellent pour nous demander notre opinion, comment ça fonctionne, qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire.

Les intervenants doivent être multidisciplinaires, doivent connaître autant la problématique des allocations familiales, d'un bail, comment fonctionne un permis de conduire, des aspects que les intervenants doivent connaître et nous aussi quand il y a des changements.

I asked Rivka to tell me about how the Table's mandate had evolved since its creation in 1979:

Well in part the mandate has evolved as the outside world has evolved. When we started, we started with a need to work together around reception and settlement of South East Asian Boat People- there were groups that had been doing this work for quite a few years with different successive waves of immigrants and refugees, others had got excited and involved for the first time because of the whole publicity. So that's how we began, and bit by bit other issues and other dossiers came along. First of all the Table decided- we, the people who were first involved- decided that they liked the idea of working together in this way and wanted to continue but didn't want to just be dealing with refugees from South East Asia so we enlarged the mandate to refugees from wherever, and then in the next while other groups came along and also there were other situations that were evolving very quickly- or evolve is probably the wrong word- so we very quickly had - we were listening to presentations about Haitian boat people that were stuck somewhere in the Caribbean and the Bahamas and that was right around the time that the American interdictions started, and then we had very - refugees started coming from Central America and from- and they were coming as 'claimants'. They weren't coming as 'selected overseas' and so there started to be a problem with the refugee determination system that there was at the time. Then the backlog had started building up with claimants and the crises that developed around that, and so they had to start: a) finding out more about what was going on in those countries - Sri Lanka and El Salvador, Guatemala etcetera, and issues around refugee claimants which were very very different from 'how do you resettle people who are selected overseas'. And initially we were completely volunteer, in the sense that a lot of people worked for their agencies but the work of the coalition was completely volunteer and most of what happened, happened at the meetings, and we would have the meetings, we decided certain things, and we exchanged information, people undertook tasks and that was about it, and then it would be good if somebody volunteered to do the minutes, bit by bit- it's the same evolution everywhere. We realized we needed some kind of secretarial support, and so we got a little grant and got a part time secretary. As the issues evolved and as the whole movement across Canada grew for a new refugee determination system - the focus shifted very quickly. We always remained concerned and remained involved in the whole issue of refugees selected overseas but the refugee claimants and refugee determination, a fair system, became a focus for a lot of groups across the country who built alliances bit by bit with our colleagues across Canada and then a lot of it of course is in response to what's going on. In response to government initiatives, in response to ministerial conferences, in response to change in policy, so the big emphasis over the years became the whole refugee determination system. And at the same time, we continued to work on settlement and resettlement and selection overseas. Some agencies have always been involved with the resettlement of immigrants or refugees who were selected overseas and others were almost entirely involved with claimants- we try to find the balance between the two. Initially (in 1979) it was a *regroupement* of two *regroupements*. There was the Québec Committee to Save the Boat People, and there was another group of people.

> But I got involved because JIAS [Jewish Immigrant Aid Services, where Rivka was employed at the time] was involved and because we were one of the agencies that had been doing this for a long time and we knew a lot about sponsorship. Because we'd been doing sponsorship from other countries.

I also asked Stephan to tell me about 'how the mandate had evolved':

> Quand je suis arrivé à la Table, c'était surtout la question des réfugiés, mais c'était aussi de créer un réseau communautaire plus cohérent, plus fort, plus structuré, et c'est ça en fait ce qu'est devenu la Table. Maintenant, c'est un réseau d'organismes communautaires avec des objectifs communs qui touchent les réfugiés, les immigrants. Alors qu'avant c'était plus le problème des réfugiés, et puis tout les gens qui s'intéressaient aux réfugiés venaient à la Table. C'est ça qui a évolué beaucoup. Le contexte, la conjoncture en général au Québec depuis 10-15 ans, je veux dire les groupes communautaires et les groupes de base ont beaucoup évolué. Ils jouent un rôle plus important, il y a plus de financement, l'État a besoin des communautaires parce que lui-même n'a plus les moyens d'offrir les services publics, donc c'est moins cher pour l'État de faire appel aux groupes communautaires.

a) Who are the member organizations?

The members of the Table are community or parapublic[13] organizations who work with refugees and newcomers in the areas of reception, settlement and integration, as well as in the area of advocacy. These organizations must be legally incorporated and pay an annual fee of $45. Member organizations have a voting right at the annual general meetings as well as at any special meetings (i.e. once in a while there are special strategy and planning meetings for non-governmental participants only) and are eligible for positions on the Board of Directors. One person from each organization will be considered an official member and have voting rights.

CARI St. Laurent (Centre d'Accueil et de Référence pour Immigrants) is a member organization of the Table. CARI has been in existence since 1989 and is located in Ville St. Laurent. It is a non-profit organization which, as described in their introductory pamphlet, receives and helps immigrants with settlement, and provides assistance for personal, social and professional integration. CARI offers various services, including: a listening service where people can have individual meetings with the staff; information on such topics as

[13] 'Parapublic' organizations are social services such as school boards, or health services which are public services, government run, yet not part of any government ministry- the employees work for the state but they are not government officials, they do not work directly for any Ministry.

immigration and employment programs, health, education, housing, interpretation, translation, and emergency services; *jumelage*, or pairing between Québécois and newcomers - or, as they say at CARI, neo-Québécois people; popular education and francisation, which includes introduction to Québécois life, literacy courses and French courses; a *Femmes du Monde* program which includes rotating house visits, collective activities and a mutual help network for all women, including collaborations with non-immigrant women; employment support, including job search workshops; and sociocultural activities, such as intercultural get-togethers and excursions.

Natasha Normand is a representative of CARI who participates in the Table, and regularly attends the training sessions. Here she describes her job when she first started at CARI, with the *Femmes du Monde* group:

> C'était l'intervenant d'un groupe de femmes, le groupe qui s'appelle Femmes du Monde qui demandait une animatrice communautaire. C'était animer des groupes de support. Et le but de ça, c'était de favoriser [...] la population, les femmes isolées - c'est souvent elles qui sont les dernières à s'intégrer dans la société pour des raisons - des fois c'est la langue qu'elles ne parlent pas, et elles y vont pas nécessairement sur le marché du travail, donc elles restent à la maison, quand les enfants sont partis, si elles n'ont pas appris le français ou si elles n'ont pas pratiqué - car elles peuvent être allées au COFI [*Centre d'orientation et de formation des immigrants* - language school for newcomers subsidized by the government], mais elles reviennent chez elles et puis continuent de parler la langue de leur pays. Bon, mais quand les enfants partent, 10 ans, 15 ans, elles se trouvent qu'elle ne parlent pas le français, et puis elle n'a plus ses intermédiaires. Ça peut être soit des personnes que ça fait même longtemps qu'elles sont ici et sont isolées quand même. Des femmes, ou des jeunes femmes qui arrivent qui ont toutes leurs enfants - quatre, cinq, six enfants, qui pour des raisons familiales, ne quitteront pas le foyer familial pour avoir de plus des plaisirs pour soi, de faire des choses pour elles, au lieu de pour les enfants. Alors nous, on avait monté une garderie sur place, donc elles ne peuvent pas dire 'Ah! mes enfants, il faut que je m'en occupe'. Donc le but de tout ça, c'est qu'elles sortent de chez elles, qu'elles rencontrent d'autres femmes qui sont plus ou moins dans la même situation qu'elles.
>
> Ça c'était un peu la description de cette tâche-là ... Ça, ça m'intéressait comme travail de faire ça. J'ai fait ça pendant à peu près un an, des activités comme la couture - c'est pas moi qui donnait des cours mais je me chargeais à ce que les femmes viennent, monter le cours - et puis des sorties, que les femmes connaissent un peu plus Montréal, utiliser le transport en commun, prendre le train (parce qu'il y a un train à Montréal), se promener à droite, à gauche, qu'elles connaissent les endroits comme les marchés aux puces ou des petits parcs, des choses comme ça. Qu'elles sortent de chez elles, c'est vraiment le but. C'est ça, je me suis intéressée dans cette dynamique-là, on avait une très bonne équipe de travail.

Currently, Natasha is no longer involved with the *Femmes du Monde* group, however what she does at CARI remains multifaceted:

> Là, présentement mon emploi c'est dans l'accueil et établissement - tu sais, le PAEI [*Programme d'accueil, établissement et installation* funded by the MRCI]. Moi je m'occupe que tout fonctionne bien dans le PAEI. Je suis intervenante communautaire, alors je reçois les gens, je relis leurs besoins, mais aussi je m'occupe de la gestion de l'information, comme TIM, entre autres. Tout ce qui est - tous les changements là, c'est effrayant depuis un an et demi tous les changements que le gouvernement provincial apporte dans ses ministères, changements de programmes, changements de mesures, comment c'est d'appliquer, si on a des revendications à faire, parce que c'est trop trop de coupures, alors je vois à ce que les dossiers soient bien compris des intervenants, ce qui est pas toujours évident.
>
> On est une équipe multiculturelle alors c'est un beau défi, moi je suis la plus jeune, donc c'est un autre défi pour moi, j'anime les réunions à chaque semaine dans l'équipe d'accueil, je fais quand même pas mal de choses. Je m'occupe aussi de la promotion de l'accueil, que les clients puissent venir, c'est quand même que, dans certains organismes, il y a une chute, il y a une baisse de clientèle, et je pense que c'est quand même pas mal généralisé. Et puis ça c'est pour l'accueil, et je m'occupe de jumelage aussi.

The Jewish Immigrant Aid Service (JIAS) is the oldest non-governmental organization in Canada working with immigrants, and the Montréal office is a member of the Table. JIAS, a national organization in existence since the 1920s, is funded mostly by donations from the Jewish community, as well as by grants from the federal and provincial governments. The services offered by JIAS include immigration counseling; resettlement and integration services- including referral and information, resettlement counseling, integration programs (such as French language instruction, adaptation information and support, translation services, cultural activities, and the Family -to-Family Program where Jewish families in Montréal offer friendship and moral support to newcomers); financial assistance (eligibility determined based on financial situation); and partnership (according to their introductory pamphlet: "While you bear the primary responsibility for your success, JIAS is here as a partner to help you achieve all that you can"). Making particular efforts to help Jews from countries where they are vulnerable and their freedom to participate in Jewish life is restricted, JIAS's services include para-legal aid for refugees.

Ber Lazarus has been an employee of JIAS since 1992, working with refugees mostly coming from the former Soviet Union. Here he describes his role there:

I've got a very strange job at work. Part of it is- I do intake. I'm the gatekeeper who decides who becomes a client of JIAS, who doesn't. Now one would have thought that would be rather simple. Basic objective criteria of how long you've been in the country, what's your immigration status, all this kind of stuff. You have to keep your caseload to a certain level or else you'll become totally swamped. It used to be five years, then it was cut down to three years, and now the mandate is two years. So if you've been in the country for two years or longer then you can't be a client. The rationale is that for resettlement purposes, if you've been here two years, you pretty much know how to get around. And a lot of our work deals with just resettlement issues, people who know they're going to be- they're landed immigrants. That's the majority of the cases. The majority of the clients. So, getting kids into school, finding work, learning the language, all this kind of stuff. If you've been here two years you've probably been doing it, if you haven't then there's probably not much we can help you with. And so people come and they meet with me, and I find out who they are, and one of the problems we've come up against is that some people pretend that they're Jews, but they're not.

The Russians discovered that there was suddenly an advantage to being a Jew because Jews coming over from the Soviet Union for the last five years or so- or longer actually- were more likely to be accepted as claimants for reasons of anti-semitism. Also in '89- '90 you could only get out to go to Israel- or at least you could get out much more readily if you had a visa to go to Israel. To get a visa you had to be Jew, you had to have at least one grandparent. So suddenly the population - maybe it doubled.

In Russia after the second war, Stalin instituted a policy whereby everyone had their nationality written in their birth certificates in their internal passports. And you were Kazak, or Tajik, or Russian, or Ukrainian, or a Jew. And so they had this documentation which attested in some form to the fact that someone in their family- their mother, their father, had been or still is a Jew. So they'd come over here and say 'yeah I'm a Jew'. And then it turned out that they weren't. A few people started complaining. Saying listen- you've accepted these people and there's no connection. And so we started looking more closely, and basically it became my job to determine through documents through interviews- then we would give them a letter saying that they were members of the community, because we've been asked by lawyers to provide some kind of letter, because it would lend weight to their hearing at the [Immigration and Refugee] Board, and then that letter started being used as confirmation that people were Jewish. And you know, I've been accused of being worse than the KGB, which is rubbish but you know, still.

At one point, a couple came to see me and they said they had been sent by one of the commissioners of the Board, the story went something like this- that they had their hearing, and at the end of the hearing, he had turned off the taperecorder and said 'by the way' have you been to JIAS? And they said 'no' and he said 'why not'? So he sent them and said 'it might be a good idea' wink wink nod nod 'if you were to get a letter from JIAS. He thinks he's saving the Board from all the fraud. So he sent them to me, and I interviewed them, and I wasn't sure whether they were Jewish or they weren't Jewish. I mean it's very often the case that you just don't know. You think, 'well, maybe it's possible, and maybe not'. We generally err on the side of inclusion. I don't want to be the person who's going to definitely say you're not, when you are. So I gave them a letter. Right on the spot. I said 'fine'. And I did it particularly because *he* asked for it. So what followed was really quite something.

Within a short while I got a call from one of the hearing officers, and he said 'we need to know, how it is you decide who gets these letters'. I said 'well, I can't really tell you' he said 'well, you're going to have to send us some kind of information about how you decide who gets these letters, because we need to

know'. And I stalled and I stalled and I really didn't want to write anything, and then he said 'well if you don't, we're going to subpoena you to testify at this case' I only found out later that they had no power to subpoena anybody. They were just threatening me, and they were bluffing, and I fell for it. So OK, I said, I'm not going to come and testify because I have no intention of testifying in any one particular case, especially if they're clients of the agency. I'm not going to put myself in a situation where my testimony might contribute to their rejection. So, I wrote three pages, basically saying that it was impossible to decide 100% that anyone is or isn't, that essentially he or she that declares him or herself as such- why would anyone do it? Throughout history, who in their right mind would do it necessarily, right? It's anomalous, it's just not an experience that we have faced in our history a great deal. So I said frankly, I saw no reason why a refugee claimant coming claiming to have been persecuted for reasons of anti-semitism needs to be a member of any local ethnic group. The point of the claim is based on what happened there. Any reasonable fear of persecution. On the *belief* that someone is a member of a particular group. Their associations with groups here are completely irrelevant, or ought to be. But what they've done is that they've brought the two together and said 'OK if you're going to be accepted here, and we're going to believe that you really are a member of that group, then you have to be member of this group. And if they're not going to accept you, then we're not going to accept you'. So I accepted everybody. So that didn't sit too well with them.

Recently there was another case that [a refugee lawyer] had, and he was getting the same kind of thing. They were saying well 'why don't you know what gefilte fish is?' Why don't you know the name 'gefilte fish' You should know Yiddish'. The woman had been born in the mid-thirties, in Siberia. Now obviously these people had no conception of what Siberia must have been like in the 1930s during the Stalin purges. We had millions upon millions people destitute- totally destitute with rags on their backs, and Gulag, and they're going to be worried about gefilte fish? It boggles the mind, right? So I wrote another piece, just saying that 'listen- a Jew can be a Jew, they don't have to believe in G-d, they can be an atheist and still call yourself a Jew, you don't have to know anything about gefilte fish, or any words in Yiddish for that matter.

So for people who don't know this, OK, but they should, because they're at the Board, and the problem is that fundamentally, they don't know. They don't know and they can't know any better than we know, who is who. And that's what frightens them I believe because they have very little way of actually determining, for some percentage of the cases, who is who. There are some objective criteria which don't really fit. You can't examine someone using cultural criteria, as you imagined it to have been, because you watched movies. It's way off track because it didn't happen, or it was erased. So as it turns out, the woman did know what gefilte fish is, but she doesn't know the word because she has a Russian word for it. It's just not part of her vocabulary. Somebody who was Yiddish speaking in Siberia forgot it very quickly. There was no advantage to pronouncing yourself to be a Jew, I believe.

So that's another form of advocacy that I've been involved in, trying to get [the Board Members] straightened out to some extent in that particular area - cultural translation. But it's very weird because they don't know and they have to make these decisions, and unfortunately they don't err on the side of inclusion. Their idea is that they have to protect us from these terrible people who are going to foist a fraud upon us. What's the terrible thing they're going to do? And I'm sure there are a few criminals amongst them, but so there are amongst independent immigrants.

To some extent, I find [the Montréal Jewish community] to be terribly obnoxious and rude sometimes and they don't treat their employees- in general, not only at JIAS, in general- they don't treat them very well, they certainly don't pay

them very well, but it's a job, right now. But it's more than a job, because the part of it that I'm really very interested in is to take the situations that are seemingly impossible and do something.

b) Monthly Meetings

On the first Wednesday of every month (except July and August) all the member organizations of the Table are invited to send at least one representative to the monthly meeting. These are held evenings on the premises of the Cathédrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde, courtesy of the Archbishop of Montréal. The large dimly lit room is painted canary yellow, and for every meeting people from the Table set up about 30 wooden bridge tables with three plastic folding chairs around each- all of which need to be put away again after each meeting. At the front of the room there is a long head table with two, three, or four chairs facing the other tables. There is either a clock or a crucifix hanging on the wall behind the head table- it seems to alternate randomly and I have not yet understood the pattern (I do surmise that for at least some of the meetings, there would be a clock instead of a cross because there was to be a written examination held in the room the next day). Every meeting, on a table set up by the entrance door, there are two sign-in sheets- one for the member organizations, and one for the non-member organizations. The names of the organizations are already listed and the reps can just sign their names in the appropriate spaces. Independent observers[14] can sign in at the end of the list. On this table one can find the proposed agenda of the night's meeting (although these are sent out by mail, fax or TIM to every member organization as well as to non-members who attend regularly, and who pay an annual fee of $20 to receive notification of all the meetings), and usually also some information sheets to pick up: some relevant to the topics of the night's meeting, some just as points of information, some are placed there by the community centres, often announcements of events, invitations to lectures, celebrations, and so on. Behind the information table is the green metal cabinet in which the amplifier for the microphone used

[14] Because you have to be a non-governmental organization to be a member of the Table, there are some individuals, not affiliated with any organization, who like to attend the meetings. Therefore, as well as governmental representatives attending the meetings as observers, there are also individuals such as lawyers, students, or professors who would be non-member, independent observers.

by the head table is kept. At the opposite end of the room are a couple of tables set up with a large coffee percolator, Styrofoam cups, sugar, milk, a few types of juices and a plate with a sign near it reading "contribution volontaire". There are a few paintings on the walls around the room, featuring landscapes, or portraits of children. There are nine large windows. At the December 1997 meeting a refugee lawyer and I were contemplating how if the walls were less bare the echoing sound in the room could be improved. There is a functional kitchen in the very back of the room, which is put to use by the Table for occasional special events, and at least once a year for the December meeting which doubles as a holiday season potluck.

The meetings are scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. Participants are encouraged to bring their supper and, as it says on every *proposition d'ordre du jour*: "la salle est ouverte dès 17h30 afin de permettre aux participants de casser la croûte ensemble". In my experience, the meetings don't actually start until around 6:30 p.m. The language of business at the meetings is exclusively French. To open, the person presiding at the meeting (who is usually, but not necessarily, the president of the Table, Rivka), welcomes everybody and announces the number of the meeting (the December 10, 1997 meeting, for example, was the '140ème Réunion Mensuelle'). At every meeting there are three steps to be taken before the *suivi des dossiers* can begin. First, the chair asks for someone to adopt the agenda. Sometimes people stand up and suggest items they would like to add to the agenda. One of the members moves the adoption of the agenda. Her or his name gets noted. Someone seconds it and their name is noted as well. Next, the minutes of the previous meeting are moved and seconded, and their names are recorded. The proceedings of the monthly meetings are recorded and are available for consultation, at the office of the Table, or via TIM. The third step is, for me, a very interesting one even though for the three years of going to these meetings I found this step to be nerve-racking (stage fright, I guess): Each person in the room- and there can be between 35 and 60 of us, on average about 50 people- stands up and one by one introduces themselves by giving their name and the organization

they represent (or states that they are there as individual observers). For example, come my turn, I stand up and say "Valérie Shamash, bénévole, Table de Concertation", which I usually can't hear myself say because my heart is pounding so hard. I must say that I believe for many of the others in the room this is an easy-going and casual process. There have been times when people would heckle or make little jokes at each other as they're introducing themselves, to make people laugh.

Although the number and composition of people is different every month, I have found that there seems to be a pattern whereby women comprise a significant majority-often doubling the number of men. The age range of those in attendance is also wide, seeming to vary between people in their twenties, perhaps in their first employment after obtaining a social work degree, to people past 70 years old who have been working in the area for years. Those in attendance are predominantly representatives of member organizations, although there are regularly a few non-members, similar numbers of governmental and non-governmental (unless it is a meeting reserved exclusively for non-governmental participants) (see Table 2).

These monthly meetings have been going on since the beginning of the Table in 1979. At each meeting there is a main theme which may be based on current events and there are updates on issues that touch upon reception, integration, and the defense of the rights of refugees and new immigrants in Québec and Canada. The meetings are principally addressed to the member organizations who work with refugees and new immigrants, though any organization, institution or individual interested in the subject may attend. Some of the non-members who participate regularly are representatives from different levels and sectors of the government such as CIC, MRCI, the IRB, the City of Montréal, different police corps, etc. These governmental observers may attend any meetings unless these are specified as being explicitly reserved for non-governmental participants. The people who attend the meetings have different origins, cultural backgrounds, and points of view, and

thus the meetings also offer an occasion to concretely live out intercultural relations in a francophone context.

Table 2: Monthly meetings attendance breakdowns- according to the signatures on the attendance sheets

DATE	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	# WOMEN	# MEN	# MEMBERS*	# GOV'T NON-MEMBERS	# OTHER NON-MEMBERS
JAN. 15 '97	52	40	12	42	04	06
FEB. 12 '97	61	36	25	43	09	09
MAR. 12 '97	32	22	10	21	n/a**	11
APR. 09 '97	48	32	16	30	07	11
MAY 14 '97	54	34	20	32	10	12
JUNE 18 '97	35	19	16	29	n/a**	06
SEP. 10 '97	46	31	15	34	04	08
OCT. 08 '97	54	36	18	41	07	06
NOV. 12 '97	57	43	14	41	09	07
DEC. 10 '97	47	30	17	35	06	06
JAN. 22 '98	53	36	17	42	n/a**	11
FEB. 11 '98	40	25	15	30	05	05
MAR. 11 '98	36	27	09	29	03	04
APR. 15 '98	50	35	15	33	08	09

*includes staff of the Table and volunteers **reserved for non-governmental participants

Stephan told me that since the last few years, membership attendance at the meetings has gone up about 80-90%:

> Les activités de la Table se sont diversifiées. Ce n'est pas juste les réunions mensuelles, il y a les autres activités aussi et la participation est beaucoup plus active à la Table. Ça fait deux ans maintenant - je pense qu'il y a une dynamique beaucoup plus intéressante depuis deux, trois ans.

When I asked him about the portion of members who attended the meetings regularly, he explained that there are a variety of factors:

> C'est difficile de dire des chiffres, mais la moitié des membres sont vraiment actifs et viennent régulièrement, 40, 50 organismes qui sont vraiment présents, actifs, et qui veulent avoir des feedbacks. Bon, les autres c'est les organismes qui pensent

> que c'est important d'être membre, pouvoir dire qu'ils sont membres de la Table et qui ne viennent pas pour toutes sortes de raisons. Ils disparaissent pendant un an et reviennent après. C'est souvent lié à des personnes. Il y a certains organismes qui sont là parce qu'il y a une personne dans l'organisme qui pense que c'est important et qui vient aux activités, puis quand la personne s'en va, l'organisme reste membre et puis il n'y a plus personne [qui vient aux réunions].
>
> L'idée des réunions le soir, c'est qu'au début, la Table, c'était beaucoup de bénévoles, des gens qui travaillaient quelque part mais qui militaient et qui ne pouvaient pas quitter leur travail. Mais maintenant il y a beaucoup moins de gens comme ça. Maintenant il y en a beaucoup moins parce que le réseau s'est beaucoup professionnalisé. C'est surtout les gens des organismes qui viennent. Avant c'était plus des comités d'action, des comités de défense des réfugiés. Ça a évolué avec le temps. Le réseau est beaucoup plus solide, il y a beaucoup plus d'organismes qui reçoivent de l'argent pour travailler avec les nouveaux arrivants, avec les réfugiés. On peut parler d'un corps professionnel.

When Stephan mentioned that people volunteer their free time to attend meetings after work hours, I realized that the people present must be present because they want to be, rather than simply because it is their 'job'. There are also often weekend activities. Stephan agreed with me that this is a reflection of a strong community spirit.

Noticing that most of the people present are women, and that many of those present do have young children it brings to mind that coming to the meetings in the evenings may also require childcare arrangements. Ber, for example, is a single father and although he finds the meetings very useful, does not attend them "mostly because of baby-sitting". There is another representative of JIAS who attends regularly. I did see Ber at the January and February 1998 meetings, though; the meetings which were focused on the discussion of the Legislative Review Report, and he was there, he explains,

> because of the report. Because I'm actively involved in preparing our brief to the consultation we expect to be invited to. So I want to be able to be part of- see what the Table is doing, so that I can bring information and positions back to our organization to make them at least fairly congruent. Because there's a tendency in the Jewish community sometimes to be kind of insular, and so it's important I think for people to have some kind of consistency, if not identical positions. A common front. I think we're all basically fighting the same battles.

Rivka is more often than not the person who chairs these meetings. Here she describes the role the meetings play in keeping the Table together:

> I think that one of the most amazing things about the Table is that they (the members) stick together. And that it IS quite a remarkable coalition which has

managed, I think even though the mandate has evolved[15]. I don't even know quite how we did it. Some of it was I think the credibility of my predecessors and also some luck to keep this together. I don't think we could ever create it now. And to keep a very disparate group together and build a kind of trust and confidence. And I think one of the things - because we've managed to keep it really quite transparent. There are the monthly meetings, people know what's going on, people participate. Some people feel intimidated at different points and that's a problem. And the ROSNA - the meetings with the settlement groups which happen- it's a lot of stuff. I mean there are a lot of moments - there's at least - the settlement agencies meet once a month and the whole Table meets once a month, and there's a lot of stuff that goes on publicly. And major issues are out there... and some people say "Oh I was never told about this" I say "look it was there at the meeting. You weren't [at that meeting]. Or it's in the .. "Ah j'ai pas lu" I say 'well read it.' And some people are 'comment ça ce fait? Moi j'étais pas au courant!' I say 'Well...' Anyway. So sometimes, people say it- you know- just because you sent it out doesn't mean that it got connected in and some people in good faith need- we need to think through how to communicate better. But other people are trying to pull a number on you so you have to distinguish between them. But generally we've managed to build up .. and it's hard sometimes because you're so in it- that you try to see from the outside a lot of competence and a lot of good ability - which is amazing considering how- what has been the fate of so many other coalitions over the years, and the fact that we have a very very disparate membership - it keeps growing and there's some interest there if people keep joining. A few have fallen away- but also what I think is interesting is that my predecessor, as president , who was Robert Beaupré who at the time was an abbé who was in charge of this dossier- refugees (for the Catholic Church). And was involved with all this volunteership, was in charge of all the sponsorship efforts. And he - he was quite a brilliant man and a very organized person and he - the form that [things have taken] was really- was under his leadership that it took shape- because way back- we used to - when we started we used to have these *interminable* meetings. We used to come to a meeting and never know when it was going to end, it was an endless agenda that people kept adding to - and so eventually people would trickle out, they would come knowing it was going to be a marathon and then leave - and we said this can't be. So we tried to create a little bit of a better structure. So the first proposal was very heavy. We said 'ach, this is too much'. It's just too structured- no it's too, too legalistic.

Well what we finally worked out was that - we came up with a structure that was organized but flexible and also the idea of running meetings with a framework so that people would know ahead of time - here's when we start, here's our target for finishing- so even if we run over it at least there's an idea that you're trying to finish at a certain hour. And the challenge is to get people up to speak but within a framework that people know ahead of time. That this is- you don't cut off the discussion- you say look- we're giving ourselves this much time- if you really need more time you know you can extend it- there's one central topic and we try to have some kind of framework and order to it - and that was something that he was very very good at doing, and creating a kind of atmosphere where we could discuss things . And also - and I think this was the most important thing- and now it seems so obvious but it wasn't obvious at the time- to create an atmosphere where - we're talking about refugees, no matter where they're from, that a refugee is a refugee whether it's from a left wing dictatorship or a right wing dictatorship - or somewhere in the middle, and that- of course everyone has their ideologies, but- and you have to know who's who and what's going on- but that we're not going to

[15] See pages 62-63 for a discussion of the historical changes in the mandate of the Table.

> discuss ideologies at this table. You park your ideology at the door. And you're not questioning, whether this one is more a refugee than the other one, and you have to develop this mutual respect and in fact people found out a lot that they didn't know before because - it's not obvious at the time, it wasn't obvious to a refugee from Chile why somebody from Poland was a refugee...and other kinds of situations people didn't know about and they had learn to know each other and to respect each other. And this wasn't obvious. And it did over time develop. I'm not saying everyone ... but at least there's that respect and that atmosphere, and I don't think that they even knew how challenging, how difficult what we were doing actually was, at some point we see in other situations where it just doesn't seem to work. It's amazing that we were able to do that.
>
> There's nothing that says anywhere that the president has to chair all the meetings. There was a time when we would rotate that chairing job. And that's one of the things I want to talk to the executive about, that people should take turns chairing. Because it's good experience, and.. it's hard. It's hard. It's exhausting. To chair those meetings. Especially making it look easy, or relaxed, it's hard, you can't lose your concentration for a minute you have to be thinking all the time. And sometimes you do a better job than others. Sometimes you just lose it, you know because you have to- if you don't get a feel of what's going on, what's the underlying thing. It drives me crazy when people don't say anything and then they grumble in the hall, you know? So you have to figure it out you have to create an atmosphere where people feel like they can get up and say things. To make sure that people aren't not talking- is it just because they don't have anything to say? Or because they're intimidated or they don't think it's worth it, or what? Then sometimes there are questions - that 'why doesn't anybody ask this question?' It seems to me as sort of an obvious and important question to ask our speaker. Sometimes I end up asking something but usually- sometimes I plant the questions because I want this question asked. But I guess it's not always obvious.

Rosemary Hnatiuk told me that she finds that going to the meetings helps her feel part of a network: "I think the structure of the monthly meetings is very good so if you need to plug in you can plug in- there's an opportunity to do that". About the meetings, she also said:

> I hate that physical space. Acoustically. It's hard enough for me to follow in French, I can do it in a sort of a non-echoing space-in a meeting. So at the end of the day you're tired and there's this <baboobaboobaboo> [echoing sound]. And it intimidates me a bit. I'm not quite sure whether it's because I don't- if I have a couple of seconds delay, processing information, I don't feel comfortable intervening. It's weird. It's in that context I noticed particularly I still have a small kind of reticence and when I first started to be in a francophone environment and having to interact- I get back to this sort of infantile stage [where it is difficult to express myself].

At the meeting which took place on September 10, 1997, there were 46 people- of these, 31 were women, 15 men. As often happens, the meeting started about half an hour late, and Rivka was chair. She announced the opening of the 167th meeting, and the proposed agenda was moved and seconded, and then the minutes of the previous meeting

were moved and seconded. Then we all stood up one at a time to introduce ourselves. Rivka welcomed the new members, and suggested that any important announcements could be made. A woman stood up and told us about some Haitian *naufragés* and requested help through a register of condolences.

The way that this meeting was structured, the central theme, "Processus de traitement des allocations familiales pour les nouveaux arrivants", was the next item on the agenda. Rivka then introduced three women sitting at the front of the room who, unlike everybody else in the room, had not already stood up to introduce themselves. Wearing dress-suits, heels and make-up, they looked different from the majority of the casually dressed advocates in the room. They were government representatives, from the Régie des Rentes du Québec, here to present the upcoming changes to be made in the family allowances, specifically as they pertain to newcomers. After the three women had presented, interrupted only once by a technical difficulty (Stephan was trying to lower the volume of the microphone when it suddenly stopped working, he apologized and explained the situation, while everyone was laughing amicably), the questions began. In response to the explanation made by one of the government representatives, that the amount to be offered in family allowance will be based on the income of the parent in the previous year, one NGO representative stood up and brought up an example of someone who had made more money the year before, and has no money this year. He asked the government representatives to imagine a man who had four kids, "what is he supposed to do with them, drown them?'. This was followed by Stephan asking a question to one of the government representatives that she seemed to be unable to answer, making her seem defensive. Sensing the tension, Rivka cut in to say that by the next session, one of the representatives from CIC, who was there, sitting in the back, would clear it up for us. She explained that we can't get angry at the messengers of the information- we just need someone to sensitize the Minister. The woman who had been defensive thanked Rivka, and said that although

she can see that Rivka is trying to be a mediator, they too have motives and reasons why they make their decisions.

At a later date, Rivka explained this type of situation to me:

> Sometimes we need information and we'll get somebody to come and give information and then afterwards you reserve time without them to decide what you want to do about it. In other words, it's one thing to get information, and to get clarifications on whatever it is that's being presented so that you're very clear on what it is you want to do- on what it is you're hearing- but then subsequently a discussion about what you want to do about it- you might want to have without the officials. And sometimes I think people tend to accost the officials- you know they're there as the messengers, they don't make the policy, but there they are, they're the representative of the government, and so what we've gotten better at- because there were a few incidents a couple of years ago where people were very rude to the people that came to make the presentation. I don't think being rude to somebody who's really in power- somebody who has created the policy is fair game. But somebody who's just coming to explain it to you, as long as they're being correct, and not being too obnoxious, I think you have to kind of recognize the limits. On the other hand if somebody seems to be not taking very seriously what you're saying, then it opens up - let's say the issue of when Medicare was withdrawn from refugee claimants, once or twice there seemed to be a little bit of a disregard for the seriousness of the situation because they kept saying everything was fine, everything was fine, until we finally had to hit this one particular official in the face with the situation that was so bad that even he had to agree it was terrible. But I think that people are very ambivalent about the presence of the officials altogether. On the one hand they want them to be there because sometimes smaller situations do get solved that way. You know, you bring up a situation, they can't answer you right away, they take note, and the fact that they have to keep on coming back to report, makes things happen. If they didn't have to come back - he could say 'well, why can't this be solved outside the meeting' well there's a certain dynamic to the meeting where if somebody has to keep coming back and saying 'I don't know the decision, I haven't got a decision yet', they start looking a little stupid so they will go and then push within their system for something.
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> I remember there was a thing with the feds too once where- I forget what the issue was, I just kept putting that on the agenda every month, and they knew, the guy sort of knew- he kept saying 'well we don't have a decision yet, we don't have a decision yet', and he started getting so pissed off at his superiors in Ottawa for putting him in that situation and finally he got mad at them, and he tried, he tried. I mean that person also doesn't always have the power but it's a way of putting pressure on the system. On the other hand, when you really want to talk strategy- I always tell the officials if I don't invite them it's for their own protection. Some of them get it, and some of them don't. For example if you have a presentation on the Trempe report, that's one thing, but if we're going to be discussing strategy and what we want and everything, it's much easier to do it without the officials. And of course with the officials- you know one of the other things that's hard, once you get to know some of them, you know, privately, they seem like really nice people-they share a lot of your views and a lot of your concerns but then when they have to come in and spout the government line, they sometimes get defensive because they know it's a crock. And other times, you can sort of see who's comfortable with their role, and who's pushing at the limits-But I think that they come because it's useful for them to come. It's complicated, there's a lot of different feelings about it.

Item three on the agenda for that day was "Mise à jour sur les services aux revendicateurs". Stephan stood up and explained the *Ministère de l'éducation*'s new rules to stop claimants' access to French courses. This caused great alarm for the community centres, he explained. Rivka explained some more. Over the summer, the Education Ministry had changed the rules. It had previously been that in Québec education was free for those who did not yet have Permanent Status as Landed Immigrants, including adult education. With the cuts, intending to cut out tourists from having access to education in Québec for free, it was changed to be that those who were not residents of Québec no longer had access, they imposed this cut without considering that those who were waiting to obtain permanent resident status, including those who had been accepted as refugees, were also cut. So after the Table and members were alerted of this, they managed to have it changed back so that it would be free for those with refugee status, but only up to the age of 16 years. After this, if they have not yet received landed status, they would have to pay $4000 per year for high school or adult education. After another protest, the age limit was raised to 18 years. But the problem remains for those over 18. Rivka rolled her eyes and chuckled as she explained. People in the meeting were scoffing as well, especially while the government representative in a business suit was talking trying to defend the government's position. This event happened in July when everyone was on holiday. Rivka thanked those members who alerted the Table a few times, that they were able to jump on this, otherwise we would have all been on holiday and it would have passed. She pointed out that there is no communication between the different ministries, as seen in this case where the Ministry of Education made a decision without notifying the Ministry of Immigration, and it is left up to the Table to pass information on- and it's "not our job".

The meeting continued as Rivka gave a brief overview of a meeting she attended the previous Wednesday in Ottawa where some CCR representatives met with some CIC representatives. Then Stephan talked about the brief to be presented at the Assemblée Génerale in Québec on Sept. 16th. The mémoire was written as a collaborative effort by

numerous member organizations (the Assemblée Générale, the mémoire and the writing process will all be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). Rivka and Stephan both invited all the organizations to be represented by the mémoire if they don't already have their own. They said that everyone should come with them to Québec. Stephan compiled and wrote the mémoire on his holiday. Rivka said it was over and above his job. Everyone applauded Stephan.

For the final item on the agenda, "varia", a few people stood up to announce activities and events that were organized by their organizations. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The meeting which took place on Wednesday October 8, 1997 may not be the best example as far as detailing the content of the meetings, or to demonstrate how the meetings generally are very smooth and are well organized- since the main speaker didn't show up! It is, however, in my opinion, a good example of the mood and the function of the meetings apart from the organized actual information dissemination.

I had arrived late for this meeting, missing the introductions. I counted 36 women, and 18 men. Rivka was chair, and a representative from CIC was presenting item two on the agenda: "Mise à jour sur le CIC Montréal". She was assuring the room that the new improved Service à la Clientèle was to be better able to rapidly respond to NGOs and lawyers with a more personalized service. A couple of people in the room stood up to voice concerns about CIC services and Rivka said there will be a meeting with CIC soon so people should let the Table know what things they should bring up.

Next, Rivka presented what happened at the last meeting between the CIC, NGOs and lawyers. Then an NGO representative presented his experience at a meeting between the CIC and the *coalition des droits de la personne*. Part of what was proposed was that there would be sensitization training efforts, and this would be done as an exchange between NGOs and government positions to get to know how each other operate. Rivka asked if there will be a salary exchange as well and everyone laughed.

Stephan was to be presenting next, and Rivka asked him if the main speaker, Arménia, had arrived yet. He said he didn't know and asked into the microphone "Arménia? Es- tu là?" She was not there. Stephan presented his experience attending a Metropolis meeting in Copenhagen in October. Rivka told him to explain how he was FORCED to go to Copenhagen and everyone laughed. Metropolis is an international forum for research and policy on migration and cities. It is a government funded project, aiming to maximize university, NGO, and governmental cooperation in information exchange, for the sake of policy-making in the field of immigration and integration. Stephan explained that the point of the meeting was to create a space for NGOs and government ministers from all over the world to get together. There were two NGO reps from Canada there. Stephan and a man from Winnipeg. Unfortunately they were very few NGO reps there. He explained some of the sessions and what went on, then said, otherwise, "il faisait beau" and that they had good food. As an afterthought, he added that the most interesting aspect for him was the informal contact with the people from other cities. He was able to explain the Table to them and everyone was so impressed that they did what they did and had research teams, and everything. He said people couldn't believe it was true. He said he felt proud and that the Table represented a model for other cities, even in Canada, 'People couldn't understand how we functioned'. Rivka said something like 'it's absurd'. Everyone was laughing about this. Stephan said that all the Metropolis documents are available on the CIC web site under 'Metropolis'.

Brenda Plant, an advocate representing the organization Project Genesis made an announcement that the *Commission des Droits Humains* has finally answered their complaint about the children of non-status residents who don't get Medicare cards. She said they are preparing their report and they need cases so for people to contact her if they could provide examples. This started a discussion because some advocates misunderstood and thought she wanted refugees to go to court themselves and testify their cases. It was argued that these people would be in no state of mind to go to court. They also will not

have the energy or the thought process to make a complaint themselves. After some debate Rivka seemed frustrated and explained and finally it became clear that they don't want refugees to testify themselves, they want the advocates to provide descriptions of the cases: 'We are not looking for the people themselves to testify. They are too fragile- we understand that. We want cases. So the advocates have to bring them out.'

This made me think about how the Table has the networking structure set-up in order to function so well as an activist organization. Here is this room full of people who work with actual cases everyday and when it comes down to having to express something to the government they can appeal to one another for support and for material which will serve as evidence. They are a great resource for one another or for someone who wants to present cases- without having to rely on people going through the traumatizing experiences themselves who would be unwilling or unable to be helpful because of their situations.

At this point, almost 8:00 p.m., Rivka announced that the main speaker still hadn't arrived, and there were no more announcements. So Rivka suggested we have a break until 8:00 p.m., and if she didn't arrive the meeting would be over. There was a show of hands to confirm that at least the majority were in favor of this plan and so there was a break.

During the break, the woman next to me, from COPSI (*Centre d'Orientation Paralégale et Sociale pour Immigrants*) asked me who I was and talked to me about what I do at the Table. We talked about how difficult it is to keep up with all the information. She works with Accueil at COPSI. Then when the people who had come to talk to Brenda had left, she joined our conversation for a little while about Projet Genèse. They do all kinds of advocacy, Rental, Welfare, Immigration... Mostly Welfare and poverty rights, she said. I asked her if a lot of people work there and she said (I think) 18 full time and one lawyer part time. Then she said she is still planning on calling me to get TIM hooked up. I said not to worry, to do it when she has time[16]. Then I pointed out that it should only take an hour to set up. At the most. If all goes well. I hope. We laughed. Then I made a little pitch for

[16] I installed TIM on her computer on March 18, 1998- five months later. It was installed on her home computer because of there not being any available computer at Projet Genèse.

TIM again. Saying that not only did I want people to hook up because I believed in it, but because it's part of my research. She nodded understandingly. I asked her about her work, fascinated by it. I asked her if she specialized in immigration or did everything. She said "everything". Although some people know everything, she said, it's impossible for her to know everything so she has to know how to find everything out.

Then Rivka, speaking into the microphone, informed us that the speaker still hadn't shown up and asked if anyone would like to say anything about the main topic of the night. No one did. Then Brenda spoke up about a letter prepared by Projet Genèse which she asked that everyone send to Louise Harel, the Minister of Emploi et Solidarité. Stephan took it and said he could fax it to all the member organizations and they could fax it to her.

Meeting adjourned, Rivka said the next meeting would be November 12, right in the middle of Citizenship week, so she knew everyone would have announcements. The meeting after that would be December 10, Human Rights day. It is also the annual holiday pot luck and everyone is invited and asked to bring some food. She said to the government representatives that they are ALL invited and asked TO BRING FOOD. Everyone laughed. It made me suppose that in the past they came and didn't bring food.

As everyone was leaving, I wanted to talk to Stephan, but, as usual, he was engaged in conversation with someone else. I waited around then noticed Brenda was helping with the tables and chairs so I joined in to help too. At the end of every meeting the tables are stacked in piles of four or five then stored in a storage space across the hall, and the chairs are folded and stacked on wheel carts. Then I finally tracked down Stephan and had to follow him as he was putting the tables away, and we talked about our plans to meet for a life history interview. The woman from COPSI asked me to repeat my name. I felt important. But what I should be saying is that I felt that she was using the meeting as an opportunity to make links. To network. At the door on the way out a woman was selling 'Latin America' agendas for $10.

For the meeting which took place on Nov. 12th, 1997, Rivka was not chair. When it was time for the item on the agenda which was the update on the *Services à la Clientèle* of the CIC- Montréal, a representative from the CIC came up front and sat down to explain the new services at the CIC. She explained (very briefly) some changes made to the family allowance system (there had been a meeting where this was the central theme), she explained that she had provided handouts for everybody (they were on the table by the door) with the list of phone numbers needed to access quick information from the CIC. Then she began to discuss what the procedures would be in the event of a postal strike, especially in terms of deadline extension. She had also provided handouts on this issue. There were many questions from around the room. One man, a representative of a member organization, stood up and posed a few questions explaining that he is still trying to understand the procedure. A few people from around the room stepped in now and then to explain certain points, and when the questions continued, Rivka stood up and explained what it was that was confusing everybody, and with the situation made clear, the questions stopped.

Stephan then asked the IRB representatives who were there if they had any special plans for the postal strike. A male refugee lawyer jumped in at this point and said (in French) "no negative decisions during the strike!" This made everybody laugh. One woman from the IRB explained what the procedure would be. She added that decisions will be sent by courier if the claimants submit pre-paid envelopes. I heard some people around me groan and saw some roll their eyes.

Later in the meeting, when discussing some changes being made in the IRB, people from around the room stood up and voiced their concern with the IRB's scheduling pilot project (as discussed in Chapter two, a system of treating refugee claimants who have arrived after a certain date with priority, for the sake of minimizing delays -those who arrived before the certain date have an exaggeratedly extended delay as a result). Then Rivka stood up and made a powerful statement, addressed to the room, that the delays and

the cuts are causing more suffering to refugee claimants who are already suffering enough, and organizations are suffering as well as they are faced with the misery of their clients and they have nothing they can say or do to help them. There are some serious mental/nervous breakdowns which happen because of these delays. "C'est insupportable!" she said. She then asked that anyone who is dealing with a client having a breakdown because of the delays to please report it to the Table so that it could be recorded and eventually reported officially to the IRB. She then mentioned that it had been a long time since the last open meeting with the IRB (these are called based on need, such as for a particular problem, or for explanation of changes coming into effect- they happen every few months or so) and asked the room to vote on whether there should be such a meeting organized soon. There was a show of hands which was at least the overwhelming majority and so the meeting was to be organized.

There were other issues which people addressed to the MRCI representatives at the meeting. A woman who was representing an organization working with immigrant and refugee women spoke of the situation around sponsorship which arises when women who come to Canada as fiancées face deportation if they don't marry within 90 days. Women's groups have been opposing this policy for ages[17]. The response that the woman

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[17] Janet explains:
If you're sponsored as a fiancé, your permanent residence is conditional upon you getting married within the 90 days. If you're the woman, Canadian, and you sponsor someone who's your spouse, then he's abusive, then you have a situation where you're potentially having to pay- you get presented with the bill for his welfare, and he's the one that abused you, but you sponsored him. Or the other situation is where if you're the woman that's sponsored, you can apply from in Canada, if you're in Canada, like in many cases, so you marry, and then he puts in an application for sponsorship for you. Now there's going to be time of processing, and during that time of processing, what sometimes happens is that the guy goes back and says 'I'm withdrawing the sponsorship', or he threatens to withdraw the sponsorship. Or in fact the relationship breaks up, and then by the time it comes to permanent residence, OK she's married and she's now separated from him because he was abusive, so then she doesn't have the basis anymore for getting permanent residence. So then she faces deportation which could be [dangerous]- I mean there are all kinds of individual circumstances. [There are] situations where the woman has her permanent residence, but she doesn't realize that she has her permanent residence, some men may tell their wives, 'if you go report me to the police, I will have you deported', which in fact they cannot do, she has got her permanent residence, but the woman may not know that. Or there are some situations where the person's married but the woman never gets permanent residence, because the man, maybe out of ignorance or maybe deliberately, in order to keep her in a situation of dependency, doesn't submit a sponsorship for her, so she's here probably with no status at all, and so entirely dependent upon him, and he can say at any time 'if you don't obey my will I will have you deported'.

representing MRCI gave was a bit of a shrug with the clichéd statement that they are doing all they can in the interest of fair procedures, and there seemed to be a heated moment where Rivka and the woman from the women's centre were pressing that there are cases which urgently need to be looked into and the woman from MRCI took on a more appeasing attitude.

Another issue of concern was dealt with at this meeting. Soeur Denise Lainé, one woman who has been active in refugee advocacy for over thirty years with *Centre Social d'Aide aux Immigrants* (CSAI), stood up and explained that some of the explanatory documents which claimants receive in the mail are very difficult to understand as it is and that the print is too small. People around the room laughed in agreement and understanding. The MRCI representative was still in a defensive mode. She explained her case but Soeur Denise was not satisfied. She repeated that people don't understand the flyers. Another longtime advocate stood up at this point and confirmed what had just been said, explaining that his position is that the Minister must try harder to prepare information packages that are comprehensible, to inform people on the procedures, because as it is, the community centres are left with the responsibility of explaining everything. After a few more points being raised around the room, including the argument made by one of the government representatives that 80% of the cases work well, Stephan said that it should not be the responsibility of the organizations to do all the work which is in fact left for them to do by the MRCI. People around the room laughed and applauded.

After the release of the Legislative Review Report (or the Trempe report) the January monthly meeting was arranged as a special meeting devoted to the discussion of this report. It was to start at 3 p.m. on January 22, 1998 (it was delayed because of the ice storm) and a light meal would be served (for $5) at 5:30 p.m. Copies of the report would be distributed at the meeting, and this was a meeting for reps from member and non-governmental organizations only.

There were some people at this meeting whom I either hadn't seen in a long time, or had never seen before. I counted 13 men and 32 women, but more filed in as the meeting went on. Rivka started the meeting by saying that since the new year didn't start off very well (because of the ice storm) , and since we were generally all intercultural minded people, that we should re-start the year with the Vietnamese, Chinese and Tibetan new year coming up. Someone pointed out that it was to be the year of the tiger, which is not a good thing. Everyone laughed. Rivka explained that the idea for the long meeting with dinner served was her idea, to give us more time to discuss the report released January 6th. The goal was to try to bring everyone to the same point of understanding of the report. After the ordre du jour and the procès verbal were moved and seconded, Rivka explained the different handouts which were available on the front table, and reminded everyone to sign the attendance sheets. The plan for the meeting was to devote the first half to discussing the content of the report, and the second half to discussing strategies for the consultations. She pointed out that the consultations which were held for the sake of preparing the report were very very controlled, were by invitation only and only on a pre-defined topic. The objective of the meeting is for everyone to understand the content and the stakes- to avoid a situation where there are just a few wise people and everyone else is a follower.

There were three presenters who each explained different aspects of the report. Janet Dench outlined and critiqued some of chapters, a representative of Centre Justice et Foi outlined and critiqued the rest of the chapters. Then a refugee lawyer presented a critique and analysis of the viability of the proposed legal procedures in the report. This was followed by a discussion around the room where people presented their insights, opinions and posed specific questions.

Then it was time for the dinner break. Rivka said that she had bought the food for tonight, but she had underestimated how many people would be there, so for all to please feel free to go to the food court in the train station across the street if they were not interested in the dinner available there. She won't be offended, she said. I stayed for the

dinner of bagels and rye, cheeses, cold cuts, fruits, and three types of salad. I sat with a refugee lawyer who was working at Comité d'Aide aux Réfugiés and she told me how most of her energy had been going into organizing a big event for Refugee Rights Day, on April 4th. The atmosphere in the room was an obviously social one, with people mingling, chatting and laughing.

At 7 p.m. it was time for the strategic discussion. There were fewer people present for this part, so Rivka suggested people move closer to the front instead of staying dispersed. She began the discussion by pointing out that Robillard's proposed "vast" consultations are in fact very limited, and that when she hears the word "vast" she usually thinks of "big". Everyone laughed. She presented an e-mail which was written by some groups in Toronto, addressed to the Minister. The letter was written in English, so Rivka translated it on the spot. It was a list of questions about the consultation process. Some of which were: Who will read all the reports submitted by the groups who will not attend the consultation sessions? What will be the role of Trempe & Co. as of now, will they be available to clarify their statements? How will the 60 groups be chosen? Will the sessions be recorded for us to access? Rivka pointed out that this letter is just the beginning of a discussion, and we could add more to it. Janet introduced a letter she had produced with CCR for the sake of trying to link up with a larger network. She suggested everyone there reproduce the letter and send it to anyone who might be interested in being involved. Ber Lazarus stood up and pointed out that the limited consultation may already be a *fait accompli*, and it may be a waste of time to devote our energies to this. He proposed that everyone apply to be invited, and that at the same time, our energy should be spent rallying and organizing a media campaign. Brenda stood up and suggested that we should do something dramatic to make our point. She suggested we tape-record all the reports, and play them at fast speed in order to fit them in the limited time span allotted (at the time of the meeting, the time span was 20 minutes per group. It had since been doubled for groups in certain cities, Montréal being one). Rosemary stood up and suggested that we should use

their own words against them- they spoke of the appreciation of community participation in the report, we should play up the contradiction. Janet suggested that we communicate with the MPs on the Standing Committee and try to sensitize them. A representative of the *Association québécoise des avocats et avocates en droit d'immigration* (AQAADI) stood up to emphasize that each and every group should apply to be invited and should push to increase the number of days of consultation. Rivka called for a workgroup to be formed, to break down all the recommendations and do a critical analysis of the one which they disagree with. Five women volunteered. Rivka explained that this will be a document for all the groups to use for their reports, and that everyone could add their own perspectives to be able to answer in their own way. A representative from the *Maison de l'Amitié* stood up and said that he is applying to be invited, but that he is in fact afraid of actually *being* invited unless he knows he'll have the help and support of the other groups. Rivka explained that the job of the Table as a coalition is to HELP with the sharing of information and with their "sagesse politique". She then suggested that people write letters to newspapers, to use the media channel as much as possible. Sometimes journalists call us, she said, but this may be a good time to call them. She called for everyone to share what they know with one another. As the meeting was coming to a close at 7:40 p.m., Rivka called for the five volunteers of the working group to come forward to plan a meeting.

The next monthly meeting, the one held on February 11, 1998 was divided in two parts as well. The first half would proceed as a regular meeting, open to anyone, then the second half would be for members and non-governmental organizations only, as it would be a continuation of the discussion of strategies for the consultations on the Trempe report.

Rivka was presiding, and after the introductions, Stephan was the first speaker. He announced that the Table had received the sustaining grant, and it was the first time in their 19 years of existence that they had received such a grant. He explained that he is preparing a formal proposal for approval by the members and the Board of Directors, to be presented next June at the Assemblée Nationale du Québec to expand the Table. Stephan told us that

the Table is very often called on by groups around Québec, who are requesting information on services for newcomers. The plan is to expand the Table to be a national organization: An umbrella organization for all organizations in Québec- not just in Montréal. A representative of a member organization stood up and asked how this would work, and if it would replace the CCR. Stephan explained that it would not replace the CCR, and that the goal would be to function according to needs of information exchange, collaboration, and to create national (Québec-wide not Canada-wide) collaborative committees. There are networks already in place in some areas, and the Table will not substitute those either, but would reach out to them and attempt to facilitate greater collaboration. Rivka spoke up here and reminded everyone that this is just a proposal for the Board of Directors. There have been more and more organizations from outside Montréal asking to become members, even though they can't come to meetings, since it is the only way they can get information. With TIM, and with our resources, she said, it's the only way they can be "branché". She also pointed out that it is important to remember that most of the refugees in Québec who had been selected abroad, are resettled outside of the Montréal area.

One lawyer who works for a non-governmental organization stood up and said that she believes it would work well, and that there is already much communication across Québec done by e-mail. Janet stood up and pointed out that the Table has been successful in responding to the needs of Montréal organizations. How could the Table be sure, she asked, to keep fulfilling the needs of its members? Is it possible that a change will weaken the Table's ability to do this? In Ontario, she told us, there is a provincial network, but the metropolitan networks are very weak. Rivka thanked Stephan for getting this grant, and said that he worked very hard for it. There was applause and congratulations.

When it was time for the second half of the meeting, those who were governmental representatives left as requested. The next 45 minutes were mostly devoted to gathering of opinions and ideas for points to be added to the report prepared by the workgroup who had since the last meeting done a critical analysis of the entire report. The list of which

groups would be invited to the consultations had not yet been announced and Stephan told us that he had been telephoned by someone and offered extra time as a representative of the 94 organizations on the condition that none of the member organizations will be invited. Stephan declined the offer, he said, explaining that the Table is a collective and that all groups should have a chance to be invited (as it turns out, the Table was allotted double time; 90 minutes, and ten member organizations were invited as well with 45 minutes each). People continued to express concerns, opinions, and questions about the consultations until the meeting was adjourned.

c) Regroupement des organismes au service des nouveaux arrivants

The Regroupement des organismes au service des nouveaux arrivants (ROSNA) is a committee which was created as part of the Table in 1992 and which deals with everything which touches upon services to refugees and to immigrant persons, i.e. reception, settlement and socio-economic integration of newcomers. ROSNA consists of 50 community organizations of the greater Montréal region as well as some organizations from other regions in Québec who receive provincial funding to provide services for newcomers. There are also monthly meetings for ROSNA.

At the meetings, representatives of front-line community organizations get together to discuss and mobilize around issues of service for refugees and immigrants, as well as funding programmes and criteria. As well as being useful for the everyday tasks of the organizations, these meetings provide for greater ease in mobilizing collective action. ROSNA is not specifically funded by any governmental subsidies.

d) Training sessions for advocates

The training sessions are another important aspect of the work of the Table. There are 48 sessions per year designed to help those who work with newcomers to be equipped for the challenges they face in this intercultural and multifaceted milieu. This program was initiated by the Table in 1989 and is financed principally by MRCI through the PAEI program (Programme Accueil Établissement Installation- a program providing funding for

organizations working with newcomers). The MRCI funding provides the salary for the coordinator, as well as the honoraria given to the resource people who are asked to give the sessions. These honoraria are usually $150 for half day sessions, and between $300 and $450 for full days (some people who make their living giving such training sessions can receive up to $700). The sessions are held at least once a week, could be either half day or full day, and are generally attended by between 15 and 30 people. In 1996, for example, they had been attended by a total of 574 people. Those who attend are primarily from organizations receiving funding through PAEI and also PSIE (Programme Soutien Insertion Emploi- another MRCI program providing funding for organizations working with newcomers, particularly in the area of employment). As well, these sessions are attended by representatives from any community organizations implicated in one way or another in reception, settlement and integration of new arrivals (members of the Table, CLSCs, school boards, etc.). The themes for these sessions reflect the needs expressed by the community. The coordinator of the sessions keeps her ears open to current events, and particularly to suggestions or requests made by the advocacy community. Topics could include information on resources available, psychosocial intervention in a pluriethnic milieu, knowledge of the countries and cultures of origin, management and administration. The sessions deal as well with the perpetual changes in legislation and rules of the immigration programs and there are some sessions which deal with more academic perspectives.

Marie Claire Rufagari is the staff member of the Table responsible for coordinating these training sessions:

> En fait, je m'occupe de la formation des intervenants qui travaillent auprès des nouveaux arrivants dans le but d'améliorer leurs interventions. Il y a la connaissance des lois sur l'immigration, l'intervention psychosociale, la gestion, (des organismes, et des ressources bénévoles), l'interculturel et la connaissance des pays d'origine. C'est en gros tout ce qui concerne le système avec lequel les nouveaux arrivants ont à interagir ; ca concerne toutes les structures tant fédérales que provinciales ; donc c'est continuellement identifier ce dont ils ont besoin pour intervenir. En effet, au niveau des lois, il y a constamment des modifications et il faut s'ajuster ; pour ce qui concerne l'intervention psychosociale, c'est continuel. Je pense que plus la société est plurielle, plus il y a des nouveaux besoins qui

apparaissent et donc des nouveaux ajustements qui doivent se faire, et ça c'est une question sur laquelle je mets beaucoup d'accent. Il y a quelqu'un qui me disait qu'au niveau des formations, j'avais mis beaucoup d'accent sur la relation d'aide et sur l'interculturel et effectivement, dans un sens, tout passe par là. Si je devais définir en d'autres mots ce que je fais, je dirais que c'est identifier tout ce qui peut permettre aux intervenants une meilleure compréhension des nouveaux arrivants, une meilleure connaissance du système et de la société d'accueil. Tout ceci permet de mieux comprendre l'univers d'où les gens viennent, d'anticiper au niveau de leurs besoins, ce qui facilite la communication et stimule la créativité au niveau des services.

Donc moi, mon mandat c'est juste les intervenants. Mais d'une manière tout à fait parallèle, je m'intéresse beaucoup à tout ce qui concerne l'intégration. Parce que quand les gens arrivent ici, il y a un travail, il y a un cheminement qu'ils font par rapport à l'intégration, mais la société dans laquelle ils sont, il y a aussi une démarche de cette société. Alors d'une manière, c'est tout à fait en parallèle, maintenant je m'intéresse beaucoup à l'école, je m'intéresse beaucoup aux services sociaux, publics et parapublics, dont les CLSC, parce que je m'implique aussi au niveau de la formation dans un autre organisme qui s'appelle le RIVO : c'est le Réseau d'Intervention auprès des personnes ayant subi la Violence Organisée, et dans ce sens-là, il y a tout un volet de la sensibilisation, il y a l'intervention, mais aussi la question de la sensibilisation, parce que comme tu le sais, c'est dans les réfugiés qu'on va rencontrer plusieurs personnes qui ont subi la torture dans leur pays. Quand ils arrivent ici, ils ont affaire à tout le système dans les services sociaux. Et on se rend compte que moins les gens sont sensibles, au niveau de l'intervention, sans le savoir ils peuvent causer du tort. Alors je m'implique aussi au niveau de la sensibilisation et de plus en plus aussi la question de l'école - toute la question de qu'est-ce qu'ils peuvent faire, qu'est-ce qui peut faire que dans une société les gens qui arrivent puissent s'épanouir. Ces questions-là m'intéressent - donc la question de l'adaptation, de l'intégration m'intéresse au plus au point.

Et autre chose que j'ai vu, c'est que dans mon mandat c'est juste l'accueil et l'établissement, mais de plus en plus il y a des intervenants qui travaillent en employabilité qui viennent aussi, des intervenants qui travaillent au rapprochement interculturel qui viennent [aux sessions], et moi, ça me confirme pas mal de choses, dans ce sens que, au niveau du système, toute est compartimenté. C'est comme si la personne, on lui donne des tiroirs. Et chacun vient ouvrir son tiroir - moi je travaille en emploi, je vais m'occuper d'emploi ; toi tu vas t'occuper de ... - sauf que quand on regarde, c'est que ces interventions perdent de l'efficacité si c'est pas tenu ensemble parce que la personne, elle est un tout. Donc si moi je travaille en emploi par exemple, si je n'ai pas compris tout ce qui se passe au niveau de l'adaptation de cette personne ou elle en est, je ne peux pas l'aider. C'est comme si je la mets dans une situation ou elle ne peut pas m'écouter et moi la comprendre. Donc même toutes des choses pertinentes, je n'arrive pas à les faire passer - c'est pour ça. Et ça c'est très intéressant, parce que les gens d'employabilité viennent au processus migratoire. L'année dernière on a fait une session (à peu près douze demi-journées de formation) juste sur le processus migratoire, la question de l'identité, tout ça, et c'était assez intéressant de voir tout ce monde. Donc finalement, les gens commencent à voir qu'une approche beaucoup plus continue et plus vers la personne est beaucoup plus intéressante que l'approche morcelée. Et ce sont des choses qui m'apparaissent intéressant, donc à chaque fois que je pense aux intervenantes, c'est en rapport toujours avec leur clientèle, et quelque part, c'est très bon pour moi parce que je suis psychologue de formation mais je n'ai plus un contact tout à fait régulier avec les clients. Je ne fais pas de l'intervention sauf bénévolement (en dehors du travail) mais dans mon mandat je n'ai pas à intervenir directement avec la clientèle (dans mon mandat au TCMR) mais je le fais parce que

> pour moi ça va ensemble. Pour pouvoir aider les gens par la formation, il faut que je comprenne ceux vers qui ils doivent aller. Et là, je trouve que je suis très bien tombée au niveau de la TCMR. Ce qui est très intéressant, c'est que au niveau de la créativité, il y a beaucoup de place. Il y a beaucoup de place. Donc si tu veux, je n'ai pas besoin de faire comme c'était fait avant. Une fois que ça rentre, j'explique que ça va servir l'objectif visé et j'ai vraiment une grande latitude à ce niveau-là et je trouve - quand je regarde d'autre personnes qui travaillent ailleurs - je me trouve privilégiée. C'est une très bonne ambiance parce que c'est en collaboration avec l'équipe.

On Thursday, March 5th, I attended a session entitled "L'intervention auprès des familles haïtiennes". It was a full day session, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. The description of the session, which I first read on TIM, was the following:

> Cette session a pour but de nous permettre- à partir d'analyse de cas- de mieux cerner les zones de besoin dans la pratique interculturelle, et cela en regard de la compétence des familles ainsi que dans une perspective de changement réciproque.

To register I had only to call, leave a message, fax, or send an e-mail via TIM, to Marie Claire and tell her I wanted to attend. She had, in fact, suggested I come on this date as an interesting example of a session, because of her tremendous respect for the resource person. The sessions are all held on the premises of the Table, in a meeting room which is shared by the other organizations in the same building. The room, with big windows on one side, has a dry erase board on one wall, posters of different groups or events all around, a table as well as a shelving unit with flyers of different events and organizations. The room is set up with a few wooden tables placed together with wooden chairs around them, with the ability to seat about 20 people comfortably. At this session, we were 12 people; 11 women and one man. Marie Claire explained that a group from the CLSCs had been expected, but they couldn't come because of a mix-up in the dates. The resource person, the president of a prominent Haitian community organization, began the session by explaining her interests as an introduction to who she was. She gave us a brief biography as well as an outline of her philosophy of socialization and acceptance. As she was telling us this, Marie Claire passed around a sign-up sheet, which had our names, phone numbers, and organizations, and a place for us each to sign. The resource person, Cécile (a pseudonym), then asked us each to introduce ourselves and to tell what it is that we wanted

to learn from the session. Almost everybody there (except me- I said I was there to research the concerns and inter/actions of advocates) expressed that they were there because they wanted to learn more about the Haitian community, either because they worked with them, or because they wanted to expand their knowledge of relatedness between the Haitian community and other communities they worked with. Marie Claire explained that for her, she was always in a continuous learning process- she is always seeking to further her knowledge and ability. Then Cécile told us that she may have a different agenda than everyone else- she told us she was not there to tell us what the Haitian community is. She was not going to provide a list of the qualities of 'the Haitian community', she was not going to provide us with the comfort of 'knowing the Haitian community'. Her presentation, she explained, was not about learning to walk in the shoes of another, but about the ability to look at another and to try to understand them. She asked the room if the topic was still OK for all of us- if we should go on. Everyone agreed that we should. Marie Claire explained that it was the CLSC group which had specifically asked for the topic. When Cécile felt assured that we should go on with the session, she asked us all to stand up and touch our feet. Once we had all done so and sat back down, she asked us what our reactions were to this request. One woman said she wondered if this was a Haitian tradition. Another woman said she was aware this was for the sake of observation and waited to hear the explanation. Another said she didn't think about it at all, and just followed instructions. Cécile pointed out that we all had different reactions to the exercise, yet we all did it in the same way, although there are many different ways for one to touch their feet- we may all behave according to patterns set in place by the majority, yet we may all perceive and think about our actions differently. Immigrants, she said, are the minority in a majority community. Although they may be trying to conform, seeming to do things in the same way as we do, or as the majority does, there is more than one way to interpret what is being done.

She then presented us with a situation she had come across at her community organization (she emphasized the importance of not thinking of situations as 'cases', but rather as people with real life experiences). She explained it to us in great detail and gave us handouts with the résumé of the situation. The rest of the session was devoted to deconstructing the intercultural intervention scenario. The discussion was very productive, with everyone- including Marie Claire and excepting me- bringing in their own experiences as they collectively pondered the situation.

During the session, Marie Claire took care of making photocopies as they were needed, getting dry erase markers when needed, helping plan when the breaks should be, and how long, telling people what the options were for going out for lunch, taking note of people's requests for registration at other sessions, and handing out evaluation forms when people left (everybody left at 4 p.m. except for two women who left at the lunch break). Near the end of the session, one person asked Marie Claire if he could have a copy of the attendance sheet. Marie Claire asked the room if we would like copies as well and everyone said they would so she went and made a copy for each of us. She then handed out evaluation forms to each of us, forms with the objective "de mesurer votre degré de satisfaction et de donner des suggestions pour une suite éventuelle au thème abordé aujourd'hui". Some of the information asked was: to state our objectives for the session, whether or not it met our expectations, whether or not it would expand our knowledge on intervention techniques, if it would have an impact on our daily work, whether or not we would like a follow-up, and if so, in which form. Marie Claire has been partially responsible for the design of the sheets, and although in the past the MRCI had asked to see compilations of the sheets (which was a lot of work for the secretary), they are now primarily for her to read. Here she explains her methods of evaluation for the sessions:

> Je regarde si les objectifs ont été atteints. Si ils ne l'ont pas été - pour eux, quel aurait été le meilleur moyen d'atteindre l'objectif? Et si ça va leur servir dans leur travail directement, et si ils veulent une suite, sur quelle forme et quoi pour la suite? Donc ça me permet en même temps d'évaluer les objectifs, en même temps d'évaluer la personne ressource, et en même temps de savoir si il y a une suite probable, si c'est pas quelqu'un d'autre que je vais aller chercher. Je fais de

> l'évaluation participative. En fait, quand je suis là par rapport aux interventions, des fois aussi j'interviens, comme tu as vu, et en même temps j'évalue la personne ressource... et là je réalise plein de choses par rapport aux objectifs. Et c'est ça. Donc il y a des personnes ressources que je réinvite pour autre chose, et si il y a un suivi, j'invite quelqu'un d'autre, c'est par rapport. Alors je fais une triple évaluation : des atteintes, des objectifs, et de la personne ressource.
>
> [Les personnes ressources] ont accès à tout le formulaire [si ils le demande]. Mais au départ c'est vraiment un outil de travail pour moi. L'amélioration, le perfectionnement, et l'ajustement.

e) Research Projects

The Table also undertakes research projects with a full-time paid researcher and a part-time paid research assistant. In 1996 the Table released a report, based on a study conducted in conjunction with a psychiatrist at the Montréal Children's Hospital. The report was titled *Politique d'immigration et santé mentale: Impact des séparations familiales prolongées sur la santé mentale des réfugiés.* The report was distributed widely, to organizations such as CIC, the MRCI, the IRB, and the *Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal-Centre.*

Since June 1997, another research project has begun , entitled *Étude longitudinale de processus de réunification familiale chez les réfugiés.* This project will be a practical reference for advocates confronted with critical situations surrounding family reunification.

The researchers at the Table have been solicited for other projects, for example, to sit on the Orientation Council of the Research Center *Immigration et Métropoles* which unites researchers from McGill University and the Université de Montréal on the question of immigration and integration.

Although Marie Claire's mandate is to coordinate the training sessions, she has involved herself in the research project:

> Maintenant, officiellement depuis quelque temps, je m'implique aussi à peu près trois heures par semaine au niveau de la recherche. Parce que probablement comme tu le sais, la Table continue les recherches sur la question de la réunification, et maintenant ils font la suite. C'est au niveau de voir finalement les gens qui se sont réunis, comment ils se sont débrouillés pour faire face à tout ce qui se fait de nouveau - de l'adaptation. Parce que, comme leur famille... quand la famille arrive ils sont très contents, très heureux, sauf que il y a pas mal de questions... et maintenant la Table veut trouver quelles sont les pistes pour pouvoir nourrir l'adaptation - parce que il y a des gens qui, au niveau de leur ressources

personnelles, ont pas mal de choses intéressantes... donc la recherche aussi m'intéresse.

f) Project for sensitization and education on intercultural relations

Two or three times a month, the Table is called upon by schools, CLSCs, or other public or private organizations to provide information on a particular area, whether it be immigrant integration issues, with minority ethnocultural communities and intercultural and interracial relations. There are also timely training sessions on particular subjects around the intercultural approach, socio-economic integration for immigrants, specifically disadvantaged groups such as immigrant women and children, and the adaptation of government services to the specific needs of these groups. This project is principally financed by Heritage Canada/Multiculturalism. On one hand, it serves to train professional and volunteer community workers and on the other hand to sensitize the reception community to the pluriethnic realities of our society. Depending on the type of information requested, either Stephan, Rivka, or Marie Claire may conduct the session, but sometimes the Table refers another organization who may have expertise in the area.

g) Affiliation with government committees

As Stephan was explaining to us earlier, as he was describing his role at the Table, government representatives regularly call upon the services and expertise of the Table. He has always considered it to be important that, whenever possible, there should be dialogue with representatives of the different levels of government. This consultation facilitates better communication between community organizations and government services, to the benefit of the clientèle of the organizations working with refugees and newcomers. On top of being a transmitter of information, the Table takes on a consulting role. This consulting includes policy assessment, and input on ideas for new policies, as well as interpreting and explaining the needs of refugees and newcomers. As well, governmental representatives are permanent participants in the monthly meetings, as observers (meaning they have no voting rights). The Table has regular contact with the representatives of all levels of federal and provincial immigration as well as with the IRB, mainly on issues dealing with services

available to refugee claimants, procedures for determination of refugee status, deportation and detention of rejected claimants, reception and settlement of newcomers.

Members of the Table participate regularly in various permanent consultative and advisory committees which allow for the articulation of the interests of the community organizations and their clientèle. The minutes of these meetings are available for members to consult at the Table office, and sometimes they are available on TIM. Examples of some committees are:

-Working Group CIC/NGO/lawyers on the quality of services
-National consultative committee on the Post-Claim Review (CIC/NGO, lawyers, UNHCR)
-Comité aviseur du Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome (SACA)
-Comité aviseur du Fonds de lutte contre la pauvreté par la réinsertion au travail

h) Participation as consultants, training and information

The Table is regularly invited to participate and to give advice at consultations, colloquia and conferences which deal with immigration and with refugee issues. The Table representatives are often involved with other groups or institutions as volunteer initiatives. For example, in 1997 some of the activities the Table representatives participated in were: regular consultation with the UNHCR; the colloquia of the Ligue des Droits et Libertés on intercommunity relations; the Colloquia on Justice in Haiti at UQAM; the Ottawa Parliamentary committee on immigration - a consultation on identity documents; the National Symposium on the Future of Settlement Services in Canada; just to name a few and there are many many more.

An example of one such event which I attended was part of an Amnesty International Conference at CEGEP Marianopolis on Oct. 25, 1997. Rivka was asked to speak on the subject of "The Right to Asylum and Canada". In a classroom in front of approximately 30 people, probably mostly CEGEP students, Rivka outlined some of the concerns with the refugee determination process. She spoke of the hardships caused by the delays; the injustices of the deportations; the problem of economics being more important to government authorities than human rights; and the contradictions in Canada's statements

that they are fulfilling their humanitarian obligations by providing asylum to refugees, despite the fact that it is relatively a good system, giving some specific examples to illustrate her points. She pointed out that it is a tiny percentage of refugees who actually make it to Canada, and that refugees are not helpless ignorant people- they know what they need and what's best for themselves- the problem is that they are not given the opportunity to explain this nor the means to carry it out. She spoke of what it means to do refugee advocacy and the frustration of the difficulty of getting results. The government knows what she thinks, she said, in fact, it has reached a point where they could even make her speeches for her. Nonetheless, she said, it's very important to keep on trying. She explained that the goal should be to set up means for refugees to do what it is that they decide they need to do, rather than the current situation where people in nice rooms in Geneva and in New York [UN headquarters] decide for them.

i) The Board of Directors

The Table's Board of Directors is made up of seven representatives from member organizations. These representatives are actively involved in the work of the Table. In 1996 the Board of Directors had six meetings and one special training session. The numerous issues tackled at these meetings are recorded in minutes which are available to members at the Table, and they are regularly presented at the monthly meetings. The members of the Board of Directors, particularly the president , Rivka, generally participate, throughout their mandate, as representatives of the Table or as resource persons in countless meetings, information sessions, colloquia and conferences. The Table is called to participate in numerous public events and is not always in a position to keep up with the demand. Here is how Rivka answered my request to outline her responsibilities as president of the Board of Directors:

> It's not written down anywhere, I mean other than that the president is the president. First of all we have a - our bylaws stipulate that the annual meeting chooses an executive every year -for the *conseil d'administration* [Board of Directors]. The annual meeting chooses a group. It doesn't vote for the positions. So it's a collegial group of seven people or nine people, over the years- depending on what the bylaws say -that get elected. Then the group among themselves

portions out the positions. So, internally, as far as I'm concerned it's a collegial group. Then you need, for statutory reasons, and for all these reasons, you need a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer. Those are the statutory positions that you need for an organization to be recognized. It's very interesting.

I just want to make a little jump because of the big subcommittee that there is at the Table, which is the ROSNA, which includes the organizations specifically working on settlement programs. And it has a kind of a six person group whose mandate has been to represent the group at the comité aviseur for Québec immigration, and we've never chosen a leader. And we've never chosen a president, and it works as a collegiate of six important people. And I think because we have no statutory existence- ROSNA doesn't exist except as a subcommittee and legally, except as a major committee of the Table. But for the Table, for a lot of different reasons, the president could either be more or less of a spokesperson, depending on how knowledgeable they are or aren't about the issues. There are many organizations where the president of the Board doesn't have that much to say publicly because they really don't know the nitty gritty and the details of the issues. With us it's the opposite because at the beginning it was completely volunteer driven, because it is a coalition of organizations, the Board is different than the Boards of many of the individual organizations. The Boards of the individual organizations are often people working on behalf of the agency or they're recruited because they have connections, they're more community minded but they don't know the nitty gritty details of the dossiers. And it's the professionals who are more the ones who really know that better.

When we first started, we weren't out that much in the *place publique*. And it was very interesting, because when we first started, - in the mid-eighties, before I was - the person who was the president of the board before me was Robert Beaupré from the Catholic Archdiocese, and he wasn't that much of a public spokesperson. It was Mathilde Marchand who used to work at the Centre social d'aide aux immigrants. She was our wonderful [spokesperson] on the French side, great great ability to deal with the media. And I used to do English stuff such as it was but we weren't that much in the public eye until the whole crisis struck with the claimants who were taken off assistance. Before that, nobody really called us about anything. As the issues became more public and more controversial, we were asked to take a position and I guess as it rolls along, the more you're credible, the more you'll have people who are able to communicate, the more they call you. So I think being a spokesperson is something that's evolved. I would be happier if there were more people who could speak on behalf of the organization on these issues.

So the president, statutorily- our executive meetings, we take turns chairing them. Nowhere does it say that the president has to chair a meeting, the big meetings - I've chaired most of them except that it would be good if we had other people. We used to rotate more. And the way I'm president is not the way a normal one operates. But there is a certain statutory- the executive of the Board in an incorporated organization has a certain responsibility, and then the treasurer has certain responsibilities, and then the secretary. The president, I don't think- in a statutory sense,-has that much more responsibility than anybody else. I think. Unless you have organizations where it's written into the bylaws. [In this organization] it's more the executive as a whole.

j) Lobbying and the media

With the radical cuts to the services offered to refugee claimants by Québec in 1996, (see Chapter two for more detail), the socio-economic situation of refugee claimants,

particularly families, was profoundly affected. As a consequence front-line aid organizations are facing a more and more unprovided-for clientèle without themselves having adequate resources to intervene. The Table has initiated meetings with representatives of the MRCI to try to find solutions and to avoid a continuing deterioration of the situation. As well, the Table has filed two complaints to the Protecteur du Citoyen and to the Human Rights Commission of Québec about the non coverage by RAMQ of health care costs for Canadian children born to parents waiting for their status.

The Board of Directors and the staff of the Table are also involved with regular media relations. The various media in Montréal- newspapers, radio and television- systematically consult the Table in order to have the point of view of the ethnocultural community organizations on the topic of anything which touches near or far the issue of refugees and immigrants. As such, the Table carries out sensitization work through these discussions with journalists, on the topic of refugees, given the relative lack of knowledge which appears to prevail in this area. Sometimes, Stephan told me, he will call specific journalists about specific problems. He receives calls at the Table regularly from La Presse, Le Devoir, the Gazette, CBC, and also from CIBL community radio. Here Rivka tells me about having contact with specific media persons and about sensitization:

> There's a roster of names on different issues. Each media have names on a list somewhere, to call, depending on who's on the story. That's how I think it happens. But some journalists tend to call you more than others, but some journalists who at times are on a particular beat, then get taken off it, so then it's not like- you can't- there's very few media that have the same journalist on the same beat, except for sports of course.
>
> Some journalists have been able to cover the same issue a number of times so they have some background. A lot of the times they have no background, and they have no time to do research even if they'd like to. They want something but I think they tend to like people who can give them a certain capsule form for a background. But then you never know because there's a lot of pressure often from their editors and the city desk because they don't have the time. And that's one of the problems. Things are presented out of context.
>
> The problem with media in general is that there are very few media that have a reporter covering this beat of immigration and refugees. One example would be Allan Thompson who works at the Toronto Star, and he's a journalist who asked for this beat, who insisted on having it, he's one of the few who really finds it interesting and important, and went and educated himself- he went and took courses in international law, and the context and made it his business to go and talk to officials, and get the whole context of that so when something happens, he knows

where it fits, he knows how to assess the information that he gets. Very few reporters have ever done that. There used to be more but now there's less and less. So sometimes people call up from Newswatch or from the news and want you to tell them what's happening. They want some background, but they don't have too much time. Sometimes they've covered it before, and sometimes they've never covered it, so how do they sort out what I tell them from what the government tells them - I said well look, I understand all that but when I tell you anything you go and double and triple check it, when the government tells you something you do the same thing- I want you to check out what they say the same way- that's all. But it varies, And sometimes it's tricky because when you're with a journalist that you know, and that you know is privately quite sympathetic, you can get caught, because you have to remember that they're doing their job as a journalist, or what they perceive to be their job, and sometimes they get you if you're sort of talking to somebody a little friendlier, you can get caught saying stuff that you shouldn't say. And sometimes things are taken out of context. You have to be careful. When you're talking about a particular issue, if you want to make sure that that's your main point, that your main point is the point that gets through, you have to remember to not go off into too many directions. Sometimes like there's this one last question which is peripheral, if you get too involved in that, that can end up being the focus, instead of what you're trying to say. And that's hard. And that's why a lot of people are afraid to talk. You still get caught. Because you have to be very very focused. You have to remember you're not going to make more than one or at most two points. That's for when somebody's doing a story. And you're just ten seconds in the story, if that much. Half a sentence, quarter of a sentence. But to me the best opportunities are times when they do unedited bits. I like stuff like on Daybreak or on Home Run, and radio I think is the best. But then it's like your responsibility to stay focused, to think through what it is that you want to say, to get in what you can, and then it's important to - then the tone is important. But that's when you have the chance to have a little bit of leeway because it's not cut. But you still have to stay focused and be fast at responding to the questions. Because the interviewer is asking questions of Monsieur and Madame tout le monde. Sometimes it sounds like 'why are they asking these naive questions', well they're asking because those are the questions that need to be answered. But sometimes the questions take you off on a tangent and you have to figure out how to get yourself back. I think the whole issue of immigration and where this country is going, and immigration policies, and the future of a country and what kind of country is very important. But very few media consider it important enough to have somebody who continues on that beat and who becomes expert in it. And my very banal example which I keep on using is that they would never think of sending somebody to an Expos game who didn't know everything there was to know about baseball. It would be outrageous. People would be beside themselves, if somebody covered an Expos game, and got all the stuff mixed up because they've never gone to a baseball game before. But on other issues that are much more important it seems to be OK. And then of course you always forget that if they got so many facts wrong on something you know about, that they probably have a few facts wrong on other things.

It's a very complex issue and it's too easy to put out things that perpetuate stereotypes. And success stories are never very interesting. Well, sometimes you'll get some but conflict is always more interesting, and portraying people- there are a lot of myths of perceptions- there's a huge gap between reality and real facts and perceptions and I think our job is to try to narrow the gap a little bit. But it's very difficult, especially when the government - when the Minister says things or government officials are saying things which help perpetuate those stories. And it's very hard. We're constantly talking about the media and what we could do to be

> more pro-active, and not just reactive, and it's like an ongoing discussion, ever since I've been involved in this.

The Table was invited to attend the National Assembly in Québec City of the Commission de la Culture which was held on September 16, 1997. This assembly was called in order for the Commission to receive responses from invited organizations on their document: "L'Immigration au Québec de 1998 à 2000: prévoir et planifier". Through a collaborative effort, the general consensus of the member organizations was pulled together: Stephan wrote up a Mémoire which the Table would present at the Assemblée. Here Stephan explains the collaborative process for creating reports:

> D'habitude ce qu'on fait avec les mémoires, on discute en réunion des choses qui préoccupent les gens, ensuite moi ou parfois quelqu'un d'autre, on fait un premier brouillon et puis on l'envoie à tout le monde [par fax ou par TIM]; tout le monde donne des commentaires, et là, j'intègre les commentaires et je fais une autre version, et puis je la renvoie une deuxième fois, pour les documents importants, pour avoir le consensus de tout le monde. En ce moment il y a sur TIM un document sur la révision des programmes du MRCI, et pour ça, on a déjà eu trois réunions et le document a évolué; je l'ai envoyé à tout le monde, et j'ai eu dans les derniers jours beaucoup de commentaires, alors je fais les corrections.

The report is titled "Mémoire à la Commission de la Culture de L'Assemblée Nationale. L'Immigration au Québec de 1998 à 2000: Prévoir et Planifier". All of the members of the Table had received a copy, and it is available on TIM. See appendix F for Section number four of the Mémoire - a list of 23 recommendations, which could serve as a summary of the report.

As we saw, at the September meeting before the Assemblée, everyone was invited to read the Mémoire and to be represented by it if they hadn't prepared their own. Rivka mentioned that coming to Québec would be a real lesson in the bureaucratic game and how we could find ourselves enabling the game to be played. The government uses these occasions as reasons to fight each other and therefore to justify their existence. After these public consultations, they can say that they have heard the community opinion although they use the opportunity to publicly debate each other and to try to win votes. There was some discussion about who should be going to the Assemblée, whether there should be a

large group of members going up or whether just a few reps would go. In the end it was just a few of us.

I went because Rivka had suggested that it would be a prime example of 'what advocates do'. After the Assemblée, she elaborated a bit more:

> It's a good way of seeing what we do- one of the things that we do as anything else even though it happens rarely but that was sort of like a distillation and a coming together of a whole process. And then you see how silly it is. You see how these people are SO stupid. We have killed ourselves, right, to write this beautiful brief and to do all this stuff and then you have to come there and deal with all this nonsense. It's really something. But they're getting paid. A lot of money. To sit there and RANT! Sometimes people are nice but here's this person sitting and ranting at you, and he's NOT an idiot! This is a very educated [man] who's all kinds of things, who's done this and that and the other thing- and now he's - and this is how he's finishing off.

The morning of Tuesday September 16, 1997, I stood on the south west corner of Boulevard Réné Lévesque and Rue Berri, waiting for Stephan to come and pick me up in his minivan on the way to the Jacques Cartier Bridge towards Québec city. Once in the van, I saw we were to be five of us heading to the "Consultation générale et auditions publiques sur le document intitulé L'Immigration *au Québec de 1998 à 2000: prévoir et planifier*". Stephan was driving, Rivka sat in the front passenger seat, Soeur Denise from CSAI and Pablo Altamirano from *Carrefour de Liaison et d'Aide Multiethnique* (CLAM) sat in the middle passenger seats and I sat all the way in the back row. I could hardly hear what people were saying. When I tried to take some notes on what was going on I felt carsick and had to stop. It was early morning and I was nervous.

Rivka was holding a copy of the minutes of a government meeting which Stephan had downloaded from the Internet. She was laughing at certain things that it said and passed it back to Pablo. He looked at it for a while and commented on how it's like a joke. Denise said 'on dirait qu'ils s'amusaient'. Everybody laughed, except me- the minutes weren't passed back to me, probably because I wasn't involved in that meeting in any way. I noticed that they were all more dressed up than when I usually saw them, with blazers or dresses. That made me feel underdressed (and more nervous). The conversation consisted mostly of discussion of the content of the minutes, discussion of information recently

heard. Rivka told a story which she had read in the paper about a refugee claimant who refused to show identity documents. She read out loud a newspaper clipping about the multi-million dollar houses in Upper Vancouver which no-one is buying. One example in the article was a super luxury house built by a Japanese business man over four years who, by the time the house was built, felt disillusioned with Canada and decided to return to Japan, and now the house is for sale, with no prospective buyers in sight. There has been an exodus of wealthy Japanese in BC in the last few years and times are hard for those at the top (is what the article said). She cited that this was an example of why the hand-picked immigrants, i.e. the ones with a lot of money, are NOT the ideal immigrants for the economy. They are able to move around as much as they want and they will. Those who are here because they need to be, will need to build foundations and thus make real contributions to the economy. Practically all the discussion throughout the car ride was about 'work' and generally placed the government in a position of ridicule. It seemed to me that everyone was aware that what was going to be done today was mostly for bureaucratic purposes and that it was an opportunity to lobby their position - not for the government to listen to their views and act upon them.

Once arrived, the car parked, we walked through the parliament buildings and asked a guard with a large gun at his waist for directions. He told us we wanted to go to door number three. We commented on the nice flowers outside the building and entered the building at door number three. Right away we had to go through a security check, metal detector and bag x-ray. Pablo made a joke about being at the airport. We showed our identification cards to a woman who entered our information into her computer and gave us visitor passes to wear in order to walk around this huge palace-like building. Someone asked if we could exit and enter again and we found we couldn't without going through the security check again. We asked if we could go to the cafeteria and the woman said we could. So we did. It was called "Mini-Débat". The special of the day was on display in a glass case as we walked in. Coq-au-vin with soup coffee and dessert for $5.25. Stephan

commented on what a good deal that was. I was surprised. I thought it would be an expensive cafeteria since it was for the members of parliament but in fact everything there was relatively very inexpensive. Of course- it's government subsidized. As we were sitting down with our lunch trays, the gang saw a group of people they knew from Montréal. It seems they were just leaving after their one hour session. They left a copy of their mémoire with Rivka, wished us luck and left.

By 1:00 p.m. we had eaten. Still sitting in the cafeteria, it was time to organize the presentation which was to be at 2:00. Although this was vaguely discussed in the car en route, the plan had not been concretely laid out. It was decided that everyone would discuss some of the recommendations (except me- although Stephan asked if I would like to). Everyone had a copy of the mémoire in front of them and was going over some points and there was constant discussion. To organize the presentation, they looked at the list of recommendations and broke it up. It was an issue of concern to decide which points to mention. They considered the fact that they had a limited time and decided it was better to leave more time for discussion and questions than to be presenting the whole time. They looked over the Québec document and underlined and mentioned all the problematic issues.

As we were getting up at 1:45, to go to where the session would be, Rivka pointed out that when you know too much it's hard to know what to focus on. Pablo agreed right away and said "oui c'est ça, je me sens complètement confus". Waiting while everyone went to the washroom, Denise confided in me that she was feeling a little bit nervous. The room we were looking for, called Salle Louis-Joseph Papineau, was right around the corner. It seems we were the first group after the lunch break so the room was locked. As we waited in the huge and echoing hallway, we looked at the notice on the board which listed all the groups of the day. My name was on the list of presenters for the Table. Then we entered the room. There was a huge portrait of Louis-Joseph Papineau. There were laminated poster boards around the room with different information on them- one was a biography of Papineau, there was "Histoire du Parlementarisme Québécois", "Les 92

Resolutions (1834)", "Résolutions Russell (1837)", and "L'Acte D'Union 1840". It was a huge room. Everything in the room appeared to me to be brown, black and white. It was very sunny. There was a Québec flag in the far corner. There were long tables in the form of a triangle with microphones big fancy black leather chairs and Thermos brand pitchers of water and notepads and pencils and glasses upside down on coasters at every seat. At one end of the room, behind the base of the triangle were some plain brown upholstered chairs. On the left were huge arched windows. There were four speakers suspended from the ceilings and a control booth opposite the windows where an engineer would sit to time and to oversee the recording as well as to turn on and off the microphones- throughout the meeting, these workers would rotate responsibilities every thirty minutes.

As people entered the room, many seemed to know each other and there were many hellos, handshakes and kisses on the cheeks. A woman introduced herself to me. She then asked Rivka if they had prepared a mémoire "costeau" (powerful). Rivka answered that if they didn't she would have been disappointed.

In between the triangle and the brown chairs was a long wooden table. I chose to sit on the chairs as they were a little bit further back and I was nervous and uncomfortable so I felt like being invisible. Soeur Denise suggested I move up to the table so I could write more efficiently, but when I did I realized I felt more comfortable a little more behind the scenes, so I moved back. I had my clipboard with me anyway. At 2 p.m., when the one hour period was supposed to start, people were still casually chatting around the room. Rivka came to talk to me. She told me again about what an educational experience this would be. She explained to me how the room was set up. The elected representatives of the government in power (PQ) sat on the left side of the triangle, and those of the opposition (Liberals) on the right. The chairperson sat at the point. They all sat on the big black leather chairs. The guests sit at the base of the triangle (in the plain brown chairs). She pointed out to me that the two government sides argue with each other, trying to get you on their side. It's really a game between the two sides, she said.

At 2:10 p.m. the meeting still had not started. I counted 5 men and 2 women on the PQ side, and 2 men and 4 women on the Liberal side. There were many empty chairs and it seemed a long distance between the base of the triangle and the point. At 2:13 p.m. The chairperson had arrived. He started with welcoming the Table. He explained how the session would work. The Table had 20 minutes for their presentation then each side had 20 minutes for response and questions. Rivka started: she introduced herself as Présidente of the Table and then each member of the group (except me, as I wasn't presenting), explaining that they represent together "une expérience assez étendue et assez variée dans tout ce qui est l'accueil et l'intégration des immigrants et des réfugiés et dans tout ce qui est les questions de protection des réfugiés au Canada et à l'étranger". It looked like all the government people were chatting, not even directing their gaze towards Rivka, except for the chairperson, who looked a little distracted anyway. A woman was handing out folders to the government representatives at the triangle. I guessed they probably contained the Table mémoire.

By 2:20 the government reps had quieted down and everyone seemed to be listening to Rivka speak. The first points she made were about the proportion of economic immigrants versus those sponsored as family members or for humanitarian reasons, and how one class should not outweigh another, and also that it should be possible to reach the objectives stated in the Canada-Québec Accord- to receive 25% of Canadian immigrants. She expressed the concern that Québec's goal for francisation is important yet should not lead to the rigid selection of people based on whether or not they speak French. People can learn languages as they learn other things about a new society, she said, and it is easier to teach French to an engineer than to teach engineering to anyone who happens to speak French. She also spoke of the importance of public representation of refugees on the issue of the legitimacy of their claims, as well as on the prejudice of skepticism before hearing a person's story (numbers 3-7, and 18 of the recommendations- see Appendix F).

Soeur Denise spoke next, covering the issues of concern in the area of overseas selection. She started by saying:

> Lorsqu'on parle de sélection à l'étranger, c'est un très grand dilemme et un très grand problème, parce que si on parle de réfugiés, on veut parler protection, et si on parle de sélection, on parle presque de démarches officielles. Alors, c'est difficile de concilier les deux. Nous savons qu'on prend pour acquis que le Québec a signé les responsabilités humanitaires que le Canada a signé et le Québec partage. Alors, c'est pour ça qu'on essaie de voir une façon de voir comment la protection et la sélection peuvent se combiner ensemble.

After she outlined the issues (numbers 12-17 of the recommendations), giving specific examples to illustrate her points, Rivka opened the stage for Stephan, saying that she wanted to underline that none of these problems are new problems: "C'est des problèmes qui s'accumulent depuis des années, on en parle depuis des années, et on espère en échangeant qu'on peut arriver finalement à améliorer la situation".

Stephan was told he had four minutes for his presentation. He spoke of the problems of those waiting as refugee claimants. People waiting for their papers, he said, are living in misery. He pointed out that this poverty is a real obstacle for people to integrate- to be able to attain their goals to stay in Québec and contribute to Québec. He made very clear that there was great concern over the fact that children of claimants, who are born in Canada, are also excluded from services. He said that it is "une situation de discrimination que nous trouvions assez révoltante" (see numbers 19-20 of the recommendations). The word "révoltante" was in the mémoire and it had come up in conversation earlier - whether he should use it. He said that he would use because it <u>was</u> his reaction.

Pablo was to present next. He was told he had five minutes. He outlined the concerns held particularly by ROSNA, introducing the group. He spoke of the problem of people who have been in the country for over three years and who don't have access to any aid programs, subsidized by the Ministry. He also spoke of the budget cuts and program cuts and that the organizations are left with not enough resources to give aid to all those who need it, although if they don't give aid, the integration of those without it will be

greatly slowed. He underlined the importance of consultation with the Ministry, and said that there needs to be more: "On aimerait avoir notre mot à dire. On aimerait pouvoir contribuer justement à développer des programmes qui soient ajustés à la réalité que vivent les nouvelles personnes qui arrivent au pays" (see numbers 21-23 of the recommendations).

The next person to speak was the Minister of MRCI who had called these consultations, André Boisclair. He began by exclaiming "J'aurais tellement de choses à vous dire!" which made people in the room laugh, then he said "La première est merci!" He started by quoting some statistics, and saying that the objective to accept 2,000 refugees will be reached this year. As for the 25% objective mentioned by Rivka, he said, that hasn't been a goal since 1962. That was a year with exceptionally low admissions into Canada. Since then, he said, the average has been around 16%. He explained that the choice being made by Québec is a realistic one given the constraints for short term integration which currently exist. He pointed out that the number of admissions does not correspond to the actual reception effort, because Québec continues to receive 40% of claimants into Canada, who do not count in the Québec acceptance statistics, but nonetheless settle in Québec. He also explained the lack in family class sponsorship as being due to federal administrative structures, for example he said there have been less family reunifications from Haiti because of the $975 fee. He then presented more statistics about choosing French speaking immigrants, pointing out that language points represent only 14% of all the points in the selection criteria. He used the rest of his twenty minutes to ask questions to the Table group: "D'abord, est-ce que vous jugez le système de reconnaissance du statut de réfugié, le système fédéral, est-ce que vous le jugez efficace?" This made the Table group laugh. Rivka answered the question, starting with:

> Bien, écoutez, ce n'est pas un secret, les organismes communautaires, les églises et tous les ONGs à travers le Canada parlent depuis des années de ce système. On trouve qu'il est trop long actuellement, et tout le monde est d'accord que, pour que ça soit juste envers les réfugiés, il faut que ça soit efficace mais juste.

She gave a brief presentation of the history of changes which continued to be inefficient, and suggested that the long-time experience of the organizations, lawyers and such should be listened to. She underlined that they are not there just to give criticisms, but to give recommendations as well. The Minister's reply was to state that he intends to hear those recommendations in order to present them to the federal government:

> Il y a présentement au Québec 16,000 personnes qui sont en attente de statut de réfugié, auxquelles il faut ajouter quelque 6,000 à 7,000 personnes qui sont déboutées et qui sont un peu dans les limbes, 22,000 personnes. Qu'est-ce que vous me recommanderiez d'exiger ou de demander à la ministre fédérale pour faire en sorte qu'on puisse apporter rapidement une réponse à ces 22,000 personnes?

Rivka answered that resources should be put where they are needed. There should be no more barriers for accessing the process, such as visa requirements, added bureaucracy at the airports, which all help create delays. There needs to be adequate resources, people at the IRB should be properly trained, and there needs to be a new way of looking at what constitutes risk of return because as it stands, things do not function as they should, she said.

In response to this, Boisclair asked Rivka what she thought of the fact that in 1996, 25% of claimants came from Chile, Venezuela, and Israel, implying that this was a problem which the new barriers sought to solve. Rivka replied that this year, the situation has changed, because of the visa requirements imposed. She said that throughout history, there have been moments where larger groups would come from certain parts of the world, and, like it or not, we cannot decide in advance where they should be coming from. Rather than impose more barriers to deter abusers, resources should be put towards having a more fair and efficient system, speedy without sacrificing justice- above all, there should not be delays of one, two, or three years for people to receive their status. Rivka told me later that the question threw her off guard. She wouldn't have had trouble answering it if she were only speaking for herself, but she was aware she was representing all the members.

The next few minutes were spent with the Minister giving his defense of the francization programs and Pablo responded to this by saying that they agree with the

principles, but in reality the theories do not apply. The financing by the MRCI is conditional and those who are in need of employment programs cannot apply, leaving the community organizations to either send them away or help them on their own accord. The same for all urgent services which are only available to them in French. When newcomers have just arrived, they need basic information and it is not available unless the community organizations provide it, and they are not funded for this by the MRCI. The Minister agreed that this is a problem. Pablo pointed out that community organizations usually will not send their clientele away no matter what the situation is.

The Minister ended his 20 minute spotlight with a couple of rebuttals and one more question about whether the Table group thought that the federal government should take on the responsibility of services for refugee claimants, since they have the responsibility for their acceptance. Rivka started to answer and was told she had one minute left. She asserted that no matter what, while there is debate between the federal and the provincial on the subject, it should not be those most in need who pay the bill. She said they are proud that in 1984 Québec took on the responsibility. However, 12 years later, the services are slowly being taken away and until it is worked out with the federal, it 's the people who suffer, and the community organizations who see their offices literally full of people, with whom they don't know what to do. These are people who have not enough money to eat, and must decide between buying food for their children or paying for a lawyer- and the community organizations don't know what to do, and it should not be up to those who are suffering to work it out, she said.

It was then time for the Liberal representatives to have their 20 minutes. This last section may have been the one the most obviously spent as a political debate between the two parties, especially as M. Laporte, the deputy of Outremont, spoke of his concerns. He was very upset that the PQ could not achieve the objective of receiving 25% of Canadian Immigration. He quoted many statistics and raised his voice and repeated himself quite a few times, for the purpose of complaining that the objective could and should be achieved

currently. He asked Rivka to elaborate on her opinion of using the ability to speak French as a criteria in the selection process, and that sometimes non-francophones being penalized perhaps not in the intentions, but in the consequences of Ministerial decisions. Mme. Houda-Pepin, the deputy of La Pinière had the next question. She asked Stephan to elaborate on the type of consultation they would like to have with the government. He replied that he would like to be able to use the structures that the community organizations have built over the years, which have been neglected recently, partly because of the musical chairs taking place at the Ministry, making it difficult to proceed with follow-ups to fruitful consultations. He spoke of the difficulty of receiving recognition as a specific network of community organizations. He pointed out that in the year 1995-1996, only two members of TCMR had been funded by SACA. That's two ethnocultural organizations out of hundreds of organizations who received the sustaining grants. Rivka added here that they do very much volunteer work on the level of trying to represent their members in different community milieus, for services for refugees and newcomers to be recognized as an important part of society. Mme. Houda-Pepin then asked Stephan to elaborate on the situation of the children born in Canada with no access to services such as Medicare. After Stephan's reply, she asked the last question of the Table group for the day. She wanted to know how Montréal organizations could help with the settlement of immigrants in other parts of Québec. Stephan spoke of the need for a more concrete network to be in place between Montréal organizations and others in Québec. However, there is already quite a lot of communication back and forth, they do have meetings, although there is no (financial) support from the Minister for this. Rivka elaborated on the potentials of sharing the expertise obtained by Montréal organizations with those out of the city. Refugees have specific needs, and they are very strong people who have survived unimaginable things- these are people who want peace and to establish themselves and to participate in society- here Rivka was cut off by the chairperson saying "Merci. Ça va aller, madame, merci beaucoup". As quick as a flash, the government representatives stood up to approach the

Table group and shake their hands. Rivka and I exchanged later that we both noticed that Mme. Houda-Pepin was always the first one to arrive and shake hands with the guests. During the short break between groups, she introduced herself to me, shook my hand, and asked me why I was there, and if I was waiting to give a presentation. The next group up was l'Association québecoise des avocats et avocates en droit de l'immigration (AQAADI). The four others of the group joined me in the back seats at the base of the triangle and we stayed a couple of hours longer to see their presentation as well as the one that followed, the Conseil national indo-Canadien (CNIC). Some other groups presenting at the Assemblée that day and the next one were: the Equality Party, the City of Montréal, Comité sur la violence contre les gais et lesbiennes, les Centres jeunesse de Montréal, and the Fédération canadienne de l'entreprise indépendante.

In January 1998, with the federal consultations coming up, I asked Stephan his opinion on how the MRCI incorporated the consultations. He told me that they declared that they had been confirmed by the public, and went ahead and did everything they had been planning to do in the first place.

I have described in the Introduction and at a couple of the monthly meetings, some of the preparation for the consultations with CIC Minister Lucienne Robillard following the release of the report of the Legislative Review Advisory Group entitled "Not Just numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration". On Friday, March 6, 1998, the Table sat down in front of the Minister to voice their concerns. They had been allocated 90 minutes of speaking time, double that of any of the other Montréal guests, on the basis that they represent so many groups. On the way in to the hotel, I passed by a group of demonstrating Chileans- they were supporting the group of Chileans who were on a hunger strike to protest an imminent deportation (their refugee claims were found to have 'no credible basis' -based on the assumption that there was no more political conflict in Chile since the democracy came into place- this is probably not unrelated to Chile being Canada's newest free trade partner). Upon approaching the room in the Sheraton Hotel, the media

presence was very clear. There was a media sign-in counter, and several video cameras visible, as well as a few people with tape recorders and notepads. In the room where the consultations were to be held, there were three tables allocated to media reporters. As I sat down in the front row of the 136 observer seats, I noticed that Brian Britt of CFCF 12 was sitting at the media table. I watched him conduct a short interview with a woman from an NGO who was not invited to speak to the Minister. I heard him say "I don't want to put pressure on you, but we've got Mayor Bourque [who had earlier presented to the Minister], we've got the Minister, we've got the Chileans, and we've got to wrap it up in ten seconds". Britt and his cameraman left the room immediately afterwards.

The arrangement for the Minister, her entourage and her guests was a big U-shaped table with a white table cloth, with a backdrop of one Canadian and one Québec flag. There were microphones and bottled water at every seat. The chairperson sat at the tip of the U-shaped table, with the Minister and her group facing the observers, meaning that the guests would sit facing the Minister, and with their backs to the observers. Presenting for the Table was Stephan, Rivka, Soeur Denise, and Nathalie Blais, a young lawyer working at the Comité d'Aide aux Réfugiés (CAR). As on the trip to Québec City, I noticed that they were dressed up a little bit more formally than when I usually see them.

Moments before it was time for the Table's presentation, Robillard was chatting with Rivka and Stephan quite casually. Everyone sat down and the chairperson introduced them, and noted that because the Table represents many groups, their presentation will be longer than the others. Stephan began by thanking the Minister and introducing the Table group, and the Table as an organization, noting that being based in Québec, their work involves negotiations with two governments at the level of immigration. The Minister laughed and commented that it should make the work more interesting. Rivka gave her presentation next, followed by Soeur Denise then Nathalie. Each presentation referred to other presentations that would be made later in the process. This was done as a time-saving device between the invited organizations, to avoid repetition. For example, they would say:

'as explained on page 22 of the report submitted by AQAADI'; or 'our position is the same as that clarified on page14 of the report which will be presented tomorrow by the Ligue des Droits et Libertés'; or 'as you will see in the CCR report which will be presented in Ottawa on Monday'; and so on.

When it was the Minister's turn to speak, she began by saying that she realized that there had been complaints about the inadequacy of the consultations. She explained that she was not trying to impose the 172 recommendations from the report. If she were, she said, then she would have much larger consultations. Since she is listening to the groups even before the decisions are being made, she is confident that these consultations are real and are adequate. She also explained that she does receive information on their concerns regularly from them, and does take it seriously. She told the group that she will not be making any decisions until she has heard them all, and although it's clear they are not always in agreement, they should be assured that all their advice will be considered. The year of 1999 will be the year of the thorough and extensive consultations, on the subject of the position of the government, she said. She then had some specific questions for the group, at first it was for clarification, either on their presentation, or on specific comments in their report. She then asked them for their position on certain issues, explaining that she was noticing a trend in one direction or another from the other groups that had spoken, and wanted to know where the Table stood vis à vis the others. As soon as the session was over, Rivka went over to Robillard to talk to her some more. The Communauté Urbaine de Montréal was to be presenting next, after the hour-and-fifteen- minute lunch break.

Before the consultations took place, Ber told me his opinion of the consultation process:

> It's not a consultation. It's not a study. It's not an in-depth year, year and a half: it's window dressing. It's political window dressing. That's clear. And we're all going to play the game. We're all going to - my question, at that [Jan.22] meeting, and I didn't pursue it, it was 'Aren't we wasting our time on this? And our energy, of trying to get more consultations? Maybe we should just- not go! Basically say 'look, this is a sham, we know it's a sham, but people want to have their voice heard, and that's understandable'.

There have been issues that have been studied in depth- over a year, a year and a half, two years, before any action's been taken. But I think one of the analyses [of this case] which is probably pretty close is that the Liberals want to be - want to position themselves for the next election to undermine the Reform party's platform. So since the Reform and Neo-Conservatives have been gaining in strength, the Liberals have traditionally stolen whichever side of the spectrum has been stronger. So if it's the NDP that's been stronger, we'd get good health care. If the Reform's stronger, we fuck the refugees, right? So their agenda is to get this written, passed and on the books before the next election. They have to work fast. It's going to be a media circus, it's going to make [Robillard] look good, we're going to feel good because we're there and we're with the Minister, it's this whole kind of- stuff like that. I'm not sure it's really in the end very productive. To score political points you have to be seen to be consulting. And then basically in your offices you do what you want.

k) Some comments about the Table as an information network

Despite the competition community groups face for receiving money from funding sources, Stephan says, people still follow the Table:

> Je suis assez fier que malgré ça, on a réussi à maintenir une cohérence. C'est un peu le défi, en fait, chez nous. Une des raisons également pour les gens de venir à la Table, c'est la personnalité de Rivka qui joue un rôle important de ralliement. C'est quelqu'un qui a beaucoup de crédibilité dont la Table profite énormément.

Rosemary is a lawyer, and thus as an individual not qualified to be a member of the Table. She nonetheless affiliates herself with the Table. Here she explains why:

> I think the Table is great. I think it's great. I think Rivka and Stephan are amazing. They're apparently not supposed to be dealing with individual cases, they're supposed to be dealing with policy and general stuff, but I find them really quite accessible for specific things. If you want to find something out about what's going on, it's sort of like a brain. An NGO brain. I think it's just- I don't know if anything like it exists anywhere else in Canada, the Table is just amazing. It's necessary, it's good. And I'm sure they could do much better if they had more resources. But they've done a pretty darn good job with what they've got.
>
> I use it a lot and I'm very satisfied, like I go to [the monthly meetings]. I think the structure of the monthly meetings is very good so if you need to plug in you can plug in - there's an opportunity to do that. What I'm finding that over the years, is that there are certain things that if I ask, I'll get this information, so perhaps they could be a little bit more proactive about providing that information to their members, or people so that it's more available. As I say I'm not sure whether that's just because I'm not- I'm too busy to be completely plugged in, the way I should ideally be. I found for example the Internet thing [TIM] very useful like the other day there was this thing about something happening at Blackpool and 'oh my goodness'[there was a message about Blackpool on TIM].
>
> One of the things I'd like to know about is also all these groups that are out there... and it's also great because then it's always the same if you're going after the government, trying to shake them up a bit, it's much better if you have a lot of voices, a lot of different voices, saying it, and also to get this information out to people out there. Because they don't know what's going on. The population doesn't know.

Ber also had some things to say about the Table. I asked him if he saw himself as part of a community of advocates:

> Well I do in a way, I mean professionally, yeah. I think that the network that exists here is very helpful. I think it's quite, it's fairly strong, it has good access to government officials, whether anything actually changes as a result of that- sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. It's better that the voice is there than not. There's a certain amount of sharing- I don't find a great deal, but it's between certain groups. Sharing of information and trying to come together to advocate for each other's groups if it works. People- I guess out of necessity, generally because of the lack of resources are very focused on what they're familiar with- and that's fine. I think that the network though works reasonably well, and I think that through the meetings that are held, the Table meetings that I've been to have always been pretty well attended, you know, as people voice their concerns. Yeah I find myself in that sense, part of the community [because of the Table].
>
> These networks have existed in the past, CCR really played that role previously, and JIAS was involved as co-founder of the CCR many years ago. I guess in my life I'm part of many communities that overlap each other. And sometimes I feel I'm not a member of any. I'm just like some lone human being out there floating around [laugh]. But I guess I tend to be rather solitary because of my artwork which tends to be a solitary activity. It's a welcome relief from too many human beings. I've often felt that - I get burnt out with people, not necessarily very quickly, but in fairly short order. I've been at this job for six years now, which is the longest I've ever been at any job. And that's mostly if not entirely because I have my daughter to raise, and I don't want to face abject poverty in this situation.
>
> Where was I? The community, right. But I think that it helps that the network of the Table helps a great deal to provide up-to-date information of what's going on so that I can advise people better. At the time that I need to know about what to do, because it changes every day. Every day practically there's a new piece of information. And I get most of my information from refugees themselves- what's going on, what they hear, and not all of it is necessarily good information, in other words, it's not necessarily accurate. They- it's their lives, right?
>
> [They hear] from other refugees, and very often it's from government officials, and sometimes it's from lawyers, so I get to know what's going on, what they're being told. I don't know what the lawyers have been learning, or where they've been going to school, because some of the information they're giving is just terrible. [So the Table serves as an information spreader] and as a rallying point to coordinate common positions, like with this [Trempe] report. I think it's important that to a greater or lesser extent that those people in the field have a fairly consistent point of view on important developments.
> [My point of view is often consistent with the group]. I mean we generally stand for the same things.
>
> I don't think we're ever consulted. I mean we participate voluntarily at the meetings, and if we're not there then our voice isn't heard. I don't remember having been called [but when we're wanting to input something] it's certainly there. Through ROSNA as well, we've participated. I've been actively involved in those meetings as a participant, as group leader, as that kind of thing. And the discussions are always lively, and always interesting, and always culturally based.
>
> It takes certain kinds of people, to be able to feel comfortable about going beyond their community's boundaries, and not everyone does it. Not everyone thinks it's even important. They're content to live in their sphere and to do what they can, do what they want, what they think needs to be done there, and they'll have contact, but beyond that, not necessarily a lot of it. The preoccupations of

> JIAS in the last several years have been in developing immigration programs to bring people here as independent immigrants. The whole aspect of refugees has been largely, not abandoned- but it has not been the central focus of the organization. It's true that most of the clients are not refugees anymore. They used to be, almost entirely refugees. They're not anymore. The world has changed. Basically it changed largely with the fall of the Soviet Union, about ten years or so ago.

ii) Meet the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)

The Table is a member of the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), the independent pan-Canadian network of organizations for the promotion of the rights of refugees. Janet Dench, who is the executive director of the organization which has its office in Montréal, explains CCR as "a coalitional organization so a networking organization, information exchange organization, also an advocacy organization for rights of refugees, and for newcomer settlement". Their Mission Statement reads as follows:

> The Canadian Council for Refugees is a non-profit umbrella organization committed to the rights and protection of refugees in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada. The membership is made up of organizations involved in the settlement, sponsorship and protection of refugees and immigrants. The Council serves the networking, information-exchange and advocacy needs of its membership.

The CCR aims to fulfill this mission through holding conferences, working group meetings, and putting out publications. They work in cooperation with other networks, and spend much effort on policy-analysis and information exchange on refugee and related issues. They advocate for the rights of refugees and immigrants through media relations, government relations, research and public education.

The Table is implicated in the activities of the CCR in order to coordinate actions at the Canadian level. Members of the Table are involved in all of the CCR's working groups (explained below), and this involvement ensures the connection, contacts, and exchanges with other provinces in between CCR's twice yearly conferences. Representatives of the Table are regularly present at the conferences, contributing to and confirming the adopted resolutions of the CCR. Here Stephan tells about the importance the CCR holds for him:

> Je pense que c'est important d'avoir un réseau canadien pour la défense des réfugiés, et le Conseil Canadien des Réfugiés est très impliqué au niveau des réfugiés, comme l'interlocuteur direct d'Ottawa. Donc nous partageons beaucoup ce

que fait le CCR. On essaye de ne pas dédoubler les choses. On suit beaucoup le CCR. Souvent c'est le CCR qui prend l'initiative, et nous on appuie. Au niveau international aussi, le CCR joue un rôle important ; c'est notre structure au Canada au niveau international. Il s'agit d'un rapport de force, pour faire des pressions, maintenir une pression, surtout la communication aussi, un réseau de communication qui permet de faire faire en même temps les choses à Vancouver, Toronto, Montréal, sur des questions semblables, donc c'est très important de pouvoir maintenir une pression. Cela permet une cohérence dans les actions au niveau des réfugiés. Nous, on a la chance que le bureau du CCR soit à Montréal, donc il y des liens personnels plus étroits au niveau de l'échange ; on se voit très souvent. Mais par exemple, le CCR intervient pas du tout au niveau du Québec. Le CCR fait les liens pour assurer la circulation de l'information. Sur ce qui se passe au niveau local à Vancouver, à Toronto, à Winnipeg, pour que nos collègues des autres provinces sachent qu'on est en train de négocier des nouveaux programmes ici au Québec. Ils ont accès à cette information. Donc pour ça, le CCR est très important.

Rivka told me that she's been involved in the CCR ever since the first meeting of the Table in 1979:

> To me it's an extension [of the Table]- the two go hand in hand, one is, the Table is the local arm, and the [CCR is the] wider coalition. And I think I have the same feelings about both- it's just that here we're more involved in the hands-on local stuff and at the CCR it's more policy.

In order to further introduce you to the CCR, I will next share with you Janet's description of her role at CCR, then I will describe my experience at one of the CCR conferences, which may help to further illustrate some of the processes she talks about. This is not a complete profile of the CCR as an organization, but rather a look at some of the functions of CCR. This is how she answered my request to describe her role:

> My role there - I'd been acting executive director. Since Sunday (Annual General Assembly 1997) I've become executive director. With a small staff so, we have one other permanent at the moment and the rest is all contract so the role is very diverse. Pretty much everything imaginable.
>
> I'm the resource person for the executive committee which is overseeing the business of the CCR, so I need to make sure that their meetings are properly prepared for and their action items are followed up. I'm also the resource person for all the different working groups. [These working groups deal with] protection (refugee claimant issues), overseas sponsorship and settlement and so [I work] preparing for their meetings making sure that their information that they want circulated around gets circulated around, plus following up on projects that they may undertake. I guess it's keeping those- all of the different organs of the CCR going and responding to their needs, which can be from small things like somebody says 'well we want to find out information about this', 'what's the government policy on such and such an issue'- finding something like that out, or something slightly bigger so the government announces- is proposing to change the policy, so produces a draft so we'd have to develop comments on that so normally I will be at least coordinating that response and often drafting it by getting comments from

other people. But then we also have the even larger projects, like for example this refugee women research project that means drafting proposals, getting input from various different people, looking for funding opportunities, preparing a meeting to discuss it, following up on a meeting, and then supervising- if we hire someone for this project- supervising that person on that particular project.

I guess I would see my role in two main ways: one is as a facilitator of the community of NGOs who are members of the CCR, and on one level the CCR is a place for people to be together, exchange information and develop common positions so often a meeting of the CCR will not necessarily be to declare actions taken by the CCR but that a lot of people will go back to their own meetings and say 'well we've exchanged that information, we've developed a common strategy we've thought - we've all agreed that what would be important is to do x, y, or z'. And that may or may not be anything to do with the government directly. It might be, people are saying- we recognize that there is a particular group of refugees that are in particular need, so you've heard from the CCR about these people, forgotten refugees and something they need- they need resettlement- or you've heard about detention conditions in - about people in detention and the importance of going to visit them and you think well in the community nobody is going visiting them in detention so we should set up a program. So in that sense we're a place for that to happen and our role is to allow people to meet and in order to do that we organize the meetings, set up agendas that meet people's needs, and do things like the CCR list which allows people to communicate, and sending out mailings where- exchanging information- and another example is the April 4th, which is Refugee Rights day. So what has been asked of the CCR on occasion, where we produce a resource [document] that people can use which highlights what are the current issues for refugee rights, and that's something that people in the communities can use as a tool. And also reflect back to people about what's happening in different communities so we'll call up and find out what's happening in Winnipeg, find out what's happening in Toronto, etc. Then we put together an outline- I mean a sheet of paper which says 'these are the activities' so that people can know and be inspired by each other and feel connected with people across the country. So that's one aspect of what we do.

The other part of it - and I guess this is where- the fact that we have both of these roles in some ways is - distinguishes us from some of the other coalitions in other countries- for example, in the United States, the almost equivalent organization to the CCR, the National Immigration Forum, they restrict themselves to that first side of things, they don't do the advocacy themselves, and then there are other refugee councils in other countries that are not membership based particularly so they won't- they just make their own decisions over what to advocate and they're not particularly concerned with providing places where people can exchange and develop networks.

So the second- the advocacy side of things- is where we're in direct conversation with the government, and well not just the government, but generally the outside- public opinion too, or different levels of the government or different bodies like the UNHCR. We'll have different issues with the UNHCR where we will write or talk to them and try to encourage them to take certain positions or to change their policies or procedures in a way that we think would be better for refugees. So that's - I mean obviously in a number of special issues, we are going to be against the government in that they'll be taking one position and we'll oppose it, for example the head tax [see Chapter two for explanation]. We are opposed to the head tax and we are looking for ways to persuade the government to drop the head tax. But it's not necessarily so in areas where it's against the government- there'll be often, they'll be preparing drafts of something and the drafts may not themselves be new policy- they'll be proposals. What they are proposing may not

be absolutely bad- I mean we'll be saying do MORE of this, or correct- giving them feedback saying this is not going to work because of that. Or we're calling on them to do more for refugees, so we're emphasizing and trying to make the government aware of its responsibilities in the particular area of refugees.

I asked about the relationship between CCR and the Table:

Well sometimes there's a certain tension because, given that our office is located in Montréal, there's a proximity to the Table which shouldn't- it's an accidental proximity, and as the CCR we need to be equally belonging to different parts of the country so we shouldn't be particularly tied to the Table. But on the other hand, an advantage to being located in Montréal, being able to be more present at the Table is that, because of the language issue and also the way the- effects of the Québec Canada accord, the participation of people from Québec is less, and I think that's often the case in many national organizations is that you don't have sufficient representation from Québec, but it's an advantage to [be] coming regularly to the Table and at least making CCR known to the people who are members of the Table. I go[to the monthly meetings] as a way of keeping informed, it's a useful source of information to add to what I hear from talking to people across the country. And also just by talking to Stephan and Rivka about what's going on. So it's useful for me in order to do my job to be a little bit aware of what's going on so I feel like I need to keep informed and one of the ways of doing that is by attending the Table meetings or anything like that. But I don't feel like it would be appropriate for me to get much involved in the Table activities. My official role there is as an observer. Obviously we're not members of the Table. The Table is a member of CCR. Also I've been to some of the Vancouver Refugee Council meetings and when I'm in Vancouver then I can go and talk to the people there about what the CCR is doing, I can give a report to them. And in Toronto there's nothing comparable really.

This led me to ask about networking and what are some of the barriers which seem to inhibit networking to function at its greatest potential in a multidirectional way.

Well, the various problems that you're always faced with are that for example the fact that people are having to fit in networking across regions into their busy schedules. So people have always- they want to do more than they can and they commit themselves to doing more than they can ever do, and that's something. There are more topics that they want to discuss and then they can never manage to fit [them] in. We already ask people to spend enough time with our four meetings a year that not everybody can make but it's a big commitment, and then people have a lot of ideas and not everything can get done. And people tend to get excited and enthusiastic when they come to CCR meetings and then when they go back to their own regions and they're taken up with crises of the day and realities and their job descriptions and the pressure's on, so that's a limitation, and then of course there's the perennial problems of the expense of traveling long distances in Canada to meet which means that people from out West, or from the Atlantic can't come- it's harder to keep all people involved, and then there's the language question which means that it's hard for people who don't speak English to be - impossible really for them to be as much involved in the CCR.

a) My experience at a CCR Conference

Every six months, usually in November and in May of every year, the CCR organizes a conference for member organizations from across Canada and others to get together and inform each other about policies, philosophies, actions, and to make plans or 'resolutions' for future actions, and to confirm consensus on current philosophies. The conferences are located in a different Canadian city each time (there is repetition). Each Conference has a general theme, which is the topic of the main plenary session of that conference. One conference I attended was the November 1997 conference in Toronto. Here, I learned an awful lot about the CCR and about networking. I was also very pleased to have the networking experience myself. The theme of this conference was 'women and children'. The conference lasted three days and each day's agenda was full. There were usually three sessions taking place simultaneously, except for the Plenary Session on the first evening and the Annual General Meeting on the last day. The conference took place in a Howard Johnson hotel in North York. Although the rooms were $78 per triple room per night, it seemed to me like an expensive place to be, as far as the decor and the prices at the restaurants. I, like most of the other out-of-towners, stayed at the hotel.

At the very first session, the "Orientation for First Time Participants", I learned about resolutions, the working groups and the core groups:

b) Resolutions:

At the orientation session, it was explained that at the CCR conferences, everyone is encouraged to participate, to submit their thoughts, and to draft resolutions. The drafted resolutions need to be written clearly and include the name of the mover as well as a seconder (in the Conference kit, one of the handouts was an explanation of how to draft resolutions). Each resolution then has to be passed at the working group meeting, then be voted in by the general meeting in order to become resolutions officially adopted by the CCR. In between the working group (resolutions due 5:30 p.m. Friday) and the general assembly (1:30 p.m. Saturday), the CCR resolutions committee reviews every resolution to ensure that they make grammatical and political sense. There are a lot of resolutions

submitted- one can imagine the late hours that Janet and the others on the CCR executive will spend preparing them for the annual general meeting the next day. It is important that either the mover or the seconder of the resolution be at the Annual meeting, otherwise the resolution can't be voted in. These are the resolutions that everyone leaves with to work with at home- They can back their arguments with CCR resolutions, or base their actions on them. They can be motivated by them. The outgoing president of the CCR explained that in her experience, the real work of the CCR happens when people go home from the conferences and use the resolutions as a framework. Here is an example of a resolution that was passed at the November 1997 General Assembly:

> WHEREAS:
>
> 1. The CCR is aware of numerous cases in which CIC's information-gathering practices have jeopardized the security of refugee claimants and their families;
>
> 2. The CCR is not aware of the existence of any adequate CIC guidelines on information-gathering practices;
>
> THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the CCR call upon the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to:
>
> 1. Draft and implement guidelines for the gathering of information concerning Convention refugee claimants;
>
> 2. Ensure the Guidelines so developed are similar in nature and intent to the IRB's Guidelines with respect to the gathering of claimant-specific information and include the assurance that the security of the refugee claimant and his/her family will be paramount and that notice is given to claimants of proposed information searches with an opportunity for the claimant and his/her counsel to respond;
>
> 3. Ensure that such Guidelines are binding on any government agency involved in the gathering of information concerning refugee claimants, including but not limited to the RCMP and CSIS.
>
> Moved by Peter Stockholder
> Seconded by Nick Summers

c) Working Groups:

Working group meetings are restricted to non-governmental and inter-governmental representatives. A CCR handout explains: "The working groups are the forum in which CCR members exchange information, network and develop strategies and policy positions in particular areas of concern. They are responsible for preparing resolutions and planning workshops at the consultations, as well as for advising the Executive on policy". There are two elected positions for co-chairs who have as responsibilities: "being responsible for planning, running and overseeing follow-up to the four working group meetings each year. You are also regularly consulted on matters of policy relevant to the working group". There are three working groups: Settlement, Refugee Protection, and Overseas Protection and Sponsorship.

d) Core Groups:

There are two core groups. The Gender Issues Core Group and the Anti-Racism Core Group. The anti-racism core group is currently working on implementing the anti-racism policy, including within the CCR itself, and the gender core group makes sure that the interests of women are being addressed. They have meetings at every conference as well as conference calls between them. CCR members can report any issues having to do with race or gender discrimination or anything touching upon race or gender issues to the core groups and they will be responsible for bringing that information in for decision making in the working groups. The core groups meet informally and often spontaneously (e.g. at a lunch table) so if one wants to be involved they can hook up with one of the representatives and ask them to be notified when there will be a meeting. There need to be representatives from each of the core groups in each of the working groups.

e) An information session

The very next session which I attended was entitled "Challenging Discrimination Against Refugees and Immigrants (Part I)". It was three hours long and at the front table was the resource person, the facilitator, and the translator. Translators at these meetings

would usually translate from English to French, unless a speaker was presenting in French, then it would be the other way. The resource person was a lawyer involved at the Metro Toronto Chinese and SE Asian Legal Clinic. She was there to explain "what is involved in making a Charter Challenge on an issue of discrimination and explore how to work with a community to take a problem to the courts", as the Conference agenda explained. There were not too many people at this session. The facilitator started the session by telling us about the "International Market" downstairs where there will be coffee, tea and cookies served at the coffee break. There were also books, and items from different parts of the world for sale.

After the resource person explained the history, function, and process of Charter Challenges, we broke up into two groups and prepared a plan of action for one of the two hypothetical cases which were given to us on a handout. The case which the group I was in was assigned to work on was about clients from Ghana having to provide DNA proof of relationship with their children in order to process their sponsorship application. DNA testing can be requested if there is not satisfactory evidence otherwise, for example in the absence of satisfactory identity documents. There is no written policy about which countries have satisfactory identity documents. It seems to be usually Ghanaians and other Africans who have to provide more evidence than the identification documents that they already hold.

This is where the court case will be difficult- it would require PROOF that there is a pattern- and that only one group is in fact being discriminated against- that would be the groups from African and other 'countries of color'. The government could argue that in these countries fake i.d. is so easy to get that any of them could be fake. The government doesn't want to let in abusers, criminals, etc., so they check everybody out- guilty until proven innocent. There is no empirical evidence to suggest that a disproportionate number of criminals are coming in from any one part of the world. In fact, many criminals come in with legitimate identification papers (then we reminded ourselves that this case was about

children being sponsored so the justification may not be criminality). I was the 'reporter' for the group, which was a good exercise. It was a very interesting scenario about how adverse discrimination works with refugee policy.

After the reporters from each group presented the discussions of their group, there was some discussion of the strategic role of networking. This came up as one of the very important requirements for a successful Court Challenge- to be able to spread and share information easily. Also, when discussing the pros and cons and how to go about approaching a Court Challenge, it was brought up in several ways that networking is a crucial element to this maneuver. Networking, it was said, is about mutual support and the recognition that we are all cogs of a larger wheel. Helping one group out in one instance means that they will help you in another, which makes it easier to mobilize large groups and have more effective campaigns in terms of resources as well as in terms of pressure factor. Having more people mobilized means having more potential for making an impact.

After the presentations, discussion turned to the subject of getting help and support from other organizations in the advocacy community. One question many were interested in was how to get support from lawyers. One person mentioned that at her organization, law students were a great resource. They would offer to help refugee claimants fill out their PIF, in exchange only for the experience. Someone suggested that since there were lawyers at the conference, that we should take the opportunity to get to know them personally and then it will be possible to ask them for help. The CCR conference could be one of the best places to network with lawyers and start with coalition building. Networking, it was said, means establishing personal relationships. It means being able to posit a situation in a way that is an advantage to the others if they help. For example, lawyers can get publicity if the case is going to the supreme court. People agreed that a good strategy would be to join together more than one issue, to take one issue of concern and offer to help another group to fight if they would help with your cause. This would not only lead to more resources, but a better ability to formulate arguments that your issues are part of the bigger picture and

not isolated compartmentalized issues. It is networking that is needed for action, and support from other organizations is key. The facilitator told us to ask ourselves if that network is in place. This support network could involve information or activities. She seemed to think not, and that it needed to be done.

The next session which I attended, which was also three hours long, was entitled "Using Complaints Mechanisms to Address Racism". Marie Claire, from the Table presented three examples of systemic racism. One story was of a person going to Europe on a holiday from Montréal, with landed immigrant status and a travel permit issued by Canada. She was sent to the Immigration office nonetheless, and noticed that there were only people of color who had been sent at the same time as her. This story was to illustrate the absolute and arbitrary power of customs officials. The second story she told was about a person from Zaire who has all his papers yet had them confiscated, due only to unfounded suspicion, which caused him huge problems. The third story she told was about employment discrimination.

The next speaker was from the Ontario Press Council and he explained how they work and how to submit a complaint. The next speaker, from the Canadian Human Rights Commission, also explained how her organization works and how to file a complaint. The final speaker for that session was from an organization in Winnepeg called the International Center. He said that in his experience, the most effective means of achieving change is to let the public see what is going on. He was very adamant about the power of the media. He said "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it did it make a sound? If an atrocity happens and it wasn't on CNN did it really happen?" This brought on discussion of mobilization. he said "How do we [in other parts of Canada] hear about your success and use it to influence our people?" He suggested using a website, like the CCR site, for sharing information. We could have an area on the CCR web site, he suggested, for people to enter stories of discrimination in great detail. We should all be responsible for communicating. Someone else was concerned that although the Internet is good for these

things, not everybody has access to the Internet, 'so where else would we forward our complaints?', he asked the group in the room. There was a suggestion that there be a book at every port of entry for all people to be able to enter their stories.

At this point, having heard about requests for better networking twice in two meetings, I wondered why wasn't there more information at the conference specifically about the strategy of networking. I decided I would write it up as a suggestion for future conferences[18].

Rosemary Hnatiuk, who was there, agreed with the importance of pooling information. She spoke of needing to keep the higher ups in the government informed on what their minions are doing. The injustices which occur at customs counters in the airport and at borders, or by security guards in detention ('prevention') centres could be stopped if there were people on the government side who saw that this was happening, she said.

The second day of the conference was the day I attended the all-day Working Group on Refugee Protection. The first part of the meeting was dedicated to people taking positions. There was a call for people to volunteer to be regional contacts. These people would be primarily responsible for disseminating information sent to them through the CCR. Needed was a contact for Toronto. Two people volunteered. Rivka stood up and said she just wanted to be sure that she could contact these people and they would in fact disseminate the information for her, saying something like 'I just would like to know how to make sure that everyone in Toronto gets a piece of information' (while there are many community organizations in Toronto, and an umbrella organization for Ontario groups, there is no such organization for groups in Toronto, and it is felt by organizations like the Table when they need to retrieve or share information with the groups in that city).

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[18] In a later discussion with Janet, she told me that there had been a session about the Internet at the November 1994 conference in Montreal. At the May 1996 conference in Winnipeg, before the conference began there was a meeting called with all the regional contacts and the executive and the working group chairs to discuss how to be more effective in networking and making links. The May 1998 conference in Montréal did have a session on the Internet as a networking tool, at which I was a speaker.

After the reports from the Core Groups, and the review of the resolutions process, it was time to discuss IRB issues. Rosemary spoke up about the importance of complaints mechanisms. Although it is possible to place complaints at the Montréal IRB, there isn't really a mechanism and complaints are not taken seriously. With the CIC, at least in Québec, she explained, cases tend to be received more politely- having to be responsible for one's actions as opposed to impunity leads to a huge difference. She said we should always be responding to injustices with letters and 'carbon copy' each other so that we are always keeping tabs on what's going on and so that the government is notified every time we spot a problem. She told us that she had been working to prepare a resolution to set up a bank of incidents to use for the media and eventually presenting it to the IRB.

Two different women from different parts of Canada spoke about the impossibility of getting the PIF form ready for the deadline, which is 28 days after making the claim, because of the wait for the welfare check and the unavailability of legal aid (lawyers can ask for money in advance or on the spot to help with this very important form, and claimants often have to wait for their first welfare cheque before they have the money, leaving little time for the PIF to be filled out carefully as it should be). They both said they thought it might be a regional problem- and when the second woman said that, voices from all over the room told her (assured her) that this is a problem everywhere in Canada.

A representative from a Toronto NGO spoke up about the problems Zairian refugees are experiencing in Toronto, with IRB members refusing their identification documents as being valid (Zairians have for years had to use old identification papers with new pictures, because the Zairian government hasn't issued new i.d. for the last few years. That's the standard Zairian procedure. However, the IRB says these ids are falsified and are refused- see Chapter two|. He was wanting to know if more people had been having the same problems. He wanted to know if it was just a problem with the Toronto IRB members or if it had been happening everywhere in Canada. He said there was a need for information gathering. A woman responded by saying they have similar problems in

London (Ontario) although there are many different Board Members. Someone else added that if we were better able to be in touch with each other and share current information about what's happening, we should be able to take effective action. At this point, people shared some resource information about Zaire. For example, Rivka mentioned that there is much Zairian information produced in Montréal, such as 'Info Zaire', and suggested that if anyone wanted to find out about the UNHCR reports on Zaire, they should talk to the UNHCR representatives who were at the conference.

Another example of information sharing and networking at the conference was illustrated when a man told a story about a problem he had seen in Edmonton. One co-chair of the meeting pointed out that there are many cases in Toronto like that and she suggested that it could be dealt with at a national level. She gave him names of people to contact.

We reached the point of the meeting where we were to start preparing plans for action or resolution (with the lunch break approaching). Janet, who seemed to be busily coming and going from the meeting as it went along, had just pointed out that we don't need to limit our actions to resolutions. We could use a pre-written resolution to motivate an action, or we could decide to do an action on its own- it doesn't have to be a resolution first. The idea here was to divide ourselves into small groups and prepare either a plan or a resolution for each point that was brought up that morning. We were to make decisions in small groups and then bring them back to the larger group after lunch.

One person proposed a group to discuss what to do about the impact and consequences of the long delays created by the Montréal IRB's pilot scheduling program (see Chapter two) . A few people volunteered for this. Then Rosemary proposed a group to prepare a plan for action and I volunteered to be involved in the creation of a data base of information on injustices. I volunteered for the sake of my interests in the networking and information dissemination aspects of this but also because I thought I could be helpful with my skills and knowledge of electronic possibilities. We met when the meeting broke up for

lunch. I thought we would meet over lunch but some of the people in the group thought that would be too complicated and so we met without lunch (and I was starving!).

We came up with what we called 'a plan of action for accountability by the IRB'. First of all, we agreed, it's very important that you need to have the permission of the claimant before you can make a complaint about their situation- no matter who you are. Some of the ideas thrown out by the five person group were: to gather a list of complaints-situations of injustices to be given to the media; and to send letters to Nurjehan Mawani, chair of the IRB- Rosemary said she often writes letters to Mawani and sends them as 'carbon copy' to all the NGOs. Sometimes, this could work towards getting specific people out. It depends on the level of interest of the people inside whether or not they will be active in getting things done. Complaints, at least, could make it into the person's file, and if they added up they could eventually lead to change. In terms of working with the networking mechanism offered by the CCR, we thought that there should be a fact sheet available to all CCR members about complaint mechanisms in place- explaining the procedures and calling for a collection of incidents. It should include information on who to complain to, who can complain, and how to proceed with a complaint.

We had just a little bit of time left before the meeting would reconvene so I sat down for a quick lunch with Rosemary. Most of the conference-goers were in the more expensive restaurant- offering a buffet for $14. She had told me that she's quite broke, giving the explanation "I'm a refugee lawyer", and I agreed that it was too expensive so we went to the coffee shop style restaurant which was still overpriced, in my opinion, but at least we could spend less than $14. Earlier that day, I had been talking to Stewart Istvanffy in the lobby of the hotel, who is also a Montréal refugee lawyer. He also told me that he was having problems paying for the hotel and the conference because he has been broke. I thought it illustrative of the provincial cuts in legal aid (see Chapter two).

When Rosemary presented the proposal during the afternoon session of the meeting, she emphasized the potential effectiveness of the plan by stating that individual

complaints here and there are ineffective- but gathered together they have more weight. The (outgoing) president of the CCR told us that we should put a structure in place and consider the resource implications. We should not be only planning what to do, but how to do it. A committee was called together to work on it some more, and I volunteered to be on it.

Janet gave me her view on the plan a few days after the conference:

> There was also discussion going on, on a similar sort of line -well different but similar in some ways- of people saying that in the settlement program we could have something whereby people put in information about programs that they've got that are successful and from there go and find out about them. I have - from years of experience, I have a lot of skepticism about these things because what we have found again and again, when we're trying to get information to try and document a report and we've done a number of times where we say 'OK we want to have some examples of this or that'- you just can't get them. You really have to work really hard to try to get anything out of people and we only- when we were doing the head tax, we wanted to do a study of the impact of the head tax, and what we did with that, we had a student working with us over the summer and we got her to go to lots of different agencies and she set up interviews and she sat down with people and she got stories from people. Even that was really hard work because a lot of people would say- oh you know, they couldn't quite think of anything. I've never had a successful experience where we had said 'we want you to send in information'- they just don't. I mean people just don't. People have got a full agenda, they've got their priorities which are driven by their immediate tasks which are providing service- for their clients. So documenting experiences of their clients is a second level, and it gets pushed down. And I don't see a way around it, so I have difficulty believing that if we put it on a web site that we'd get a much different experience.

Thinking about the difficulty of having people input information, no matter how simple and available the medium is, I also think about TIM. Although it started out as a plan to create a space where information is not only *sent out* to member organizations, but *sent in* by them as well, the way TIM is currently used seems to be mostly for the members to retrieve information. As Janet had been saying about trying to gather information for any project, it is difficult to "get anything out of people". While I was talking about the 'plan of action for accountability by the IRB' I believed that if the medium was extremely accessible and easy to use, then people would input information. I have since acknowledged that the difficulty lies in the area of gathering the stories in the first place, not just in recording them. As of yet, this plan has not been put into action- and I believe it is also because it would involve a time commitment which no one has been able to make. It is

unrealistic indeed to ask such a task on an already underfunded and thus understaffed organization with such tremendous amounts of work to do to fulfill its mandate. It would require a person or persons to be the motivators and be ready to volunteer their time. The merits as well as the difficulties of technological information sharing projects in this community will be discussed in the next chapter, where we spend some time visiting TIM.

iii) Conclusion- Networks are people too

As we have seen thus far, a large part of the struggle for the refugee advocates lies in the area of information sharing. The Table and the CCR are both organizations which exist as information spreading mechanisms, for the sake of networking, mobilization, and ultimately, change.

The success of these organizations in attaining participation from members is largely related at least to the personalities involved: Stephan spoke of Rivka- her charisma and popularity having to do with the success of the Table; Rivka spoke of the talents of the Table's first president, Robert Beaupré; all the people we have met so far are people motivated to do work which is over and above their 'job'; the people who go to the monthly meetings are giving up their evenings; people at the CCR conferences are earnestly concerned with widening their networking possibilities and often paying expenses out of their own pockets; the success or non-success of ideas such as Rosemary's plan of action are largely dependent on the resources and motivations of people who are willing to volunteer time to organize it, and as well to willingly record and input their stories.

By the same token, the non-successes are also related to personalities. There are tensions caused by competitiveness for funding between organizations as well as reticence by some people to participate in group siutuations, perhaps due to an atmosphere which the find to be intimidating. There can be problems with 'burn-out', or discouragement by many as they are fighting battles which are seldom won. There may also be personal or political tensions between advocates which hinder cooperation and solidarity. At the CCR conference people expressed the need to feel they have better access to the support

network. And the existence of groups such as the gender core group and the anti-racism core group illustrates not only initiative to minimize problems, but acknowledgement that these problems exist among the advocates[19].

The more information the organizations have, the greater their potential to achieve their objectives, and thus more members are attracted. Of course, the more members there are, the more information there is. Power, for this group, is the ability to negotiate effectively with the government, which is enhanced by the amount of information, the number of members, as well as the charisma and energy of the spokespeople. It is also power in terms of their credibility and visibility in the public and media realms.

It is recognized that when everyone shares knowledge, understanding, there is less of a hierarchy and more of a collective, a community. The objective, and the struggle, is to have coherence within and between these intercultural groups for the sake of greater potential for making an impact. The ultimate objectives of this affinity group of advocates working for refugee rights is to make an effective impact on those who hold the power to make and enact policies. This is done by introducing new perspectives- humanizing perspectives- in order for government representatives to better understand the human consequences of the policies and the ways in which they impose them. The ultimate objectives of the government policies and seemingly of some of the bureaucrats (but not all) continue to appear quantitative- about numbers: Numbers of dollars, numbers of people from whichever categories, numbers of votes they can win. The people in this story are people motivated to think and act collectively- recognizing that we are all part of the world around us, these refugee advocates are part of the information communities working to decenter what Malkki termed the "natural order of things" (1995:511) (see also page 14 of this thesis). These motives and actions are intended to be of benefit to society as a whole.

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[19] This is not an area which I sought to further explore for the purposes of this thesis- although the analysis would surely be useful for bettering the potentials of the networks. I have made a choice to portray how the advocates have been successful in order to illustrate the potentials of networking and of groups based on affinity.

Chapter Four: Refugee Advocacy and On-line Networking:

i) Meet TIM:

It is only a handful of people who are familiar with the inner workings of microcomputer technology and computer programming languages. There are many computer users like myself, familiar with how to use the programs and the computers, who are unfamiliar with the technical details. Most people have a general idea of what a computer looks like, many are capable of understanding that by typing commands onto the keyboard, one can view and manipulate information on the monitor. In the industrialized world, particularly in the academic community, it would be hard to find a person who has never once tried a word processing program.

For my purposes here, I shall not attempt to describe the technical details of computer communications technology- that would be a major undertaking in itself- especially considering I have very little such understanding; not ever having needed it. I shall assume a shared understanding of how a computer is used physically, being that my audience in this case is an academic one.

One objective of my research is to demonstrate some of the functions of a community-based on-line information network, and its attempt towards constituting 'resistance' or 'oppositional' politics. The network in question is called Tabl'Info Montréal (TIM). Although 'Tim' is a name commonly ascribed to males in anglo-saxon lingo, TIM is not inherently male nor female. For this reason, I will stick to calling TIM 'it' rather than 'he' or 'she' despite my argument that TIM should not be considered to be distinct from the humans who work with, and in fact, *are* TIM. I always find it difficult to explain in just a few words what TIM is, so I am quite pleased to be able to take my (your) time here and explain TIM since its inception. I won't describe the beginnings of my interest in community activism, nor the beginnings of my involvement with the organization which claims responsibility for TIM, but rather I'll continue this story with the origins of TIM itself.

ii) The Birth of TIM:

It was in 1995 that I began doing volunteer work at the Table. In January of that year, I had received a modem as a birthday gift from my eldest brother, who is a self-described 'net-head' and was very insistent that his stubborn, skeptical, workaholic (at the time, at least), research-crazed sister get excited about the joys of telecommunications. I didn't get too excited about it, but I used it for some simple communication and research, and when I told Stephan that I knew a little about how to use a modem, he became very excited and began brainstorming about how I could help the organization with my 'expert' knowledge of computers and telecommunications (meanwhile, all I could think was 'Yikes! What have I got myself into?'). Suddenly, I was co-organizer of a project to set up a bulletin board system for the Table to be able to send out information to all its member organizations and minimize the mailings and faxes and phone calls, as well as centralize their constantly updated information banks with easy access for members. We visualized a system where the members of the Table would be not only consumers of information put out according to a specific agenda, but they would also be producers of the information and contributors to a flexible agenda as well. By October of that year we had narrowed down our wild ideas to what is now known as TIM.

We rented out some space on the hard drives of the weekly newsmagazine the Montréal Mirror, and bought 50 annual memberships, at a bulk rate of $3 apiece in order to minimize the costs for the members, who would be paying us the same rate that we paid the Mirror. Their Bulletin Board System (BBS) is named Babylon. They allowed us to have a separate site on Babylon which could only be accessed by our members. We hired a graphic artist to design a logo for our desktop, we gave him $100, then we prepared the diskettes and the instruction manuals for the 'easy' installation of First Class, the software needed to run TIM. All the while, I was still being labeled by Stephan as the computer 'expert' although I was struggling desperately to keep up with what was going on- and, even more difficult, to explain this communications system to Stephan and the members.

iii) A visit with TIM

Every morning, upon waking up and making coffee, I sit down in front of my Macintosh computer, turn it on as I turn on my modem. I wait for the lovely 'hello' chime that my Mac makes, and soon I see the little smiling computer icon which all Macs start up with as trademark (although this can be manipulated to be any graphic or sound with the right software and know-how). I then use my 'mouse' to point to the icon on my desktop which is named "TIM", and I 'double-click'. After I instruct the software to 'login', I am in the kind of cyberspace which is purportedly a 'global network,' an 'information superhighway,' I am at a site which is part of the Internet (although NOT the World Wide Web), I am on/with/using/visiting TIM. I am in a virtual space, looking at my virtual desktop with eight neatly organized 'file folders' (see Illustration 4).

Illustration 3: TIM login

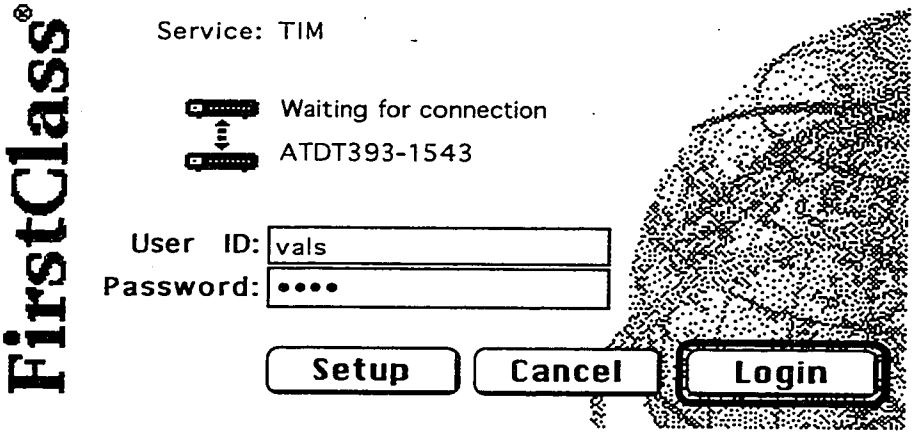
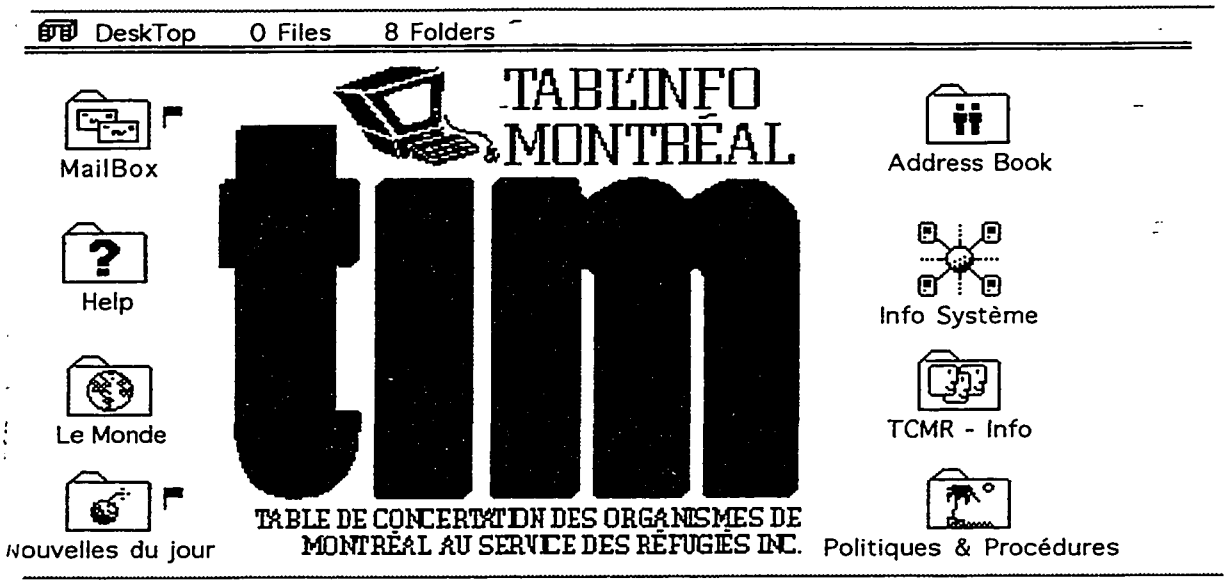


Illustration 4: TIM desktop



First, the folder on my desktop named 'Nouvelles du Jour' opens automatically (see Illustration 5). I see the four folders within this folder which hold news-like information and don't have any better place to be filed, and the archive of information, a 'pile' of 'mail' or 'files' which has yet to be placed in the appropriate folders on the desktop. The most recently 'mailed' file, the one on the top of the pile, has a little flag on it, indicating that it is 'unread'. I use my mouse to double click on it, and it automatically 'opens'. I can see who sent the message, the date they sent it, and who else they sent it to at the same time. Illustration 6 is a message Stephan sent to the 'Nouvelles du Jour' folder. It is a follow-up to a message he sent a couple of days earlier, which announced that CIC Minister Robillard had directed Québec CIC that claimants who had legally arrived in Canada via the United States were to be deported back to the United States. This would include claimants arriving from countries which were to have moratoriums on deportations (Algeria, former Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, Afghanistan), and would affect around 500 people in Québec.

Once I have read, pondered and sometimes printed the new information in the "Nouvelles du Jour" folders, I look at my personal 'Mailbox'. If there is an unread flag on it, I feel a little bit of pleasure and anticipation to open my personally addressed mail. It could consist of a personal message from a friend in Montréal, San Francisco, Tel Aviv, New York, Lahore, or wherever else I have friends who have access to computers, modems, Internet accounts, my e-mail address, and the know-how to get them all to work. It could also contain a message from a professor, or from the university library, or from a fellow member of TIM or someone who works at Babylon who needs to discuss or to provide me with information on the administration or bureaucratic aspects of running TIM.

The message I have reproduced as Illustration 7 is from one of the new users of TIM (I have covered her user name). I had recently been at her office, to install and explain TIM and as she was getting familiar with working with TIM, she had some technical questions for me. I wrote her back telling her the message was received and then I called her the following afternoon as she suggested, and we worked through how to use the 'Address Book'. It is a personal list of Internet e-mail addresses, whereby one can program the addresses in, and assign 'nicknames' to be used instead of addresses when sending e-mail messages.

After I have read all my personal mail, and printed what I wanted to, I have a quick look at the other folders. The ones named "Help", and "Info Système" contain information provided by the administrators of Babylon for the purpose of instruction and software information. All the users of Babylon can access this information.

"Le Monde" provides access to 192 Internet newsgroups. This same folder can be accessed by all the members of Babylon, but the newsgroups can be accessed by any members of the Internet. One newsgroup which TIM subscribers could refer to for the sake of information relevant to Canadian Immigration policies is named "Misc. Immigration. Canada". As you can see in Illustration 8, there are 'postings' made by a variety of different users, and many of the postings consist of replies to other postings. For

example, near the bottom of the page, you can see that someone with the e-mail address "b_chiu@mail.exite.com" sent a message entitled "Fingerprints- Mr. Cameron..." to the group on April 26, 1998 (at 8:58 p.m., Montréal time). On April 27, 1998, at 4:54 a.m. Montréal time, someone named Andrew Turinsky replied to the message. By now, it is possible that more people have replied, and that people have replied to the replies. Anyone who reads the messages can reply to them.

Illustration 5: TIM conference "Nouvelles du jour"

Conference 8 Files 4 Folders

Conférences/colloques

Réseau intern.établisse

Info Multiculturalisme

Info HCR

CCR	8K	upcoming conference informati	4/23/98	4:26
Stephan Reichhold	6K	Lettre/Ref.revendicateurs	4/22/98	11:18
RIVO@babylon.montreal.q	11K	Canadian Network Spring meeti	4/20/98	22:44
Stephan Reichhold	3K	Ressortissants congolais	4/20/98	9:59

Illustration 6: TIM message "Déportations vers les EU"

Wednesday, March 4, 1998 17:06:41
Nouvelles du jour Item

From: Stephan Reichhold
Subject: Déportations vers les EU
To: Nouvelles du jour

Cc:

Jeudi 4 mars

Sujet : Reprise des déporations vers les EU, entre autres, des personnes de pays sous moratoire

Nous avons été informés cet après-midi que les renvois vers les États-Unis sont temporairement suspendus. Cette décision a été prise au niveau de la ministre Robillard suite à une intervention "musclée" de notre part . Le problème n'est cependant pas réglé à plus long terme. À suivre....

Illustration 7: TIM message "Adress Book" [*sic*]

Title: **Adress book**

Thursday, November 13, 1997 16:19:22
Message

From:

Subject: Adress book

To: Valerie Shamash

Allo

Je n'ai pas réussi à entrer un nouveau nom dans le Address book. Je ne vois pas Members et quand je fais save as l'ordi me demande dans quel fichier Je ne comprends pas peux-tu me téléphoner quand tu auras une minute nous pourrons le faire ensemble au téléphone Pour moi demain après-midi sera un bon temps.

Merci et bonne soirée

Illustration 8: TIM newsgroup "misc.immigration.canada"

Title: **misc.immigration.canada**

Conference 256 Files 0 Folders

Andrew Z. An,za202@cam.	3K	Visiting visa to Canada	4/27/98	8:56
dgabrov@pentapro.ro	3K	filling out immigration form	4/27/98	8:53
cad,cad@tech.kgtu.runne	2K	Unofficial test	4/27/98	5:24
Alan Yung,alan.yung@uto	3K	Re: ?	4/27/98	5:20
Daniel Hsu,daniel171@ho	2K	Family sponsorship	4/27/98	5:13
THOMAS LAU,laut@vcn.bc.	4K	Re: Racist murder in Canada	4/27/98	5:12
azfar@comports.com	3K	Sponsoring parents for an imm	4/27/98	4:54
Andrew Turinsky,turinsk	4K	Re: Fingerprints - Mr Cameron	4/27/98	4:54
Andrew Turinsky,turinsk	3K	Re: Medical test	4/27/98	4:42
Donald Cameron,canvisa@	3K	Re: I need help!!!	4/27/98	4:29
Jean Boudreault,comtel@	2K	work or visit Canada	4/27/98	4:22
jmart@cam.org,Internet	3K	Re: Citizenship for children	4/27/98	4:22
nish@mail.exit109.com	3K	Visting Canada !!	4/27/98	4:22
gallaghe@istar.ca	3K	Re: Citizenship for children	4/27/98	4:22
gallaghe@istar.ca	3K	Re: Mebbe in my next life....	4/27/98	4:22
J.S. Bains,bains@yallar	2K	Processing time in Sydney ??	4/26/98	21:12
jparker2@hotmail.com	3K	Re: Letters of Reference	4/26/98	21:06
MarketingDpt,fingroupiz	2K	About a 2nd Passports and 2nd	4/26/98	21:06
jparker2@hotmail.com	2K	Mebbe in my next life....	4/26/98	21:06
jparker2@hotmail.com	3K	I did alter the form	4/26/98	21:06
b_chiu@mailexcite.com	3K	Fingerprints - Mr Cameron, Ga	4/26/98	20:58
jmart@cam.org,Internet	6K	Re: Job description needed	4/26/98	20:50

The folders named "TCMR-Info" and "Politiques & Procédures" can be accessed only by members of TIM. They contain reference information organized in folders which may or may not contain sub-folders and which all the members of TIM are encouraged to contribute to.

Illustration 9: TIM conference "Politiques & Procédures"

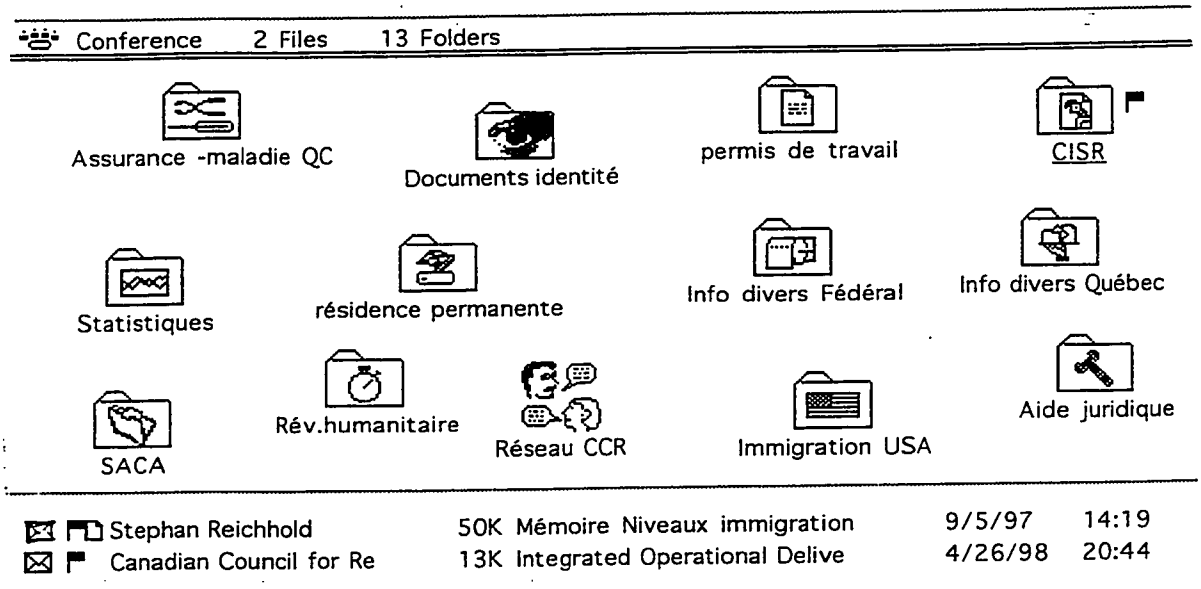
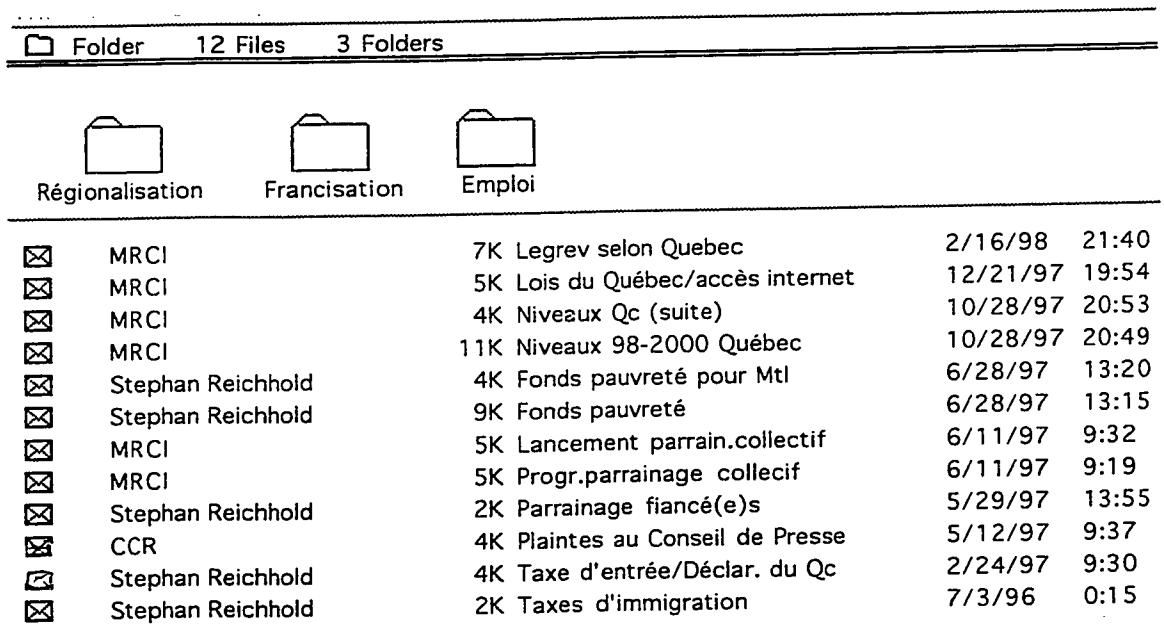


Illustration 10: TIM subfolder "Info divers Québec"



iv) TIM behind the scenes

Now that you've met TIM and seen what it can do, here are some stories about TIM behind the scenes; why TIM exists, how Stephan and I have made efforts to have people meet TIM and join TIM, the reception TIM received from the member organizations, and some reasons why perhaps some people haven't joined in. Here Stephan describes some of his early motivations to create TIM:

> Un des objectifs de la Table, un des mandats de la Table, c'est la communication entre les organismes, et je sentais toujours que j'étais limité pour diffuser l'information, pour donner accès à l'information parce que moi je recevais beaucoup d'information et j'arrivais pas à la transmettre vers l'extérieur, alors c'est en parlant avec toi, j'ai su qu'il y avait cet outil qui semblait relativement simple et je pensais que ça pourrait être utile pour la Table aussi, il y avait aussi un peu un défi. Bon, c'est à l'époque ou la question de l'Internet, l'autoroute de l'information était très médiatisée ; c'est sûr qu'il y avait le défi de vouloir être un peu à la pointe de la technologie, surtout dans le communautaire qui est traditionnellement assez anti-technologie. En démarrant, je ne savais pas trop bien ou on s'en allait avec ça. Et c'est en le pratiquant... C'est un peu ma philosophie souvent. Je ne suis pas quelqu'un qui a besoin de concepts complètement pensés et finis avec des objectifs et des résultats ; je suis plutôt quelqu'un qui tâtonne et qui essaye des choses et puis si ça marche, tant mieux, et si ça ne marche pas, tant pis. Bon, je n'ai pas peur de me tromper, donc c'est un peu ça au départ. Au fur et à mesure, on a essayé d'améliorer, de trouver une façon de faire.

Here, Natasha, one of the advocates who has welcomed TIM, explains her reaction to being on-line with TIM:

> TIM, je trouve que c'est intéressant parce que c'est <snap> c'est rapide, tout le monde peut l'avoir en même temps, tout le monde peut réagir rapidement, on a juste à savoir écrire, on a toute la même information. On l'a brute. On a la même information, ce n'est pas 'téléphone arabe'.
>
> Mais je ne suis pas certaine que c'est tout tout genre d'information qui serait bon à véhiculer sur TIM. Alors là, je pense... le fait d'avoir un écran géant et puis que quelqu'un à Toronto, à Vancouver, à Montréal puisse discuter dans l'espace temps, on peut connecter. Mais sans écran géant, juste écrire, c'est...je pense que ça serait difficile.

Here Marie Claire presents some of her impression of TIM:

> V- Et TIM tu as commencé à l'utiliser?
> MC- Mais oui oui oui oui si j'ai commencé.
> V- Et puis qu'en penses-tu?
> MC- Je trouve que c'est bien.
> V- Est-ce que tu trouves que ça marche comme un réseau? Ou est-ce que tu l'utilises plutôt pour le courrier?
> MC- Je l'utilise pour le courrier et des fois j'utilise pour regarder qu'est-ce qui...bon, au niveau de la recherche, voir ce qui est mis dedans.

V- Est-ce que tu trouves que ça te donne plus de contact avec les autres organismes, ou...
MC- Non, parce que maintenant par exemple, j'ai l'impression que c'est toujours la Table qui envoie. Mais, au niveau des autres qui nous envoient, il n'y a pas très grand-chose.
V- Ce n'est pas trop souvent.
MC- Oui c'est ça justement. Donc je vois la table ouverte, mais je ne vois pas beaucoup de [participation].
V- Oui, et est-ce que tu es confortable avec? Utilisant l'ordinateur? Tu m'as dit que tu ne savais pas comment utiliser l'ordinateur il y a un an...
MC- C'est ça exactement, exactement. Non... deux ans. Et je commence à me familiariser, par exemple maintenant au niveau des formations et tout ça. Je peux les taper, Estelle [receptionist at the Table] les ajuste et... non... finalement je pense que c'est un outil intéressant.
V- L'ordinateur?
MC- L'ordinateur, et même cette histoire de TIM, je pense que c'est très intéressant parce que tu peux avoir le maximum d'information. Et ça te sauve des papiers, tu peux pas les perdre, et même j'ai toujours envie d'écrire, mais écrire, je trouve [que] ça m'a toujours fatiguée, et maintenant avec l'ordinateur je peux [taper].

Ber here recalls his first reaction to TIM:

At that time I was very excited about it, in fact I think I had suggested it to [Stephan] at some point, and he said that he had already started looking into it. And I said, well, if you want me to participate -I was just thinking at the time, because I had just started e-mail and I was thinking 'wow' this would be really neat. Just like you were thinking, if we could get everybody hooked up, we could exchange the information so much more quickly. And it could be centralized.

Stephan, upon being asked of the usefulness of TIM, reflects on the importance of information exchange for networking, solidarity and ability to attain objectives:

Je pense à TIM comme quelque chose pour renforcer l'appartenance au réseau. Ça commence un petit peu à être là, mais pas beaucoup. C'est un élément parmi d'autres, ça peut être autant les réunions mensuelles, les réunions de ROSNA (le Regroupement des Organismes Service des Nouveaux Arrivants) le comité avec les organismes de services qui se rencontrent tous les mois, les sessions de formations, en fait, toutes les activités que fait la Table ; toutes ces activités se sont développés progressivement et il y a un sentiment d'appartenance, d'identification à un réseau beaucoup plus grand depuis les huit ans, quand je suis arrivé. Un des résultats le plus concret c'est que depuis trois, quatre mois, le membership a beaucoup augmenté. Il y a d'autres personnes qui se sentent maintenant obligées d'adhérer à la Table. Il y a des organismes qui, il y a cinq ou six ans ne voulaient rien savoir de la Table, se rendent compte qu'ils sont isolés, et en font maintenant partie. Ça nous permet de voir un rapport de force plus intéressant par rapport au gouvernement pour négocier, au niveau des subventions, pour la politique, par rapport à la politique des réfugiés, on a plus de pouvoir je pense, et ce pouvoir est beaucoup basé sur l'information. L'information qu'on a, qu'on gère, qu'on diffuse nous donne un certain pouvoir. Ça augmente la crédibilité, la visibilité. Ça c'est un ensemble qui fait que la Table est maintenant un organisme incontournable au Québec, au Canada, qui a acquis une reconnaissance, une réputation, qui est là et qui nous permet d'obtenir des choses qu'on n'obtiendrait probablement pas si on n'avait pas cette structure-là.

a) TIM's reception among the community groups

When Stephan first started calling people at the member organizations to tell them about TIM, he was met with great confusion. The Internet was a relatively new phenomenon at that time, and other than a couple of people, most did not know what it was, and could not visualize the uses of an on-line network. Seeing as there was very little technological understanding, there were two main types of reactions, Stephan told me; some were curious and were willing to give it a try, and some were afraid that it was too complicated for them to make use of it. Slowly, and with great effort to understand the technology ourselves, Stephan and I visited some organizations together to install the modems, software, and introduce TIM to them.

In the summer of 1997, Stephan and I were sitting in his office talking about the future of TIM. Stephan explained to me that the costs of TIM were perhaps not worth the amount of usage by the members. At that time, we had 34 members registered with TIM (including Stephan and myself), and enough space to have 50. We didn't know for sure, but I would have estimated that at the time about 14 of these organizations were actually logging on to TIM (This was before I began to have access to the statistics) regularly. He suggested that if we could not get 25 or 30 members subscribed AND working with TIM, we should consider a mailing list (Agh! replace my dear friend with a mailing list!?). We acknowledged that even the people who are registered with TIM, are not using it, and that was probably, according to Stephan, due to a hesitancy to be alone with TIM, to be going on-line without having a 'computer expert' in the vicinity. The people who are comfortable with computer mediated communications have accounts with servers who give them access to the WWW. He suggested that I start phoning some of the organizations and offer to visit them and hook them up, install their modems if necessary and the software, and show them how to work with TIM. On a copy of the list of member organizations of the Table, Stephan marked off 16 of the organizations whom he thought may be interested in getting hooked up. We went over what I could say to them as I phoned them (I was grateful for

this, because, especially in French, I get nervous about how to introduce myself vis à vis my position at the Table):

1. Je travaille avec TCMR, Je suis la responsable du volet informatique.
2. Est-ce que tu as déjà entendu parler de TIM?
3. Es-tu déjà abonné?
4. Es-tu interessé?
5. As-tu déjà un modem?

And so, off I went, with this task before me which was much more difficult than I would have thought at the time. I started calling the organizations alphabetically. Almost every call I was told to call back or leave a message. Most of the time, I would suggest that I would call back rather than leave a message, since I realized the people whom I was calling probably didn't know who I was. Later, when I decided to leave messages, just because of the sheer difficulty of reaching these people, it was to no avail- I very rarely received a return phone call. I understood that what I was probably experiencing was the high demand that these people are in and, concurrently, the low priority placed on someone who is not necessarily in need of their intervention skills. Some of the calls took days of repeated attempts to actually get through. These days were not consecutive, so all in all the phone calling project lasted about two months by the time I had gotten in touch with everyone at least once and visited their organization if that was what they wanted (although it seems it will never really be finished, there's always a follow-up which could/should be done). When I would get through to someone, I would start with my list of questions. Of course, these questions were almost inevitably met with questions back from them, such as 'how much does it cost?'. The cost to be a member of TIM, by the way, up until January 1998, was three dollars a month, plus taxes. Since then, it has been raised to five dollars. My calls were met with quite a wide variety of responses (These interactions all took place in French unless otherwise noted):

Organization A: The woman whom I spoke to told me that their computer is not powerful enough, and that they do not have the capacity for the Internet. They have a modem and use it to send out information by fax. I explained that if they could do that then they could use First Class and TIM. She said to fax her some information and that I should call her after they have their office meeting so she could give me response. When I called back she said

they did discuss it at their meeting, but they decided against it because they have one computer and they use it all day long for other purposes.

Organization B: On the first phone call, the woman I spoke to told me that they have a modem which is not yet installed in their computer. She said she will talk to the Board of Directors then will call me back. When I called her back, the first woman I talked to wasn't working there anymore, and another woman told me that they already have someone there helping them out with computer stuff, and they will be making changes in their computer system in the end of October so I should call back then. When I called back, she told me that they are changing their whole office around and I should call back in the end of January. When I called in the end of January, she told me that they still have their old computers and that she'll call me when they are ready.

Organization C: After leaving a few messages, I received a return call. The woman who called told me they would like to install it at home for practical reasons. She told me she has a Mac at home and that her husband will be calling me to get information on how to download First Class. He did in fact call me and after a few exchanges, I dropped off a diskette at his office and heard from him no more, and in January, according to the TIM statistics, I could see that they were not regular users of TIM. I called her back and asked her if everything was alright. She told me that they had installed the software successfully, but she had been so busy that she hadn't made the effort to use it. When I saw her at the consultations for the Trempe report in March, she told me that she was using it and was pleased with it.

Organization D: The first woman I spoke to suggested that I fax more information and then call her back in one week. When I called back, I was referred to a different person, and he told me that they already have e-mail, but that he will look at the information and I should call back later in the day. When I called back, he explained to me that they don't have enough computers in their office for the people who would want to access TIM. He said that in about 6 or 8 months they will be getting new computers and then maybe they would be interested and they would call me.

Organization E: The woman I spoke to was very interested, although disappointed about not having Web access. She said that I should call in the next week to set up an appointment. When I called back she said she didn't have a modem other than an old one which we agreed would probably not be fast enough. She would look into buying a new modem and call me if she needed assistance with it. When I called back in January, she told me that they have installed the new modem and the software and have successfully logged on to TIM, and they do not use it much -they are still trying to get used to it.

Organization F: The woman I spoke to told me that they do not have a modem. She said she will call me when she's interested.

Organization G: [English] The woman I spoke to told me that they have a modem and a computer and are already hooked up with the Internet, and would like to have access to TIM. We set up an appointment, and the installation was successful. I gave a brief demonstration of how it works and according to the TIM statistics, they log on at least once a week.

Organization H: The man I spoke to said that I should send him information by fax on how to connect and he will consider it. They are already very well hooked up to the Internet, and they have their own web site. When I called him back he said he couldn't find the fax and that I should send it again and put my phone number on it so he could call me back. He did call me back and said he was interested and I told him how to download the software. He

was having difficulty getting hooked up and I was not familiar with his system and I couldn't help him over the phone and probably not even if I was in his office. He knew more than me about computers and I had to leave him to figure out his system. After a few months, he worked it out and now, according to the TIM statistics, they log on at least once a week.

Some of the visits to the organizations which stemmed from those phone calls were easily successful, and some were quite complicated. Here are some descriptions of a few of my visits:

Organization I: With very little information required, the man I spoke to agreed immediately to set up an appointment. On September 10, 1997, at 10 a.m. I arrived in the office. When I heard that Mr. Lafontant [a pseudonym] was not in yet, I sat in a chair. There were several chairs set up as waiting area. Shortly after I arrived a young man knocked on the door very quietly and poked his head in and asked in English to please see Mr. ... The receptionist beckoned him to come in and sit down, then asked him in French (he had what I thought may be a Spanish accent) for his name. When the visitor didn't understand, the receptionist repeated the question in English. The visitor seemed to me to be nervous, uncomfortable as he sat down to wait, but within a few minutes seemed more relaxed.

The office was small and in a building full of community organizations. It smelled like coffee, and there were posters on the walls, including: Multiculturalism Canada posters- a young man with the caption "Coiffure Exotique, Coeur Québécois" and another with a little girl "Les Yeux en Amande, Coeur Québecois"; CLSC posters; posters advertising multicultural events; and a UNHCR poster. There were resource brochures all over the room, including brochures about employment, lodging, literacy. Mostly they were in French, some were in Spanish. There were clippings from a local newspaper pinned to the wall- the Saturday Career page.

I noticed there was no computer at the front desk. I could hear all kinds of machines- photocopier, phone ringing, radio, The receptionist was very busy answering the phone and making photocopies.

At 10:50 a.m. Mr. Lafontant had still not arrived. The receptionist took notice of me again and told me that I was not in his appointment book. He asked me to tell him what I was there for so I explained TIM to him. He told me that he had a membership on a government network and that they never answer. I was about to ask him to explain this, as I didn't understand when we were interrupted by a man who had a lot to say to the receptionist so I returned to my seat. At 11:00 the man was still talking to the receptionist and I realized I wasn't going to see Mr. Lafontant that morning so I said good-bye and left.

At the Assemblée Nationale in Québec City, on September 16th, Mr. Lafontant was there. As we were all leaving, walking to our cars, Stephan pointed out to him that I was the person whom he had stood up. He shook my hand and apologized, gave me his reason, that he has a new position with the school board and is so busy that he completely forgot about our appointment. 'No problem' I said, 'we could make another appointment', but he didn't even seem to have enough attention for me to hear me say that. He was already in conversation with someone else. When I heard later that he was not at all comfortable with computers I realized that a busy schedule and computer reticence together mean that he is very unlikely to call me for another appointment.

CARI St. Laurent: I spoke to Natasha and she was immediately very interested. She told me that her boyfriend designs web sites, and asked if we need a web site. First she told me they don't have a modem, and that they would need help to buy a modem. Since at the Table we had two modems in stock from the first round of getting people hooked up, I told her about that. She said she would talk to her boss and call me back. When I called her

back she said she found out that they do in fact have access to an IBM with a modem, and we set up an appointment.

On Friday, August 29, 1997, at 1pm, I arrived at the office in Ville St. Laurent. Natasha had called that morning and told me she had overbooked her day and could I come an hour earlier than our originally scheduled 2 p.m. appointment, or another day. She felt very bad about asking and I felt she respected my help. Natasha shook my hand and we went to the computer right away. The installation was very easy and successful. Natasha didn't know very much about the Windows 95 system and reiterated a few times that she used a Mac as a reason for why she didn't know the answers to my questions, like what kind of hard drive, modem, etc. (In fact, most of the people I went to see didn't know the answers to those questions, even if they used the PC). She is an MA student in International relations and intercultural training. She did a BA in anthropology. The computer we were working on was one that was used mostly by Mahal [a pseudonym], a woman who worked in a different part of the organization, and she was present throughout the installation and explanation of TIM. She was a little worried about the installation and needed to verify quite often that there was nothing wrong when something didn't look like she thought it should. She was easily assured. Once the software was installed both women seemed quite comfortable using the software. Mahal sent the first Internet e-mail.

I spent about half an hour showing them how to use TIM. They were a little disappointed that the software and most of the instructions and the main manual were in English, but they said it would be OK, that they could function in English. When I explained that I am a student, Natasha was very interested in what I was doing. She seemed to understand right away why I was there and said something like "C'est le fun d'aller aux centres communautaires pour voir directement comment ils réagissent au TIM". She mentioned that she realized that it must be a problem that so many centres don't have modems and would be slow at hooking up and getting comfortable with TIM.

Organization J: This is a convent as well as a newcomer help organization. Stephan and I had been here together in the early TIM days and had set them up. They called me again because they wanted to be able to access TIM from a second computer. On October 15, 1997 I went there and was led to the receptionist's office. Giselle [a pseudonym], the woman who had called me, told me that she was very impressed to see a woman doing this sort of work. Both Giselle and Lucille [a pseudonym], the receptionist, asked me if I was a computer programmer. I explained no but they were very impressed nonetheless. Giselle repeated that she was very impressed to see a woman doing work like unscrewing the hard drive and installing a modem. I was wondering if she was just trying to say something nice because I was having a lot of trouble removing the hard drive cover. If they couldn't see that, they knew that I was, because I told them. When finally the modem was installed, the keyboard wasn't working. I figured out why and it was because of something I had done while I was installing the modem. I felt embarrassed. I felt it was just one goof after another and they were telling me how impressed they were.

I was there for two hours. When Giselle called me she thought the modem was installed but when I arrived there we realized it wasn't. She successfully found a screwdriver, and a phone wire, which was a relief because I came unprepared for a modem installation- not knowing it was necessary. Giselle seemed to be technologically comfortable. As I was doing the installation, Lucille, whose office and computer it was, was talking to me all the time. She was very interested in what was going on. She told me how much she loved technology, and something like how she felt it was good to be hooked up with the rest of the world. Since I was using her computer, she had nothing else to do that she could do without the computer. I know because she made a phone call and told the callee all about it. She went out for a walk. After all the trouble I had already been having, I had trouble getting the software to work in conjunction with the modem. After working on it for a while, I decided to compare the installation with the one done a few months before

on Giselle's computer. Unfortunately, she had already left for the day and her office was locked. So I decided I would come back another time when she was in.

I went back a week later and tried again after having access to Giselle's computer. Still no luck. Finally they were visited by their volunteer computer expert and he got it all working because he switched the modem port on the settings. A very simple change. They are now hooked up and logging on daily. Lucille asked me to come in one more time to give her a lesson in how to use TIM. She has been e-mailing and phoning me often with questions.

Organization K: On the first call, Hasan [a pseudonym] told me he was very interested in TIM. He said I should fax him information on TIM and on the price of a modem and will present it at the next office meeting. Stephan laughed when I asked him to send a fax because he said he must have already sent it twice. The next time I called he at first had no idea who I was then said he will be buying a new computer in the next 15 days. He said I should call again at the end of the month. When I called, we set up an appointment, and he asked me to fax the information again.

When I got to the office in a Montréal suburb, I could see Hasan was very busy and seemed to be stressed. They had just moved offices (in fact I didn't know that until I called just before heading out there). Two men came in around the same time as I did saying they were having trouble with their landlord. They spoke English, Hasan spoke French. A woman was translating but seemed too soft-spoken to be as direct as Hasan in explaining that he couldn't help them and gave them the phone number of a place that could help. The men weren't satisfied and kept asking WHY he couldn't help them. Hasan became frustrated and raised his voice. Then he looked at me and said 'c'est compliqué, hein?' Then finally he left them and beckoned me into his office. He had completely forgotten that I was coming. He asked me to remind him why I was there. I explained. He was obviously confused. Over the phone he had told me that he knew nothing about computers. He didn't know if he had a modem so he read me the list of things he had on his computer and 'modem' was there. I said I could install the software while I was there. He didn't want me to put the diskette in because he didn't have a virus program. I said all the other computers had virus programs so the disk must be OK. He didn't accept that explanation. Finally he said that there would be someone coming Wednesday morning to install the software. He lost the fax (again! The fourth time?). I said I'll send a fax again on Tuesday, and he'll call me on Wednesday if they're having any problems. I asked for a brochure of the organization. He apologized quite a few times, he showed me that they're still unpacking. He asked about Stephan and Rivka and told me to tell them hello. I left and he thanked me, and said that he knew I had come a long way for the appointment. According to the January statistics, this organization was still not logging on to TIM, so I called him to ask if he needed help. He told me that now they were having trouble with the computer, and he is too busy with meetings and other things to deal with it.

b) Statistics:

One of the great things about First Class Client as networking software is that it is quite simple to obtain statistical information. Well, at least it's very simple for me- because the administrator of Babylon sets them up and I simply access them. The administrator of the network has placed a folder on my desktop (which is actually an alias to their stats folder) which contains the daily statistics as of Oct.31, 1997. At the Mirror, they track logins, and conference and folder opens.

The stats I have access to are those for the entire Babylon server. Once I edit them by deleting all the stats which are not about TIM members, I have pared them down from about 50 pages to about three. I can see the names of the users and the times and dates that they log on and log off. I can also see what kind of interface they are using (graphical or Command Line), the operating system (Mac or Windows) as well as which folders or conferences they opened (i.e.'Nouvelles du jour', 'TCMR-Info') and for how long.

November 1997
Total subscribers: 39
Total subscribers who have logged on at least once: 17
Total subscribers who log on daily: 7
Total subscribers who logged on at least once weekly (other than daily): 4

Aware of the great divide between the number of subscribers and the number of users, Stephan and I discussed trying to cut some of the subscribers off the list. There were quite a few who were subscribed, yet were never billed because Stephan was aware that they were not using it. Stephan set out to call all those organizations and ask them if they intended to get hooked up to TIM soon, or if we should cut them off. This resulted in seven names being taken off the subscriber list. As seen above, the potential of TIM, as far as the number of users, had been far from being realized, and, as can be seen below, is not changing rapidly.

February 1998
Total subscribers: 32
Total subscribers who have logged on at least once: 19
Total subscribers who log on daily: 8
Total subscribers who logged on at least once weekly (other than daily): 5

v) TIM the cyborg advocate:

In saying that TIM is a cyborg, I am referring to the concept that TIM is as much a technological tool as it is a set of human relations. As we have seen, TIM- although a functioning Bulletin Board, is not the virtual community that Stephan and I first envisioned. There are not large numbers of users, and the information flow is more unidirectional and centralized than is potentially possible or necessary. Some reasons for these unmet expectations can be found by looking at who the potential users are- their

material constraints, enthusiasm, experience and comfort with computers and new technologies, and the off-line power structures of information dissemination.

a) Material considerations:

Upon discussing the low participation on TIM, Stephan presented the issue of financial difficulties:

> Les organismes communautaires n'ont pas beaucoup de moyens pour investir dans la technologie. Je me rappelle il y a quatre, cinq ans, quasiment aucun organisme n'avait un fax et peu à peu ... Bon, les fax à l'époque étaient très cher aussi, puis il fallait les lignes téléphoniques et tout ça. Ça a pris deux, trois ans et maintenant tous les 89 organismes ; tous ont un fax. C'est naturel pour eux. Il y a de la méfiance par rapport à la technologie, un phénomène répandu dans la gauche en général, mais c'est aussi une question financière.
>
> À la Table, on a acheté un premier ordinateur il y a six ans, on a installé un premier fax modem pour pouvoir envoyer des choses par fax, ça a toujours été des bouleversements, un, deux, trois mois, et des problèmes de temps. Ça prend beaucoup de temps mais par la suite on gagne beaucoup de temps aussi. Ça c'est difficile à évaluer. Certains organismes ont informatisé leur comptabilité, gestion financière. Avant tout le monde faisait ça à la main, et maintenant de plus en plus d'organismes font ça à l'informatique. Ça demande un peu de courage parce que effectivement pour trois mois, pour quatre mois, c'est un peu la confusion, et on perd le contrôle. Et l'investissement financier, je pense que c'est souvent un problème. Il y en a qui ont pas de choix. Il y en a qui objectivement ne peuvent pas, n'ont pas les moyens, n'ont pas d'ordinateur, n'ont pas la ligne téléphonique, parce qu'ils n'ont pas les ressources.

Natasha, who was very enthusiastic about TIM when she first heard about it, here gives her perspective on the constraints of getting hooked up:

> Bon, la grosse, grosse contrainte du communautaire, c'est l'argent pour s'acheter des ordinateurs. Pour avoir l'accès à l'ordinateur comme tu as vu au CARI il fallait que je négocie avec la personne responsable du PSIE (qui est l'atelier de recherche d'emploi) en gros, pour avoir une demi-heure par jour (de une heure à une heure et demie). Puis, jusqu'à deux heure si j'en ai besoin. Parce que de toute façon, on a une heure par jour, et ça m'a pris deux semaines avant d'avoir rendez-vous avec cette personne-là pour pouvoir négocier ça.

b) Comfort, experience, and enthusiasm

Another possible constraint could be that people simply aren't comfortable with computers and/or communications technology. As well as different levels of access to equipment, there are different levels of experience and comfort with electronic communications. In the book Working Together Online, Maureen James and Liz Rykert (1997) are attempting to provide a guide for building online communities and workspaces.

They wrote that "in every group of people trying to make the move to online collaboration, there are always some people who are really excited about the opportunity, some who are willing to suspend their disbelief and give it a try, and others who will energetically resist" (37). I asked Rivka how she feels about TIM and why she doesn't join in:

> Well I think TIM is a great idea, but I am one of the technological illiterates that still hasn't got a modem on the computer, and still hasn't got e-mail, even though I think it's a wonderful idea, it's been on my list of things to do for the last two years, to overcome my- whatever you want to call it- to just do it.
> V- technophobia?
> R- I don't know - it's something else. Probably what I need to do is go down to wherever and do a basic course and then get somebody like you to come and demystify things for me. I think just basics you know and then- even though I'll forget most of it, but just to get some - because I've been using that [computer] but I use it like a typewriter. It's stupid. And even that most of the time I forget what you're supposed to do. And I have people all around me, my upstairs neighbor, he's the director of the PR department at Concordia and he loves the stuff, and a very close friend of mine does educational technology and training and - I mean I have enough- it's not the lack of connections and contacts- it's just- I don't know- well, that's a whole other story, it's me and my something. I don't know.
> V- Do you think that it has to do with the fact that you're a woman?
> R- No. It's me and my procrastination. There's a very long list of things that I need to do-in order to be more effective, one of things that I keep saying that I'll do. But I think TIM, generally, is great. I think we probably at some point need to re-launch it to people. Because when we started- it's quite amazing the exponential leap that's going on in the last while because a few years ago, some of the organizations didn't have faxes yet and now-It's amazing what you could do. When I started working at JIAS, we had a Gestetner machine. We had one of those lino machines- I used to sit there and type- you know me who can't type- I used to put out perfect copy on the typewriter. The *sommet de la technologie* was when I got my typewriter with the corrector ribbon. That was great. When I started I was working- it was on a manual...and then we got the corrector ribbons. What a treat... But we don't deal with those hysterical Gestetner machines. Typing on those things and correcting with the red thingy it was good.
> I think there are probably a couple of organizations out there that still need to be hooked in because there are things that are a little bit- I mean I know for example, just as an example- Pablo, a few years ago he wasn't doing hardly anything. Now he's hooked on the Internet. He loves it. So I think it's great. I think it's great. And I think it works for the people that are in it - more in communication- at some point I guess sometimes people are now in information overload. So how to sort out the important- you know it used to be- you send something- a fax- that got their attention you know? Now the faxes pile up until people have time to read them. So they say send me an e-mail. Because that they pay attention to. So soon they're not gonna have enough time to read their e-mails.

In order to get a sense of the importance Rivka placed on face-to face as opposed to on-line communications I asked how she would feel about the extreme scenario of telecommunications replacing all other forms of communication:

No not that it would replace- no no I don't think it ever replaces the meetings. I don't think - there are certain things we could never replace and until you've done certain things you don't- I mean I remember in 1994 I went down- it was an international mission- I went down to the Caribbean to look at the situation of Haitian refugees [there], and at one point somebody said- why do we have to GO, what's the difference, why don't we just bring somebody up to tell us about it. I said you know, it's not the same thing. People need to see with their eyes. And after I went I realized that I was even more right than I knew. I mean I wasn't just looking for a trip. It was really interesting I learned a lot of what to do and not to do but I realized that there were certain things that I would never ever have understood if I hadn't been there and seen it. And also that with my Canadian eyes I could ask questions and understand things in the way that needed to be understood in order to convey the importance of this here in Canada. That the person coming up from there would report it in a certain way. Didn't even know that a whole lot of things that they would never think of telling you because they didn't think it was such a big deal but it was in fact a big deal in terms of understanding the process for us of what was going on. And those kinds of eyewitness things are often irreplaceable. Even if you can't always indulge in it and with meetings, and the interactions with the people and stuff it's very important. I'm all for that.

But sometimes I think- try to figure out what can be effectively better done by - electronically, and what you leave for- I mean you can do a lot of things preliminarily- you know if you're going to have a telephone conversation and first you fax each other the material, so that everyone is looking at a text, that can be a much better phone conference, for example, then if you're just trying to listen to it all and retain it. So I think - that facility of being able to send each other material ahead of time very quickly, or you can correct it back and forth before you get together so that when you get together, you're doing it at a higher level or at a more satisfying level, that you work out a few mechanical kinks that you can work out ahead of time and you leave the real exchange for what's important. A lot of that is useful. But I think there's something about face to face because otherwise they would never meet these guys face to face. I mean why is Chrétien in Moscow? There's something about sitting down, in an armchair opposite the other guy, and part of it is a photo opp[ortunity]. And part of it- something happens when two people meet and especially if they click, and it's interesting - the human thing- some people who like each other it's that simple. Across ideological differences, and other differences, and some people you'd think they should be the best of pals and they're not, they just don't like each other. And things happen or don't happen and could all be based on those kinds of things. Now whether that's right or good I don't know but that's how it is. But I think that the human thing and the ability to persuade- the spontaneity of what could happen at a meeting- The unexpected things that can happen- How you could seize on certain moments or certain things that happen- I thinks that's- I consider it vital.

Natasha explained that for her to be interested in telecommunications came very easily because her partner is a computer graphic designer:

Ce qui aide aussi, il faut que je le dise, mon chum est infographiste. Tu sais le hardware, là, c'est lui qui va s'en occuper. Brancher les lignes, puis nyanyanya, puis taponner des heures et des jours et des semaines. Il y a un an et demi, c'est pas comme aujourd'hui, puis il y a cinq ans c'est pas comme aujourd'hui. C'était facile pour moi. Faut que je le dise.

J'ai l'envie. Je suis certaine qu'une personne, tu sais comme mon père, il est sur l'Internet depuis quelques semaines je pense, ma mère elle ira pas sur l'Internet. Ben c'est ça, ça prend l'Interet puis la curiosité. Je suis très curieuse. Moi j'avais pas peur. Parce que j'avais déjà mon ordinateur.

Moi ce que je peux dire, pourquoi les hommes s'intéressent beaucoup beaucoup à l'Internet et aux ordinateurs et à la programmation, c'est qu'il faut pas chercher les émotions. C'est basic. Ça vient pas chercher la personne. C'est à l'extérieur. C'est la compétition. C'est très compétitif, hein? C'est apprendre beaucoup. Ça change vite. Il y a aucune remise en question là-dessus. Très peu en tout cas. Je pense qu'il y a un lien. C'est gros ce que je dis là, surtout si c'est enregistré, là.

Ben moi, c'est parce que dans ma famille, ça parle beaucoup d'ordinateurs. Avec surtout mon père, mon frère, puis mon chum (il est infographiste) puis ils ont ben de la misère à parler d'autres choses que ça. Puis il y a quelque chose en arrière. Mon frère et mon père, c'est deux gars. Il vient de devenir ingénieur, mon frère,(mon père est actuaire) ; c'est très loin des émotions. Ce que je fais, ils ne comprennent ni l'un ni l'autre ce que je suis en train de faire. Même mon autre frère ne comprend pas, ma mère non plus ; c'est comme... très nébuleux.

When talking to Stephan about TIM, I pointed out to him that I noticed that when we first started talking about the idea, he knew very little about telecommunications and computers, but he was nonetheless very eager and comfortable to try it out. By now, I told him, things have changed radically and he has bought his own computer and has become very efficient and comfortable with many telecommunications situations:

Disons j'utilise selon mes besoins. Mais ce n'est pas du tout élaboré. Il y a plein de choses que je ne sais pas faire, et qui ne sont pas vraiment utiles pour moi. Je suis spécialisé selon mes besoins à moi pour pouvoir fonctionner et utiliser ça. Mais c'est vrai que je ne suis pas du tout un expert, surtout par rapport avec Internet.

Stephan pointed out that some of the discomfort community activists may feel with technology could be related to a historical-political positioning of technology:

Je sais qu'en Allemagne, il y eu des grands débats dans les années 80 justement par rapport à l'informatique, à l'accès à l'information par la télécommunication. La gauche en Allemagne était toujours très critique par rapport à ça parce qu'on voyait que le gouvernement était en fait le premier à utiliser ça ; on craignait le contrôle et la surveillance. Il y a toujours une réaction assez négative par rapport à ça en général par la gauche. Il y a en Allemagne une approche critique face à la croissance économique, au développement technologique sans limites libre marché, free-for-all et au développement sans contrôle, le capitalisme sauvage, et je pense que le développement technologique rentre là-dedans aussi un peu. Donc il y a méfiance vers ce développement. Dans un certain sens, la gauche était toujours un peu conservatrice au niveau des changements et développements de société, et je pense qu'au Québec aussi il y a un peu de ça.

c) Collaboration and information exchange: Is TIM a virtual community?

Another element of TIM's potential which is not being realized, something which is not illustrated in the statistics, but is found in the ethnographic look at TIM, is that those who do log on, are not inputting information so much as retrieving it. Nearly all the messages on TIM are sent by Stephan or Janet.

The CCR has also had experiences in trying to maximize their networking potentials by developing a web site, as an on-line space for people to seek information, as well as a mailing list, as an electronic means for the quick distribution of information. Here Janet explains how they came about:

> We talked a long time about having a CCR list. There are people who use e-mail and who saw the use of e-mail in other areas of their work. For example when the person from WUSC- he has always been promoting e-mail - you know, WUSC, World University Services [Canada] - student people and of course students are among the first to get branché.
>
> So in the WUSC network they were using e-mail and finding that very effective. So the person from WUSC was one of the eloquent advocates of that. We kind of started it with the Centre for Refugee Studies and they came up with - I'm a little bit unclear on the- I'm trying to remember how it happened - but I guess they came up with the project to do it somehow and I think they got some money to do it but it took a long time to get it completely launched and then when it was launched it was quite simple and at first there were not that many people who were on it but now more and more people are getting e-mail so it becomes quite a good way and it's changed the way we communicate in some ways because it's so easy to send a message out to the CCRlist whereas in the past we may have sent a list out to all the executives, or we'd send it through these regional contacts. Now instead of doing that we simply send out something to the CCRlist. Unfortunately it leaves out certain people who don't have e-mail, but it gets to a much broader range than if you were say going to send out a fax to say 20 different places- because we have about 180 or something e-mails on the list [There were exactly 185].
>
> The web site, we had an intern, who was working with CCR for about 8 months, and he was- as many of these young people are, he was not too intimidated and he knew a bit about it, I don't think he had ever set up a website before but he knew how to negotiate himself around these things. So he set it up and then we've had a problem with upkeep because we haven't got anyone to upkeep-I'm the one that upkeeps it- keeps it up but I don't have enough time to do it so I don't do it very often. Plus I'm not- I don't do it often enough- the little bit I learn- I kind of figured out how to do HTML [the programming language used for websites] more or less, enough for my purposes, but because I don't do it very often I forget what I learnt so I have to go back to this cut and paste thing and I feel like it's quite time consuming to do it.
>
> Some people complained that they got sick of looking at [the website] because they kept looking and it wouldn't change. What I find the most useful thing about the web site is that you can send people there to find out information about the CCR. In particular, you have a lot of students that want to have information about topics because they're going to write their papers or whatever. And it doesn't

cost us anything and it's quick to do work - before we had to worry about - you know, you've got to photocopy things and then send it to them and then would they ever pay the bill for photocopying- and so that's excellent. And then there's other people who want to know a little bit- they want to find out about the CCR and I can just refer them there and that's very useful.

I don't know how much member organizations use it. I haven't heard of people. Documents that we have, but often documents which would have been mailed out to a lot of people or sometimes it's the information- for example the conference pamphlet- we put the material up about the conference onto the web site but we also put it out over the list so they can get it both ways. And now we've decided to do a monthly bulletin to send out to media and we can also send it out to members but that will be something we can send out by e-mail to everybody on the CCRlist but at the same time put it up onto the website.

The information from the CCR list makes a major contribution to TIM. Janet, as the person doing most of the work for CCRlist, is a major provider of information on TIM. On a daily basis, she reads and may add information to the CCRlist, as well as to TIM. I asked her what she does when she has a new piece of information for CCRlist, which she thinks is also relevant for TIM. She said : "Well I send it to CCR list but sometimes I will also put it onto TIM but also I find that before I can do that Stephan has already put it onto TIM". I also asked her what she thinks about TIM itself:

Well I guess it's a useful way of sending out information rather than faxing out a whole lot of stuff to people, but it's the same experience as we have with the CCR list. We want it to be there as a kind of point of exchange, but people tend to be very much passive and wait to be sent stuff and very rarely post anything themselves.

I think a lot of organizations, except for an organization like the Table or CCR, which has as part of its goal communicating with other people, it's not part of the organization's prime business to communicate with other people. Their main goal is to serve their clients. And putting up information about what they're doing is not necessarily meeting those goals. So it could become an extra chore- lower down the list. Also I wonder to what extent people will feel that it's less effective, that there are more effective ways- if there's something you really wanted to get the message across about, there could be a better way. I certainly find when I'm trying to communicate with people, if there's something really important sometimes I would try to send a fax, even though the person's got e-mail because a fax will have a better chance that it will get through. I mean if you want to be even more sure then you call them- if you need to actually get their attention. Whereas the electronic- particularly the bulletin board thing is, if you've got a busy day then you don't bother to look and if you - you might log on and think well there's some new pieces of information here but I've got too much to do today to start looking for new things, I'm gonna go and send the messages that I need to send to the people that I'm actually doing something immediate with.

I think people censor themselves and they may feel inhibited about putting something onto the list because it's going to be read by a lot of people and then they'll be frightened that people will be thinking 'oh you know tedious message coming I don't want to be bothered with that' or that probably you should know the

answer to that. It's like public exposure in a big way to- it's like getting into a big meeting of about 180 people and standing up and saying 'I have got a problem' so people may feel reluctant about that. And that does happen at the meetings and the conferences.

I remember I used to be on a Classics List for a while because I studied classics for a while so I was just interested in hearing that, so I read through a lot of messages and there was one topic that came up and I wanted to put in a message, and I found myself quite intimidated by that, so you get so used to listening into other people talking and you think 'dare I myself, can I?' so I can imagine that people would be. I don't know whether-how much that's the answer but I'd have thought it's part of the answer.

Stephan as well, was able to provide some insight on why people aren't contributing information despite having the facility to do so, and why rather than becoming a virtual community where everyone is interacting and contributing information, TIM is indeed more of a place where people seek information:

Peut-être nous surestimons le besoin de pouvoir communiquer ensemble. Mais effectivement, c'est quelque chose à développer, à pousser. Pour l'instant je pense que - chez nous, à la Table, [TIM] est un outil plus efficace que le fax ou le téléphone, même si au niveau technique, c'est plus complexe.

Un des problèmes avec TIM, c'est le graphisme - c'est pas quelque chose qui ébahit par la beauté ou l'esthétique. Sur l'Internet, c'est ça qui épate le plus, le côté visuel, côté attirant. TIM n'est pas très attirant <laugh> visuellement. C'est du texte.

Au début j'étais vraiment fasciné. Maintenant c'est devenu comme mon traitement de texte, quelque chose de très technique.

Le dilemme avec TIM, c'est qu'il y a pas énormément de gens qui ont accès. Il y a peut être une vingtaine de groupes maintenant, 25, qui y ont accès sur une base régulière. Si tu es sur un site Internet, tu as comme cette fascination que c'est accessible pour la planète. Le but de TIM, ce n'est pas de donner de la visibilité à la Table, ou de faire de la publicité. C'est plus la diffusion de l'information entre les membres. Même si les groupes s'identifient à la Table, ils ne s'identifient pas au réseau TIM.

Ber here reflects upon why he himself logs on to TIM daily, yet never inputs information:

I think there's a problem in- the kind of information that I could provide, it's not clear to me, what - because the kind of information that Stephan puts on, or that we get from CCR, through the list - that's the kind of general information that everyone needs to know. I've seen a number of postings for employment opportunities from different places. I guess I'm not sure what I could be putting on.

I think it relates to a certain lack of structure because if you use the analogy of a meeting, most meetings have a certain structure to them. There is a purpose to them, there's an agenda, there's a topic to discuss. And there is in general, but not specifically. So if someone could devote their time to putting stuff on, because it's a lot easier to take it off, right, it's just a couple of clicks and it's downloaded and that's it. But to put it on, means you have to think about what it is you're gonna write, and who's gonna read it, and then you have to do it. And it would be very

> helpful, if for instance we got a list of who's logging on. [There is such a list available on TIM and I explained to Ber where he could find it].
>
> The idea [of TIM] was, as I understood it to involve also being able to strategize about positions, about situations arising vis à vis refugees. The problem with the medium, as such, electronics, is it's enormous mediation. It's far too mediated for most people. You must take too many steps to get to the point where you can exchange. It's still far easier to pick up a telephone. You can't speak to as many people perhaps, but nowadays you can, in a conference call. And so it becomes- as it seems to have developed right now, being fairly passive, in other words people are recipients of someone who is taking the time to put the information out. And that's the other problem- it's that you have to get the information that's already existing into a form that it's not. And so somebody has to do that. Somebody either has to type it on, or scan it on, or- and I know- JIAS is completely wired. We've got 13 or 14 computers, it's all networked, not the very latest software, but certainly pretty close, we're on the Internet we've got e-mail, the whole business, and I can see that my colleagues, 99% of them, have no interest, none at all. Because the technology still requires an excessive amount of time, but not necessarily time that's well spent. It's time that leads to frustration.

James & Rykert state that "collaboration and information exchange doesn't 'just happen' because an electron workspace is set up" (30). According to them, a useful way to better understand on-line working patterns of a group, is to look at the off-line working patterns. The Table functions mostly to disseminate information. When there is shared communication among the whole group, i.e. at the monthly meetings, it is initiated and chaired by the Table. Some people may not be involved in the group discussions, whether it is because they don't have the ability to regularly attend the meetings, because they are not comfortable with the atmosphere, are intimidated by the amount of experience of the other participants at the meetings, or other reasons. Decisions are made with the input of any the members of the Table willing to input their opinions, but the Table Board of Directors does not go out of their way to seek this input. The way that information flows off-line is mostly with the Table as the main receiver and disseminator, and it is the Table which is responsible for getting it moving. This situation is very similar with the CCR, although at a Canada-wide level, and thus with the CCRlist. Although Stephan and Janet receive information from various sources, it is usually their responsibility to assemble this information and to disseminate it to the group, and this is the way it is both on-line and off-line.

The off-line communication patterns of the groups seem to have been reproduced on-line. The group has traditionally relied on having the Table or the CCR prepare and supply most of the information, and this has not shifted much despite the potential provided by an online workspace. Although these organizations encourage input from members, coordination and information seems to continue to come from a middle point rather than becoming decentralized and multidirectional.

As it stands, then, the main purpose of TIM is to allow information to be more accessible to the members of the Table, and having fewer members logging on than not, creates an imbalance. Here Stephan explains:

> Un des dangers d'être en réseau ou pas, c'est d'avoir deux catégories de membres. Ceux qui ont accès et ceux qui ont pas accès. Ça pose un problème sérieux parce que on a la situation de ceux qui ont accès à TIM et qui sont beaucoup mieux informés que ceux qui n'ont pas accès à TIM. On ne peut pas offrir la même information aux gens qui sont sur TIM et aux gens qui ne le sont pas. Ça c'est un problème. Toujours par rapport à notre membership, c'est pas tout à fait correct, en fait, de favoriser ceux qui sont branchés sur TIM.

I have often thought that better training might lead to more participation, both in quantity and in quality. Thus far, the training sessions for TIM have been individual ones with each interested member, which has been useful for answering individual questions, and providing the different levels of assistance and explanation needed. Some of the users whom I spoke to about their lack of collaboration spoke of their sense of not knowing who the other groups working on-line are. For this I see the potential usefulness of organizing a full-group training session. As James and Rykert stated: "Organizing a full-group training session creates informal opportunities for the group to establish norms for the online space" (38).

Many of the above points of the pros and cons of TIM for the sake of networking, also apply to the Internet in general. Stephan and I had considered at a couple of moments in TIM's existence, whether it would be wiser to transfer TIM to become a website with private access for members. We considered the simplicity of TIM as it is versus the seeming complexity and overwhelming sense which many feel about the Internet,

especially seeing that there has already been so many barriers just for little TIM to get going. TIM as it is, is also less expensive to run, maintain, and subscribe to than would be a server with access to the WWW. TIM can be run with older equipment which is often all that the community organizations have. On the other hand, we also considered that perhaps access to the whole Internet (by way of access to the WWW which TIM does not now provide) might attract more users. Ultimately, we decided, the simplicity and low cost of TIM are crucial to its survival (thus far, anyhow).

vi) Conclusion - Cyborgs for Earthly Survival! - on the use of technology in activism for social change

Like the off-line realities of the refugee advocacy efforts in this story, the success or non-success of the initiatives is largely related to the motivations of the people intertwined with them. TIM has grown out of the cyborgian reality of people and machines which were designed with military objectives. TIM, however, is a cyborg born out of the intentions to further the objectives of the Table. Although it is not in itself a virtual community, because the information flow is unidirectional and thus it is more of a tool used like a bulletin board than it is a space used like a meeting room, it is nonetheless an effective tool for building the affinity-based coalition of refugee advocates. It is another means for members to feel part of the Table, like being at the meetings, members can feel that they are involved in the information sharing which is an important purpose of the Table. As there are different levels of input by the different characters at the monthly meetings, there are different levels of involvement with TIM. The involvement or non-involvement with TIM is related to several kinds of human/machine interplays: whether or not the computer and modem are available, whether the users are comfortable using the machines, or comfortable with the idea of working with telecommunications- with or without the interest or enthusiasm for computers and telecommunications in the first place. There is also the influence of the historical/political realities of telecommunication being designed to further the goals of military objectives, as well as the realities of people simply not having the time to consider the pros and cons of telecommunications because they are too busy working face to face

with the people in front of them. Like the off-line network of refugee advocates, the success of TIM relies on the people working with it. TIM would be more powerful as a cyborg if the people interacting with it were more reciprocal and more enthusiastic to use it. The power that TIM could potentially have would be the power of having an egalitarian flow of information, and the power of a coalition of many in the face of government negotiations. Technology has great potential for community activism, but it is intricately tied to the people using it as to whether or not that success will be achieved.

As it stands, TIM is part of the coalition practice of refugee advocacy in Montréal, at least of the advocates in this story. TIM may not be a community in itself, but it is indeed part of the community based on affinity which is created by the social networks of the Table (and CCR). TIM is part of an attempt to question and change the perceived 'natural' order of things.

An anthropologist could approach CMC as if it were simply a tool- as a new medium which could provide a large number of informants, or which would require a new methodology of participation. Anthropologist Lotfalian (1995) started a research project of a newsgroup with those objectives in mind. But once he realized that he had been treating the medium of CMC as a communications tool rather than as a new and different medium which would require new and different types of study, his concerns shifted. As we have seen,

> [CMC] is at once technology, medium, and engine of social relations. It not only structures social relations, it is the space within which the relations occur and the tool that individuals use to enter that space. It is more than the context within which social relations occur (although it is that, too) for it is commented on and imaginatively constructed by symbolic processes initiated and maintained by individuals and groups (Jones 1995: 16).

As an anthropologist I recognize TIM to include both technology and human interaction. TIM blurs anthropological conceptual presuppositions that exclude machines from anthropos. By decentering perceptions which dichotomize nature and technology, TIM, my cyborg friend, is a tool with origins in militarism but which, with human agency, can be put to use towards social change. TIM not only subverts hegemonic categories

conceptually, but is active in challenging government discourse as, on an every day basis TIM works towards understanding government policies, sharing information and mobilizing for change.

Telling a cyborg story, writing with cyborg consciousness, is not about demonizing technology- about romantic notions of purity or organic original innocence which has been corrupted, but it is about the power to survive "on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked [the Other] as Other" (Haraway 1991: 175). Haraway uses cyborg imagery to "suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves" (1991: 181). She is talking about the embracing of science and technology as part of machines and consciousness rather than hegemonic perceptions of nature, and thus avoiding legitimating and perpetuating the myths of natural dichotomies. Take the destructive potential of the hegemonic discourse and use it towards earthly survival! TIM is a cyborg for earthly survival.

Chapter Five: Profiles of Some of the Advocates

In the following pages I have reproduced some of the words of five refugee advocates in order to provide insight into who they are and why they do what they do. Other than my descriptions of the contexts, I have mostly removed my presence from these sessions. I had been asking questions which I felt would keep the flow of information continuing, as well as inputting my opinions, or stories of my own which I felt were relevant. I have edited the text as little as possible, trying to leave the words in the same order as they had been told to me.

i) Natasha

My first communication with Natasha was when I called her up at CARI St. Laurent to see if she was interested in being part of TIM. She expressed interest right away and we made an appointment for a few days later. Once at CARI, she told me she had studied anthropology as well and this led to her offering to help me with my research. I phoned her a few days later to ask to arrange an interview. She invited me to come to her house the following Wednesday and gave me directions. We met on Wednesday, September 24, 1997 at 9 p.m. She had just returned from her Karate class, was still dressed in her gym clothes and was eating some quiche.

I looked around at the comfortably furnished apartment, noticed the little black cat, who was named after a place in Québec where Natasha had been kayaking. Then we went in the living room and I showed her my big awkward tape recorder and we spent some time arranging for it to be plugged in. She was struggling to reach the socket and make space for my tape recorder's plug, when everything else got unplugged for a second. We agreed it was too much trouble to plug it in so I used my batteries. She offered me coffee and told me that the Karate class was a hard one and she was tired. I suggested we didn't have to do this and she said it was OK and if we didn't do it tonight she would never have time. I told her I had no specific list of questions, and that I wanted her to tell me not only about what she does at CARI but why she does it, how she became involved, whether it was interest

or circumstance and how she feels about it now and that if we had time then I would like to talk about technology and what it means for her in her life in general and at work for the sake of achieving her goals.

> [J'ai fait mon bac] en anthropologie. En ethnologie, moi j'ai surtout focussé sur l'Amérique latine, au niveau de l'art culturel, mésoamérique, surtout, et le sujet qui m'avait intéressé beaucoup - j'en ai deux - c'est le développement international et l'aspect politique, tout ce qui est pouvoir, [quasiment] tout ce qui tourne autour de l'aspect de pouvoir ça m'a [...] intéressée - mais quand même relié au développement international. Développement international ou local.
>
> Quand j'ai terminé mon bac, j'ai fait un certificat en commerce international. Là-dedans, ce qui m'intéressait beaucoup c'est la relation interculturelle, toujours dans le titre du développement international, parce que plus que 89% de nos échanges c'est avec les Américains. Alors c'est énorme. Et pour le reste du monde, moins de 20%, alors je pense qu'on a beaucoup, beaucoup à faire. On commence, depuis les années 60, on commence à voir qu'il y a autre chose que le Québec, et puis depuis les années 60 aussi, ça a évolué aussi beaucoup l'approche soit du développement internationale, des échanges internationaux, tout ça. Ça a changé beaucoup. C'est parti d'une mentalité où si nous en venons en Inde, nous autres, c'est très paternaliste ; et là, on commence beaucoup a fonctionner par projets, échanges technologiques, des choses comme ça, fait que... c'est de l'évolution. C'est pas toujours évident de voir le président d'une compagnie ou les directeurs généraux, avoir une attitude d'égal à égal, mais je pense qu'en travaillant ... quand il y a beaucoup d'argent en jeu, il y a beaucoup de choses qui peuvent se passer - mais au moins d'être conscient de comment eux ils fonctionnent, c'est quoi leur priorité - et pour ça j'ai fait un certificat, j'ai complété avec des cours aussi au collège... pour être plus technique. Et là ce qui m'intéresse, ça serait de faire les formations interculturelles, monter des petites formations.

When she explained her role at CARI, I noted that she had a lot of responsibilities.

Oui, oui puis à un moment donné je me suis occupée de plus de choses que ça encore, et j'ai fait 'TILT!' ; j'ai vraiment 'tilté', là, parce que il y avait des problèmes familiaux aussi par rapport à ma famille à moi, fait que... tout ça en même temps, ça fait trop. Puis, veut ou veut pas, quand il y a quelqu'un qui fonctionne quand même bien, ben la boss elle va donner toujours un petit peu plus, un peu plus, jusqu'à temps qu'on dise «Whoooooa!». Puis moi, j'ai de la misère à dire non. Là je commence à savoir dire non. Je commence. Déjà pas pire à 27 ans, hein? Je voyais des gens qui ont 45-50 ans qui ont pas encore [appris à dire non], puis tu vois que ça pèse sur leur santé. Dans le communautaire à un moment donné, il faut que - oui il faut aider les gens mais, non on peut pas aider tout le monde, parce qu'il y a TELLEment de besoins, on peut pas faire tout en même temps. C'est ça la gestion de temps, là, qui est difficile. Moi mon but pour cette année, c'est améliorer ma gestion de temps pour être plus efficace, pas plus efficace compétitive, mais plus efficace pour bien faire mon travail, et puis dire non quand c'est le temps. Et aussi on peut dire non, il faut expliquer aux gens, puis les gens comprennent. Il faut que je sois assez *wise* parce que je sais que les gens vont comprendre, des fois je veux tout prendre sur moi. Ça c'est mon défi pour moi cette année. Ça a de l'allure, pour bien faire ce que je veux faire, il faut vraiment que je fasse attention.

Je veux [travailler dans le milieu interculturel] pour mes trente prochaines années. C'est un choix vraiment très personnel, comment ça a commencé plus ou moins, c'est que moi je viens de Québec. Québec c'est très blanc catholique francophone. Alors moi j'ai grandi là-dedans, O.K.? Dans ma famille c'est blanc catholique francophone. Mais j'ai connu un moment donné des Cambodgiens. Quand j'avais 12 ans. C'était des bons amis. C'était mon premier chum. Et puis ma meilleure amie, elle sortait aussi avec un Cambodgien, puis elle est encore avec lui, ça fait 14 ans. Et avec eux, je commençais à voir d'autres choses que chez nous.

Donc, il y a plein de choses qui allaient de soi. À un moment, quand j'avais 17 ans, j'ai déménagé à Montréal. C'était un déracinement. Je suis partie, à mon après après-bal, ma mère est venue me chercher, et puis on est allées à Montréal. Je connaissais personne, je connaissais mon frère qui lui, dans ce temps-là, voulait pas trop savoir de rien. Mais là je suis arrivée juste avant le CÉGEP. Donc on a passé un été assez seule. Là au CÉGEP, j'ai fait beaucoup d'amis, mais c'était presque juste des - il y avait beaucoup beaucoup de Chiliens - fait que j'ai commencé à apprendre l'espagnol. J'ai sorti avec deux Chiliens, trois ans, là je me suis intéressée beaucoup aux problématiques de l'Amérique latine. Donc les Chiliens sont très politisés, moi j'aime beaucoup la politique donc ça - on avait des bons échanges. À ce moment-là, je me suis rendue compte qu'il y avait d'autre chose que le Québec, le Canada; je me suis rendue compte à quel point à l'école secondaire, on ne nous montrait pas autre chose que Québec, Canada.

Alors c'est en arrivant à Montréal que je me suis rendue compte que 'wooooo!' c'est un grand local, puis je suis attirée, plus attirée à des gens qui viennent d'un autre pays, je suis très très curieuse. Si tu cherches des fois c'est quoi les attitudes pour travailler dans les milieux interculturels, faut être très curieuse, vraiment avoir beaucoup de soif, puis pas s'arrêter sur quelque chose. Il faut aller un peu plus loin, tellement que ça dérange. On peut pas creuser beaucoup sinon on dérange. Alors le fait pour moi de me rendre compte de ça - je vois les limites des gens, puis je les respecte plus. Avant de me rendre compte de ça, ça me dérangeait et des fois les échanges finissaient et puis on n'étaient pas contents ni l'un ni l'autre, puis on se comprenaient pas non plus.

C'est tellement vaste et varié le genre de personnes que je rencontre [au travail] que c'est sûr que je vais trouver, comme on dit, chaussure à mon pied. C'est sûr que je vais avoir beaucoup plus d'empathie. C'est - je ne sais pas si tu connais Margalite Cohen Émerique? C'est une psychologue qui fait beaucoup de

formations interculturelles. Puis elle est à Montréal actuellement. Elle écrit vraiment des bonnes choses. Pourquoi je dis ça, c'est parce que au début du mois j'ai fait une formation avec elle, puis elle disait quelque chose que - tu sais des choses très simples, toujours simples. Les choses sont toujours simples, c'est rarement compliqué, mais on les voit pas. C'est comme moi, je crois que c'est comme ça. Elle disait qu'on a beaucoup plus d'empathie avec les gens qui ont des valeurs similaires, la distance quand elle est courte y est beaucoup plus facile que quand la distance est très longue. C'est évident, mais je ne me rendait pas compte à ce point-là. Quand les gens ont fait des études en sciences sociales, bon tout de suite je vais être plus - je sais pas, je vais être portée à plus les écouter, les laisser parler, quand les gens sont analphabètes, alors c'est plus difficile, la communication est plus difficile quand ils parlent une autre langue. Faut prendre plus notre temps alors l'entretien est plus ardu. Et c'est plus difficile aussi de s'investir - à un moment donné, l'intérêt est un peu moins long. C'est plate à dire, mais je pense que c'est la réalité. Au moins de me rendre compte qu'il faut que je fasse attention, faut que je me dose pour pas trop donner, puis pas trop me retenir. Les collègues de travail - c'est sûr que plus il y a d'empathie, plus on a des valeurs communes, plus ça va être facile de connecter. Quand une autre personne pense complètement différent de moi, a des valeurs différentes, a une attitude que je comprends pas, puis elle non plus, ben je vais la respecter mais ça va être plus difficile de m'investir. Puis en interculturel, c'est permanent là. C'est comme mes collègues de travail, les clients que je rencontre, le partenariat que je fais avec d'autres organismes, c'est tout le temps <snap> [une bonne connexion].

Puis des fois je me suis rendue compte - j'ai eu beaucoup, beaucoup d'amitié, de tendresse, et pour certaines personnes, mes collègues de travail inclus, qui avaient beaucoup de problèmes ; et des fois ça c'est retourné contre moi. Parce que j'ai dis quelque chose ou - à un moment on est moins disponible et puis les

gens ils se demandent pourquoi. Alors je me suis rendue compte qu'il faut que je fasse attention. Faut que je mette des limites à un moment donné parce que pas de limites, les gens vont tout prendre ce qu'ils peuvent puis c'est pour le mieux. Puisque à un moment donné moi je suis toute déséquilibrée, puis je peux pas, et puis c'est moi qui a besoin de recevoir. Je me suis rendue compte qu'il faut que je fasse attention. Avec nos amis, nos conjoints, nos enfants, nos parents. Je suis en train de le vivre ça avec mes parents. Elle me demande beaucoup. Ma mère, elle me demande beaucoup, là. Puis elle me reproche de beaucoup beaucoup de choses. Moi je pense que c'est correct ce que je fais.

Puis la semaine prochaine, la prochaine formation pendant deux jours et demi avec Margelite Cohen Émerique, c'est Négociation et Médiation interculturelles. J'en ai déjà fait un cours de deux jours puis j'en ai refait un autre parce que la personne qui l'a donné, c'est les enseignements de Margelite qu'elle enseigne. Mais là je vais aller la chercher à la source.

Puis on est toutes des personnes en interculturel, on se connaît bien c'est un tout petit milieu, alors ça va être encore plus stimulant parce que c'est avec des collègues de travail, pas au CARI, mais dans d'autres organismes, CSAI, TCMR, mais là, tu connais Marie Claire - Marie Claire va être là, parce que dans le fond, eux-autres, sont rendues des amies. Je les apprécie énormément.

On se rend dans les mêmes intérêts alors on s'en va aux mêmes formations, aux mêmes réunions, on a les mêmes problématiques, les mêmes défis, mais vu qu'on est dans différents domaines (mais on est dans le même domaine mais on a des différentes tâches), mais Marie Claire, elle, elle doit communiquer les formations à la Table donc elle veut pas être toujours en communication avec nous, c'est ça son travail, qui est assez intéressant.

Mais ça commence à changer parce que Marie Claire, Pascale et moi - parce que moi je suis québécoise, pourquoi je le dis c'est parce que elle [Marie Claire] est

du Rwanda puis elle peut m'apporter beaucoup au niveau de comment elle aperçoit les relations interculturelles québécoises avec des yeux 'immigrantes' puis moi je lui apporte ma vision les yeux 'québécoises'. C'est pas nécessairement la même vision. Mais ça se ressemble beaucoup. Mais où est la force, c'est que moi je pourrais dire des choses à des Québécoises qui vont passer mais, elle, elle dirait la même chose puis ça passerait pas. Elle, elle peut dire des choses à des Africains que moi je dirais qui passeraient pas. C'est ça notre force. On regarde beaucoup beaucoup dans la même direction. Et puis dépendemment avec qui on parle, à qui on peut parler, puis se faire écouter, c'est ça la force. C'est un peu ça qu'on est en train de tâter ensemble. C'est intéressant. À l'intérieur de chaque communauté. Il s'agit de voir qui est prêt de nous écouter, et qui est prêt de discuter. C'est pas juste écouter, c'est discuter, puis de faire un bout de chemin. Et puis si ça prend toi pour faire passer une idée, ben c'est toi qu'on va prendre. Si c'est Marie Claire, on va prendre Marie Claire.

Moi c'est ma philosophie, c'est ma stratégie. C'est comme ça que je vois que ça peut finalement bien fonctionner dans la société. C'est jamais une personne qui s'adresse à tout le monde. Ça c'est comme un premier ministre. Oui ça prend des gens rassembleurs. Mais au jour à jour, ça prend plein de petites personnes qui travaillent, qui font un bout de chemin, qui tirent un petit peu, qui reculent, qui tirent. Tant que comme ça, j'y vois ça.

ii) Stephan:

I have known Stephan since I started volunteering at the Table- I've always worked primarily with him- and he was very agreeable about doing an interview. He had read my thesis proposal. We had arranged our interview about a month earlier to be on October 9. Then the day before he sent me an e-mail saying he had to postpone it because he had to go to a meeting at his daughter's school and he couldn't change that.

We met for this interview on Friday, October 17, 1997, at 7 p.m. in my apartment. He brought beer and chips. He had come over that night by bicycle straight from a meeting at Côte des Neiges and Queen Mary.

J'ai fait mes études à Berlin dans les années 70. C'était une époque très mouvementée politiquement, et donc j'ai grandi dans ce milieu-là et j'ai toujours été disons, du côté de la défense des droits de choses très sensibles à la justice, à la discrimination. Il y avait un mouvement important (le mouvement alternatif) qui essayait de trouver d'autres manières de faire, de vivre, de penser ; de trouver d'autre façons d'organiser sa vie. Donc c'était un peu l'équivalent de ce qu'on appelle le mouvement communautaire. Le mouvement alternatif allemand, c'est ça un peu mon identité. En arrivant au Québec en 1988 je cherchais un peu ce milieu-là. En Allemagne j'étais assez impliqué au niveau de l'environnement, l'écologie, les centrales nucléaires, et je travaillais dans le secteur interculturel, la formation interculturelle. Quand je suis arrivé ici, je recherchais un petit peu dans ce secteur. J'ai toujours beaucoup aimé développer des projets, essayer de nouvelles choses, de travailler différemment - disons de faire des choses utiles dans la vie, et c'est un peu par hasard que j'ai trouvé ce travail à la Table. Quand je suis arrivé à la Table, l'organisme n'avait pas d'argent, c'était plus du bénévolat au début, et en fait c'était un peu mon défi. Il s'agissait de reconstruire la Table comme organisme, comme regroupement, de trouver de l'argent, de développer de nouveaux projets et c'est ce que je fais depuis huit, neuf ans. Pas tout seul, avec le conseil d'administration, les organismes membres. On a construit une nouvelle structure, je pense qu'on a assez bien réussi puisque maintenant ça marche assez bien <laugh>.

Je pense pas que je ne suis plus capable de travailler dans un milieu disons traditionnel, classique hiérarchique... C'est sûr qu'aller travailler dans un organisme communautaire, dans un organisme comme la Table, ça a certains inconvénients et certains avantages. Si j'étais allé travailler dans le secteur privé ou

dans l'enseignement (j'ai fais des études pour devenir prof - professeur de Français), j'aurais probablement une situation économique plus intéressante, mais en même temps, je pense que j'ai profité beaucoup du fait de pouvoir toujours travailler à ma façon, de pas travailler en contexte hiérarchique, de créer mon propre environnement de travail, et de travailler collectivement aussi. Je ne suis pas quelqu'un qui est capable de travailler seul, là je cherche à créer un espace disons plus sain humainement et moins bureaucratique. Mon idéal c'est de combiner le travail avec l'engagement politique, d'avoir un environnement social satisfaisant, combiner les choses utiles et agréables aussi, avoir du plaisir en travaillant, et de sentir que je fait des choses utiles aussi. C'est ça ma philosophie.

Il y a ma situation familiale aussi, en fait j'ai deux enfants, alors j'ai plus de temps pour m'occuper des enfants, surtout au début. J'ai pu pendant trois ans travailler à temps partiel, pour être à la maison à mi-temps quand les enfants sont nés, alors tout ça c'est pas possible dans le privé. Travailler dans un contexte communautaire c'est beaucoup plus facile pour ça. Puis maintenant je n'ai pas des horaires très fixes et je peux gérer moi-même mon temps. Ça c'est beaucoup plus important que gagner beaucoup d'argent je pense, pour la santé mentale.

Travailler dans un collectif, travailler dans un contexte social ou tu sens qu'il y a un mouvement social - moi je me considère comme faisant partie d'un mouvement social. On essaye de changer la situation politique. Je pense que j'ai gardé mon idéalisme des années 70. Je pense aussi que c'est important de ne pas avoir honte de le dire. Il y a beaucoup de gens qui ont comme abandonné ça pour des raisons matérielles, moi je n'éprouve pas ce besoin...

Je travaillais les dernières années en Allemagne comme animateur/formateur. J'organisais des stages de formation avec des jeunes de différentes communautés, des jeunes Turques, dans le cadre d'échanges en France avec des jeunes Algériens, des Marocains. Les questions d'immigration

m'intéressaient, et quand je suis arrivé ici, j'ai regardé du côté développement international, ce qui m'intéressait plus, le côté international, cosmopolite, j'avais pas d'idée concrète. C'est vraiment au hasard que je suis tombé sur la question des réfugiés. C'est sûr que les réfugiés m'intéressaient, c'est un problème assez majeur, un des plus gros problèmes de la planète en ce moment. C'est quelque chose qui m'interpellait au départ, mais j'avais jamais travaillé au niveau des réfugiés. À Berlin, j'allais à des manifs pour défendre des déportations, des choses comme ça, mais je ne m'impliquais pas activement dans ce dossier-là.

La personne qui travaillait à la Table avant moi partait, et Sophie [his spouse] connaissait la personne. Elle m'a dit que je devrais appliquer. J'ai appliqué, et c'est comme ça que j'ai atterri ici, c'est un peu par hasard.

Moi-même j'étais un immigrant donc je m'identifiais au problème. J'ai jamais eu des problèmes majeurs, mais quand tu es immigrant, tu as toutes sortes de petits ennuis, puis tu penses : « c'est terrible toute cette bureaucratie ». En général je suis quelqu'un qui est assez cosmopolite, découvrir un nouveau pays, j'aime ça. Tous les pays occidentaux sont devenus multiculturels; il faut qu'on trouve un moyen de gérer ça pour pouvoir développer des sociétés vivables, donc je pense que c'est un problème majeur de sociétés en occident, que ce soit au Québec, Canada, en l'Allemagne ou en France. C'est un défi important, et c'est le fun de participer à ça. De changer des choses, d'influencer le cours des choses, de trouver des solutions aux problèmes, aux tensions raciales, aux conflits interculturels.

C'est un réflexe naturel chez moi - j'ai grandi en Afrique[20] et j'ai appris le français à l'école française et mes parents étaient Allemands. J'ai vécu en Allemagne, j'étais identifié comme un français d'ailleurs (je parle mieux le français que l'allemand). En Allemagne, je me sentais un peu étranger. En France, quand j'étais en France, je n'étais pas vraiment Français parce que je suis Allemand. J'ai

[20] He spent eight years in Senegal because his father was working there as a diplomat.

toujours été un peu marginal culturellement, toujours, peu importe où j'étais. En venant à Montréal - bon, j'ai aucun problème avec la langue, mais je me sens immigrant ici, un peu marginal, même si je suis très bien intégré. Je pense que c'est important de trouver des espaces personnels à chacun des espaces culturels, qui permettent de vivre ensemble d'une manière harmonieuse.

Pour moi, avoir des racines multiculturelles, c'est tellement un enrichissement évident. Une société multiculturelle, c'est beaucoup plus intéressant que d'avoir un société complètement monoculturelle.

Avec la Table, en sept, huit ans j'ai réussi à me faire ma place ici, être reconnu, avoir certains succès, ça c'est très important. Je me sens très à l'aise puis je suis assez fier de ce que j'ai accompli, de comment j'ai réussi à m'intégrer. Je n'ai pas de dons particuliers mais je suis entouré de personnes et de choses stimulantes ; j'ai une certaine facilité à mettre les choses en relation. Je fonctionne beaucoup à l'intuition. Je fais certainement des erreurs, il faut pas trop idéaliser non plus, il y a des problèmes à la Table, il y a des limites aussi, on a des conflits, on perd souvent les batailles, la question des réfugiés est dramatique, souvent on ne peut rien faire.

iii) Rivka

When I finally got up enough nerve to call Rivka who I only knew from crossing paths at the Table and seeing her speak publicly at numerous events and who I think is so great, she made me feel at ease quite quickly. After I introduced myself, she said "What DO you do. I only know that I see you around and I think oh there's this wonderful person who helps us out so much but I have no idea what you do" I told her as best as I could. I told her I was going to ask her about what she does, and mostly about WHY she does it, she said "oh my God.. I'm nuts. That's why. It's a genetic deformity" and laughed. We set up a date which had to be rescheduled a few days later because she was too busy. We set up another appointment and she called me back later the same day and left a message on my

answering machine saying that she already had to postpone our meeting because there was something else she had to do that she couldn't do any other time- she was meeting with someone from the Commission ds Droits de la Personne. About a month later, on Monday, October 20, 1997 I went to her house in Outremont at 3 p.m.

When I arrived at her house, she was on the phone. She told me with sign language to come in and sit down. She was sitting on the couch in front of me in her living room, comfortable, with her feet up and an empty dish and fork in her lap. While I waited I looked around at the photo portraits, the large wall hanging with a harvest of vegetables portrayed on it. I contemplated a large painting which looked to me to be portraying a worker's revolution. I noticed African originating artifacts around the place. Her glass coffee table in front of me was full of flyers, mail, and her reading glasses were on the table. She had a few bookshelves full of books and books piled up in front of the bookshelves. I noticed the UNHCR books, Refuge magazine, a few other books about refugee issues, 'Planets, Potions and Parchment', 'A Place Called Home', and 'Ancient Jewish Art'.

> I started at JIAS. In 1974, I was sort of at loose ends. I was - I had done a number of jobs, I never finished university, I don't have a degree in anything. Since those years I've done courses here and there but I don't - and I had done- I worked at the Douglas hospital, I worked for the Canadian Jewish Congress, I worked here and there I had done different things, and I felt I had to be serious for a while so I went and spoke to Dr. Joseph Kage who was then the director of JIAS but had in fact been the person who started the JIAS social services in 1947, at the time when they all thought it was gonna be a temporary business.
>
> I knew Dr. Kage from other stuff from other Jewish community involvements- Canadian Jewish Congress. He had asked me to tutor his sons in Yiddish so we had all these connections - so when I decided to be serious I went to see him not to ask him for a job at JIAS but because I felt he knew what was

happening, thinking he'd know of A job somewhere for me who had no qualifications- on paper. So he in fact asked me to do this summer project at JIAS. He had some summer grant money and in those days money was much easier to come by for various things so I started at JIAS teaching English which I had no training for and I was given *carte blanche* to do whatever I wanted in terms of how I taught English. So there were some books around that were really terrible, I went around to talk to all the social workers so in fact I got to know JIAS in a certain way. I already knew it before and stuff but I got to know it working with the workers trying to get a sense of who the clients were- the potential pool of students were- and then I sort of made it up.

Anyway so that was fun and then I got re-hired - that project came to an end then I got re-hired - what's important here is that- it's funny now- is that when I started I told myself that I had to be serious. So I had to stick it out for two years no matter what. Unless I was fired - I wasn't allowed to quit for two years. No matter how terrible it was- if I hated it or if I didn't like- Because I was 27 years old it was time to be serious. So, I stayed there for seventeen years. But I didn't start working with JIAS saying I'm gonna become a refugee activist. Or I'm gonna make my so-called career because I had no notion of a career originally- I was never able to think ahead anyway. So when I started there- I just didn't know that this was gonna become the thing that I would do. It sort of happened to me. And I'm not trying to be - not responsible for it- it came to me and it was much later after I got really involved with stuff that I really made more of the connection in terms of what it was that had finally made this the thing that I was sticking to. I had done this and I had done that - and I said you have to stick to something. But it stuck to me.

There was a big caseload at JIAS- a lot of North African families - mostly Moroccans- my first big culture shock was... when I started again, I was doing this

with the families, and there were all these people who spoke French much better than I did at the time but we were culturally completely different. And you could have- I think the worst cultural misunderstandings you could have are with people where you think you're speaking the same language but you're not- it was just, the words didn't mean the same thing, the expressions didn't mean the same thing- the weight of things was not the same, how whatever was said was analyzed, and me at 27 talking to some elderly guy - 55, 60, from another culture, what did I have to tell him that he was going to find in any way useful? I mean I had a lot of things to tell him that might have been useful but he couldn't see me as anyone useful. Plus they were all worried about the fact that I wasn't married. It was of great concern. So they used to call me Mademoiselle Rivka because Rivka was not polite, Augenfeld was too complicated, so they called me Mademoiselle Rivka and I used to get 'Mademoiselle Rivka je vous souhaite un bon petit mari'. This was for my Rosh Hashana wishes. Peut-être pas si petit, but anyways.

But so what happened was I did housing and it was my first experience also even though I had helped friends of mine try to find apartments and I saw a lot of the discrimination and stuff, but here what I was hitting up on, which was quite a shock, was Jewish landlords who were extremely prejudiced against Moroccan Jews and who were willing to rent out their apartments on Barclay and Plamondon to them, but on Bourret, no. No at the time, Bourret- we're talking about twenty years ago, the apartment buildings were sort of nicer- now they've all gone down too, but Barclay was OK for the Moroccans but Bourret was too nice. And it was such a shock to me, even though, you know, I'd seen this before, and I was trying to explain- "Voila comment qu'il fait ça? Il est un juif". I said - 'Look- a landlord is not behaving like a Jew, he's behaving like a landlord'. And not all landlords are nasty, but this behavior is not Jewish, it's landlord. But it's really important to try to sort it out and tell people - look, now he's being a landlord, but it was quite

rotten really so I learned- it taught me a lot about that whole housing situation and how helpless one feels at first and you can't start suing everyone... But it's interesting because when I at first started renting apartments (for myself) I ended up dealing quite by chance with some of Montréal's worst and most notorious landlords so I cut my teeth on these landlords who were quite something. In the days before the rental board in the days when they used to try to trick you into all this stuff and I had to negotiate with these guys- so I learnt.

And so I was doing that (helping find apartments), and then, I - when one of the case workers went on maternity leave, I was asked to take over her case load, which was terrifying. I knew nothing about case work or settlement but I had a chance to meet the clients in kind of a more- as I said in that period in the summer when I was dealing with the same- not necessarily the same individuals but people like them- in those English classes it gave me a chance to get to know them a little bit. And in quite a positive way.

After a while- they would drag me out and send me here or there to represent the agency for different things which caused certain jealousies, but I spoke French better than the others- some of them- we had some francophones on the staff- but a comfort with being 'out there', which was something that I had- which I enjoyed so I would go out there and I loved that. But I started to realize and for years this was my refrain to my colleagues was that "your peers are not in the Jewish community, they're out there in the other agencies- the people who do what you do- who speak your language- with whom you can discuss these issues are not upstairs or downstairs in our building- they're out there!" See, what we were doing- we were doing certain kinds of sponsorship before there was a sponsorship program, we were doing joint assistance cases before there was such a program. We were doing a lot of things experimentally and it was all based on trust and good will. So it was very much where at that point, with our agency, with the community

vis à vis the Canadian government, there was an enormous amount of real creativity and very good will and a lot of things happened. So that was the initial experience. Seeing how things could happen when there was a will that it could happen. And the flexibility that there can be when people who are in the right places want them to happen.

There would be meetings of the settlement agencies but it was more like getting to know each other and it was organized by immigration, not by the agencies. So the person who was the *agent de liason* for the agencies who was giving out the grant would every month- there would be a meeting- it would be at one of the agencies- what was great actually was that people got to go around- each month it was in another agency and you got to know that place and there'd be a topic of information- either UI or this or that- some topic- never a controversy or a discussion, but information and people got to know each other in the circuit. So she actually- without that being quite her intention, helped create this network.

So I started going to some of those meetings from time to time- when the other person at JIAS, the director of social services would go, and bit by bit I got to know the other people and then when the PQ came to power in '76, it just happened I knew a lot of the people, I wasn't scared of them so it just got very interesting because of those initial ... I was somebody that knew I wasn't intimidated by any of them. So they started having meetings thinking they were gonna get us- all the ethnics- together for the first time to have a debate and they called everyone together and of course everybody knew everybody else they said "oh, vous vous connaissez?" we said yeah, without you.

[Dr. Kage] asked me did I want to start doing immigration as opposed to settlement, and at the time at JIAS it was separate, there were case workers who did immigration cases because we dealt a lot with overseas.. and then- immigration was everything up until a person arrived or was landed. And then it went over- it was

transferred to social service- they opened another file. But I think what's important also is that during those years I had good colleagues, I learned a lot of stuff from people outside, I learned everything I know from other people. And in fact at the time there were no courses in all this. Even the people with the social work degrees, there was not anything on immigration, there was nothing on- intercultural anything, it didn't exist, the whole notion of specialized social services for immigrants that was developed by agencies like JIAS, and the CSAI and others who of course never wrote a lot of it down-.developed these practices. I had a supervisor who was- I learnt two things from him, I learnt - I used to come in for supervision- this was an elderly gentleman who was a social worker, a professional social worker who spoke about fourteen languages - originally from Yugoslavia. But he was very ponderous and thorough. So I'd come in with my case and he'd ask me questions I didn't know the answers to in terms of information- and he would say the refrain "data data data, where is your data?" [she said this with an imitation of his accent and tone and laughed]. So I learned about collecting the data which is what I in fact now do when I do my training sessions. It's important- it's in the details. You can't ignore the details. Before you have the information or the details you can't know what to do. That's one of the things I try to teach people- it's scary sometimes when people phone up - for information- they wanna know what to do with the case and I ask them some really basic facts and they don't know... otherwise I can't tell them anything. Anyway, it seems sort of obvious, then you realize all these things that we think are obvious are not. Certain kinds of thinking is very hard to teach anybody. It seems to be common sense. But common sense I've learnt is not common.

I enjoyed immigration more than settlement. Immigration is different. Because it's a different feel you have to understand different things. We had a real

affinity so I was enjoying that. I took to it. I couldn't have told you ahead of time, but I just did.

I was born in Austria. I came [to Montréal] when I was 2. We were DPs [displaced persons]. I was born in a DP camp. I think that I figured out finally that the reason I stuck with this- I mean different people have different motivations, right? I think probably what made me stick to this and find the passion for it was my background. My parents and the whole thing. But I didn't start out by saying I am a child of DPs, or I am a DP therefore I'm gonna become a refugee advocate. It's not how it happened. But I'm the kind of person, I mean people don't believe me but I'm a very lazy person and one of the world's biggest procrastinators. I mean look at my table [her dining room table was absolutely covered with papers and books and articles]. It's sort of symbolic of a lot of things. That table has been on my list of things to clean up for months. I finally moved everything from where I've hidden it - you know when I have people over I have to hide it all then it comes back- anyway the point being that I have to- I guess- to do things, I have to feel very strongly about it. So I had to find the thing that I felt strongly enough about to actually move me to do stuff. And that's what this work is for me. It's not even a conscious choice. Again, I'm not trying to be such a goody two-shoes, it's not. Sometimes when- I say it as a joke but I think it's partly true - it seems like a genetic deformation. It seems like one has no choice.

I believe more strongly than ever that what we're doing is important and I think over the years I have come to understand more and more and believe more and more that this is a very very important issue. But I think we have to go through how do we - how do we get smarter - how do we get our message across - how do we become more proactive - how to reach the community better. So there are all the issues and I think sometimes we burn ourselves out because we don't take care of ourselves. That I don't do. I think it's because- you know, I don't have a family- I

don't have a partner, I don't have any children, so you have to give yourself permission to have a private life, you know? What I like best of all is to just hang out with my friends on no schedule, you know, listen to music, have a party.

I was involved in politics from very young. I come from a very political family. But I got involved in the NDP when I was still in high school. A lot of this for me, comes from my background... you know I was very involved politically for a very long time...But this is the thing that I've stuck to the most. I thought going to meetings was something that grownups did. I didn't know that most grownups didn't go to meetings because- Well my father I must say at the time and now my mother goes to a lot of meetings but in those days (when I was a child) there also used to be meetings at our house. My father was very involved politically in Europe and after the war when we got here the first thing they did was to join [groups] and go to meetings, and there'd be these various types of meetings at our house and I would walk from one end to the other so I could figure out what was going on. So to me I thought that this was what- you became a grown-up you went to meetings. This was an activity that was important. And lo and behold! when you get older you realize 'hey, most people don't do this. This is not normal'. Not abnormal but you know what I'm saying? It's not like- So there was always the idea that you're supposed to be involved in something more than yourself. You're supposed to somehow be connected to people... that was always there. I met some very wonderful people. You know I love other people that do this work, are really wonderful. To me the biggest revelation, even with how I grew up was to meet people, very religious and very left wing, and very committed, very progressive, and radical- much more radical than some other people because I always thought in order to be left wing you had to forget about religion. Once you meet all these social justice types it's quite a revelation. So it's interesting. It opens up your head. For them things are not a fad, it's part of their life. I met some really wonderful people.

[What I do is] not clear to me either. There's no two weeks that resemble each other. A half an hour before I wouldn't have known I was doing it. I would have done this interview in the morning...- so there's a certain spontaneity but there's a certain I guess - I'm so involved in all this community work ... Canadian Jewish Congress, Jewish Public Library. I'm the champion de bénévolat. When I'm named to some community position- people call and say 'oh I see you have new job' I say 'no no it's another volunteer thing'. That's what I get. [laugh] It's not a job.

iv) Marie Claire

When I first called Marie Claire for an interview, it was after we had met informally at the Table and we had arranged to share a hotel room at the upcoming CCR conference in Toronto. We were also both to be getting a lift to Toronto with Rivka. She was very open to the idea of the interview and she agreed right away and suggested we do it the first night in Toronto after registering because there wouldn't be much else to do that night.

On November 19, 1997, Rivka, Marie Claire and I arrived at the Howard Johnson hotel in Toronto for the CCR conference. After we had registered, and checked out our room, Marie Claire and I went for dinner and talked about our philosophies about racism and culture and our possibilities for being open and for having people understand that a prejudice is just a prejudice and they could unlearn fear of the Other just by getting to know someone they had been afraid of. We shared a lot of views, I gained much respect for her, and I was glad to feel I had earned some respect from her by sharing, understanding and agreeing and even adding to some of her philosophies in a way which she appreciated. I told her about my research, about how I wanted to show that organizations are people. She talked about her personal experiences, often around issues of racism, in Belgium and Zaire. She told me in detail about each of her family members and where they all are and what they do. At around 10 p.m. we went to our room, and unpacked a little, made a couple of phone calls, got dressed into our pajamas, brushed our teeth, got into bed, and then at

10:30 p.m. we were ready for the interview. I had set up the tape recorder on the night table in between the beds so we could lie down and relax. We laughed as we envisioned the description of the setting- us in our pajamas and all.

She told me that the work that she did came from her heart...

> Parce que je regarde - au début quand je suis arrivée, je suis arrivé [je ne pouvais pas] faire reconnaître mon diplôme, et je voulais travailler comme psychologue. Parce que de toute façon ces gens de métier 'social', on ne les trouve pas là par hasard. C'est que quelque part, au niveau de l'aide, c'est quelque chose - les études de la psychologie je les ai faites vraiment par - c'est bizarre de le dire mais ça été 'hobby' pour moi. Tu comprends, ça n'a pas été comme une contrainte. C'est même très fort parce que c'est des études ou j'ai pas eu beaucoup l'impression d'avoir fait énormément d'efforts. Au début.
>
> C'était en Belgique que j'ai étudié. Et j'ai fait aussi en même temps, en parallèle, les relations publiques internationales. Et arriver ici, il fallait que je fasse un examen, que je paye - et étant réfugiée, c'était pas évident au début de pouvoir payer, puis je me disais : « je ne peux pas travailler dans un cabinet si j'ai pas de clients », donc finalement c'était pas accessible de faire ça, l'examen, et puis de me faire tout connaître... Mais tout compte fait, je regrette pas beaucoup, du tout d'ailleurs, parce que ce que je fais, j'aime mieux. Et comme par hasard, j'utilise les deux diplômes en même temps. J'aurais jamais pensé que c'est possible. Parce qu'au niveau de relations publiques, je rencontre beaucoup de monde extérieur... et au niveau de la relation d'aide, j'en fait beaucoup aussi dans le cadre.
>
> En Europe on parlait pas beaucoup [de service communautaire]. Le communautaire est très développé ici, au niveau social. C'est ici au Canada. Mais j'ai toujours été intéressée beaucoup par la question des rapports entre les gens. Mon travail de fin d'études s'appelle 'le dialogue comme interface universelle entre les différentes cultures'. J'avais jamais entendu parler de l'interculturel, et alors

donc tout ce qui est au niveau du rapport entre personnes de cultures différentes m'intéressait, et là, effectivement ici, j'ai trouvé que le communautaire était très [...] et beaucoup plus proche des gens. Je ne conçois pas bien un projet sans la participation des personnes à la base. Les gens travaillent avec les gens, et des gens qui travaillent à partir de la personne. Et je trouve qu'au niveau communautaire par exemple, il n'y a pas beaucoup d'erreurs que je vois très souvent dans le public [les gens pensent dans des compartiments]. Et ça je pense, c'est à cause de la manière dans la politique des subventions... chacun son mandat : 'le mandat, le mandat, le mandat...' Parce que des fois, souvent on dit : « pourquoi tu fais ça, c'est pas dans ton mandat, c'est dans le mandat des... ». Par exemple, pour les CLSC on va me dire : « le CLSC, ils ont de l'argent, pourquoi tu acceptes qu'eux, ils viennent suivre la formation? » C'est sûr que je me dis, si ils ne suivent pas, ceux qui en partie sont en dernier, se sont les clients qui arrivent. Alors je dis rien que pour ça, si celui qui a le mandat ne le fait pas - je pense que c'est le mandat - si on fait les choses pour les nouveaux arrivants, bon... toutes les choses qui touchent directement et indirectement... et si il y a des actions qu'on peut faire, et ça je pense que tout le monde à la Table partage ça, parce que si on est pris dans l'histoire du mandat, la personne qui arrive a déjà besoin de beaucoup de - tu sais construire des repères. Mais si les éléments qu'ils reçoivent sont morcelés, il y a pas de continuité, et c'est très déroutant. Parce que souvent les gens, la première personne qu'ils rencontrent dans la société d'accueil [est] déterminante pour leur futur.

Je pense que ça a à voir avec mon expérience en Europe. Parce que c'est là que j'ai vécu dans un contexte qui n'est pas le mien, seule - sans les gens proche, que ce soit l'environnement, que ça soit par les relations familiales. Donc, si tu veux, au niveau de l'isolement et tout ça, ça me parle beaucoup, et cette expérience-là m'a appris énormément sur toutes les questions des vécus d'expériences des gens, de la richesse, finalement de la rencontre des personnes différentes. Souvent

malheureusement, la différence est vue comme une menace alors que c'est une source de richesse. Mon expérience en Europe a joué ; ça m'a appris beaucoup.

Je suis née au Burundi, et mes parents ont quitté le Burundi quand j'avais, je pense, deux ans. Et mon père est parti continuer ses études de médecine au Zaïre, qu'il a terminées en 1966. Mon frère est né là et tous les autres sont nés après. J'ai fait toutes mes études, primaire, secondaire au Zaïre et en 1982, je suis allée étudier en Europe, en Belgique, à Bruxelles. Je suis partie faire mes études en 'Physical therapy' et justement pendant que je faisais mes études, on faisait des stages partout. Donc j'ai fais des stages aussi en psychiatrie, et un de mes superviseurs trouvait que ça serait intéressant que je passe justement à la psychologie relationnelle. Il trouvait que j'étais bien là-dedans et que ça serait intéressant de faire les deux. Mais je trouvais que ça pouvait être long parce que c'était cinq ans. Mais tout compte fait, je me suis rendue compte que j'aimais beaucoup, et c'est comme ça que je me suis dirigée dans la psychologie. Et normalement ça serait cinq ans, mais dans mon pays, toutes les études sociales ne sont pas très valorisées, donc faire la psycho, c'était pas une chose encouragée, et c'est pour ça que j'ai fait en même temps les relations internationales. Je me disais : je fais la psycho parce que j'aime, et je vais faire l'autre parce que c'est peut-être beaucoup plus facile pour moi de trouver du travail, et ça me permettra de faire la psycho aussi. Un pour gagner ma vie et l'autre pour faire quelque chose qui m'intéresse. C'est ça. Et je devais après mes études retourner dans mon pays. J'ai toujours pensé : « [quand] je terminerai, je vais travailler dans mon pays ». Mais depuis les années 1984-1985, les situations politiques ont empiré, et comme je suis d'origine ruandaise, malgré qu'on avait la citoyenneté zaïroise, politiquement, il y a des gens qui mettaient ça en question - donc il y avait toujours la question de retirer la nationalité, donc il y a eu des pressions politiques et tout ça, et pour mes parents et pour nous ça commençait à être assez dangereux. Parce que souvent les dictateurs utilisent de nouveau la

différence pour leur avantage politique donc ils montent les gens les uns contre les autres pour continuer. Et c'est comme ça qu'à la fin de mes études, il n'était plus question que je retourne m'installer dans mon pays. Et j'étais obligée, mes soeurs étaient déjà parties, certains avaient déjà quitté le Zaïre, donc moi aller au Zaïre, on disait c'était un suicide. Et c'est comme ça que finalement, je suis venue au Canada comme réfugiée en 1994.

Et l'avocate qui m'a défendue a joué un rôle très intéressant et important dans mon parcours, parce qu'elle m'a dit : « Marie Claire, tu vas travailler vite avec le background que tu as, mais il faut que tu rencontres du monde ». Moi je pensais que c'était juste par gentillesse. C'est pour te dire combien les gens que nous rencontrons jouent un rôle important, qu'ils le sachent ou non, et moi je pensais que c'était par gentillesse parce que plein de monde me disaient que je ne pourrais pas travailler sans expérience canadienne. Et puis quand tu arrives comme réfugiée, ta carte d'assurance sociale commence par un '9', donc tu n'as pas encore ta résidence permanente. Mais bon, je me suis dis, tout compte fait, comme je viens d'arriver, c'est un système différent, même si c'est une province francophone, je voulais apprendre, comprendre un peux, je lui ai dit que j'étais disponible et c'est comme ça qu'elle m'a invitée à une réunion de la Table, une réunion mensuelle. Et c'est là que j'ai rencontré Sylvie [the former research person at the Table] qui m'a présenté justement la recherche, la première recherche, et j'ai demandé si je pouvais m'impliquer là-dedans, mais elle voulait quelqu'un au niveau de l'entrée des données, mais je ne savais pas utiliser l'ordinateur. Là, j'ai demandé de travailler bénévolement. Et Stephan était sur un projet avec la réunification avec les Ruandais, avec la Soeur Denise et [une autre femme], et c'est là que je [les ai] rencontré. Et lors de la réunion, la Soeur Denise m'a invitée à visiter leur organisation, le CSAI. Et de fil en aiguille, elle m'a invitée à une réunion du RIVO. Et c'est comme ça que j'ai commencé à m'impliquer au niveau de la formation du RIVO avec un groupe

psychiatre, et j'ai rencontré comme ça pas mal de monde dans mon domaine finalement. Et j'ai eu un programme PAIE en employabilité, au CSAI, de juin 1995 normalement à décembre 1995. Mais dans l'entre-temps, le poste de formation à la Table s'était ouvert. J'ai postulé et j'ai été engagée. Donc mon programme PAIE, finalement, je l'ai arrêté en septembre, et c'est comme ça que je suis à la Table depuis 1995. Et vraiment les gens que j'ai rencontré ont joué un rôle très très intéressant... J'aime ce que je fais.

I asked her how, as a refugee, she ended up with Canada as her destination.

Je suis croyante, hein? Je te dirais que c'est Dieu. Parce que c'est vraiment un concours. Si tu regardes de loin, c'est vraiment un concours. Moi je ne pensais pas venir au Canada parce que le Canada pour moi était trop loin, et comme j'avais toujours pensé travailler dans mon pays, je pensais à un pays plus proche de chez moi. Donc l'Afrique du Sud. Mais comme la situation est devenue beaucoup plus compliquée [South Africans getting upset that foreign educated blacks were coming in for all the high positions and the white contingency liked it because these blacks had no voting power]. Donc on m'a expliqué que ça va être difficile pour moi de pouvoir travailler là-bas, et que politiquement, c'était pas le moment. Et que je risquais aussi de me trouver remballée au Zaïre. Mais entre-temps justement, il y avait une dame qui était belge, qui est une amie, qui travaillait déjà, qui avait immigré ici au Québec, qui travaillait dans les Laurentides. Elle m'a dit : « pourquoi tu ne viendrais pas? ». Et entre-temps, il y avait les deux cousins qui étaient déjà là et une amie qui est déjà venue ici. Ça s'est décidé assez rapidement. Et c'est ça. Et je me suis dit bon, dans un premier temps - en fait, quand tu es réfugié, tu choisis pas vraiment. C'est comme c'est - quel est le pays qui peut te prendre le plus rapidement dans ce moment-là. À la limite, je pense que si la Belgique n'était pas... l'Europe n'était pas si fermée, ça aurait été plus rassurant pour moi d'aller en Belgique, parce que j'ai étudié, et la Belgique c'est très très très

familier.[J'étais 12 ans en Belgique], c'est partie de ma vie. Donc c'est ça, j'ai atterri au Canada et finalement c'était une très bonne chose.

v) Janet

We met Wednesday Nov. 26, 1997 after planning the meeting on-line through TIM. We agreed to meet at the Second Cup attached to Paragraphe book store on McGill College Street. She told me (by e-mail) that she had passed by there on her bike and had been wanting to go in. When I arrived at the bookstore coffee shop, I saw that it was packed with students and quite noisy. I went into the bookstore and saw Janet browsing in one of the aisles. We decided to go elsewhere and I told her about my research as we headed for another café. Once there, she bought me a coffee, commenting tongue-in-cheek that she works for the big executive company.

We spent a little bit of time discussing how to help a colleague who wanted to have TIM installed on her computer. Then she began to tell me some of her background.

> I was in refugee advocacy in many different ways as a volunteer before I started to work for the Canadian Council for Refugees, and I got into that because after I finished university [with a BA in Classics and Modern Language], I came back to Montréal- I'd been living in England- I came back to Montréal, and I didn't have any clear idea what I wanted to do with my life, and so I started doing a variety of different volunteer activities, and after a while- I'd done various things, I guess nothing had - there was nothing that I got completely overwhelmed or taken up with so I decided I wanted to work with immigrants because I'm interested in different languages and different parts of the world, and people's histories and just in different countries and different cultures and so I asked around for an opportunity to work with immigrants and so that's how I got referred to- what do you call that [in English]?- *a maison d'accueil* for unaccompanied minors and they were refugees and it was in that way that I got to refugee work. And for a summer I was working at that maison d'accueil. I was mostly volunteering, just hanging out with these

people and I became interested in finding out what they were going through by way of process. Because I wasn't involved in that at all, I was just meeting them and hearing about where they came from. So then having decided I wanted to find out more about the process, then I started volunteering in terms of the refugee process. I volunteered at Tyndale St. Georges, the refugee program there, and I got involved in a variety of different things, I got involved with refugee sponsorship with the Anglican Diocese, so I started going around trying to find churches that would agree to sponsor people, and I got very much involved with the Sri Lankan community and doing stuff with the women's group of the Sri Lankan - the Tamil association and I gave French classes at the Tamil association, and doing activities like meetings and a sports day that we organized for people there. Then I was involved in some of the - that was the time when there was the big fight over the legislation so I was a bit involved in the fight against the new legislation that was coming out at the time C-55 and C-84 two pieces of legislation, and detention, visiting the detention centre, and in time I got into, well in 1989 then we had the backlog program and I was involved in training and recruiting volunteers to work with people in the backlog program- and various other things.

I think it was in 1990 I started part time at the CCR and at the same time I was doing a Master's program [in Religious Studies at Concordia University], I started very part time at the CCR then I became working group coordinator and was working half time, and then it went up to 3/4 time and then eventually full time.

There's many different things you could do [around refugee and immigration aspects], and I could have done something more service related but I think that what drew me was issues relating to justice and that certain- for me I guess it was inculcated at a young age, whether you're born with it or you're taught it, but I had a strong sense of fairness and that things should be fair and that if it's not fair then it's not something that's livable. I would think that is something that

was in my family, that everybody in my family would feel quite strongly that justice was important, being fair, and I guess many kids do that they say 'oh it's not fair, she's got this and I haven't', and everything has to be fair in the family. For me justice is important so I'd be more inclined to this than be just involved in offering service. I want to be involved in trying to seek justice.

I guess another aspect of it is - you find a lot of people that don't want to deal with difficult painful subjects. Things like talking about human rights abuses, terrible stories of people separated from their families, they're all the kind of really painful stories, situations that you deal with, some people say 'keep it away from me I don't like to hear about it' but my attitude is always the opposite. I feel strongly the need to know about it and it's only in that way that I can feel in some measure of a way comfortable with it. I mean it's simply very actively making yourself uncomfortable with it that makes me feel healthier than if I was to try to avoid it. And not even that you can do something about it, not even- because you read about human rights abuses happening in Iran or people in jail being murdered in various places but at least you know about it, at least you're not pretending- at least you don't feel like you're living a superficial life where you're avoiding the realities and that you're - whatever happiness you have is based on completely shallow or unstable foundations. Some people can do it and I don't want to judge them, it's that some people, for their happiness, they don't want to hear too much of these things. For me, I would always feel that it's a fraud, that I know that I'm not looking it full in the face, as it were.

And I guess it's a question of what you feel good at, or what you're good at or you get satisfaction out of and so the kinds of work that I would feel might be worthwhile when you're doing things that you feel like you're making a difference in some way or that you're doing something that you can feel happy with the product. So it's better than going home early at five o'clock and reading a book.

You know, it might be staying at work and producing something that you felt was something well done. And the other aspect which probably ties into much of this is a high degree of a sense of conscience if I get something started, if something needs to be done, then it needs to be done, and I feel responsible for doing it, I can't just leave it. And it's not a conscious choice, it's not something that- you just do what seems natural, and to me, it's interesting, I'd like to interview people who have different lives, and say 'why do you choose such a thing?'.

I don't separate out the refugee work from other aspects of my life, and a lot of the people that I'll see socially outside work are going to be people that I know from the refugee network. I can't say that ALL of my friends are in that category, you know I have family and family friends and so on but I think for a lot of people, this area of work can be quite intense and it's also quite specialized so that can kind of mean that you have a lot of feeling of affinity with other people that are in the same net- the same work, so they'll respond in the same way to things that you see around you or things that come over in the newspapers or on the radio.

I guess within the CCR what we have sometimes found is that there are differences between - there can be differences between people's approaches and that can depend upon where you're coming from. So people- for example people who are working on refugee claimants' issues, they often experience things as much more of a matter of crisis and they tend to be fairly deeply committed to the issues- to working on the issues as a matter of principle and voluntary commitment - because we are quite broad in scope in CCR- you'll find other people who are working for sometimes very large organizations where it does become quite- it does come more of a matter of a profession, and not across the board- but you'll find some people who don't bring quite the same passion to their work.

vi) Comments

It is not my intention here to make any conclusive statements about the people who have just been introduced. These are very partial profiles of who they are, with 'who they are' certainly not being something which can be easily defined, nor is it something which is in any way unchanging. What I do intend to do, however, other than having presented that which I have presented, is point out a few elements from what these people had told me for the sake of their profiles- elements which I see as being relevant to the rest of my story.

Natasha, Stephan, Rivka, Marie Claire and Janet are all very different people, yet they do have some common tales to tell. They have each told me tales of their interests in intercultural relations, and have each related it to a migration experience of their own (even if it is their parents who had migrated). They have all had years of experience in the intercultural milieu and/or community activism and have enjoyed it. They have each told me that they find pleasure in doing what they do and that they would do it voluntarily (if that isn't already the case) if they weren't paid for it, and would rather be doing these jobs than others which might pay more but which wouldn't fit into their personal/ political goals- and acknowledging that they do more work than required by their 'job descriptions'. They have all mentioned that other people have influenced their life decisions. Each one of them has also expressed to me that they feel they are part of a community among their peers - that they are comfortable because of affinity. Their community is less defined by geographical location than it is by common interest and by social networks.

What I intend to demonstrate here is the importance which the life story of each of these advocates has played in leading them to be the people motivated in the way that they are. The organizations, networks, on-line or off, all exist because the people in them share common goals and share the motivations to carry them through.

Chapter Six: People, Mechanisms and Machines- Cyborgs and Subversions

In writing this story of refugee advocacy in Montréal, I have been speaking from my stance as a refugee advocate anthropologist. The story is far from being a complete one. The representations here are not meant to be value-neutral nor to be representations of *all* refugee advocates (who comprise a diverse, changing and unclosed group), nor are they meant to be complete representations of the refugee advocates in question (who are complex changing individuals). It is neither a representation of the entire refugee advocacy scene, which goes far beyond this story and which, like the people in it, is greatly varied and constantly changing. For example, I have presented very few words of government representatives, who in themselves comprise a greatly diverse group. I acknowledge that 'the government' is also an organization made up of people with a variety of opinions on the policies and procedures and that to do justice to humanizing them would require far more research time. The choice to focus primarily on the non-governmental advocates is based on my political alignments: due to the current hierarchical structures which tend to give greater weight to governmental organizations than to advocates or refugees, I have chosen to represent those who face a greater struggle in order to be heard. I have also presented few words from the mouths of refugee claimants telling their own experiences with the system. This is partially because of my own identification with the advocacy element and partially because there have been some excellent such studies done in Canada (for example: Gilad 1990; McLuhan 1995; Giles et al. 1996). Another element of the advocacy world which I have not greatly explored is the area of inefficiencies. Acknowledging that this would be valuable data for the sake of analyzing how the networks could work better, I have chosen to place more emphasis on demonstrating what I deem to be the positive potentials of networking and of groups based on affinity.

I follow the view held by Brackette Williams on value-neutrality in fieldwork. Williams writes:

> While we think that fieldwork for the sake of ethnographic representation may aim for value-neutrality, where fieldwork enters the arena of homework value-neutrality is nothing more than having made the decision to self *and* other about the criteria informing the act. For better or for worse, fieldwork as an aspect of or technique for doing homework becomes a self-consciously moral and political act which is defined by its project rather than by its methodology or by the relations between locales as 'field sites' and the anthropologist's formal political identity (i.e., U.S. citizen working in the United States) or self-ascribed categoric identity (i.e., a particular 'race' or 'gender' working among that 'race' or 'gender') (1995: 39).

Clifford Geertz defines ethnographic description: "it is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the 'said' of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms; [and] it is microscopic" (1973: 20-21). According to Geertz "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (9), and therefore, there is no reason to claim that any ethnography is a complete accurate objective rendition of a group of people. Anthropological interpretation, he wrote, "consists in tracing the curve of a social discourse [and] fixing it into an inspectable form" (19). Anthropologists, he pointed out, "don't study villages (tribes, towns, neighborhoods...) they study *in* villages" (22). With the situated viewpoint in mind, as well as the layers of interpretation, and the microscopic quality of ethnographic description, I agree with Geertz's statement that "cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out the bodiless landscape" (20).

What I have done in this anthropological thesis then, is traced my interpretation of but one curve of many possible curves in one of but many possible social discourses which could be perceived/interpreted among the community of refugee advocates I have met and represented here. I haven't been studying the community of advocates, I have been studying *in* it. As such, rather than presenting a 'conclusion' or 'analysis' drawn from this 'study of refugee advocates' I will here present my stance as the advocacy anthropologist/

person I am and draw on my (anthropological) experience among these members of the refugee advocate community.

We have seen that there is generally an absence of shared purpose between advocates and government representatives. Although the CIC- commissioned report may be claiming to be less concerned with numbers than with people it has in fact been the role of the advocates to work for the policies and practices to be more humanitarian. This involves a constant critical analysis of the words and actions of the government representatives (even though they may simply be the messengers and not always the designers or implementers of the policies) and thus a decentering of the "natural order of things" towards a wider understanding of refugee experience as human experience.

To have an effective coalition of multiple and diverse organizations is not a simple task. It is even more difficult when the organizations in question are put into contest against one another to obtain funding from the few available sources. As well, there are obstacles to efficiency such as interpersonal tensions or difficulties, the hesitance of some members to participate, and the discouragement which comes with often losing battles. Despite this, there has been an achieved coherence amongst the groups who are members of the Table. People seem to follow the Table by attending the meetings and training sessions, generally participating in projects and thus by contributing to the wisdom of the Table as well as benefiting from it. While much of the success and non-success of the Table depends on the personalities in it and their motivations, it is a mechanism which has allowed for an information exchange which has been effective in creating a community of refugee advocates. This is a community based not on place, but on affinity, on social networks. This combination of people and mechanisms exists for the purpose of mobilization against perceived injustices in the area of immigration, most especially of refugee rights.

TIM is a cyborg in that it is a combination of human agency and machines. It is a part of the community of advocates in that it aids in the creation and maintenance of information sharing and networking. It is another combination of people and mechanisms

which exists for the purposes of mobilization among the community. Looking at TIM as a cyborg and thus to include technology in anthropology helps to decenter perceptions which dichotomize nature and technology; and TIM is a cyborg which can be put to use, even as a tool, towards social change.

The life history interviews which I presented here have been useful for demonstrating the importance of an individual's life situation in the type of motivation or agency they will act out. Although people may have very different class, racial, or cultural backgrounds, be different genders, ages, they find a community in a group of people with common interests.

i) Cyborgs for Blurring the Boundaries of Anthropological Discourse

I have attempted to illustrate the importance of individual agency in the creation of networks, whether on-line or off. The structures, organizations, mechanisms and machines mentioned in this thesis, including the government ones, are not in the least independent from the people in them. The advocates are working for the policies and practices to be more oriented towards people rather than representing mere numbers for policy-makers. The successes and non-successes of the networks have been related to the charisma and connections/ relationships of the people in them, as well as the motivations.

Simultaneously, the people mentioned in this thesis, are not at all independent of the mechanisms and machines in them. The existence of the Table as an organization has enabled the creation of a community through information exchange. The success of the information dissemination at the Table is due to the use of telephones, faxes, computers and modems. At the monthly meetings the microphone is regularly in use and website addresses are distributed almost as much as phone and fax numbers. These machines are as much a part of the refugee advocacy community as are the advocates. As Donna Haraway wrote, "it is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine" (1991: 177). This is cyborg anthropology, which, as Downey et al. wrote:

> explores a new alternative by examining the argument that human subjects and subjectivity are crucially as much a function of machines, machine relations, and

> information transfers as they are machine producers and operators. From this perspective, science and technology impact society through the fashioning of selves rather than as external forces (1995: 343).

Gary Lee Downey, who wrote of the merits of transcribing human agency into technology, wrote: "Through most of its history, the discipline of cultural anthropology has reproduced the cultural separation between technology and human society in its every day work" (1995: 364). He then wrote:

> By following how technologies acquire and redistribute human agency within society, anthropological inquiry can overcome the discipline's unstated reliance upon a presupposed cultural distinction between technology and society and follow sociologists of technology in viewing technologies as active participants in social life. Writing about human agency within technology does indeed threaten to externalize one's analysis from normal human-centered anthropological discourse, but avoiding such agency also inhibits the analysis from offering interpretive understanding of technology in society. In my judgment, the response must not be to ignore human agency in technology but to challenge the existing forms of discourse. A crucial first step in blurring the human-centered boundaries of anthropological discourse is to grant membership to the cyborg image, i.e. to recognize in our writing that human actors routinely produce themselves and their machines as part human and part machine, and that machines have positioning strategies too" (369).

ii) Affinity not identity

The communities created by the people, mechanisms and machines of the Table and CCR are affinity groups. Donna Haraway and Chelo Sandoval have written about the merits of groups being created on the basis of affinity: Haraway explained that there is no essential unity to be found in the categories of race, class or gender- there is only an opposition: "gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism" (1991: 155). In groups which are defined based on only one of these categories, there can be much frustration and thus much splitting. Identities are not essentialized into any one category at a time. For this reason, Haraway explains, there has been a growing number of groups created by affinity rather than identity.

Sandoval wrote about this in the context of 'oppositional consciousness': the "skill for reading webs of power" which is derived from being refused "stable membership in the [essentialized] social categories of race, sex, or class" (Haraway: 155). There is not an

essentializing identity into the category 'woman', where the matrix is naturalized into 'white woman' or 'black', for example- and negating all Others: "The category 'woman' negated all non-white women; 'black' negated all non-black people, as well as all black women" (156). By consciously appropriating this negation, and identifying as 'women of colour' it is a "self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship" (156).

iii) Cyborgs for Earthly Survival

I would like here to reiterate Haraway's stance on the usefulness of cyborgs for earthly survival. She wrote that "cyborgs are about particular sorts of breached boundaries that confuse a specific historical people's stories about what counts as distinct categories crucial to that culture's natural-technical evolutionary narratives" (1995: xvi). Seeing social reality as a political construction, the cyborg myth according to Haraway is a postmodernist strategy meant to subvert/undermine the certainty of what counts as nature. The cyborgs in this thesis: TIM and the other advocates, destabilize government/hegemonic consciousness. Haraway writes:

> Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other. The tools are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of western culture (175).

The people, mechanisms and machines in this thesis are cyborgs. They are groups formed on the basis of affinity. They are all worthy of anthropological study because they are all actors with "positioning strategies". They function to help question the perceived "natural order of things": the assumed sealed borders of nation-states; the human-centered foundations of anthropological discourse; and the rigidity of social categories like race, class and gender. They recognize that the international refugee situation is entangled with this perception. By de-centering such hegemonic perceptions these cyborgs re-tell the old stories. These cyborgs work for the rights of refugees, and for the widening of perceptions

of refugee experience as human experience and to decrease the potential for the rejection of newcomers just because they are different. The work done by the people, mechanisms and machines in this story of refugee advocacy in Montréal, works to re-build our common future: as Stephan says (see page 25 of this thesis) about this kind of work: "it *does* pay".

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Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations.

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now therefore, the General Assembly proclaims

This Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2
Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3
Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4
No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5
No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6
Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7
All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8
Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10
Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11
(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14
(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15
(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16
(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17
(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18
Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19
Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21
(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genu

ine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22
Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23
(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration insuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24
Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25
(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26
(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27
(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28
Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29
(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30
Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

Appendix B: Exerpts from the Immigration Act of 1976 and the Immigration Manual

Excerpts from the Immigration Act of 1976:

2.(1) "Convention refugee" means any person who, by reasons of a well- founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion,
(a) is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, by reason of such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or
(b) not having a country of nationality, is outside the country of his former habitual residence and is unable or, by reason of such fear, is unwilling to return to that country.
Part 1 Canadian Immigration policy:
Objectives:
3. It is hereby declared that Canadian immigration policy and the rules and regulations made under this Act shall be designed and administered in such a manner as to promote the domestic and international interests of Canada recognizing the need
(g) to fulfill Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees and to uphold its humanitarian tradition with respect to the displaced and the persecuted

excerpts from Immigration Manual:

8.07 Refugee definition:
1) a) "By reason of a well founded fear of persecution"... This is the most difficult part of the refugee definition to interpret and the source of most appeal decisions in various signatory states. "Well-founded fear" is normally interpreted to mean that the person has either actually been the victim of persecution or can show good reasons why he fears persecution. As "fear" is a subjective feeling, 'well- founded" provides the objective element and imposes an obligation on the applicant to provide such indications as will enable the determining authority to decide whether the applicant has good grounds to fear persecution. "Persecution", in the context of the refugee definition, has not been, and is unlikely to ever be, defined. This is not an oversight on the part of the drafters of the Convention but simply a recognition that persecution will vary according to the feelings and opinions of the individual and is therefore subject to infinite variation. "Persecution" must be related to the grounds outlined in the definition, i.e., race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.
iii) "Particular Social Group" was added to the refugee definition at the suggestion of the Swedish representation. It is intended to include such groups as the nobility, capitalists, land owners, civil servants, businessmen, farmers, members of trade unions, social clubs or societies or any other group who may be persecuted solely on the grounds of such memberships.
e) Finally, only persecution which is specific and personal is likely to make a person eligible for refugee status. Vague generalized statements which relate to other persons or the fact that the government is oppressive, etc., will only indicate a possibility of persecution if combined with specific examples of how this affected the claimant.

Inland Refugee Claims in Canada, Immigration and Refugee Board Statistics, January 1989 – December 1997

Compiled by Len Wong

Year	Claims Finalized	Decisions Rendered	Positive Decisions	*Acceptance Rate (%)*	Negative Decisions	*Rejection Rate (%)*	Withdrew/ Abandoned	*W/A Rate (%)*
1997	24,943	19,138	10,031	*40.2*	9,107	*36.5*	5,805	*23.3*
1996	21,803	16,578	9,541	*43.8*	7,037	*32.3*	5,225	*24.0*
1995	17,189	13,710	9,614	*55.9*	4,096	*23.8*	3,479	*20.2*
1994	25,069	21,666	15,224	*60.7*	6,442	*25.7*	3,403	*13.6*
1993	30,553	25,549	14,101	*46.2*	11,448	*37.5*	5,004	*26.4*
1992								
Initial Hearing	31,431	31,189	29,883*	*95*	1,306	*4.2*	242	*0.8*
Full Hearing	29,175	27,308	17,437	*59.8*	9,871	*33.8*	1,867	*6.4*
Overall	30,723	–	17,437	*56.8*	11,177	*36.4*	2,109	*6.9*
1991								
Initial Hearing	30,055	29,608	28,203*	*93.8*	1,405	*4.7*	447	*1.5*
Full Hearing	28,280	26,941	19,425	*68.7*	7,516	*26.6*	1,339	*4.7*
Overall	30,132	–	19,425	*64.5*	8,921	*29.6*	1,786	*5.9*
1990								
Initial Hearing	21,469	21,206	20,240*	*94.3*	966	*4.5*	263	*1.2*
Full Hearing	13,997	13,623	10,710	*76.5*	2,913	*20.8*	374	*2.7*
Overall	15,226	–	10,710	*70.3*	3,879	*25.5*	637	*4.2*
1989								
Initial Hearing	12,690	12,368	11,798*	*93*	570	*4.5*	322	*2.5*
Full Hearing	5,376	5,306	4,744	*88.3*	562	*10.5*	70	*1.3*
Overall	6,268	–	4,744	*75.7*	1,132	*18.1*	397	*6.2*

Source: Adapted from Immigration and Refugee Board Inland Refugee Claims Statistics, 1989 to 1997.

* Granted Full Hearing.

Percentage across the table may not add up to 100 due to rounding error.

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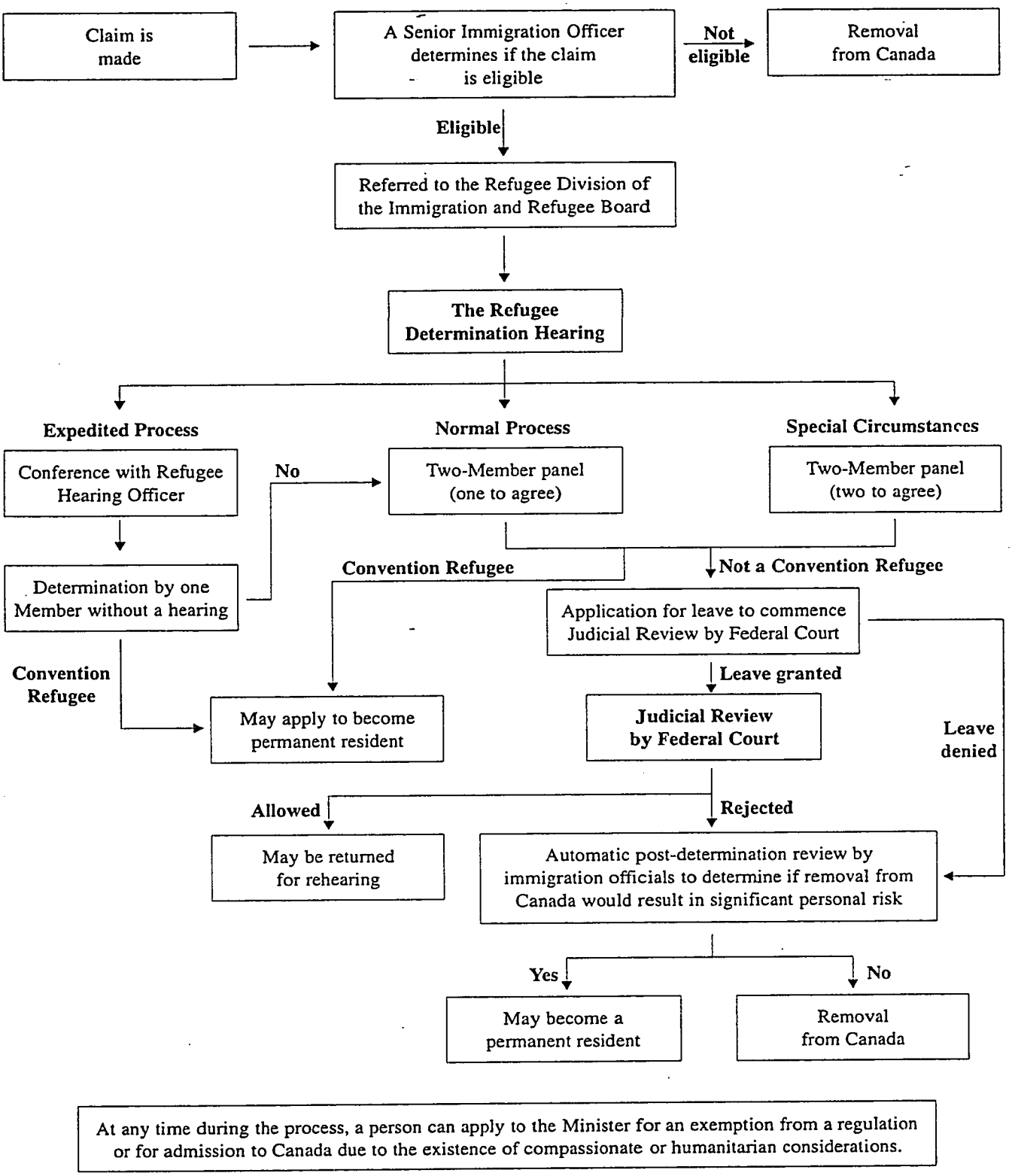
Appendix D: Convention Refugee Determination Process



Appendix E: List of Member Organisations of TCMR

LISTE DES MEMBRES
(juin 1998)

[1]Accueil liaison pour arrivants
[2]Accueil Saint-Léonard
[3]Action réfugiés Montréal
[4]Amitié Chinoise de Montréal (L')
[5]Association des Aides Familiales du Québec
[6]Association des Femmes Croates du Québec
[7]Association islamique des Afgans du Québec
[8]Association Multi-Ethnique pour l'Intégration des Personnes Handicapées du Québec
[9]Association Pour l'Éducation Interculturelle du Québec
[10]Au bas de l'échelle
[11]Bureau de la Communauté Chrétienne des Haïtiens de Montréal
[12]Carrefour d'Aide aux Nouveaux Arrivants
[13]Carrefour de Liaison & d'Aide Multiethnique
[14]Carrefour le Moutier
[15]Carrefour solidarité Anjou
[16]Cartier centre d'entraide populaire (Le)
[17]Centre Afrika
[18]Centre Alpha Sainte-Anne
[19]Centre communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques
[20]Centre culturel & communautaire des iraniens de Montréal
[21]Centre d'Accueil & de Références pour Immigrants Région St-Laurent
[22]Centre d'action bénévole de Montréal-Nord
[23]Centre d'action socio-communautaire de Montréal
[24]Centre d'Aide aux Familles Immigrantes
[25]Centre d'aide aux immigrants
[26]Centre d'Appui aux Communautés Immigrantes Bordeaux-Cartierville
[27]Centre d'Études Arabes pour le Développement
[28]Centre d'Intégration Multi-services de l'Ouest de l'Ile
[29]Centre d'Orientation & de Formation Favorisant les Relations Ethniques Traditionnelles
[30]Centre dOorientation Paralégale & Sociale pour Immigrants
[31]Centre de Promotion, Référence, Information & Services multiethniques
[32]Centre de recherche-action éducation & sociale multiethnique
[33]Centre de Recherche-Action sur les Relations Raciales
[34]Centre de Recherche d'Emploi Laurentides, Lanaudière, Laval
[35]Centre de services à la communauté arménienne
[36]Centre des femmes d'ici & d'ailleurs
[37]Centre des femmes de Montréal
[38]Centre Justice & Foi /Secteur Communautés Culturelles
[39]Centre Multi-Écoute
[40]Centre multi-ethnique de Notre-Dame-de-Grâce
[41]Centre multiethnique de Québec
[42]Centre Saint-Louis (CECM)
[43]Centre Social d'Aide aux Immigrants
[44]Centre Yves-Thériault (CECM)
[45]Clinique Santé Accueil (CLSC Côte-des-Neiges)
[46]Comité d'action pour les Juifs Soviétiques
[47]Comité d'Aide aux Nouveaux Immigrants
[48]Comité d'Aide aux Réfugiés
[49]Comité d'Éducation des Adultes Petite Bourgogne & St-Henri
[50]Comité Régional d'Éducation pour le Développement International de Lanaudière
[51]Communauté Khmère du Canada
[52]Communauté Rwandaise de Montréal
[53]Communauté Zaïroise de Montréal Métropolitain
[54]Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux/Comité sur les relations interculturelles & raciales
[55]Congrès Canadien Polonais
[56]Congrès Hispano Canadien du Québec
[57]Congrès Juif Canadien Région du Québec
[58]Corporation Archiépiscopale Catholique Romaine de Montréal
[59]Corporation Culturelle Latino-Américaine
[60]Corporation de Développement Économique Communautaire Centre-Sud/Plateau Mont-Royal
[61]Fédération des groupes ethniques du Québec
[62]Filière Employabilité
[63]Hirondelle Services d'accueil & d'intégration des immigrants
[64]La Maisonnée Service d'aide & de liaison pour immigrants
[65]Ligue des droits & libertés
[66]Maison d'Haïti (La)
[67]Maison de l'amitié
[68]Maison Internationale de la Rive-Sud
[69]Maison Odyssée / Service d'intégration à la collectivité
[70]Maison Secours aux femmes
[71]Mission catholique latino-américaine
[72]Mission communautaire de Montréal
[73]Mouvement Action Chômage de Montréal
[74]Projet Genèse
[75]Promotion, intégration, société nouvelle
[76]Refuge pour les femmes de l'Ouest de l'Île
[77]Regroupement des Organismes du Montréal Ethnique pour le Logement
[78]Regroupement Inter-Organismes pour une politique familiale au Québec (Le)
[79]Réseau d'Intervention auprès des personnes ayant subi la Violence Organisée
[80]Resto Plateau
[81]Service à la famille Chinoise du Grand-Montréal
[82]Service d'Aide aux Étrangers de l'Église Chrétienne Espagnole de Montréal
[83]Service d'Aide aux Néo-Québécois & Immigrants
[84]Service d'Aide aux Réfugiés & Immigrants du Montréal Métropolitain
[85]Service d'Éducation & d'Intégration Interculturel de Montréal
[86]Service d'interprète, d'aide & de référence aux Indochinois
[87]Service d'Orientation & d'Intégration au Travail de Québec
[88]Services Canadiens d'Assistance aux Immigrants Juifs
[89]Société d'Aide aux Immigrants du Moyen-Orient
[90]Société Québécoise de Solidarité Internationale
[91]Société Saint-Vincent-de-Paul
[92]Solidarité femmes africaines
[93]Union Française
[94]Village africain
[95]YMCA de Montréal - Centre-Ville

Appendix F: Recommendations from the Mémoire presented by the Table at the Assemblée Nationale du Québec

POUR LA PLANIFICATION DE L'IMMIGRATION 1998-2000, LA TABLE DE CONCERTATION DES ORGANISMES DE MONTRÉAL AU SERVICE DES RÉFUGIÉS RECOMMANDE AU GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC :

ORIENTATIONS GÉNÉRALES :

1. de jouer un rôle déterminant au niveau de l'opinion publique afin que les avantages et les bénéfices du programme d'immigration du Québec et la contribution positive des immigrants et des réfugiés à la société d'accueil soient mieux connus.

2. de renforcer le rôle du Québec comme terre d'accueil pour les victimes de conflits armés, de répression politique, de violation des droits en considérant les dangers d'une vision strictement utilitaire de l'immigration.

NIVEAUX D'IMMIGRATION:

3. de rehausser progressivement les niveaux d'immigration afin d'atteindre les objectifs fixés dans l'entente Canada-Québec, c'est-à-dire 25% de l'immigration canadienne.

4. de ne pas privilégier les niveaux de l'immigration économique au détriment de l'immigration familiale ou humanitaire.

5. d'augmenter, de concert avec le gouvernement fédéral, le nombre de réfugiés sélectionnés à l'étranger afin que le Québec en accueille 3000 par année.

6. de développer sa politique de régionalisation de l'immigration en associant les instances régionales dans la planification des niveaux, en tenant compte des besoins des régions et en collaborant plus intensivement avec les organismes communautaires de Montreal et des autres régions.

7. de ne pas pénaliser les non-francophones dans le processus de sélection, en particulier lors de la sélection des réfugiés.

CATÉGORIE DE LA FAMILLE

8. de reconnaître la réunification familiale comme un droit fondamental et incontournable pour tout immigrant ou réfugié s'installant au Québec indépendamment de la capacité financière du garant.

9. de s'assurer auprès du gouvernement fédéral que les périodes d'attente lors de parrainage de membres de la famille n'excèdent pas 6 mois.

10. de demander au gouvernement fédéral le retrait des frais de résidence permanente pour les réfugiés ou les personnes en situation de détresse, ces frais entravent sérieusement la réunification familiale.

11. de ne pas majorer les frais de résidence permanente pour les immigrants s'établissant au Québec.

RÉFUGIÉS OU PERSONNES EN SITUATION DÉTRESSE SÉLECTIONNÉS À L'ÉTRANGER :

12. de sélectionner des réfugiés ou des personnes en détresse sur la base des critères de protection et en fonction des besoins de réétablissement et non sur leur capacité d'établissement.

13. de mieux tenir compte des besoins spécifiques des réfugiés et personnes en situation de détresse sélectionnés par le Québec et de s'assurer que les services et ressources disponibles soient suffisants et adéquats; ces ressources ne devraient pas uniquement être basées sur le bénévolat, comme cela arrive parfois, afin que les réfugiés puissent bénéficier d'un soutien maximal dès leur arrivée.

14. de prendre en considération les besoins de réétablissement des réfugiés venant de l'extérieur de l'Europe, en particulier du continent africain.

15. de sensibiliser et former sur une base régulière les conseillers en immigration du Québec à l'étranger à la problématique des réfugiés et de la réunification familiale.

16. de mettre en oeuvre avec les organismes communautaires concernés une campagne de sensibilisation pour inciter le secteur privé à parrainer des réfugiés et des personnes en situation de détresse dans le cadre du nouveau Programme de parrainage collectif.

17. d'établir les réfugiés ou personnes en situation de détresse en région selon leur capacité d'accueil et selon la volonté des réfugiés et non pas à des fins de régionalisation de l'immigration.

REVENDICATEURS DU STATUT DE RÉFUGIÉ

18. de reconnaître publiquement la légitimité des revendicateurs du statut de réfugié quant à leur besoin de protection et de ne pas les opposer aux réfugiés sélectionnés à l'étranger.

19. d'admettre les revendicateurs du statut de réfugié aux programmes gouvernementaux et aux mesures d'aide réguliers lors de l'attente d'une décision de la Commission de l'immigration et du statut de réfugié ou de la Cour fédérale; notamment au niveau des services d'accueil et d'établissement, des mesures d'employabilité et de la sécurité du revenu.

20. d'accorder les mêmes droits aux enfants de nationalité canadienne nés de parents revendicateurs du statut de réfugié qu'à tous les enfants canadiens résidant au Québec.

21. de poursuivre les efforts pour sensibiliser les institutions et les services publics québécois, notamment en ce qui concerne le réseau de la santé et des services sociaux, de l'éducation et de l'emploi.

22. de reconnaître pleinement le travail et la spécificité des organismes communautaires d'accueil, d'établissement et d'intégration socio-économique à Montréal et dans les autres régions, y compris les organismes communautaires monoethniques, en leur fournissant le soutien nécessaire de la part des ministères sectoriels pour qu'ils puissent répondre adéquatement aux besoins de leur clientèle.

23. d'améliorer, conjointement avec les organismes communautaires, les mécanismes de concertation et de coopération horizontaux entre les différents acteurs impliqués dans l'accueil, l'établissement et l'intégration socio-économique des nouveaux arrivants, notamment au niveau de la régionalisation de l'immigration.