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**PRESS RELEASE
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**Viens Commission:
The AFNQL intends to call on international organizations**

Wendake, December 13, 2018 – The Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), Ghislain Picard, testified today for a fourth time before the *Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec* (Viens Commission). During his intervention, Chief Picard presented the recommendations of the AFNQL, specifically those on access to United Nations mechanisms.

“As we approach the end of the Viens Commission’s work, I would first like to acknowledge the courage and perseverance of First Nations women. Confidence in a justice system should be unshakeable, but in light of their testimonies, it is clear that much work remains to be done and that international organizations can be a remedy. Despite the limitations of its mandate, I invite the Commission to address the challenges of access to justice, especially for First Nations women, in order to facilitate their access to United Nations mechanisms because as things stand in Canada and in Quebec, the justice system continues to ignore certain cases,” said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

“It is impossible to conclude this work without looking back at the cases of abuse that led to this process and which have caused and still cause suffering to the women of our Nations. We consider it unacceptable that they could not find satisfactory answers in respect of the far too many cases of discrimination against them,” said Chief Picard before the honourable Jacques Viens, President.

In addition, during his testimony, the Chief of the AFNQL recalled the three main issues that Quebec has repeatedly been asked to act upon, namely, to recognize, denounce and fight against the systemic racism that exists within its institutions and population. To repair the wrongs suffered by the victims, especially First Nations victims. And finally, to recognize the right of First Nations to provide their own policing services.

It is in this context that the following recommendations were made by the Chief of the AFNQL before the Viens Commission:

1) that the Commission support complainants wishing to file individual communications against the Government of Canada before the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*;

2) that the Commission clearly affirms the right of First Nations to provide their own policing services or to receive policing services that are culturally adapted to the reality of each Nation and community and take a position on the implications arising from this finding;

3) that Quebec adopts and implements the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; and

4) that a permanent entity be established to ensure that provincial government activities be subject to existing law and meet national and international standards on Indigenous People's rights and issues.

The AFNQL wants to thank the Commission's team, especially the Commissioner for his listening. "On behalf of the AFNQL, I would like to convey my thanks to Commissioner Viens, who has allowed the necessary conditions to hear as many testimonies as possible. We will be awaiting the report and recommendations", concluded Chief Ghislain Picard.

A copy of the AFNQL's brief to the Commission is available at: www.apnql.com .

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador is the political organization regrouping 43 Chiefs of the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador. Follow us on Twitter @APNQL

Source:

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