



Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec-Labrador

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Special Parliamentary Committee on Youth Protection “Our Children Also Deserve to Grow Up in Dignity”

Wendake, May 28, 2019 – In response to Premier Legault’s May 17 announcement of the creation of a Special Parliamentary Committee on Youth Protection chaired by Régine Laurent, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) reiterates the importance of including First Nations in any reflection process, including the discussions that will determine the mandate of the Special Parliamentary Committee. It will be essential to address the functioning of Quebec’s youth protection system and its relationship with First Nations, and to review interventions in order to better meet the interests of First Nations children.

“While any decision regarding a child must be made in the best interest and well-being of the child, the over-representation of First Nations children in the child welfare system remains an undeniable and disturbing reality at all stages of intervention,” declared Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

With the introduction of Bill C-92, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, which affirms the rights and jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples with respect to child and family services, the Special Parliamentary Committee cannot proceed without paying particular attention to the challenges and issues faced by First Nations in Quebec. “The AFNQL supports First Nations in the exercise of their right to self-determination. We expect nothing less from the Government of Quebec, which will have to make the decisions that will ensure our full involvement throughout the process,” added Chief Ghislain Picard.

The statistics show a critical and alarming situation. In addition to reviewing the functioning of the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse (youth protection directorate) and the role of the courts, this commission will allow us to highlight the inequalities experienced by First Nations children throughout Quebec.

“The AFNQL demands the appointment of a First Nations co-chair to the Special Parliamentary Committee. In addition, we ask that issues specific to First Nations children be included in the commission’s mandate. Our children also deserve to grow up in dignity,” concluded Chief Ghislain Picard.

A few statistics:

- The rate of reports retained for evaluation among First Nations children in Quebec is 4.4 times higher than among non-Indigenous children.
- First Nations children are 6 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to have their safety or development considered as compromised.
- The rate of First Nations children placed by the Director of Youth Protection is nearly 8 times higher than that of non-Indigenous children.

About the AFNQL

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

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