



Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec-Labrador

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection: The AFNQL will ensure that the rights of children and communities are recognized and respected

Wendake, September 12, 2019 – “We have an obligation to ensure the protection of our children and we intend to exercise this responsibility in the way and at the time we deem appropriate. Our children must no longer be at the mercy of a system that denies their reality,” said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), following the announcement of the start of the Laurent Commission's work.

For several years, the First Nations have been raising awareness among the Government of Quebec so that it can ensure that the *Youth Protection Act* recognizes the specific context of our Nations and allows for greater participation by our families and authorities in the management of cases subjected to it.

In this spirit, the AFNQL has worked with governments, including those that preceded François Legault's, to make the necessary legislative changes to ensure that the law reflects the reality of our populations. As a result of these collaborations and the adoption under the Couillard government of the *Act to amend the Civil Code and other legislative provisions relating to adoption and disclosure of information*, our families can now represent their interests and those of their children in court. More needs to be done.

“Once again, we are faced with an all too familiar situation: looking from the outside at what is being said inside about our Nations. In any case, we will be extremely vigilant and ready to react to any action or words that could compromise the interests of our children. We also have this responsibility on behalf of our governments,” continues Ghislain Picard, who will submit this issue to the AFNQL chiefs.

The adoption of the *First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families Act* by the Canadian Parliament last June radically changes the current perspective. This Act recognizes the right of First Nations to self-determination and allows them to exercise what they consider to be their jurisdiction in the area of youth protection.

“The AFNQL obviously wants Quebec to cooperate in the implementation of the federal law that will come into effect on January 1, 2020, but we intend to do everything we can to allow our communities to protect our children. The system has abused them for too long,” concluded Ghislain Picard.

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.

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