



## Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec-Labrador

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## Viens Commission's Report Beyond the apology, the urgency to act

*Val-d'Or, September 30, 2019* – “We knew we wouldn't see what we wanted to see. The establishment of the Viens Commission goes to Indigenous women who dared to speak out against the abuses they suffered as victims, and the report devotes them only a few lines. The apologies recommended by Judge Viens are rightfully theirs,” said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL, in response to the unveiling of the report of the Listening, Reconciliation and Progress Commission.

After three years of work, the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec is finally tabling its report. Unsurprisingly, the AFNQL notes that the report unequivocally confirms the presence of systematic discrimination. This reflects a collective failure to recognize and respect First Nations' rights and cultures in their relations with the public services that were investigated.

"We would like to thank President Viens for listening. The conclusions are overwhelming, and the evidence is irrefutable. We have before us a two-tier system. The one that must meet the expectations and needs of First Nations is sorely lacking. The current system discriminates against our peoples and makes them second-class citizens," declared the Chief of the AFNQL.

The report reveals that the actions taken to date by the provincial government have been tremendously insufficient, not only to end discrimination against First Nations and Inuit, but more importantly to recognize the structural and institutional problem affecting the governance structures currently in place. There is an urgent need for action, Indigenous resilience has reached a wall. Action must be taken quickly.

Relations between the First Nations and the Government of Quebec are the direct responsibility of the Premier. Only the leader of a government can give all its ministers a clear directive to immediately correct the unacceptable situations denounced in Judge Viens' report. “The role of the Ombudsman is certainly not to allow the Premier or his government to escape their responsibility. The expectations of all First Nations people are very high. First Nations must be directly involved in the implementation of the Viens Commission's report,” added Ghislain Picard.

A little over a year ago, François Legault, in the middle of the election campaign, made a commitment to follow up on the Viens report, in these words: “A CAQ government is firmly committed to following up on the report that will be produced by the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec: listening, reconciliation and progress. We will do everything possible to ensure harmonious and respectful relations between First Nations members and Quebec society.” “The ball is in the Québec Government's court”, 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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*Source :*

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