



NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Laurent Commission: The AFNQL and the FNQLHSSC advocate for the future of First Nations children

Montreal, February 12, 2020 – On the occasion of the Special Commission on the Rights of Children and Youth Protection (Laurent Commission), the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) and the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) presented a joint brief aimed in particular at reaffirming the rights of First Nations to decide on the future and education of their children.

It must be said that the sad event at the origin of this Commission raised many concerns about the flaws in the Quebec youth protection system and the support measures provided to families. Unfortunately, for First Nations, this finding is not new. Since its creation, First Nations children and families have been continuously faced with the shortcomings of the *Youth Protection Act* (YPA), which is far too rigid and regressive while disregarding the cultural and socioeconomic differences of the nations. Through its blindness, this system is responsible for having taken a large number of children, temporarily or permanently, and placing them far away from their families and communities and profoundly disrupting the development of their identity.

“The YPA is not suitable for us, or at least how it is implemented in our communities; some of its elements are even discriminatory. This unsuitability is proven by the fact that our children are overrepresented in youth protection, up to eight times more than Quebec children. This is what happens when services and programs impact First Nations without being created by them or controlled by them. The time has come for our right to self-determination to be respected,” said Derek Montour, President of the Board of Directors of the FNQLHSSC.

“We are very determined to exercise our collective responsibility to see to the wellness of our children. The coming into force, on January 1, 2020, of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (C-92) confirms the jurisdiction of our political authorities in matters of child and family services. Beyond the claims of other governments which risk becoming isolated in interminable jurisdictional disputes, we have the obligation to ensure the necessary conditions which will allow our own institutions, with the participation of our families, to decide on the future of our children,” added Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

In their brief, the two organizations made recommendations that affect Act C-92, Bill 31, which aims to authorize the communication of personal information concerning certain missing or deceased Aboriginal children to their families, and the YPA. Among other things, the AFNQL and the FNQLHSSC have reiterated their constitutional right to manage family support and youth protection services, according to Act C-92, and are asking the Government of Quebec to withdraw its dispute and negotiate coordination agreements in good faith with First Nations governments and Canada. With regard to the YPA, they are also calling for Indigenous children to be exempted from the application of the maximum periods of foster care and that the regulation on financial assistance to promote the adoption and tutorship of a child be amended. More generally, the two organizations recommend that Quebec implement measures that respond appropriately to the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the calls to action of the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec.

To read the brief, [click here](#).

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is a political organization that unites 43 First Nations Chiefs in Quebec and Labrador.

About the FNQLHSSC

The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission is a non-profit organization that supports First Nations in Quebec in achieving their objectives in terms of health, wellness, culture and self-determination.

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