



Assemblée des Premières Nations
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COMMISSION DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX
DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS
DU QUÉBEC ET DU LABRADOR

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Concrete solutions to put an end to a broken system and systemic racism against First Nations children

Wendake, Thursday, May 28, 2020 - Despite the unexpected suspension of the work of the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (Laurent Commission) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) and the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) are favourably welcoming several of the recommendations made by the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse* (CDPDJ) in the brief it tabled this morning in the context of the Laurent Commission.

In its report, the CDPDJ recognizes that First Nations are in the best position to determine the futures of their children. Accordingly, the First Nations must be involved in making the decisions that concern them, and they must also be able to count on the full cooperation of both levels of government to ensure compliance with and the application of the principles of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (C-92).

Even though the creation of a defender of the rights of Indigenous children is still coveted by the Chiefs of the AFNQL, we welcome the commitment demonstrated by the CDPDJ to collaborate and share its expertise in our communities. "We are convinced that First Nations families will be better supported and that they will benefit from quality services that are culturally appropriate once the First Nations have the support and all the means necessary to operate their own governance structures," said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

In addition, we must insist on the resumption of the work surrounding the implementation of the calls to action of the Viens Commission, the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, work that will take on its full meaning following the formal recognition and implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

We must join forces and work together for the wellness of First Nations children and families regardless of where they live. This cultural and identity-based matter must be recognized and supported by governments and organizations that advocate for the interests of children, including First Nations children.

The time has come to take action in the context of our respective authorities and to implement concrete actions based on practical and lasting partnerships. Systemic racism cannot endure. It is essential that we act on all social determinants to correct a system that has failed us.

“The fact that the CDPDJ refers in its brief to the coming into force, on January 1, 2020, of An Act respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth and families is encouraging since the Act recognizes explicitly the right to self-determination of Indigenous peoples to legislate on issues affecting children and youth in their respective communities. This is a major step forward for the rights of Indigenous children,” said Derek Montour, President of the FNQLHSSC.

About the AFNQL

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

The FNQLHSSC’s mission is to accompany Quebec First Nations in achieving their health, wellness, culture and self-determination goals.

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