



**Assemblée des Premières Nations
Québec-Labrador**

250, Place Chef Michel Laveau, bureau 201
Wendake (Québec) GOA 4V0
Tél. : 418-842-5020 • Téléc. : 418-842-2660
www.apnql-afnql.com

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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN: WHEN THE LEGAULT GOVERNMENT
IS INSPIRED BY THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS**

Wendake, September 14, 2021 – At the origin of the tragedy of the Indian residential schools and their persistent painful consequences a century later, there was the will of the so-called “superior” government and religious authorities to tell Indigenous parents and families that they did not have the competence to raise their children. Parents were forced to stop passing on their ancestral customs, languages and way of life to their children. The government and religious authorities in place took great measures and used all possible strategies to impose their values, or what they believed to be the “true” values, on the Indigenous children. This happened a hundred years ago. All agree today in condemning the supremacy of one culture over that of others and the detestability of this colonialist approach. Considering the numerous reports, recommendations and data available to us to improve the situation of First Nations children and families in Quebec, including the recent report of the Laurent Commission, the reality should be quite different. However, such is not the case.

We are now in 2021. And yet, for approximately the past two years, the provincial government has been challenging the constitutional validity of a law adopted by the Parliament of Canada, namely the Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (Federal Act). The AFNQL and the FNQLHSSC are involved in this constitutional reference which will be heard before the Court of Appeal of Quebec this week, from September 14th to the 16th. The pleadings of the AFNQL and the FNQLHSSC will for their part be heard by the Court on Thursday, September 16th.

The Federal Act establishes national principles regarding services intended for Indigenous children and families and affirms the jurisdiction of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis to adopt and enforce their own laws with respect to services for their children and families, a right that the Quebec government continues to deny. The Legault government insists on imposing its Youth Protection Act, its regulations, its standards, its vision, its authority ... This Quebec law only recognizes the autonomy of the First Nations within a regime that is limited to the delegation of responsibilities which does not solve the problem, since it locks the First Nations into the constraints of a protection approach that is unsuitable for their needs. And yet, a strong will to impose its own culture on other peoples remains, even in 2021, despite the devastation this approach has caused.

“Quebec chooses to defend what it refers to as its “jurisdiction” to the detriment of the capacity of the First Nations to manage their own services for their children and families. The impacts of the Indigenous residential school tragedy persist. Even the Legault government denounces them ... Have the lessons of history been properly understood? We can and must pose this question to the Legault government if we want to prevent history from repeating itself. We need to be more concerned with the legacy we will leave behind,” said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the regional political organization that brings together 43 Chiefs of the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador. Follow the AFNQL on Twitter @APNQL.

Information:

Alain Garon, agaron@apnql.com

Communications Advisor

Cell.: 418 254-4620