

**PRESS RELEASE
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**PREMIER LEGAULT HAS THE RIGHT TO MAKE A MISTAKE BUT DOES NOT
HAVE THE RIGHT TO MISGUIDED STUBBORNNESS**

Wendake, October 5, 2021 – “My first thoughts are with Carol Dubé, his children and the entire community of Manawan who, today, are subjected to another stage added in an already extremely painful ordeal,” said the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), Ghislain Picard.

Premier Legault is making the mistake of denying the presence of systemic racism in Quebec. Yet no society is immune from this scourge. Why would Quebec be any different? It is no longer a matter of opinion. Systemic racism is now identified in the coroner’s report as a determining factor in avoiding tragedies like the one that caused Joyce Echaquan’s tragic death and plunged her family, community and nation into mourning in addition to all of Quebec.

“The Government of Quebec has a moral obligation to follow-up without hesitation on the first recommendation of the report that *the Government of Quebec recognize the existence of systemic racism within our institutions and undertake to contribute to its elimination*. How can we effectively combat systemic racism in Quebec if the Premier of the province continues to deny it?” added Chief Picard.

Premier Legault is wrong to think that dedicating a statutory holiday to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples compromises Quebec’s productivity. How much does Quebec’s economy stand to gain from more frequent partnerships with Indigenous peoples? How beneficial could more harmonious and less conflictual relations between the nations which coexist on the territory be? The Premier needs to acknowledge that taking a day to think it over together is not a waste of time.

Premier Legault is also wrong to think that the people of Quebec are looking to the past, that they want the status quo, and that they are not interested in issues affecting the Indigenous peoples. The AFNQL’s experience following a first year of its Action Plan on Racism and Discrimination shows the opposite, with a survey supporting it!

“The Premier and Deputy Premier constantly talk about building ‘bridges’ with First Nations. After three years of the Caquiste government, it is high time they got down to it. The First Nations have been waiting at the river for a long time. We must ensure that no one loses their life at the hands of the system,” concluded Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the political body that brings together 43 Chiefs of the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador.

INFORMATION

Alain Garon, AFNQL
Communications Advisor
agaron@apnql.com or 418-254-4620