



**AFNQL**  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
— QUEBEC-LABRADOR —

# POLITICAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2025-2026

*A year of action, representation, and advocacy  
for the rights of First Nations*





## POLITICAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2025-2026

This report presents an overview of the main political actions, representations, interventions and strategic files undertaken by the AFNQL during the 2025–2026 fiscal year.

This is the first political activity report of its kind produced by the AFNQL, marking an important step in strengthening the transparency of political actions and highlighting regional work.

Coordination: AFNQL Secretariat  
Period covered: April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026

For more information, please contact: Valérie Gagné-Vollant  
[vgagne-vollant@apnql.com](mailto:vgagne-vollant@apnql.com)

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**Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador**  
250, pl. Chef Michel Laveau #201  
Wendake (Quebec), G0A4V0  
(418) 842-5020  
[www.apnql.com](http://www.apnql.com)  
[info@apnql.com](mailto:info@apnql.com)





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## MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL CHIEF

Over the past year, the AFNQL went through a significant period of transition. It has been a demanding and challenging year, but also a profoundly human one, marked by solidarity, collective work, and a commitment to continue advancing the rights and priorities of First Nations.

From the very beginning of my mandate, I knew I had big moccasins to fill. Nothing fully prepares you for the responsibility of directly representing the voices of First Nations in often complex political contexts, especially since this leadership transition also occurred during a period of significant internal renewal, with the departure of several employees who profoundly shaped the organization over the years. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge their contributions and commitment, and to thank them for their continued dedication.

This period of great change also allowed us to establish a renewed dynamic based on collaboration, strengthening the AFNQL as a political gathering place for First Nations. Emphasis was placed on listening, dialogue, and creating spaces for sharing, which initiated the development of a renewed organizational culture built on constant communication with Chiefs and Grand Chiefs. In this context of renewal, I am extremely proud of the work accomplished collectively this year. *What we achieved, we achieved together.* In each and every file, we have demonstrated that when we work together in a united manner and with respect for our realities, we are able to make our voices heard.

I am thinking in particular of the Bill 97 file, which marked the year in a significant way. It was a defining moment where we succeeded in building strong alliances with several partners, including actors from Quebec civil society, confirming that when we create real spaces for discussion and understanding, it becomes possible to build stronger and more human relationships.

In pursuing our priorities of legislative Reconciliation and coexistence, we also accomplished important work in the defense of our rights in several major files, including provincial and federal bills, Indigenous languages and cultures, childhood reform, major projects, the environment, economic development, and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).



Through my role at the national level as Child and Family Services Reform and Jordan's Principle file holder, and as co-holder for Education and Public Safety, I ensured constant representation to bring the realities and priorities of First Nations at the forefront in various discussions with national partners and governments.

In all of these cases, we continued to reiterate a fundamental principle: First Nations must be treated as legitimate governments and involved from the outset in decisions that affect our territories, our children, our languages and our future.

In the current political climate, where many decisions continue to be made without genuine recognition of our rights and governments, we need to work together and support each other more than ever. While respecting that each Nation has its own unique reality, priorities, and autonomy, I remain convinced that unity will be one of our greatest strengths in the years to come.

I would like to sincerely thank the Chiefs and Grand Chiefs who get involved on a daily basis, both regionally and nationally. Many of them are tackling extremely complex files with great determination and generosity, and their essential work deserves to be recognized. I also want to acknowledge the contributions of the AFNQL committees, the Youth Network, the Council of Elected Women, and all those who support us in this collective endeavour. Your expertise, commitment, and perspectives profoundly enrich our work.

The coming year promises to be another challenging one. Discussions surrounding Quebec's constitutional bill, major projects, the provincial elections, and issues related to UNDRIP will continue to demand our full attention. Despite these challenges, I remain deeply optimistic, because throughout our communities, I see engaged young people, mobilized leaders, stewards of the land, entrepreneurs, workers, and families who continue to build the future with courage and determination.

We still have much work ahead of us, but together, we are moving in the right direction. We will continue to make our voices heard and build a fairer future, respecting our Nations, languages, cultures, and territories, for generations to come.



**Francis Verreault-Paul**

*Chief, Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador*



## THE AFNQL'S ROLE

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) is the political organization that unites and represents the 43 First Nations of Quebec and Labrador. Since 1985, its mandate has been to defend inherent and treaty rights and to support First Nations in their political, social, economic, and cultural endeavours, as well as in their decision-making. The affirmation of self-determination and the well-being of each First Nation, while respecting traditional values, is at the heart of the AFNQL's mission.

The AFNQL acts as a common voice, as the primary interlocutor with regional, federal, and international institutions, and coordinates regional political positions. It also acts as a regional political representation body, a forum for consultation among Chiefs, and a lever of influence with external governments.



Photo: UN delegation

### The AFN and the AFNQL: A complementary relationship

The AFNQL is affiliated with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). While the AFNQL constitutes the regional political voice of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, the AFN acts as the national spokesperson to the federal government and international bodies.

The AFN is a national forum where First Nations leaders meet to discuss issues of common interest, collaborate on solutions, and share best practices. It exists to support Chiefs and communities, not to speak on their behalf, ensuring that it provides the information necessary for community leadership to make informed decisions. Regional priorities, policy positions, and mandates are defined by

the leaders of the AFNQL are then represented nationally by the AFN, which amplifies their priorities and issues to influence federal policies and international discussions. The Regional Chief sits on national bodies, helping to shape national positions, ensuring the transmission of regional priorities, and raising issues with the governments of Quebec and Canada.

This collaborative relationship ensures consistency between local, regional and national priorities, while respecting the political autonomy of the Nations, which retain a distinct, strong and autonomous voice while being present in national decision-making spaces.

*The AFNQL builds the regional political position >*

*The AFN amplifies this position on the national and international stage >*

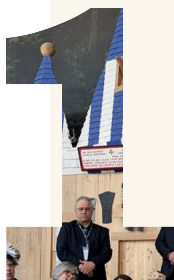
*The Regional Chief ensures continuity between the two political spaces.*



# AFNQL PRIORITIES FOR 2025-2028

## AXIS

### DEFENSE OF RIGHTS AND LEGISLATIVE RECONCILIATION



- Defending the rights, titles and governance of First Nations;
- Participating in parliamentary committees and legislative reforms;
- Implement UNDRIP and ensure respect for rights recognized by the Constitution.
- Protecting and revitalizing ancestral languages
- Create spaces for dialogue and collaboration with Quebec.

## AXIS

### GOVERNANCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION



- Strengthening the self-determination of First Nations;
- Get First Nations laws and processes recognized and respected;
- Advancing legislative and economic Reconciliation;
- Supporting Chiefs as file holders and strengthening common political orientations;
- Ensuring the transfer of responsibilities in respect of the rights of First Nations.

## AXIS

### SUPPORT FOR FIRST NATIONS AND CROS



- Strengthening collaboration between the AFNQL, commissions and regional organizations;
- Improving the sharing of knowledge and expertise;
- Increasing operational efficiency and coordination of actions;
- Ensuring greater transparency towards Chiefs and communities.

## AXIS

### RELATIONSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS



- Developing a regional, national and international communication strategy ;
- Strengthening public awareness and visibility of First Nations ;
- Developing strategic partnerships and alliances ;
- Promoting relationships based on respect, dialogue and coexistence.







## MANDATES, FILE HOLDERS AND COMMITTEES

Chiefs' Committee on the UNDRIP Act: R. Montour, Kahnawake (proxy)  
 Chiefs' Committee on Emergency Management: S. Sunday-Diabo, Akwesasne  
 AFN Knowledge Keepers Council: **VACANT**  
 AFN Women's Council: **VACANT**  
 AFN National Youth Council: **VACANT**  
 AFN Veterans Council: **VACANT**  
 AFN 2SLGBTQIA+ Council: K. Sky-Deer, Kahnawake (proxy)  
 Chiefs' Committee on the Renewal of the AFN Charter: **VACANT**

### Health and Social Services

#### File holders

SEF and Jordan's Principle : F. Verreault-Paul  
 Health and Social Services : **VACANT**  
 Chiefs' Committee on Health: G. Nequado, Lac-Simon (proxy)  
 Committee on Child, Family and Self-Determination Services: R. Gray, CSSSPNQL (suppl.)  
 Chiefs' Committee on Early Learning and Child Care: S. Sunday-Diabo, Akwesasne  
 National Chiefs' Commission on Children: V. Chief, Timiskaming First Nation  
 Joint National Working Group on the Legislative Implementation of the Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families: R. O'Bomsawin, Odanak  
 Chiefs' Advisory Committee on the Work of the Health and Social Services Governance Process: L. Haymond (Kebaowek), C. Kistabish (Pikogan), S. Flamand (Manawan), G. Nequado (Lac-Simon)-proxy, D. Laveau (Wendake)-proxy, J. Shetush (Uashat mak Mani-Utenam).

### Environment and territory

Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment: **VACANT**  
 Chiefs' Committee on Territories and Resources: **VACANT**  
 Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment: **VACANT**  
 Chiefs' Committee on Territories and Resources: **VACANT**

### Housing and infrastructure

File holder and Chiefs' Committee on Housing and Infrastructure: L. Haymond, Kebaowek

### Public Safety

#### File holders

National Representatives: F. Verreault-Paul, A. Benedict (Ontario) F  
 irst Nations Police Services: L. Haymond, Kebaowek  
 Chiefs' Committee on Justice: L. Wabanonik, Lac-Simon

### Education

#### File holders

National representatives: F. Verreault-Paul, B. Cameron (FSIN - Saskatchewan)  
 Chiefs' Committee on Education: John Martin, Gesgapegiag (proxy)

### Economic development and employment

#### File holders

Taxation: R. O'Bomsawin, Odanak  
 Employment and Training: L. Robinson (Wolf Lake First Nation), W. Lafontaine (CDRHPNQ)  
 National Fisheries Committee: **VACANT**  
 Fiscal Relationship: **VACANT**

### Languages and Cultures

Chiefs' Committee on Ancestral Languages: S. Flamand, Manawan

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The files and committees marked as vacant still were at the date this report was published.

*For more information or to get involved in a file or committee,  
 please contact Valérie Gagné-Vollant at [vgagne-vollant@apnql.com](mailto:vgagne-vollant@apnql.com)*



# GOVERNANCE

## Role of the AFNQL

The core of the governance mandate is the recognition and implementation of First Nations' inherent right to self-determination and self-government, and the defense of their exclusive legislative jurisdiction. The AFNQL plays a supporting and coordinating role by assisting communities in their political, legal, and administrative processes, participates in negotiations with the governments of Quebec and Canada, and contributes to developing new governance models better suited to their realities.



## Activities and achievements

### Federal election campaign

The AFNQL intervened during the federal election campaign to raise awareness of First Nations priorities among political parties and the public, emphasizing the importance for the next government to respect First Nations rights and address key issues such as housing, education, infrastructure, and self-determination. The AFNQL also highlighted priorities related to sovereignty, Reconciliation, and the implementation of UNDRIP in federal policies, while stressing the importance of support for First Nations initiatives on climate change and reform of child and family services. Throughout the campaign, the AFNQL held numerous interventions and meetings with political parties to secure clear commitments to First Nations, reiterating that Reconciliation must be translated into concrete actions.

### UNPFII

In April 2025, the AFNQL coordinated a large delegation of Chiefs, elected officials, and councillors from First Nations in Quebec and Labrador to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). This was the region's largest political participation in this international forum in over twenty years, with the objective of delivering a clear demand: the effective implementation of the UNDRIP in Quebec and Canada. The AFNQL emphasized the need to move from commitments to concrete actions, denouncing the persistent obstacles to the recognition and exercise of First Nations rights. It also highlighted key priorities such as the protection of territories and waters, environmental justice, language revitalization, and the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, all issues that depend directly on the implementation of UNDRIP.



Photo: UNPFII AFNQL delegation



### UNPFII (cont'd)

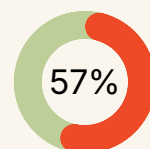
In its interventions, the delegation also stressed that First Nations often have to turn to the courts to enforce rights that have already been recognized.

Alongside the official proceedings, the AFNQL organised a parallel event on the implementation of UNDRIP in Quebec, allowing First Nations leaders to present concrete issues related to rights, territory and development projects.

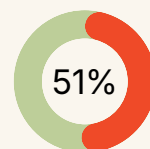
## Legislation monitoring and defense of First Nations rights

The AFNQL continued its political and legislative monitoring work, a task that occupied a central place in this year's political work, in order to follow federal bills that have direct impacts on First Nations and their rights.

The increasing pressure exerted by provincial and federal legislative activity on the rights, powers, and priorities of First Nations is evident: a total of 34 bills were analyzed as part of the political monitoring. Of the 61 political files reviewed, 35 were classified as high priority, representing 57% of all files monitored. The provincial level accounted for the largest share of the political monitoring, with 31 files, or 51% of the total.



% priority cases



% provincial files

### Draft Constitution of Quebec - PL-1

Following its participation in the general consultations on PL-1, the AFNQL called for its immediate withdrawal, deeming it based on a colonial approach incompatible with the rights and political status of First Nations. The organization denounced the lack of genuine consultation, the disregard for the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, and the marginalization of Indigenous legal systems and governance structures. Furthermore, the AFNQL expressed concerns about the impacts on linguistic, social, economic, and cultural rights, and on the recognition of Aboriginal rights, asserting that a constructive approach must be based on respect and coexistence rather than imposition.



Photo: National Assembly of Quebec - PL-1

The organization undertook several initiatives throughout the year, including meetings with opposition parties, members of the Quebec government, federal ministers, and several allied organizations such as Amnesty International Canada (Quebec chapter), the Quebec Bar Association, and the Quebec Order of Urban Planners. The AFNQL also strengthened its ties with Treaties 6, 7, and 8 in Alberta to discuss issues related to PL-1 and sovereignty movements, and submitted a request to the *United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

### **PL-1 (suite)**

Three meetings of the technical committee were held with legal experts, institutional representatives, and specialists in Indigenous constitutional issues, also involving lawyers from First Nations organizations, representatives from the FNQLHSSC and the FNQLSDI, as well as university law professors. These meetings benefited from significant political participation, with the presence of more than 15 Grand Chiefs, Chiefs, and elected officials, illustrating a broad, coordinated mobilization around the analysis and response to the bill.

*The general consultations began on December 4, 2025 and ended on February 18, 2026.*

### **Bill C-5, One Canadian Economy**

In recent months, the Privy Council Office of Canada has been working to organize regional engagement sessions with First Nations regarding Bill C-5. Seeking to foster meaningful and informed participation from Chiefs, the AFNQL offered its support to the federal government to help organize these meetings and disseminate the necessary information to communities. As part of this work, Chief Lance Haymond (Kebaowek) testified on behalf of the AFNQL before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities on June 18, 2025, regarding this bill.



*Photo: AFN press conference on priority issues, including Bill C-5*

Despite this invitation, the recommendations and support offered by the AFNQL were not accepted by the Privy Council Office. The meeting held on November 21, 2025, saw very low participation, with only two First Nations represented out of forty-three, raising concerns about the quality of the process and the ability of First Nations to fully participate in the discussions.

### **Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Indian Act**

The AFNQL also followed the work surrounding Bill S-2, which aims to amend the Indian Act regarding new registration rights. The Regional Chief appeared before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Northern Affairs on November 4, 2025, to defend First Nations' right to self-determination regarding membership, to denounce the impacts of Bill S-2 on community services, and to call for corrections to inconsistencies in the French version of the bill. The bill passed first reading in the House of Commons on December 10, 2025, and after being passed by the Senate, continued its journey in the House of Commons, where second reading was completed on February 27, 2026, before being referred to committee for further study.

The AFNQL continues to follow this issue closely and continues to reiterate that First Nations must be able to fully exercise their right to determine their own membership and their own citizenship codes without being limited by imposed mechanisms.





### **Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025**

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) has been monitoring the work surrounding Bill C-15, related to the implementation of the 2025 federal budget. The Regional Chief appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Transportation and Communications regarding the high-speed rail network, to denounce the risks associated with expropriation, the failure to respect the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations, and the inappropriate use of Indigenous knowledge and data. Following its review by the Standing Committee on Finance in February 2026, the bill continued its parliamentary journey before receiving Royal Assent on March 26, 2026. The AFNQL has remained attentive to the potential impacts of federal budgetary measures on First Nations and to concerns regarding the powers granted to the federal government under certain provisions of the bill.

### **Bill C-254, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (incitement of hatred against Indigenous peoples)**

Since the first reading of Bill C-254 in the House of Commons on October 31, 2025, little progress has been made on the bill. In a context where hate speech, denialism, and disinformation continue to have real impacts on First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) remains concerned about the lack of progress on this legislative initiative and continues to support efforts to better protect Indigenous Peoples from hate speech and discrimination.

### **Protection of Indigenous Identities**

As part of its work on the recognition of rights and the protection of identities, the AFNQL adopted a resolution in 2025 affirming that no historical Métis community exists in Quebec and Eastern Canada, including Labrador. The emergence of groups identifying as Métis or Indigenous without any clear historical or community recognition creates confusion, can lead to the misappropriation of resources intended for First Nations, and undermines the recognition of the rights of the true holders of ancestral and treaty rights.

In this context, the AFNQL supported the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador during their appearance before the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. Briefs and letters were submitted to denounce the recognition of groups without a territorial base, without reserves, or without modern treaties, and to emphasize the importance of protecting the integrity of First Nations collective rights. The AFNQL therefore called on the governments to cease the recognition and funding of these organizations in order to protect First Nations rights, preserve historical truth, and support legitimate governments.



*Photo: Tshakapesh Institute Symposium*





## Challenges and perspectives

For the next fiscal year, the AFNQL plans to intensify political and strategic work surrounding several major issues and to continue its efforts to strengthen First Nations unity, defend collective rights and ensure full and complete participation of First Nations governments in all decisions that affect them.

Quebec's proposed constitutional bill will remain a central concern. Several Chiefs believe this initiative represents a significant attempt to redefine political relations without genuine recognition of the rights and status of First Nations.

The Quebec government's approach to UNDRIP also remains a cause for concern. The AFNQL will continue to denounce disinformation and to reiterate that UNDRIP is not a veto right, but rather a minimum framework for the respect of human rights.



Photo: Advertising campaign calling for the implementation of UNDRIP



Photo: AFNQL press conference  
@amelieshoots

The upcoming provincial election will also be closely watched, particularly in a context where certain political discourses are fueling divisions, fear and identity tensions.



# HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

## Role of the AFNQL

Since its first assembly in 1985, where a resolution was adopted demanding active lobbying of the federal government to secure adequate funding, the AFNQL has been working to transform health systems to ensure cultural safety. Through its regional technical expertise, it works to uphold dignity, defend rights in health and social services, and support community autonomy.



## Activities and achievements

### Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services

The Childcare reform remained one of the most complex issues of the year, involving political, legal, and administrative dimensions. Francis Verreault-Paul continued his role as the national Portfolio Chief for the Child and Family Services Reform and Jordan's Principle, and in this context, meetings were held with the *National Children's Chiefs' Commission*, the *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society*, and the AFN regarding implementation plans.

### **Canada must abandon its legal challenge to Order 2025 TCDP 80**

In 2016, the Tribunal ruled that the Canadian government was racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children through the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) program and its flawed and narrow application of Jordan's Principle. The AFNQL carried out sustained interventions in the context of this file before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in response to Canada's orders and actions, and demanded that the federal government fully comply with the decisions to end systemic discrimination rather than contest them.

### **Canada must commit to collaborating with the NCCC, the Caring Society and the AFN**

The AFNQL also denounced federal approaches that it considers divisive to First Nations, including the use of regional agreements perceived as a strategy to fragment collective positions. It reaffirmed the need for genuine collaboration between Canada, the AFN, the NCCC, and the *Caring Society* to co-develop solutions based on rights, accountability, and the implementation of Tribunal orders, in order to sustainably end the structural inequalities affecting First Nations children and families.

## Challenges and perspectives

With a long-term vision in which First Nations themselves are the ones who define child protection models based on their laws, cultures, and realities, work will continue over the next year around the fundamental objective of restoring greater control to communities over child and family services, which are currently largely administered or regulated by federal structures. The AFNQL will continue to support the work among national partners and to affirm that any lasting reform must be First Nations-led and implemented without delay.



# ENVIRONMENT AND TERRITORY

## Role of the AFNQL

The AFNQL promotes territorial management that combines traditional knowledge with the absolute protection of biodiversity, and supports Chiefs in their territorial governance. The AFNQL's efforts aim to secure recognition of the inherent right of First Nations to manage their ancestral territories and the obligation to obtain their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for any project affecting them.



## Activities and achievements

The environment remained a central priority in all of the AFNQL's positions this year, with issues related to climate change, land protection, and the preservation of natural resources continuing to guide the organization's strategic thinking. First Nations are among the first to experience the direct impacts of climate change on their territories and ways of life, and this reality continues to reinforce the importance of ensuring their full participation in decision-making processes related to land development, major projects, and environmental policies.

### Forest Regime – Bill 97

In early September 2025, following several months of discussions, the Chiefs' Committee on Forests noted the lack of guarantees regarding the integration of First Nations proposals into Bill 97 on the modernization of the forest regime. Consequently, the AFNQL called for its complete withdrawal, arguing that the essential principles of respect for Aboriginal and treaty rights, genuine government-to-government co-management of forests, and the rejection of priority forest management zoning were not ensured in the version presented.

This position was reaffirmed and amplified during a broader mobilization on September 16, 2025. An unprecedented coalition bringing together the AFNQL, First Nations Chiefs, forestry unions, environmental organizations and territorial actors was formed to oppose Bill 97, unanimously denounce a version deemed unacceptable and developed without real listening to the solutions proposed by the parties concerned, and raise public awareness of the impacts of the bill on ancestral and territorial rights.

The AFNQL played a central role in the political and strategic representations surrounding this bill, insisting on the need to reject it in its initial form and to prioritize a collaboratively developed forest reform that respects rights, socioeconomic realities, and biodiversity. It also called for the initiation of a genuine government-to-government dialogue process to fundamentally rethink the forest regime based on real collaboration and sustainable balance. Following this, the government tabled an omnibus bill, Bill 11, on December 4, 2025, which was subsequently adopted.



In response, the AFNQL, in collaboration with the FNQSDI, submitted a joint brief in February 2026 to assert its positions, choosing not to appear before a parliamentary committee while maintaining its demands: recognition of First Nations rights, respect for existing governance structures and the establishment of a framework for the co-construction of forest and territorial policies.

The withdrawal of the bill by the Quebec government, an exceptional situation in the political context of recent years, demonstrated the effectiveness of this mobilization and of the joint pressure of First Nations and their allies.



Photo: Press conference following the announcement of the withdrawal of Bill 97 at the FQM congress

### COP30

At COP30, the AFNQL reminded the governments of Canada and Quebec of the urgent need to respect their climate commitments and the rights of First Nations, and denounced the persistent gaps between international commitments and concrete actions. The AFNQL emphasized that the impacts of the climate crisis disproportionately affect the territories, health, and livelihoods of First Nations communities. Stressing the recognition of First Nations as essential partners in climate and biodiversity solutions, the AFNQL argued for the adoption of ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and for ensuring the consistency of climate policies with UNDRIP regarding Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. It also called for legislative Reconciliation that fully integrates Aboriginal rights, and adequate funding for climate adaptation.

## Challenges and perspectives

Environmental protection is a value that will continue to guide the AFNQL's positions on all matters. The protection of the territory simply cannot be separated from social, cultural, and economic concerns. Climate change directly affects communities and traditional ways of life, and First Nations are often the first to see and suffer the impacts of the degradation of territories, natural resources, and ecosystems. Throughout the debates surrounding Bill 97, Chiefs reiterated the importance of maintaining a balance between respecting First Nations rights, economic development, and the conservation of territories.

In this context, the AFNQL maintains that First Nations must be fully involved in all decisions related to territory and major projects, from the beginning of the processes, and will continue in the coming years to advance collaborations with stakeholders in the forestry sector through ongoing work on the future of forests.





# HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

## Role of the AFNQL

The mandate of the AFNQL in terms of Housing and Infrastructure is to improve living and housing conditions in communities, a challenge that requires massive federal investment and the negotiation and implementation of an approach where First Nations have full jurisdiction.



## Activities and achievements

Housing and infrastructure remained among the priority issues of the year. The housing shortage, current overcrowding issues, as well as the state of infrastructure have direct impacts on other very concrete human realities such as physical and mental health, education and dropout rates, family well-being, and youth success.

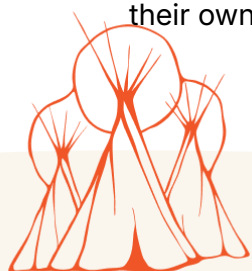
During the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the AFNQL continued its political advocacy efforts to raise awareness of the housing crisis in First Nations communities and the need for sustainable and appropriate action. In this context, the AFNQL continued to support regional and national work related to housing, community infrastructure, and local capacity building. Particular attention was paid to the need for stable and predictable investments that would allow communities to plan their projects for the long term rather than operating on a model of short-term and insufficient funding.

### Regional Tripartite Committee on Housing

The AFNQL, in collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), is implementing the 2025-2027 Action Plan of the Regional Tripartite Housing Committee. This work aims to strengthen First Nations governance and autonomy in the planning and management of housing and infrastructure, to fully recognize First Nations jurisdiction over housing, and to support communities better equipped to exercise their governance in a way that is autonomous and adapted to their realities. The AFNQL supports an approach where First Nations gradually assume more responsibility according to their level of preparedness. Capacity building is central to this approach, enabling all communities to develop the skills necessary to better manage their own housing programs at their own pace.



Photo: AFNQL & CoPH 2026 Regional Housing Meeting in January 2026



The AFNQL held the Housing Regional Meeting in February 2025, bringing together various First Nations stakeholders, technical experts, partner organizations, and government representatives to discuss community needs for essential infrastructure and solutions to improve housing conditions. This regional mobilization addressed key issues such as community health, matrimonial real estate, housing management models, community infrastructure, and the growing need for accessible housing.

In October 2025, the AFNQL participated in national discussions surrounding the creation of *Build Canada Homes*, stressing the need for a distinctions-based approach, the importance of flexible funding mechanisms adapted to community realities, as well as the protection of existing budgets and the recognition of the structural limits of communities in terms of housing and infrastructure development.

The AFNQL also advocated for community interests during the review of CMHC programs, including Section 95 and the Housing Rehabilitation Assistance Program (HRAP), calling for the preservation of historic funding levels and ensuring a review conducted in consultation with First Nations. It continued to implement the *Urban, Rural and Northern (URN) Indigenous Housing Strategy* for off-reserve housing and the collection of housing needs data, while continuing to advocate for stable, equitable, and appropriate funding.

In the context of the AFNQL's representations regarding critical infrastructure, discussions held throughout the year highlighted the persistent barriers faced by communities. Despite government announcements and planned infrastructure investments, actual access to funding often remains complex and insufficient to meet needs. Aging infrastructure, high construction costs, challenges in accessing materials and labour, and cumbersome administrative processes poorly adapted to the realities of First Nations: these findings echo the conclusions of the AFN report, "*Closing the Infrastructure and Housing Gap for First Nations*," which underscores the scale of the needs and the chronic underfunding of critical infrastructure in communities.

## Challenges and perspectives

This year's work confirms the importance of developing tailored programs, supporting local planning and management, and strengthening collaboration among Indigenous housing stakeholders. For the coming year, the organization intends to continue its political advocacy efforts to ensure that governments fully recognize the extent of the needs in communities and implement more accessible, flexible, and appropriate funding mechanisms. The AFNQL will also continue to support local capacity building and community self-reliance in housing and infrastructure.

In a context where several communities are experiencing significant population growth and where the effects of climate change are putting pressure on infrastructure, needs will continue to increase in the coming years. The AFNQL will therefore remain committed to supporting the development of healthy and safe living environments for future generations.



# PUBLIC SAFETY

## Role of the AFNQL

The AFNQL has been working with governments for over two decades to ensure stable funding for Indigenous police services and to guarantee the safety of communities.



## Activities and achievements

Although few concrete political advances were observed in relations with governments in 2025-2026, issues related to public safety continued to be among the priorities of the AFNQL.

Despite this context, several important discussions were held among First Nations to better define common priorities and strengthen collaboration between communities. As the national file holder for this issue, the Regional Chief participated in the October 2025 meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers of Justice and Public Safety in Alberta. He also participated in work at the National Assembly of Quebec in collaboration with Chiefs Lance Haymond (Kebaowek) and Jonathan Germain (Mashteuiatsh). Together, they presented First Nations concerns before a parliamentary committee, including funding for essential services, language barriers, community needs, and the importance of genuine consultation with First Nations in decisions affecting public safety. The Regional Chief also testified before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) as part of the study on First Nations police forces. A tripartite meeting on public safety, attended by the Regional Chief and Chief Lance Haymond, was also held in December 2025 between representatives of the federal, provincial, and First Nations governments. This meeting provided an opportunity to continue discussions on public safety issues experienced in the communities and on funding and essential service needs. A second meeting is planned to follow up on the discussions initiated.

Throughout the year, the AFNQL continued to emphasize that public safety in communities cannot be approached solely from a policing perspective, and that security issues are directly linked to social conditions, housing, mental health, youth, prevention, and collective well-being.

## Challenges and perspectives

First Nations public safety services and police forces play a vital role in protecting communities. The AFNQL therefore intends to continue its advocacy efforts and strengthen collaboration among First Nations to advance these discussions. Despite the challenges and lack of political progress observed at some levels of government, the AFNQL is optimistic that the work already underway will lead to greater recognition of the realities and needs related to public safety in the years to come.



# EDUCATION

## Role of the AFNQL

The AFNQL upholds the fundamental principle of First Nations control over their own education, working to ensure fair, predictable and appropriate funding that can support the vision of an education system that values First Nations languages, cultures and histories and provides students with the tools to excel in all areas.



## Activities and achievements

In its mandate for Education, the AFNQL continued its representations to ensure that the realities and priorities of First Nations are taken into account in discussions surrounding future agreements with the federal government, and continued to monitor issues related to regional agreements and the funding of First Nations educational institutions, while denouncing inconsistencies in federal approaches to governance and regionalization.

In February 2026, the Regional Chief participated in the AFN Education Forum: Voices for Tomorrow, Uplifting Our Nations Through Lifelong Learning, in Vancouver. The AFNQL is proud to have participated alongside the First Nations Education Council (FNEC), the Tshakapesh Institute, the Regional Committee on First Nations Languages (RCFNL), and other regional organizations committed to the development and educational success of First Nations communities.



Photo: AFN Education Forum

### First Nations Education Council (FNEC)

The FNEC is comprised of 22 member communities that collectively fulfill the mandate to support full ownership of education by and for First Nations. During the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the FNEC continued to support the AFNQL by providing guidance and IT support to the organization, and the AFNQL wishes to express its sincere gratitude for this commitment.

## Challenges and perspectives

Discussions surrounding regional agreements, funding and federal approaches continue to raise several concerns, particularly regarding inequalities between communities.





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

## Role of the AFNQL

The AFNQL has been working for decades towards the autonomy of First Nations by creating structures dedicated to economic development and workforce management.



## Activities and achievements

In 2025-2026, the AFNQL continued its work on economic Reconciliation and First Nations participation in economic development projects. While several government initiatives were announced to facilitate access to financing and loan guarantees, the organization emphasized that regulatory, administrative, and legislative barriers continue to limit Indigenous businesses' actual access to public procurement and economic opportunities.

On November 27, 2025, *First Nations Venture Capital of Quebec* announced the creation of a \$50 million investment fund, all Indigenous-led, designed and governed, to support the economic development of Indigenous communities. The AFNQL contributed to this initiative with a \$1 million investment from a trust fund, playing a key role among the partners involved. The fund targeted strategic sectors such as tourism, construction, energy, and natural resources, with a focus on economic self-determination. This initiative was also driven by a collective commitment to strengthening Indigenous control over development and building a sustainable collaborative model.

## Challenges and perspectives

Economic Reconciliation cannot be limited to financial announcements: it must also involve concrete changes to rules, policies, and access mechanisms so that Indigenous businesses can truly participate in economic development. Even though governments did announce several programs and funds, numerous obstacles remain for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in government tendering and procurement processes. The AFNQL intends to continue its advocacy next year to promote fairer mechanisms better adapted to the economic realities of First Nations, including those of Indigenous SMBs, which face these significant inequalities.

The AFNQL will also remain vigilant in the face of the acceleration of major projects and increasing economic pressures, and will continue to defend the principle that First Nations must be present from the outset in decision-making processes, with the full right to participate in projects or to refuse those that threaten their territories and their rights.



# LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

## Role of the AFNQL

The AFNQL works towards the recognition, protection and promotion of ancestral languages and First Nations cultures, a task which requires equitable funding and the promotion of the richness and diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures.



## Activities and achievements

At the heart of First Nations identity and survival lie their languages and cultures. The issues related to these have therefore been a significant focus of the AFNQL throughout the year. The organization continued its involvement in regional initiatives related to Indigenous languages and advocated for the recognition of ancestral languages, remaining vigilant against government policies that could negatively impact their recognition and visibility.

The AFNQL also denounced certain legislative and political approaches of the Quebec government which, despite a rhetoric of cultural protection, continue to marginalize Indigenous linguistic realities. In particular, the AFNQL opposed the use of the term "language of origin" in legislation, as this terminology is inappropriate and contrary to the recognition of the ancestral nature of First Nations languages, applying instead to immigration contexts. The AFNQL also raised concerns about new cultural policies and content discoverability, which risk exacerbating the marginalization of Indigenous artists and creators on digital platforms. To date, these issues remain a concern for Indigenous artists and creators.

## Challenges and perspectives

For the coming year, the AFNQL will maintain heightened vigilance to ensure that Quebec's language and cultural policies explicitly recognize the ancestral nature of First Nations languages and do not increase the marginalization of Indigenous content in the digital environment. Among other things, work will continue to ensure that regulations and quotas negotiated with web giants incorporate parameters and investments that also benefit Indigenous artists and producers, and to implement the obligations and mechanisms stemming from the Indigenous Languages Act and the UNDRIP implementation frameworks, in order to support revitalization and transmission on a sustainable basis.



Photo: Chief Sipi Flamand, portfolio holder for Languages, in February 2026



# COUNCIL OF ELECTED WOMEN (CEW)

## Spokespersons for 2025-2026

Tesha Rourke, Akwesasne | Nadia Robertson, Gespeg | Isabelle Napess, Ekuanitshit

## Role of the CEW

Since 2007, elected women from the 43 First Nations governments in Quebec and Labrador have decided to unite and set common goals and action plans by forming the AFNQL Council of Elected Women. This enables them to support and guide the AFNQL Chiefs who serve on the AFN Women's Council.



## Activities and achievements

Throughout the year, the AFNQL continued its collaboration with the CEW on several matters related to First Nations women's leadership. The CEW's work this year led to the renewal of the partnership on the Women and Leadership training program, delivered in collaboration with *First Nations Executive Education (FNEE)*.

Progress continued with the Women's Committee of the Secretariat for the Status of Women, as well as with various government partners, within the framework of the Ethics and Lateral Support Commission project. Furthermore, a meeting with the Inter-Ministerial Committee provided an opportunity to present the project and noted their strong interest in this initiative. In addition, efforts to support the creation of the Ethics and Lateral Support Commission, in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Table of Chiefs (May 2023), also continued.



Photo: Council of Elected Women 2025-2026

The CEW maintained an active presence on the international stage, notably through its participation and representation at the United Nations, and contributed to raising the profile of elected women through an awareness campaign highlighting their leadership. Finally, in February 2026, the CFÉ held an event combining recognition, training, and mobilization, including the launch of video clips in collaboration with *Boîte Rouge Vif*, training activities with the *Women, Politics and Democracy Group (GFPD)*, and the presentation of phase 2 of the project on the forced sterilization of First Nations and Inuit women in collaboration with UQAT and the FNQLHSSC.

## Perspectives

Building on its ongoing work in representation, leadership, and the development of impactful initiatives, the CEW plans to soon submit a draft resolution to clarify, formalize, and strengthen its recognition, governance, and capacity for action within the AFNQL. These initiatives also aim to ensure a solid and sustainable foundation through access to appropriate funding, enabling the CEW to respond even more effectively to the priorities and needs of elected women and to support supportive environments in the fight against violence.



# AFNQL SECRETARIAT

## Activities and achievements

The AFNQL plays a vital role in providing collective support so that all First Nations have access to the information they need to advocate for their interests. To strengthen this administrative role, the AFNQL Secretariat has focused this year on initiatives promoting transparency and efficiency. Indeed, several efforts have been made to improve communication with Chiefs and Grand Chiefs, including by increasing access to published information, accelerating the flow of strategic information, and strengthening internal coordination with commissions and regional organizations.



Photo: Home page of the new AFNQL website

### A more accessible AFNQL

Among these achievements, new information-sharing and accountability tools have been implemented, including a newsletter, to ensure that communities have rapid access to analyses, policy monitoring, and strategic information. This approach also aimed to reduce inequalities faced by some communities with less access to technical or political capacity.

Building on this momentum, the AFNQL has also launched a project to digitize its archives, a colossal undertaking that will facilitate access to information and ensure greater continuity in monitoring political and administrative files. At the same time, a complete redesign of the AFNQL website was undertaken to provide a more modern, accessible platform better suited to the needs of First Nations, thereby improving access to documents and information tools for communities.

### Administrative and political support

Throughout the year, the Secretariat provided ongoing support to the various files of the AFNQL, conducting continuous monitoring, producing analyses, briefing notes and reports, and liaising with Commissions and regional organizations to support the positions and decisions of the Chiefs. This strategic support role ensured an optimal and up-to-date understanding of all issues, whether political, legislative or social.

The year's data confirms the scope of this responsibility. With 232 communication and advocacy activities, 137 media interviews, 35 courtesy meetings, 61 policy files monitored, and 34 bills analyzed, the AFNQL maintained a consistent presence in political, media, and institutional spaces. This volume of activity clearly reflects the ongoing effort of coordination, analysis, and advocacy required to defend the rights and priorities of First Nations in a demanding political context.





### **Strengthening partnerships and sharing resources**

The past year has also been marked by significant efforts by the Secretariat to strengthen AFNQL partnerships, with the aim of more effectively supporting communities and optimizing the use of available resources.

The FNEC continued its support and collaboration with the AFNQL during the 2025-2026 year, notably by providing IT support and guidance to the organization. The AFNQL therefore wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the FNEC for its commitment, availability, and ongoing support.

A collaboration with the FNQLHSSC has also been established at the administrative level, with significant progress in sharing expertise and pooling support resources. Furthermore, as of April 1, 2026, the FNQLHSSC will assume the IT support mandate previously held by the FNEC for improved organizational efficiency.

The 2025-2026 period also saw the emergence of a very productive collaboration between the AFNQL and the FNQLEDC. The two organizations worked together strategically to share their resources and this resulted in the implementation of common management tools, including the integration of the AFNQL into the FNQLEDC's timesheet management system, as well as the sharing of several services in graphic design, printing, and production of promotional materials.

Through the use of common tools and improved coordination with the Regional Organizations (ROs), the AFNQL's administrative performance has been significantly strengthened. For the Secretariat, this significant progress aligns perfectly with the shared mission of the AFNQL and the ROs regarding economic self-determination.

### **Outlook for the coming year**

Over the next year, efforts to structure and improve internal processes will continue. A key priority will be the standardization of monitoring processes through the development and use of common tools, harmonized templates, and monitoring schedules.

The AFNQL also wishes to put in place clearer and more systematic mechanisms to improve the traceability of decisions, including resolutions, motions and follow-ups, since documenting the decisions taken will make it possible to better monitor their implementation and ensure access to reliable and clear information.

Strengthening the management of cross-cutting issues, which affect several sectors and committees at once, will also be a priority in order to better coordinate interventions and ensure better alignment between the priorities of the Table of Chiefs and the work carried out by the different teams.



## IN CLOSING

The year 2025-2026 was an important period of transition for the AFNQL, characterized both by the continuity of major political issues and by a period of intense renewal.

To build on the momentum of this period, during which significant reflection took place on strengthening internal structures and the role of the AFNQL for First Nations, the organization will soon begin a full restructuring of the organization's ecosystem. This process will be implemented during the next fiscal year to improve the currently complex structure that connects various governance bodies, commissions, committees, and support teams. The organization hopes that this will lead to smoother processes and a greater capacity to respond to the political priorities of First Nations Chiefs.

To date, the AFNQL continues to play an active role in all matters that directly affect the rights, services, and living conditions of communities. Whether it concerns public safety, reform of child and family services, federal bills, or issues related to housing, infrastructure, language, and culture, the organization has maintained a sustained presence in political and consultative spaces.

To progress even further, a committee on ancestral languages will be established in the coming year, with the aim of strengthening the protection, transmission and vitality of First Nations languages, which are the fundamental pillars of identity, culture and sovereignty.

As this fiscal year draws to a close, the AFNQL looks ahead with a determination to consolidate its structures, strengthen the coherence of its interventions, and continue supporting Chiefs in advancing priorities. In a constantly evolving political and social context, the AFNQL is more committed than ever to working in a spirit of unity, collaboration, and respect for First Nations rights, in order to build sustainable solutions for current and future generations.

**Secretariat,  
Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador**



**Access the Council of Chiefs and Commissions organizational chart**  
Consult the official structure and the complete list of commissions to better understand the responsibilities and governance in place.



**AFNQL**  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
— QUEBEC-LABRADOR —

250, pl. Chef Michel Laveau #201  
Wendake (Quebec), G0A4V0

☎ (418) 842-5020  
🌐 [www.apnql.com](http://www.apnql.com) | [info@apnql.com](mailto:info@apnql.com)  
📘 [www.facebook.com/APNQL](https://www.facebook.com/APNQL)



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