



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

Press release
For immediate distribution

Bill 79: Supporting the families of missing and deceased Indigenous children in questionable circumstances

Kahnawake, April 1st, 2021 — On December 9, 2020, the Minister responsible for Indigenous Affairs, Ian Lafrenière, tabled Bill 79, *An Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of missing or deceased Indigenous children following an admission to an institution* (hereinafter PL-79). The purpose of this bill introduced in the Quebec National Assembly is to support families in their search for information regarding the circumstances leading to the disappearance or death of Indigenous children sent to various health and social services institutions located outside their community. This appears to be in response to ENFFADA recommendation #20.

Last month, on March 18, 2021, Quebec Native Women (hereinafter QNW) was called upon to address the bill in question. In general, QNW applauds the Quebec government's willingness to develop solutions that support families who have lived through such upsetting events and to ease their suffering by helping them to find out what really happened.

However, QNW underlines in its brief, presented on March 31, 2021 to the National Assembly of Quebec, that the phenomenon of disappearances and deaths of Indigenous children is intrinsically linked to colonial policies of assimilation and is a serious human rights violation. However, the mandate of this bill is too limited and contains many gaps. In order to ensure the respect of the families' right to the truth and thus take a step towards reconciliation, it is necessary, according to QNW, to investigate the systemic *causes* surrounding these disappearances, the reasons for the deaths and disappearances, and not only the circumstances as proposed in Bill 79.

QNW highlights the fact that the search for the truth cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the already traumatized families and, as a last resort, on the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, which does not have the necessary independence.

In its complementary final report to Quebec, a section is devoted to missing children. According to the testimonies, despite the fact that the families have received some documents, they still have many unanswered questions. It is in this context that their appeal to Justice 21 takes place, asking the Quebec government to create a commission of inquiry.

Therefore, in order to ensure the right to truth, safety and psychological integrity of the families, QNW supports the families' request and recommends again the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry rather than a temporary law.

It is important to remember that this is an urgent situation. Many parents and relatives are still searching for the truth and some risk disappearing without having the opportunity to finally know the fate of their child.

Quebec Native Women is convinced that an independent commission of inquiry must be set up in order to adequately respond to the need for research and elucidation on the systemic causes of this phenomenon, to guarantee the non-repetition of these violations, and thus to take one more step towards reconciliation:

"The establishment of an independent commission of inquiry is a responsibility of the government following the ENFFADA Kebec Report, and the government must therefore implement Recommendation 21.", insists Viviane Michel, President of QNW.

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Source :

Doreen Petiquay Barthold - Communication Officer
(514) 757-1508
communication@faq-qnw.org