



**FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.**  
**QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.**

**Press release**  
**For immediate distribution**

**End of public hearings into the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan: the beginning of a wind of change**

**Kahnawake, June 2, 2021** — The public inquiry into the death of Joyce Echaquan evoked a range of emotions throughout the hearings. This 37-year-old woman of Atikamekw origin, who died at the Centre hospitalier régional de Lanaudière on September 28, 2020, highlighted, through her courage in making a video recording, the sad reality of Indigenous women in Quebec facing systemic discrimination.

The evidence, through the family's testimony, the health care staff's admissions, and the testimony of civilian witnesses, demonstrated that racism manifested in prejudice and implicit bias was indeed present at the Joliette hospital.

Ms. Rainbow Miller, lawyer for Quebec Native Women (hereafter QNW), reminded the audience that for centuries, Indigenous people have been considered second or even third class citizens. As such, they are considered unworthy of any fundamental right, including the right to life, safety and dignity.

Rainbow Miller asserts that the *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* did not apply in Joyce Echaquan's case. On the contrary, her rights as a Canadian citizen, a Quebecer, and a member of a First Nation, were violated throughout her stay by the staff of the Joliette hospital. Joyce Echaquan was abandoned, left alone, when she should have been supervised. The treatment she suffered constitutes a particular violation of her right to life, safety, respect, and dignity.

*"All human dignity was stripped from Ms. Echaquan in the final hours of her hospitalization and continued even after she passed away, because she was an Indigenous woman. Throughout her hospitalization, she was treated as a worthless person."* says Rainbow Miller, QNW's lawyer.

She concludes that the cumulative effects and insidious factors of systemic racism resulted in the violation of Joyce Echaquan's human rights and contributed significantly to her dehumanization, deterioration of her health and ultimately her death.

QNW wishes to thank the Coroner for accepting the testimony of the President, Viviane Michel. QNW also reiterates its support to Mr. Carol Dubé and his children, to the family and community of Manawan, and wishes to mention again its support for the adoption of *Joyce's Principle*.

*"I hope that the words 'Justice for Joyce' will not be forgotten after today. I hope that these hearings will bring real change and that Joyce's tragic death will not be in vain. I hope that collective awareness will be raised and that we will reach out to each other to understand the difference. I hope that concrete actions will be taken to truly make the recommendations of the Viens Commission and the MMIWG report effective. We also hope that the recommendations that we have submitted to the Coroner will be taken into account. "* says Viviane Michel, president of QNW.

In honor of Joyce Echaquan, a Grand March was held this afternoon. Many people were present to honor her and to denounce systemic racism.

"Systemic racism and discrimination kill and we hope that this mobilization will lead to the beginning of a new era. We hope that this mobilization will lead to the beginning of a new era," said Viviane Michel, president of QNW.

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Source:

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