



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

Kahnawake, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Office of the Prime Minister  
Mr. François Legault  
Honoré-Mercier Building, 3rd floor  
835 René-Lévesque Boulevard East  
Quebec City, Quebec G1A 1B4

Office of the Minister of Indigenous Affairs  
Mr. Ian Lafrenière  
905 Honoré-Mercier Avenue  
Quebec City, Quebec G1R 5M6

**Re: Open letter to the Quebec government for the adoption of Joyce's Principle and the recognition of racism and systemic discrimination against Indigenous women**

Dear Prime Minister, Dear Minister,

I am writing to you today as part of the day of remembrance for Mrs. Joyce Echaquan. One year ago, Joyce Echaquan lost her life in deplorable conditions at the Centre Hospitalier de Lanaudière. The purpose of this open letter is to share with you the demands of Quebec Native Women (hereafter QNW) regarding Joyce's Principle and the recognition of racism and systemic discrimination. As part of our mission to promote and defend the rights of Indigenous women, we wish to bring justice to Joyce and her family, her community and all Indigenous women who do not have access to services free of racism and systemic discrimination.

A year has passed since Ms. Echaquan's death and despite repeated requests from Indigenous organizations, your government has unfortunately refused to listen to reason and adopt Joyce's Principle. Aimed at ensuring equitable access, without discrimination, to all health and social services, the Joyce Principle would provide a guarantee to Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women, who experience racism and systemic discrimination.

Article 22 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (hereafter UNDRIP) ensures that special attention will be paid to Indigenous women in the implementation of the entire Declaration. It also assures that States will take necessary measures, in collaboration with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women are protected from all forms of violence and discrimination. On October 8, 2019, the National Assembly unanimously passed a motion recognizing the principles of the Declaration and yet there is still a clear refusal on your part to adopt Joyce's Principle. The implementation of the UNDRIP responds to Call to Action 3 of the Commission of Inquiry into Relationships between Indigenous People and Certain Public

Services and Call to Justice 19 of the Follow-up Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Concerning Quebec (hereafter MMIWG).


As heard at the public hearings, QNW stated that Ms. Echaquan's fundamental rights to life, security, respect and dignity, guaranteed by the *Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, were violated during her hospitalization. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* adds a constitutional guarantee to the right to non-discrimination and to the prejudices ingrained by colonialism in Canada. In addition, article 26 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* guarantees international protection of human rights against discrimination. In this sense, QNW formally asks you to adopt the Joyce Principle without delay and without reservation.

Racism and systemic discrimination against Indigenous women are also issues that we wish to bring to your attention. Your government claims to be taking concrete action to combat racism in Quebec, but does not explicitly recognize racism and systemic discrimination in its public services. However, the Government of Canada recognizes discrimination and racism in institutions. QNW wishes to state once again that it is impossible to work on this issue if the situation is not addressed and recognized in Quebec.

Your reluctance to not recognize systemic racism and discrimination is not justified considering that MMIWG inquiry denounces the genocide perpetuated against Indigenous women. Joyce Echaquan lost her life and many Indigenous women refuse to access public services for fear of abuse. You believe that you are working hand in hand with Indigenous communities on a nation-to-nation basis, but this is not possible until racism and systemic discrimination are acknowledged.

In order to say loud and clear that Quebec is reconciling with Indigenous peoples and women, the government must act in good faith to directly address the issues, which are to adopt Joyce's Principle and to acknowledge the existence of racism and systemic discrimination against Indigenous women in Quebec.

I look forward to speaking with you in the near future, Mr. Prime Minister and Mr. Minister, Sincerely.



Viviane Michel  
President of QNW

c.c. Mr. Christian Dubé, Minister of Health and Social Services