



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

Kahnawake, May 25th, 2022

Office of the Minister of Justice  
Mr. Simon Jolin-Barrette  
1200 route de l'Église  
Québec (Québec) G1V 4K9

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

**Subject: Open letter to the Quebec government for the adoption of Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec**

Dear Ministers,

I am writing to you today in the context of *Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec* (hereinafter Bill 96), which was passed in the National Assembly yesterday. The purpose of this open letter is to share Quebec Native Women's (hereafter QNW) concerns regarding the preservation and respect of Indigenous languages. QNW joins all organizations and members of Indigenous communities who have denounced the negative effects of *Bill 96* on Indigenous communities in Québec. As part of our mission to promote and defend the rights of Indigenous women and girls, we wish to put an end to discrimination based on cultural identity experienced by all Indigenous women and to prevent them from being discriminated against in the use of their languages, whatever they may be.

Declaring and enshrining in law that French is the only official language of Québec undoubtedly undermines the use and enhancement of Indigenous languages, and by extension, Indigenous cultures. Indigenous communities are making major efforts to reclaim their languages, which have often ceased to be transmitted and have even disappeared. Bill 96 impedes the revitalization, transmission and promotion of ancestral Indigenous languages. QNW does not think it necessary to remind this government of the major negative and detrimental impacts colonization has had on their languages and cultures. With the goal of reconciling with Indigenous peoples, the government should be aware of these issues and should not continue to undermine the rights of Indigenous peoples through the adoption of legislation that is still colonially and paternalistically based, and that perpetuates the assimilation of Indigenous peoples.

Colonization primarily disadvantaged Indigenous women and girls. Colonial and paternalistic policies affected their traditional roles in their communities, particularly with respect to their responsibility for the transmission of knowledge, languages and cultures. To this day, the consequences persist as this role, that women once carried out with pride, is still minimized in their own communities, in the urban environment and in Québec society.

Numerous inquiries have demonstrated that Indigenous people, particularly women, are disadvantaged and discriminated against in public services, including health, education, justice and communication with public officials. *Bill 96* will therefore create an additional barrier to the delivery of services, thereby widening the gap between Indigenous people and the majority and undermining reconciliation.

*Bill 96* violates Articles 3, 4, 8.1, 13 and 14 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (hereafter UNDRIP). The motion to recognize and implement UNDRIP, adopted unanimously by the National Assembly on October 8, 2020, is still not in force. Moreover, the motion adopted in June 2021 regarding the promotion of Indigenous languages has obviously not been respected either. Furthermore, *Bill 96* violates sections 133 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* and infringes on the rights of Indigenous peoples protected by sections 15, 25 and 35 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and section 10 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. In addition, *Bill 96* unilaterally amends the *Constitution Act, 1867* in contravention of Canadian law and the principle of free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous communities.

*Bill 96* is a major step backwards in terms of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It also goes against the principle of respectful coexistence with Indigenous peoples, who are the original inhabitants of this land and who have been dispossessed of it.

I hope that all the challenges from the various Indigenous groups will make you re-evaluate the impact that *Bill 96* has on Indigenous peoples and their cultures, and that you will finally listen to our recommendations.

I look forward to discussing this with you in the near future.



Marjolaine Étienne  
QNW President

c.c. Mr. Ghislain Picard, Regional Chief of the AFNQL  
Mrs. Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer, Grand Chief of Kahnawake  
Mr. François Legault, Premier of Québec  
Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
Mr. Marc Miller, Minister of Crown Relations and Northern Affairs Canada  
Ms. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Aboriginal Services Canada