



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

**Presentation by Quebec Native Women**

in the context of

*the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to Canada*

**February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

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## **Presentation by Quebec Native Women**

Quebec Native Women (hereafter QNW) is a bilingual non-profit organization founded in 1974 which started as a community-based initiative. QNW represents women of all ten (10) First Nations in Quebec: Abenaki, Anishinabe, Atikamekw, Innu, Eeyou Istchee, Wendat, Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk, Mig'maq, Mohawk and Naskapi. We represent women in the communities as well as those who live in urban centres. Furthermore, in 2015, the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada recognized QNW as an Aboriginal Representative Organization (hereafter ARO).

QNW's mission is to advocate for the human rights of Indigenous women and their families, both collectively and individually, and to represent the needs and priorities of its members to various levels of government, civil society and decision-makers in all areas of activity that impact on the rights of Indigenous people. We also promote the engagement, empowerment, development and leadership of Aboriginal women and girls in all areas of activity.

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For more than 47 years, QNW has contributed to restoring the balance between women and men, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, by giving a strong voice to the needs and priorities of women. QNW brings the needs and priorities of its members to the attention of authorities and decision-makers in all areas of our activities: health, youth, justice and public safety, women's shelters and the promotion of non-violence, human rights, international law, as well as employment and training. In this context, we play a role in education, awareness and research, and provide a structure for women to be active in their community.

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## **Introduction**

QNW has developed an expertise on the issues that concern Aboriginal women and girls in Quebec and has been sharing this expertise with various United Nations bodies for several years. In fact, since July 2009, QNW has had consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This status allows our organization to be recognized as a non-profit organization and to participate in the different works and subjects that the United Nations deals with. Over the past few years, QNW has participated in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> sessions of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Our organization is also involved with the Continental Link of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA) and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), including participation in the development of recommendation n° 39 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Our organization believes that the UN bodies represent a very important forum to express our priorities and concerns, especially when the issues are not taken into account at the state level.

## **Preliminary observations**

First of all, it should be noted that the term "Indigenous women and girls" in this text includes Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ persons from all Nations of Quebec and Canada, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The objective is not to make the text too long.

In addition, it is important to note that Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ people experience specific realities related to their identity, and as such, still face distinct barriers. They suffer from a lack of recognition, a lack of services and support, and disproportionately experience lateral and intersectional violence. They are also mistreated by various public and private services.

Because of the multiple factors of oppression related to colonialism and systemic discrimination experienced by Indigenous women and girls, a gender-based and intersectional approach and analysis of all the issues presented below is required.

## **Issues of Indigenous women and girls in Quebec**

### **1. Systemic racism and discrimination**

As a result of this country's colonial and patriarchal history and policies, there is systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous people in Canada, in particular towards Indigenous women and girls. Indigenous women and girls do not have equality before the law due to racism and discrimination which are at the root of all the current problems they face, including violence, as reported in numerous national and international reports<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the preamble of Bill C-15, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, provides that the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (hereinafter UNDRIP or "the Declaration") shall:

[i]nclude concrete measures to address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence, racism and discrimination, including systemic racism and discrimination, against Indigenous peoples and Indigenous elders, youth, children, women, men, persons with disabilities and gender-diverse persons and two-spirit persons<sup>2</sup>.

In light of recent events that have particularly marked the relations between Aboriginal people and the Quebec State, the issue of the recognition of systemic racism and discrimination has been the subject of several public and political discussions. The facts experienced and denounced by Anishinabe women in Val-d'Or concerning discriminatory actions by police officers, as well as the tragic death of Mrs. Joyce Echaquan at the Joliette hospital, are only two examples that testify to the systemic nature of racism and discrimination experienced by Indigenous people, and more specifically Indigenous women and girls. Let us not forget that although they experience systemic racism and discrimination in all public institutions, many people do not speak out. These cases

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<sup>1</sup> Native Women's Association of Canada, "*What Their Stories Tell Us*", [https://nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/2010\\_What\\_Their\\_Stories\\_Tell\\_Us\\_Research\\_Findings\\_SIS\\_Initiative-1.pdf](https://nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/2010_What_Their_Stories_Tell_Us_Research_Findings_SIS_Initiative-1.pdf), pp. 3 and 7, consulted January 31, 2023; also see United Nations, CEDAW/C/OP.8/CAN/1, 2015; OES Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, OEA/Ser.L/V/II Doc. 30/14, 2014, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Indigenous-Women-BC-Canada-en.pdf>, par. 98.

<sup>2</sup> C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, House of Commons, December 3, 2020, consulted January 21, 2023.

remain unspoken, but they remain in the minds of those who have lived through such experiences. While the federal government acknowledges its existence, however, the Quebec government still refuses to acknowledge the reality of systemic racism and discrimination in the province<sup>3</sup>.

This refusal to acknowledge the existence of systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous people in Quebec is detrimental to the process of true reconciliation. Indeed, without this recognition, it is impossible to advance the priorities and issues specific to Indigenous people in Quebec, such as those defended by our organization. QNW is of the opinion that Quebec's closed position on this issue makes it difficult to collaborate and take concerted action to repair the state wrongs denounced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whether they be those of the past or those that continue to be perpetuated.

This is a long-term issue that absolutely must be addressed by public decision-makers, whether at the federal or provincial level. Without the intervention of the federal government and without international pressure on this issue, QNW believes that the current Quebec government will never recognize the existence of systemic racism and discrimination in its institutions. Considering that non-recognition contributes to the disproportionate discrimination experienced by Aboriginal women and girls, QNW is making this issue a priority. Furthermore, this systemic discrimination widens the societal and institutional gap between Indigenous people and the public system. Indeed, the Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Quebec (Viens Commission) recognizes that Indigenous people are victims not only of inequality in the provision of public services, but of inequality in terms of socio-economic conditions as well<sup>4</sup>. Recognizing the existence of systemic racism and discrimination would therefore be a step in the right direction.

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<sup>3</sup> Le Soleil, « Racisme systémique : Legault présume des recommandations du groupe d'action », *Le Soleil*, October 13, 2022, [Racisme systémique: Legault présume des recommandations du groupe d'action | Politique | Actualités | Le Soleil - Québec](#), consulted January 31, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics, Gouvernement du Québec, 2019, [Rapport Synthèse.pdf \(gouv.qc.ca\)](#) pp. 12, 16, consulted January 24, 2023.

## 2. Economic, social and cultural rights

The gap in socio-economic conditions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada is not a new issue and has already been denounced in previous reports of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Special Rapporteur) on the situation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, in 2004<sup>5</sup> and 2014<sup>6</sup>.

The studies and reports of the various commissions of inquiry have shown that all of Indigenous people poor socio-economic conditions have systemic causes, based on racism and discrimination<sup>7</sup>. Among other things, the National Poverty Advisory Council's 2020 report shows that the rates of poverty, homelessness and food insecurity are stark<sup>8</sup>. It is relevant to mention that in 2023, some Indigenous communities in Canada still do not have access to potable water<sup>9</sup>.

Difficulty in accessing housing and education for Indigenous women and girls are also factors that significantly hinder the well-being and improvement of the living conditions of Indigenous people, issues already raised in 2014 in the report of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. James Anaya concerning the situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, it was noted that Indigenous populations lag far behind the general population in all levels of education, which is attributed to poverty, colonial history and systemic racism, among other factors<sup>11</sup>. It is necessary to indicate that it is even more difficult for women and girls to access education, since in addition to the obstacles related to systemic racism, there are also those related to sexism and all forms of gender-based and intersectional discrimination<sup>12</sup>. The report also denounced the existence of a housing crisis in Indigenous communities, the lack of funding to address this issue, and the negative impact this has

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations, E/CN.4/2005/88/Add.3, 2005, par. 101.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, A/HRC/27/52/Add.2, 2014, par. 15.

<sup>7</sup> National Advisory Council on Poverty, 2020, "Building Understanding", Employment and Social Development Canada, Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2020-annual.html>, consulted September 6, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Indigenous Services Canada, "Ending long-term drinking water advisories", *Government of Canada*, consulted January 31, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 15.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, CEDAW/C/G/39, 2022, par. 47.



on a wide range of social and economic conditions, such as health, family and other violence, and education<sup>13</sup>. These issues are still relevant today.

The holistic health of Indigenous women and girls is affected by these poor socio-economic conditions. In addition, Indigenous women have a very important traditional role in their nations and communities and are responsible for the well-being of their families. Colonization and its assimilative and paternalistic policies have minimized their role, which has resulted in a much lower participation and representation of women in society. All of these interrelated factors significantly diminish the quality of life for Indigenous women, girls and their families

It is necessary to improve the living conditions of Indigenous women and girls. In particular, it is relevant to reiterate the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that urgent measures be taken to address the housing crisis faced by Indigenous people, both within and outside of their communities<sup>14</sup>. Concrete steps should also be taken to improve the conditions of education in close collaboration with Indigenous people<sup>15</sup>. Improving overall socio-economic conditions will lead to long-term, multi-faceted outcomes, resulting in improved health and holistic well-being for Indigenous communities.

The next sections will focus on violations of economic, social and cultural rights. Gender-based violence, forced sterilizations, the case of Ms. Joyce Echaquan, the situation of youth protection, and the need for cultural safety for all services will be addressed.

## **2.1 Gender-based violence**

One of the key mandates that QNW has always carried is fighting violence against Indigenous women and girls, which is based on gender. Indeed, Indigenous women disproportionately experience violence in all its forms, particularly in the context of marriage and family, whether it be verbal, obstetrical, cultural, linguistic, political or systemic violence, etc.<sup>16</sup> Although they represent only 4% of the Canadian population, Indigenous women and girls experience 3.5 times

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 24-28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 86-87.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 11, par. 1.

more violence than non-Indigenous women<sup>17</sup> and are six times more likely to be victims of homicide than their counterparts<sup>18</sup>.

This disproportionate violence was already denounced by the Special Rapporteur in his 2014 Report on the Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada<sup>19</sup>. This problem is particularly present in Quebec, as shown in the supplementary report of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls - Kepek-Québec (NIMMIWG)<sup>20</sup>. Violence against Indigenous women and girls is trivialized in the communities and in non-Indigenous society, and sometimes even ignored. Consequently, there is a certain impunity for the perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women and girls<sup>21</sup>.

Urgent action is needed to address this gender-based violence. The prohibition of gender-based violence against women is a principle of customary international law and applies to Indigenous women and girls. In addition, gender-based violence is a form of discrimination under Article 1 of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*<sup>22</sup>, which Canada has ratified and must respect. For example, Article 2 of the Convention provides that States Parties shall take immediate action to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination against women<sup>23</sup>. As noted above, gender-based violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada is rooted in systemic racism and discrimination<sup>24</sup>, consequences of past and current colonial practices and policies and intergenerational trauma. Recognizing and addressing systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous people, and in particular Indigenous women and girls, is therefore all the more urgent in the fight against impunity.

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 1, par. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada, "Homicide in Canada", 2017, Government of Canada, November 21, 2018, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54980-fra.pdf>, p. 4, consulted January 16, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 34.

<sup>20</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, "Reclaiming Power and Place, Supplementary report KEPEK-Quebec" NIMMIWG, 2019, [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Rapport-compl%C3%A9mentaire\\_Qu%C3%A9bec.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Rapport-compl%C3%A9mentaire_Qu%C3%A9bec.pdf), consulted September 13, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 11, par. 22.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, A/47/38, 1992, par. 7.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, CEDAW/C/GC/35, 2017, par. 21.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 11, par. 22.

Among the forms of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, sexual assault is an alarming form of violence. A recent Statistics Canada study (2022) states that:

Almost six in ten (56%) Indigenous women have experienced physical assault while almost half (46%) of Indigenous women have experienced sexual assault. In comparison, about a third of non-Indigenous women have experienced physical assault (34%) or sexual assault (33%) in their lifetime<sup>25</sup>.

In addition, Indigenous women represent the majority of sex trafficking victims<sup>26</sup>. This is an under-discussed issue that needs to be addressed to counter violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Persistent taboos and the lack of education about sexuality among Indigenous people are among the situations that need to be addressed in order to raise awareness about sexual assault. There is a flagrant lack of resources and prevention tools to fight violence in all its forms against Indigenous women and girls. In particular, there is a lack of culturally appropriate and accessible tools, especially in situations of family and domestic violence. This lack of resources is all the more salient in cases of violence against Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

## **2.2 Forced sterilization**

Forced sterilization is also a form of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Quebec. This phenomenon was initially more documented and attributed to the western Canadian provinces. However, Indigenous women here also experience it. The absence of data on this reality is not a reason to affirm that the problem does not exist in Quebec.

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<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada, “Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in Canada”, Government of Canada, 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00004-eng.htm>, consulted January 25, 2023.

<sup>26</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, “Reclaiming Power and Place”, NIMMIWG, 2019, p. 60, consulted January 16, 2023; also see Femmes Autochtones du Québec, *Les filles autochtones et l’exploitation sexuelle, présenté devant la Commission spéciale sur l’exploitation sexuelle des mineurs*, 2020, p. 15-16.; also see Department of Justice, “Victims of Trafficking in Persons: Perspectives from the Canadian Community Sector”, Government of Canada, 2005, p. 10; Sandrine Ricci et al., *La traite des femmes à des fins d’exploitation sexuelle : entre le déni et l’invisibilité*, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2012, pp. 5, 33.

Just recently, in 2022, a report was made public that denounced some cases of obstetrical violence and forced sterilizations in Quebec<sup>27</sup>. Four main findings emerged from this report. First, there are numerous violations of the right to free, prior and informed consent guaranteed by UNDRIP. Indeed, the absence of consent forms, ligation without the patient's knowledge, the absence of information and of an interpreter have violated the right to consent of Indigenous women and girls. The experiences of Indigenous women and girls also significantly undermine their sense of trust in the health care system. As a result, they become more fearful and avoid hospitals, even when they need care. The third finding is that Indigenous women and girls experience differential treatment in hospitals, that is, they are second-class patients. Finally, women are being sterilized for no good reason and at a young age. The conclusion of this study also denounces that Indigenous women who have been sterilized without their consent have experienced systemic racism and discrimination.

Forced sterilizations of Indigenous women and girls, in these cases in the health and social service system, are an unacceptable form of violence that is particularly directed at them. Among the stereotypes behind the practice of coerced sterilizations is the stereotype of being unable to care for oneself and one's children. These stereotypes were also denounced by Coroner Gehane Kamel's report on the death of Ms. Joyce Echaquan.

### **2.3 The case of Joyce Echaquan**

Like the women who were sterilized without their consent, Ms. Joyce Echaquan was also subjected to unwarranted bias, which led to the poor delivery of health care services she received. The case of Joyce Echaquan is a clear and concrete example of the presence and effects of systemic discrimination in health and social services. Coroner Gehane Kamel's report acknowledges in its conclusions the presence of systemic racism as a factor in the lack of adequate care that led to her death.

On September 28, 2020, Joyce Echaquan, an Atikamekw mother of seven (7) children and member of the Manawan community, died under inhumane circumstances in a public hospital in Joliette. Ms. Echaquan had the courage to film the last moments of her life, thus capturing the degrading

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<sup>27</sup> First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services, "Free and informed consent and imposed sterilizations among First Nations and Inuit women in Quebec, FNQLHSSC, consulted January 25, 2023.

and insulting remarks, full of stereotypes, made by the nurses shortly before her death. This created a wave of consternation in the Quebec population and in the Indigenous communities, even though they knew that she was not the first to receive such hospital treatment<sup>28</sup>. It is important to note that this hospital was the subject of a specific study in the Commission's report Come with regard to systemic racism and discrimination.

The Atikamekw Nation and the Atikamekw community of Manawan have created a document in response to this event. Joyce's Principle:

“aims to guarantee to all Indigenous people the right of equitable access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services, as well as the right to enjoy the best possible physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health” and “requires the recognition and respect of Indigenous people’s traditional and living knowledge in all aspects of health<sup>29</sup>”.

Based on the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the Atikamekw Nation wishes to assert the rights of Indigenous people in matters of health and social services in Quebec and Canada. It is thus urgent to implement Joyce’s Principle without reservation and without delay. QNW therefore asks the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to examine this situation which must be addressed by Canadian authorities.

In fact, Coroner Gehane Kamel's report on the circumstances of Joyce Echaquan's death recommended that the Quebec government recognize “the existence of systemic racism within our institutions and make a commitment to help eliminate it [TRANSLATION]”<sup>30</sup>. Almost two years later, no significant action has been taken by the Quebec government despite the insistent demands of Aboriginal organizations and groups.

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<sup>28</sup> Espaces Autochtones, « Joyce Echaquan : « On va avoir la paix, elle est morte », aurait entendu une témoin », *Radio-Canada*, May 25, 2021, [Joyce Echaquan : « On va avoir la paix, elle est morte », aurait entendu une témoin | Dossier - Joyce Echaquan | Radio-Canada.ca](#), consulted January 25, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Joyce’s Principle, 2022, I Support Joyce’s Principle, consulted January 25, 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Bureau du coroner, « Décès de M<sup>me</sup> Joyce Echaquan - La coroner Géhane Kamel dépose son rapport d’enquête », *Gouvernement du Québec*, Octobre 1, 2021, [Décès de M<sup>me</sup> Joyce Echaquan - La coroner Géhane Kamel dépose son rapport d'enquête Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#), consulted January 25, 2023.

## **2.4 Youth protection**

Indigenous women often face problems with the discriminatory judicial system and are more likely to lose custody of their children, who then end up in the Quebec youth protection system. Children in the care of this system are mostly placed with non-Indigenous families, causing them to lose all ties to their families and culture. In 2014, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples raised the issue of over-representation of Indigenous people in child welfare and youth protection services, which is eight times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous Canadians<sup>31</sup>. According to the report, the reasons for this overrepresentation include colonial policies, colonial trauma, intergenerational violence, and disparities in funding and quality of child services for Indigenous children compared to non-Indigenous children<sup>32</sup>.

The overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the current state youth protection system demonstrates that it is clearly not adapted to their realities and needs. Currently, Quebec's youth protection system reproduces colonial and traumatic experiences such as residential schools, the disappearance of Indigenous children from the health and social services system and the “60s scoop”. This over-representation contributes to the perpetuation of prejudice against Indigenous women, who are seen as incapable of caring for themselves and their families.

As proposed by QNW in its brief to the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (Laurent Commission), jurisdiction over youth must be transferred to Indigenous people. They themselves must be able to decide on the fate of their own children: they are in the best position to identify the needs and associated solutions according to their culture.

## **2.5 Need for cultural safety**

As the events surrounding the tragic death of Ms. Joyce Echaquan have clearly illustrated, there is a significant need for cultural safety in all services, public and non-public, in communities and urban areas. This gap in service provision is even more present for people with disabilities, minors, youth, the elderly, etc. We do not need to revisit the history of Indigenous mistrust of services provided by non-Indigenous people to make the case for providing services that are tailored to

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<sup>31</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

them. The colonial system that does not provide an environment or even a sense of safety for Indigenous women and girls. In addition, the supply of services is generally very inadequate, making it even more complex to obtain culturally safe services in which Indigenous clients can truly feel confident.

The lack of cultural safety is present in all services, whether in the justice system, education, health and social services, or police and correctional services. Culturally safe services must be developed through collaboration and co-construction with Indigenous organizations and partners. The goal is to enrich service protocols and delivery to include Indigenous traditional knowledge and practices to improve the living conditions of Indigenous people. It is important to note that cultural safety principles cannot address the impacts of systemic racism and discrimination and that the problem remains structural and institutional.

In conclusion, QNW denounces the poor socio-economic living conditions of Indigenous women and girls, particularly with regard to issues related to gender-based violence and systemic and intersectional discrimination. These discriminations are found in the health care system and manifest themselves in the form of forced sterilizations and mistreatment, as Joyce Echaquan has experienced. This discrimination is also found in the social system, such as the child protection system. It is urgent that the State adapt its services to the realities and needs of Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women and girls.

### **3. Right to justice**

This section raises the various violations of the right to justice, including the right to equitable access and the issue of overrepresentation of Indigenous women and girls in the justice system.

#### **3.1 Equitable access to justice for Aboriginal women and girls**

Indigenous women and girls in Canada experience systemic racism and discrimination within the justice system, and this is as true in Quebec as it is in other Canadian provinces<sup>33</sup>. Among the many manifestations of this systemic racism and discrimination, we can cite the various obstacles women face when trying to access justice. We can notably mention the lack of information or financial

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<sup>33</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *supra* note 20, p. 105.

means, but also the mistrust of women towards the police and justice services. This has a direct impact on their human rights such as the right to life, integrity and security<sup>34</sup>.

There are many actions that need to be taken to promote equitable access to justice for Indigenous people, particularly for Indigenous women and girls. The latter are at least doubly discriminated against by the fact that they are both women and Indigenous. In this sense, Recommendation 39 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women states that :

“Access to justice for Indigenous women requires a multidisciplinary and holistic approach based on the understanding that it is linked to other human rights issues facing Indigenous women, including racism, racial discrimination and the effects of colonialism; sex and gender discrimination; discrimination based on socio-economic status; discrimination based on disability; barriers to accessing lands, territories and natural resources; lack of appropriate and relevant health and education services; and lack of access to justice; discrimination on the basis of socio-economic status; discrimination on the basis of disability; barriers to access to lands, territories and natural resources; lack of culturally appropriate and relevant health and education services; disruption and threats to spiritual life [TRANSLATION]<sup>35</sup>.

There is a need for safe legal services to be created by and for Indigenous people with an intersectional approach, particularly for Aboriginal women and girls. The various justice workers who work with Aboriginal women and girls must also be trained to provide such services.

Furthermore, QNW is of the opinion that there must be a constant follow-up of the recommendations and calls to action of the various commissions of inquiry, notably the NIMMIWG (National and Complementary Report), the Viens Commission, the Laurent Commission, the “Rapport du Comité d’experts sur l’accompagnement des victimes d’agressions sexuelles et de violence conjugale (Rebâtir la confiance)” [Report of the Committee of Experts on

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<sup>34</sup> Femmes Autochtones du Québec, « Dans le cadre du 39<sup>e</sup> Projet de recommandation générale sur les droits des femmes et des filles autochtones du Comité pour l’élimination de la discrimination à l’égard des femmes (CEDEF) », 28 janvier 2022, [https://faq-qnw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAQNW\\_consulté\\_le\\_26\\_janvier\\_2023](https://faq-qnw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAQNW_consulté_le_26_janvier_2023).

<sup>35</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 11, p. 11.



the Support of Victims of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (Rebuilding Confidence)], the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, etc.

Our organization demands that the government be transparent and accountable for its actions and that it implement concrete measures to ensure equitable access to justice for Indigenous women and girls.

### **3.2 Over-representation of Indigenous women and girls in the justice system**

Another manifestation of systemic racism and discrimination in the justice system is the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in the justice system and in prisons<sup>36</sup>. This problem has been recognized by Canada on several occasions and has already been identified by the Special Rapporteur in his 2014 report<sup>37</sup>. For example, although they represent only 4% of the Canadian population, Indigenous women make up 38% of the population in provincial and territorial institutions and 34% of the federal prison population<sup>38</sup>. It is important to note that Indigenous men represent 26% of the provincial and territorial prison population and 23% of the federal prison population respectively<sup>39</sup>, which further highlights the disproportionate presence of Indigenous women in this environment.

The issue of overrepresentation in the justice system is very present in Quebec<sup>40</sup>. In particular, the arrests of Indigenous women have been the subject of a recent study. It was shown that an Indigenous woman is 11 times more likely to be arrested than a non-Indigenous woman in Quebec<sup>41</sup>. QNW is also currently handling a complaint filed with the Commission des droits de la

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<sup>36</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 1, par. 6; also see United Nations, *supra* note 11, par. 32.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Department of Justice, “Spotlight on Gladue: Challenges, Experiences, and Possibilities in Canada’s Criminal Justice System, Statistical Overview on the Overrepresentation of Indigenous persons in the Canadian Correctional System and Legislative Reforms to Address the Problem”, Government of Canada, 2017, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/gladue/p2.html>, consulted January 9, 2023; also see: United Nations, *supra* note 16, par. 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> For more information, refer to the recent study in which QNW collaborated which illustrates that the number of Aboriginal women and girls in Quebec provincial prisons is greatly disproportionate to its population rate. Here is the link: <http://collective-healing.net/accueil.php>

<sup>41</sup> Victor Armony, Mariam Hassaoui et Massimiliano Mulone, « Les interpellations policières à la lumière des identités racisées des personnes interpellées, Analyse des données du Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) et élaboration d’indicateurs de suivi en matière de profilage racial », *Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la diversité et la démocratie*, 2019, consulted January 11, 2023.

personne et des droits de la jeunesse [Commission of human rights and youth rights] regarding the case of an overreaction that witnesses the presence of systemic discrimination within the police system. The case deals with the intervention of 17 police officers accompanied by the canine squad following a call to 9-1-1 for a case of psychological distress of an Inuk woman in Cabot Square, in Montreal, in May 2020.

There is an urgent need to address this problem, which impacts women's living conditions and prevents them from effectively seeking justice.

#### **4. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

The disappearances and murders of Indigenous women and girls in Canada are a national crisis, but also a human rights crisis that must be urgently addressed. While there are no precise figures for the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, it can be noted that Indigenous women and girls are 16 times more likely to be reported missing or murdered than non-Indigenous women<sup>42</sup>.

This phenomenon has been denounced by numerous indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations at the national, regional and international levels since 1990-2000<sup>43</sup>. Between 1996 and 2014, more than 29 official investigations and reports on this issue were made, resulting in over 500 recommendations for action<sup>44</sup>. Indigenous and non-indigenous organizations have repeatedly called for a national investigation, leading the Special Rapporteur to make this a recommendation in his 2014 report<sup>45</sup>. A national public survey was then set up in 2016, with the objective of deepening the understanding of the scope and systemic dimensions of this problem.

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<sup>42</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *supra* note 26, p. 60.

<sup>43</sup> See for instance (non-restrictive list): Native Women's Association of Canada, *supra* note 1; also see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015*; OAS *supra* note 1; also see United Nations, CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/7, 2008; United Nations, *supra* note 5; United Nations, *supra* note 1.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 34.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 37 and 89.

Thus, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls released its report in 2019, which includes 231 calls for justice to governments, institutions and civil society<sup>46</sup>. In addition, the NIMMIWG concluded in its supplementary report that the Canadian government is committing genocide against Indigenous peoples. It identifies the underlying and systemic causes of this violence and the phenomenon of disappearances and murders.

The socio-historical and institutional context of Quebec is different from that of the rest of Canada, but this does not mean that colonization and colonial policies did not affect Indigenous women and girls in Quebec in the same negative way. However, the phenomenon of disappearances and murders of Indigenous women and girls in Quebec is not well known, as this issue was initially attributed and documented more in the western Canadian provinces. To address this, QNW produced a report in 2015 entitled *Nānīawig Māmawe Nīnawind. Stand with Us. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Quebec*, giving voice for the first time to the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls<sup>47</sup>.

In Quebec, the Commission of Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has published a complementary report to the National Inquiry's final report, including a more detailed analysis of the realities of Indigenous women and girls in Quebec<sup>48</sup>. QNW also produced another report specifically on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in 2018<sup>49</sup>. In particular, the report denounces the systemic racism and discrimination faced by Aboriginal women and girls as being linked to colonialism and as the underlying cause of disappearances and murders.

Systemic discrimination against Indigenous women and girls is particularly prevalent within the justice and police forces, which often slows down the search. In particular, NIMMIWG reports on the attitude of police services when reporting a disappearance. Indeed, NIMMIWG's testimonies report the negative stereotypes associated with Indigenous women and girls that families must

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<sup>46</sup> Enquête nationale sur les femmes et les filles autochtones disparues et assassinées, *supra* note 26 aux p. 198-246.

<sup>47</sup> Femmes Autochtones du Québec, *Nānīawig Māmawe Nīnawind. Debout et solidaires. Femmes autochtones disparues ou assassinées au Québec*, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Enquête nationale sur les femmes et les filles autochtones disparues et assassinées, *supra* note 20.

<sup>49</sup> Femmes Autochtones du Québec, *KA UTSHINIKANAT UTINNIUNNUAU, Celles dont on a pris la vie*, 2018.

face. These include the stereotype that any missing or murdered Indigenous woman or girl deserved it, put herself in danger by living a high-risk lifestyle<sup>50</sup>, such as “party-girl” and “prostitute”<sup>51</sup>. These stereotypes inherited from colonization lead to systemic biases and result in judicial and police institutions not understanding the phenomenon of disappearances and murders, or even taking them seriously<sup>52</sup>. This contributes to poor investigations and thus to impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes and the risk of recidivism<sup>53</sup>.

This situation reinforces the feeling of mistrust of the service among Indigenous women and girls. Women will be less likely to report a disappearance, which again leads to impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes<sup>54</sup>.

Three years after the NIMMIWG report and despite the alarming context of large-scale disappearances and murders, our organization is of the opinion that the Canadian government is not acting with the due diligence needed to prevent, remedy, protect and repair the harm caused to Indigenous women and their families<sup>55</sup>.

It is also necessary to demand accountability from the Canadian state for its lack of concrete action. It is also urgent that Quebec recognize systemic racism and discrimination as causes of these disappearances and murders in order to consider an appropriate response to this phenomenon.

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<sup>50</sup> Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, *supra* note 26, p. 396.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 46, 113-114.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 791.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 189, 791; also see United Nations, *supra* note 43, par. 31.

<sup>55</sup> Radio-Canada, « ENFFADA : 2 ans plus tard, entre frustration, espoir et passage à l'action », *Radio-Canada*, 3 juin 2021, <https://ici.radiocanada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1797989/femmes-autochtones-bilan-faq-viviane-michel-moon-manitoba-shannonhoskie>, consulted January 2023; also see: Radio-Canada, « Femmes autochtones : bilan décevant, selon des organisations », *Radio-Canada*, August 19, 2021, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1817476/autochtone-enffada-enquete-femme-afacfaq-bilan-gouvernement>, consulted January 2023.

## **5. Right to self-determination**

This section presents issues regarding the respect of right to self-determination. The implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the context of registration and residual discrimination under the *Indian Act* as well as the right to the environment will be discussed.

### **5.1 Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was adopted in 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly after several years of Indigenous mobilization and negotiation. It is interesting to note that the discussions leading up to the drafting and adoption of this declaration already included the notions of self-determination, connection to territory and resources, consent, and combating racism and discrimination against Indigenous peoples. In addition to protecting specific rights for Indigenous peoples, UNDRIP reaffirms that the human rights of Indigenous peoples must be respected in the same way as those of non-Indigenous peoples.

Although Canada voted against the adoption of the UNDRIP, it changed its decision and approved the Declaration in 2010. In 2016, a private member's bill (*Bill C-262*) was introduced by Member of Parliament Roméo Saganash to ensure compliance with UNDRIP. This bill received broad support from Indigenous peoples in Canada. It was voted on by the House of Commons in 2018, but was blocked by the Senate in 2019.

On June 16, 2021 Canada finally passed *Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (AUNDRIP), which largely reflected the content of Bill C-262. The purpose of AUNDRIP is to confirm that the Declaration is a universal international human rights instrument applicable in Canadian law. It includes the obligation for Canada to develop, in consultation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples, and implement a plan of action to achieve the objectives of the *Declaration*.

QNW is currently working on the development of such an action plan. However, our organization is once again faced with the lack of time granted by the government to consult women. The principle of free, prior and informed consultation and consent of Indigenous peoples protected by UNDRIP cannot be respected under these conditions. For example, it was not possible to inform

Indigenous women and girls of the purpose of the consultation sufficiently in advance and thus get informed feedback on the measures to be included in the action plan.

Regarding the province of Quebec, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously passed a motion on October 8, 2019 that supports the principles of UNDRIP. However, this simple motion does not bring binding obligations to Quebec's public decision-makers. QNW therefore believes that it is essential that Quebec follow suit and adopt a binding law to integrate all of UNDRIP principles into its legislation, as requested by Indigenous peoples and the various commissions of inquiry in Quebec. La DDPA must be endorsed by Quebec to provide a legislative framework within which to address and resolve the issues identified in this submission.

## **5.2 Indian Act and Indigenous people registration**

Of the many statutes in Canada, the *Indian Act* (the Act) is one of the least conducive laws allowing for the least effective exercise of Indigenous self-government<sup>56</sup>, right protected in particular by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. In particular, this legislation still provides control and decides who is Aboriginal and who is not. As a result, many individuals are greatly impacted and do not have access to the services provided by their Band Councils<sup>57</sup>, who cannot access their ancestral territories, who cannot transmit their languages and cultures, etc.

However, it has an even more negative impact on Indigenous women and girls because one of its key features is that its provisions do not apply equally to men and women, despite its amendments to that effect<sup>58</sup>, adding a sexist dimension to the racist dimension of the law.

QNW was founded in 1974 by a group of Indigenous women who were seeking to have their rights to non-discrimination and equality respected. The gender-based discrimination that Indigenous women faced in relation to Section 6 of the *Indian Act* is still an issue today. Indigenous women

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<sup>56</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 39.

<sup>57</sup> It is important to note that the creation of Aboriginal communities (Band Councils) as we know them today is also imposed by colonial assimilation policies. This comment does not refer to the communities and the traditional governance model as they were organized and structured before colonization.

<sup>58</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 54 and 55. For a more complete history, including amendments to the Act, see Shelagh Day, « Equal Status for Indigenous Women — Sometime, Not Now: The Indian Act and Bill S-3 », 2018.

and their children still face many barriers to being registered under *The Act* and being able to fully exercise their identity rights.

Since the first legislative amendment in 1985 with *Bill C-31* and subsequent amendments to *Bill C-3* in 2010, concrete advances and registration procedures have not evolved at the pace needed and requested by Indigenous individuals and organizations. This means that despite several pieces of legislation enacted to amend the Act, none have addressed gender-based inequalities. Indeed, the decision of the UN Human Rights Committee in the case of *McIvor v. Canada*, CCPR/C/124/D/2020/2010, emphasizes that the Government of Canada has violated articles 3 and 26, read in conjunction with article 27 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*<sup>59</sup>.

Although Canada claims to have eliminated all traces of discrimination with *Bill S-3*, our organization can see the continuing impacts of the backlog in the registration process. As a result, Aboriginal women and their descendants cannot enjoy their right to non-discrimination. Their right to identity guaranteed by Articles 2, 8, 9 and 33 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and by the same token, the corresponding sections of *Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, are also not respected. There is no appreciable level of discrimination that a state can create through its assimilation laws.

In QNW's submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples (the Committee) regarding the impacts of *Bill S-3* in the spring of 2022<sup>60</sup>, Our organization interviewed several people affected by their non-registration. These people denounce the lack of information provided by the federal government concerning the new registration procedures of *Bill S-3*. They also criticize the slowness of the bureaucratic apparatus regarding the registration process as well as

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<sup>59</sup> United Nations, CCPR/C/124/DR/2020/2010, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Femmes Autochtones du Québec, Examen de la mise en œuvre de la Loi modifiant la Loi sur les Indiens pour donner suite à la décision de la Cour supérieure du Québec dans l'affaire Descheneaux c. Canada (Procureur général), [FAQNW Memoire-impacts-loi-S-3 Comite-permanent-questions-autochtones\\_fr.pdf \(faq-qnw.org\)](#).

the rigid procedure they must go through to prove their Indigenous ancestry. Finally, individuals testified to the inconsistency of the department's discussions and decisions.

The Committee's 2022 report concluded that the changes made by *Bill S-3* “have made narrow, technical amendments to the *Indian Act* in response to court decisions, rather than taking a broad approach to address all inequities in the registration provisions”<sup>61</sup>. The Committee's nine (9) recommendations are consistent with what Aboriginal organizations and groups have been calling for for many years<sup>62</sup>.

In parallel to the work of the Committee, the Secretary General of the United Nations transmitted to Canada a communication from CEDAW in response to communication no. 68/2014<sup>63</sup>. In the findings of the Committee it is stated that:

« [I]ndigenous peoples do have the fundamental right to be recognized as such, as a consequence of the fundamental self-identification criterion established in international law. Article 9 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by Canada, affirms that indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned<sup>64</sup>.

With respect to the 1985 cut-off year rule introduced in the S-3 amendments, CEDAW notes that “it perpetuates in practice the differential treatment of descendants of historically disenfranchised Aboriginal women”<sup>65</sup>.

Finally, in December 2022, the Government of Canada introduced *Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration fees)* in the House of Commons to address four (4) issues related to the residual inequities of registration under the Act. It responds to some of the demands of

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<sup>61</sup> Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, “Make It Stop! Ending the remaining discrimination in Indian registration”, Senate, 2022, [2020 Accessible Committee-Report template E.docx \(sencanada.ca\)](#), p. 6, consulted January 26, 2023.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-39.

<sup>63</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 59.

<sup>64</sup> United Nations, CEDAW/C/81/D/68/2014, 2014, par. 17.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 19.



Indigenous organizations and groups, but unfortunately ignores the concerns that Indigenous organizations and groups have been calling for since their struggles to eliminate gender-based discrimination. The Department plans to hold further consultations on this issue in the spring of 2023, but our organization remains skeptical about the Government of Canada's promises.

In conclusion, our organization demands that the Government of Canada adequately address the issue of gender-based discrimination which particularly affects Indigenous women and their descendants. Since the first legislative amendments in 1985, the impacts have continued to be perpetuated over time, without any form of compensation being given to those affected by the issue. CEDAW's Recommendation 39 recently addressed the issue of forced assimilation policies and recommended that states parties:

“... develop comprehensive policies to eliminate discrimination against Aboriginal women and girls, focusing on the effective participation of those living within and outside Indigenous territories, and to expand its collaboration with Indigenous peoples. These policies should include measures to address the intersectional discrimination faced by Indigenous women and girls [TRANSLATION] [...]”<sup>66</sup>.

For QNW, this recommendation clearly demonstrates that, to this day, the Government of Canada has not fulfilled its obligations to eliminate gender-based discrimination and that it is Indigenous women and girls who continue to experience the consequences.

It should also be recalled that Mr. James Anaya, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, had already recommended in his *Report on the Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada*, to eliminate all legal obstacles in the *Indian Act* that prevent the effective exercise of self-government<sup>67</sup>.

### **5.3 Right to the environment, lands, territories and resources**

The situation of climate change and environmental degradation is alarming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (hereafter IPCC) Report has warned that currently

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<sup>66</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 11, par. 9.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 5, par. 90.

vulnerable populations will suffer the most from the impacts of climate change<sup>68</sup>. Indigenous peoples, especially women, are among them. First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, although they represent only 6.2% of the world's population, are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change even though they protect 80% of the planet's biodiversity<sup>69</sup>.

Since they have the role of transmitting culture, traditional customs, medicine, language, etc., Indigenous women and girls are particularly affected by climate change. Cultural identity is therefore intimately linked to the conservation of the territory and its resources. It is also relevant to mention that women are often at the forefront of advocating for the right to a safe, healthy and sustainable environment and of action in this regard. Indigenous women who are also defenders of environmental human rights are also often victims of assault, murder, harassment and criminalization, and their efforts are constantly discredited<sup>70</sup>.

In Canada in particular, there is little respect for the right to self-determination with respect to the right to the environment and access to territories, lands and resources, particularly in the context of the *Indian Act*<sup>71</sup>. Indigenous peoples have few enforcement tools to protect the environment, and their knowledge and understanding of environmental law is insufficiently taken into account, which limits their access to essential resources and their power to act.

It is urgent to remedy this situation and to ensure respect for the right to self-determination, to take into consideration the principles of international environmental law, in particular the principle of prevention and precaution, and to recognize the knowledge and skills of Indigenous people, and in particular Indigenous women, with regard to responsibility and protection of their environment.

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<sup>68</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, « Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability », *IPCC*, 2022, [R6 Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability — IPCC, consulted January 31, 2023](#).

<sup>69</sup> FIMI, « CEDAW for Indigenous Women and Girls: Filling the gap for the path ahead », *FIMI*, 2019, [CEDAW for Indigenous Women and Girls: Filling the gap for the path ahead – FIMI – IIWF \(fimi-iiwf.org\)](#), consulted January 31, 2023.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations, *supra* note 11, par. 60.

<sup>71</sup> Amnistie internationale, « Urgence climatique en territoire innu - L'innu-aitun en péril », Amnistie internationale, 2022, [AICFR-Rapport Pessamit-17 11 22-web.pdf \(amnistie.ca\)](#), consulted January 31, 2022.

## **6. Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples invited to Quebec**

Following the many issues we have raised, QNW would like the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to pay particular attention to the presence of systemic racism and discrimination in Quebec. This issue is at the root of all the problems experienced by Aboriginal women and girls, as outlined above.

The Government of Canada already recognizes the presence of systemic racism and discrimination. Its support, coupled with pressure from the United Nations, would encourage Quebec to recognize systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women and girls. QNW also believes that studying this issue fits perfectly with the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, in terms of examining specific cases of violations of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Other organizations in Quebec are also making submissions in relation to this same issue such as the Atikamekw community of Manawan (Joyce's Principle Office) and Amnesty International. QNW is working with these organizations and we look forward to your visit in our province.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this document has presented the issues and concerns of Quebec Native Women. It is clear that not all issues have been explicitly demonstrated. The Quebec government's refusal to acknowledge the existence of systemic racism and discrimination against Aboriginal people is an impediment to effectively addressing it and finding concrete solutions. In our organization's view, this is the priority issue of the day.

Violations of economic, social and cultural rights as well as the right to justice for Indigenous women and girls in Quebec are of concern. In addition, the disappearances and murders of Indigenous women and girls still occur disproportionately, despite numerous recommendations, including those of the Special Rapporteur in 2014, and are a priority issue for our organization. Finally, despite being protected by international law, the right of Indigenous women to self-determination, is violated. This affects Indigenous women in Quebec and considerably undermines

their representation within institutions, their political participation, their leadership and their empowerment.

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