



NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

CULTURAL SAFETY: A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Wendake, December 5, 2024 — Regarding Bill 32, *An Act to establish the cultural safety approach within the health and social services network*, the First Nations organizations and governments believe that the bill will not fully guarantee the cultural safety of First Nations users of the health and social services network, despite all the solutions provided to the government to adequately address this.

It is with disappointment that the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan (CADM), Quebec Native Women (QNW), Joyce's Principle Office (JPO) and the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) are noting once again the lack of real and concrete involvement of First Nations. Furthermore, it is deplorable that the government didn't choose to do things differently : prior, free and informed consent in the context of Bill 32 was not respected. Despite their good faith participation in the process, the measures taken by the government in this bill fall far short of the objectives, particularly due to the absence of the full integration of Joyce's Principle in the final wording of the bill.

"The First Nations have the right to be consulted, and the current legislative processes have been lacking for too long. Safety is an inherent and intrinsic right. The Quebec government cannot legislate on us, without us. The need to immediately undertake an in-depth reflection with a view to agreeing on a First Nations-specific consultation process has become necessary and essential. I want to assure to the First Nations people that we will continue to do everything in our power to fully ensure the safety of all," said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

"The First Nations and Inuit are in the best position to define their health and social services needs. It is imperative that the Quebec government recognize, support and implement solutions developed by our governments, including those of primary importance defined in Joyce's Principle, to ensure safe care that respects our cultural identity," added Sipi Flamand, Chief of the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan.

Marjolaine Étienne, President of Quebec Native Women, also reacted: "It is regrettable that First Nations women and girls are particularly affected by a bill that is not culturally safe enough. We have rights that governments are required to respect, including those related to health and culture, as stipulated in General Recommendation No. 39 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A genuine co-construction process from the outset would have made it possible to integrate concrete recommendations into Bill 32."

"We cannot work as equals or on a nation-to-nation basis in the current context. Certainly, our voices were heard following Joyce's death, but since then, we have not been able to agree on the actions required to achieve real security for Indigenous people. Without a real and respectful desire to do things differently, the government will never be able to truly move forward," said Jennifer Petiquay-Dufresne, Executive Director of the Joyce's Principle Office.

"It is clear that the fundamental principle of co-construction remains abstract for the Quebec government. First Nations will continue their efforts to develop concrete actions, while promoting

their own definition of cultural safety to their partners and the public,” added Dereck Montour, President of the FNQLHSSC.

Finally, everyone is urging the Quebec government to respect the rights of First Nations and to assume the accountability it must demonstrate. The First Nations are reminding the Legault government to do better “together”; the safety of their populations depends on it.

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the political organization that brings together 43 Chiefs of the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador.

About the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan

The Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan (CDAM) is a local government that works in the interests of all the members of the Atikamekw community of Manawan while ensuring personal and identity development and promoting their wellness in a healthy environment that reflects their Atikamekw nehirowisiw culture and values.

About Quebec Native Women Inc.

The Quebec Native Women Inc. is a non-profit organization that has represented, for 50 years, First Nations women in Quebec as well as Indigenous women who live in urban areas.

About Joyce’s Principle Office

Joyce’s Principle Office, created following the tragic death of Ms. Joyce Echaquan in September 2020 at the Joliette hospital, aims to ensure the adoption of Joyce’s Principle by various bodies, including the Quebec government.

About the FNQLHSSC

The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission is a non-profit organization that supports Quebec First Nations in achieving their objectives in terms of health, wellness, culture, and self-determination.

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