



PRESS RELEASE
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QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN WELCOMES THE AUTHORIZATION OF A COLLECTIVE ACTION AGAINST THE CISSS DE LANAUDIÈRE CONCERNING THE FORCED STERILIZATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Kahnawake, February 20, 2025 – Quebec Native Women (QNW) welcomes the decision of the Court of Appeal of Quebec, which authorized the collective action for damages against *the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de Lanaudière* and the three doctors involved in the case of sterilizations without free and informed consent of Atikamekw women. This decision overturns part of the trial judgment and represents an essential step towards justice for the survivors and their families.

QNW is proud to have contributed to this cause by supporting Indigenous women affected by these unacceptable acts. For many years, our organization has denounced these colonial practices and their devastating impact on Indigenous women and communities. This ruling recognizes the importance of ensuring that victims have a voice and that institutions are held accountable for their actions.

A tragedy that has lasted for over 40 years

As early as 1982, a report published by the former Council of the Atikamekw and the Montagnais (Conseil des Atikamekw et des Montagnais) warned of cases of forced sterilization of Indigenous women and the absence of informed consent. Despite these warnings, the practice continued, demonstrating a serious failure of the authorities and the health system to respect the fundamental rights of Indigenous women.

A more recent report, led by Atikamekw researcher Suzy Basile, has revealed that these practices continued until 2019. According to this study, at least 22 Indigenous women in Quebec underwent forced sterilization between 1980 and 2019, often without being informed of the consequences of the procedure.

Marjolaine Étienne, President of Quebec Native Women, points out: “This ruling is a strong signal denouncing the injustices experienced by First Nations women. We cannot tolerate that these practices have existed for so long. It’s time for governments and institutions to assume their responsibilities and implement concrete measures to ensure that this never happens again. We will remain vigilant and stand in solidarity with the survivors in their quest for justice”.

A systemic problem of discrimination and racism

QNW points out that forced sterilization is part of a wider context of systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls. Such institutional violence, which deprives women of their fundamental right to dignity and bodily integrity, must stop immediately. In her judgment, the Honourable Christine Baudouin describes systemic racism as a “social fact that cannot reasonably be disputed”. For several years now, QNW has been fighting for systemic racism to be recognized at all levels of government. The organization invites all political decision-makers, especially those at the provincial level, to consult this judgment.

QNW will continue to follow this case with the utmost attention and to support the survivors and their families in their pursuit of justice. We call on the authorities to recognize the scale of this crisis and to take immediate action to ensure that such human rights violations never happen again.

About QNW

Quebec Native Women is a non-profit organization that has been representing First Nations women in Quebec as well as Indigenous women living in urban areas for 50 years.

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Source:

Quebec Native Women \ <https://faq-qnw.org/>

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