



## Press release

*For immediate release*

### **Faced with the striking increase of social problems in communities: First Nations act**

**Quebec City, Tuesday March 24, 2009** – The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission pursues its efforts to help the communities to rebuild their social fabric, which has been tattered by the effects of the governments' repeated assimilation policies. Therefore, two awareness tools have been launched March 24 in Quebec City, in presence of several health and social services interveners, Chiefs and former students of Indian residential schools: a vivid documentary about "The legacy of Quebec Indian residential schools" and a "Kit to prevent youth violence in First Nations".

The documentary on the Indian residential schools has been produced with the aim of encouraging reflection and discussions in First Nations communities, to better assist the preparation of the activities planned within the healing, truth, reconciliation and commemoration project: "We strongly wish that this documentary rises discussions and that it answers many questions that the younger ones have the right to ask in our communities. We also must inform the Québécois about this part of their history that has been hidden for too long", said the general director of the FNQLHSSC, Mrs. Guylaine Gill.

#### **The legacy of Indian residential schools: an important scar**

After their forced stay in the residential schools, many former students say they have transmitted to their children the pattern of addiction, negligence, mental illness and even sometimes violence. Many communities of Quebec find themselves destroyed by social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, sexual assault, incest, early pregnancies, etc. Given the alarming trend of youth violence, a problem that requires urgent and concrete actions of prevention, and upon the request of the communities' interveners, the FNQLHSSC has developed a prevention kit to increase the awareness of violence and encourage the adoption of positive attitudes and relationships. It contains information and videos that can act as a support to holding activities with the youths.

#### **The assimilation of native children: a persisting phenomenon**

In 1831, the first Indian residential school opens its doors in Brantford, Ontario.

In 1876, the federal government adopts the *Indian Act*: all the native children therefore fall under its guardianship.

In 1920, attending the residential school becomes obligatory for Natives aged from 6 to 15. Everywhere in Canada, about 100 000 children are taken away from their families, along with a goal of assimilation.

In July 2007, Quebec adopts the Bill 125, which modifies the rules concerning the placement of children in the *Youth Protection Act* by imposing a time limit to the duration of temporary placements. Because they are deprived of adequate measures of direct assistance to which the others Québécois are entitled, the First Nations children are henceforth placed more rapidly and in a greater number outside of their community. In 2007, they were about 8 times more placed than Québécois children and the difference tended to increase.

The children of the First Nations of Québec are locked into a system where, first, on behalf of their security and well-being, and on behalf of equal treatment for all the children of Québec, they are withdrawn in a greater number from their family and from their cultural environment; while on the other hand, their parents and family are denied the support they deserve, but this time, under the pretext of meeting the standards of funding defined by the federal, which must be applied uniformly in all provinces.

“The assimilation process has lasted long enough; the governments must meet their obligations. They must respect us as First Nations and make every effort so that we can protect and educate our own children in a healthy and stimulating milieu”, added the chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Mr. Ghislain Picard.

#### **About the AFNQL**

The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador is the regional organization representing the Chiefs of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador.

#### **About the FNQLHSSC**

The role of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission is to assist the First Nations and Inuit communities and organizations in the defense, the maintenance and the exercise of inherent rights in the area of health and social services, and also to help them to realize and to develop these programs.

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