



GENERAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

A REGIONAL EDUCATION AGREEMENT

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, federal minister of Indigenous Services, sat down with the FNEC Chiefs Committee on April 4 to discuss the upcoming regional education agreement based on the real needs of First Nations communities, including the steps needed to reach an agreement in principle.

On April 7, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, federal finance minister delivered the 2022 budget, making a commitment to [*move forward on reconciliation...*] with First Nations. Budget 2022 proposes to invest an additional \$310.6 million over five years to support better student outcomes through a regional education agreement with the First Nations Education Council on behalf of the organization's 22 member communities in Quebec.

The Cain Lamarre law firm was mandated through a chiefs' resolution to negotiate a regional K-12 education agreement alongside the FNEC. The proposed agreement will ensure independent community self-government, and adequate and equitable funding based on the formula developed by the FNEC and tested by participating communities. Formula component methodology and outcomes received general assembly approval with complete transparency in compliance with FNEC governance.

The Chiefs Committee and the FNEC are planning to hold an official signing ceremony in Kahnawà:ke with Minister Hajdu in mid-July. Member community chiefs will be invited to attend this important milestone in the takeover of education by and for First Nations. Since children are at the heart of this agreement, we would like each grand chief or chief to be accompanied by an elementary or secondary student from their community. FNEC staff are working closely with the minister's office to coordinate this memorable and historic event.

BILL 96

After several changes to the initial draft, especially to articles concerning college instruction, clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 96 modifying provincial language laws was concluded by the Quebec National Assembly's Committee on Culture and Education on April 14.

Amendments to Chapter VIII.1 of the Charter aim to frenchify college instruction, requiring students enrolled in English-language programs to take three additional French courses, and cap full-time student enrolment in subsidized English-language colleges and CEGEPs and unsubsidized private English-language colleges.

These changes to post-secondary education language policy could considerably affect the pending accreditation and mission of Kiuna Institution, the only First Nations post-secondary institution in Quebec, along with the college's students and staff.

Last fall, the FNEC participated in drafting a position paper containing five proposed amendments and ten recommendations that was submitted before a parliamentary committee by Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador Chief, Ghislain Picard, and Gesgapegiag Chief and Chief Responsible for Education, John Martin.

The Minister Responsible for the French Language, Simon Jolin-Barrette, tabled Bill 96 and rejected all the AFNQL's recommendations, including granting First Nations college students an exemption from language requirements. During the March 16 parliamentary debates, the minister said priority should be given to the French language, and that First Nations needed to be involved in Quebec society. He also said this kind of exemption would only exclude them from Quebec society.

Minister Jolin-Barrette has recently reiterated his disagreement with the AFNQL's recommendations in a letter to Chief Ghislain Picard and in a virtual meeting with the Regional Chief and two representatives from the AFNQL Chiefs' Assembly.

The final proposed amendment in the AFNQL's position paper, giving professionals living in Quebec and practicing their profession in First Nations communities an exemption from the Charter, was submitted during the report stage and rejected by MNAs.

Bill 96 was adopted by members of the National Assembly on May 24, and enacted on June 1 becoming *An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec*.

KITCISAKIK AND HYDRO-QUÉBEC LAUNCH THE ANIMIKI ICKOTE PROJECT

Chief Régis Pénosway of the Conseil des Anicinapek de Kitcisakik, Sophie Brochu, President and CEO of Hydro-Québec, Ian Lafrenière, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs, Chief Ghislain Picard of the Assembly of First Nations Québec-Labrador, and Pierre Dufour, Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Parks shared in announcing the Kitcisakik electrification project at a press conference held in Val-d'Or on May 3.

The project aims to connect the community to Hydro-Québec's power grid by 2025. A reliable power supply is a basic need and essential for community development. This project will directly impact services provided to students in the community, and will contribute to fulfilling the FNEC's mission. Phase one is set to begin in the community's current location along the Dozois reservoir.

BARBARA GRAVEL LEAVING THE FNEC



The FNEC wishes to inform you that Ms. Barbara Gravel has stepped down from her position as Director of Data Governance Services on April 13, 2022.

After 18 years at the service of our member schools and communities, Barbara felt it was time to look for new professional challenges. We want to pay tribute to her dedication to the FNEC mission, her contributions over the years are many, but we especially want to emphasize her hard work these past few years in negotiating the Education Regional Agreement. We wish her success in her new endeavour.

INDIGENOUS STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE

A special meeting of the provincial Indigenous Student Success Committee was held on April 7 to look at highly important issues affecting students like Bill 96 and credit recognition.

The certification of studies branch of Quebec's Ministry of Education issued two sanctions (Info-Sanction 21-22-12 and 21-22-13) suspending the practice of recognizing a lower-level course upon successful completion of a higher-level course (e.g., crediting Secondary IV English Language Arts if students successfully complete Secondary V ELA). This practice had been used for years to address exceptional situations including small class sizes or limited number of teaching staff.

The FNEC has been working with education partners for months to overturn this regulation affecting a limited number of students, and creating unnecessary hurdles to the success of our students that can result in increased social isolation and marginalization and premature school dropouts.

The FNEC is planning on meeting with Minister of Education, Jean-François Roberge, and Assistant Deputy Minister for the Anglophone Education Network and Intercultural and Indigenous Relations, Marie-Josée Blais to include credit recognition in her recently announced renewal of the moratorium on education level recognition for students enrolled in vocational training or adult education programs. The FNEC is also recommending that a subcommittee of the Indigenous Student Success Committee be created to study the issue and find sustainable and equitable solutions for the recognition of credits, grades, and diplomas obtained in FNEC member community schools.