



**PRESS RELEASE
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Quebec Education Minister's Priorities: Bernard Drainville must intervene to decolonize education laws that undermine First Nations autonomy

Wendake, January 31, 2023 – On the occasion of the return to Parliament, the First Nations Education Council (FNEC) Chiefs Committee reacted coldly to the seven priorities that will guide the Minister of Education, Bernard Drainville, during the current mandate.

“In his priorities, we would have liked to see Minister Drainville commit to integrating an eighth priority to eradicate once and for all every systemic barrier in the education system. Institutional barriers are detrimental to the educational success of First Nations students. To do so, the minister must decolonize certain laws and regulations, a step which is crucial to guaranteeing the educational success of students in those communities,” says Adrienne Jérôme, Chief of the Lac-Simon community and member of the FNEC Chiefs Committee.

However, measures intended to enact swift action to address education workforce issues and to provide backup for teachers bode well. A concrete example of one of the FNEC's successful initiatives is the creation of the first Indigenous Peoples university centre of excellence, which aims to respond to training needs and establish a university teaching model specific to First Nations. Another includes the development and implementation of teacher assistant training for First Nations communities in Quebec.

The Minister of Education says he wants to make the network not only more effective, but also more efficient and more accountable by improving data collection and sharing. “It is, however, worrying that his department does not have a clear picture of its own network's current situation other than partial data from English-language school service centres and school boards. The Ministry of Education clearly does not collect or have any data on First Nations students. Our organization has the expertise needed in this area and we invite the minister to consult with us,” says John Martin, Chief of the Gesgapegiag Community and member of the FNEC Chiefs Committee.

According to Denis Gros-Louis, Director General of the First Nations Education Council, “Weak collaboration on the development of Indigenous educational content in the new Culture and Citizenship in Quebec course and the adoption of Bill 14 are clearly the results of a lack of consideration of First Nations in educational matters.”

About the FNEC Chiefs Committee

The Chiefs Committee is composed of volunteer chiefs who are part of the FNEC Extraordinary General Assembly. The committee advises the FNEC and leaders of the member communities on education policy issues. With support from the FNEC, it develops political strategy, represents the interests of all member communities and ensures that leaders are kept informed of progress and negotiations.

About the FNEC

The FNEC is an organization that has been working for more than 35 years towards the recognition of the First Nations right to exercise full control over their education, equipped with the necessary resources that are designed and managed based on their values and cultures. For more information, visit the FNEC website at www.cepn-fnec.com.

Source:

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