



Open Letter

To: Journalists

Date: September 3, 2025

Subject: Collective Open letter from Tshakapesh Institute, Quebec English School Board Association and the First Nations Education Council concerning the critical situation in education

First Nations and Inuit students: the ones left behind in education

Following the incredible mobilization of actors in the Quebec education sector, the government announced a reinvestment of over 540 million dollars. However, First Nations and Inuit students have been left behind at the beginning of this new school year, plunged into a climate of uncertainty and precariousness.

The budgetary measure dedicated exclusively to supporting First Nations and Inuit students in the provincial education network has been suspended since December 2024. This brutal withdrawal has created an alarming gap in services destined for First Nations and Inuit youth.

First Nations and Inuit students attending the provincial school network are suffering a dual injustice that has significant consequences on the services provided to them and, ultimately, on their educational success. While they face the same challenges as all Quebec students, they are directly affected by the December 2024 suspension of the budgetary measures that were meant specifically for them. This dynamic impedes the efforts of Call to Action 11 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which aims to make indigenous educational success a priority.

These amounts allowed schools and school service centres to offer essential services to First Nations and Inuit: cultural support, psychosocial support and adapted educational interventions, elements essential to their educational success. They were a real and concrete driver of reconciliation.

Today, job cuts and the end of crucial educational activities lead to a loss of bearings throughout the province for young people who are already vulnerable. School principals, teachers and professionals are expressing their confusion, their impotence and, most of all, their feeling of abandonment.

Since 2006, the Round Table on the Educational Success of First Nations and Inuit Students has enabled the Minister of Education to become aware of the realities experienced by indigenous students and to work with their representatives to find adapted solutions. However, its unilateral suspension by the Minister of Education in 2024 has deprived the government of a vital space for dialogue. Without this forum, the Minister could not quickly grasp the extent of the impacts caused by the suspension of measure 15061 or take the necessary corrective measures.

The Auditor General confirmed this observation in a scathing report filed in November 2024: it condemned the Minister of Education's inaction, affirming that it contributes to erecting additional barriers to the perseverance and success of First Nations and Inuit students. The data speak for themselves: Quebec has the highest rate of First Nations without a certificate or degree and has had the slowest progress in the country.

That is why it is imperative that the Minister meet with First Nations and Inuit experts who are members of the Table. Although Measure 15061 was reinstated for the 2025–2026 school year, the MEQ budgetary rules still allow school boards to reduce its funding by up to 20%. Additionally, positions funded through this measure count toward a school board's Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) cap set by the Ministry. Including these positions in the cap creates a significant risk that roles providing direct support to Indigenous students and initiatives advancing reconciliation could be eliminated. This is a major setback for First Nations students, who are already suffering the effects of a provincial education system that deviates from their needs. Their success cannot be relegated to the background.

Consequently, we propose reviewing the funding measure with the Minister. Several specialists believe that this measure could truly meet the needs of First Nations and Inuit students. To this end, they have identified restrictive provisions and observed an overly centralized implementation by the Minister and wish to offer innovative pathways that will take into account distinct regional realities. A genuine consultation with members of the Round Table on the Educational Success of First Nations and Inuit Students would make it possible to find ways to make this measure efficient.

Education is not an unjustified expense: it is a structural investment in the society that we hope to create together. It is a driver for social, cultural and economic change. It gives the youth of today and tomorrow tools for personal growth, to build their future and continue the essential work of reappropriating their rights, their languages and their history.

Thanks to multi-year federal funding, First Nations schools in First Nations Education Council member communities operate autonomously, independent from the provincial education network. This full control of education model has proven its worth, and the benefits are undeniable: creation and retention of hundreds of jobs, major investments in language and culture, significant increase in the school attendance rate and overall strengthening of the capacity of Indigenous education systems. These results demonstrate that with appropriate resources, the Table's various member organizations have the expertise that the Minister needs.

We demand that Measure 15061 be fully protected from reductions and that all positions funded through this measure be exempted from the FTE calculation and cap. These positions are vital to ensuring continuity, supporting student success, fostering culturally inclusive school environments, and advancing reconciliation in close consultation with the Table members. This is an essential condition to guarantee equal access to quality education for every student, regardless of their origin.

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