



Secrétariat
de l'Assemblée des
Premières Nations
du Québec
et du Labrador

Secretariat of the
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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The First Nations insist on co-managing the natural resources
« Quebec Cannot Ignore our Rights »
- Ghislain Picard -

Quebec City, October 22, 2008 – The Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, Ghislain Picard, accompanied by a dozen of Fellow Chiefs, issued a warning to the government of Quebec: “there cannot be any development without the participation of the First Nations that have never transferred their rights and titles, as well as those which have treaty rights”.

He made this statement before a Parliamentary Commission on the renewal of the forest regime. “Quebec is celebrating its 400th anniversary; we are celebrating 10,000 years of presence”, reminded Chief Picard, emphasizing that the First Nations of Quebec have never relinquished their rights on the territory. “Unlike other regions of Canada, here, there was no signing of treaties, there was no transfer of rights and there was no relinquishment of our titles and rights. Therefore, the whole of the Quebec territory has always been affected by ancestral rights of the First Nations. The government of Quebec cannot ignore these rights”, stated the Chief of the AFNQL, thus reacting to the recent announcement of the Plan Nord, by the Premier of Quebec.

The Chiefs each came in turn to submit questions to the members of the commission, and they emphasized their desire to see the government of Quebec adopt an entirely new attitude towards relations with the First Nations. The First Nations demand a cohabitation of the territory that is respectful of their rights, and which necessarily goes through a co-management of the natural resources.

Out of the state of dependency

To the Chief of the AFNQL, this urgent call for the recognition of their rights is closely linked to the socioeconomic stakes of the First Nations. “The debate on the rights is not a hypothetical or legal question; it’s a matter of survival. The governments of Canada and Quebec want to maintain the First Nations in a state of dependency and then occupy their territory. In 2008, is it possible to get out of the XVIIth century and put an end to colonialism?”, concluded Ghislain Picard.

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

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