



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

Secretariat of the  
Assembly of the  
First Nations  
of Quebec  
and Labrador

250, Place Chef Michel Laveau, suite 201, Wendake, QC G0A 4V0  
Tél.: (418) 842-5020 / 842-5274 FAX: 842-2660

PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **The Romaine Project is located in the Heart of Innu Territory This territory is encumbered by Aboriginal and Ancestral Rights**

*Wendake, May13, 2009* – With today's announcement of the launching of the Romaine Hydro-Electric Development Project, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) desires to point out that this project is located in the heart of Innu Territory. "This territory continues to bear Aboriginal title and Ancestral rights" stated Ghislain Picard, AFNQL Chief. Consequently neither Hydro-Quebec nor the government can claim clear and exclusive possession to the territory on which the Romaine Hydro-Electric Development Project is to be pursued.

The AFNQL Chief also sought to clarify that the agreements worked out between Hydro-Quebec and some Innu communities are administrative agreements and cannot in any way be construed to imply the subjection of Innu rights to provincial jurisdiction. "The Innu retain clear title to these territories, which to date has not yet been fully recognized. To interpret the situation in any other manner would be an unacceptable denial of these rights and would force us to take action to protect the full enjoyment of our rights" declared Chief Ghislain Picard.

The Innu communities of the North Shore and Lac St-Jean have been engaged in territorial negotiations since 1979; even if no Treaty has yet been signed, these rights still exist. "Aside from the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, no Nation has signed any agreement extinguishing its rights to Aboriginal lands in the Province of Quebec, which means that Innu ancestral rights, like all other First Nations rights, remain in force and are opposable to Crown title" explained Ghislain Picard.

## **Northern Plan**

While the Romaine River Project is one element in Jean Charest's "Northern Plan", Chief Ghislain Picard pointed out that the First Nations were not consulted nor did the Premier ever clarify his intention to ensure First Nations involvement in the project. "What does Mr. Charest mean when he refers to First Nations involvement? How does he intend to recognize our rights to the territories and the resources?" asked Mr. Picard.

The First Nations do not wish to be merely involved in the development of Northern Quebec. They demand co-management of the territory and sharing of the income generated by resource exploitation. "There can be no question of First Nations involvement in any project without full consideration of our Aboriginal title, rights, interests and aspirations" stated Chief Picard.

It must be remembered that on November 27, 2008, the AFNQL Assembly of Chiefs adopted a Declaration regarding a Sovereignty Affirmation Process, which is to be shortly completed by a concrete action plan to reinforce the jurisdiction of First Nations governments. "As distinct Nations and peoples, we possess the right to self-determination, including the inherent right to self-government. We are firmly resolved to exercise these rights and to embark on a new government to government relationship with the governments of Quebec and Canada, clarified Mr. Picard. The Premier should take note and avoid creating unnecessary tension by seeking to minimize our rights to the territories referenced in the Northern Plan."

**The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador is a regional organization that includes the First Nations Chiefs of Quebec and Labrador.**

SOURCE: Alain Garon  
AFNQL Communications Officer  
418 842-5020  
418-956-5720