

## **Indian Residential Schools, Volume 2: The Perverse Effects of Bill 125**

We, the Chiefs of the First Nations of Quebec, would like to speak to the population of Quebec today regarding what we believe to be the most serious problem that we have been subjected to since the sad “Indian Residential Schools” episode. It is well known that the objective was to make our Nations disappear as quickly as possible by « killing the Indian in the child »! This is what is known as ethnocide. We are still, even today, confronted with new government measures that will have effects that risk being just as disastrous for our First Nations.

In fact, a new clause under the Youth Protection Act ensures that, as of July 9, 2008, a child of less than two years of age who has been placed for a year outside of his/her family can now be the object of a permanent life placement and be placed until the age of majority. Each First Nations child subjected to this measure will be taken away in a permanent fashion from his/her natural family, community and roots - if a First Nations foster home or institution cannot be found in the community. Therefore, because of the lack of means caused by insufficient investments, local services such as group homes are virtually non-existent in the First Nations communities. This situation has been underlined and denounced countless times in the past, and yet nothing has been done.

In a memoire that focuses on the aforementioned bill (Bill 125), the *Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse du Québec (CDPDJ)* reported their concerns regarding the application of these rules in Aboriginal communities as well as the projected time limits for the placements and the lack of available placement resources. In a previous report (2003), the CDPDJ had already shared their concerns regarding the protection services that were being provided to Algonquin children and the infringement of their right to receive adequate and continuous social services.

Moreover, a few weeks ago, the Auditor General of Canada also denounced the underfunding of support services for First Nations families and children.

We are therefore unable to meet the demands of the current Act because we do not have access to appropriate services. It is important to note that Quebec allocated \$15 M in their 2008-2009 budget, however these funds are inaccessible in the non-agreement communities. Once again our children and parents rights to receive adequate and continuous social services are being infringed.

For over a year, we have carried out, in vein, supported efforts among the highest levels of authority in the hopes that the Government of Quebec would decree a moratorium in the application of permanent life placements among the First Nations. A request for an investigation has even been recently submitted to the *Commission des droits de la personne du Québec*.

Jean Charest's government still does not agree to a moratorium on the permanent placement provisions. Proceeding with the application without consideration from the government for this aspect of the Act, from our perspective, constitutes a very serious injustice which brings back memories of the past for which Prime Minister Harper has just apologized for.

The assimilation policies and negligence on behalf of the governments in the development process of our communities have lead to disastrous results that translate to a disproportionate amount of First Nations child placements into the Quebec system at a rate that is 8 times higher than for Quebec! Experiences over the past decades have clearly demonstrated that removing First Nations children from their environment is not a solution.

We are not arguing against the necessity and obligation to implement efficient ways to protect children who, in many cases, must be removed from their immediate families for periods of time that can be substantial, but we are firmly opposed to the ordering of permanent life placements - and this, for as long as we do not have the resources required to implement them in our environment. It is imperative that we be able to take care of our own children.

Is the continued suppression and extinguishment of our people acceptable to Quebec society? We denounce this situation in hopes that Quebec society, and their institutions who value their uniqueness, language and culture will join us in ending such detrimental policy towards our people.

Your opinions are valuable and can be expressed at this email address ([ccleary@csspnl.com](mailto:ccleary@csspnl.com)) or by fax at (418) 842-7045.