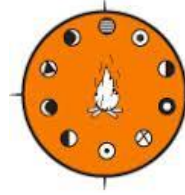




BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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Assemblée des  
Premières Nations  
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## **News Release**

**For Immediate Release**

October 1, 2020

### **Regional Chief Teegee and Regional Chief Picard Demand Independent Inquiry into Racism in Quebec's Healthcare System**

*(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – October 1st, 2020)* - Regional Chief Terry Teegee (BCAFN) and Regional Chief Ghislain Picard (AFNQL) are offering their sincerest condolences to the family of Joyce Echaquan, a 37-year-old Atikamekw woman and mother of 7, who died Monday at Joliette hospital. The horrifying circumstances surrounding Echaquan's death are rife with racism, including derogatory remarks from hospital staff and potential neglect to treat her, despite her screams for help, all captured on video.

This is yet another example of the rampant anti-Indigenous racism that permeates society and public services, contributing to poor outcomes and in some instances, fatalities for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Regional Chief Teegee and Regional Chief Picard echo Grand Chief Constant Awashish of the Council of the Atikamekw Nation (CNA) in demanding a public independent inquiry into Ms. Echaquan's death, that a First Nations member be involved in the said inquiry to ensure the transparency of its results (since it is something that Quebec did not do regarding its yet to see fight against racism actions) and that Quebec expedite its implementation of the Viens Commission's recommendations to eliminate systemic racism in the province's public service providers.

"Earlier this year, we learned of racist games being played in hospitals in BC. In response, the Ministry of Health appointed Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond to investigate anti-Indigenous systemic racism in BC's healthcare system and how it affects delivery of care to our First Nations citizens," said Regional Chief Teegee. "It is clear that a mirror investigation in Quebec's healthcare system is desperately needed. Regardless of the outcome of the investigation into Joyce Echaquan's death, we know that she was not surrounded by compassionate people as she passed."

"Quebec needs to stop dragging its feet on implementing the recommendations of the Viens Commission. First Nations people in Quebec are subject to unnecessary cruelties; which often discourages people from seeking the services and care they need to survive or improve their quality of life. I cannot think of a worse time to be deterred from accessing healthcare than during a global pandemic. Quebec can and must do better by its Indigenous Peoples," stated Regional Chief Picard.

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