

# THE ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMUNICATION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION TO THE FAMILIES OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN WHO WENT MISSING OR DIED AFTER BEING ADMITTED TO AN INSTITUTION

SECRETARIAT AUX AFFAIRES AUTOCHTONES



2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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OF PERSONAL INFORMATION TO THE FAMILIES OF INDIGENOUS  
CHILDREN WHO WENT MISSING OR DIED AFTER BEING  
ADMITTED TO AN INSTITUTION**

**SECRÉTARIAT AUX AFFAIRES AUTOCHTONES**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS



It is with considerable humbleness that we present the first report on the administration of the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution*, which came into force on September 1, 2021. Much remains to be done but I am very proud of this initial effort.

While this first report only covers the period from September 1, 2021 to February 28, 2022, readers will note that the efforts of the entire array of interveners responsible for carrying out the Act has been significant. I am indeed satisfied with what has been achieved and am confident that our initiatives will continue to advance rapidly for the benefit of the bereaved families.

The coming into force of the Act has led to the establishment of a team comprising three mainstays, i.e., the Direction de soutien aux familles in the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, Anne Panasuk, the special family support advisor, and the Association des familles Awacak. Together, they offer unparalleled expertise on which the families can rely.

The Direction de soutien aux familles has a mandate to support the families affected by ensuring the full administration of the Act. This marks the first initiative of its kind in Québec. It has, in a brief time, mobilized the entire array of expertise, tools, partnerships, and institutional or other collaboration necessary to administer the Act, thereby laying the foundation of tailor-made assistance for families in the coming years.

Drawing on her journalistic research among Innu families on the Côte-Nord and Atikamekw families, Anne Panasuk inspires trust in the communities. Her presence enables her to inform families about the Act and ensure proper coordination of the committee responsible for monitoring its administration.

The Association des familles Awacak, made up of Indigenous families bereaved by death or disappearance of a child, is playing a key role in supporting the families. The organization and its representatives offer the loved ones of children who have died or gone missing a reassuring place for sharing that is respectful and adapted to their needs, which is just as essential as legislative initiatives.

Lastly, I would like to warmly thank the members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act and my colleagues, Opposition MNAs, who are monitoring the deliberations. The committee's analyses and recommendations will be essential to pursue our efforts.

Of course, I will end by saying *Tshinashkumitnau, Welaliog, Qujannamiik, Nakurmiik, Chiniskomiitin, Niá : wen, Meegwetch, Mikwetc, Woliwon* to the families for their strength and trust in this process which, we hope, will mark an additional step toward better relations between our peoples.

**Ian Lafrenière**

# MESSAGE FROM THE SPECIAL FAMILY SUPPORT ADVISOR



On June 8, 2021, my status changed, and, above all, I experienced a change in thinking.

Having denounced in my televised news reporting, podcasts, and a book the fate of the families of children who went missing, I have become part of the solution. The transition from an investigative journalist to a special advisor to Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs Ian Lafrenière for the administration of Bill 79 has been a balm for the soul.

The Act, long awaited by the First Nations, is a step toward a solution, i.e., the search for truth. The families are entitled to know what happened to their children who went missing after a medical evacuation. This is the first gesture of respect to bring peace to the families, which the new Act facilitates. We are still taking our first steps but know the path to follow. I am confident that, with the family support team and the Association Awacak, we can meet the challenge of trust, with the assistance of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act.

**Anne Panasuk**

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTION DE SOUTIEN AUX FAMILLES



Nearly six months ago, the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution* came into force to support families in their research.

From the outset, the Direction de soutien aux familles has sought to build, piece by piece, the elements necessary to support the families. To ensure the administration of the Act from the standpoint of the families but also the special advisor and the Association des familles Awacak, we have had the good fortune to work with dedicated, sensitive, professional individuals united in the fulfillment of an important mandate.

The essential mobilization of and collaboration by the institutions targeted are the cornerstones of our mission. We would like to thank the establishments, government departments, and organizations with which we have worked since September 1. Your contributions and creativity in the search for solutions are essential to effectively support the families in a spirit of respect and with dignity.

In recent months, we have also been able to rely on the dedication of collaborators wishing to offer their expertise to the families and to our department. Researchers, physicians, archivists, and historians have all displayed a shared desire to contribute to the families' healing.

This initial report humbly reports on the developments made possible through these indispensable interveners.

To each of the families that gives the Act its meaning: our team undertakes to pursue its efforts rigorously and with sensitivity. We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has agreed to share with us part of their story and will continue to welcome your stories and support you in your quest for truth.

## **Patrick Lahaie**

Associate Secretary General  
for Indigenous Affairs

## **Julie Martel**

Acting Director of Family Support

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE ASSOCIATION DES FAMILLES AWACAK – PETITS ÊTRES DE LUMIÈRE



On March 24, 2021, on the eve of the adoption of Bill 79, the Awacak organization was born. Awacak was established by and for the members of the families of the Indigenous nations whose children went missing or died after being admitted to a health and social services institution. Awacak means “little beings of light” in the Atikamekw language.

Awacak's mission is to represent the families in the difficult search for truth concerning the causes and circumstances surrounding the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous children. Awacak is participating in this search for truth in keeping with its values, i.e., integrity, fairness, transparency, and respect. The composition of our team fosters respect for different Indigenous customs and the establishment of bonds with the communities affected by the disappearance and death of Indigenous children. The members of the Board of Directors and the employees of Awacak are drawn from different Indigenous nations.

Several members of our team searched for a child who went missing or died before the new legislation was adopted. Awacak embodies the suffering stemming from the loss of a child and the recollection of all the obstacles to the search for truth that preceded the adoption of the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution*. Awacak is indeed pleased to have collaborated closely with the special advisor, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act. We are moving from the shadow of distrust toward the light of trust.

**Françoise Ruperthouse**





# MESSAGE FROM RICHARD KISTABISH ON BEHALF OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE CARRYING OUT OF THE ACT



When we undertake to seek the truth, we will make astonishing, shocking discoveries but will also experience cherished moments. We finally discover our recollections in the wake of our suffering.

It is our hidden history. It is our recent and distant past. We are beginning to understand what happened to us. Why? That is the question that we ask ourselves and will ask ourselves.

This is the question that pursues me (us) since I (we) became aware of my (our) situation. I want to know! I detest non-knowledge! Through our efforts, I hope to get some kind of answer and some kind of explanation. This process will be very long and arduous and obstacles will arise along the way.

Certain obstacles will stem from administrative rules, a lack of collaboration, and deaf "ears." In short, it is the "culture" of government agencies toward the "Indians." Since the beginning of colonization, we (the Indians) were supposed to disappear. We were excluded from Canadian society. This is the "culture" that was established in the country.

The obstacles were established to prevent us from knowing and having knowledge.

It is not surprising that we are mistrustful. We are afraid. We are afraid to put our lives in the hands of government institutions. And JOYCE cleared the air!

Confidentiality is another obstacle. It is twofold. Yes, it protects individual privacy. It is also our understanding that it is a way of hiding certain government wrong-doing. We suspect crimes! Books and the reports of various commissions have revealed it.

Our history of our communities is another discovery, along with those who have profited from our economic and cultural situation, our languages, and our spirituality. Such reading must benefit our communities and our society in general.

This report is only a very modest beginning. The other stages will be more significant and worthwhile. We are proceeding toward a fascinating portrait of the discoveries that we will make.

**Nin Ejinagosi (Richard Kistabish)**



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# I. THE COMING INTO FORCE OF THE ACT

## Historic overview of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution

The establishment of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG) was announced on August 3, 2016. The National Inquiry had a mandate to “look into and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including sexual violence.”

In the context of its deliberations, several families testified in Québec on children who died or went missing in circumstances unknown to their families after being evacuated from the community for medical reasons or, more broadly, after being admitted to a health and social services institution.

The testimony revealed, by way of an example, that six Atikamekw babies evacuated for medical reasons between 1950 and 1960 went missing. In 1973, another Atikamekw newborn was evacuated to a hospital to be treated for pneumonia. His parents were informed one month later of his death. Other witnesses reported eight Atikamekw babies who went missing in the 1960s and 1970s, and an Innu child.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time as the National Inquiry was pursuing its deliberations, Anne Panasuk, then an investigative journalist, revealed in a series of reports on the Radio-Canada program *Enquête* and in a podcast entitled “Chemin de croix” the disappearance between 1971 and 1972 of eight children from the Innu community of Pakuashipu after being hospitalized in Blanc-Sablon (Côte-Nord). She also reported on missing Atikamekw children.

The families that the NIMMIWG commissioners and Ms. Panasuk met generally reported their suffering but also that the institutions kept them uninformed of the death or disappearance of their children. Moreover, several witnesses mentioned the existence of contradictory or erroneous information transmitted to the families, which sometimes led to finding children that the families believed were dead:

“In the fall of 1958 and the summer of 1959, respectively, a one-year-old boy and his five-year-old sister went missing under similar circumstances at the Hôtel-Dieu hospital in Amos. Decades later, in 1996, the members of the family traced them to a hospital in Baie-Saint-Paul. They learned that the boy had died in 1965, not in 1958 as they had been told at the time. His sister was still alive and was 37 years old. She had been kept in the same hospital in Baie-Saint-Paul and was unable to walk or talk. This story, whose incredibility is surprising, raises doubts as to the fate of several children whose parents were told they were dead. Other witnesses are convinced that the babies were kidnapped to be used in medical experiments or sold to non-Indigenous families.” (NIMMIWG, Québec Supplementary Report, 2019, page 107).

1. NIMMIWG, *Reclaiming Power and Place, A Supplementary Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Kepek-Quebec*, 2019, pages 109-110.

At the conclusion of the testimony from the families and the research conducted by the NIMMIWG team, the National Inquiry concluded that the parents who testified had not been informed of their children's state of health, that they were not considered when the question of the care to be given their children arose, and that they did not have the power to consent to the transfer of their children to specialized centers or long-term care facilities:

"When their children died, the parents were not told the truth about the circumstances of the deaths or where their children were buried. In almost all the situations examined, the bodies were never returned to the parents after death. The children's bodies were buried, but the family was not told where, or what funeral rite, if any, was performed. One of the children was found in a common grave years later." (NIMMIWG, Québec Supplementary Report, 2019, page 109).

At the conclusion of nearly three years of investigation, the NIMMIWG released its final report on June 3, 2019. The final report was accompanied by a supplementary report specific to Québec containing 21 calls for justice, one of which urged "the Quebec government to provide Indigenous families with all the information it has about children who have been apprehended following admission to a hospital or any other health center in Quebec." (Call for Justice 20)

The *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution* (the Act) stems from a desire to respond to this call and thereby humbly contribute to possible healing, in a spirit of respect for the families.

## Context of the administration: from suffering to the quest for the truth

Families grieving an Indigenous child who died or went missing after being admitted to an institution frequently reported during the first months of the administration of the Act the need for information and answers to understand the circumstances that led to their children's absence. Certain families in recent years had already submitted their questions to the NIMMIWG committee members and shared with them their suffering. Others had undertaken, either alone or collectively, research in the institutions targeted to attempt to get answers. Still others, not knowing which organization to contact, remained silent, sometimes with a feeling of guilt.

Over the past seven years, numerous fact-finding commissions have made it possible in Québec and more broadly speaking in Canada to document, disseminate, and denounce the experiences of families and First Nations and Inuit communities in the



Blanket covered with soft toys and children's shoes at Lac Decelles in July 2021 to commemorate children who went missing or died (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

20th century colonial context. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada marked a basic milestone in the recognition of the traumatic events experienced by many children educated in residential schools and their families. The deliberations of the NIMMIWG (2019) and, almost simultaneously, of the Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Québec (2019) were followed and rounded out several years later by the report of the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (2021), which devoted a major section to Indigenous children and families. Still more recently, working groups with targeted expertise have formulated several recommendations on violence affecting women and, more specially, First Peoples women. The tragic death in September 2020 of Joyce Echaquan rekindled painful experiences and sustained long-term fear of public institutions in the communities. Coroner Géhane Kamel's inquest report concerning the death of Ms. Echaquan tabled in September 2021 concluded that "the racism and prejudice that Ms. Echaquan faced certainly contributed to her death" [translation] and recommended, consequently, that the Québec government "recognize the existence of systemic racism in institutions and commit itself to contributing to its elimination [translation]."<sup>2</sup>



The Dubé family from Manawan at the Lac Decelles gathering (July 2021). From left to right: Simone Dubé, her mother Delima Flamand Dubé, who lost her daughter Violetta, and Thérèse Dubé (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

At the heart of these major deliberations, the need to facilitate a quest for truth and restore the trust of the First Nations and the Inuit in Québec public institutions was repeatedly pinpointed as a condition for healing and a step toward the reconciliation of the families and the communities.

In this context and to promptly respond to Call for Justice 20 in the report of the NIMMIWG and the needs of the families concerned, in the fall of 2020 the Québec government proposed the inclusion of six amendments to Bill 31 (the *Act to amend mainly the Pharmacy Act for the purpose of facilitating access to certain services and to authorize the communication of personal information concerning certain missing or deceased Aboriginal children to their families*), which was then being studied. The six new sections were to facilitate access to certain information that the institutions held to enable the families to learn of the circumstances surrounding the disappearance or death of a child.

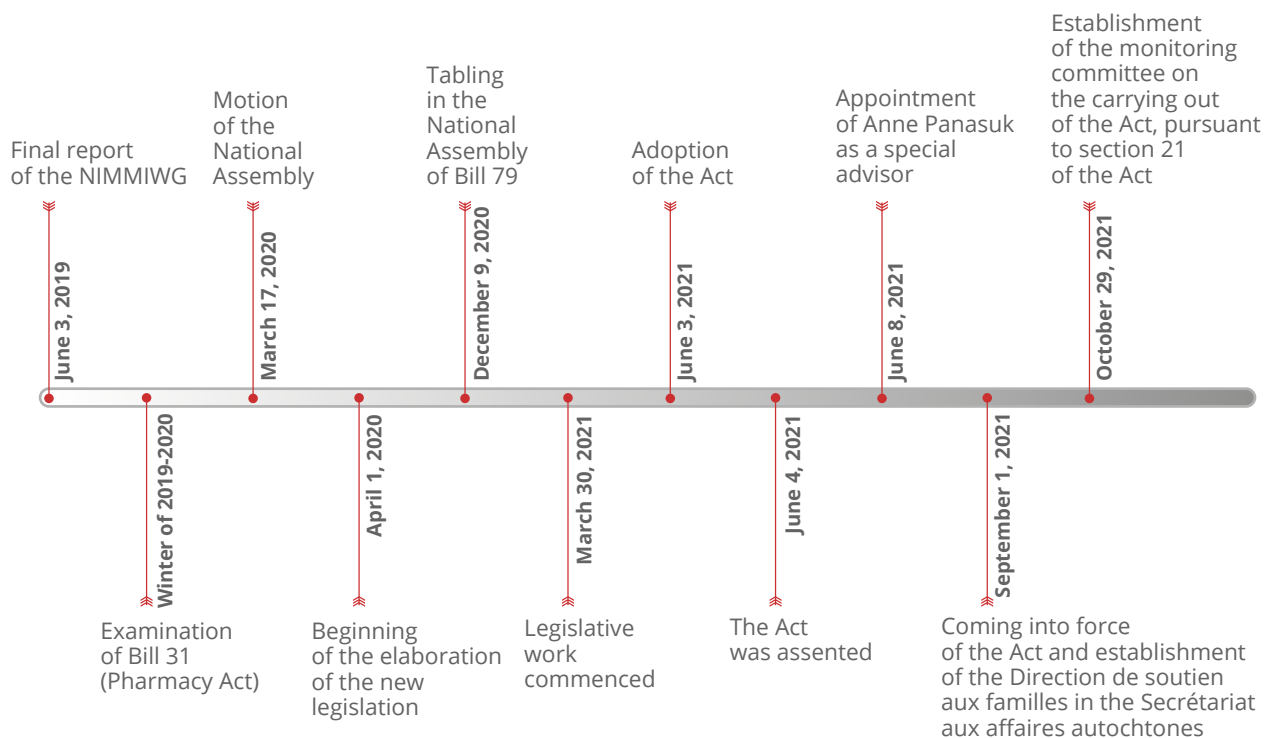
The initial amendments received a mitigated response from the Indigenous families and organizations. The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) joined with the Québec Ombudsman to request that the First Nations and the Inuit participate fully in the consultations concerning the response to the bereaved families.

2. Bureau du coroner, *Rapport d'enquête POUR la protection de LA VIE humaine concernant le décès de Joyce Echaquan*, signed by Géhane Kamel, September 2021, page 21.

In a joint brief submitted with the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC), it requested a separate bill to facilitate the implementation of a mechanism to afford access by the families to the personal information held by Québec government departments and bodies on Indigenous children who went missing or died. The requests were formulated to support those of the families, who would subsequently establish the Association des familles Awacak.

Bearing in mind these questions and given that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic demanded the prompt sanction of Bill 31, the *Act to amend mainly the Pharmacy Act for the purpose of facilitating access to certain services and to authorize the communication of personal information concerning certain missing or deceased Aboriginal children to their families* was adopted then sanctioned on March 17, 2020 without the six sections devoted to Indigenous children.

The same day, the National Assembly adopted a motion calling for the government to undertake to table a separate bill stipulating the communication to their families of personal information concerning certain Indigenous children who went missing or died, thereby confirming its desire to elaborate a new bill in response to the needs of Indigenous families.



At the conclusion of nearly one year of deliberations, the National Assembly of Québec adopted the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution* was adopted on June 3, 2021. Less than three months later, it came into force on September 1, 2021.



## The Act in a nutshell

The Act seeks to support the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died in their search for information on the circumstances surrounding the children's disappearance or death after being admitted to an institution, bearing in mind the families' distinctive linguistic and cultural traits, and their psychological and spiritual needs.

Guided by a preamble that targets the families' quest for the truth, their healing process and reconciliation, the Act seeks to make accessible to the families certain information held by institutions, public bodies, and religious congregations to enable them to shed light on the circumstances surrounding the disappearance or death of a child. For the Act to apply the child must have been admitted to an institution prior to December 31, 1992.

### Preamble to the Act

AS the circumstances under which Indigenous children went missing or died after they were admitted to a health and social services institution of Québec, while taken in charge for health reasons or after being evacuated without the presence of their parents, remain unknown to their families;

AS the National Assembly recognizes the suffering caused when a child goes missing or dies;

AS the National Assembly wishes to put in place a response to support Indigenous families in their quest for truth when they seek information on the circumstances under which an Indigenous child went missing or died and in their process of healing, and to embark on the path of reconciliation;

AS the National Assembly wishes to work in a spirit of cooperation with the Indigenous peoples, considering such aspects as their linguistic and cultural characteristics, and to keep Quebecers' collective memory alive.

The Act empowers the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs (the Minister) to investigate institutions, bodies, or religious congregations when one or more factors suggest that information likely to reveal the circumstances surrounding the disappearance or death of an Indigenous child exists but has not been communicated pursuant to the measures that the Act stipulates.

What is more, with the goal of supporting the families' manifold needs, it allows for the implementation of culturally reassuring support measures. The measures, which are examined later, are made possible through the collaboration of an array of partners. They are intended to offer the families guidance and support throughout the process in a spirit of respect for their culture, language, and history.

Moreover, from the standpoint of their healing process, the Act provides for assistance for the families that so desire concerning a possible application for an order of disinterment.



Children's moccasins sitting on the version of Bill 79 under review (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

Lastly, the Act stipulates that an individual can lodge a complaint with the Minister when the person is dissatisfied with the services received while seeking information from an institution, a body, or a religious congregation, and makes the Minister responsible for reporting on the administration of the Act in this annual report.

## Partner organizations are at the heart of the Act's administration

Shortly after the Act was assented to, on June 8, 2021, Anne Panasuk, the Minister's first special family support advisor, was appointed. Its coming into force several weeks later was accompanied by the establishment of the Direction de soutien aux familles, a new administrative branch in the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones (SAA), to ensure its administration.

In September 2021, the Association des familles Awacak, the first registered association comprising the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died, joined these core interveners responsible for applying the Act, supported by an array of partner organizations.

### The special family support advisor

Anne Panasuk, a journalist who conducted investigations with Innu families in Pakuashipu and Atikamekw families whose children died or went missing after being hospitalized, was appointed a special family support advisor on June 8, 2021.

She has a mandate to guide and support the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs in the administration of the Act by ensuring optimum relations and communications between the Indigenous families and the Québec government.

In collaboration with the family support team, she is responsible for:

- establishing and coordinating the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act stipulated by the Act;
- maintaining relations between the Indigenous families and the Québec government in the context of the administration of the Act;
- informing Indigenous families of the measures implemented to support their search for information, especially the procedure to follow in keeping with the Act;



Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Nutashquan (November 2021). Marie-Ange Malec (seated), surrounded by her daughter Marie-Josée Wapistan and her son-in-law Clément Peters. Seated near them, from left to right: Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak), Viviane Echaquan and special advisor Anne Panasuk (photo credit: Françoise Rupertouse).

- supporting and advising officials in the administration of provisions in the Act, including those pertaining to the communication of personal information, the exercise of investigative powers, and the support mandate at the time of a disinterment;
- contributing to the elaboration, the dissemination, and the presentation of the annual report stipulated by the Act.

## The Direction de soutien aux familles

Established on September 1, 2021, the Direction de soutien aux familles in the SAA has a remit to apply the Act in spirit of respect for the families' needs.

More specifically, it is responsible for:

- supporting the families in all their research efforts, including access-to-information requests, requests for civil status documents, and requests to public bodies and religious congregations;
- elaborating, in collaboration with the families, tailor-made research strategies that satisfy their wishes and objectives;
- coordinating the interdepartmental committee on the administration of the Act;
- coordinating networks of experts to support the administration of the Act;
- developing all procedures and relations aimed at establishing the expertise that the administration of the Act requires;
- communicating to institutions, government departments and bodies, and religious congregations information concerning the Act and its administration, and offering them training;
- communicating to partner Indigenous organizations information concerning the Act and its administration and possibly offering them training;
- coordinating the annual report.



Julie Martel, Acting Director of Family Support (left) and Florence Dupré, Family Support Coordinator (right).

The Direction de soutien aux familles is a permanent member of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act. It collaborates with the families, the special family support advisor, the Association des familles Awacak, Indigenous organizations, and the institutions covered by the Act to fulfil its mandate.

The Director of Family Support, who reports directly to the Associate Secretary General, Indigenous Affairs in the SAA, supervises the Direction de soutien aux familles team, which also includes a coordinator responsible for the development and implementation of its key directions and should shortly hire new staff devoted to assisting families. The Direction de soutien aux familles has an initial budget of \$2 million over two years (2021-2023), announced in Budget 2021 of the Québec government.

## The Association des familles Awacak

The Association Awacak was established by and for the members of families from the Indigenous nations whose children went missing or died. More specifically, the Association has a remit to:

- group together the families from Québec's Indigenous nations whose children went missing or died;
- help families from Québec's Indigenous nations to find their missing children;
- help families from Québec's Indigenous nations to determine the causes and circumstances surrounding the death or disappearance of their children;
- pursue all the sociological, anthropological, or legal research necessary to assert the rights of the families from Québec's Indigenous nations whose children went missing or died;
- make the necessary representations to all authorities to assert the rights of the families from Québec's Indigenous nations whose children went missing or died;
- defend and promote the interests of families from Québec's Indigenous nations whose children went missing or died;
- heighten the general public's awareness of the situation of families from Québec's Indigenous nations whose children went missing or died.



Members of the Board of Directors of the Association des familles Awacak at the gathering of families at Lac Decelles in July 2021 (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

To attain these objectives, Awacak is working in collaboration with special advisor Anne Panasuk and the Direction de soutien aux familles.

### Testimonial of the Niquay family from Manawan concerning the Association Awacak

"We belong to a family with two missing children who died in 1959 after being admitted to an institution. For years, like several Indigenous families in Québec, we experienced this trauma believing that we were alone. In February 2016, a family member participated in a consultation meeting on the preparation of the NIMMIWG to request with other families that the investigation include missing Indigenous children. The request was accepted. Our late oldest sister shared our story as a witness at the NIMMIWG hearings in March 2018 in Montréal.

A family member committed himself to act to group together the Indigenous families to establish the Association Awacak, a registered, recognized non-profit organization. We know that Awacak participated actively in the detailed examination of Bill 79 (2021, chapter 16) since it was adopted, assented to, and came into force on September 1, 2021. We believe that his contribution is noteworthy.

We have been members of the Association Awacak since September 2021. Awacak is providing us with emotional support, invaluable legal support, active listening based on a recognition of and respect for who we are and an understanding of what we are experiencing, since it is made up of families that are experiencing the same traumas as we are. Awacak is like a camp leader that takes care of its members. We share its outlook and together we are fulfilling its mission. Awacak is working through us, for us, and with us based on the principle of participative management and inclusion. Awacak is promoting a harmonious approach to consolidate trust in our relations with those who are administering Bill 79. It clearly represents the achievement of the call for action in the supplementary report of the NIMMIWG (Kepek-Quebec).

It has already been said that a child is a giant who becomes small by growing up. Awacak, “little beings of light,” will become a big light.

We had an intake interview with special advisor Anne Panasuk to complete the identification form for our missing or dead brothers, at which Mariette Niquay and Fernand Niquay were present. We asked Awacak to assist our family and that the information be shared with the Direction de soutien aux familles.

We would like to pay tribute to everyone who believed us and continue to believe that Awacak is an essential organization in the quest for the truth of Indigenous families, namely the APNQL, Quebec Native Women, all MNAs in the National Assembly, the Direction de soutien aux familles, the special advisor, and the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs.”

Mariette Niquay  
Fernand Niquay

## The monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act

Section 21 of the Act stipulates that “A monitoring committee on the carrying out of this Act, composed of representatives of various groups or of persons, is created by the Minister, in order to contribute to improving the services offered to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died, in particular with regard to complaints and concerning the status of the processing of applications.”

Coordinated by special advisor Anne Panasuk, the monitoring committee was officially set up at its first meeting on October 29, 2021. It subsequently met on December 16, 2021 and on February 14, 2022.

The monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act now comprises 11 permanent members, mainly representing organizations and members of the First Nations and the Inuit:

- Anne Panasuk, special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs;
- Julie Martel, Acting Director, Direction de soutien aux familles;
- Florence Dupré, Coordinator, Direction de soutien aux familles;
- Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Association Awacak;
- Marjolaine Sioui, Director General, First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission;
- Marjolaine Etienne, President, Quebec Native Women;
- Florence Picard, legal affairs advisor, Regroupement des Centres d’amitié autochtones du Québec;

- Madeleine Basile, Regional Coordinator of Health Support Programs, Council of the Atikamekw Nation;
- Nicole Lascelle, Coordinator, Association des femmes inuit – Saturviit
- Dr. Stanley Vollant, Innu physician
- Richard Kistabish, an Anishnabe Elder and advisory aid.

In addition to the permanent members, there are four observers representing the opposition parties and the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, to which other representatives may be added in the coming months:

- Gregory Kelley, official opposition critic on Indigenous affairs, Québec Liberal Party;
- Manon Massé, spokesperson for the second opposition group on Indigenous affairs, Québec solidaire;
- Martin Ouellet, spokesperson of the third opposition group on Indigenous affairs, Parti québécois;
- Nicole Anne Vautour, Directrice de la protection et de la promotion des droits de la jeunesse, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.

The permanent members finalized the committee's mission statement at their December 16, 2021 working meeting. Appendix 1 indicates the mission statement and the full list of members.

Among its key attributions, the committee is responsible for monitoring the administration of the Act and formulating recommendations pertaining to it. The conclusion to this report presents its first recommendations.

## II. FIRST ADMINISTRATION REPORT: SEPTEMBER 1, 2021 – FEBRUARY 28, 2022

This initial report covers the first six months of the administration of the Act. It summarizes the deliberations carried out between September 1, 2021, date on which the Act came into force, and February 28, 2022. More specifically, it presents the key achievements pertaining to:

- 1- communications and awareness-raising with respect to the Act;
- 2- assistance for families;
- 3- the search for information;
- 4- training;
- 5- interdepartmental deliberations;
- 6- the complaints procedure.

### **Communications and awareness-raising: disseminate the Act and its enforcement tools**

From the outset, the implementation of the Act and support for the families hinged on the institution of an array of communications activities aimed at publicizing this new legislative tool among families, institutions, and the public.

To this end, the special advisor's efforts at the time of her appointment in June 2021, presented in the summary table below, played a key role.

**Table 1: Summary of the activities carried out and the communication tools produced by special advisor Anne Panasuk**

Period covered	Communications and awareness-raising activities
June 2021	<p>Appointment on June 8, 2021, as special advisor to Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs Ian Lafrenière. She subsequently gave media interviews concerning her role, including Radio-Canada, CBC, Noovo, the <i>Toronto Star</i>, <i>Le Devoir</i>, <i>La Presse</i>, SOCAM, <i>Eastern Door</i>, and <i>Le Journal de Montréal</i>.</p> <p>She contacted Indigenous chiefs and leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quebec Native Women;</li> <li>• the Chief of the AFNQL;</li> <li>• the Chief of the CAN;</li> </ul> <p>certain Innu chiefs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pakuashipu: Chief Denis Mestanapéo;</li> <li>• Ekuanitshit: Chief Jean-Charles Pietasho;</li> <li>• Pessamit: Chief Jean-Marie Vollant;</li> <li>• Nutashquan: Chief Réal Tettaut;</li> </ul> <p>and Anicinapek chiefs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pikogan: Chief Monik Kistabish;</li> <li>• Lac-Simon: Chief Adrienne Jérôme.</li> </ul>
July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the Lac-Simon powwow and meeting with Chief Adrienne Jérôme.</li> <li>• Call to Chief Régis Penosway (Kitcisakik).</li> <li>• Meeting of the Minister with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> <li>• Meeting with the Director of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre.</li> <li>• Participation in the commemoration of missing children and visit to the Atikamekw territory (Lac Decelles).</li> <li>• Interview with the Société de Communication Atikamekw Montagnais (SOCAM).</li> <li>• Interview with the Université de Montréal internal newsletter.</li> <li>• Participation in information meetings with the Direction de soutien aux familles (SQ, Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, institutions, university researchers, and so on).</li> <li>• Regular meetings with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> </ul>
August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of the first video brief concerning the Act disseminated on the social networks.</li> <li>• Interview with <i>L'actualité</i> magazine.</li> <li>• Calls to chiefs in Côte-Nord communities to organize a potential tour in their region.</li> <li>• Contact with the advisor of Chief Jean-Claude Therrien-Pinette of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam.</li> <li>• Regular meetings with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> </ul>



Period covered	Communications and awareness-raising activities
September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the Direction de soutien aux familles. Statutory weekly meetings were held subsequently.</li> <li>• Calls to Anita Benjamin, community organizer in the community of Pessamit.</li> <li>• Meeting concerning georadar with the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications.</li> <li>• Production and dissemination on the social networks of the second video brief concerning the Act.</li> <li>• Participation in the fall retreat with the Minister, the negotiating team, and SAA managers.</li> <li>• Meeting with the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Québec.</li> <li>• Meeting with the senior managers of the La Tuque Native Friendship Centre.</li> <li>• Meeting with Grand Chief Constant Awashish of the Council of the Atikamekw Nation.</li> <li>• Meeting with the employees of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières.</li> <li>• Book launch: <i>Auassat : À la recherche des enfants disparus</i>.</li> <li>• The book launch was followed by 40 interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Television: Radio-Canada (<i>Tout le monde en parle, On va se le dire</i>), Noovo les nouvelles, TV 5 Monde.</li> <li>– Radio: Radio-Canada: <i>Tout un matin</i>, Pénélope, Kwei Kwei, 15-18, CKIA, RC Première Trois-Rivières, <i>Bonjour la Côte-nord</i>, <i>Du côté de chez Catherine</i>; Radio-Unique, CHGA-FM, Maniwaki, WKND 99,5 FM, Bleu FM Chandler, CHOX FM <i>le radio-réveil</i>, CKRO-FM Péninsule acadienne, Radio VM Confluents, Canal M Kwei Vues, and <i>voix Bonjour</i>.</li> <li>– Newspapers: <i>La Presse, Le Devoir, La Tribune, Le Nouvelliste, Le Soleil, Le Droit, Le Quotidien, La Voix de l'Est, Espaces autochtones</i>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Calls to the leaders of Indigenous organizations to establish the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act.</li> <li>• Meeting with the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Sûreté du Québec, and the Ministère de la Sécurité publique.</li> <li>• Meeting with the Direction de soutien aux familles and the CIUSSS de la Mauricie-et-du-Centre-du-Québec.</li> <li>• Regular meetings with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> </ul>

Period covered	Communications and awareness-raising activities
October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the Forum sur la gouvernance atikamekw in Casey.</li> <li>• First meeting with the members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act: work session to review the obligations stemming from the Act.</li> <li>• Broadcast of an interview on the Sans réserve (APTN) program.</li> <li>• Meetings and calls with physicians to establish a network of partner physicians.</li> <li>• Meeting with the Minister and his advisors.</li> <li>• Regular meetings with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> </ul>
November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact with Raymond Frogner, Chief Archivist of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Information exchanges.</li> <li>• Tour with the Association des familles Awacak in five Innu communities in the Côte-Nord region: Pakuashipu, Unamen Shipu, Nutashquan, Ekuanitshit and Uashat mak Mani-Utenam. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Identification forms were produced (requests to search for missing children) following the tour.</li> <li>– Interviews with community radio stations in each of the communities with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> <li>– Interview with Radio-Canada Côte-Nord.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interview with <i>Le Journal Nord-Est</i>.</li> <li>• A talk given to medical students at the Université de Montréal.</li> <li>• Participation in the Salon du livre de Montréal with respect to <i>Auassat : À la recherche des enfants disparus</i>.</li> </ul>
December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information provided at the general meeting of Quebec Native Women.</li> <li>• Second meeting with the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act: work session to define the mandate with the permanent members of the committee.</li> <li>• Meeting with the Direction de soutien aux familles and researchers.</li> <li>• Regular meetings with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> </ul>
January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calls to the observer members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act.</li> <li>• Meeting and information exchange with the monitoring committee members.</li> <li>• Health resolution of the Council of the Atikamekw Nation.</li> <li>• Interview with Radio-Canada Abitibi-Témiscamingue.</li> <li>• Regular meetings with the Association des familles Awacak.</li> <li>• Research pertaining to the identification forms: contact with Sœur Armande Dumas concerning the Unamen Shipu parish registers (Registre de Musquaro and Pointe-Parent Indian mission register). Contact avec Père Alfred, Notre-Dame-du-Cap parish register.</li> <li>• Discussion with Nicole Driscoll at the Centre de santé de Pakuashipu.</li> </ul>

Period covered	Communications and awareness-raising activities
February 2022	Meeting with and training of the new employees of the Association des familles Awacak. Work on the identification forms. Meeting with the Minister and his advisors. Third meeting with the Monitoring committee: work session to prepare the first annual report on the administration of the Act. Meeting with students at the Cégep Édouard-Montpetit (Longueuil).

The special advisor’s intensive communications and awareness-raising efforts since her appointment have reached:

- **the families** in their communities and through the local media;
- **the political representatives and organizations concerned** through targeted communications and meetings;
- **the general population** through numerous appearances in the print media and on television in Québec, especially concerning the launch of the essay *Aussat : À la recherche des enfants disparus*, devoted to her investigations conducted with the families.

In addition to this array of activities, communications tools were produced under the communications plan implemented by the Direction de soutien aux familles. Some tools have been updated on an ongoing basis to transmit the most complete possible information to the families, institutions, and the general population. This is especially true of the Québec government Internet page devoted to the Act since the deliberations in the National Assembly began: [Missing and deceased Indigenous children: Support for families | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](https://www.gouvernement.qc.ca/fr/actualites/2021/04/01/missing-and-deceased-indigenous-children-support-for-families). The statistics collected reveal that the page was visited 1 481 times between April 1, 2021 and February 1, 2022. Nearly 85% of the consultations were single views.

The following table indicates progress in the implementation of other sections of the communications plan under the responsibility of the Direction de soutien aux familles.

**Table 2: Summary of the activities carried out and the communication tools produced by the Direction de soutien aux familles**

Activity	Description of the activities and the tools produced
Elaboration of the communication tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of information bookmarks for families, information sheets for the communities and organizations, and informative posters on the Act and the services of the Direction de soutien aux familles.</li> <li>• Translation into Atikamekw, Innue, Mohawk, Anicinape, Crie and Naskapie, Inuktitut, and English of the tools.</li> <li>• Posters and information sheets sent to First Nations organizations, partner Inuit organizations, and the health centres of the communities targeted (December 2021).</li> </ul>
Implementation of the communications plan pertaining to the Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio message to inform the communities targeted of the coming into force of the Act (August 2021).</li> <li>• Ongoing updating of the Internet page devoted to the Act and its enforcement tools: <a href="https://www.gouvernement.qc.ca/fr/actualites/2021/08/01/missing-and-deceased-indigenous-children-support-for-families">Missing and deceased Indigenous children: Support for families   Gouvernement du Québec (quebec.ca)</a>.</li> <li>• Communications with the Indigenous organizations and the Indigenous health centres in the communities targeted to inform them of the coming into force of the Act and the establishment of the Direction de soutien aux familles.</li> </ul>
Participation in the Forum sur la gouvernance atikamekw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation with special advisor Anne Panasuk in the Forum sur la gouvernance atikamekw in Casey (October 1-2, 2021).</li> <li>• New requests from families were received at that time.</li> </ul>

While these activities benefited communication and awareness-raising in the families that the Act targets, the activities were given concrete expression in the events organized in the communities and through the first tour conducted in November 2021 by the special advisor and the Association des familles Awacak.

To offer the support to families that the human, cultural, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of the Act stipulate, the partners in the administration of the Act initiated the development of a shared perspective aimed at guiding the families in a spirit of respect for their needs.

## **Family-focused tours in the communities**

### **(by Anne Panasuk, special family support advisor)**

The tour of Innu communities in November 2021 revealed to me the importance of being in the field with Awacak to share suffering and hope between First Nations members and, more specifically, between the families stricken by a missing child. In a spirit of respect for the medicine wheel, Awacak requested that the tour commence among the Innus of Pakuashipu, the Keepers of the Eastern Door. This indeed made sense since I believe that everything started there when the Innu of Pakuashipu publicly revealed their tragedy. From Pakuashipu, we then returned to the east to visit five communities, i.e., Unamen Shipu, Nutashquan, Ekuanitshit and, lastly, Uashat mak Mani-Utenam.



Tent of the Forum sur la gouvernance atikamekw in Casey, October 2021 (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).



Agnès Poker, mother of two missing children, and her son Chief Guy Mestanapeo from Pakuashipu, during the gathering of families at Lac Decelles (July 2021).



Aerial view of Lac Decelles during the gathering of families (July 2021).

The sharing of the personal stories of Françoise Ruperthouse, Director of Awacak, and Pierre-Paul Niquay, head of recruiting and information, who both lost brothers and sisters after they were admitted to a healthcare institution, captured the very essence of the Act. Anishnabe, Atikamekw, or Innu, regardless of the nation, the families found each other and supported each other in the quest for the truth. The Innu felt involved and reassured because Awacak expressed its trust in the Act and through my presence as a special advisor. There is no better way to develop such a valuable bond of trust. Indigenous people who have suffered from a missing child trust the Act. The pace of the discussions and ways of expressing themselves meant that the families felt at ease, listened to, and serene. Pierre-Paul Niquay brought bear fat to give to the elders. The bear is the emblem of our tour under the sign of wisdom.

We received requests to search for 21 children. The requests were submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles to proceed with access-to-information requests. Ten of the requests were deemed to have priority since the elderly mothers or fathers of the children are still alive. Additional information to guide the research is required to complete the other three requests.

In October 2021, Julie Martel and Florence Dupré, Acting Director and Coordinator, respectively, of the Direction de soutien aux familles, joined me at the Forum sur la gouvernance atikamekw organized by the Council of the Atikamekw Nation in traditional territory in Casey. We felt that it was important for the First Nations members



Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Ekuanitshit (November 2021). From left to right: Françoise Ruperthouse (Director General of Awacak), Anne Panasuk (special advisor), Rita Mestokosho, attendant at the Musée de la culture innue and her team, Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak), and Viviane Echaquan.



Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Unamen-Shipu (November 2021). Anastasia and Josephis Bellefleur, whose son Raymond went missing (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).



Forum sur la gouvernance Atikamekw, Casey (October 2021). From left to right: Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles), and Charles Coocoo from Wemotaci (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

to meet us in their territory. Our twofold objective was to show our willingness to hear them in their territory and to put names on the faces of the individuals to whom the families will subsequently speak on the telephone during the research process.

We must reflect on the best way of transmitting to the families the documents and responses obtained following the research that the Direction de soutien aux familles conducted. The families must receive psychological support and we must ensure optimum understanding of the information obtained. We are establishing a network of partner physicians to enlighten families on the medical reports. However, we must develop the method of communication, according to the families' needs.

I believe that communication between the families of different communities and, indeed, Nations, is extremely important to achieve healing. This seemed obvious during a gathering of families organized last summer by the Atikamekw at Lac Decelles, Pakwecikan Sakihinanik, to commemorate the missing children. I was there to provide information on the Act and camped in a tent in traditional territory for four days with the 158 adults registered, mainly Atikamekw from the three communities but also Innu who travelled more than 2 000 km to attend, as well as Anicinapeks and an Eeyou Cree woman. To share. To support each other. The pooling of the findings of the research carried out should be communicated not just to the families but to the communities and the nations.

## **Families: Awacak, by and for Indigenous families (by Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Association des familles Awacak)**

The Association Awacak, through its constantly evolving members, then as an association, participated in the legislative process leading to the adoption of the Act. Awacak informed the legislators of the families' interest, especially by submitting a brief and engaging in discussions with MNAs from the different political parties, including Manon Massé, Martin Ouellet, and Gregory Kelley, and with Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs Ian Lafrenière.

Awacak, a new association, recruited its founding members even before the Act was assented to. The founding members of Awacak are three Elders from Manawan, who did not think twice about joining Awacak and explained that they have been awaiting for a long time such an initiative.



Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Pakuashipu (November 2021). In the centre, Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General of Awacak. To her left, Christine Lalo and her spouse Charles Mark, who lost three children, and their daughters Gilberte and Cécile Mark. To her right, Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak) and psychologist Judith Morency (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

## Testimonial of Annette Dubé concerning the Association Awacak

Kweil

My name is Annette Dubé, and I am the daughter of Marcel Dubé and Délima Flamand Dubé. My parents' newborn baby went missing after being admitted to the Hôtel-Dieu d'Amos in 1956. For several years, our mother spoke about this child, who she called Pierrette, who apparently died of measles. More than 60 years later, we have learned the sad truth. My parents never held nor saw their baby at the time of birth, never saw the body, never buried the baby, and never even received proof of her death and interment.

We mobilized with other families in February 2018 during the first meeting in Wemotaci. The same year, our family testified during the hearings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG). We subsequently undertook research to find out the truth. The research was difficult and trying. The hospitals had little or no information on our sister, but we nonetheless found evidence of her stay in the Macamic sanatorium and the Hôtel-Dieu d'Amos. We also discovered a baptismal register in a parish in the Amos region and learned that she was baptized Violetta, but nothing about the interment. In the fall of 2019, we organized a commemoration ceremony with the family in the territory. The ceremony was marked by emotions but also hope.

Steps were then taken by the group of families concerning legislation focusing on missing Indigenous children. Once again, the effort was difficult, but the government finally adopted Bill 79, which we were all awaiting and in which our family was actively involved. In July 2021, our family participated in the gathering of families at Lac Decelles organized by Awacak, whose status was not yet official. The Association was officially incorporated in September 2021. Once again, our family proudly collaborated on the establishment of Awacak. Since October 2021, my mother Délima, my five sisters Denise, Simone, Thérèse, Guylaine, Carole, and I have officially been members of the Association. We are proud and reassured to know that Awacak is there to support us, provide us with the assistance we need, and in truth seeking.

We want to thank our chiefs and the government for listening to us and granting our missing sisters and brothers a place in collective memories so that their disappearance is not in vain, and families can get answers and heal from these wounds from the past.

Mikwetc

Annette Dubé  
Marcel Dubé and Délima Flamand family  
Sister of Violetta, little being of light

In the weeks after the Act was assented to, Awacak hired employees and prepared its visit to Innu country. To this end, it announced its visit to the communities and contacted the community interveners. Moreover, the identification form for children who went missing or died, a valuable tool for collecting information from the families, was developed.

During the visit to Innu country, Awacak made itself known to the families through its participation in public meetings and community radio broadcasts. Awacak spoke to several families in the communities of Pakuashipu, Ekuanitshit, Pessamit, Nutashquan, and Pikogan. The wonderful encounters were filled with emotion. We heard horrible stories, most of which brought tears to our eyes. However, we observed that it does the families good

to speak freely. Several families expressed relief and great satisfaction with the establishment of Awacak. This marks both for them and for us the completion of a crucial step in our quest for truth. The families shared with us their suffering and we witnessed the release of emotions that had been pent up for too long. The Indigenous employees of Awacak, who have engaged for several years in our healing process respecting suffering related to beloved children who went missing or died, were in a privileged position to grasp the families' suffering. We were pleased to witness a reduction in the mistrust that several generations of Indigenous peoples have felt toward the government and the Act.

### Testimonial of Agnès Poker concerning the Association Awacak during its visit to the community of Pakuashipu

"I was pleased with their visit and what touched me a great deal is that we experienced the same pain. This also helped me a lot. I would like Awacak to continue and move forward to discover the truth. I appreciate their efforts."

Agnès Poker

Back from our visit to Innu country, Awacak transcribed the interviews and gave the audio files to the special advisor and the Direction de soutien aux familles. Awacak offered support to the families with which it met. The Awacak employees able to pursue helping relations spoke to the families. Furthermore, having established partnerships in the communities visited, Awacak took steps to find the appropriate aid resources for the members even within their community.



Public meeting in Unamen-Shipu during the tour in the Côte-Nord region by the Association Awacak and Anne Panasuk (November 2021).

## Assistance for families seeking information

To respect the confidentiality of the personal information that the families entrust for research purposes to the Direction de soutien aux familles, the data presented in this report do not reveal the identity of individuals.

As of February 28, 2022, the Direction de soutien aux familles was seeking information concerning **55 children based on requests received from 35 applicants.**

Among the requests, **16 stem from the tour of the Côte-Nord region** that the special advisor and the Association des familles Awacak **carried out in November 2021.** The requests were submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles between January and February 2022.

The following pages present the highlights of the research and its progress as of February 28, 2022.



## Assistance for the families: methodological considerations

The nature of the assistance that the Direction de soutien aux familles offers generally varies according to the families' needs and specific objectives.

While the branch deems most of the requests to be undergoing active processing, including, for example, the analysis and elaboration of research strategies, the formulation of access-to-information requests, the search for civil status documents, or the identification of witnesses, the other requests proceed at a less sustained pace from the standpoint of communications and the families' decisions.

As of February 28, 2022, 30 of the 35 requests (more than 85%) submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles were deemed to be active. However, these figures should be considered with caution since they can change quickly in terms of the families' choices and the capacity of the Direction de soutien aux familles, the special advisor, and the Association des familles Awacak to simultaneously process requests of which large numbers might arrive at certain periods.

## The reception of the families and the initiation of research

At the conclusion of the initial contact with a family, the first step is to conduct a reception interview to trace the family's history. The pandemic limited most of the trips made by the Direction de soutien aux familles during the first months of the Act's administration. The meetings were mainly conducted through videoconferencing or, when the families requested it, by telephone. The branch ensured that it responded to the families' needs for support and translation during the discussions. The special advisor and the Association des familles Awacak had the opportunity to meet personally with the families with the assistance of an interpreter and support staff during their tour in the Côte-Nord region.

The welcoming meetings ensure that the families are eligible according to the provisions in the Act. Above all, they lay the groundwork for the research strategy that will be subsequently proposed and validated with the family, then implemented by the Direction de soutien aux familles. These initial discussions often hinge on the establishment of a bond of trust that the research requires. Certain applicants are accompanied regularly or on an ad hoc basis by loved ones during the interviews, i.e., brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, and spouses, but also interveners, interpreters, elders, or representatives. Each stage of the research is subsequently subject to ongoing follow-up and regular validation with the families, including discussions of progress in the approaches and impending stages or to ensure the families' comfort and pinpoint possible needs.

## The challenge of remote communications

The relevance of the mode of communication used with the families poses a challenge with respect to several types of support that the Direction de soutien aux familles offers. Whether from the standpoint of communications and follow-up between the partners that administer the Act and the families (email, telephone, videoconferencing, and so on) or institutional practices regarding the organizations that the requests target (email, postal mail, and so on), not all the applicants possess the technological access and literacy likely to make communications reassuring and easy.

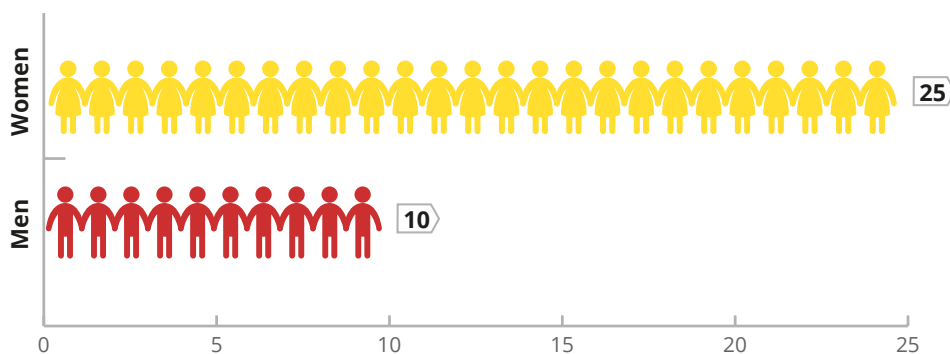
Reflection in this respect is ongoing between the Direction de soutien aux familles, the special advisor, the Association des familles Awacak, and certain families to determine a method of functioning that better satisfies the situations of each of the individuals involved in the research.

## Highlights of the requests

Given the brief period that this initial report covers, it does not present a detailed analysis of the requests that cross-references factors such as the years in which the children went missing or died and their community of origin. The data sample available to the Direction de soutien aux familles at the conclusion of the first six months of administration is not sufficiently complete to conduct such analyses without other more extensive research. If necessary, such analyses could be conducted later.

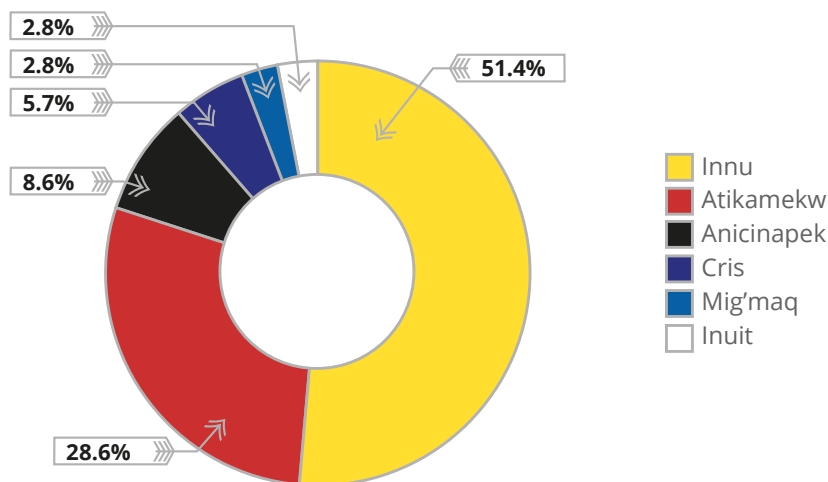
Considering the first 35 requests received, several highlights nonetheless warrant emphasis concerning the applicants' profiles and the 55 children concerned by the research. A clear **majority** (more than 70%) **of the applicants are women** (Graph 1).

**Graph 1: Breakdown by gender of the applicants**



As illustrated below, the Innu (51.4%), Atikamekw (28.6%), and Anishnabe (8.6%) Nations are the main nations represented by the families identified (Graph 2). Some of the families had already testified before the NIMMIWG committee members. Others had not yet initiated any research. They approached the Direction de soutien aux familles, the special advisor, or the Association des familles Awacak when they heard about the new Act in their communities.

**Graph 2: Nations represented by the research of the Direction de soutien aux familles**



Families from other nations are starting to come forward. However, a significant awareness-raising and communications effort remains to be carried out, especially in the northern nations covered by an agreement (the Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi), and other First Nations. The following table provides details of each request received, by nation and community.

**Table 3: Nations and communities represented by the research of the Direction de soutien aux familles**

Nation represented	Number from applications submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles	Number of children concerned by the requests
<b>Innu</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>
Pakuashipu	8	11
Unamen Shipu/La Romaine	5	5
Uashat mak Mani-Utenam	2	2
Nutashquan	2	4
Pessamit	1	1
<b>Atikamekw</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>
Manawan	6	20
Opitciwan	4	4
<b>Anicinapek</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Winneway/Long Point First Nation	1	2
Pikogan	1	1
Lac-Simon	1	1
<b>Cree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Mistissini	2	2
<b>Mig'maq</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Gesgapegiag	1	1

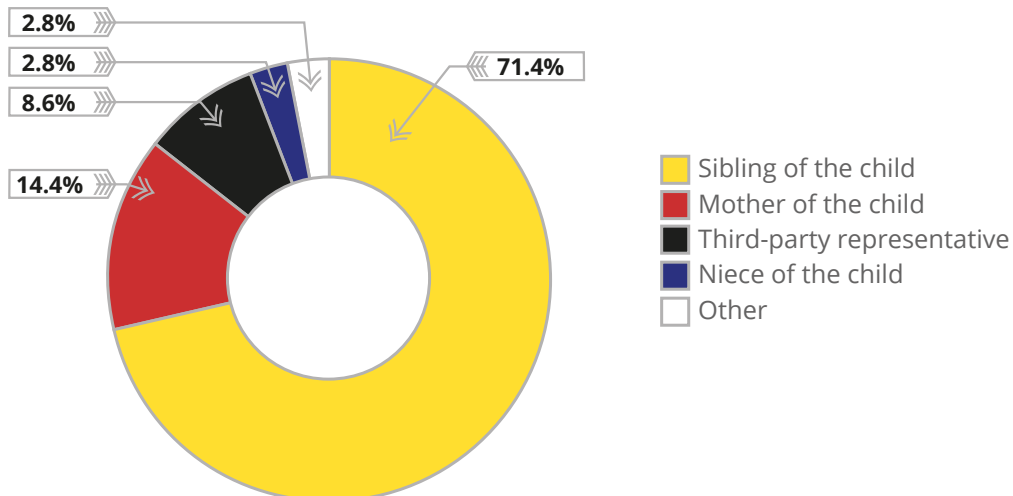
Nation represented	Number from applications submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles	Number of children concerned by the requests
<b>Inuit (inactive)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Outside Québec	1	1
<b>Mohawks</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Hurons-Wendats</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Malecite</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Abenaki</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Naskapi</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>55</b>

It should be noted that while the number of applications from the Innu Nation is by far the biggest, with more than 50% of the requests coming from communities in the Côte-Nord region, the number of Atikamekw children (24) represented by the requests is slightly higher than the number of Innu children (23) targeted by the research. In some cases, a single family is searching for several children.

While women are largely represented among the applicants who have contacted the Direction de soutien aux familles, the children that the research targets are mainly girls (nearly 51%), followed by boys (38%). In almost 11% of cases, the child’s sex has not been determined with certainty, either because it is unknown to the families or because the family history contradicts certain testimony or documents that the applicants have obtained.

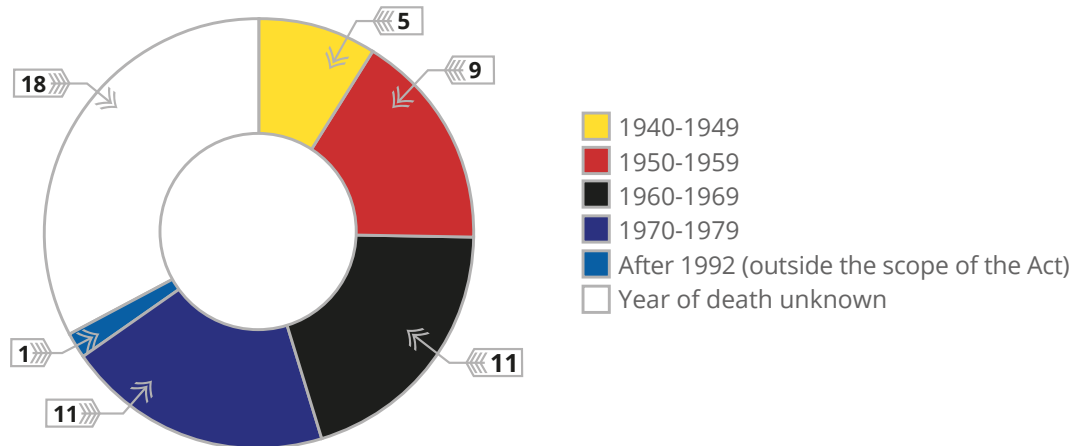
**Most of the applicants (more than 71%) are siblings of the child or children that the research targets** (Graph 3). This bolsters the relevance of the dispensations stipulated by the Act to allow the child’s extended family (including “any significant person”) to receive the communication of personal information, since only five of the 35 applicants are the child’s immediate parents. In the absence of the Act, they alone would be authorized to receive such information. It should be noted that a third party represents few applicants. However, the number could change rapidly when requests for representation are submitted at the conclusion of a tour to an organization of families such as the Association des familles Awacak, for example.

**Graph 3: Family ties of the applicants with the children that the research targets**



The children targeted by the research in the past six months were generally born between 1933 and 1978. The graph below illustrates the most widely represented periods when children died or went missing and the substantial number of cases in which the families are not certain of the date of death.

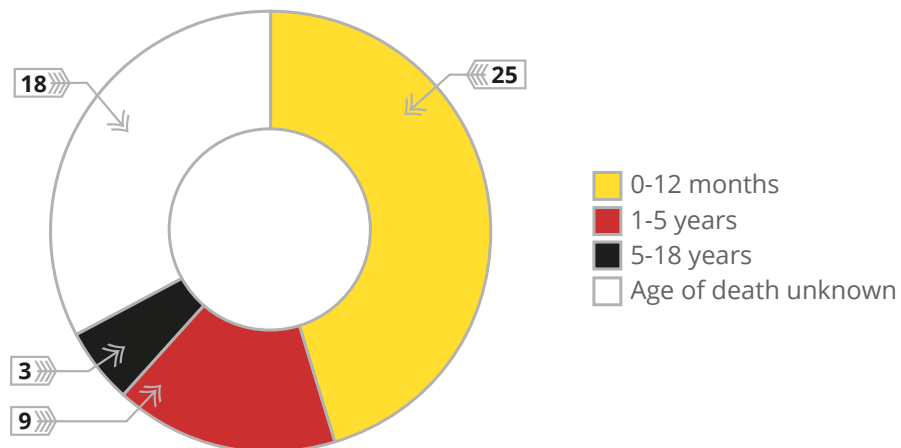
**Graph 4: Years covered by the death or disappearance of children**



The age at which the children went missing or died (Graph 5) varies. Most cases (more than 45% of the children that the research targets) concern toddlers one year of age or under. More than half of the deaths occurred during the first two months of life. Among the 55 children that the initial research targets, more than 16% of the deaths or disappearances occurred between the age of 1 and 5 years and only three deaths after the age of 5. The date on which the child died or went missing is unknown in nearly 33% of the cases. More extensive analyses might be conducted in the coming years to grasp the possible link between the public health context in the communities, the delivery of health care and the medical evacuations emphasized, and the age of the children when they died or went missing.

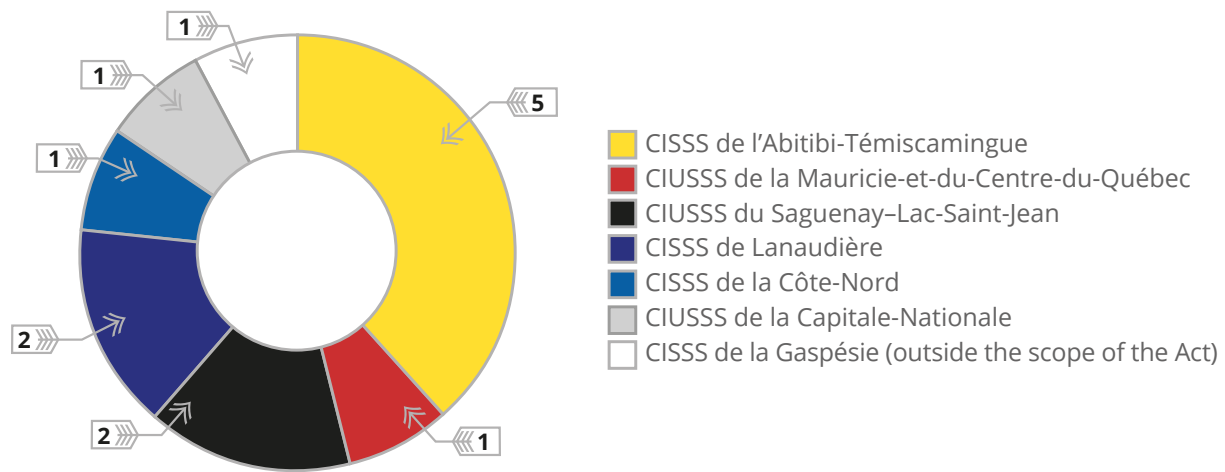
Among the older children, it bears noting that two of them died while attending a residential school.

**Graph 5: Ages of the children when they died or went missing**



The degree of advancement of the research conducted with the families by the Direction de soutien aux familles varies according to the steps that certain families took beforehand. In general, most of the research begins when access-to-information requests are made to the institutions targeted (when the information is sufficient) and through the search for civil status documents. As of February 28, 2022, 13 access-to-information requests had been submitted to the health and social services network in respect of 20 children (Graph 6), 24 requests for death certificates had been submitted to the Directeur de l'état civil, and several other requests were being validated by the families prior to submission.

**Graph 6: Institutions targeted by access-to-information requests already submitted by the Direction de soutien aux familles**



It should be noted that the requests concerning research related to the tour in the Côte-Nord region by the special advisor and the Association des familles Awacak are in preparation and are not, therefore, accounted for in this report or represented by Graph 6.

The requests have already made it possible to obtain the medical records of several children, but also of the parents. The search for all the requests for death certificates has been conducted by the Directeur de l'état civil or are under way. To date, they have led to the issuance of nine death certificates. The absence of medical documentation, sometimes attributable to the records retention schedules of the institutions or the transfer of certain archives to other organizations, does not mean that the research has stopped. Instead, it triggers other possible paths through religious archivists, parishes, presbyteries, social services institutions, or certain witnesses. At the same time, obtaining a child's medical record often marks only the beginning of other research aimed at understanding the circumstances surrounding a death or identifying a burial place, unknown in most cases to the family.

## Judicial reviews submitted to the Commission d'accès à l'information

During the period covered, two judicial reviews were submitted by the families, assisted by the Direction de soutien aux familles to the Commission d'accès à l'information. In both instances, the recourse targeted a breach of the time limit in the response by the institution targeted. As of February 28, 2022, the reviews are still active.

## Investigations conducted pursuant to the Act

As of February 28, 2022, no investigation had been launched in the context of research pursuant to section 13 of the Act.

## The cessation of research

The cessation of research conducted in the context of the administration of the Act hinges on the families' decision. As of February 28, 2022, all the cases submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles were open and being processed at the pace that the families desired.

## Training in partner institutions

It is possible to assist the families through the mobilization and collaboration of all the institutions, government departments, and organizations subject to the Act. In the context of specific research, such institutions have sometimes become full-fledged partners in the identification of information and new potential avenues.

Since the Act came into force, the mobilization has been achieved through presentation meetings and training offered by the Direction de soutien aux familles. The following table summarizes the main training activities carried out. In most instances, the meetings led to the establishment of regular communications between the branch and the institutions involved.

All told **more than 330 people have attended a detailed presentation on the Act**, i.e., the key interveners who administer it and assist the families, of whom 63% are employees of the health and social services network.

It should also be noted that a presentation was made to 23 Government of Canada representatives, with whom concrete collaboration in respect of certain research files involving Indigenous residential schools has been established.

**Table 4: Chronology of the presentations made by the Direction de soutien aux familles**

Organization targeted	Description of the activity	Date of the activity
Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS)	Meetings on an ongoing basis since the Act was elaborated with the Direction des affaires autochtones and the Direction de l'accès à l'information in the MSSS.	On an ongoing basis
Régie de l'Assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ)	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families ( <b>four people</b> )	August 24, 2021
Sûreté du Québec (SQ)	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families ( <b>nine people</b> )	September 23, 2021
Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (MCC)	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families ( <b>three people</b> )	October 20, 2021

Organization targeted	Description of the activity	Date of the activity
Commission d'accès à l'information (CAI)	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families <b>(30 people)</b> Presentation on recourse offered by the CAI to the Direction de soutien aux familles	October 29, 2021 January 25, 2022 and February 8, 2022
Health and social services network (institutions)	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families (access to information officials and medical archivists) – 1. Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families (access to information officials and medical archivists) – 2. <b>Total, training sessions 1 and 2: 210 people</b>	November 9, 2021 November 30, 2021
Government of Canada	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families for representatives of Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada <b>(23 people)</b>	January 13, 2022
Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ)	Presentation meeting and establishment of collaboration <b>(two people)</b>	January 18, 2021
Students and graduates in the Programme des facultés de médecine pour les Premières Nations et les Inuit au Québec	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families <b>(11 people)</b>	January 20, 2022
First Nations health and social services directors	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families <b>(32 people)</b>	January 27, 2022
Ministère de la Sécurité publique (MSP)	Training pertaining to the Act and presentation of the assistance offered to families <b>(five people)</b>	February 1, 2022
Regroupement des archivistes religieux (RAR)	Presentation meeting and establishment of collaboration <b>(three people)</b>	February 3, 2022

In recent weeks, the Direction de soutien aux familles has observed that the training and presentations offered to the institutions subject to the Act (including institutions in the health and social services network and certain central government departments involved in the research) were used by the latter when specific requests were submitted to them pursuant to the Act.

The Direction de soutien aux familles is making the consolidation of such collaboration a primary focus in the coming months.



## Interdepartmental deliberations aimed at optimum assistance for families

Collaboration by the Direction de soutien aux familles with government departments and bodies, another mainstay of the identification of solutions in the search for information, occurred in two key stages during the period covered:

- **FIRST STAGE: Consensus-building on an interdepartmental committee, aimed at:**
  - monitoring the administration of the Act by obtaining at each of the committee meetings a report on the work carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles;
  - ensuring through active participation by each of the member government departments and bodies the coherence and relevance of government action aimed at the families that the Act concerns;
  - collaborating in the administration of the Act by developing relevant practices or exchanging the information necessary for their development.
- **SECOND STAGE: Bilateral work** with the government departments and bodies targeted according to the specific needs stemming from the research under way.

The **interdepartmental committee on the administration of the Act** has met twice since the Act came into force, on November 10, 2021 and January 25, 2022. Appendix 2 of this report presents its mandate.

To ensure the independence that the fulfilment of their mandate requires, certain organizations are not members of the interdepartmental committee although they play a significant role in the administration of the Act. The organizations are identified in the “Other government departments and bodies” section of the following table. The deliberations of the Direction de soutien aux familles with these organizations occur on a bilateral basis, depending on the needs of the research under way.

**Table 5: Relations with government departments and bodies**

Government departments and bodies	Type de collaboration and projects
<b>Member government departments and bodies of the interdepartmental committee</b>	
<b>Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones (SAA)</b> Direction de soutien aux familles Direction des relations avec les Autochtones	The Direction de soutien aux familles in the SAA coordinates the interdepartmental committee.  It is collaborating with the Direction des relations avec les Autochtones in the SAA in certain research pertaining to boarding schools.
<b>Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS)</b> Direction des affaires autochtones Direction de l'accès à l'information et de la protection des renseignements personnels Direction des relations institutionnelles	Active collaboration in the development of tools, training, and processes.  Collaboration on deliberations pertaining to disinterment.

Government departments and bodies	Type de collaboration and projects
<b>Régie de l'Assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ)</b> Bureau de la responsable de l'accès à l'information et de la protection des renseignements personnels Direction de l'évaluation des services à la clientèle et de la gestion des risques Direction du soutien à la prestation de service	The development of processes related to access-to-information requests in the context of the Act. Collaboration on certain targeted research files.
<b>Ministère de la Justice (MJQ)</b> Bureau des affaires autochtones	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of targeted research. Collaboration on deliberations pertaining to disinterment. Advisory opinions and legal support for the branches concerned in the MJQ pertaining to the administration of the Act.
<b>Bureau du Coroner (BC)</b>	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and the monitoring of research to support families in their search for information on Indigenous children who died or went missing. Collaboration on deliberations pertaining to disinterment and the identification of the deceased.
<b>Ministère de la Sécurité publique (MSP)</b> Direction des relations avec les citoyens et des affaires autochtones et institutionnelles	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.
<b>Directeur de l'état civil (DEC)</b> in the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS)	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of targeted research.
<b>Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (MCC)</b> Direction des politiques et de la prospective Direction des opérations en patrimoine	Collaboration on deliberations pertaining to disinterment, including applications for permits and geolocation technologies.
<b>Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ)</b> Direction des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit et nordicité	Follow-up to the administration of the Act.
<b>Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur (MES)</b> Bureau des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, Direction aux interventions régionales	Follow-up to the administration of the Act.
<b>Other government departments and bodies</b>	
<b>Commission d'accès à l'information (CAI)</b> Direction des affaires juridiques	Collaboration with due regard for its mission. Presentation on recourse offered by the CAI to the Direction de soutien aux familles.
<b>Sûreté du Québec (SQ)</b> Division des relations avec les communautés autochtones	Collaboration with due regard for its mission.

Government departments and bodies	Type de collaboration and projects
<b>Ministère du Conseil exécutif (MCE)</b> Direction du soutien stratégique  <b>Secrétariat à la réforme des institutions démocratiques, à l'accès à l'information et à la laïcité (SRIDAIL)</b>	Assistance offered to the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning access to information processes and privacy.
<b>Ministère du Conseil exécutif (MCE)</b> Direction des communications	Active collaboration in implementing the communications plan pertaining to the Act.
<b>Québec Ombudsman</b>	Follow-up to a targeted research file.

### Complaints procedure

Since the Act came into force on September 1, 2021, a person may, if dissatisfied with the services received during his or her search for information from an institution, body or religious congregation, file a complaint in accordance with section 19.

To assume the new obligations, a complaints manager took up his position in the SAA in October 2021. To maintain the independence of the complaint-handling process, the complaints manager is not part of the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Tools have been developed to facilitate the filing of complaints by the families covered by the Act. Starting in the fall of 2021, an exclusive email address for the formulation of complaints as well as the relevant telephone contact information were put on the Internet page devoted to the Act : [Missing and deceased Indigenous children: Support for families | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#). An electronic form to facilitate the filing of complaints was also elaborated and will be put online in the coming weeks.

The complaints procedure reflects the procedure established by the Minister. The procedure, which is also available on the Internet page devoted to the Act, specifies the complaint-submission and complaint-handling process.

The complaints manager undertakes to acknowledge receipt of the request not later than three business days after its transmission and to ensure follow-up within a reasonable time depending on the nature of the procedures to be carried out. At the conclusion of his analysis, the manager takes steps with the institution, body or religious congregation referred to in the complaint to understand and improve practices, particularly by raising awareness about Indigenous realities among the persons concerned.

The complaints procedure that the Act establishes does not replace the existing procedures in the institutions targeted. It is possible for families to lodge complaints through the existing procedures and to exercise their right to recourse with the Commission d'accès à l'information (review or examination of a disagreement).

As of February 28, 2022, the complaints manager had not received any complaints pursuant to the first paragraph of section 19 of the Act.

# III. ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS: ENHANCE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES

Given the brief period that this initial report covers, development prospects for the coming year are focusing primarily on the needs of families for assistance and the projects under way. They also hinge on the enhancement of the work-related cooperation between partner organizations, which have evolved gradually in recent months, and the consolidation of collaboration initiated with the institutions covered by the Act.

## Development work: medical expertise and university research to support families

At the same time as the collaboration established with the institutions covered by the Act and in collaboration with the special advisor, the Direction de soutien aux familles has established a network of medical experts to answer the families' questions and guide certain specific research through the information that they provide.

Aside from the mobilization of the medical knowledge that is essential to certain research, the families are expressing the need to contact medical experts to be assured of obtaining a complete analysis of the contents of the information that they receive. This need sets out the necessary bond of trust to be developed with the information obtained and the partner institutions to attain the truth and achieve healing.

As of February 28, 2022, 10 First Nations general practitioners or medical specialists or physicians who have worked with Indigenous families had also confirmed their desire to collaborate in assisting the families. We expect to meet with other experts in the coming months, including nurses and other health and social services specialists.



*Tikinagen* (Atikamekw baby carrier) displayed during the gathering of families at Lac Decelles to pay tribute to the children who went missing or died (July 2021). Families wish to recover the *tikiganen* left in hospitals after their children went missing or died (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

The experts' individual contributions, which will depend on their availability and specializations, could take shape through three main sections:

- a research section, based on user files and other medical documents received in the context of the procedures;
- a section devoted to meetings with the families to answer their questions;
- a consensus-building section with the entire array of medical experts who are assisting the families in the context of a committee of experts that could meet two or three times a year to enhance the support practices.

From the outset of the discussions with the experts involved, the need emerged to elaborate consent, assistance, analysis, and response processes aimed at families in a spirit of respect for their needs, the confidentiality of family histories, and the protection of personal information in medical records. The Direction de soutien aux familles will pursue its efforts in this matter in the coming year.

Aside from the establishment of a network of medical experts, in recent months the Direction de soutien aux familles has engaged in discussions with university researchers wishing to contribute to the families' research. The diversity of university expertise offered by historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, social workers and religious studies, child protection or ground-probing radar archaeological techniques specialists could lead to research projects targeting certain specific facets related to the administration of the Act. The Direction de soutien aux familles, the special advisor, and the Association des familles Awacak will pursue such collaboration in the coming year.

## **The cooperation between partner organizations and the pursuit of collaboration with the institutions**

Over the past six months, the special advisor, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the Association des familles Awacak, have undertaken teamwork to clarify each intervenor's roles and responsibilities and ensure the complementarity of their initiatives aimed at families. This cooperation, which is reflected in the application-handling process, sometimes involves sharing information and a referral dynamic that requires work related to privacy and secure data transmission. It also involves ongoing adaptation to contexts and needs of each of the families. Such reflections will be pursued in the coming months to ensure that the families receive respectful, reassuring, effective assistance.

The foundations that have been laid regarding collaboration with all the institutions that the Act covers and interdepartmental consensus-building must also be pursued and consolidated. The efforts that began in the fall of 2021 involving several government departments and bodies are a concrete example. To date, this extensive project aimed at pinpointing each of the practical, medical, and legal stages in the process to apply for an order of disinterment to assist



Quilt displayed in July 2021 during the gathering of families at Lac Decelles to pay tribute to the children who went missing or died (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

the families in pursuance of section 18 of the Act has mobilized several Interdepartmental committee members and required work meetings with experts in different branches in the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, the Ministère de la Justice, the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, the Bureau du coroner, or the federal government. Such collaboration and the entire array of attendant contributions will be pursued.

## **The contribution of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act**

Given the brief period that this report covers, no key issues have yet been identified in the context of the administration of the Act. Three recommendations were nonetheless formulated at the committee's February 14, 2022 meeting and are presented in the following section.

The monitoring committee on the carrying out of the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution*, whose contribution is essential to defining the direction of the implementation, is nonetheless maintaining the possibility of formulating comments and recommendations concerning the challenges that could be pinpointed at any time and communicating them at all stages in the administration of the Act.

# CONCLUSION – THE FIRST RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE CARRYING OUT OF THE ACT

At the conclusion of its analysis of the initiation of the administration of the Act and the key aspects of this initial report, the members of the monitoring committee are formulating three initial recommendations focusing on the conservation, archiving, and use of data collected in the context of the work of the special advisor, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the Association des familles Awacak.

## Recommendation 1

The monitoring committee recommends that the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association des familles Awacak develop and implement a uniform method of archiving the information collected in the identification forms, through which the families request research concerning a child who went missing, and the recordings of meetings with the families, to maintain the confidentiality of the information.

## Recommendation 2

The monitoring committee recommends that the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association des familles Awacak develop an information management protocol in a spirit of respect for individuals and Indigenous families to manage potential future use of the information obtained in the context of the Act. The protocol should hinge on and abide by the principles of the research protocols developed by the First Nations and the Inuit in Québec.

## Recommendation 3

The monitoring committee recommends that the information (identification forms, documents obtained through access-to-information requests, recordings, and so on) be preserved in keeping with the protocol established and that such information not be destroyed.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Mandate and members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act

Monitoring committee on the carrying out of the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution*

### Mission statement

#### Context

On December 9, 2020, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs Ian Lafrenière tabled Bill 79, the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution*.

The Act seeks to support the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died in their search for information on the circumstances surrounding the children's disappearance or death after being admitted to a health and social services institution, bearing in mind the families' distinctive linguistic and cultural traits and their psychosocial needs.

#### Mandate of the monitoring committee

Sections 21 and 22 of the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution* (Bill 79) establish the monitoring committee on the carrying out of this Act contribute to improving the services offered to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died, regarding complaints and concerning progress in processing the requests.

More specifically, the monitoring committee has a mandate to:

- Monitor deliberations carried out in the context of Bill 79:
  - by regularly receiving a progress report, in French and in English, on the initiatives carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles in the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones;
  - by regularly receiving information on the work performed by the Association Awacak, the special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs, and any other organization that assists the families;
  - by identifying, analysing, and proposing to the Direction de soutien aux familles solutions to the challenges encountered.
- Survey and obtain feedback from the individuals and families that the Direction de soutien aux familles or the Association Awacak assists as regards existing measures to support them in seeking information, especially from the standpoint of the procedure to be followed in accordance with the Act.



- Analyze the annual report concerning the Act.
- Formulate any recommendation or submit any advisory opinion that it deems necessary to the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs concerning the requisite improvements, especially in the wake of reading the annual report.
- Be present when the annual report is released in a community or at a significant site.
- Make public in French and in English the monitoring committee's recommendations and advisory opinions thirty (30) days after they are submitted to the Minister.
- With the financial support of the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, if necessary, have translated the recommendations into the Indigenous languages.

## Composition

The special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs coordinates the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act .

The monitoring committee comprises permanent members:

- Anne Panasuk, special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs;
- Julie Martel, Acting Director, Direction de soutien aux familles;
- Florence Dupré, Coordinator, Direction de soutien aux familles;
- Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Association Awacak;
- Marjolaine Sioui, Director General, First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission;
- Marjolaine Etienne, President, Quebec Native Women;
- Florence Picard, legal affairs advisor, Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec;
- Madeleine Basile, Regional Coordinator of Health Support Programs, Council of the Atikamekw Nation;
- Nicole Lascelle, Coordinator, Association des femmes inuit – Saturviit;
- Dr. Stanley Vollant, Innu physician;
- Richard Kistabish, an Anishnabe Elder and advisory aid.

Observing members (with the right to speak but without voting rights):

- Gregory Kelley, official opposition critic on Indigenous affairs, Québec Liberal Party;
- Manon Massé, spokesperson for the second opposition group on Indigenous affairs, Québec solidaire;
- Martin Ouellet, spokesperson of the third opposition group on Indigenous affairs, Parti québécois;
- Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, pending;
- Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, pending;
- CLSC Naskapi, pending;
- Association des femmes crie de l'Eeyou Istchee, pending;
- Nicole Anne Vautour, Directrice de la protection et de la promotion des droits de la jeunesse, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.

Guest members

Individuals or the representatives of organizations may be invited on an ad hoc basis to monitoring committee meetings at the request of its permanent members to present certain questions and achievements related to the administration of Bill 79 or to contribute to the committee's targeted reflection.

## Monitoring committee meetings

The monitoring committee will meet three or four times a year depending on needs. The discussion topics on the agenda will determine the length of each meeting.

The special advisor will coordinate the meetings.

Meetings will be held online by means of Teams, Zoom, and teleconferencing.

Additional meetings could be convened, if required.

If simultaneous translation services are required, the SAA will assume the costs and the special advisor and the communications branch of the Conseil exécutif will ensure planning.

## Role of the monitoring committee members

Participate actively and collaborate harmoniously and respectfully in the deliberations:

- build on its expertise and provide advice and key directions concerning the administration of Bill 79;
- provide the relevant information required to carry out activities;
- validate the minutes of each meeting;
- ensure follow-up and report to its respective authorities on the progress of work;
- participate in the analysis of the annual report submitted pursuant to Bill 79 and make recommendations pertaining to it.

## Length of term

The monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act is instituted for the entire duration of the administration of the Act. Its mandate will be reassessed and, if necessary, adjusted on September 1, 2023 then every two years subsequently.

## Precedence of French

Should a difference of interpretation arise between the French and English versions, the French version will take precedence.

*Note:*

This document can be revised according to changes in the mandate. Any change must be subject to a consensus among the members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act and validated by the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs.

## Appendix 2: Mandate of the interdepartmental committee on the administration of the Act

### Context

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG) focused on Indigenous children who died or went missing under circumstances unknown to their families after being admitted to a health and social services institution between 1950 and 1980.

In response to its final report requesting that the families concerned obtain all the information available to it concerning such children, in June 2021 the government had adopted the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution* (the Act).

The Act came into force on September 1, 2021. It is a practical tool to assist families humanely and respectfully in their search for answers concerning children who died or went missing in a health and social services institution or a religious congregation.

The Direction de soutien aux familles in the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones was created to administer the Act. To fulfill its mandate, it is collaborating with the relevant Québec government departments and bodies assembled on an interdepartmental committee.

### Mandate of the interdepartmental committee

Established in November 2021 and coordinated by the Direction de soutien aux familles in the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, the key mandates of the interdepartmental committee are to:

- monitor the administration of the Act on a regular basis by obtaining at each of its meetings a report on the work carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles;
- ensure through active participation by each of the member government departments and bodies the coherence and relevance of government action aimed at the families that the Act covers;
- collaborate in the deliberations pinpointed aimed at the administration of the Act by developing relevant practices or exchanging the information necessary for their development;
- contribute to the elaboration of the annual report on the administration of the Act and formulate any recommendation or submit any advisory opinion concerning it to the Direction de soutien aux familles.

### Coordination and composition of the interdepartmental committee

The Direction de soutien aux familles in the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones coordinates the interdepartmental committee. In its capacity as a coordinating body, the branch convenes committee meetings, prepares the agendas, minutes, and any other relevant working document, and leads the meetings.

The committee comprises the following government departments and bodies:

- Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones (coordination);
- Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux;
- Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec;
- Directeur de l'état civil;
- Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale;
- Ministère de la Justice;
- Ministère de la Sécurité publique;
- Coroner's office;
- Ministère de l'Éducation;
- Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur;
- Ministère de la Culture et des Communications.

When necessary, the Direction de soutien aux familles updates the list of members appended to this mandate.

## Replacement of members

The government departments and bodies must inform the Direction de soutien aux familles of any change of representative on the Interdepartmental committee. To this end, they must submit to it the contact information of the new representative to ensure that the list of members is always up to date.

## Meetings of the interdepartmental committee

The committee meets at least three times a year during the following periods:

- January-February (follow-up to the work and preparation of the annual implementation report);
- May-June (follow-up to the work and definition of working guidelines);
- October-November (follow-up to the work).

Other meetings could be added as the need arises.

The agenda determines the length of each meeting.

## Appendix 3: Illustrations, tables and graphs

**Illustration 1:** Logo of the Association des familles Awacak

**Table 1:** Summary of the activities carried out and the communication tools produced by special advisor Anne Panasuk

**Table 2:** Summary of the activities carried out and the communication tools produced by the Direction de soutien aux familles

**Graph 1:** Breakdown by gender of the applicants

**Graph 2:** Nations represented by the research of the Direction de soutien aux familles

**Table 3:** Nations and communities represented by the research of the Direction de soutien aux familles

**Graph 3:** Family ties of the applicants with the children that the research targets

**Graph 4:** Years covered by the death or disappearance of children

**Graph 5:** Ages of the children when they died or went missing

**Graph 6:** Institutions targeted by access-to-information requests already submitted by the Direction de soutien aux familles

**Table 4:** Chronology of the presentations made by the Direction de soutien aux familles

**Table 5:** Relations with government departments and bodies

## Appendix 4: Photographs

**Photograph 1:** Children's moccasins (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 2:** Ian Lafrenière, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs.

**Photograph 3:** Anne Panasuk, special family support advisor (photo credit: Patrick Lachance).

**Photograph 4:** Julie Martel, Acting Director of Family Support.

**Photograph 5:** Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Association des familles Awacak.

**Photograph 6:** Richard Kistabish, an Anishnabe Elder from Pikogan and member of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act.

**Photograph 7:** The Dubé family from Manawan at the Lac Decelles gathering (July 2021). From left to right: Simone Dubé, her mother Delima Flamand Dubé, who lost her daughter Violetta, and Thérèse Dubé (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 8:** Blanket covered with soft toys and children's shoes at Lac Decelles in July 2021 to commemorate children who went missing or died (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 9:** Children's moccasins sitting on the version of Bill 79 under review (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 10:** Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Nutashquan (November 2021). Marie-Ange Malec (seated), surrounded by her daughter Marie-Josée Wapistan and her son-in-law Clément Peters. Seated near them, from left to right: Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak), Viviane Echaquan and special advisor Anne Panasuk (photo credit: Françoise Ruperthouse).

**Photograph 11:** Julie Martel, Acting Director of Family Support (left) and Florence Dupré, Family Support Coordinator (right).

**Photograph 12:** Members of the Board of Directors of the Association des familles Awacak at the gathering of families at Lac Decelles in July 2021 (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 13:** Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Ekuanitshit (November 2021). From left to right: Françoise Ruperthouse (Director General of Awacak), Anne Panasuk (special advisor), Rita Mestokosho, attendant at the Musée de la culture innue and her team, Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak), and Viviane Echaquan.

**Photograph 14:** Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Unamen-Shipu (November 2021). Anastasia and Josephis Bellefleur, whose son Raymond went missing (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 15:** Forum sur la gouvernance Atikamekw, Casey (October 2021). From left to right: Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles), and Charles Coocoo from Wemotaci (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 16:** Tent of the Forum sur la gouvernance atikamekw in Casey, October 2021 (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 17:** Agnès Poker, mother of two missing children, and her son Chief Guy Mestanapeo from Pakuashipu, during the gathering of families at Lac Decelles (July 2021).

**Photograph 18:** Aerial view of Lac Decelles during the gathering of families (July 2021).

**Photograph 19:** Tour in the Côte-Nord region, Pakuashipu (November 2021). In the centre, Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General of Awacak. To her left, Christine Lalo and her spouse Charles Mark, who lost three children, and their daughters Gilberte and Cécile Mark. To her right, Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak) and psychologist Judith Morency (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 20:** Public meeting in Unamen-Shipu during the tour in the Côte-Nord region by the Association Awacak and Anne Panasuk (November 2021).

**Photograph 21:** *Tikinagen* (Atikamekw baby carrier) displayed during the gathering of families at Lac Decelles to pay tribute to the children who went missing or died (July 2021). Families wish to recover the *tikiganen* left in hospitals after their children went missing or died (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Photograph 22:** Quilt displayed in July 2021 during the gathering of families at Lac Decelles to pay tribute to the children who went missing or died (photo credit: Anne Panasuk).

**Secrétariat  
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