

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 RELATIONS AVEC LES PREMIÈRES NATIONS ET LES INUIT



2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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This publication was produced by the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones in collaboration with the Direction des communications.

An accessible version is available online.

<https://www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministeres-et-organismes/secretariat-premieres-nations-inuit/publications>.

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Website : www.quebec.ca

Legal deposit – April 2023

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

ISBN : 978-2-550-94554-3 (print version)

ISBN : 978-2-550-94555-0 (electronic version)

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR RELATIONS WITH THE FIRST NATIONS AND THE INUIT



Bonjour, Hello, Kwei, Kwe, Kwai, Kuei, Qey, Shé :kon, Waachiya, Ulaakut

It is with considerable humbleness that I present the second 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.

After 18 months, we are already seeking information on 120 children and 80 families have placed their trust in us. While the task is far from finished, my team, comprising the Direction de soutien aux familles in the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, the Association des familles Awacak, and Anne Panasuk, my special advisor, has made advances.

Behind the research and each document submitted to loved ones is a broad range of individuals determined to lend a hand. Indeed, the Act has created a genuine network. Moreover, I would like to thank the teams from the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act and the coroner's office, the physicians and nurses who are helping the families to understand certain documents, the archivists in the health and social services institutions, Québec government departments and bodies, and many more, who have mobilized quickly to contribute to our important quest.

Through their dedication, more and more people are becoming familiar with the Act, which is beginning to enable the families to obtain the long-awaited responses. It is for the families that we are working and it is they who guide us each day.

Once again, I would like to thank the families for their strength, courage, and trust in this process, which, I hope, will bring them some measure of comfort and peace.

Merci, Thank you, Tshinashkumitnau, Wela'liog, Qujannamiik, Nakurmiik, Chiniskomiitin, Niá:wen, Meegwetch, Mikwetc, Woliwon, Tiawenhk.

Ian Lafrenière

MESSAGE FROM THE SPECIAL FAMILY SUPPORT ADVISOR



We have consolidated our efforts during the second year of 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*.

Publicizing the Act in the communities so that the families trust us is an ongoing process that we pursued with the Association des familles Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles. We organized visits to the Innus of Matimekush and Pessamit, the Naskapis of Kawawachikamach, the Anicinapek of Lac-Simon and Kitcisakik, and the Atikamekw of Opitciwan.

These visits in the field enabled us to consolidate our approach, apportion tasks, and collaborate with Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles. Various organizations and individuals also supported us. Physicians, researchers, and organizations are offering their assistance and expertise. Québec society is learning about what happened and wishes to participate in redress.

In addition to tours to publicize the Act and meet with families seeking searches to trace their missing children, we have begun tours to share with the families the information obtained. Virtual meetings are organized regularly but, when possible, we visit the communities. Accordingly, we devoted several days to visiting families in Unamen Shipu, Nutashkuan, and Pakua Shipi.

The meetings arouse emotions. The families finally know what happened and where the child is buried. The information obtained varies but we ensure that the families are certain that everything has been done and that they are aware of all the steps taken to find the truth.

It now remains to establish paths to the Eeyou Cree and Inuit communities in Québec and pursue our efforts in the Anicinape communities, not all of which have been reached.

I note growing interest in the Act among Indigenous organizations in the rest of Canada, which are requesting presentations. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is the special intermediary appointed by Ottawa to propose a legislative framework respecting missing Indigenous children in Canada. The Act is essential and innovative.

Anne Panasuk

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTION DE SOUTIEN AUX FAMILLES



While the Direction de soutien aux familles was established less than two years ago, we have the impression that we have already been accompanying the families for a long time.

Whether we are women from the First Nations or from other cultures, we are, above all, mothers, daughters, granddaughters, sisters, nieces, and friends. It is with each of these dimensions and its compassion that the team from the Direction pursued its research and support for the families during the second year of administration of the Act.



We cannot overemphasize the essential contribution that numerous partners have made to the research. The professionalism and involvement of archivists with varied expertise, colleagues from the Québec government and its bodies, cemetery officials or members of historic societies, physicians, nurses, researchers, but also First Nations and Inuit organizations, especially the monitoring committee members, mark the initial steps in the necessary duty to remember.

In particular, we wish to highlight the invaluable contribution in recent months of the practitioners and psychologists working in community health centres and the Native friendship centres.

The family support team's thoughts are with the children. At the conclusion of this second year of research, 120 little beings of light are sustaining every day the strength and perseverance of each one of us to accompany the families along the path to healing.

We wish to sincerely thank our valued colleagues from the Association des familles Awacak who are working with us strengthened by their experience, resilience, and kindness.

Merci, Tiawenhk.

Patrick Lahaie

Secrétaire général associé
aux relations avec les Premières
Nations et les Inuit

Julie Martel

Directrice du soutien aux familles

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



A second year of effort has begun filled with emotions and suffering. Awacak engages in recruiting and awareness-raising in Québec's Indigenous communities and publicizes the Association as a resource to uncover the truth concerning children who went missing or died after being admitted to health and social services institutions.

We submitted the first report in the community of Pakua Shipi with the entire team, including the Direction de soutien aux familles (Julie Martel and Florence Dupré), the special advisor (Anne Panasuk), the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act, and the team of the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit.

I sincerely believe that we have fulfilled our mission since we returned to the Innu communities to hand over the documents found and provide the answers that the families have awaited for several years.

The negligence, not to mention the racism, of physicians at the time is one reason for the families' suffering. The physicians never contacted the families to inform them of deaths, burials, and transfers. The families feel bitterness toward a number of physicians from that time, which has led to mistrust of the hospitals that is still widespread.

I find it distressing that the families have had to wait for so long to mourn or to understand the events leading to the their children's disappearance. Our efforts since March 2022 have made us empathetic toward those who have lost loved ones. Our research list now comprises more than 120 children and more than 80 families. The Association Awacak has nearly 120 members, including 83 women and 34 men, with several members awaiting registration.

Awacak will clearly exist for several more years since the need is very apparent. Having met, above all, with the Innu, several Atikamekw, and several Anicinape, and, therefore, having covered a small portion of Québec, I am pleased that Awacak exists for all these families.

Françoise Ruperthouse



MESSAGE FROM MADELEINE BASILE ON BEHALF OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE CARRYING OUT OF THE ACT



I would like to dedicate this message to the families who have lost a precious child.

As I write this message I have before me photographs of babies warmly, safely swaddled in the *tikinakan* (baby carrier).

I think about the mothers and fathers who perhaps went home with an empty *tikinakan*.

Sadness, solitude, and powerlessness surround questions about their missing child, for which there are still no answers.

However, they are filled with hope since their babies have disappeared. They hope to find them while imagining how they have grown.

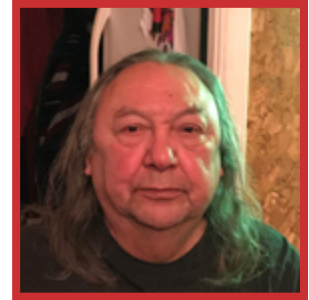
The Direction de soutien aux familles, the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act, and the families are engaged in a long-term effort in which feverishness and disappointment mingle in the search for the files of the missing children.

Let us continue to strongly, lovingly support our families.

Mikwetc.

Madeleine Basile

ANICINABE REFLECTION



Notes and thoughts concerning our ongoing efforts.

The murder of children in Laval has traumatized all of us. The public at large will express a collective sense of sorrow. It is a collective trauma. Society as a whole is experiencing it. Along with the mothers and fathers, family members, loved ones and others are people from all levels of society. The premiers are hastening to support the families to express these feelings.

This drama is bringing back to us the disappearance of our children. They never came back.

Some died accidentally, others sometimes mysteriously, or because of illness.

We are searching for children.

This is abominable. Some creature or other came looking for them, hid them, and what else?

However, it is government institutions that took the children. They never contacted the mothers and fathers. These parents were left not knowing, without resources and assistance creating a feeling of extreme distress. This is odious.

I ask you : Is the government responsible for this situation ? Is it a crime ?

A crime has been committed.

We are engaging in an effort for which no one has experience.

We are discovering that there are victims. The families know nothing. Government representatives have not informed them of their initiatives. The government must make a tangible gesture for these mothers and fathers.

We must find the truth. The truth will afford very minimal relief.

We must do so at all costs.

Nin

Ejinagosi (Richard) Kistabish

Membre du Comité de suivi de la Loi

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I. THE CONTEXT OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACT

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 seven Atikamekw babies evacuated for medical reasons between 1950 and 1973 went missing. Other witnesses reported eight Atikamekw babies who went missing in the 1960s and 1970s, and one Innu child.¹

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 Pakua Shipi after being hospitalized in Blanc-Sablon (Côte-Nord). She also reported on missing Atikamekw children.

Generally speaking, the families that the NIMMIWG commissioners and Ms. Panasuk met 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 and was unable to walk and talk. This story, whose improbability is surprising, raises doubts as to the fate of a number of children whose parents were told they were dead. Some 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 110).

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 107-108.

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 centres 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 of the situations examined, the bodies were never returned to the parents after death. The children's bodies were buried, but the families were not told where, or what funeral rite, if any, was performed. One of the children was found years later in a common grave." (NIMMIWG, Québec Supplementary Report, 2019, page 111).

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 called for "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 the families' desire to respond to this call and thereby humbly contribute to possible healing, in a spirit of respect for the families' dignity.

From suffering to the quest for the truth

The families distressed by the loss or disappearance of an Indigenous child following admission to an institution have for many years sought to obtain answers. Since the Act came into force in September 2021, they have regularly mentioned the need for information 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 expressed to 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 address, 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 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 reports of the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (2021), each of 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 deep-rooted, long-term fears of public institutions in the communities and in urban areas. Coroner Géhane Kamel's report



"Every Child Matters." Wall decoration at the Centre de santé de Pakua Shipi (Côte-Nord).

concerning the death of Ms. Echaquan submitted 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 the institutions and commit itself to contributing to its elimination [TRANSLATION]." ²

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 reconciliation.

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 should facilitate access to certain information that the institutions possess 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. 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 (Association Awacak).



The *tikanakan* (Atikamekw baby carrier) given to the Pakua Shipi families by the members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act, during the presentation on April 29, 2022 of the first annual report pertaining to the Act.

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

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 just over one year of deliberations, on June 3, 2021, 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 (the Act). The parliamentary deliberations that led to its adoption were guided by a shared, trans-partisan perspective of the children’s dignity and their families’ quest for the truth. The Act came into force on September 1, 2021.

3. The first annual report pertaining to the Act covered its first six months of administration (September 1, 2021 to February 28, 2022).

4. The second annual report pertaining to the Act covers the period from March 1, 2022 to February 28, 2023.

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 the 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.



Presentation on April 28, 2022 in the National Assembly of Québec of the first annual report pertaining to the Act. From left to right and from top to bottom : Viviane Echaquan Niquay (Awacak), Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak), Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak) / Chantale Awashish (Awacak), Madeleine Basile (monitoring committee – Council of the Atikamekw Nation), Laura Rock (monitoring committee – Quebec Native Women) / Manon Massé (monitoring committee – Québec solidaire), Doreen Petiquay Barthold (monitoring committee – Quebec Native Women), Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Claudette Dumont-Smith (monitoring committee – Quebec Native Women), Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles) / Gregory Kelley (monitoring committee – Québec Liberal Party), Anne Panasuk (special advisor), Martin Ouellet (monitoring committee – Parti Québécois), and Ian Lafrenière (Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit).

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, taking into account such aspects as their linguistic and cultural characteristics, and to keep Quebecers' collective memory alive.

The Act empowers the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit (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 in a spirit of respect for their culture, language, and history throughout the process.

Moreover, from the standpoint of their healing process, the Act calls for support for the families that so desire in the possible steps surrounding an application to the Superior Court to obtain an order of disinterment.

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 interveners are central to the administration of the Act

On June 8, 2021, shortly after the Act was assented to, Anne Panasuk, the Minister's special family support advisor was appointed.

The Act's coming into force several weeks later was accompanied by the establishment of the Direction de soutien aux familles, a new branch in the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (SRPNI) to ensure the Act's 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 administering 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 Pakua Shipi and Atikamekw families whose children died or went missing after being hospitalized, was appointed a special family support advisor of the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit on June 8, 2021.

She has a mandate to guide and support the Minister 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 :

- coordinating the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act, including its requisite contributions and validations for the annual report ;
- maintaining relations between the Indigenous families and the Québec government in the context of the administration of the Act ;
- informing Indigenous families of the support offered by the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association des familles Awacak to support them in their search for information ;
- supporting and advising the Direction de soutien aux familles 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 an exhumation ;
- contributing to the elaboration, the dissemination, and the presentation of the annual report stipulated by the Act.



Anne Panasuk, special family support advisor along with Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General of the Association des familles Awacak, in Pakua Shipi (February 2023).

The Direction de soutien aux familles

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

More specifically, it is responsible for :

- supporting all the families' research efforts, e.g., requests from institutions, requests for civil status documents, requests addressed to government departments, public bodies, and religious congregations, efforts to identify a burial site and to obtain the related documents, and exhumation requests ;
- elaborating, in collaboration with the families, tailor-made research strategies that satisfy the families' wishes and objectives ;
- organizing and coordinating, at the request of the families that it supports, meetings with health and social services experts (mainly physicians and nurses) or any other relevant expert in the analysis and understanding of the documentation obtained ;
- coordinating the Réseau d'experts en santé et services sociaux en soutien à l'application de la Loi ;
- coordinating the interdepartmental committee on the administration of the Act ;
- developing all procedures and collaboration 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 support and presentations ;
- communicating to partner Indigenous organizations information concerning the Act and its administration and offering them, if necessary, presentations and updates ;
- coordinating the preparation and drafting of the annual report.



The family support team. Florence Dupré, Coordinator (left) and Julie Martel, Director (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 Association Awacak, the special family support advisor, Indigenous organizations, and the institutions covered by the Act to fulfil its mandate.

The team from the Direction works under the supervision of a director of family support who reports to the to the Secrétaire général associé aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit in the SRPNI.

The team also has a research coordinator who is responsible for the elaboration and implementation of its key directions and tools, the establishment of the entire array of partnerships required to fulfill its mandate and

support the families, an administrative technician, responsible for the development and updating of the research and archival database, and three family support advisor positions focusing on support for the families and research.

The first of the three advisor positions was created in February 2022 and was occupied from April 4, 2022 to January 13, 2023 by a staff member who supported several families in their research. This initial post was again filled on February 20, 2023. The Direction should soon fill the two additional positions created in January 2023.

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 SRPNI has obtained the budget's renewal and hopes to enhance it to satisfy high expectations concerning support for families over the next five years (2023-2028).

Testimonial from Adam Hunter concerning the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles with respect to baby Alice Margaret

Alice Margaret Hunter is a baby girl, who fell ill as an infant approximately 9 months after her birth, and passed away. Daughter of my Father Isaac Hunter and his first wife Edna Polson. Alice was taken to a hospital in Rouyn-Noranda and was never to be seen again.

(January 14 – October 23, 1952)

Shortly after the horrific discovery of the mass graves at the Kamloops residential school, my big sister contacted me, and during our telephone call she mentioned and wondered what ever happened to "Dad's little baby girl". Of course, this was a surprise and a somewhat shocking news to me.

Conversation followed almost immediately amongst my sister Lena, brother Jimmy and I and we began our search. Coincidentally, and thankfully, the Government of Quebec had in place assistance to help guide us through the process of searching for Alice.

I don't think I speak for myself only when I say that this was an emotional roller coaster. I must admit that there were moments when I didn't know how exactly I was feeling. I was only able to think about the tremendous ordeal that baby Alice's parents must've suffered. Sadness for our loss and happiness for our closure lingered and stirred within us throughout this journey.

In the end, we are among the fortunate who managed to find our long lost loved one. And we are overwhelmed with thankfulness, not just for finding Alice, but we're especially thankful for being blessed with a caring soul like Florence Dupré to help us walk through this part of our lives.

Kitchi Meegwetc Florence. Kitchi Meegwetc.

Adam Hunter, Baby Alice Margaret's brother

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.

The five founding members of the Association Awacak are :

- Françoise Ruperthouse ;
- Pierre-Paul Niquay ;
- Viviane Echaquan Niquay ;
- Chantale Awashish ;
- Viviane Chilton.

To attain its objectives, Awacak collaborates with the Direction de soutien aux familles and special advisor Anne Panasuk.

The Association des familles Awacak team during the submission on April 28, 2022 in the National Assembly of the first annual report pertaining to the Act. From left to right : Pierre-Paul Niquay (recruiting and information officer), Viviane Echaquan Niquay (Chair of the Board of Directors), Chantale Awashish (recruiting and research officer), and Françoise Ruperthouse (Director General).



Testimonial of Mélissa Crépeau concerning the support that the Association Awacak offers

I would like, in my own name and on behalf of my family, to thank the Awacak team and the Direction de soutien aux familles for fully supporting our efforts to find out what happened to our missing young brother.

The team's assistance was remarkable. They listened to us without pressuring us and rushing us in making the necessary decisions. They took the time to conduct a great deal of research, make numerous calls, and worked relentlessly to shed light on this event, not to mention that they offered psychological support when necessary.

Once again, we thank them for their great dedication.

Mélissa Crépeau, sister of Baby Jérôme

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 committee was officially set up at its first meeting on October 29, 2021.

The committee met twice during the 2021-2022 fiscal year, and six times between March 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023 :

- April 4, 2022
- June 20, 2022
- October 12, 2022
- November 29, 2022 (meeting of a working group of the committee)
- January 31, 2023
- February 13, 2023

The committee's composition was fairly stable during this period, but some adjustments had to be made because of the availability of its members and the provincial election on October 3, 2022.

The monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act comprised nine permanent members between March 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023, two fewer than during the first six months of the administration of the Act because the workload of two members prevented them from maintaining their involvement :

- Anne Panasuk, special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit ;
- Julie Martel, Director, Direction de soutien aux familles ;
- Florence Dupré, Coordinator, Direction de soutien aux familles ;
- Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Association Awacak ;

- Marjolaine Sioui, Executive Director, 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 for the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program, Council of the Atikamekw Nation, was replaced on January 31, 2023 by Raoul Quitich, assistance officer for the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program, Council of the Atikamekw Nation ;
- Ejinagosi (Richard) Kistabish, Anicinape Elder and advisory aid.

In addition to the permanent members, observer members represent the opposition parties and the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse. The following four observer members present since the monitoring committee's inception in October 2021 remained in their positions until October 3, 2022, date of the last provincial election :

- 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 for the third opposition group on Indigenous affairs, Parti Québécois ;
- Nicole Anne Vautour, Directrice des enquêtes jeunesse, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.

Starting from October 4, 2022, certain parties designated new representatives to sit on the committee. From October 4, 2022 to February 28, 2023, the following observer members sat on the committee :

- André Albert Morin, official opposition critic for relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Québec Liberal Party ;
- Manon Massé, co-spokesperson of the second opposition group and spokesperson for relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Québec solidaire ;
- Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, leader of the third opposition group and spokesperson for relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Parti Québécois ;
- Nicole Anne Vautour, Directrice des enquêtes jeunesse, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.

Among its key attributions, the monitoring committee is responsible for overseeing the administration of the Act and formulating recommendations pertaining to it. Appendix 1 indicates the mission statement and the full list of members.

In the context of the submission in March 2022 of the first annual report pertaining to the Act, the monitoring committee made three recommendations focusing on the preservation, archiving, and use of data collected pursuant to the administration of the Act. Section 4 and the conclusion of the report, respectively, present the response to the initial recommendations and the monitoring committee's new recommendations.

The concerted efforts of the partner stakeholders was sustained throughout the second year of administration of the Act through the mobilization efforts and research of several institutions covered by the Act. The individual and institutional contributions of medical and religious archivists, cemetery and parish officials, and public servants from government departments and bodies seeking responses and solutions to access information significantly enhanced the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles at the request of the families.

II. SECOND ADMINISTRATION REPORT : MARCH 1, 2022 – FEBRUARY 28, 2023

In the wake of the first annual report covering the first six months of administration of the Act, this second report summarizes the work carried out between March 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023. More specifically, it presents the key achievements pertaining to :

- 1- communications and awareness-raising ;
- 2- assistance for families ;
- 3- sectorial development ;
- 4- investigations and complaints.

The report also focuses on the indispensable humanity of the way to healing, an essential facet of the administration of the Act.

Communications and awareness-raising : disseminate the Act and its compliance tools

The administration of the Act and support for families hinge on an array of communications activities that seek to make known to the families, institutions, and the general public the services offered to search for children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution.

Several communications initiatives of the special advisor, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the Association Awacak were carried for this purpose during the first six months following the coming into force of the Act. The initiatives were presented in the first report submitted in March 2022.

Over the past year, **such activities have focused primarily on** travel and visits to the communities, the special advisor's communications initiatives, and growing media interest in the research conducted at the request of the families.

Travel and visits to the communities

Visits by partner stakeholders to the families and communities but also meetings with the institutions covered by the Act intensified starting in the spring of 2022. On April 29, 2022, the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, members of his office staff, the special advisor, the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Association des familles Awacak, and several members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act visited Pakua Shipi to present there the first annual report pertaining to the Act. At that time, a report was presented to the families and those present on the work accomplished. A ceremony steeped in emotion was held to honour the children who went missing or died.



Presentation on April 29, 2022 to Innu families in Pakua Shipi of the first annual report pertaining to the Act. From left to right and from top to bottom : Doreen Petiquay Barthold (monitoring committee – Quebec Native Women), Marjolaine Sioui (monitoring committee – First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission), Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles), Alana Boileau (political advisor to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit), Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak), Martin Ouellet (monitoring committee – Parti Québécois), Pierre Lalo, Alfred Tenegan / Manon Massé (monitoring committee – Québec solidaire), Chantale Awashish (Awacak), Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Françoise Rupertouse (Awacak), Anne Panasuk (special advisor), Agnès Poker, Madeleine Basile (monitoring committee – Council of the Atikamekw Nation), Marie-Louise Mark, Jérôme Mestenaepo / Viviane Echaquan Niquay (Awacak), Christine Lalo, Charles Mark, Agathe Tenegan, Louisa Tenegan and Ian Lafrenière (Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit).



The Association Awacak, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the special advisor accompanied by members of the family of Mélissa, Michèle and Rollande Crépeau at the public meeting held in Pessamit (Côte-Nord) in May 2022.

From May 16 to 23, 2022, the Association Awacak and the special advisor visited the Innu community of Matimekush and Naskapi families in Kawawachikamach to publicize the Act. They also visited the community of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam to meet with other families. On May 24 and 25, 2022, the Direction de soutien aux familles joined them in the Innu community of Pessamit on the North Shore to hold a public meeting to present the Act and take stock of research with the families already supported by the Direction. The Direction took advantage of the opportunity to meet the priest in the community, the person responsible for medical archives, and the assistant to the President and CEO of the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de la Côte-Nord to take stock of ongoing requests and discuss collaboration.



A commemorative stele for First Nations children interred in the Amos cemetery (Abitibi-Témiscamingue, July 2022).



The historic cemetery in the Amos region (Abitibi-Témiscamingue), which the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak visited in July 2022 in the context of their research.

From July 18 to 21, 2022, the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak spent several days in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region with families in the Anicinape communities of Lac-Simon and Kitcisakik. The visit allowed for the organization of a public meeting in Kitcisakik but also for visits to several institutions, including cemeteries and the site of the former Hôtel-Dieu d'Amos. At that time, the Direction de soutien aux familles met with the archives team from the CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, which gave it access to the institution's archive system. The meeting was also intended ensure follow-up to research under way and better grasp the procedures adopted to respond to the families.



Prayer at a meeting to transmit findings during the visit to Nutashkuan (October 2022). From left to right : Marie-Ange Malec (mother of the children), her daughter Marie-Josée Wapistan, Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak), Dr. Éric Poirier (collaborating physician), and Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles).

From October 25 to 28, 2022, the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Association Awacak, and the special advisor visited Nutashkuan and Unamen Shipu (Côte-Nord) to give to the Innu families that they met in November 2021 the findings of the research conducted by the Direction. Of the eight families met in person, six were able to meet with a partner physician to obtain explanations on the contents of the medical



A meeting to transmit findings during a visit to Unamen Shipu (October 2022). From left to right : Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Simone Bellefleur (niece of the missing child), and Adeline Mark (sister of the missing child).



Unamen Shipu (Côte-Nord).

documents compiled by the Direction. One of the physicians was present in Natashquan. Three other physicians joined the discussion by videoconferencing in Unamen Shipu. Preliminary research was also conducted in certain religious archives. As a result of the Direction's research and discussions with the families, it was hypothesized that certain of the children being sought might have been buried in the old cemetery in the municipality of Natashquan neighbouring the Innu community. Discussions with the mayor of Natashquan and preliminary searching were initiated at that time.

From January 23 to 26, 2023, the Association des familles Awacak visited Opitciwan to hold a public meeting and present the Act to the Atikamekw families. The special advisor joined the public meeting by videoconferencing to present the Act. New families were met at that time and five new requests for research were submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles.

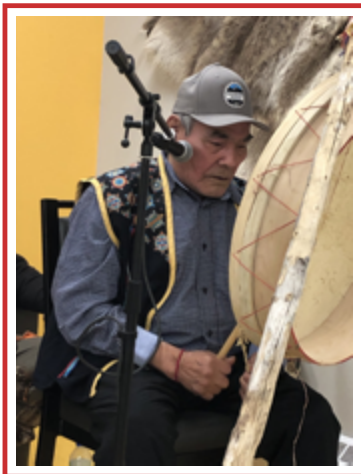


Public meeting held in January 2023 in Opitciwan. Along with Chief Jean-Claude Mequish are members of the Association Awacak and the families. In the background on videoconferencing is special advisor Anne Panasuk.



Meeting to transmit findings during the visit to Pakua Shipi (February 2023). From left to right : Chantale Awashish (Awacak), Dr. Sharon Hatcher (partner physician), Anne Panasuk (special advisor), Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak), Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles), Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Nicole Lalo (sister of the missing child), Pierre Lalo (father of the missing child), Marie-Louise Mark (mother of the missing child), Thérèse Lalo (sister of the missing child), and Diane Lalo (sister of the missing child). Missing from the photo : Judith Morency (psychologist) and Nathalie Bordeleau (primary child and family caregiver), present in person, and Dr. Claude Cyr (partner physician), who joined the meeting through videoconferencing.

Lastly, from February 6 to 11, 2023, three partner stakeholders visited Pakua Shipi to give to six families the research findings concerning nine children. A partner physician accompanied the team during visits to all the Innu families. Another physician participated by videoconferencing to share his analysis with the families and answer their questions.



Charles Mark, the father of three missing children, playing the drum during a gathering of families from Pakua Shipi at the conclusion of the tour to present results in February 2023.



Agnès Poker (on the right) and Jérôme Mestenaepo (on the left), the parents of two missing children during the meeting to present results with the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Association Awacak, and the special advisor in Pakua Shipi (February 2023).



Judith Morency, psychologist (on the left) and Nathalie Bordeleau, primary child and family caregiver (on the right), present to provide support during all the meetings to present results held with the families from Pakua Shipi in February 2023.

At the same time as these visits, eight trips between June and December 2022 enabled the DSF, often accompanied by the Association Awacak, to meet with families in person to report on the research findings or enable them to meet a collaborating physician. The team from the Direction also directly visited institutions covered by the research, e.g., religious congregations, institutions, and cemeteries, to pursue archival research and meet with the officials responsible.

While this extensive travel required ongoing planning between the partner stakeholders, it also, and above all, ensured the development of relations with the families and the communities and the consolidation of the Direction's partnerships with the institutions targeted, which are crucial in the research.

The initiatives of Anne Panasuk, special family support advisor

Communications initiatives

My work is multifaceted. It encompasses regular work with the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak and the political staff of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit.

Targeted meetings with organizations or individuals clarify specific questions or facilitate the development of collaboration with the organizations.

Communications initiatives are carried out by means of tours and public meetings in the communities but also through talks and media interviews. It should be noted that Indigenous associations in Canada are interested in the Act and ask me to speak about it.

I am also coordinating the monitoring committee stipulated by the Act. The committee's composition has been modified in the wake of the election.

To conclude, my book continues to arouse interest, which enables me to make speeches or meet a wider audience to talk about the Act and our deliberations.

Work with the Direction and Awacak

I meet weekly with the Director of the Association Awacak to plan work, conduct intake interviews, and to give support.

Roughly every two weeks, we meet with the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak to discuss different questions and apportion the work.

We occasionally organize broader, more targeted meetings :

- training given on March 22, 2022 by psychologist Judith Morency to the employees of the Association Awacak ;
- training given on March 25, 2022 on the research protocols of the First Nations given by Professor Suzy Basile of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT), in anticipation of pending sociological or anthropological research ;
- meetings with the Sûreté du Québec on their report following investigations of missing children requested by Atikamekw families ; follow-up to the collaboration to be developed concerning access to information (March 29 and July 6, 2022) ;
- meeting on private adoptions (June 29, 2022) ;
- meeting with the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale (LSJML) on the DNA tests to be used with the families ; training on the usefulness of the tests (July 12, 2022) ;
- meetings with partner physicians (June 16 and October 4, 2022).

In addition, meetings were held with the Minister and his political staff, if necessary. Two more formal meetings were held on May 12 and on November 22, 2022 with the Minister and negotiators or mediators.

Tours

Information tours in the Indigenous communities continued at the same time as tours to give families information obtained in response to their requests.

- In May 2022, with the members of the Association Awacak, we visited the Innu community of Matimekush to provide the information through the community radio and also at a general meeting. The visits occurred in two stages. Information was provided and we then met with families to receive their research requests, which we call the intake interviews.
- During the same period, we visited the Naskapis of Kawawachikamach to give an interview on the community radio, hold a public meeting, and meet with the families.
- On the return trip, we stopped in Uashat mak Mani-Utenam to meet with the families wishing to request our assistance. We took advantage of the opportunity to meet families that acted as foster families to attempt to understand the private adoption process in the 1970s. This research obviously warrants examination in greater depth.
- With the Direction de soutien aux familles, we held a public meeting in Pessamit and met with families.
- We briefly visited officials in Essipit, where we were told that there were no missing children. However, we must return there to validate such an assertion at a public meeting.
- I was unable to accompany the members of the Association Awacak to Opitciwan last January, but, at the request of the Chief, did participate via Zoom in the public meeting, which enabled me to explain the Act by means of a PowerPoint presentation. The Association Awacak subsequently conducted intake interviews with families seeking to have research carried out.

Different tours began this year to give the families the information and documents obtained.

- From October 25 to 28, 2022, we visited two families in Nutashkuan to give them the information obtained on missing children. A collaborating physician accompanied us.
- We met with five families in Unamen Shipu. The collaborating physicians joined us via Zoom.
- From February 6 to 11, 2023, we met with six families in Pakua Shipi. A partner physician joined us on site and a pediatrician joined us via Zoom on several occasions. It all began for me in Pakua Shipi in 2014 when families broke their silence concerning their missing children despite their guilt and shame at being unable to protect their children. I was also especially moved by the closure ceremony organized by the community, where the elders sang accompanied by their *tewekan*.

We must now further explain the Act to the Eeyou Cree communities and the Inuit. I began this work in December 2022 with the Eeyou Cree :

- conversation on December 7, 2022 with Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty ;
- meeting on December 13, 2022 with Melissa Saganash, delegated by the Grand Chief, and the Association Awacak.

I also conduct intake interviews at the request of families who know me or at the request of the Association Awacak and ensure follow-up to them.

Talks

When I am invited to give talks, I attempt to do so with Françoise Ruperthouse, Director of the Association Awacak. We both participated in the following events :

- UQAT – March 24, 2022 ;
- a talk given to the APNQL – April 27, 2022 ;
- the Kwei event in Québec City – June 19, 2022 ;
- the Journée Vérité et réconciliation at the Université de Montréal – September 30, 2022 ;
- the Cercle des Premières Nations of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) – December 3, 2022.

I also gave talks alone :

- Laurentian University – June 15, 2022 ;
- A course for UQAM students – November 29, 2022.

Talks given in Canada

The Indigenous associations of Canada wish to learn about the Act.

I met several times with Raymond Frogner, Director of Archives for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) to discuss the existing archives of the religious congregations, especially the Oblates. We are updating a protocol to enable the Indigenous communities to more readily access the NCTR's archives.

On March 31, 2022, I gave a talk devoted to the Act at a meeting organized by the NCTR.

The federal government has appointed Kimberly Murray as Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. She must pinpoint the requisite measures and recommend the establishment of a new federal legal framework. While her work focuses above all on the residential schools, Ms. Murray is aware of the Act and has noted that children disappeared from healthcare institutions.

We had an initial meeting on the Act on July 26, 2022, then met on August 8, 2022 with Michel Martin, the facilitator that the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit appointed to focus on the residential schools.

Ms. Murray invited me to give a talk at the National Gathering on Unmarked Burials in Vancouver, which I visited from January 16 to 18, 2023.

It is perhaps egotistical to say so but it would be worthwhile for Newfoundland and Ontario to adopt a similar act since the Indigenous peoples living in Québec were sent to hospitals in the two provinces. However, we suspect that children disappeared in provinces other than Québec.



A composition representing an empty chair to commemorate missing children produced at the National Gathering on Unmarked Burials held in Vancouver in January 2023.

Media interviews

- CBC –May 2, 2022
- Voix et Vues – September 21, 2022
- QUB –Septembre 30, 2022
- Radio – October 3, 2022
- Radio – October 4, 2022
- Radio – October 5, 2022
- Radio-Canada Côte-Nord – October 29, 2022
- Émission Voix et Vues – September 2, 2022
- Radio program – September 30, 2022
- Interview with *Le Devoir* – November 1, 2022
- RC – December 1, 2022
- Radio-Canada Côte-Nord – February 13, 2023

Related issues

Related issues linked to the Act are also of concern to me. Accordingly, I :

- met on May 9, 2022 with a social worker who worked with the Atikamekw in the early 1970s ;
- met with the Mohawk Mothers concerning the Allan Memorial Institute and the possible existence of Indigenous graves. The Mohawk Mothers sought a court injunction (July 25, 2022 and several appeals) ;
- met with a man who adopted an Indigenous child and realized that it was without the mother's consent (September 29, 2022) ;
- met with Archéo Mamu and Nutashkuan on efforts to identify possible graves in the former Innu cemetery located in the fishing village. The cemetery was wrecked when the school was built. A family has given us an exhumation request (November 28 and December 20, 2022) ; and
- established initial contacts with physicians, nurses, or researchers who wish to collaborate with us.

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ) is willing to collaborate with us. It is proposing to compile scattered collections to make the archives more accessible. I had several discussions in this respect :

- on January 10, 2023 with the Director General ;
- on January 24, 2023 with the chairperson ;
- on January 27, 2023 with the Comité du congrès des archivistes, which has requested our participation.

Book

My book, *Auassat, à la recherche des enfants disparus*, published in the fall of 2021, continues to arouse interest. I receive invitations to book fairs where I can give talks or give courses to students or media interviews. I take advantage of these activities to talk about the Act to a broader or different audience, which leads collaborators

to contact me. In this way, collaborating physicians and researchers who wish to contribute have offered us their skills and assistance.

- Bibliothèque de Villeray – March 9, 2022
- Bibliothèque de Saint-Lambert – April 6, 2022
- Salon du livre de la Côte-Nord – May 12 to 15, 2022
- Salon du livre de Dieppe – October 19 to 22, 2022 (lecture, talk, round-table forum)
- facilitator at the launching of the book by Chief Sipi Flamand of Manawan – November 12, 2022

Communication tools

Last year I prepared two video segments that were disseminated on the social networks. This year, I was able to prepare only one. With the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit we disseminated a video on the submission of the annual report in the community of Pakua Shipi.

On the other hand, I add specific information on our work to my Facebook page (6 800 subscribers).

Other communication tools

It is worth noting that in addition to this array of activities carried out by the special advisor, various communication tools were produced in the wake of the coming into force of the Act pursuant to 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 information possible 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 \(quebec.ca\)](#). The statistics collected reveal that the page was visited 1 140 times between March 1, 2022 and February 1, 2023. Nearly 87 % of the consultations were single views.

What is more, since November 2022 and on the recommendation of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act, a section of the newsletter of the SRPNI⁵ has been devoted, when relevant, to the initiatives carried out pursuant to the administration of the Act. These regular publications, in French and in English, enable the partner Indigenous organizations to disseminate brief reports in their networks. The Direction de soutien aux familles and its partners are thus updating quarterly in the SRPNI newsletter their work with the families.

Growing media interest

While special advisor Anne Panasuk had already mediatized in the context of her work as a journalist the situation of certain families of Indigenous children who went missing or died, media interest in the research of families under the aegis of the Act has intensified with the publication of 15 or so press articles between March 2022 and February 2023. Most of the articles focus directly on the Act or refer to it. They describe the research of the families assisted by the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak.

In December 2022, two short reports were disseminated by TVA/LCN journalist and anchorwoman Marie-Claude Paradis-Desfossés devoted to the presentation of research findings to one of the families in Nutashkuan. The

5. To register for the SRPNI newsletter : <https://www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministeres-et-organismes/secretariat-premieres-nations-inuit/abonnement-infolettre>

reports highlight the families' experience but also the role of the Association Awacak and the complexity of the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles. Following their dissemination, several families wishing to initiate research contacted the Association Awacak.

Since then, other reporting projects and documentaries have been brought to the attention of the partner stakeholders. Growing media interest has undoubtedly has a significant impact on the publicization of the Act and the support services offered to families and in heightening awareness in the general population of the intergenerational traumatic experiences of the families searching for their children.

However, the Direction de soutien aux familles is careful to avoid excessive media coverage of the research to protect the privacy of those families who wish it and avoid restricting access to the services by families who do not wish to see their efforts publicized. The Direction is guided above all by the wishes and needs of the families in responding to the media requests that it receives.

Awacak, by and for Indigenous families

by *Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Association des familles Awacak*

The Association Awacak has a remit to engage in recruiting and awareness-raising in all Indigenous communities in Québec and with respect to the members living outside the communities. This mission has been fulfilled in several communities, including Innu communities, several Atikamekw communities, and several Anicinape communities. The Association Awacak wishes to pursue these awareness-raising tours in the other Québec communities in the coming years. Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles will meet with the Eeyou Nation and the Inuit to inform them of the establishment of the Association and the services offered.

While we have not yet visited half the communities, we realized this year that the children and families are more numerous than we imagined. Not all the families that we have met have registered with the Association Awacak. The families are aware of the lengthy process and its emotional burden and need time before initiating the research.

Through the awareness-raising carried out in the communities, the families are becoming increasingly aware of the Association Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles and are discussing them among themselves. Word of mouth is contributing to publicizing the support services and the support offered.

Among the Association Awacak's key achievements over the past year, the adoption of general by-laws but also the elaboration of interview tools with the families, consent forms, and a protocol governing the preservation and archiving of the data collected from the families are particularly noteworthy. Collaboration was established with Professor Suzy Basile and her team from the UQAT to produce the protocol. All the data collected from the families are safely preserved using the system.

The Association Awacak has also pursued collaboration with lawyers, in particular to support the first families that requested the exhumation of their children. Such requests require the elaboration of a lengthy, very sensitive process.

The Association Awacak has a Director General but also a recruiting and information officer, a recruiting and research officer, an assistant responsible for employee files, and a staff member responsible for verbatim reports. It also relies on an accounting firm. A full-time administrative assistant and a new English-speaking recruiting officer will join the team shortly.

Lastly, the Association Awacak wishes to establish support for its team overall, whose work is sometimes trying but gratifying. Such support will alleviate the emotional burden when the need arises.

Testimonial of Agathe Awashish concerning the Association Awacak

I am very pleased that my son Joseph's birth date was found. I feel that my grief has been eased and I feel much better. I will be able to go in peace when my time comes.

I know that the research has not been completed and that there is much more work to do, but discovering my son Joseph's birth date means that part of the work has been done. I am glad that the Association Awacak now exists to be able to discover the truth.

I encourage you to continue to work hard to give other families part of the answers. I am pleased that Minister Lafrenière has believed us, the families, about the disappearance of our children and that he had adopted this Act. I am very grateful and pleased that the Association Awacak was established.

Agathe Awashish, mother of Baby Joseph



A *tikinakan* (Atikamekw baby carrier) produced by Raymond Weizineau for Agathe Awashish, the mother of Baby Joseph. The illustration of the *tikinakan* represents the story of Joseph's disappearance. His mother was unable to bring him back to his community after his birth. From left to right : Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak), Agathe Awashish, and her daughter Chantale Awashish.

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, 2023, the Direction de soutien aux familles was seeking information concerning **120 children based on requests received from 80 applicants**. This represents an increase of more than 118 % in the number of children covered by research and more than 128 % in the number of applicants ⁶ in relation to the first annual report submitted in March 2022.

The following pages present the highlights of the research and the key sectoral developments as of February 28, 2023.

Support geared to the families' needs

The considerations that the Direction de soutien aux familles mentioned in its first report, nearly six months after the Act came into force, are, one year later, always topical and noteworthy from the standpoint of posing certain methodological limits in this report.

Generally speaking, **the nature of the assistance that the Direction de soutien aux familles offers varies according to the families' needs and specific objectives.**

6. The first annual report pertaining to the Act submitted in March 2022 reported research concerning 55 children at the request of 35 applicants.

While most of the applications can be deemed to be undergoing active processing by the Direction, including, for example, the elaboration and implementation of research strategies, the formulation of access requests to user files or administrative information, the search for civil status documents, and possible burial sites or the identification of witnesses, other requests proceed at a less sustained pace in accordance with communications and the families' decisions.

As of February 28, 2023, 74 of the 80 requests (more than 92 %) submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles were thus deemed active. This represents a seven percentage point increase in relation to the observations formulated in the first annual report pertaining to the Act. The publicization of the Act and the services offered to the families, the intensification of the tours in the communities and ongoing collaboration between the Association Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles are undoubtedly relevant to this high level of activity. The less active research efforts are attributable to a spirit of respect for the decisions and the pace of the families concerned.

Reception of the families and follow-up to research : the establishment of the unique partnership bond between the Association Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles

Over the past year, the reception procedures with respect to families have **diversified** to ensure that support is the most humane and respectful possible of the needs expressed, e.g., interpreting, emotional or spiritual support, level of ease with technology, and geographic distance.

The welcoming meetings facilitate the presentation of the support services that the Association Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles offer, ensure the families' eligibility for the provisions of the Act, and lay the foundations of the research strategy that will be validated with the family then implemented by the Direction. The establishment of a relationship of trust often depends on these initial exchanges, to be maintained throughout the support process. Certain applicants are accompanied regularly or on an ad hoc basis by loved ones during these interviews : i.e., brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, and spouses, but also interveners, psychologist, interpreters, elders, or representatives.

While the Direction de soutien aux familles mainly carried out the initial interviews to retrace the family history primarily by videoconferencing against the backdrop of the pandemic for the first six months, more and more interviews were conducted in person as travel resumed in the communities. The meetings were, by and large, held in collaboration with the Association Awacak, especially during tours, with the assistance of an interpreter and support staff when necessary.

The Association Awacak also conducted face-to-face intake interviews and subsequently submitted the requisite information to the Direction de soutien aux familles with a view to initiating the research. Special advisor Anne Panasuk also conducted certain interviews, alone or with the Association Awacak, remotely or on site.

Once the Direction has initiated the research, validation and regular follow-up are carried out with the families and the partners, e.g., submitting information or documents, discussing progress in the process, pending stages, or ensuring that the families are at ease and pinpointing possible needs.

As of February 28, 2023, nearly 80 % of the families on behalf of whom the Direction de soutien aux familles was conducting research were supported jointly by the Direction and the Association Awacak. The other families directly approached the Direction's team. While Awacak's support was proposed to them at the outset of the process, they still did not wish to take advantage of it. The Direction de soutien aux familles informed the Association Awacak of the requests without, however, disclosing personal information.

The Association Awacak continues to recruit families to adhere to the organization. When the families feel ready, welcoming meetings are organized with or without the presence of the Direction de soutien aux familles and the information is then submitted to it with the families' consent, and the research is initiated. The Association Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles are present at meetings with the families to ensure follow-up and submit the findings. When the families so desire, the special advisor can also attend the follow-up meetings.

The enumeration of different paths that the partners stakeholders follow to support the families illustrates the **absence of a single, uniform process**, to ensure a response to the families' needs instead of asking them to adapt to a set procedure.

It also illustrates the coherent, flexible partnership that the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak have jointly developed during the past year.

Testimonial of Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General of the Association Awacak, concerning support for families

To help the families, we must take the time to work and to do things properly. We must take the time to listen to them and allow them to cope with their emotions. We must allow them the freedom to express their feelings, regardless of how they do so.

In our capacity as an organization that has for several years conveyed information and responses to their questions, we have an obligation to listen to them and support them in a spirit of respect.

The best way to support the families is to work with individuals who are as competent and sensitive as the team overall, i.e., Awacak, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the special advisor. Partners have joined us and with them, we see that we are on the right path, the path of truth.

I must thank these fine people because our work is very difficult but very enriching. The team members deserve my full respect for their efforts. Without them, I could not have done what has been accomplished.

Françoise Ruperthouse



An extensive team accompanies the families. From left to right : Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak), Anne Panasuk (special advisor), Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak), and Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles). The photo was taken at the Unamen Shipu airport (October 2022). Missing from the photo and an essential member of the extensive team is Chantale Awashish (Awacak).

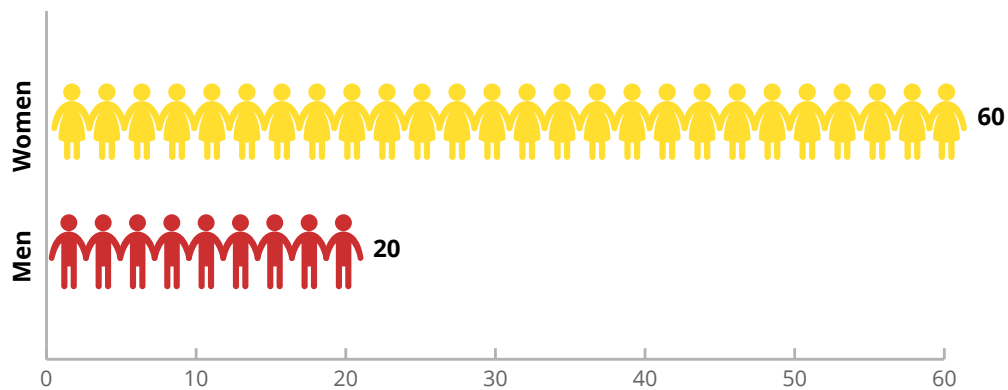
To the establishment of a relationship of mutual trust has been added the **development of joint occasionally bilateral, constantly evolving work processes between the two teams** in order to create around each family the support network corresponding to its needs.

While this joint effort is ongoing, it is unquestionably one of the most significant achievements in this second year of the administration of the Act.

Highlights of the requests

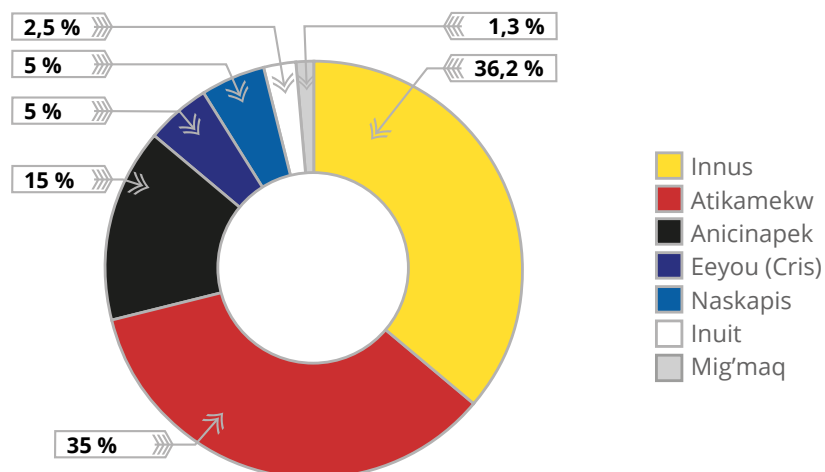
While certain research appeared to gradually come to a successful conclusion in recent months, all the requests processed by the Direction de soutien aux familles as of February 28, 2023 were deemed ongoing. Of the 80 applicants, a very clear **majority** (75 %) are women (Graph 1). This confirms the trend observed in the first report, which noted that 70 % of the applicants were women.

Graph 1 : Breakdown by gender of the applicants



As indicated below, the Innu (36.2 %), Atikamekw (35.0 %), and Anicinape (15.0 %) nations are still the main nations represented by the families identified (Graph 2), although the representation of Atikamekw and Anicinape families has increased appreciably over the past year, each one by 6.4 percentage points. Such data reflect the visits to the communities over the past year. Moreover, the presence is worth noting this year of new Naskapi families that were not represented during the first six months of administration of the Act.

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



Families from other nations are also starting to come forward. However, a significant awareness-raising and communications effort remains to be carried out aimed, in particular, at the Eeyou (Cree), Naskapi, and Inuit nations, and the Kanien'kehà :ka (Mohawk), Mi'gmaq, and Wolastoqiyik. Inuit families are still under-represented and are now coming forward mainly in Nunavut. It should be noted that no Inuit family from Nunavik has yet to request research pursuant to the Act, although the Direction de soutien aux familles has engaged in discussions with the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services over the past year and collaborated with Donat Savoie, mandated by Makivik Corporation to identify Inuit patients (children and adults) who died in the sanitoriums. Such collaboration will be pursued and diversified over the coming year, especially among families living outside the communities. The following table provides details of each request, by nation and by community, received by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Table 1 : Nations and communities represented by the research of the Direction de soutien aux familles

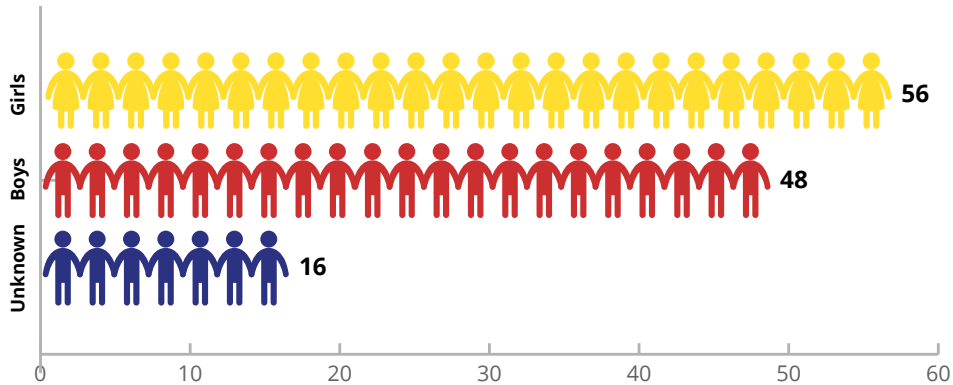
Nations and communities of the families	Number of requests addressed	Number of children concerned by the requests
Innus	29	37
Pakua Shipi	8	11
Unamen Shipu	6	6
Pessamit	6	6
Uashat mak Mani-Utenam	5	7
Nutashkuan	2	5
Matimekush	2	2
Atikamekw	28	48
Manawan	12	29
Opitciwan	15	18
Wemotaci	1	1
Anicinapek	12	22
Pikogan	4	13
Lac-Simon	4	4
Winneway/Long Point First Nation	2	3
Kitcisakik	1	1
À préciser	1	1
Eeyou (Cris)	4	6
Mistissini	2	2
Waswanipi	1	3
Waskaganish	1	1
Naskapis	4	4
Kawawachikamach	4	4
Inuit	2	2
Nunavut (outside Québec)	2	2

Nations and communities of the families	Number of requests addressed	Number of children concerned by the requests
Mi'gmaq	1	1
Gesgapegiag	1	1
Kanien'kehà :ka (Mohawks)	0	0
Wendats	0	0
Wolastoqiyik (Malecite)	0	0
Abénakis	0	0
TOTAL :	80 families	120 children

Further to the preliminary observation formulated after the first six months of administration of the Act, while the number of applications from the Innu Nation is slightly higher, with more than 36 % of the requests coming from communities in the Côte-Nord region, the number of Atikamekw children (48) represented by the requests is this year markedly higher than the number of Innu children (37) targeted by the research. In some cases, a single family is searching for several children.

Another point of continuity is that while women are largely represented among the applicants who have contacted the Direction de soutien aux familles, the children that the research targets also includes a majority of girls, although slightly less pronounced than during the first six months of administration of the Act, i.e. more than 46 %, as against 40 % for boys (Graph 3). In more than 13 % of cases, the child's sex has not been determined with certainty, either because it is unknown to the families or because contradictory information exists between the family history and certain testimony or documents that the applicants have obtained.

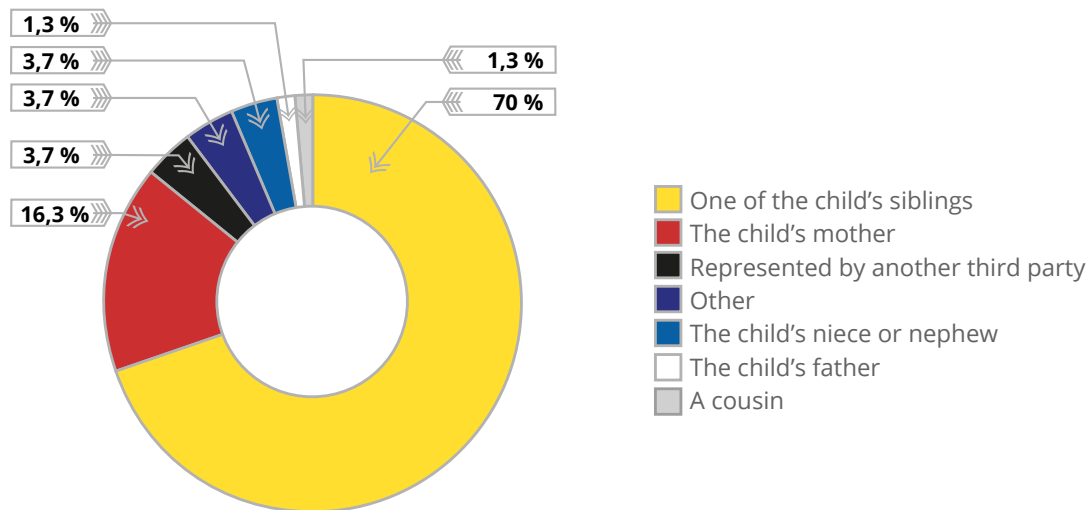
Graph 3 : Gender breakdown of the children that the research targets



Most of the applicants (more than 70 %) are the siblings of the child or children that the research targets (Graph 4). This proportion, which includes stepsisters and stepbrothers, is relatively stable in relation to the observations formulated in the previous report and again bolsters the relevance of the exemptions stipulated by the Act to allow the members of the child's extended family (to include any significant person) to receive personal information.

Just under 18 % of the applicants are the mothers and fathers of the missing children. Without the exemptions that the Act stipulates, they alone would have been authorized to receive information concerning the children. In other words, the medical records of less than 16 % of the children that the Direction de soutien aux familles is now seeking would have been accessible to their families without the adoption of the Act.

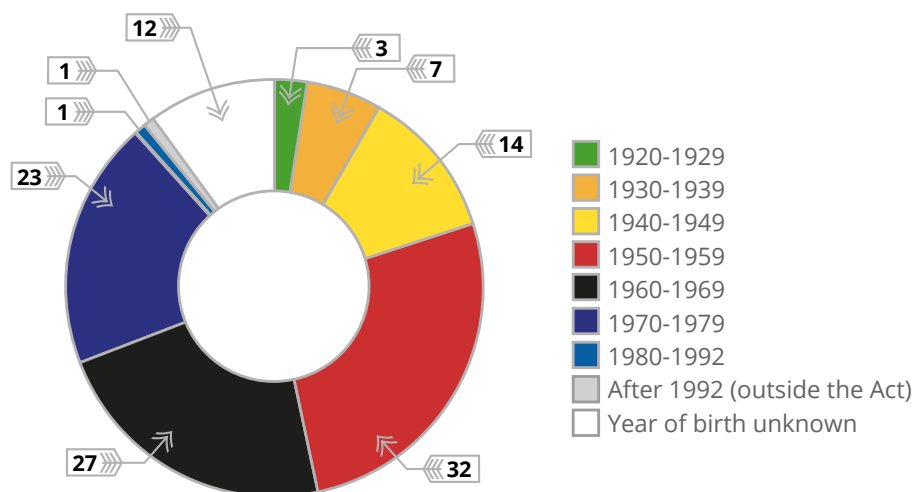
Graph 4 : Family ties of the applicants with the children that the research targets



Lastly, while few applicants were represented by a third party during the first months of administration of the Act, an **authorization** was established in the second year that families who wish to do so can give to the Association Awacak. The authorization has allowed several families whose Internet access or digital literacy would have complicated easy transmission of the requests to the institutions to mandate the Association to submit and receive on their behalf the requests prepared by the Direction de soutien aux familles. However, this authorization in no way withdraws control over the research by the families, who maintain control over each stage.

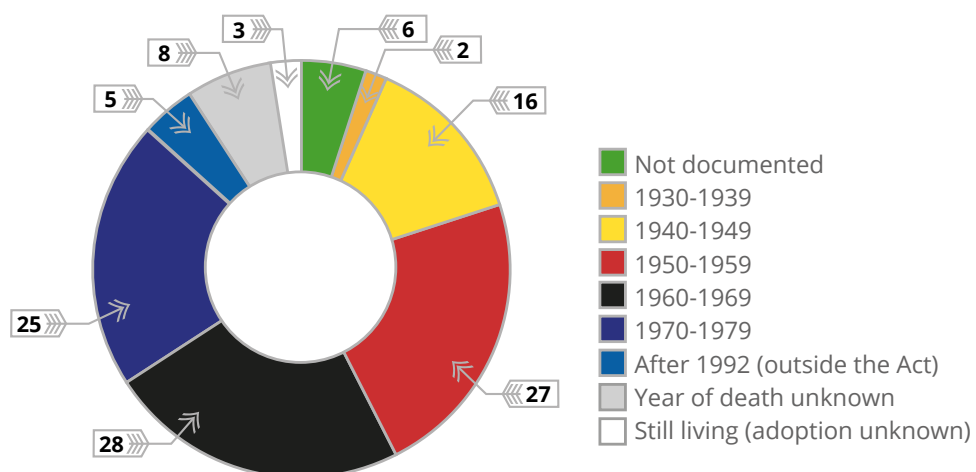
Generally speaking, the children subject to research pursuant to the administration of the Act were born between 1927 and 1980. The period 1933-1978 pinpointed at the time of the first annual report has been extended slightly (Graph 5). The exact date of birth of 10 % of the missing children is still unknown. In the case of one research request addressed to the Direction and the Association Awacak to which the Act does not apply, the birth occurred after 1992.

Graph 5 : Years covered by the children’s births



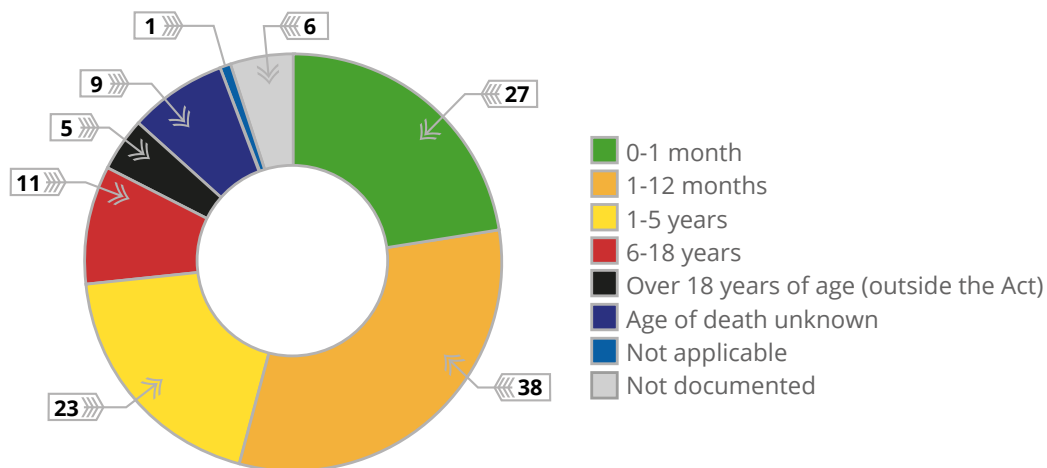
Graph 6 illustrates the most represented periods of death or disappearance. In particular, it illustrates the substantial reduction in the course of the research that the Direction has conducted over the past year in the proportion of children whose date of death or disappearance is not known with certainty. The first annual report indicated 33 % of such cases and as of February 28, 2023, it was unknown in less than 12 % of the cases, either because the families have not provided it in the case of research being initiated or because it remained unknown at the conclusion of the research. In 2.5 % of the cases (three children), the children’s adoption following their admission to an institution was known to their birth families when research with the Direction was initiated. Lastly, in 4 % of the cases (five children), the exemptions stipulated in the Act cannot apply to the research because of the death or disappearance of the children covered after December 31, 1992.

Graph 6 : Years covered by the death or disappearance of children



The age at which the children died or disappeared (Graph 7) varies. The majority of cases concern toddlers one year of age or under, i.e., 54 % of the children subject to research, which confirms the trend observed in the first annual report, and more than 40 % of such deaths or disappearances before the age of one occurred in the first month of life. Among the 120 children that the research targets, more than 19 % of the deaths or disappearances occurred between the age of 1 and 5 years, and 11 deaths (9 %) between the ages of 5 and 18.

Graph 7 : Ages of the children when they died or went missing



In a manner similar to the dates of death or disappearance, the children's ages at the time of their death or disappearance is not provided for research that is beginning or still unknown at the conclusion of the research in nearly 12.5 % of cases, which represents a reduction of this category of 20.5 percentage points since the first annual report, through the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles among its partners.

Reflection on communications with the families by special family support advisor Anne Panasuk

The Act is arousing interest in Québec's Indigenous communities, of course, but also the interest of Québec organizations that are requesting talks or interviews and, this year, such interest has extended to the other provinces of Canada.

While talking about the Act is one of my key tasks as a special advisor, doing so for me is a genuine pleasure since I believe that it is innovative and essential. I occasionally joke that I am "sharing the good news." Communicating to the families the information and documents that the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak have obtained on their missing children is at one and the same time the most difficult and the most gratifying task.

Allow me to briefly take you to a typical meeting with a family. The ageing parents are accompanied by their adult children, one of whom acts as an interpreter, or brothers and sisters who are now orphans and who grew up sharing their parents' grief and who want to establish the facts once and for all.

The family members' anger sometimes prevents the meeting from starting. It occasionally takes an hour to dispel this anger, to agree to look at the documents, to simply accept the idea that the child died alone far from the parents without the mother being able to soothe him and without the parents being able to peacefully bury the child.

This is understandable.

Next begins the slow process of examining one by one the previously unseen documents and their translation. This usually marks the first time that the family obtains an official birth or death certificate from the Directeur de l'état civil. The child finally exists officially.

While the medical record occasionally provides a satisfactory response, it usually generates many questions that we are unable to answer since, ultimately, the parents want to know if the physicians and nurses took good care of their child. It is good to know that the child died of bronchitis, but what care was provided? The medical records rarely contain detailed notes.

Imagine the reactions of parents who learn that the physicians did not request their authorization to operate on their child or transfer him to another hospital further away, not to mention the attendant racist remarks occasionally made over the years. And what of the parents' surprise when they learn that the child sometimes survived for months or indeed for years without the family's being informed and being able to travel to visit him.

The burial certificates afford some peace, and the families know at last where their child was laid to rest. The child is no longer missing.

These meetings are also gratifying. After three or often four or even five hours of discussions, the family usually leaves with a lightened heart. For want of answers to all its questions, the family knows that the team has listened to it, believed it, and taken care to search everywhere in the context of the Act.

The meetings are necessary mourning ceremonies.

The advantages of targeted documentation

With the substantial increase in the number of requests from the families and the consequential increase in the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles and the existing historical, anthropological, and social research for certain communities the most extensively affected by the ongoing research, a "monographic" approach, i.e., a more thorough study of certain specific topics might one day seem relevant to afford the families a broader understanding of certain practices, information, and the children's paths.

Such an approach could, for example, seek to grasp in the future and on a regional basis the possible link between the public health context of certain communities, the administration of certain healthcare services, the medical evacuation practices adopted and their interveners, the children's ages when they died or went missing, and the known medical causes of the confirmed deaths.

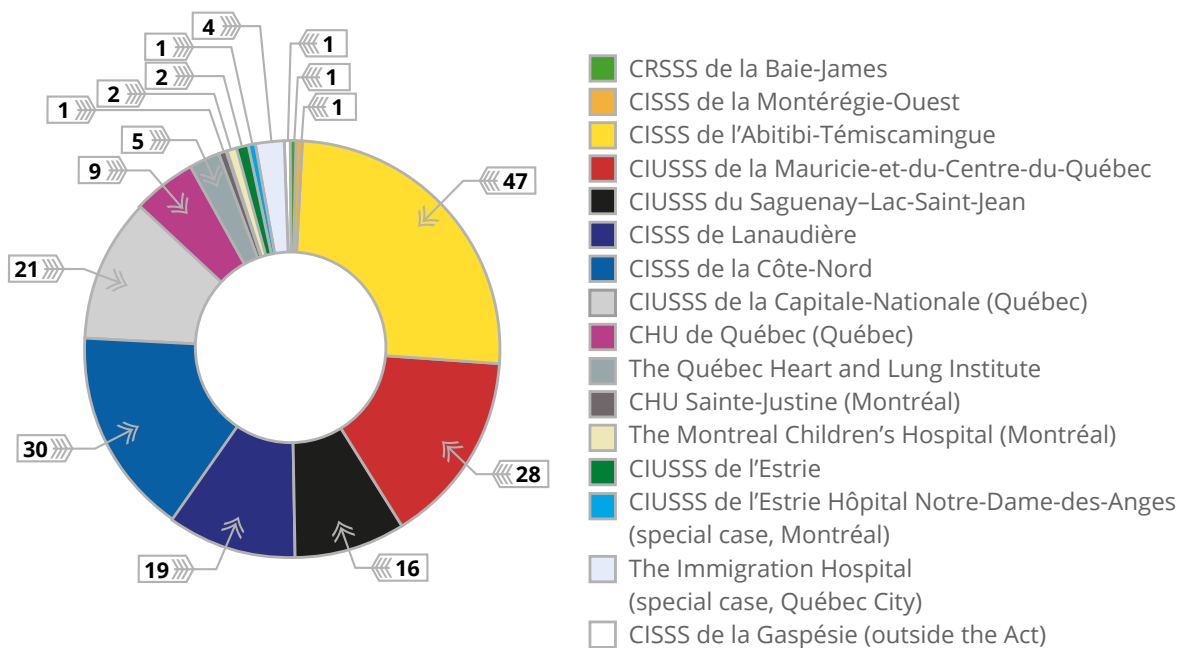
While some documentation work has been initiated over the past year to answer the families' questions, the latter require the partner interveners to prioritize the focal areas according to the families' needs. The third part of this report provides more details on such documentation needs.

Work with the health and social services institutions

Research focusing on user records

Generally speaking, and independently of the nature of the information available, most research begins with requests to access the medical records of the children addressed to the institutions targeted. As of February 28, 2023, 187 requests to access user records had thus been addressed to the health and social services network (HSSN) in respect of the entire array of active requests (Graph 8).

Graph 8 : Institutions targeted by access requests in the context of research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles



To date, the medical records of 48 children covered by the research have been obtained. Some records are archived in several hospitals and, in some cases, documents concerning the parents when the information confirming the death or disappearance of a child was recorded there.

Several access requests are being processed at the time of writing of this report. In the case of access requests that received a negative response, the absence of medical documentation was sometimes justified, depending on the case, by the following factors :

- the medical records retention and destruction schedules that allow pursuant to the *Act respecting health services and social services*, the *Archives Act*, and the *Organization and Management of Institutions Regulation* for the destruction of certain documents after a set amount of time following a user's death ;

- the transfer of certain archives to other organizations when they close. This is true of the medical archives of the Immigration Hospital in Québec City, ⁷ which cannot be found after several months of research by the team from the Direction, federal government civil servants, and Donat Savoie, mandated by Makivik Corporation. The absence of accessible archives is impeding the research of several families that the Direction is supporting whose children appeared to have died when they were hospitalized in the institution ;
- the accidental destruction over the past 50 years of certain archives during fires, floods, and other events ;
- the lack of knowledge of former archives in certain institutions that are not digitized or have not yet be inventoried.

The current absence of this medical documentation does not mean, however, that the research has been halted. Instead, it activates other possible paths through religious, parish, presbytery, and social services institution archivists, or certain witnesses.

Furthermore, it should be noted that in addition to these medical documents, 52 acts of death (SP-3 forms ⁸) have been given to the families at the conclusion of research conducted in the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux over the past year. Access to such documents strictly in the context of the administration of the Act is all the more important for the families since the documents are sometimes the only ones to contain a reference to the medical causes of a death or a burial site.

At the same time, obtaining a child's medical record often marks only the beginning of other research aimed, in particular, at understanding the circumstances surrounding a death or identifying a burial place, unknown in most cases to the family.

Lastly, if the Direction and the entire array of partner stakeholders advance the overall research as much as possible, in some rare instances the information obtained is absent or very scarce and does not provide a clear answer to the families' questions. This possibility is broached with the families at the outset of the process to transparently establish the possible outcomes. As distressing as this absence of a response can be, it is also possible that the knowledge that any administrative documents do not exist or no longer exist is a separate stage in the process and it at least ensures the families that the entire array of possible approaches has been carried out.

7. According to the information that Donat Savoie has obtained in the context of his research, the Immigration Hospital, also known as the Savard Park Hospital, was a federal hospital founded in 1897 to receive sick immigrants. Located away from populated areas near the Rivière Saint-Charles in Québec City, it served for a long time as a quarantine hospital. In the late 1950s it was abandoned for some time, then bought by the Québec government in 1960, before being transferred to the Corporation de l'Hôpital Christ-Roi. In 1963, it was converted into a general hospital for general practitioners in the region. In 1996, it became a residential and long-term care centre. The first First Nations patients were admitted there in 1946, followed by Inuit patients in 1948, several of whom were subsequently transferred to Hamilton, Ontario in 1952.

8. The SP-3 forms are standardized forms of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. They contain several documents, including a copy of the act of death (SP-3) – Institut de la statistique du Québec, a copy of the medical record or the coroner's record, and a copy of the act of death (SP-3) – funeral director. The collection of data on stillborn children in its current form began in Québec in 1936. Around 1975, the Ministère des Affaires sociales began to designate the forms by the term "act" and assign to them the acronym "SP." The numerical order attributed to the acts corresponds to the order of occurrence of events during a lifetime, with the exception of stillbirths : births (SP-1), marriages (SP-2), deaths (SP-3), and stillbirths (SP-4).

Research focusing on the administrative archives of the institutions

In the case of specific research, three access-to-information requests were also addressed during the past year to the administrative archives of institutions, two of which are being processed.

The three requests seek to document certain practices related to the transfer and medical treatment of the children and the deaths in hospitals of young children during the periods that the research covers, and to pinpoint existing information pertaining to certain diagnoses and pandemics. Going forward, such requests could increase in number, especially in cases where specific information concerning the children sought is unavailable.

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

During the period covered, three judicial reviews submitted by the families with the assistance of the Direction de soutien aux familles were ongoing at the Commission d'accès à l'information. The three reviews were launched during the first six months of the administration of the Act.

In all three instances, the review targeted a breach by the institution of the time limit in its response. Over the past year, at the families' request, the three reviews have been the subject of mediation meetings between the institution's officials and the family's applicant. A mediator from the Commission d'accès à l'information organizes the videoconferencing meetings with each of the families and, at their request, the Direction de soutien aux familles.

At the conclusion of the discussions and in the wake of the answers to their questions, the applicants decided to halt the review and asked the Direction to pursue the research by other means.

Challenges, good practices, and perspectives

Aside from these judicial reviews that the families submitted to the Commission d'accès à l'information and while most of the institutions concerned by the requests responded to the families over the past year within ever shorter time limits, the exceeding by several months of the time limits by several facilities of the CISSS de la Côte-Nord were in the past year the main challenge in pursuing the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles. In the context of the start of the first year of administration of the Act, several hospitals took several months to organize a comprehensive system to respond to the families. At the conclusion of the meetings of the Direction with officials from the institution and follow-up, the hospitals concerned appear



Part of the building that made up the former Hôtel-Dieu d'Amos. The photo was taken during the tour of the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region (July 2022).

to have remedied the situation and substantially reduced the response times for the families. As of February 28, 2023, the time limits complied with the provisions in the *Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information*.

At the same time, medical archivists and the representatives of public bodies made themselves available to organize meetings with the families to discuss the research conducted in the context of the Act, thereby contributing to the explanations to support the research carried out.

Certain teams from the RSSS also regularly informed the Direction de soutien aux familles of efforts to identify and locate old medical records for the families pursuant to the administration of the Act. This is true of the CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, which sought over the past year to locate and decipher certain records that afford the teams of archivists in the facilities more efficient access during research.

Testimonial of the CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue concerning the collaboration established pursuant to the administration of the Act

Requests from the families enabled us to conduct research in our historic archives and to understand how the records and files at the time were constituted. This allowed us to establish the history of our service and to assemble pieces of the past.

Each request is, for us, a mission. We want so much to give the families answers since, behind each request, there is a story, a family seeking to understand what happened.

We will continue to collaborate and hope that we have provided the families with elements that facilitate the beginning of the healing process.

Isabelle Lord
Chef de service des archives médicales – Secteur Amos et Val-d'Or
Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue

Other institutions have also integrated access to information request liaison officers for Indigenous users pursuant to the administration of the Act to ensure more reassuring support for the families. Moreover, over the past year, the multidimensional teams referred several requests under the Act to the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Still other institutions elaborated response procedures adapted to the families seeking a child who went missing or died, following the example of the CISSS de la Côte-Nord, to include a human dimension to the response formulated. Lastly, it is not uncommon that the archivists conduct additional research with other institutions before giving the families and the Direction de soutien aux familles a positive or a negative response with a view to opening new avenues for research.

Testimonial of the CIUSSS du Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean concerning the collaboration established pursuant to the administration of the Act

The archive services team believes that it is very important to be involved and participate in the Indigenous families' research process. Such participation in the research process arouses a significant feeling of collective mutual aid and facilitates collective action to foster the healing process of the First Peoples.

Nadia Brassard

Conseillère cadre à la standardisation des pratiques Accueil, Admission, Archives, Téléphonie, Transport Interne et Morgue (Intérim)
Direction des services multidisciplinaires
Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux du Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean

While the medical archives teams from the RSSS regularly called upon the Direction de soutien aux familles in the course of their research to discuss orientations and possible challenges related to certain research, the teams also made themselves available during the past year to answer questions from the Direction concerning targeted research or more transversal contextual factors of research.

Lastly, it should be noted that 145 members of the RSSS, mainly medical archivists, access to information officials, and liaison officers for Indigenous users, participated on October 18, 2022 in the annual follow-up meeting organized by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Based on the best knowledge, the expertise, and abilities of each of the teams and individuals, the development of **this collaboration with the teams from the RSSS** marked a key step completed during the past year. It guarantees extensive research and has gradually facilitated a better understanding of the realities of the families and those of the medical archives, representing a step that the partner stakeholders want to be significant in the spirit of the relationship and the redress necessary for possible reconciliation.

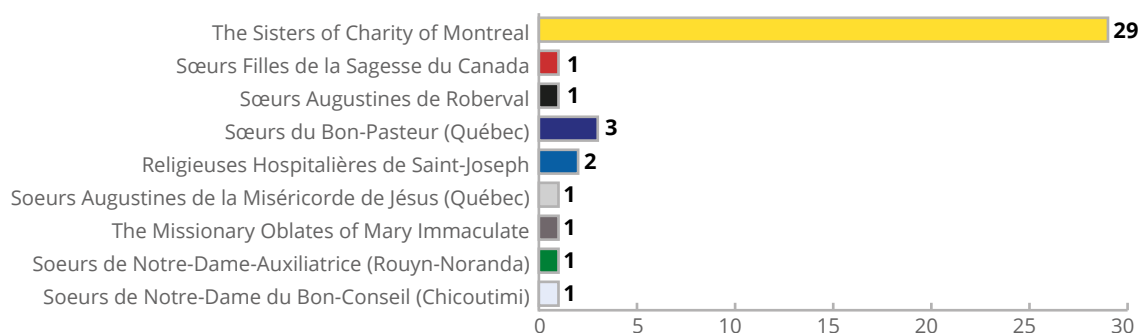
Research involving the religious congregations, parishes, and cemeteries

The religious congregations

Little or no research among the religious congregations, parishes, and cemeteries was conducted during the first six months of the administration of the Act. What is more, the first annual report, submitted in March 2022, pinpointed such research as a priority area of focus to be developed.

The past year of the administration of the Act has witnessed several developments. The Direction de soutien aux familles transmitted several requests to the religious congregations. In most cases, the Regroupement des archivistes religieux (RAR) enabled the Direction to efficiently identify the congregation and the person in charge of the archives. The following graph represents the main congregations concerned by ongoing research over the past year and certain impending research.

Graph 9 : The main religious congregations concerned by ongoing or impending research



In September 2022, while in the preceding months research among the congregations was conducted mainly by the institutions' archivists, the Direction de soutien aux familles visited the archives of two congregations, i.e., the Sisters of Charity (Montréal motherhouse) and the Sœurs du Bon Pasteur (Québec City motherhouse).

In both cases, the Direction de soutien aux familles received the material under analysis, consisting in several similarities with children sought but, above all, in the historic overview and the practices related to the care given to the children at the Hôtel-Dieu d'Amos, the Hôpital Saint-Joseph in La Tuque, the Crèche de la Miséricorde (Montréal), and the Orphelinat du Sacré-Cœur (Québec City). Several photographs of First Peoples children were located in Amos and La Tuque. An identification process could be initiated shortly with the Association des familles Awacak.

The Direction de soutien aux familles reported on the advancement of this research to the monitoring committee members in the fall of 2022, which led to the establishment of a **working group devoted to archiving and identifying** the material. The working group held its first meeting on November 29, 2022. Collaboration with the congregations targeted could be necessary to pursue these efforts.

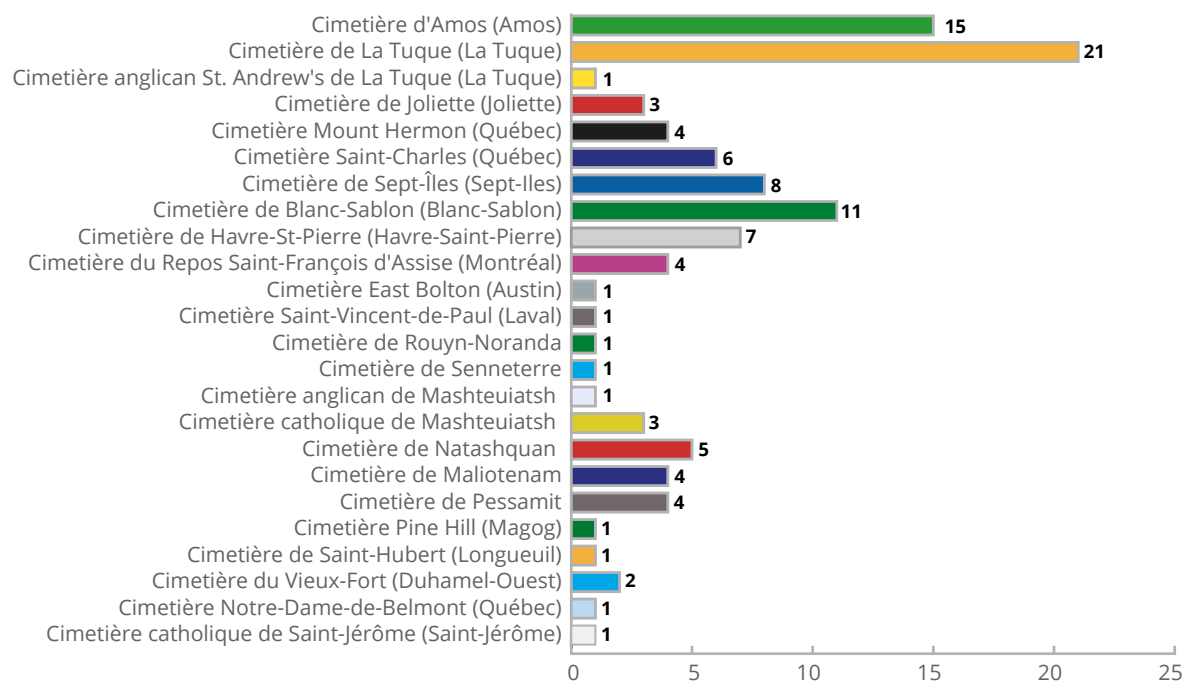


A work session of the Direction de soutien aux familles in the archives of the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity (Montréal) in September 2022. Julie Martel (on the left) and Florence Dupré (on the right).

Research involving parishes and cemeteries

Parishes and cemeteries are not explicitly covered by the Act and its provisions. They have played a key role in most of the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles over the past year. The mobilization of these institutions sought principally to identify and confirm the burial sites of the children whose deaths were documented. All told, 107 requests were thus submitted to provide the families with information on the burial sites of their children, broken down as indicated below.

Graph 10 : The main cemeteries mobilized in the research of the Direction de soutien aux familles



It is worth noting that the graph represents the breakdown of all requests formulated by the Direction rather than the nature of the responses obtained. The requests resulted in the confirmation of the place of death of 59 children. Research continues with respect to cases not confirmed with certainty.

When a burial site is identified, the information available varies from one child to another. While certain cemeteries are able to issue to the families burial certificates bearing a lot or grave number, it is only possible in other cases to obtain a copy of an extract from a parish register confirming the death and parish of inhumation to guide the research.

Furthermore, several of the burial certificates obtained refer to the interment of children in **common lots**. This is especially true of certain cemeteries in Québec City, Montréal or Amos, where such lots appeared relatively widespread and available to Quebecers overall. Burials on such sites raise numerous questions for the families, including that of possible discrimination, the focus of the third part of this report. This reality, often very difficult to accept because of its perceived dehumanizing character, also has major implications with respect to burial : for many families whose children are buried in these lots, the exhumation requests that the families may want are complicated and, indeed, may be impossible in certain cases. This point and the recommendations of the Direction de soutien aux familles in this respect are presented in detail in the third part of the report devoted to development prospects for 2023-2024.

Rollout of the network of health and social services experts

The network in a nutshell

All told, 19 general practitioners and specialists, including four paediatricians, and three nurses make up the network of health and social services experts. Six of the experts are from the First Nations. The network's members are contributing depending on their availability, at the families' request, to interpret the documents and medical information obtained through research.

The network has held four meetings since its establishment in March 2022. The first meeting was held on March 16, 2022 and reviewed the initial issues raised during discussions with its members. A second meeting was held on June 16, 2022. It was devoted, in particular, to a presentation of the support that the Association des familles Awacak offers the collaborating physicians and nurses and was attended by the Association and the special advisor. The network held its third meeting, also attended by the Association des familles Awacak and the special advisor, to take stock of the initial follow-up meetings held with the families and the preparation of meetings with Innu families in Nutashkuan, Unamen Shipu, and Pakua Shipi. The network held its fourth meeting on February 22, 2023, attended by partner stakeholders, to take stock of the first year of the network's constitution.

Meetings with the families are an essential step in the process

Between July 13, 2022 and February 28, 2023, 23 meetings involving 12 partner physicians devoted to the interpretation of medical documents were held between physicians and the families, including nine face-to-face meetings and 14 videoconferencing sessions.

During the discussions that followed the meetings, certain families deemed them an essential stage in the process. While the Direction cannot ascertain in this report the families' specific assessment of each of the meetings, it notes that the families almost systematically request a meeting with a physician as soon as the medical documents are received.

Testimonial from Dr. Sharon Hatcher concerning meetings held in February 2023 with families in Pakua Shipi

To all the families and the community of Pakua Shipi :

How can I express to you how privileged I felt to have participated in this visit? With you, we made a voyage back in time to retrace the painful path of the loss of your children. Together we sought responses, to take another step toward truth and to ensure the healing process.

Thank you for opening up your hearts and for trusting us. What I learned from this experience, first and foremost, is the beauty of your community, the strength of your families, the dignity of the elders, the depth of your hearts, and your unrelenting efforts to achieve a fulfilling future for subsequent generations.

Dr. Sharon Hatcher, family physician
Partner physician in the administration of the Act
Family physician in the GMF-U de Chicoutimi and the Centre Mamik
Coresponsable Santé et mieux-être des Premiers Peuples, Faculté de médecine et des sciences de la santé
de l'Université de Sherbrooke

Moreover, if these meetings have seemed important in the research process of several families, they have also been significant for several members of the network, who have occasionally expressed their surprise, emotion, or incomprehension in the context of the analysis of certain cases then during the discussions with the families concerned.

Testimonial of Dr. Anne Vibien concerning her involvement in family support

I was deeply concerned that Indigenous children died anonymously, far from their families, and often without their families being aware of their deaths. It is with considerable humbleness that I joined the group of physicians in 2022 to support the Direction de soutien aux familles.

I discovered a remarkable team entirely devoted to ensuring that bereaved families regain possession of the history of the end of their children's lives. Speaking as a physician/microbiologist-infectiologist, I was able to give meaning to the infectious diagnoses recorded on several retraceable documents unfortunately all too scarce after the 50 to 70 years that have elapsed since the children's deaths. I had the tremendous privilege to listen to families courageously tell their stories and to discuss with them and have come away from the meetings deeply moved and altered.

I attempted as best I could to answer their legitimate questions concerning the last moments of their children's lives and shed a bit of light on the attendant medical circumstances.

This support, which concerns what is intimate and human dignity, strikes me as essential in the perspective of grief to be overcome, bridges of trust to be rebuilt, and the path toward healing, since we must first understand. This marks a long-term effort with human challenges that surpass the simple reading and interpretation of medical archives.

I hope that these essential efforts for and with the families of deceased Indigenous children continue for we have a collective responsibility and a duty to remember so that these children find their way back home.

Dr. Anne Vibien, microbiologist-infectiologist
Partner physician in the administration of the Act

Given the significant increase in the number of families and children sought over the past year and the **occasionally urgent requests** from certain families whose aged or sick members hope to quickly obtain answers, one of the key challenges that the Direction de soutien aux familles has encountered in the coordination of the network since the fall of 2022 is the availability of its members with respect to their own workload. The broadening of its composition might be desirable in the months ahead.

Another focal point in the discussions of the network's members that is closely linked to the previous aspect in the implementation of support is the importance of establishing reassuring support that is sensitive to the context of the intergenerational traumas specific to the families and the impact of colonization, and the integration of coherent practices to this end. Certain discussions have illustrated the fragile balance between the exponential number of requests from the families and the need to take the time necessary to elaborate a suitable process. This aspect, which requires the pursuit of thorough reflection, poses a critical issue depending on the partner stakeholders, about which discussions should continue in the coming year with the members of the network.

Remuneration and collaboration

To ensure the perpetuation of the network and the response to the families' needs, the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux have explored the possibility of concluding two remuneration agreements, one for general practitioners and the other for medical specialists in the network. Several obstacles have arisen concerning the agreements because of the specificity and duration of the mandate in question. The Direction has in the end developed a perspective of funding consisting in the assumption by the SRPNI of expenses related to the contribution by experts in the network in the context of support for families. The Ministère de la Santé et des Services is continuing to offer its support to the Direction in respect of certain targeted aspects of the development of an optimal method of remuneration.

Discussions were also held over the past year on the recommendation of several members of the network with various organizations and professional corporations, i.e., the Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ), the Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA), and the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec (OIIQ). The initiation of dialogue with these organizations facilitated awareness-raising among their representatives concerning the families' realities, the mandate of the partner stakeholders, and the contribution of several of their members to support for families.

In all instances, the representatives of the organizations said that they wish to pursue the discussions and contribute more concretely to support for families, their research, and healing. The realization of such collaboration will be subject to ongoing efforts in the coming year with the interested members of the network.

Interdepartmental deliberations aimed at optimum support for families

Collaboration by the Direction de soutien aux familles with government departments and bodies, another essential mainstay of the search for information under the Act, was carried out over the past year according to two key components :

- **FIRST COMPONENT : consensus-building on the interdepartmental committee**, aimed at :
 - monitoring the administration of the Act by obtaining at each meeting of the interdepartmental committee 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 specific deliberations targeting the administration of the Act to its full potential for the families, especially by developing relevant practices or exchanging the information necessary for their development ;
 - contributing to the elaboration of the annual report pertaining to the Act.
- **SECOND COMPONENT : bilateral work** with the government departments and bodies targeted according to the specific needs and projects stemming from the ongoing research.

The interdepartmental committee

The interdepartmental committee devoted to the administration of the Act met four times between March 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023, i.e., on May 17, September 20, and December 6, 2022, and on February 14, 2023.

Appendix 2 of this report presents the committee's mandate. It is worth noting that to ensure the independence that the fulfilment of their mission requires, certain organizations are not members of the interdepartmental committee although they play a central role in the administration of the Act. Such organizations are identified in the second section of the following table ("Other government departments and bodies"). The deliberations of the Direction de soutien aux familles with these organizations occur on a bilateral basis, depending on the development projects.

Table 2 : Contributions and ongoing deliberations of government departments and bodies

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific deliberations carried out or under way
1.Members of the interdepartmental committee		
<p>The Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (SRPNI)</p> <p>Direction de soutien aux familles Direction des relations avec les Autochtones</p>	<p>The Direction de soutien aux familles in the SRPNI coordinates the interdepartmental committee.</p> <p>It is collaborating with the Direction des relations avec les Autochtones in the SRPNI in certain research pertaining to boarding schools.</p>	<p>The Direction de soutien aux familles sits on the Comité intergouvernemental de suivi sur les pensionnats and participates in its regular meetings.</p> <p>Meetings are held on an ongoing basis depending on the specific needs pertaining to the questions examined since November 2021.</p>
<p>The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux</p> <p>Direction des affaires autochtones Direction de l'accès à l'information et de la protection des renseignements personnels</p>	<p>Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.</p>	<p>Implementation of the process to access acts of death.</p> <p>Targeted collaboration when specific documentation needs arise, e.g., exhumations, acts of death, and the register of notifiable diseases.</p>
<p>The Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec</p> <p>Bureau de la responsable de l'accès à l'information et de la protection des renseignements personnels Direction de la gestion des programmes et du soutien à la prestation de service</p>	<p>Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.</p>	<p>Targeted collaboration in the context of certain research.</p>
<p>The Ministère de la Justice</p> <p>Bureau des affaires autochtones</p>	<p>Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.</p>	<p>Collaboration on certain targeted research files. (Direction du soutien aux orientations, des affaires législatives et de la refonte)</p>

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific deliberations carried out or under way
The coroner's office	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.	<p>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.</p> <p>Collaboration on deliberations pertaining to exhumation and the identification of the deceased.</p> <p>Collaboration on targeted research.</p>
The Ministère de la Sécurité publique Direction de la coordination ministérielle et des affaires autochtones	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.	<p>Collaboration on deliberations pertaining to exhumation.</p> <p>Collaboration on targeted research files.</p>
Directeur de l'état civil, du ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.	<p>Administration of the application-handling process respecting attestations and civil status documents pursuant to the Act.</p> <p>Conclusion in February 2023 of an agreement to facilitate the processing of applications.</p>
The Ministère de la Culture et des Communications Direction des politiques et de la prospective Direction des opérations en patrimoine	Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.	<p>Collaboration on deliberations pertaining to exhumation.</p> <p>Deliberations related to financial support for commemorative activities.</p>
The Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec Direction des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit et nordicité	Follow-up to the administration of the Act.	

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific deliberations carried out or under way
<p>The Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur</p> <p>Service des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit</p> <p>Direction générale de l'accessibilité et de la réussite, Secteur de l'accessibilité, de la réussite et de l'expérience étudiante</p>	<p>Follow-up to the administration of the Act.</p>	
<p>2. Other government departments and bodies</p>		
<p>The Commission d'accès à l'information</p>		<p>Handling of recourse in the context of the judicial activities of the Commission.</p> <p>Organization of mediation meetings between the families and public bodies in the context of recourse when the parties so desire.</p>
<p>The Sûreté du Québec</p> <p>Division des relations avec les communautés autochtones</p>		<p>Implementation of an access to information process in keeping with the spirit of the Act.</p> <p>Collaboration on certain targeted requests.</p>
<p>The Ministère du Conseil exécutif</p> <p>Direction du soutien stratégique</p> <p>The Secrétariat à la réforme des institutions démocratiques, à l'accès à l'information et à la laïcité</p>		<p>Support and advice offered to the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning access to information processes, the protection of personal information, and data archiving.</p>
<p>The Ministère du Conseil exécutif</p> <p>Direction des communications</p>	<p>Active collaboration on the development of tools and processes and monitoring of research.</p>	<p>Support and advice offered to the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning the implementation of the communications plan pertaining to the administration of the Act, including the production, translation, and dissemination of the tools.</p>
<p>3. Specific collaboration</p>		
<p>The Québec Ombudsman</p>		<p>Collaboration on certain targeted requests.</p>

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific deliberations carried out or under way
<p>The Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (SRPNI)</p> <p>Responsable du secrétariat, du greffe et des plaintes</p>		<p>To maintain the independence of the complaint-handling process, the SRPNI has assigned this responsibility to an individual in the Secrétariat who is not connected to the Direction de soutien aux familles.</p>

Bilateral deliberations with government departments and public bodies

Research related to acts of death

Bilateral collaboration between the Direction de soutien aux familles and government departments and certain public bodies responds, depending on the case, to one-off or long-term needs in the search for information under the Act.

By way of an example, 110 requests for death certificates have been submitted to the **Directeur de l'état civil** (DEC) since the Act came into force in September 2021. The search for all the requests for death certificates has been conducted by the Directeur de l'état civil or is under way. To date, death certificates have been issued to 79 families, 70 more than when the first annual report pertaining to the Act was written. This represents a positive response rate of nearly 72 %.

Moreover, the crucial collaboration of the **Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux** (MSSS) enabled the Direction de soutien aux familles to give 52 acts of death (SP-3 forms) to the families that it is supporting out of 80 requests submitted in the context of its research during the past year, which also represents a positive response rate of 65 % for such documents.

The **occasionally unsuccessful search** for death certificates and acts of death enabled the Direction de soutien aux familles to initiate documentation in the course of its research and discussions with experts in the field on practices from 1930 to 1980 in the realm of the administrative recording of deaths of newborn or young children. In other cases, the absence of such documents reinforced the need to pursue research through other channels, including the adoption of the children concerned, which is discussed later in this report.

Projects under development

Aside from such well established collaboration, the Direction de soutien aux familles and certain government departments and public bodies are developing interdepartmental projects :

- Discussions are under way with the **Ministère de la Culture et des Communications** concerning funding possibilities for certain commemorative activities involving the families and the communities.

- A transitional agreement is being elaborated with the **coroner's office** to more concretely support the families wishing to request the exhumation of a child pursuant to the administration of the Act. The following section examines the agreement in greater detail.
- Collaboration is being developed with the **Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale (LSJML) and the Ministère de la Sécurité publique** to ascertain the potential and limitations of the possible identification of certain children at the request of their families and to adequately support the families. Accordingly, on July 12, 2022 the LSJML made a presentation of its services and identification techniques to the Association des familles Awacak, the special advisor, and the Direction de soutien aux familles.

The latter two collaborations are directly aware of the families' needs expressed in the realm of exhumation and have facilitated significant advances in this respect over the past year.

Deliberations related to exhumation : key advances for the families

Since the Act came into force, several families have expressed the desire to exhume their children, most of whom were not buried in community cemeteries, in order to offer them interments closer to their families, surrounded by their loved ones.

Certain families have also expressed doubts about the children in respect of whom the Direction de soutien aux familles has located acts of death or burial information. The family histories collected reveal that the parents rarely attended their children's interment and even fewer families saw their deceased children before their burial. What is more, several families were never informed of the children's deaths, which heightens the feeling of doubt and the need for concrete proof concerning their deaths.

In this context, over the past year the Direction has identified two recurring needs of the families that it is supporting :

- disinterment to repatriate the children ;
- disinterment to identify the children.

As of February 28, 2023, families supported by the Direction de soutien aux familles had initiated **three requests for exhumation**. Subject to the granting of the requisite authorizations, two of the families wanted to identify the remains that will be exhumed to verify the children's identity.

Exhumation is a multifaceted process

The exhumation process in Québec comprises several steps. Public health authorities are responsible for several steps. Other steps are of a legal nature and require the issuance of an order by the Superior Court. Still other steps rely on the technical expertise of funeral establishments in the realm of exhumation and interment. Under certain conditions, the identification and analysis of mortal remains relies on the coroner's office and the expertise of the LSJML.

Regardless of the step in the process contemplated and the expertise required, exhumation is, above all, a process of great emotional and occasionally spiritual complexity for the families supported pursuant to the administration of the Act. The removal from his resting place of the mortal remains of a child whose identity is sometimes in doubt or whose burial site was until very recently unknown engenders numerous reactions in the families, which requires, aside from administrative support in the various processes, broader support involving recourse to ceremonies or commemoration focusing on individuals, families, communities and, occasionally, nations.

In this multidimensional context and in keeping with the preamble of the Act focusing on the quest for the truth and the families' healing processes, the Direction de soutien aux familles is elaborating a support approach that involves various legal, practical, technical, emotional, and spiritual steps in the exhumation of children. Such support is offered in close collaboration with the Association des familles Awacak.

In keeping with section 18 of the Act, which stipulates that “[t]he minister may assist the families of missing or deceased Indigenous children in completing the formalities surrounding an application to the Superior Court for an order of disinterment,” the Direction de soutien aux familles is also assembling the funds necessary to finance the exhumations. The Association Awacak is offering the member families a legal support service that could, in certain cases, partially assume the legal fees stemming from the court formalities.

A draft agreement with the coroner's office

At the same time as the elaboration of this approach, the Québec coroner's office and the Direction de soutien aux familles are collaborating to establish an administrative agreement to temporarily provide a temporary framework for the assistance that the chief coroner might offer the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit with respect to the identification of exhumed Indigenous children. Such an agreement would facilitate the identification of the children, when possible, which might not be the case for all families, depending on the state of preservation of the bodies. In particular, the agreement would seek the expertise of pathologists, odontologists, anthropologists, and biologists from the LSJML.

In September 2022, the **first DNA samples** of the members of the families who so desire with a view to the exhumation and possible identification of children were conducted in the presence of the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak. Since then, several families have, with the requisite support, taken the samples and submitted them to the LSJML.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier in the section of the report devoted to research conducted in parishes and cemeteries, it is worth noting that it might be complicated for several families whose children are apparently buried in common lots to obtain a judgement authorizing exhumation since the request addressed to the Superior Court must usually hinge on sufficient information concerning the identity of the person whose mortal remains are to be exhumed and the burial site. In this context and to avoid creating distressing expectations for the families, the Direction de soutien aux familles and its partners, including the coroner's office and the LSJML when the families so desire, systematically inform the families of the **inherent limitations to the possibilities of exhumation** such as common lots and the disposal of the remains, but also **those pertaining to the identification** of the children, such as the preservation of the remains and the DNA material available.

These developments related to the exhumation of the children irremediably echo in the efforts of both the partner stakeholders and the families the recent discovery over the past two years of anonymous graves near several residential schools across Canada.

Collaboration in the search for missing children in residential schools

Four of the children sought by the Direction de soutien aux familles at the request of their families died in **residential schools**.

In the context of its research, the Direction de soutien aux familles is working closely with the teams from the SRPNI and those of the Government of Canada responsible for research and programs related to children who died

or went missing in residential schools. In particular, it is participating in the Comité intergouvernemental de suivi sur les pensionnats focusing on research and developing in certain targeted cases practical and financial collaboration partnerships to facilitate, by way of an example, a child's exhumation and his interment in his community of origin near his family.

Such collaboration will continue over the coming year to carry out the most complete, relevant research possible to answer the families' questions. The families often express the desire in such contexts to understand the links between the children's experience in the residential schools, their admission to institutions, and their death or disappearance. The Direction de soutien aux familles hopes to develop an **ongoing cross-functional view** in the context of its research to avoid compartmentalizing the children's paths and hindering the families' quest for the truth.



Children's shoes placed at the foot of the site of the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery residential school. The photo was taken during the tour of the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region (July 2022).

Difficult research in the realm of adoption

Among the hypotheses formulated by the families during discussions with the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak, the hypothesis of the adoption of the children was by far the most prevalent one. The discussions reveal that for several families this hypothesis was for a long time the only plausible explanation in the absence of clear, explicit, concrete information transmitted to the parents concerning the disappearance or death of their children.

The context of the roundup in the 1960s that affected numerous Indigenous nations across Canada at a time when most of the children now being sought under the Act disappeared strongly permeates the families' views. Several people met during the past year also reported the testimony of loved ones who later saw again certain of the missing children in other communities or regions, or caskets that were supposed to contain the mortal remains of children that proved to be empty when their families verified them. Whether expressed to the

Direction and to the Association Awacak with anger and suffering, or with a ray of hope, the adoption of the children consequently remains a hypothesis that is present in research that does not succeed in documenting a death than in better documented research.

In this context, the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles at the request of loved ones has focused in recent months on institutions responsible for the custody and putting up for adoption of children from the 1930s to the 1970s, mainly nurseries operated by the religious congregations. In the course of its research in the archives of the congregations, the Direction consulted records of indigents, the lists of children admitted to nurseries, or mothers who came to give birth far from their families in contexts that the authorities once considered unsuitable to keep a child, e.g., unmarried mothers, or women deemed incapable of raising their children.

As of February 28, 2023, the Direction was able to find only one letter in the archives of the congregations pertaining to a child whose family was already aware of the adoption and the place of birth. It bears noting that research in this respect is very complex, especially because of the adoption procedures at the time designed to ensure the absolute protection of the identity of the child's biological parents. Depending on the archives consulted, in certain hospitals and nurseries, the names of the mothers and those of the children in placements were entirely altered. In this context, it becomes almost impossible to trace the mother's delivery and the placement of her child without knowing the child's adopted name.

At the same time as this research in the religious archives that will continue over the coming year, the Direction de soutien aux familles has initiated discussions with certain courthouses to ascertain the procedures for accessing adoption files in Québec. Other discussions have revealed that it would be very difficult to trace adoptions not subject to the parents' consent and a legal act in documentary research.

At the request of the families and in cases where no administrative trace of the deaths of certain children has been found through research conducted under the Act, much remains to be done in the realm of adoption to document the placements of children during the periods targeted, establish concrete ties with certain institutions, or, to the contrary, pinpoint possible undocumented practices. Such research could be conditional on a monographic approach in the communities where testimony focuses on the trajectories of specific children.

In this respect, the families' questions concerning the children's trajectories raise the question of possible discrimination. Whether it is a question of the absence of medical information transmitted to them, numerous questions concerning the children's burial places or crucial questions concerning the adoption and placement of certain children examined in the preceding pages, several families that the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak are supporting consequently refer to the **children taken away from them** rather than children who went missing or died.

Investigations conducted pursuant to the Act

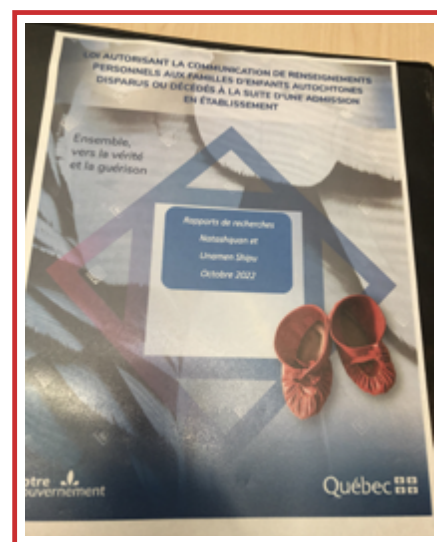
As of February 28, 2023, no investigation had been launched in the context of research pursuant to section 13 of the Act.

The cessation of research

As of February 28, 2023, while certain research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles may possibly be close to conclusion, all the requests are still active and their handling respects the pace that the families desire.

Over the past year, the Direction has developed different methods of transmitting the information obtained to the families according to each one's wishes. The methods include a **binder that summarizes the steps taken** during the research and contains **all the answers obtained**, information, original documents, and identified photographs. Over the past year, the presentation in person of the binders to the families has often been emotional. According to the comments received, the families appear to appreciate the visual and physical aspect of this tool, which several people can repeatedly consult.

The cessation of research conducted pursuant to the administration of the Act hinges above all on the families' decision. For most of the families, the administration of the Act and the attendant research do not represent an end in itself but instead a transition or a stage. The partner stakeholders supporting the families are pursuing their reflection on the "conclusion" of the research and the different ways to support their transition.



The cover of a binder to present results elaborated by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

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 SRPNI 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.

It is worth noting that tools have been developed to facilitate the filing of complaints by the families covered by the Act, including an exclusive online email address for formulating complaints. Accordingly, since the fall of 2021, the appropriate telephone contact information has been made available on the website devoted to the Act : [Missing and deceased Indigenous children : Support for families | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](https://www.quebec.ca/missing-and-deceased-indigenous-children-support-for-families).

What is more, in the spring of 2022, an online complaints-handling procedure and an electronic complaint submission form were established :

- Procedure for the examination of complaints : [Procedure for the examination of complaints under the Act | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#) ;
- Complaint submission form : [Complaint form, support for the families of missing Indigenous children \(quebec.ca\)](#).

Under the procedure established, the SRPNI 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 complaints 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.

While all the measures were in place to handle complaints, as of February 28, 2023, the complaints manager **had not received any complaints** pursuant to the first paragraph of section 19 of the Act.

Lastly, it bears mentioning that 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).

Beyond the reports lies the essential humanity of the path of healing

The foregoing developments seek to report as accurately as possible on the achievements during the second year of administration of the Act and ongoing work. However, one dimension of the particularly complex research to be described in an annual report nonetheless omnipresent at the root of each step is the irremediably human and emotional dimension of the overall research process for the families and the partner stakeholders.

In this context, through the meetings that the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Association Awacak, the special advisor, the partner physicians, or certain representatives of institutions or public bodies have held with



A work representing the thoughts offered to missing children in the form of a dream catcher displayed at the entrance to the Anicinape community of Pikogan (Abitibi-Témiscamingue) during the 2022 community Pow-Wow on the theme "Every Child Matters" (June 2022).

the families over the past year, links have been forged to gradually ensure psychological and spiritual support for the children's loved ones. Various components such as the presence of members of the extended family, prayers or moments of contemplation to pay tribute to the children and their families before the discussions, the presence at the request of certain families of practitioners and psychologists, intervention by members of the Association Awacak and the Direction at pivotal moments during the meetings, and the sharing of experience between the families and the members of Awacak, are gradually contributing to supporting the progress of the families that request them. The growing human relationship between the support teams and the families, the proliferation of meetings or the shared moments during the tours in the communities have also helped to forge and then bolster, step by step, relational and emotional trust throughout the process.

Testimonial of a family concerning the human dimension of the research process

To rekindle this glimmer to find the being of light can occasionally be a lengthy, often arduous process that defies resilience. However, the team from the Direction de soutien aux familles always enlightens us, even through anger and sorrow, to illuminate the path of light.

A family that wishes to remain anonymous

In several instances, the establishment of these links is accompanied for the partner stakeholders by a significant sharing of suffering and trauma that the families have experienced. Aside from the occasionally necessary discussions between the partners at the conclusion of certain meetings, the Direction de soutien aux familles has established clinical supervision, including training and individual meetings or meetings with the entire team to adequately equip its team by focusing on the emotional component of each of its members involved with the families.

Far from representing a challenge, this intrinsic humanity of the process constitutes instead for the Direction, the Association Awacak, and the special advisor one of the essential conditions for collective healing and represents one of the essential conditions for collective healing and reconciliation.

III. PERSPECTIVES IN 2023-2024 : FURTHER SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILIES

Sectoral research to support the families

Several sections of the review of the administration of the Act presented in this report refer to the possibility, the relevance, or the need for more extensive research concerning certain targeted aspects. The different facets or research require time and expertise, whether to better understand certain healthcare practices, bereavement, interment, or adoption, but also to pinpoint new archives or analyze the possibility of exhumation in common lots. The entire array of partner stakeholders agree, above all, that they are an inescapable stage in the pursuit of research a year and a half after the Act came into force.

To this end, the Direction de soutien aux familles will in the coming months establish a position focusing on the coordination of its research and the development of the necessary collaboration and the partner stakeholders will pursue their reflection to adopt a coherent prioritization plan.

The documentation of practices

In order to give the families the clearest, most substantiated responses possible, especially when certain documents pertaining to the children are unobtainable in the context of the research, the Direction de soutien aux familles has launched several targeted research initiatives on the history and development of certain cemeteries or hospitals that admitted several of the children concerned by the research. For example, the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region is subject to increasingly precise documentation that could enhance understanding of the children's trajectories and the prevailing practices. Certain sanatoria, hospitals, and other sites are also subject to such research, occasionally in informal collaboration with researchers, historical societies, or officials in the institutions.

Such research was rounded out during the past year by sectoral research conducted by experts in the Québec government departments and bodies collaborating on the administration of the Act. For example,



Canoes on the bank of a watercourse, Domaine Notcimik (Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec, September 2022).

in the fall of 2022, the Direction requested the assistance of jurists from the coroner's office to understand and document the disposal of "unclaimed" bodies in the years that the research targets and the history of the implementation of the *Bulletins de mortinaissance*. The contributions have oriented certain research conducted by the Direction.

Other research could be initiated by the partner stakeholders in the coming years following the example of changes in administrative, legal, formal, and informal child adoption and placement practices in the years 1930 to 1980, practices concerning the disposal of the bodies of stillborn children or children who died very young, or changes in theories and practices concerning grieving young children in the health-care setting in the years 1930 to 1980. The partner stakeholders are prioritizing these lines of research on their respective teams.

Over the past year several recurring questions from the families concerning their children's trajectories and the attendant decisions finally emerged with the presentation of the documents obtained. During their discussions with the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak, several families questioned the children's treatment from the standpoint of racism and discrimination :

*"If he wasn't an Indigenous child, would :
my child have received the same treatments ?
his medical treatment have been different ?
my family have been informed of his transfer or death ?
would his body have been returned to me and would I have been able to bury him near his family ?
would I have been able to attend his burial service ?"*

For the time being, it is impossible to offer accurate, substantiated answers to these questions.

Archival research

Aside from the essential pursuit and broadening of research in the archives of the religious congregations, the initiation of research in other major archives, including those of Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ) or federal archives, would have to be materialized and systematized in the context of collaboration in the coming year.

Research in federal archives would, in particular, facilitate better understanding of the role of the "Indian Affairs agents" and the delivery of healthcare in the communities during the periods that the research covers. They could also broaden the search for the location of certain institutional archives, following the example of the archive of the Immigration Hospital in Québec City discussed earlier in this report.

Among the other vital archives in Canada, mention should be made of the archives of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg devoted to the former residential schools and all the children who attended them. In several cases, an accurate knowledge of the archives' contents and functioning would enable the partner stakeholders to substantiate certain responses to the families' questions.

Exhumation and common lots

Numerous families informed the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak of their desire to have their children exhumed at the conclusion of the research whether for identification purposes or for reburial in the community. Mention was made earlier in this report of the substantial number of children in respect of whom the research revealed interment in the common lots of cemeteries. Because of the difficulty of accurately locating individual remains in the lots and also of obtaining the authorizations of each of the families involved to possibly open the lot, this type of interment could raise different questions with respect to a possible request for exhumation.

In this context and the parallel context of research to locate the anonymous burial places surrounding several residential schools in Canada, the Direction de soutien aux familles wishes to undertake an approach in collaboration with the partner stakeholders to identify possible obstacles to the exhumation of children buried in common lots to properly inform the families and explore possible ways to overcome such obstacles.

Such discussions must, in particular, be conditional on a typology of different types of common lot and could, in order to do so, require the development of new collaborations with the cemeteries and funeral companies.



Gifts of tobacco in the hands of the Direction de soutien aux familles during the gathering of families from Pakua Shipi (February 2023).

The development of new data analysis and preservation tools

From an administrative standpoint, the second year of administration of the Act was marked by the development of the data analysis and preservation tools that the partner stakeholders obtained in the course of their research. The tools were created in response to follow-up and analysis needs related to the information identified for the families but also through reflection by the members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act, who formulated several recommendations pertaining to preservation and archiving at the conclusion of the first six months of administration of the Act.

A new administrative database

Since the Act came into force, the Direction de soutien aux familles has developed numerous tools designed to rigorously monitor each research initiative conducted at the request of the families. Needs for follow-up and analysis are growing with the number of requests. Such tools, which satisfy specific needs, have proliferated in keeping with the pace of development of new partnerships and research.

To ensure the coherence and efficacy of the tools, in the spring of 2022 the Direction took steps to create a database specific to the administration of the Act. The database would replace most of the existing internal follow-up and analysis tools and would centralize the entire array of information required for research. The process continued throughout the fall of 2022 with different teams from the Ministère du Conseil exécutif to ensure the new tool's efficiency and optimum protection of the families' personal information.

Subject to the outcome of the process, the Direction should establish the database in the months ahead. The new tool has been developed in keeping with another key system focusing on the archiving and preservation of the information obtained for the families.

A structured, accessible information preservation system by and for the First Nations and the Inuit

The families' possession of the data collected pursuant to the administration of the Act is a key facet of the pursuit of research, which has over the past year sustained extensive reflection. The initial period of administration of the Act, established at 10 years and renewable for additional two-year periods if necessary, raises several challenges in the realm of the preservation and accessibility of the data collected by the families. How can the families access the data that belongs to them if the Act is no longer in force? How can we ensure the preservation of entire chapters of the history of the communities, the First Nations and the Inuit, but also the history of healthcare and the treatment of members of the First Peoples in Québec, if the documentation collected is purged according to records retention schedules? How can we ensure structured but also secure preservation from the standpoint of accessibility in a spirit of respect for the families' needs?

The monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act took up these questions and devoted its first recommendations to them when it submitted its 2021-2022 annual report, which are examined in greater detail in the next section of this report.

In this context, the Association Awacak contacted Professor Suzy Basile, holder of the Canada Research Chair in Issues Relating to Indigenous Women and Director of the Laboratoire de recherche sur les enjeux relatifs aux femmes autochtones Mikwatisiw at the UQAT, to establish for the families a data preservation system developed by experts in the field.

Professor Basile and her team launched the system's development in the summer of 2022. The Direction de soutien aux familles was integrated into the development process in the fall to ensure coherent linking between the two systems in terms of the identification and archiving of the documentation collected, one governmental, developed by the Direction de soutien aux familles and the teams from the Ministère du Conseil exécutif for the purposes of the administration of the Act and the transmission of information to the families, and the other one university-based, developed by Professor Basile's team to ensure the long-term secure preservation of the data and enable the families to access it beyond the period of administration of the Act.

As of February 28, 2023, several working meetings have been held by the partners to establish this new structure. Professor Basile and her team obtained access to the UQAT's secure platform to archive the digitized documentation and the appropriate equipment to ensure secure preservation of the physical research-related documentation such as documents in hard copy, photographs, and DNA samples.

The response to the monitoring committee's recommendations is under way. It will be possible to transfer data following an update in the coming months of all the consents that each family requires. It will be accompanied by the implementation of an archiving plan to identify and inventory each document preserved to ensure direct, secure access to the members of the families concerned.

Along with this initial component of the project, a second component more specifically devoted to research based on the data collected could be added. The last as yet preliminary aspect must, however, be subject to discussion and joint reflection with all the families and the partner stakeholders.

IV. FOLLOW-UP TO THE 2021-2022 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE

At the conclusion of its analysis of the initiation of the administration of the Act, the monitoring committee members formulated three initial recommendations focusing on the conservation, archiving, and use of data collected in the context of the administration of the Act.

In conjunction with the achievements presented in the preceding section concerning the development of a structured information preservation system accessible to the families, the sections below describe the approaches initiated by the partner stakeholders to respond to these recommendations of paramount importance to ensure the perpetuation of the individual, familial, collective, community-based, and nation-based dimensions of the research outcomes.

Recommendation 1

“The 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.”

Over the past year, the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak have adopted secure archival practices in their respective organizations but also data transmission procedures when the families supported requested them.

Since the summer of 2022, the Direction de soutien aux familles has collaborated with archival and data preservation managers in the Conseil exécutif to establish a protocol governing the classification, preservation, and archiving of information and documents, including recordings and photographs, collected in the context of the research conducted at the request of the families. The process includes a risk analysis related to the protection of personal information in order to identify and implement the requisite security measures. The project will continue in the coming months until the protocol is finalized.

Over the past year, the Association Awacak has approached Professor Suzy Basile to obtain effective support in the protection of the personal information that it possesses.

The efforts of most of the families now supported under the Act are jointly supported by the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak. Against this backdrop, and to limit the necessary transfer of the information that the two organizations collect in the context of their support efforts, the families that so desire

can request that the Direction and the Association Awacak simultaneously receive the information identified by certain institutions.

The Direction de soutien aux familles has also obtained specific access to the secure platform of the Ministère du Conseil exécutif to transfer the confidential documentation obtained during its research. Personalized access can also be created for each of the relevant partners. Accordingly, several physicians receive medical records for analysis through their personalized access to this platform. Certain documents containing personal information are also transferred in this manner to the special advisor or to the Association Awacak.

Other secure transfer procedures have been established for medical documentation through the collaboration by the members of the network of health and social services experts pursuant to the administration of the Act : (1) the direct secure transmission of documents to the archival services of the home hospitals, in which security measures are expressly adapted to the nature of the archives ; and (2) digital transmissions through secure governmental, institutional, and other email addresses.

While several measures have thus been implemented since the Act came into force to uniformly apply a method to archive the information collected in a spirit of respect for its confidentiality, the Direction de soutien aux familles believes that certain data transmission procedures require additional elaboration and systematization through transfer tools that specifically target data protection, summarized in a protocol shared by the partners.

Recommendation 2

“The 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 possible future use of the information obtained in the context of the Act. The protocol must hinge on and abide by the principles of the research protocols developed by the First Nations and the Inuit in Québec.”

As indicated in the preceding pages, the Association Awacak contacted Professor Suzy Basile, holder of the Canada Research Chair in Issues Relating to Indigenous Women and Director of the Laboratoire de recherche sur les enjeux relatifs aux femmes autochtones Mikwatisiw at the UQAT, to establish for the families a data preservation system.

The work under way, launched in the summer of 2022, will include the production of an information management protocol in a spirit of respect for individuals and families, that will structure access to data and its possible future use and hinge on the principles of the research protocols developed by the First Nations and the Inuit in Québec.

Recommendation 3

“The 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 they not be destroyed.”

In keeping with the preceding recommendation, which it concretizes, the response to the latter recommendation will consist in the impending application of the information management protocol that should be linked to the data preservation and archiving system that Professor Suzy Basile and her team are developing. The Association Awacak will regularly monitor the implementation on the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act over the coming year and in the context of the next annual report pertaining to the Act.

CONCLUSION – 2022-2023

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE

MONITORING COMMITTEE

At the conclusion of this second year of administration of the Act and considering :

- the general aim of the Act, oriented toward the families' quest for the truth and healing ;
- the families' needs expressed in the context of the support that the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association des familles Awacak provide ;
- the progress of the research conducted for the families presented in the preceding sections ;
- the identification of facilitating practices and challenges to their realization ;
- reliance on new partnerships ;
- the implementation of new tools but also projects whose development should be prioritized over the coming year ;

the members of the monitoring committee on the carrying out of the Act present two new recommendations in this report, whose realization is added to that of the first three recommendations formulated in February 2022.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Québec government provide the necessary resources to the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Association Awacak to enable them to evaluate and implement all the forensic, legislative, remote sensing or other possibilities to respond to the requests of parents who wish to exhume their children buried in a common lot.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit financially support the Association Awacak to help families to obtain legal and other recourse once the families have received and examined the documents and information that the Direction de soutien aux familles has obtained with respect to their children.

In the wake of the reception of this second recommendation, the Association des familles Awacak was contacted promptly to ensure that it well and truly has the necessary funding. The Association confirmed that its financial requirements are, for the time being, satisfied. The Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit will pursue its close collaboration with the Association and will evaluate with it its financial requirements as the initiatives progress.

APPENDICES

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

Committee responsible for monitoring 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*

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* (the Act) establish the monitoring committee 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 progress in processing the requests.

More specifically, the committee has a mandate to :

- monitor deliberations carried out in the context of the Act :
 - 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 relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit ;
 - by regularly receiving information on the work performed by the Association Awacak, the special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First and the Inuit, and any other organization that supports 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 supports 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 pertaining to the Act ;
- formulate any recommendation or submit any advisory opinion that it deems necessary to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit 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 the monitoring committee's recommendations and advisory opinions, in French and in English, thirty (30) days after they are submitted to the Minister ;
- with the financial support of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, if necessary, have translated the recommendations into the Indigenous languages.

Composition

The special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit coordinates the monitoring committee.

As of February 28, 2023, the monitoring committee comprised the following permanent members :

- Anne Panasuk, special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit ;
- Julie Martel, Director, Direction de soutien aux familles ;
- Florence Dupré, Coordinator, Direction de soutien aux familles ;
- Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Association Awacak ;
- Marjolaine Sioui, Executive Director, 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 ;
- Raoul Quitich, assistance officer for the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program, Council of the Atikamekw Nation ;
- Ejinagosi (Richard) Kistabish, Anicinape Elder and advisory aid.

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

- André Albert Morin, official opposition critic for relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Québec Liberal Party ;

- Manon Massé, co-spokesperson of the second opposition group and spokesperson for relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Québec solidaire ;
- Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, leader of the third opposition group and spokesperson for relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Parti Québécois ;
- Nicole Anne Vautour, Directrice des enquêtes 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 can be convened, if required.

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

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 the Act ;
- 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 the Act and make recommendations pertaining to it.

Length of term

The monitoring committee is instituted for the entire duration of the administration of the Act. Its mandate will be reassessed and, if need be, adjusted on September 1, 2023, and 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 Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit.

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 health and social services institutions 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 humanely, respectfully support families in their quest for answers concerning children who died or went missing in a health and social services institution, a public body, or a religious congregation.

The Direction de soutien aux familles was established in the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit 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 relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, 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 relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit coordinates the interdepartmental committee. In its capacity as a coordinating body, the Direction convenes committee meetings, prepares the agendas, minutes, and any other relevant working documents, and leads the meetings.

The committee comprises the following government departments and bodies :

- Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (coordination) ;
- Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ;
- Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec ;
- Directeur de l'état civil ;
- Ministère 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 report pertaining to the Act) ;
- May-June (follow-up to the work and definition of working guidelines) ;
- October-November (follow-up to the work).

Other meetings can be added as the need arises.

The agenda determines the length of each meeting.

**Secrétariat
aux relations avec
les Premières Nations
et les Inuit**

Québec 

