

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

SECRÉTARIAT AUX RELATIONS AVEC LES PREMIÈRES NATIONS ET LES INUIT



2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

UPDATED 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, Ullaakut,

This is the fourth annual report on the carrying out of the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution*. In other words, we are almost halfway through the initial ten-year period of the Act's implementation.

Once again this year, I have the privilege of following the progress of families as they retrace their children's path, and the searches carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles and its partners.

The commemorative ceremonies that have marked this year's events for certain families were extremely moving. The third exhumation, the reburial that followed in Mistissini on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and the heartfelt message delivered to political representatives and society in general by the family of a young girl buried outside a cemetery, following an archaeological process, were all pivotal moments that will remain in our minds and in our hearts.

Last, I will always remember the strength of the teamwork and the quality of the relationship that was built around children and their families. Once again, I would like to thank all the partners involved in the implementation of the Act.

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

Ian Lafrenière

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTION DE SOUTIEN AUX FAMILLES



Over the past year, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued its journey alongside the 121 families for which it has provided support since the coming into force 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*.

After more than three years of development and learning with its numerous partners, the family support team has conducted searches under the Act for 209 children.



For the first time, this year, it was able to direct its attention to the end of the search process, in a spirit of humility and sensitivity. The end of a search, discussed with each family, does not mark the end of the journey. At this crucial stage, spiritual and emotional support for each family member becomes even more essential. Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière and all the other partner organizations providing support for families play a key role in this new stage.

To get this far in the process, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued to work with the institutions to which the Act applies, and has extended the scope of its qualitative and documentary research to respond to questions from families. Several new partnerships have been formed, in particular thanks to the productive work completed with Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

As we start a new year, and on behalf of the family support team as a whole, we would like to thank our partners for their unfailing commitment and all the families who have placed their trust in us while showing us the way.

And thank you also to the children who have let us briefly into their too-short lives.

Patrick Lahaie

Associate Secretary General
For Relations with the First Nations
and the Inuit

Julie Martel

Director of Family Support

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



This has been another emotional year for the members of Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles. The year 2024 has not been easy, whether in emotional, physical, spiritual or mental terms.

We began 2024 with an official gathering of the members of Awacak at the annual general meeting.

So we've begun and completed the work of accompanying and supporting families who had filed an application to search for their children or siblings in previous years. It is always a great honour for me to carry out this work, which requires peace of mind and emotional flexibility. Several requests for exhumations and follow-up for the families were dealt with by the teams, involving many hours of planning and travelling to support the families.

Commemorations and ceremonies were a big part of the year. We carefully completed all the necessary follow-up work and meetings in the English-speaking Anicinape communities.

Trips to communities were not very productive this year, for several reasons, including the extensive follow-up needed after ceremonies in cemeteries, the organization of marches for children who disappeared and were buried without their families being contacted, and searches in cemeteries. All this work resulted from the requests made by Innu and Atikamekw families and a few Anicinape families. Some families were able to move onto the mourning stage, which was challenging for them and for us.

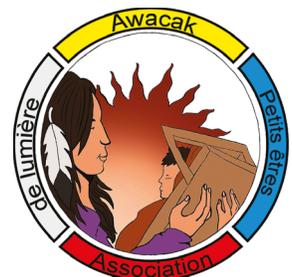
I can observe that the more the work advances, the more detail and emotion are involved. Exhuming human remains and visiting cemeteries with families is distressing.

The partners have shown nothing but respect in their work and I can only thank them with all my heart on behalf of the families who are members of Awacak.

2024 has been the most emotional year for me, and a year of hard work.

Several families are still waiting for a response, and so the work is not over yet.

Nin Françoise Ruperthouse



MESSAGE FROM FLORENCE PICARD, ON BEHALF OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE CARRYING OUT OF THE ACT



Indigenous children are our hope for the future—they represent the future and the survival of tradition. Family is the central pillar, where children have pride of place.

The quest for truth continues as a large number of families seek to discover and understand the circumstances in which their child disappeared or died after being admitted to an institution, at a time when answers were only too often not provided.

This search for answers would not be possible without the mobilization of the families concerned and the collaboration of various institutions. The commitment of all the stakeholders makes a difference in the search to bring peace to the families. We recognize the efforts made by the institutions working to implement the Act, while reaffirming the importance of transparency, compassion and respect for the Indigenous peoples.

To all those waiting, even at times when nothing appears to be moving and answers are not forthcoming, I say that your actions are a powerful force.

On behalf of the committee, I can assure all the families affected directly or indirectly that we will continue to raise our voices for you and will remain determined to complete the work begun and the efforts made to bring you the clarity and peace you deserve.

Florence Picard

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I. BACKGROUND TO IMPLEMENTING THE ACT

Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution

On August 3, 2016, the establishment of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG) was announced. The commission of inquiry was mandated to “look into and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including sexual violence” (NIMMIWG, undated: online).

Several families testified before the Commission in Quebec about 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.

For instance, the testimony revealed that seven Atikamekw babies evacuated for medical reasons between 1950 and 1973 went missing. Other witnesses reported the disappearance of eight Atikamekw babies in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as one Innu child (NIMMIWG, 2019b: 107-108).

While the NIMMIWG was pursuing its work, Anne Panasuk, then an investigative journalist, made a series of reports on the Radio-Canada program *Enquête* and in a podcast titled *Chemin de croix*. She revealed the disappearance, between 1971 and 1972, of eight children from the Innu community of Pakua Shipi who had been hospitalized in Blanc-Sablon, in the Côte-Nord region. She also reported on missing Atikamekw children.

In general, the families that the NIMMIWG commissioners and Ms. Panasuk met conveyed their suffering, but also stated the institutions did not inform them of the death or disappearance of their children. Moreover, several witnesses mentioned that contradictory or erroneous information was sent to the families, which sometimes led to children the families had believed dead eventually being found.

“In the fall of 1958 and the summer of 1959, respectively, a one-year-old boy and his five-year-old sister went missing under similar circumstances at the Hôtel-Dieu hospital in Amos. Decades later, in 1996, the members of the family traced them to a hospital in Baie-Saint-Paul. They learned that the boy had died in 1965, not in 1958 as they had been told at the time. His sister was still alive and was 37 years old. She had been kept in the same hospital in Baie-Saint-Paul and was unable to walk or talk. This shocking story raises doubts as to the fate of several 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, 2019b: 107).

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 consulted as to the care to be given to their children 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 the situations examined, the bodies were never returned to the parents after death. The children's bodies were buried, but the family was not told where or what funeral rite, if any, was performed. One of the children was found in a common grave years later" (NIMMIWG, 2019b: 109).

At the conclusion of nearly three years of investigation, the NIMMIWG released its final report on June 3, 2019 (NIMMIWG, 2019a). The final report was accompanied by a supplementary report specific to Quebec containing 21 calls for justice (NIMMIWG, 2019b), one of which urged "the Government of Québec 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 centre 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* (referred to here as "the Act") reflects the goal, shared by both families and the Québec government, of responding to this call and thereby humbly contributing to possible healing, in a spirit of respect for the families.

From suffering to the quest for truth



Tewegan ("drum", in the Anishinaabe language) designed by two Anishinaabe artisans from Kitigan Zibi, Pinock Smith and Dean Ottawa. The drawing symbolizes unity and the link between First Nations and their ancestral roots, as well as the medicine wheel guiding them towards balance and healing.

Families grieving the death or disappearance of Indigenous children after they were admitted to an institution have been seeking answers for many years. Since the Act came into force in September 2021, they have regularly expressed their 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 commissioners and shared with them their suffering. Others, alone or collectively, had begun to seek answers from institutions. Still others, not knowing which organization to turn to, remained silent, sometimes with a feeling of guilt.

Over the past ten years, numerous fact-finding commissions have made it possible in Quebec, 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 sent to 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 Quebec (2019), were followed and rounded out by the reports of the Select Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Minors (2020) and 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. Even more recently, working groups with targeted expertise have formulated several recommendations on violence affecting women and, more especially, Indigenous women.

The tragic death in September 2020 of Joyce Echaquan rekindled painful experiences and sustained long-term fear of public institutions in the communities as well as in urban areas. Coroner Géhane Kamel's inquest report concerning the death of Ms. Echaquan, tabled in September 2021, concluded that "the racism and prejudice that Ms. Echaquan faced certainly contributed to her death [translation]" and recommended, consequently, that the Government of Québec "recognize the existence of systemic racism in institutions and commit itself to contributing to its elimination [translation]" (Bureau du coroner, 2021: 21).

More recently, on October 4, 2023, the Protecteur du citoyen released its first follow-up report on the Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Quebec. The report underscored both the progress made and the significant amount of work that still lies ahead. The adoption and implementation of the Act is one of the achievements highlighted by the Protecteur du citoyen (Protecteur du citoyen, 2023: 8).

The Supreme Court of Canada decision finding that the *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families* was constitutional was made in early 2024. The implementation of this legislation enables First Nations, the Inuit, and Métis in Canada to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services.

Almost two and a half years after being appointed by the Canadian Justice Minister and Attorney General as the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, Kimberly Murray released her final report at the 7th National Gathering on Unmarked Burials on October 29, 2024. The report, *Upholding Sacred Obligations: Reparations for Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children and Unmarked Burials in Canada*, sets out 42 "legal, moral and ethical obligations" of governments, churches, and other institutions to support the implementation of an Indigenous-led Reparations Framework (Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, 2024a: 210). One concerns the Act directly, suggesting that Canada's provincial and territorial governments should "draw on the successful aspect of Bill 79" to establish, as in Québec, "a permanent office to provide support for families and communities of missing and disappeared children" (Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, 2024b: 1325-1326). The report also mentions that the Act "has both strengths and limitations" and "has helped many families find where their loved ones are buried" (Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, 2024a: 138-139).

Last, Bill 32, the *Act to establish the cultural safety approach within the health and social services network*, was passed on December 5, 2024 in Québec. In response to various calls for action made by the Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Québec, the new Act includes an obligation for Santé Québec and health and social services institutions in Québec to develop partnerships with the First Nations and the Inuit to target, put in place and assess the impact of secure measures that take the cultural, spiritual, linguistic and historic realities of the First Peoples into account.

At the heart of this work, the need to facilitate the quest for truth and restore First Nations and Inuit trust in Québec's public institutions was repeatedly identified as a condition for healing and a step toward reconciliation.

Passage of the Act

In this context and to promptly respond to Call for Justice 20 in the NIMMIWG report and the needs of the families concerned, in fall 2020, the Government of Québec 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 Indigenous Children to Their Families*), which was under consideration at the time. The six new sections were intended to facilitate access to some of the information held by institutions to enable families to learn more about the circumstances surrounding the disappearance or death of a child.

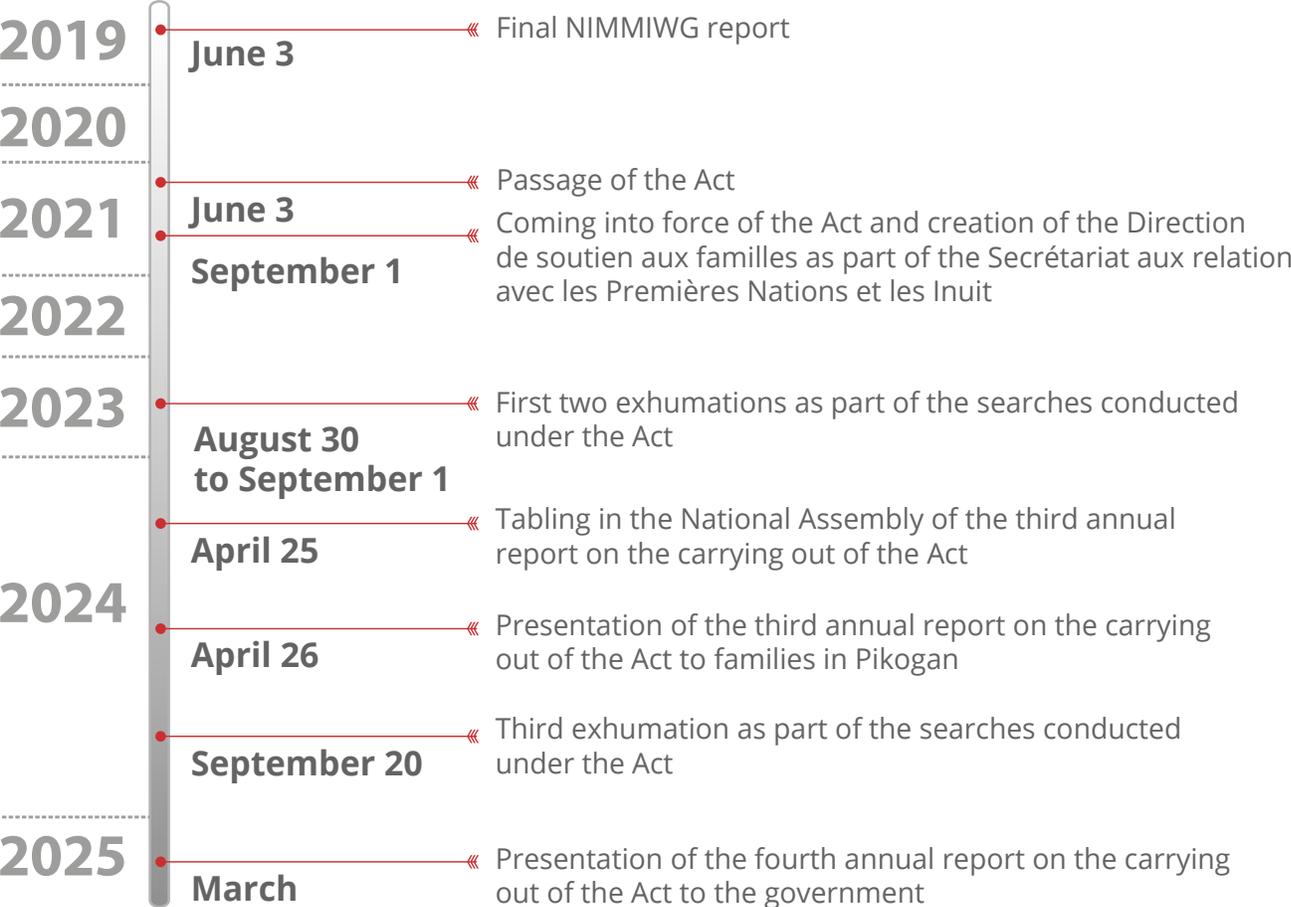
The initial amendments received a mitigated response from Indigenous families and organizations. The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) joined with the Protecteur du citoyen to request that the First Nations and the Inuit participate fully in consultations concerning the response to the 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 give families access to the personal information held by Government of Québec departments and bodies on Indigenous children who died or went missing. The requests were formulated to support those of the families who would subsequently establish the non-profit organization Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière (referred to in this document as "Awacak").

Bearing in mind these questions and given that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic demanded prompt assent to Bill 31, the *Act to Amend Mainly the Pharmacy Act for the Purpose of Facilitating Access to Certain Services* was adopted and then sanctioned on March 17, 2020, without the six sections dedicated to Indigenous children.

The same day, the National Assembly adopted a motion calling for the government to table a separate bill stipulating that personal information concerning certain Indigenous children who went missing or died be communicated to their families (National Assembly of Quebec, 2020), thereby confirming its desire to draw up a new bill in response to the needs of Indigenous families.

After approximately one year of deliberations, 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 passed on June 3, 2021. The parliamentary proceedings leading to its passage were guided by a shared, all-party vision of the dignity of children and their families' quest for truth. The Act came into force on September 1, 2021, specifying that it was to apply for an initial period of 10 years.

Timeline - key milestones in the implementation of the Act



Overview of the Act

The Act is meant as a tool to support the families searching for information on the circumstances under which their children went missing or died after they were admitted to an institution, taking into account those families' linguistic and cultural characteristics and psychological and spiritual needs.

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

The Act empowers the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit (referred to in this document as "the Minister") to investigate institutions, bodies or religious congregations when one or more elements lead to the belief that information that could shed light on the circumstances under which an Indigenous child went missing or died exists, but could not be communicated.

With the goal of supporting the families' manifold needs, the Act allows for the implementation of culturally reassuring support measures. The measures, which will be presented below, are made possible through the collaboration of an array of partners. They are intended to offer the families guidance and support throughout the process in a spirit of respect for their culture, language and history.

As part of the healing process, the Act provides for assistance for the families that so desire concerning an application to the Superior Court for an order of disinterment.

Last, the Act stipulates that an individual can file a complaint with the Minister when dissatisfied with the services received while seeking information from an institution, public body or religious congregation. It also makes the Minister responsible for reporting on the carrying out of the Act in an annual report.



Anishinaabe doll made by the Mikis Committee and offered to guests by Awacak when the annual report was presented in Pikogan (Pikogan, April 2024).

Partner organizations at the heart of the implementation

In June 2021, shortly after the Act was sanctioned, Anne Panasuk was appointed as the Minister's special advisor for family support. Her two-year mandate ended in June 2023, and since then she has continued to work with families alongside Awacak.

To ensure the implementation of the Act as soon as it came into force, a new branch was established at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (SRPNI): the Direction de soutien aux familles.

In September 2021, Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière, the first registered organization formed by families of Indigenous children who went missing or died, joined these interveners to contribute to applying the Act, alongside other partner organizations. Many organizations and individuals, such as the Family Information Liaison Unit in Nunavut, the health support team of the Council of the Atikamekw Nation, caseworkers in various Indigenous communities and elders, provide support for Indigenous families and have become key players in their quest for truth.

Direction de soutien aux familles

Established on September 1, 2021, the Direction de soutien aux familles at the SRPNI is tasked with ensuring the implementation of the Act in a way that respects the needs of families.

More specifically, it is responsible for:

- assisting families in all aspects of their search (requests to institutions, requests for civil status documents, requests to government departments, public bodies and religious congregations, steps to identify a burial site and obtain related documents, requests for disinterment, etc.);
- working with families to develop and implement tailored research strategies that meet their wishes and objectives;
- facilitating and coordinating, at the request of the families it supports, meetings with healthcare and social services experts (primarily doctors and nurses), exhumation specialists or any other relevant experts to analyze and interpret the documentation obtained;
- coordinating the health and social services support network assisting in the implementation of the Act;
- coordinating the interdepartmental committee under the Act;
- coordinating a committee of partners on exhumations;



The Direction de soutien aux familles team. From left to right: Simon Charette, Florence Dupré, Caroline Éthier, Véronique Laveau, Catherine Morin Boulais, Julie Martel and Louise Morin.

- developing any approaches and partnerships aimed at establishing expertise required for the implementation of the Act;
- communicating information concerning the Act and its implementation to institutions, government departments and bodies, and religious congregations;
- communicating information concerning the Act and its implementation to partner Indigenous organizations and offering them presentations and updates, as needed;
- coordinating the preparation and drafting of the annual report.

The Direction de soutien aux familles is a permanent member of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act. It works with families, Awacak, Indigenous organizations and all the institutions targeted by the Act in pursuit of its mandate.

The Direction de soutien aux familles team works under the supervision of a director of family support who reports to the Associate Secretary General for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit at the SRPNI.

The team also includes a research coordinator, four family support advisors and an administrative technician.

In addition to consolidating the initial funding of \$1 million granted to the Direction de soutien aux familles in the 2021 budget, the 2023 budget included an **additional \$4.5 million over five years (2023-2028)** to support the families of missing or deceased Indigenous children.

Since its creation in September 2021, the Direction de soutien aux familles has broadened its support for the Indigenous families of missing or deceased persons in response to their needs. In accordance with the requirements of the Act, this report focuses specifically on the work of the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act.

Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière

Awacak was founded by and for Indigenous families whose children went missing or died. More specifically, the organization’s mission is to:

- put Indigenous families in Quebec whose children went missing or died in touch with each other;
- help Indigenous families in Quebec find their missing children;
- help Indigenous families in Quebec discover 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 Indigenous families in Quebec whose children went missing or died;



The Awacak team. From left to right: Pierre-Paul Niquay, Kim Lagueux Ruperthouse, Francoise Ruperthouse, Loriane Trapper and Chantale Awashish.

- make the necessary representations to the authorities to assert the rights of the Indigenous families in Quebec whose children went missing or died;
- defend and promote the interests of Indigenous families in Quebec whose children went missing or died;
- heighten the general public's awareness of the situation of families Indigenous families in Quebec whose children went missing or died.

The five founding members of Awacak are:

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

To attain its objectives, Awacak works alongside the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act



Meeting of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act, January 31, 2025. From left to right and top to bottom: Patrick Lahaie (Associate Secretary General for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit – Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit), Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles), Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Richard Kistabish, André Albert Morin (Quebec Liberal Party), Nicole Anne Vautour (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse), Manon Massé (Québec solidaire), Pascal Paradis (Parti québécois) / Marjolaine Sioui (First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission), Geoffrey Kelley (Coordinator), Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière), Ian Lafrenière (Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit).



Rachel Lagueux, Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière.



Simeon Trapper, Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière.

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.”

The Committee was officially set up at its first meeting on October 29, 2021, and held five meetings between March 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025, on:

- April 3, 2024;
- May 27, 2024;
- September 16, 2024;
- December 16, 2024;
- January 31, 2025.

The Committee had nine permanent members during this period:

- Geoffrey Kelley, Coordinator of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act;
- Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General, Awacak;
- Marjolaine Sioui, Executive Director, First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission;
- Marjolaine Étienne, President, Quebec Native Women;
- Annick Gill, Strategic Development Advisor, Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, from March 1 to May 26, 2024, replaced by Florence Picard, Legal Affairs Advisor, Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, on May 27, 2024;
- 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;
- Julie Martel, Director, Direction de soutien aux familles;
- Florence Dupré, Coordinator, Direction de soutien aux familles.

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:

- André Albert Morin, Official Opposition Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Quebec Liberal Party;
- Manon Massé, Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Québec solidaire;
- Pascal Paradis, Third Opposition Group Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Parti Québécois;
- Nicole Anne Vautour, Director of Youth Investigations, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.

Among its key attributions, the Monitoring Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Act and making recommendations pertaining to it. Appendix 1 gives the mission statement and the full list of members.

Since the first report on the Act in March 2022, the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act has made a total of 12 recommendations. The response to the initial recommendations and to the Monitoring Committee's new recommendations are presented in Section III and in the conclusion of this report.

The concerted efforts of partners has been supported, since the early days of the Act's implementation, by initiatives and searches in a number of institutions, both covered and not covered by the Act, including medical and religious archivists, cemetery and parish officials, civil servants from various public departments and bodies seeking answers and solutions to access information, as well as researchers, doctors and exhumation and identification specialists.

During this fourth year more than ever, the individual and institutional contribution of each of these partners has been central to the work the Direction de soutien aux familles has carried out at the families' request.

II. FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT: MARCH 1, 2024 TO FEBRUARY 28, 2025

The fourth annual report covers the work completed between March 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025. To ensure continuity with the previous reports, it outlines the main accomplishment in four areas:

- 1- travel and communication;
- 2- support for families in their searches;
- 3- sectoral developments;
- 4- investigations and complaints.

The summary of the main accomplishments alternates with testimony from families and other people involved in the searches. It highlights some of the progress made over the last four years, as well as the obstacles that remain to be overcome, illustrating the families' deep resilience and their desire to ensure justice and dignity for their children.

Travel and communication

The fourth year of implementation has seen fewer trips and fewer tours to make new communities aware of the services available under the Act. Instead, the focus has been on providing support for families wishing to visit burial sites and organize scouting, commemorations or, in some cases, ceremonies in memory of their children. During the year, several media organizations also expressed an interest in the progress of the searches and the ceremonies organized.

Travel

The tabling of the third annual report in the National Assembly on April 25, 2024 was followed by a presentation to the families of **Pikogan** (Abitibi-Témiscamingue) on **April 26, 2024**. On this occasion, the Minister



Presentation of the third annual report under the Act at the National Assembly of Quebec, April 25, 2024. From left to right and top to bottom: Catherine Morin Boulais (Direction de soutien aux familles), Véronique Laveau (Direction de soutien aux familles), Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Simon Charette (Direction de soutien aux familles) / Louise Morin (Direction de soutien aux familles), Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles), Sol Zanetti (Monitoring Committee – Québec solidaire) / François St-Louis (Member of the National Assembly for Joliette), Patrick Lahaie (Associate Secretary General for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit – Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit), Suzanne Blais (Member of the National Assembly for Abitibi-Ouest) / Anne Panasuk (Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière), Geoffrey Kelley (Monitoring Committee) / Sylvestre Desterras (Awacak – petits êtres de lumière), Pascal Paradis (Monitoring Committee – Parti québécois) / André Albert Morin (Monitoring Committee – Quebec Liberal Party), Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière), Richard Kistabish (Monitoring Committee), Ian Lafrenière (Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit).

Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, the members of his staff, the Direction de soutien aux familles, Awacak, and several members of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act, including members from the parties represented at the National Assembly, attended a ceremony organized by the Chief of Pikogan, Chantal Kistabish, and her team.



Presentation of the third annual report under the Act to Anishinaabe families in Pikogan (Pikogan, April 26, 2024).

to a possible request for exhumation. The Direction de soutien aux familles coordinated the preparation phase, and the work was carried out by two archaeologists from Université de Montréal. The family members were present during the survey, and representatives from the cemetery and community were also on-site to support the family.

On **May 13, 2024**, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak travelled to see a family in **La Tuque** (Mauricie–Centre-du-Québec) for a follow-up meeting concerning their search. The Direction de soutien aux familles took advantage of the trip to go to the Catholic cemetery in La Tuque, where several missing children are buried, in order to gain a better physical understanding of the site. It also went to **Notre-Dame-de-Pierreville** (Mauricie–Centre-du-Québec) to locate another burial site. This provided an opportunity for the Direction de soutien aux familles to create a contact with the Société historique de Pierreville and several witnesses, and to find out more about the cemetery in Pierreville.

From **May 13 to 15**, the Direction de soutien aux familles visited the Innu community of **Pakuashipi** (Côte-Nord) for a sharing circle with a family and the community's elders, with Awacak also present via a videolink. The circle, organized by the Direction de soutien aux familles with essential support from the community's health centre at the request of the family, was a way for family members to find out more about the still-painful disappearance of their brother.

A little earlier in the month, on **April 3, 2024**, a member of the Direction de soutien de soutien aux familles travelled from Montreal to **Quebec City** (Capitale-Nationale) to meet a family, present the search results, and accompany the family to a meeting with a physician and member of the health and social services support network. Awacak was present for part of the meeting via a videolink.

On **May 7 and 8, 2024**, the Direction de soutien aux familles went to the **Catholic cemetery in Mashteuiatsh** (Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean) alongside a family. A ground radar survey was conducted prior



Sun rising over the community of Pakuashipi (Pakuashipi, May 2024).

On **July 30 and 31**, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak met up with the members of another family at the **Cimetière des Trembles in Montreal** (Montreal) for a commemorative ceremony for their sister. The ceremony provided an opportunity for the Direction de soutien aux familles to present the family with a small wooden urn to carry back a little earth from the burial site.

The Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak also attended a gathering of survivors of the Fort George Residential Schools, organized in the Cree community of **Chisasibi** (Nord-du-Québec) from **August 5 to 9, 2024**. Both organizations were able to publicize their services at the event, which attracted almost 170 people, mainly from Cree communities in Québec and Ontario. At the request of one family for which it is providing support, the Direction de soutien aux familles and the family spoke about the steps in the search for their child. Following the gathering, three new requests for support in a search were received for cases that are not covered by the Act, and the Direction de soutien aux familles will be able to respond thanks to its new, broader mandate.

On **September 17, 2024**, the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Family Information Liaison Unit in Nunavut accompanied a first Inuit family to the **Cimetière des Trembles in Montreal** (Montreal) to hold a commemorative ceremony for the family's child who died after being hospitalized in Quebec City. They accompanied a second Inuit family for the same purpose on **September 24**. At both ceremonies, the Direction de soutien aux familles presented the family members, who live in various regions of Nunavut and Nunavik, with small wooden urns to allow them to carry back some earth from the children's burial site.

On September 20, 2024, the third exhumation was carried out pursuant to the Act. The Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak accompanied the family members to the **Anglican cemetery in La Tuque** (Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec) on **September 19 and 20, 2024**. The child was reinterred on **September 30** in the Cree community of **Mistissini** (Nord-du-Québec). The extremely moving re-burial ceremony was held in the presence of the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, the Minister Responsible for the Fight Against Racism, the members of the National Assembly for Huntingdon, Soulanges and Gaspé, Awacak, officials from the Anglican Church, and a number of representatives from organizations who gathered alongside the family and community.

On **September 26, 2024**, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak accompanied a family representative to the **Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise in Montreal** (Montreal) to conduct an initial scouting



Presentation by Catherine Morin Boulais (Direction de soutien aux familles) at Fort George residential schools gathering (Chisasibi, August 2024).



Poster of Fort George residential schools gathering (Chisasibi, August 2024).

of the place where her brother was buried. The hours spent at the site, in the presence of a young fox, were highly emotional. A cemetery official gave the family a document attesting to the child's burial.

On **October 31, 2024**, a large-scale ceremony was held at a site near the cemetery in **Joliette** (Lanaudière) to honour the memory of a child buried outside the cemetery. It was organized by the child's family to begin a key archaeological stage in the search process before a possible exhumation. The ceremony brought together, at the family's invitation, representatives from Awacak, Michèle Audette (a senator), the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, the member of the National Assembly for Joliette, the Direction de soutien aux familles, several permanent members and observers from the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act, members of the National Assembly, Arkéos inc., a company specializing in anthropological research, representatives from the Lanaudière integrated health and social services centre, and media representatives.

Last, from **November 5 to 7, 2024**, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak went to the cemetery in **Saint-Augustin** (Côte-Nord) to join the members of a family from the Innu community of **Pakuashipi** who wanted to hold a commemorative ceremony for their brother. As in the previous ceremonies, the Direction de soutien aux familles presented the family with a wooden urn to bring back earth from the burial site.

A trip to Pakuashipi (Côte-Nord) to give the latest search results to several Innu families was planned for September 2024. The tour was postponed by the families concerned (to November 2024) and then postponed again (to spring 2025). The Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak will remain available to meet with the families at a time of their choosing in the coming months.

In addition to these trips involving meetings with one or more families, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued its tours to identify burial sites, gather information about certain sites, and carry out searches in archives.

Communications

Between May 15 and November 18, 2024, these tours led to at least six presentations by the Direction de soutien aux familles to highlight its support services or consolidate its partnerships with various organizations while raising awareness about the work performed pursuant to the Act. These communications efforts targeted various authorities and institutions, including the Association des chanceliers du Québec, the Regroupement des archivistes religieux, the Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ), teams at the Ministère de la Sécurité publique and participants at the conferences organized by the Government of Québec to mark National Indigenous Peoples Day. More recently, a discussion meeting bringing together the Direction de soutien aux familles, BAnQ and representatives from the Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops and Mission chez nous was held in Quebec City on January 20, 2025.

Testimony of Msgr. Pierre Murray, secretary general of the Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops, concerning his collaboration with the Direction de soutien aux familles

In the spring of 2024, the Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops (AECQ) was contacted by the project leader at Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ) who was coordinating relations with partners for searches under 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*.

To provide more support for families looking for useful information in the archives kept by Catholic parishes and cemeteries, the AECQ helped organize an initial meeting with the chancellors of Québec's eighteen dioceses. The chancellors are responsible for anything connected with the Church's own law (canon law), including the conservation of administrative documents.

Once the chancellors had been informed of the important mission of the Direction de soutien aux familles, procedures were put in place to ensure that requests for information would be properly understood and would receive a quick response in compliance with the current rules. By sending requests directly to each diocesan chancellery, it will be easier for the Direction des familles to ascertain, in each actual case, whether or not the local religious archives hold any useful information.

In January 2025, the AECQ helped organize a working meeting with the Direction de soutien aux familles, in partnership with BANQ, to answer specific questions about Catholic funeral practices in the 20th century, and also more general questions about the organization of the Catholic Church in Québec. The AECQ secretary general explained, for example, how dioceses and parishes are structured, how authority is wielded within the Church, and the links between bishops and the secular clergy, on the one hand, and regular clergy (religious communities) on the other. The AECQ also shared a reference book with the Direction de soutien aux familles, *Le mot juste: vocabulaire des mots courants de la foi catholique* (Novalis, 2007). The director of the Mission chez nous organization, set up by the AECQ in 1993 to support a pastoral presence in Indigenous communities, to show solidarity with the First Peoples and to make non-Indigenous Catholics aware of Indigenous realities, was also present at the meeting. Some possibilities for ways to work together were discussed to provide more direct spiritual support for families who requested it, in particular in cases involving an exhumation and reburial.

The AECQ is glad to have an opportunity to work with the Direction de soutien aux familles in this important effort to repair historical harm and provide genuine support for people in mourning who have suffered and indeed continue to suffer from the consequences of colonialism. The AECQ, now that it has been made aware of these realities that the general public often knows little about, can assure the Direction de soutien aux familles of its ongoing involvement as a partner.

Mgr Pierre Murray

Secretary General

Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops

Several of the presentations were made jointly by the Direction de soutien aux familles and BANQ under an agreement signed in 2023 for work conducted pursuant to the Act. The topics covered are discussed in more detail in the section of this report about searches in the Québec archives.

The Act in the media

Between March 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025, 28 print articles, 10 radio broadcasts or podcasts, and 8 television segments about the work conducted under the Act were noted, a total of 46 media publications.

As noted in the third annual report, the question of exhumations, and especially the third exhumation carried out under the Act, attracted the most media interest. A total of 16 articles, 2 radio reports, and 1 TV report concerned that exhumation. Most of the articles were published on June 18, 2024, one week after the Superior Court judgment. After the commemorative ceremony held on October 31, 2024 in Joliette to launch the archaeological steps leading up to a possible exhumation, one article, two TV broadcasts and one radio newscast were noted between October 31 and November 1. In addition, 23 media items dealt with the question of exhumations, making up 50% of the media content devoted to work under the Act during the past year.

Among the other topics that attracted media interest was the tabling of the annual report under the Act, which led to at least one article, one radio report and four TV segments. *Espaces autochtones* also included a text about the story of Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General of Awacak, and the searches carried out by her family to find her brother and sister. The article was published on March 14, 2024, and mentioned in three radio broadcasts the following day. In April 2024, Anne Panasuk, the former special advisor to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, discussed the application of the Act in a podcast. Lastly, an article published on June 3, 2024, to mark the fifth anniversary of the MMIWG inquiry, gave families an opportunity to testify about their experiences.

In addition to these articles and reports focusing specifically on work related to the Act, it is important to mention the numerous reports about the tabling of the final report by the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools between October 29 and November 4, 2024, in the print media and on radio and television.

To conclude, Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles have more recently responded to several media requests to document, from a multidimensional standpoint, the steps taken by families under the Act. This work is ongoing as this report is being prepared.

In accordance with the vision it has defended since the start of the work, the Direction de soutien aux familles has been guided primarily by the wishes and needs of the families as it has responded to the media requests it receives.

Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière: 2024 report

By Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General

It is a pleasure to present my report for 2024.

First, 2024 has been an exceptional and emotion-filled year, with a number of meetings with several families. I present this report with the pride of knowing that we have once again acted in the interest of the families that lost a child or experienced a child's death.

In January 2024, we met with the Anicinape in Abitibi, launching the work in Pikogan and Lac-Simon.

The annual report was presented in Pikogan, and we had a fruitful trip to the village. The report was well received by the Council.

The work in 2024 was as follows:

- During the annual meeting, one member of Awacak died after giving us her tikinakan¹, a gesture we found very moving. She explained to all the members of the assembly how happy she was to get answers to the questions she had had for so many years. She expressed her thanks to the members of Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles.
- Awacak was present throughout the year at events to promote its work. This began in Sept-Îles, followed by Quebec City for children who disappeared, Université du Québec à Montréal, Gatineau for children who disappeared, pow-wows, and Chisasibi. Even after our trips to Innu and Atikamekw communities, some people are still unaware that a resource exists for Indigenous children who disappeared or died at health and social services institutions. As a result, leaflets and posters are sent out to our communities.
- Meetings were held with families for follow-up and ceremonies in cemeteries in Québec, which were trying times for the families and for us.
- One exhumation and re-burial were carried out to repatriate a child with the family. Several meetings for this work were organized by the team at the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak.



Information booth for Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière at the Festival Innu Nikamu (July 30 to August 4, 2024, Maliotenam).



Participation by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière in a panel discussion about the Act at a symposium organized by the National Advisory Committee on Residential Schools Missing Children and Unmarked Burials. From left to right: Sylvestre Desterres, Françoise Ruperthouse and Anne Panasuk (Quebec City, September 2024).

1. Atikamekw cradleboard.

- Several follow-ups with families and physicians were organized to explain the documents received.
- Meetings were held in English-speaking Anicinape communities.
- Meetings were organized with Awacak's lawyers to bring files up to date.
- Awacak took part in the work of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act.
- A webpage was set up at the address <https://www.awacak.ca/>
- The Awacak board of directors meets twice every year using Zoom and, if the budget is available, face-to-face in a neutral location.

New members of the Awacak board of directors:

- Viviane Echaquan Niquay, chair
- Sylvestre Desterres, deputy chair
- Bruno Kistabish, secretary
- Marie-Josée Wapistan, director
- Cécile Mark, director

Awacak employees:

- Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General
- Pierre-Paul Niquay, Recruitment/Information Officer
- Chantale Awashish, Recruitment/Research Officer
- Siméon Trapper, English-speaking Recruitment Officer
- Anne Panasuk, Consultant
- Kim Ruperthouse, Office Agent
- Rachel Lagueux, Administrative Assistant
- Maria Louise Nanipou, Project Leader

Supporting families in their search for information

To maintain the confidentiality of the personal information entrusted by families to the Direction de soutien aux familles for research purposes, the data presented in this report does not enable individuals to be identified.

As of February 28, 2025, the Direction de soutien aux familles had conducted searches **concerning 209 children following requests received from 121 applicants**. This is an increase of 10 children and 5 applicants² compared to the third annual report filed in March 2024.

The data shows a significant decline in new applications compared to 2023-2024. The slowdown, although it may reflect a level of saturation of the needs in the communities mainly targeted since the coming into force of the Act, may also be explained by a reduction in the number of information meetings organized with families, community and Indigenous organizations over the past year. For the coming year, Awacak will continue its awareness-raising work, especially with the English-speaking nations, while the Direction de soutien aux familles will continue to develop partnerships and inform the relevant organizations.

Despite the slowdown, it is important to note that the searches conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles during its fourth year have continued to advance at the pace set by the families. The following pages set out the highlights from the searches and the main developments up to February 28, 2025.

Welcoming families and following up on searches

The considerations the Direction de soutien aux familles outlined in its initial report continue to be relevant three years later and they warrant reiteration to establish certain methodological limitations in this report.

Generally speaking, **the nature of the** Direction de soutien aux familles's **support varies according to each family's specific needs and goals**.

Most requests can be considered in active processing by the Direction de soutien aux familles. This means, among other things, that the latter develops and implements research strategies in response to the questions and needs identified by families.

As of February 28, 2025, 107 out of the 121 requests sent to the Direction de soutien aux familles were considered active—**more than 88%**. This represents a slight decrease (just under 2%) compared to the observations made in the third annual report under the Act, but nonetheless confirms a high level of activity. A few searches are less active because of the decisions made by the families concerned and the pace at which they want to proceed, and by the closure of the first search files over the past year, detailed in the next section of the report.

2. The first annual report under the Act, submitted in March 2022, reported searches for 55 children by 35 applicants. The second annual report of the Act, submitted in March 2023, reported searches for 120 children by 80 applicants. The third annual report, submitted in March 2024, reported searches for 199 children by 116 applicants.

The intake protocols for families, established during the initial three years of implementing the Act, have been upheld in the past year to ensure the most compassionate and respectful support for families' needs (interpretation, emotional or spiritual support, comfort with using technology, geographical distance, etc.). Often, the establishment of trust hinges on these initial discussions, which must be maintained throughout the support process. Some applicants are accompanied, either regularly or occasionally, by family members during these interviews: siblings, children and spouses, as well as counsellors, psychologists, interpreters or Elders.

When the initial interviews are conducted by Awacak, the information gathered from the families is, with their consent, forwarded to the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the search process begins. Regular reviews and follow-ups are subsequently carried out with the families and partners—whether to deliver information or documents, discuss the progress of the procedures, outline future steps or ensure the families' comfort and address any potential needs.

As of February 28, 2025, 101 families for which the Direction de soutien aux familles was conducting a search were receiving various degrees of support from Awacak, or 83% of the total. The other families are supported by the Direction de soutien aux familles or, in some cases, by other partner organizations chosen by the families.

Supporting families at the end of the search process: honouring the children's memory

The fourth year of application of the Act has been marked by the families' wish to **honour the memory of their children**. Before presenting the main points of the requests, the following lines illustrates this increasingly central concern, which the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak have supported in various ways during the year.

First, the Direction de soutien aux familles formally closed several search files as part of a sensitive but rigorous approach, and this was an important aspect of the last year. A **search closure committee** was set up within the Direction, with the goal of analyzing each search stage in relation to the needs and objectives expressed by the family behind each search.

The committee, created in October 2024, held four meetings between October 30, 2024 and January 29, 2025. A total of 10 search files were analyzed and closed. Five of the applications had not led to a search, given the lack of communication from the applicants. Most of these applications had been submitted by a third party, for example via Awacak, a researcher or another family, and the families concerned had not responded to the various invitations they had received. If the applicants want to launch a search in the coming years, the case files will be reactivated by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

One application was closed by the applicant who no longer wished to carry out a search. Four other applications were closed after all the steps taken by the families had been completed, including two cases closed after a commemorative ceremony was held by the family for their child at the burial site. In each case, the Direction de soutien aux familles notified the families that it remained available for any further search requests.

It is important to note that the application of the Act and the associated searches are not always, for the families, an end in themselves, but rather a step in a process. If the "end of the search" by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act is a necessary stage, which relies on acceptance and transparency concerning the answers obtained and the questions that remain, it does not signal an absolute end to the process for all the families. Commemorations, court challenges, spiritual approaches or healing paths are other options open to the families, which they can pursue at their own pace.

To support families with the necessary sensitivity when this stage ends, the Direction de soutien aux familles has developed a way to present to the family, step by step, the traces of the children found during the search. Since the fall of 2024, a document entitled **Quelques pas dans la vie de...** (*A few steps in the life of...*) is given to each family at the meeting organized when the search ends, or at a commemorative event. This short text, included with the results file containing all the other documents obtained, relates the life of the child based on the information collected pursuant to the Act.

The Direction de soutien aux familles often supports families at the end of the search, and over the last year organized, at the request of the families concerned, **four commemorative ceremonies for their children**. Three ceremonies were held at the Cimetière des Trembles (Montreal) and one at the Saint-Augustin cemetery (Côte-Nord).

Testimony³ of Shuvinai and Jukeepa Veevee concerning the search conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles for their sister Maggie



Cimetière des Trembles (Montreal, September 2024).

We truly appreciate the opportunity to have proper closure for our little sister. It was healing journey for us especially, honoring our parents who had to leave her behind when she passed away in Montreal hospital, 59 years ago.

For the family members who remembered her, especially our brother Tommy who had a dream few times, it was amazing that the Pastor had taken a photo of the tree and where Maggie was buried. That was astonishing. It gave our brother peace, and he said little Maggie made him realize there's hope in God. As for all of sibling we have had our share of losing our own child.

The memorial trip gave us family time together and heal from our loss and knowing where little Maggie is buried at is a very peaceful cemetery, we went home in more peace.

We truly appreciate how well the memorial service was organized, and also that we were looked after with the awesome team members of Government of Quebec (Direction de soutien aux familles) and as well to Government of Nunavut Victim services team.

Thank you to Veronique for taking beautiful pictures during our visit to the cemetery.

Shuvinai et Jukeepa Veevee
Sisters of Baby Maggie

3. In the original English.

Homage by the Reverend Joël Coppieters to an Inuit family he met during a commemoration ceremony organized by the Direction de soutien aux familles

They have come to find their lost little sister.

I welcome them, to my world,
to the cemetery that I have known for so long it feels like home,
that I have walked around a thousand times,
but without ever once noticing her, in particular.

I have buried business executives and bankers,
there's one over there, under a ton of marble,
a great artist – a little further on with blue butterflies,
a soldier who died in combat, now lying beneath a cross,
even a Deputy Premier,
but this time,
I can't find the words.

How can I span half a century,
half a century of questions without answers,
half a century during which she has lain here all alone?

My words are borrowed ...
stories ...
because stories hold power.
I tell them what is known about their little lost sister.
Followed by a short sacred story.
And I end with a lullaby –
because she surely deserved more than she got!

My words are a little clumsy,
my silence is painful,
but they hear me.

At the grave of their little sister,
I am the other,
a white man from the "city",
a part of the system that swallowed her up and gave no answers ...
But their circle opens,
and they welcome me.

Maybe I was the one who was a little lost.



Commemorative ceremony organized by the Direction de soutien aux familles at the request of a family, at the Cimetière des Trembles. From left to right: Rebecca Taulkie, Jonah Kalai, Abel Kalai, Dimaris Saimaut and Norman Kalai, the brothers and sisters of the young Tabitha Siqumiaq Kalai (Cimetière des Trembles, September 2024).

Reverend Joël Coppieters

Over the past year, in addition to these commemorations, two families organized **reburial ceremonies for a child** disinterred following a search, one in Mistissini (Nord-du-Québec) and one in Pessamit (Côte-Nord).

In addition to these ceremonies, each held in the presence of the family, celebrants and the supporting individuals chosen by the family, several family members have, over the last year, asked to be accompanied on a visit to their child's presumed burial site to discover it or to pay their respects.

Testimony of Father Gérard Tsatselam about a commemorative ceremony organized by a family from Pakuashipi in November 2024

The constant and painstaking work of Véronique Laveau, at the Direction de soutien aux familles, has paid off.

On November 6, at the graveside of a young child who died too soon, I experienced both pain and comfort. The pain of hearing once again about the suffering that accompanied the death of an innocent child. The lack of respect and dignity at the burial. Everything the child endured...

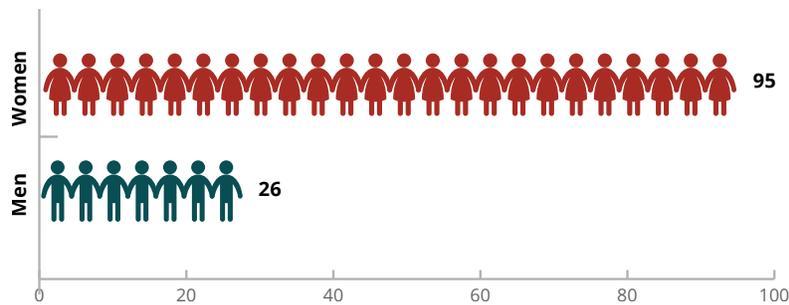
But also comfort, a feeling that what needed to be done had been done. Coming back, with all the family, elders, parents and children, to honour and to offer the respect the child deserved. Through simple actions: crying and talking; offering tobacco, praying and blessing; offering candies and Halloween toys. The discovery of this grave is an act of resilience that reveals the child's life. The child now lies in peace and lives again through all of us, in the family and the community, in Pakuashipi.

Father Gérard Tsatselam, omi

Highlights from the applications

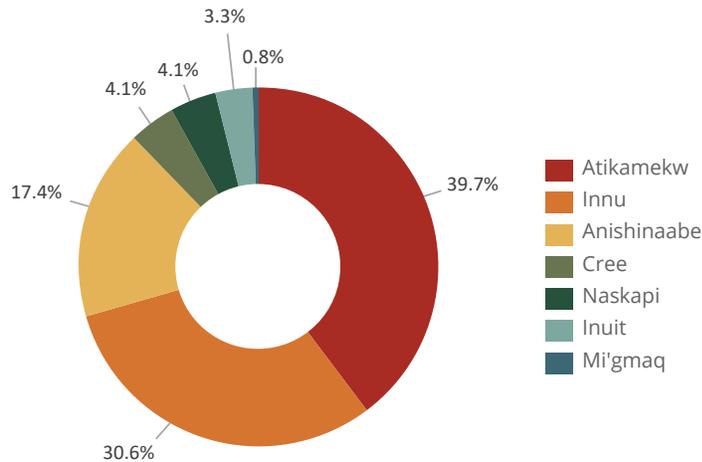
A clear majority of the 121 applicants (over 78%) were **women** (Figure 1), confirming a trend observed since the Act was first implemented.

Figure 1: Women/men distribution of applicants



Given the small number of new applications received from families over the last year, Atikamekw (48 applicants, or 39.7% of the total), Innu (37 applicants, or 30.6% of the total) and Anishinaabe (21 applicants, or 17.4% of the total) are the main nations represented by the families identified, with a representation rate that has remained relatively stable compared to the year 2023-2024 (Figure 2). A slight increase in applications from Inuit families (one extra family) and Naskapi families (one extra family) was seen during the year. The Direction de soutien aux familles has supported four Inuit families in Nunavut since the Act came into force, all from the same community and supported by the Family Information Liaison Unit in Nunavut.

Figure 2: Nations represented in the searches of the Direction de soutien aux familles



While the last year has been a time for consolidating and extending the search process, the work to raise awareness and provide information for the Cree, Naskapi, Inuit, Mohawk, Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Malecite) nations must continue over the coming year, including for families living outside their communities.

Table 1 shows the details, by nation and by community, of the applications received by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

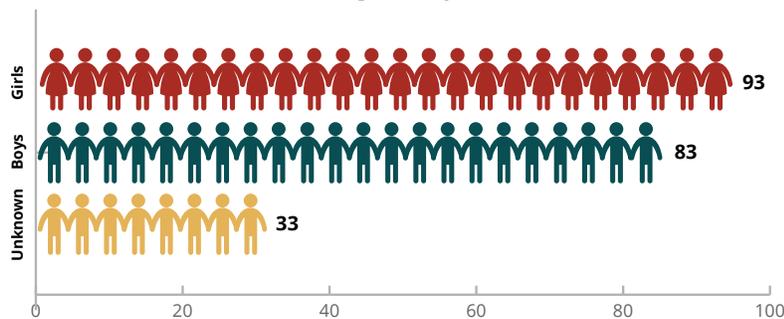
Table 1: Nations and communities represented in the searches of the Direction de soutien aux familles

Families' Nations and Communities	Number of applications received	Number of children covered by the applications
Atikamekw	48	99
Obedjiwan	23	43
Manawan	15	34
Wemotaci	10	22
Innus	37	49
Pakua Shipi	9	13
Pessamit	8	9
La Romaine	7	7
Uashat mak Mani-Utenam	5	9
Nutashkuan	3	6
Matimekosh – Lac-John	2	2
Mashteuiatsh	3	3
Anicinape	21	44
Pikogan	7	25

Families' Nations and Communities	Number of applications received	Number of children covered by the applications
Lac-Simon	7	11
Winneway	2	3
Kitcisakik	1	1
Winnipegosis (Manitoba)	1	1
Timiskaming	1	1
Information not available	2	2
Cree	5	7
Mistissini	3	3
Waswanipi	1	3
Waskaganish	1	1
Naskapi	5	5
Kawawachikamach	5	5
Inuit	4	4
Nunavut (outside Québec)	4	4
Mi'gmaq	1	1
Gesgapegiag	1	1
Mohawk	0	0
Huron-Wendat	0	0
Wolastoqiyik (Malecites)	0	0
Wabenaki	0	0
TOTAL:	121 families	209 children

As in previous years, there were slightly more girls than boys (44% compared to 40%) among the children targeted by the searches (Figure 3). In less than 16% of cases, the child's sex was not certain—either the family did not know, or the family history is contradicted by some of the testimony or documents obtained by the applicant. This proportion was also stable compared to the previous year.

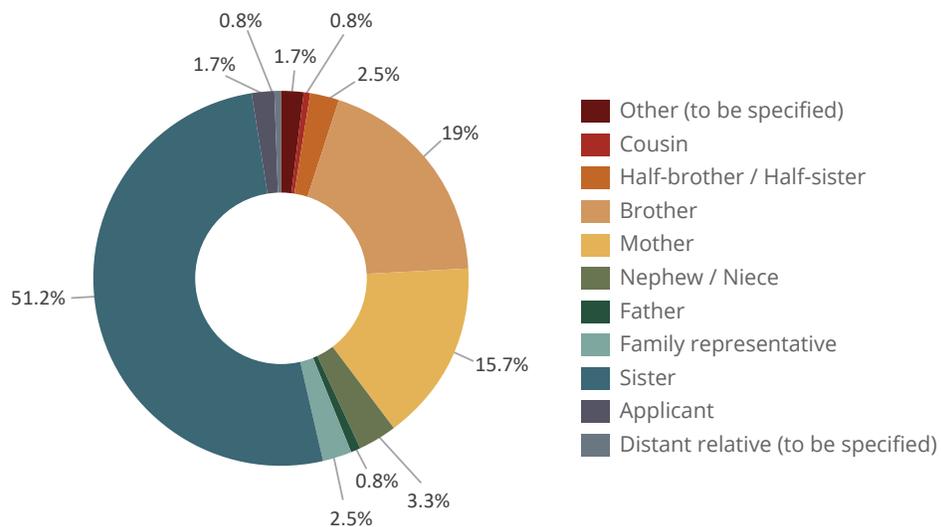
Figure 3: Girl/boy distribution of the children targeted by the searches



Most applicants were a sibling of the child or children targeted by the search (88 of the total, or 73%, Figure 4). This number, which includes half-sisters and half-brothers, matched the trend in the two previous reports. It once again underscores the relevance of the exception in the Act that allows members of a child’s extended family (up to and including "any other significant person") to receive personal information concerning the child.

Fewer than 17% of the applicants were the father or mother of the child concerned. Without the exceptions specified in the Act, they would have been the only people authorized to receive information about their child. In other words, the medical records of fewer than 13.4% of the children who are currently being searched for by the Direction de soutien aux familles would have been accessible had the Act not been passed.

Figure 4: Applicants’ relationship to the children targeted by the searches



The children who are currently being searched for by the Direction de soutien aux familles were born between 1924 and 2003 (Figure 5). For 35 children (fewer than 17%), the birth date is not yet precisely known, **a drop of 3 percentage points** compared to the last report. This can be explained by the progress made in the searches by the Direction de soutien aux familles, which has made it possible to specify a child’s date of birth and transmit the information to the family.

The Act does not apply to two applications sent to the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak, because the child’s birth—and therefore admission to an institution—occurred after 1992. However, the children’s families can still receive support from the Direction de soutien aux familles in their search, using the tools available to it.

Figure 5: Children's year of birth

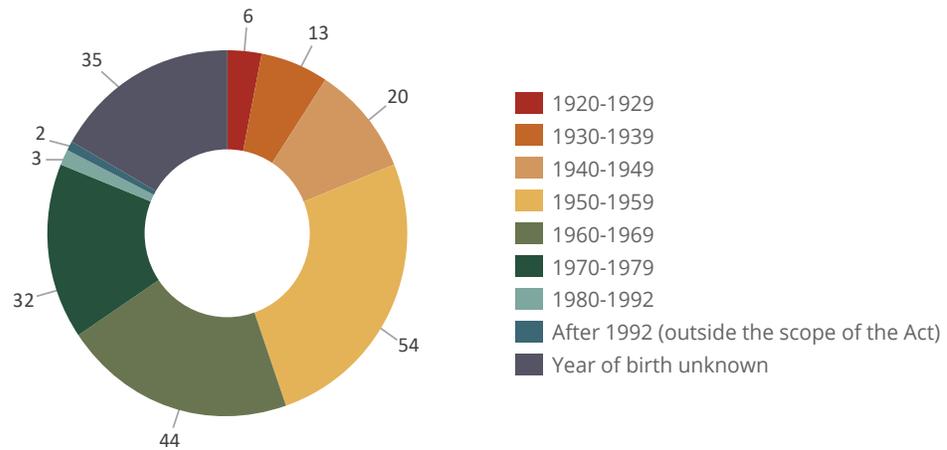
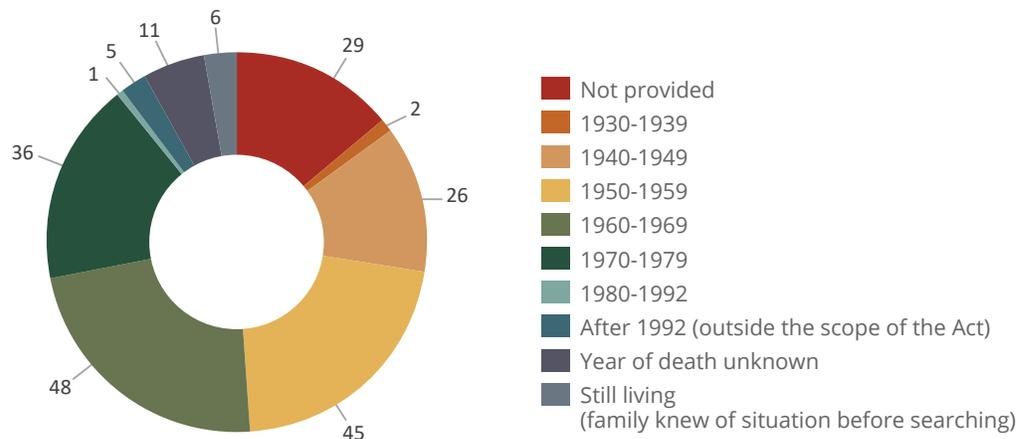


Figure 6 illustrates the most common periods of death or disappearance. In particular, it shows **the substantial decrease, over the searches carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles in the last year, in the proportion of children whose exact date of death or disappearance is not known.** Whereas the first annual report indicated 33%, this date was unknown in 19% of cases as of February 28, 2025, either because it was not provided by the family at the start of the search or because it was not discovered by the end of the search.

Six children (less than 3% of cases) are still alive and this situation was already known to the family before the search with the Direction de soutien aux familles began. Five children had been adopted and one was living with his or her family at the time of the search.

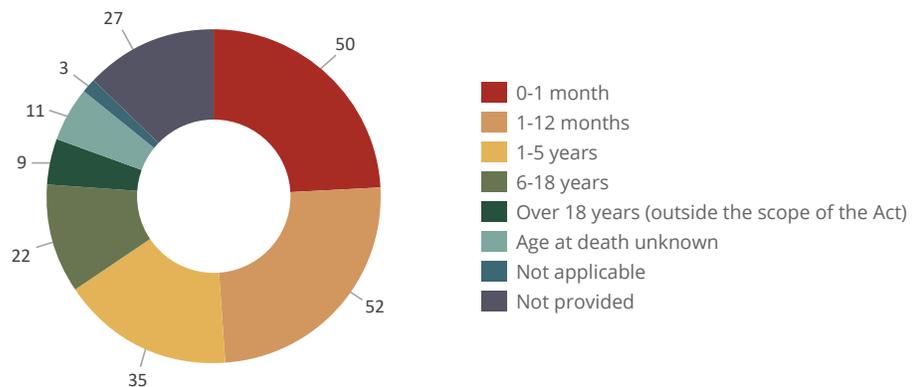
Last, as mentioned above two children were born after December 31, 1992. To round out these data, it should be noted that in less than 2.4% of cases (five children), the exceptions in the Act do not apply to searches resulting from an admission to an institution after December 31, 1992. As stated, the children's families are being supported in their search by the Direction de soutien aux familles using the tools at its disposal.

Figure 6: Years of children's death or disappearance



The age at which children died or disappeared (Figure 7) continues to vary. A majority of cases involved infants aged one year and under (nearly 49% of the children being searched for, confirming the trend observed since the Act came into force), and 49% of these deaths or disappearances before the age of one took place in the first month of life. Among the 209 children targeted by the searches, nearly 17% of deaths or disappearances occurred between the ages of 1 and 5, and 22 deaths (11%) between the ages of 6 and 18.

Figure 7: Age at which children died or disappeared



Similarly to the dates of death or disappearance, in 18% of cases the age of the children at the time of their death or disappearance was unknown (at the start of the search) or is still unknown (at the end of the search). This represents **a decrease (of over 3 percentage points) compared to the last report, and a significant decrease (over 14.5 percentage points) compared to the first report, all information located thanks to the searches conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles with its partners.**

To gain a better understanding of the data, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued its analysis based on the causes of children’s deaths, their medical trajectories and their burial.

Research in the area of family support: the first results

As soon as it was set up and started to carry out searches at the request of families, the Direction de soutien aux familles realized the importance of conducting more in-depth research on certain key aspects, whether sectoral, thematic or cross-sectional. In response, it created a position specifically dedicated to research. This position has been filled since September 2023 by an anthropologist, whose mandate is to conduct research projects that require both time and methodological and analytic expertise and also, where necessary, to make the contacts needed to develop the projects. The research is conducted in compliance with the spirit of *the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador’s Research Protocol* (Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, 2014)

and the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2022).

In preparing its fourth report on the implementation of the Act, the Direction de soutien aux familles is able to provide some of its first research findings. However, research is a long-term process, and the research program is adjusted on a continuing basis to reflect the needs expressed by families. For this reason, the searches conducted by the counsellors at the Direction de soutien aux familles as they support families provide precious input.

Causes of death, medical trajectories and burial of children

The previous annual report presented the first cross-sectional analysis of some of the data gathered by the Direction de soutien aux familles since the Act came into force. The main focus was on the medical trajectories and causes of death of children who died after being admitted to a healthcare institution or an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities.⁴ The focus has been extended, in the fourth report, to include an analysis of the **information about the children's burial**.

The methodology remains the same: an examination of attestations of birth, attestations of death, medical records and death notices,⁵ obtained at a family's request pursuant to the Act, and excerpts from registers (births, deaths and burials) obtained with assistance from a diocese, parish or cemetery. The analysis required the gathering of information on a range of elements, including:

- the operation of Québec's health system and the changes that have occurred over the years;
- the keeping of medical records;
- the history of the healthcare institutions and institutions specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities concerned;
- changes in the forms used to attest a death and process applied to compile statistical data on causes of death;
- the codes used in the *Standard Nomenclature of Diseases and Operations* (Thompson and Hayden, 1961) and the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems* (ICD).

Caution must be exercised here regarding two aspects. First, some of the statistics may appear to contradict those in the previous report. This is caused by **the evolution of the research files and the gathering of new information** that enabled to nuance or shed new light on the information gathered to date.

4. These institutions have gone by various names over the years, including "asylums" and "psychiatric hospitals."

5. These notices are also known as death records or SP-3s.

Second, **generalizations should not be drawn from these results.** They are preliminary and relate only to (1) a fraction of the children searched for under the Act and (2) a tiny proportion of the Indigenous children who died during the period in question. At this stage, the Direction de soutien aux familles's objective is to describe a situation. **Further research must be completed before any potential explanations can be offered.**

In addition, in respect of both its commitment to the applicants and the confidentiality principles of the *First Nations of Quebec and Labrador's Research Protocol* (AFNQ, 2014), the Direction de soutien aux familles presents the results in a manner **that preserves the anonymity of the families requesting the search.** To do so, the Direction de soutien aux familles followed the guidelines of the First Nations Centre (2007: 18), which states that "[r]esearch results will be presented in a grouped manner such that individuals cannot be identified." As noted by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC 2022: 45), the protection of anonymity is essential to "ensure that [participants'] human rights, and the ethical principles set out in this Policy, are not compromised," i.e., to respect individuals and have concern for welfare and justice.

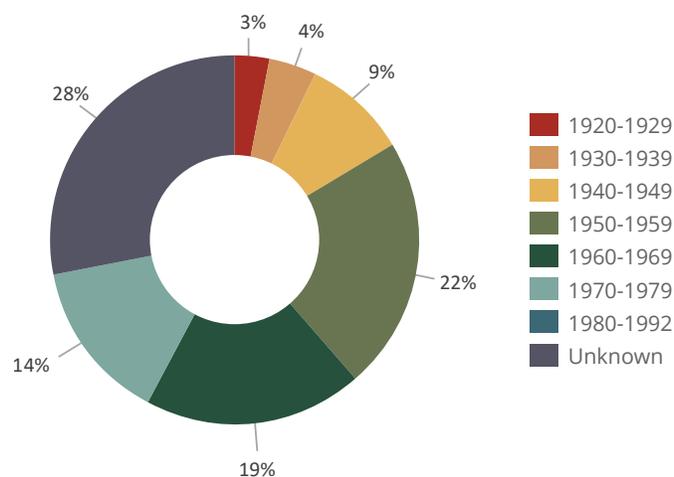
The collaboration of the members of the Direction de soutien aux familles who provide support to families, and of physicians in the health and social services support network, is an essential component of this research work.

Children who died in healthcare institutions

General statistics

When this report was drafted, 185 of the children for whom a search was conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act had died in a healthcare institution. These children were born between 1924 and 1977. Figure 8 shows that **the most frequent birth period was 1950-1959, followed by 1960-1969 and 1970-1979.**

Figure 8: Distribution of children who died in a healthcare institution, by year of birth



Although a date of birth is available for 72% of the children who died in a healthcare institution, for the remaining 28%, no document obtained pursuant to the Act until now provides this information. In addition, in 12% of cases, the documents obtained give two, and sometimes three different dates of birth for the same child. The Direction de soutien aux familles is working hard to obtain or refine this information, since the lack of a precise date of birth often hinders the families' quest for truth.

Figure 9 shows the periods of death in a healthcare institution in the same way as for the periods of birth. Since the Direction de soutien aux familles began to conduct searches, **most deaths occurred in the period between 1950 and 1969, followed by the periods 1970-1979 and 1940-1949.** A date of death is available for 72% of the children who died in a healthcare institution, while for the remaining 28%, no document obtained pursuant to the Act provides this information. In addition, in 10% of cases, the documents obtained have an imprecise date of death (the day is missing, for example) or two different dates for the same child. The searches still under way may make it possible to obtain or refine this information.

Figure 9: Distribution of children who died in a healthcare institution, by year of death

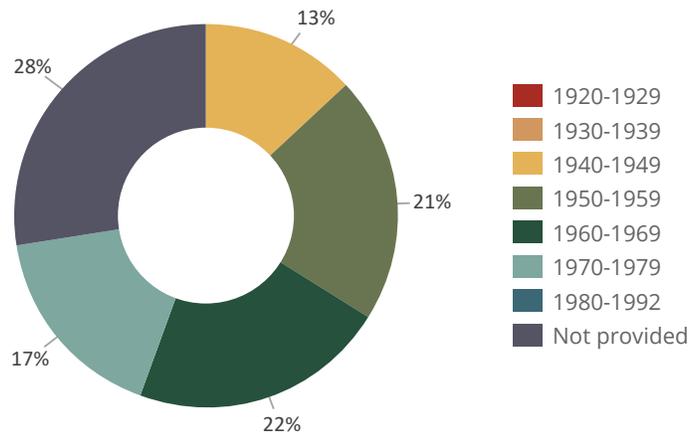
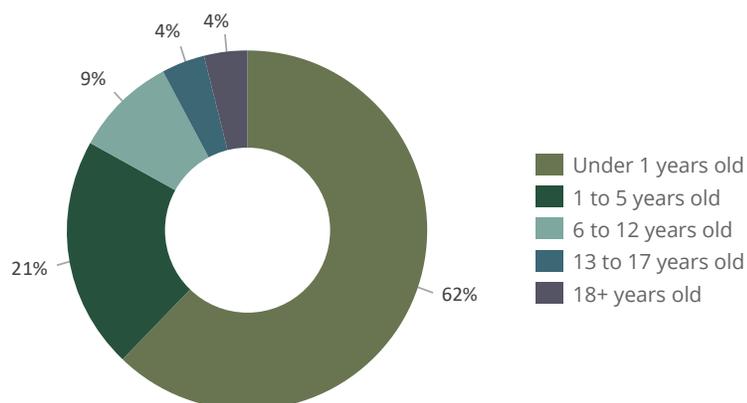


Figure 10 shows the distribution of 131 children who died in a healthcare institution and for whom the date of death was known when this report was drafted. **Almost two-thirds of the children (62%) lived for less than 1 year,** which appears to match the general trend observed for all the children's cases researched by the Direction de soutien aux familles up to February 28, 2025. According to the documents gathered during the searches, **65% of these babies died in their first month of life.**

Figure 10: Distribution of children who died in a healthcare institution, by age at death



The previous Figure also showed that **the percentage of deaths by age group declines as the children get older**: 21% died at preschool age (1 to 5 years old), 9% at school age (6 to 12) and 4% in adolescence (13 to 17). In 4% of cases, the children for whom a search is conducted died after reaching adulthood.

Last, since the date of birth or death of some of the children for whom a search is conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles is still unknown or imprecise, it is impossible at this stage to determine the age at death of 29% of the children who died in a healthcare institution. Ongoing research may improve this result.

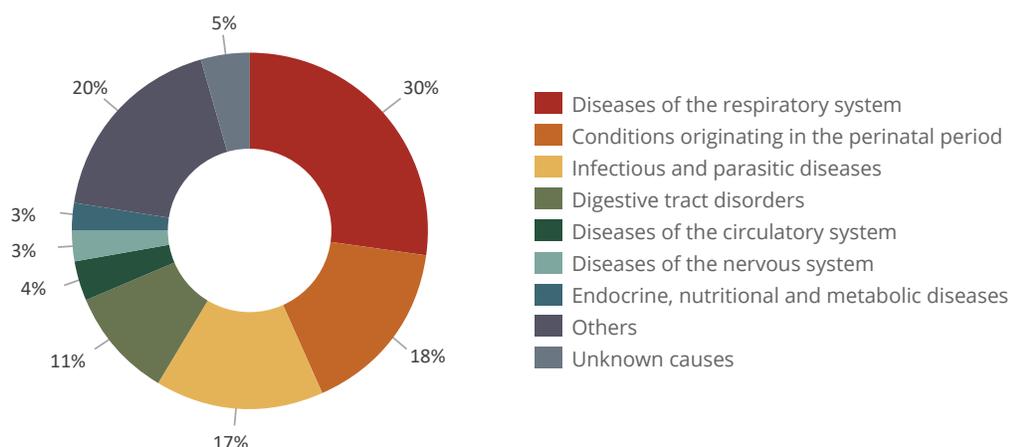
Causes of death

At the time of writing, the Direction de soutien aux familles has documented the cause of death of 120 of the 185 children who died in a healthcare institution (65%). As in the 2023-2024 report, the Direction de soutien aux familles grouped the causes of death and the result was validated by a member of its health and social services support network. The major diagnostic categories are those defined by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (2020).

Figure 11 shows the causes of death for children who died in a healthcare institution. Like last year, the most frequent causes of death fall into **four major diagnostic categories**, in the following order:

- 1- Diseases of the respiratory system (30%);
- 2- Conditions originating in the perinatal period (18%);
- 3- Infectious and parasitic diseases (17%);
- 4- Digestive tract disorders (11%).

Figure 11: Distribution of deaths by major diagnostic category



The "Other" category includes deaths caused by diseases of the genitourinary system, diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs and certain disorders involving the immune mechanism, tumours, traumatic injury and burns. The "Unknown" category is for cases in which the medical records and death records specify "Unknown" as the cause of death.

A preliminary analysis does not appear to show that any deaths occurred as the result of an epidemic.

The current state of knowledge makes it possible to provide more details about the children who died from illnesses in the four most frequent major diagnostic categories. The results reflect the same trends as those presented in the 2023-2024 report, and are therefore summarized here.

Deaths from diseases of the respiratory system

For the **37 children with diseases of the respiratory system, the main cause of death was pneumonia (70%)**. In 92% of cases, children with a disease of the respiratory system died before reaching the age of 3. According to the documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act, the children died from these diseases between 1953 and 1976, and came mainly from the Atikamekw and Innu nations. These are the two nations for which the Direction de soutien aux familles has carried out the most searches since 2021.

Deaths from conditions originating in the perinatal period

For the 22 children affected by conditions originating in the perinatal period, fetal death (stillbirth) was the main cause of death (50%). According to the documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act, these stillbirths occurred between 1949 and 1974. The parents of the stillborn babies lived in Atikamekw, Innu, Anishinaabe or Cree communities.

For the live-born infants, 72% lived less than a week, including some who lived for only a few minutes (18%). The children were born between 1954 and 1973, mainly to Atikamekw parents (91%). In 55% of cases, the medical information obtained during the searches indicates that their death was linked to premature birth.

Deaths from infectious and parasitic diseases

For the 20 children who died from infectious and parasitic diseases, the main cause of death was tuberculosis (60%). The other causes of death were septicemia, meningitis and pyoderma. According to the documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act, the children died between 1944 and 1961. They were between 1 month and 20 years old, and 30% were below the age of 1. Most came from the Atikamekw and Innu nations.

Deaths from digestive tract disorders

For the 13 children with a digestive tract disorder, all died from gastro-enteritis except for one child who died from celiac disease. Just over three-quarters of the children (77%) were less than 1 year old, while the others (23%) were 1 year old. The children died between 1945 and 1972. They came from a range of communities: Atikamekw, Innu, Anishinaabe or Cree. In 15% of cases, the place of residence of the children who died in a healthcare institution from a digestive tract disorder is unclear, since the documents obtained par la Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act mention several towns or reserves for the same child.

Medical trajectories

At the time of writing, **the documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act mentioned a place of birth for 79 children who died in a healthcare institution (43%).** Since the Act is intended to shed light on the circumstances surrounding a child's disappearance or death, and since the Direction de soutien aux familles carries out searches in response to specific questions from the family, the lack of information about a child's place of birth may be explained by the fact that the family did not ask for it and it was not searched for. In the case of seven children (9%), the trajectory between the place of residence and the place of birth is hard to determine: the documents gathered so far indicate two different places of residence or places of birth.

In addition, **the documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act state a place of death for 126 children who died in a healthcare institution (68%).** For five of these children (4%), the trajectory between the place of residence and the place of death is hard to determine, either because the documents gathered so far state two different places of residence or places of death, or because no place of residence is given.

The Direction de soutien aux familles is working hard to obtain more details when information about a child's place of birth or place of death is contradictory or missing. For the families for whom it provides support, it is easier to shed light on the circumstances surrounding their children's death when the documents it obtains pursuant to the Act are unequivocal.

Table 2 presents **the medical trajectories of 128 children who died in an institution (68%)** for whom the documents obtained show a place of residence and a place of birth, or a place of residence and a place of death. For each place of residence, it shows all the places of birth and places of death identified. To present the data in a clearer way, the children whose place of residence is unclear have been omitted.

To ensure that the families remain anonymous, the number of children for each trajectory is not indicated.

Table 2: Medical trajectories of children who died in an institution

Place of residence	Place of birth	Place of death
Fort-Chimo ⁶	Quebec City n/a	Quebec City
Kitcisakik	n/a	Val-d'Or
Lac-Rapide	n/a	Noranda
Lac-John	Lac John	Sept-Îles
Lac-Simon	Val-d'Or n/a	Amos Montreal Val-d'Or
Manawan	Amos Joliette La Tuque Macamic Manawan n/a	Amos Joliette La Tuque Manawan Montreal Québec
Mistissini	Montreal n/a	La Tuque Montreal Roberval
Nutashkuan	Havre-Saint-Pierre	Havre-Saint-Pierre Natashquan Sept-Îles
Obedjiwan	Amos Chicoutimi "In the woods" ⁷ Joliette La Tuque Obedjiwan Senneterre	Amos Drummondville Joliette Kahnawake La Tuque Montreal Obedjiwan Oskélanéo Quebec City Roberval Senneterre
Pakuashipi	Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon Pakuashipi St. Anthony (Newfoundland)	Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon Maliotenam Saint-Augustin St. Anthony (Newfoundland)
Pessamit	Baie-Comeau	Baie-Comeau Pessamit

6. Until 1979, the name "Fort-Chimo" was commonly used to designate the Northern Village of Kuujjuaq (Makivik Corporation, 2025). In addition to the Inuit, Naskapis lived at the site from 1870 to 1915 and 1948 to 1956 (The Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, undated).

7. Literal transcription of the information contained in the death record.

Place of residence	Place of birth	Place of death
Pikogan	Amos	Amos La Tuque Montreal Pikogan Villemontel
Rapide-des-Cèdres	Lebel-sur-Quévillon	Amos Lebel-sur-Quévillon
Uashat Maliotenam	Sept-Îles "In the woods" ⁸	Havre-Saint-Pierre Quebec City Roberval Uashat Maliotenam
La Romaine	La Romaine Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon	Havre-Saint-Pierre Quebec City
Waskaganish	n/a	Amos
Wemotaci	La Tuque Wemotaci	La Tuque Roberval
Winneway	Ville-Marie	Ville-Marie

n/a: not applicable or information not available

Outside of Quebec

Place of residence	Place of birth	Place of death
Nunavut	Northern Territories	Montreal
Northern Territories	Northern Territories	Montreal

n/a: not applicable or information not available

With the information currently available, **the Direction de soutien aux familles can establish the full medical trajectory, in other words the trajectory between the place of residence, the place of birth and the place of death, of 77 of the 128 children who died in an institution (60%),** as shown in Table 2. In this group, 44 children (57%) were born and died in the same hospital. Two typical trajectories exist with almost equal numbers of children:

- The children who never left the hospital (48%) because they were stillborn or died during hospitalization immediately after their birth, between their first and seventh day;
- The children who went home but returned to the hospital where they were born days, weeks or years earlier to receive care, and then died in the hospital (52%).

Other children, in addition to being born and dying in two different hospitals, **were hospitalized in several places during their life.** According to the documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles pursuant to the Act, **four children** were in this situation. The searches currently under way could increase this number. Table 3 shows the age of the children at the time of their death and the number of institutions they attended.

8. Literal transcription of the information contained in the death record.

Table 3: Age of children who attended more than two healthcare institutions

Age of child at death	Number of healthcare institutions attended
7 months	3
5 years	4
11 years	5

Burial of children

Thanks to the increasing amount of information about the burial of the children for whom searches were conducted pursuant to the Act, and who died in a healthcare institution, the Direction de soutien aux familles can present a slightly more detailed overview this year.

At the time of writing, **the date on which 121 of the 185 children who died in an institution (65%) were buried is documented.** In the case of 20 children (17%), the date of burial is unclear (for example, the exact day of burial is not documented) or 2 burial dates are given for the same child. As mentioned previously, this type of confusion between documents hinders the families' quest for truth.

Excerpts from burial or interment registers, and death records, also help document the town or city where 114 of the 185 children who died in an institution are buried (61%). The information for three of these children (3%) was contradictory as regards the place of burial. However, thanks to all the documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles, the town or city and even the cemetery where they were buried has now been identified.

For the 114 children whose town or city of death is known, the documents gathered have made it possible:

- **to obtain the place of burial of 106 children (93%).** In the documents, the place of burial is designated either as a cemetery (96%), or "in the woods"⁹ (4%);
- **to obtain the number of the burial plot or communal grave where 36 children were buried (32%);**
- **to deduce, using the available information, the burial plot or communal grave where 8 children are buried (7%).**

The fact that a burial plot or communal grave number has been obtained or deduced does not necessarily mean that the precise site of the child's burial is known. Various factors explain this situation. For example, the number may refer to a communal grave with no marker (headstone, cross, etc.) to identify individual graves. A similar problem arises with temporary graves, on which the markers are removed after a given period of time—which has systematically expired in the case of the searches conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles. The text box in the section of the report dealing with the searches with cemetery authorities presents some real-life examples of the difficulties facing families trying to locate the grave of the children they are looking for.

9. Literal transcription of the information contained in the death record.

Using the knowledge currently available, some trajectories between the place of death and place of burial can be outlined. Table 4 correlates the city of death, the city of burial and the place of burial of the children who died in a healthcare institution. To ensure that the families remain anonymous, the number of children for each trajectory is not indicated.

Table 4: City or town of death, city or town of burial and place of burial of children who died in an institution

City of death	City of burial	Place of burial
Amos	Amos	Cimetière Sainte-Thérèse
Baie-Comeau	Pessamit	Cimetière Notre-Dame de Pessamit
Blanc-Sablon	Blanc-Sablon	Cimetière Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes
Havre-Saint-Pierre	Havre-Saint-Pierre	Cimetière de Havre-Saint-Pierre
Havre-Saint-Pierre	Nutashkuan	n/a
Joliette	Joliette	Cimetière Saint-Pierre
Joliette	Obedjiwan	Cimetière d'Opitciwan
Kahnawake	Kahnawake	n/a
La Tuque	La Tuque	Cimetière de La Tuque St. Andrew's Anglican Cemetery
Manawan	Manawan	"In the woods" n/a
Montreal	Montreal	Cimetière des Trembles (Hawthorn-Dale) Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise (de l'Est) Cimetière Saint-Vincent-de-Paul
Montreal	Saint-Hubert	Cimetière de Saint-Hubert
Natashquan	Nutashkuan	n/a
Obedjiwan	Obedjiwan	Cimetière d'Opitciwan "In the woods"
Oskélanéo	Obedjiwan	n/a
Pessamit	Pessamit	Cimetière de Pessamit
Pikogan	Pikogan	"In the woods"
Quebec City	Quebec City	Cimetière Notre-Dame-de-Belmont Mount Hermon Cemetery Cimetière Saint-Charles
Roberval	Mashteuiatsh	Cimetière Kateri Tekakwitha Cimetière Atshikash
Roberval	Obedjiwan	Cimetière d'Opitciwan
Rouyn-Noranda	Rouyn-Noranda	Cimetière Notre-Dame
Saint-Augustin	Saint-Augustin	Cimetière catholique de Saint-Augustin

City of death	City of burial	Place of burial
Senneterre	Senneterre	Cimetière Saint-Paul
Sept-Îles	Maliotenam	Cimetière de Maliotenam
Sept-Îles	Nutashkuan	Cimetière de Pointe-Parent
Sept-Îles	Sept-Îles	Lauredale Protestant Cemetery
Uashat	Uashat	Cimetière Uashat
Val-d'Or	Lac-Simon	Cimetière de Lac-Simon
Val-d'Or	Kitcisakik	n/a
Villemontel	Amos	Cimetière Sainte-Thérèse

n/a: information not available

The overall information collated highlights the following facts:

- **68% of the children, in other words a large majority, were buried in the town or city where they died.** This concerns the children hospitalized in Amos, Blanc-Sablon, La Tuque, Quebec City, Rouyn-Noranda, Saint-Augustin and Senneterre, and some of the children hospitalized in Havre-Saint-Pierre, Joliette, Montreal and Sept-Îles;
- **12% of the children were taken back to their community of origin after their death in another town or city, to be buried.** This mainly concerns the children who died in Baie-Comeau and Val-d'Or, and some of the children who died in Joliette, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Roberval and Sept-Îles;
- **9% of the children died and were buried in their community,** either in the parish cemetery or "in the woods";
- **9% of the children were buried in the cemetery of the Indigenous community closest to the town or city where they died, despite the fact that they came from another community.** This concerns the children hospitalized in Kahnawake and some of the children hospitalized in Roberval;
- **3% of the children were buried in a town or city other than the place where they died, but not in their community of origin.** This concerns the children hospitalized in Montreal and Villemontel.

The Direction de soutien aux familles is working to document the historical reasons for each trajectory in order to explain them to the families for which it provides support.

Children who died after being transferred to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities

General statistics

The searches carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles have allowed two more children to be found whose death occurred after they were transferred to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities, taking the total to 11. Considering the small number of children in this

situation, no detailed statistics about the children’s year of birth or death or age at death will be presented, in order to ensure that the families remain anonymous.

In general, the children who died in an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities were **born between 1937 and 1973**, mostly during the period 1950-1969. In one case, the exact date of birth is not known. The children **died between 1957 and 2010**, most frequently in the 1960s. Just over a quarter of the children transferred to a specialized institution died after reaching adulthood. The others were between 1 and 13 years of age, and most often of pre-school age.

Health problems and causes of death

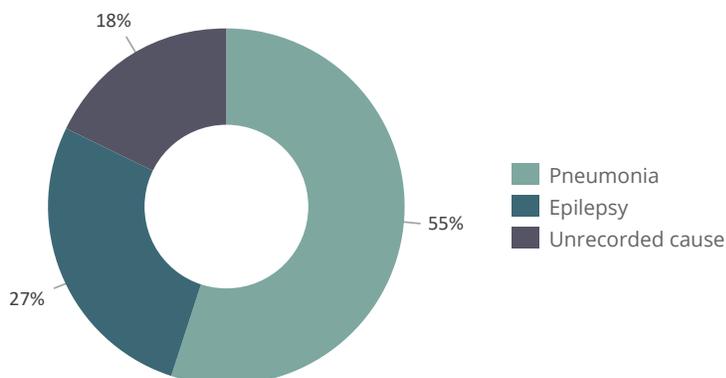
The 11 children who were sent to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities were born with similar health problems (Table 5). Most had an intellectual disability (64%) and over half (55%) suffered from paralysis or epilepsy. Some had psychomotor problems (27%) or were born with microcephaly (18%).

Table 5: Health problems of children transferred to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities

Health problem	Percentage of children
Intellectual disability	64%
Cerebral palsy, quadriplegia or paraplegia	55%
Epilepsy	55%
Psychomotor problems	27%
Microcephaly	18%

Figure 12 shows the causes of death of children transferred to an institution specialized in long-term care and intellectual disabilities. According to the preliminary analysis, **the deaths appear to be due to complications stemming from the children’s health problems**. Acquiring new information could enable us to refine this analysis.

Figure 12: Distribution of children transferred to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities, by cause of death

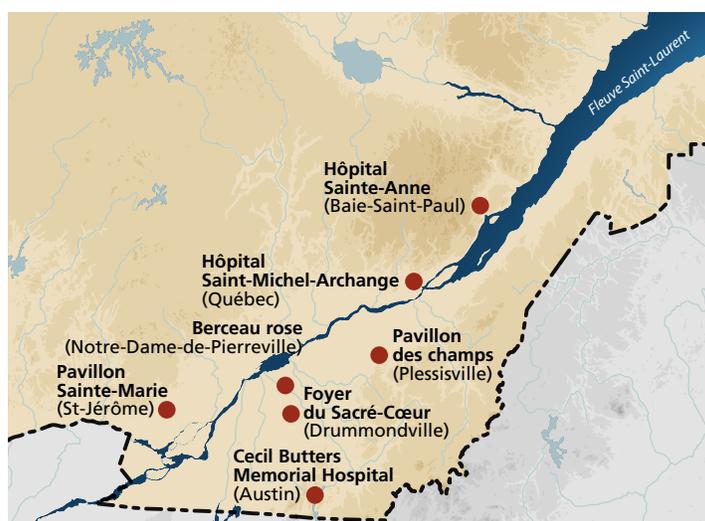


Institutions targeted in the searches

The 2023-2024 report identified six institutions specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities in which children now being searched for by their families died. The research completed pursuant to the Act during the past year has identified a seventh institution: Le Berceau Rose. It was located in Notre-Dame-de-Pierreville, and accepted children with a disability from 1960 to 1966.

Map 1 shows the institutions where the 11 children had been admitted at the time of their death. To ensure that the children are not recognized, the Direction de soutien aux familles will not share the trajectory between the community of origin and the place of death.

Map 1: Institutions specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities where children covered by the Act died



Last, it is important to note that the documents obtained so far by the Direction de soutien aux familles indicate that some of the children who died in an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities attended between three and five healthcare institutions successively.

Burial of children

In the case of one child, the place of burial was known to the family before the search began.

At the time of writing, **the research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles has identified the cemetery where 8 of 10 children were buried after being admitted to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities (80%).** The eight children were buried in the cemetery of the town or city where they died, except for one child who was taken back to his or her community to be buried. **In half of the cases, the plot where the children are buried in the cemetery is documented.** However, the exact place of burial is generally hard to determine, since several people can be buried in the plots concerned and cadastral maps are not always available. This has not prevented some families from holding **commemorative ceremonies** at the cemetery in memory of their children.

In the remaining cases, the plot where the children were buried is not indicated in the documents obtained and it is extremely difficult to deduce the site of the grave using the information currently available. The Direction de soutien aux familles is continuing its research to attempt to provide families with the answers they are seeking.

Abortion and miscarriage

Searches are continuing for the families that contacted the Direction de soutien aux familles to shed more light on the circumstances leading up to what they have identified as miscarriages or abortions. This year, a third family was added to the two families that the Direction de soutien aux familles was already supporting. The healthcare institutions targeted in the searches remain the Hôtel-Dieu d'Amos and the Hôpital Saint-Eusèbe de Joliette, for the period 1959 to 1979.

Database for statistics on demographic events

To add more context to the deaths of the children for whom the Direction de soutien aux familles is conducting searches, a statistical database on births, deaths and causes of death in Quebec and in Quebec's First Nations has been set up. For this purpose, the annual Statistics Canada reports entitled *Vital Statistics* from 1930 to 1980 inclusively were analyzed. This period includes the year of death of most of the children for whom searches are being conducted under the Act.

The suitable use of the database depends on an understanding of the limits of the data it contains. A research document has been drawn up that presents the history of data collection on births, deaths and causes of death in Québec. It details two interconnected processes which underlie data collection in the province: the registration of civil status acts, which is mandatory under the *Civil Code of Quebec*, and the compilation of civil status statistics, which is mandatory under the *Public Health Act*. It also mentions information gathered as part of a previous research project at the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning death records and SP-3 forms. To ensure that the information is accurate, the research document was revised by experts at the Institut de la statistique du Québec, Statistics Canada and BAnQ.

The database distinguishes between statistics for the whole of Quebec and statistics concerning the First Nations. However, at the current time only data from the period 1930-1951 is available for the First Nations. Research has shown that Quebec's Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) holds some data on births, deaths and causes of death among the First Nations in Quebec for the period 1952-1980. At the time of writing, a communication agreement is being drawn up between the MSSS and the SRPNI to establish the parameters for accessing this data.

Testimony of Nathalie Deschênes, coordinator for demographic events at the Institut de la statistique du Québec, about research work with the Direction de soutien aux familles

We were delighted to see the wealth and quality of information found in the report "*Base de données sur les naissances, les décès et les causes de décès au Québec (1930-1980) et chez les Premières Nations au Québec (1930-1951): historique et limites*" produced by the Direction de soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit as part of its work.

The report carefully reconstitutes the history of the compilation of demographic data in Quebec, both for civil status and for statistical purposes. The reconstitution will enable any person working with this type of data to appreciate its scope.

As far as we are concerned, this document is now an essential reference.

Nathalie Deschênes
Coordinator of the Registre des événements démographiques
Institut de la statistique du Québec

Once this work has been completed, the database and the research document will be made available by the Direction de soutien aux familles. This tool will be just as useful to the Direction de soutien aux familles in supporting families as it will be to the physicians who meet with them to explain the medical information found.

Searches for coroner's records in the provincial archives

Over the past year, the Direction de soutien aux familles has learned more about access to the records from coroners' investigations, and has developed a search method to locate coroners' records archived at BANQ. This method details the procedure to follow to carry out a search in the BANQ database. To make searches quicker in the non-digital archives, it provides the library code for coroners' records in the most relevant collections. In addition to making searches for coroners' records in the BANQ easier, the tool offers ways for members of the Direction de soutien aux familles and for families to understand why some records are missing, on the basis of specific historical information (the issues raised by changes to the province's judicial districts, for example). The search method was developed by the Direction de soutien aux familles with active input from BANQ.

Access to parish registers

Given the range of responses received following applications for birth certificates or burial certificates from cemeteries, parishes, chanceries and dioceses, the Direction de soutien aux familles decided to find out more about the process for accessing parish registers. The structure of the religious archives and the management of the personal information they contain were also documented by reviewing the legislation that governs them (*Act respecting the protection of personal information in the private sector* and the *Code of Canon Law*).

This new understanding of the procedure for accessing parish registers allowed the Direction de soutien aux familles to identify the information that could be made available to families, and the format in which it could be shared. Invaluable assistance was received from archivists at the Centre de conservation de l'Archidiocèse de Québec and BANQ.

The cemetery at La Tuque

Previous results had shown that several of the children for whom a search was conducted under the Act were buried in the cemetery at La Tuque and that, in most cases, the exact location of the grave was not known. To help families understand the circumstances surrounding these burials, the Direction de soutien aux familles recently launched a historical research project on the cemetery at La Tuque. The project aims to document, for the period 1930-1980,

- the management process for the cemetery;
- the agreements between the Catholic Church and Protestant Church concerning burials in the cemetery;
- burial methods, especially for Indigenous children, orphans, stillborns and unbaptized children;
- the links between the hospital in La Tuque and the cemetery.

The research project was ongoing when this report was drafted. The results will be made available to the families concerned.

Depending on each family's needs, the Direction de soutien aux familles may conduct similar research projects for other cemeteries where the children for whom searches are carried out are buried.



La Tuque Catholic cemetery (La Tuque, September 2024).



Section used for the communal grave at La Tuque Catholic cemetery (September 2024).

Work with health and social services institutions

For an in-depth understanding of the medical trajectories of many of the children for whom searches are conducted pursuant to the Act, assistance from institutions in Quebec's health and social services network is essential.

Searches for user files

When the information available is sufficient, most searches begin with a request for access to children's medical records made to the institutions concerned. As of February 28, 2025, 369 requests for access to user records had been submitted to Quebec's health and social services network for all the active searches since 2021 (Table 6).

Table 6: Institutions targeted by access requests for searches by the Direction de soutien aux familles

Institutions or other care and social service centers	Number of requests
CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue	65
CISSS de la Côte-Nord	39
CISSS de la Gaspésie	2
CISSS de Lanaudière	30
CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale	29
CIUSSS de la Mauricie-et-du-Centre-du-Québec	61
CIUSSS de l'Estrie	3
CIUSSS du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	32
CISSS du Bas-Saint-Laurent	1
Hôpital de Montréal pour enfants	11
Ancien Hôpital Notre-Dame-des-Anges de Montréal	1
CHU de Québec	18
CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest	2
Hôpital de l'immigration	11
Institut universitaire de cardiologie et de pneumologie de Québec	8
CHU Sainte-Justine	6
CSSS de Memphrémagog	1
CISSS des Laurentides	2
Crèche de Québec	2
CRSSS de la Baie-James	4
Centre de santé de Pessamit	4
Centre de santé d'Opitciwan	7
Centre de santé Masko-Siwin Manawan	6
Centre de santé Mino Tehewin	1
Centre de santé de Pakua Shipi	1
Sanatorium de Macamic	8

Institutions or other care and social service centers	Number of requests
Sanatorium de Roberval	11
Sanatorium de Mont-Joli	1
Kateri Memorial Hospital Center	1
Cecil Butters Memorial Hospital	1

To date, these requests have located medical documents for at least 83 of the children involved in the searches. Some of the requests are still being processed at the time of writing.

In general, when requests meet with a negative response, the explanations given by the institutions concerned since the coming into force of the Act are based on the following aspects:

- Under the *Act respecting health services and social services*, the *Archives Act and the Organization and Management of Institutions Regulation*, medical document archiving and retention schedules allow certain documents to be destroyed after specific amounts of time after the death of a user. These schedules must be accepted by BANQ.
- Some archives were transferred to other organizations (sometimes yet to be identified) after their closure.
- Some archives have been accidentally destroyed by fires, floods, etc., over the past 50 years.
- Nothing is known about the archives of some institutions, or they have not been digitized or catalogued.

Hospitals that were under federal responsibility during the period of hospitalization of certain children present particular challenges for searches by the Direction de soutien aux familles. The medical archives of these hospitals, often closed, were not always transferred to provincial institutions and, if they still exist, some are not part of Quebec's health and social services network. This is the situation for the medical archives from the Immigration Hospital in Quebec City (Capitale-Nationale). After submitting an initial request to Library and Archives Canada, the Direction de soutien aux familles received, in 2023, almost 1,500 pages of archives concerning several children. A second request was submitted to Library and Archives Canada in December 2024 to obtain complementary information, and is still being processed at the time of writing.

In addition to medical records, **99 death records** (SP-3 forms) have been made available to families as a result of searches carried out with the MSSS since the Act came into force. Access to these documents within the strict framework of the Act is extremely important for families, as they are sometimes the only documents to include a reference to the medical cause of death or to a burial site.

Death records

Death records, also known as "SP-3 forms", were forms used by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. Following the passage of the *Public Health Protection Act* in 1972, the Ministère des Affaires sociales began to use the term "notice" with the abbreviation "SP". The numerical order of the notices followed the usual order of events in a person's lifetime, except for stillbirths, the last form issued: birth (SP-1), marriage (SP-2), death (SP-3) and stillbirth (SP-4).

Last, despite expert knowledge and all the efforts made, in a few rare cases there is little or no information available and families cannot get clear answers to their questions. This possibility is discussed with families early on in the process, to establish the various possible outcomes and assure them that, beyond the results of the search, all possible steps will have been taken.

Searches of institutions' administrative archives

The past year has seen a steady stream of requests made to institutions' administrative archives. While the previous report mentioned seven such requests since the Act came into force, ten additional requests were made between March 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025, taking the total number of requests to 17 since the Act came into force, concerning 20 children. The answers to most of these requests have been forwarded to the families; other requests were still being processed by the institutions concerned at the time of writing.

These requests aim to document certain practices that were in force during the periods concerned by the searches, relating to the transfer and medical care of children, as well as the death of young children in hospital. They also aim to identify existing information about certain diagnoses and pandemics. In a few cases, the results have shed light on how certain hospitals operated in terms of caring for children.

Ongoing collaboration

Over the past year, collaboration with institutions has continued under the Act as requests have been submitted and searches conducted. On October 22, 2024, 93 staff members of Quebec's health and social services network, mainly medical archivists, access to information officers and liaison officers for Indigenous users, took part in an annual follow-up meeting organized by the Direction de soutien aux familles. The person responsible for the agreement between the Direction de soutien aux familles at the SRPNI and BANQ spoke to the participants about several achievements under the agreement in terms of identifying and examining public archives.

This essential collaboration with institutions in Quebec's health and social services network continues to increase our understanding about the medical archive situation and changes in the way hospitals operated during the 20th century. It is a key way to rebuild the relationship of trust, sometimes badly eroded, between families and Quebec's health and social services network and it also, at later stages in the search, allows other partners to contribute to the families' quest for truth: the members of the health and social services support network.

Deploying the health and social services support network

To ensure that families have the fullest and clearest possible understanding of the medical documents found in the course of their search, the Direction de soutien aux familles set up a health and social services support network a few months after the Act came into force. At the request of families, and according to their availability and specialities, the members of this network help interpret the medical information and documents obtained in the research process.

The network in figures

There are currently 20 members in the health and social services support network. The team includes eight family doctors, five pediatricians, an obstetrician, a psychiatrist, an infectious diseases microbiologist, a midwife and three nurses. Six of these experts are First Nations members.

In all, three meetings of the health and social services support network were held between March 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025. These meetings brought together members, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and Awacak. At the first meeting, on **June 19, 2024**, one expert described her experience working with a family. Members also had an opportunity to discuss the importance of testimony from the families as part of the healing process.

The second meeting was held on **October 2, 2024**. Dr. Stanley Vollant gave a presentation to members and led a discussion around a central healing tool: the extended family. During this meeting, the members also expressed a wish to change the name of the network to better reflect their support role. The name "health and social services support network" was chosen by the members to replace the former name of "network of health and social services experts".

The third meeting took place on **February 19, 2025**. The members discussed their respective experiences and the Direction de soutien aux familles presented a summary of its work.

Over the past year, remuneration arrangements have been established for network members wishing to take advantage of them.

Testimony of Dr. Johanne Morel, pediatrician

Not long after I offered my help, the family support team at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit proposed my first task. It was to meet with a lady who wanted to find out more about the circumstances surrounding the death of four of her siblings that occurred over the space of several years more than 70 years ago.

I accepted and quickly received all the information available about the hospitalization and death of these young people, collected by the team. The information was contained in four pages, one per child. Four short death certificates with demographic information: dates of birth and death, date and place of hospitalization, date and place of burial. Next, one or two words to explain the direct and indirect cause of death. A single word, in fact featured on three of the four documents: tuberculosis. It wasn't much to go on, but it was all we had.

For several months these four young people and their early deaths remained in the back of my mind. I imagined them, sick in the family home, and then transferred to the hospital where they spend a few days or a few months. I tried to think about the circumstances that would have led them to the sanatorium, and the conditions of their life there. I wondered how their parents had learned about their death if they lived in the woods and maybe did not speak French. I also wondered if the parents themselves were not suffering from tuberculosis, sick and weak, and if they had been able to visit their children before death snatched them away. Images from the film *Ce qu'il faut pour vivre*, which dealt with the subject in a humane way, seemed to pass in a loop.

I also had to avoid judging the circumstances from the standpoint of a 21st-century physician. I was being asked to comment on medical practices in a far-off time, a time I had not even known myself. This was a period when tuberculosis was present throughout Quebec, especially in Indigenous communities, before antibiotics, the period of the sanatoriums. It was also a time when the practice of medicine was more paternalistic, and when patients, especially Indigenous patients, were often seen as ignorant and vulnerable. I knew, and still know, so little. How could I go to this family to explain what had happened?

I did some research, I read some books and articles, I discussed the situation with a colleague, we thought about it, but our conclusions were mainly hypothetical.

Finally, on a fine spring morning, I went to meet the lady, accompanied by her partner and her daughter. After the usual introductions, I said that I could not provide much information that she did not already have concerning the hospitalization and death of her siblings, and that I was clearly not an expert on the subject of tuberculosis in the 1940s. This was when I asked her to tell me about her family's life at the time so that, together, we could attempt to reconstitute what had happened as far as possible.

This led to a dense, warm and even light-filled discussion, during which I shared some information and answered a few questions. But above all, the lady and her partner recounted their family lives, their life before sedentarization, which they spent mainly in the boreal forest, but also in a small waterside community during the summer. A life when days of tranquil happiness alternated with drama and tragedy.

They took the time to put into words how frustrated they felt about the mortifying experience of fruitless discussions with the authorities, which left them with the feeling that they had not been listened to or heard, the feeling that they had not been respected or treated as human beings, mothers or fathers in the same

way as their non-Indigenous neighbours. All of this was expressed with great reserve, kindness, delicacy and, I should add, generosity.

It was an honour for me to hear this testimony, but I was left in pieces and spent a long time walking in the April sun trying to process the experience. I had learned a lot about how the pain created by a communications failure following the death of a child multiplies the pain caused by the loss of a loved one. About how the humiliation of being judged and treated as "other" because of a different culture and way of life is long-lasting. Experiences such as these, deeply wounding, were a repeated occurrence in the life of a family facing tragic events where compassion and support should have been offered. Here at home in Quebec.

I hope that the things we shared and discussed provided some comfort for a wound that is unfortunately still unhealed.

I also dare to hope that the practice of medicine, and medical professionals, have made some progress since the far-off time of the sanatoriums and that despite some tragic recent stories, most healthcare workers have developed an approach based on listening and empathy, rather than on judgment.

Dr. Johanne Morel, pediatrician

Montreal Children's Hospital

Member of the health and social services support network

Meetings with families

Between March 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025, seven meetings were held between doctors and families to help interpret medical documents. During the meetings, which were held in person, via videolink, or as a mixture of both, a member of Awacak was present with the family while the physician and the Direction de soutien aux familles participated via a videolink. The meetings involved four network physicians.

The heavy emotional nature of these meetings made it necessary to adapt the timeframe to each family, and to each stage of their journey. The timeframe is central to the family's journey, and the expert members of the health and social services support network are attentive to this. Over the past year, two families asked to meet with the network physician a second time to ensure that they had fully understood certain aspects of the medical record, or to discuss new questions that had occurred to them.

Interdepartmental work: a network of government partners to support families

Since the Act came into force, collaboration between the Direction de soutien aux familles and other government departments and bodies has been fundamental in retrieving information for the families involved.

The interdepartmental committee

The interdepartmental committee is involved in the implementation of the Act by:

- monitoring the application of the Act and, at each meeting, receiving a report on the work completed by the Direction de soutien aux familles;
- ensuring that government actions involving families affected by the Act are consistent and relevant, through the active participation of each member department and body;
- collaborating on specific work to ensure that the Act achieves its full potential for families, in particular by developing relevant approaches or exchanging the necessary information for their development;
- contributing to the preparation of the annual report pursuant to the Act.

The committee met four times between March 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025: on May 14, September 17 and December 10, 2024, and January 28, 2025. A new member was added at the meeting on December 10, since the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale is now represented on the committee by its Indigenous affairs division, part of the Direction des relations intergouvernementales et des mandats spéciaux.

The committee's mandate is set out in Appendix 2 to this report. It is important to note that, to ensure the independence required by their mission, certain organizations are not members of the interdepartmental committee, even though they are central to the implementation of the Act. They are identified in the second section of Table 7 below ("Other Departments and Bodies"). The Direction de soutien aux familles works with these organizations on a bilateral basis, depending on the projects in development.

Table 7: Contributions and work in progress, by government department and body

1- Members of the interdepartmental committee		
Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific work completed or in progress
<p>Ministère du Conseil exécutif Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (SRPNI) Direction de soutien aux familles Direction des relations avec les Autochtones</p>	<p>The Direction de soutien aux familles at the SRPNI coordinates the interdepartmental committee. It works with the Direction des relations avec les Autochtones at the SRPNI in some searches relating to residential 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. Ongoing meetings are held on an as-needed basis since November 2021.</p>
<p>Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux Direction des relations et des partenariats avec les Premières Nations et Inuit Direction de l'accès à l'information et de la protection des renseignements personnels Other divisions as needed</p>	<p>Collaboration in searches follow-up.</p>	<p>Implementation of the process for accessing death records. Targeted collaboration for specific needs (documentation, access to documents, presentation of targeted sectoral issues, etc.).</p>
<p>Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec Bureau de la vice-présidente aux services aux personnes assurées Direction des services juridiques</p>	<p>Collaboration in searches follow-up.</p>	<p>Collaboration on targeted search files.</p>
<p>Ministère de la Justice Direction des affaires autochtones Others divisions as needed</p>	<p>Collaboration in searches follow-up.</p>	<p>Collaboration on targeted search files.</p>
<p>Bureau du coroner</p>	<p>Collaboration in searches follow-up.</p>	<p>Collaboration on work connected with exhumation and the identification of deceased persons. Collaboration on targeted search files.</p>
<p>Ministère de la Sécurité publique Direction de la coordination ministérielle et des affaires autochtones Direction de la gestion intégrée des documents et des relations avec les citoyens</p>	<p>Collaboration in searches follow-up.</p>	<p>Collaboration on work connected with exhumation. Collaboration on targeted search files.</p>

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific work completed or in progress
Directeur de l'état civil du ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale	Collaboration in searches follow-up.	Application of the process for handling requests for civil status attestations and documents under the agreement on the communication of information by attestation (<i>Entente de communication de renseignements par attestations</i>).
Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale Direction des relations intergouvernementales et des mandats spéciaux	Collaboration in searches follow-up.	
Ministère de la Culture et des Communications Direction des politiques et de la prospective Direction générale du patrimoine Direction des opérations en patrimoine	Collaboration in searches follow-up.	Collaboration on exhumation work. Collaboration on targeted search files.
Ministère de l'Éducation Direction des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuits et de la nordicité	Monitoring of the application of the Act.	Collaboration on targeted search files.
Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur Direction des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit Direction générale de l'accessibilité et de la réussite Secteur de l'accessibilité, de la réussite et de l'expérience étudiante	Monitoring of the application of the Act.	-

2- Other government departments and bodies

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific work completed or in progress
Commission d'accès à l'information		Handling appeals as part of the Commission's jurisdictional activities. Mediation meetings between families and public bodies in the context of appeals, when requested by the parties.

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific work completed or in progress
Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale	Collaboration in searches follow-up.	Collaboration on work connected with exhumation and the identification of deceased persons. Collaboration on targeted search files.
Sûreté du Québec Division des relations avec les communautés autochtones Service de l'accès et de la protection de l'information		Collaboration on targeted search files.
Ministère du Conseil exécutif Secrétariat à la réforme des institutions démocratiques, à l'accès à l'information et à la laïcité		Support and consulting services provided to the Direction de soutien aux familles for the access to information process, the protection of personal information and data archiving.
Ministère du Conseil exécutif Secrétariat à la communication gouvernementale Direction des communications	Collaboration in developing and distributing communication tools.	Support and consulting services provided to the Direction de soutien aux familles for communications under the Act, including the production, translation and dissemination of communication tools.

3- Special collaborators

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific work completed or in progress
Ministère du Conseil exécutif Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit Bureau du secrétaire général associé		To preserve the independence of the complaints process, the SRPNI has assigned this responsibility to a person in the organization with no connection to the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Bilateral work with government departments and bodies

The agreement on the communication of information by attestation (Entente de communication de renseignements par attestations), signed in February 2023 by the Directeur de l'état civil and the SRPNI, has made it possible for the Direction de soutien aux familles to file 215 requests for attestations with the **Directeur de l'état civil** since September 2021. As of February 28, 2025, the searches have led to the issue of 146 attestations to families. The positive response rate is almost 68%, confirming the trend noted in the 2023-2024 report.

Collaboration with the **Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux** has enabled the Direction de soutien aux familles to give the families it supports, as of February 28, 2025, 99 death records (SP-3 forms), resulting from 168 requests made as part of its searches since the Act came into force, a positive response rate of almost 59%. This is a slight drop of three percentage points since the previous year, which can be explained by the fact that the documents could not be found in certain years or in certain circumstances, or because certain information provided at the start of a search was imprecise. Sometimes, as the search progresses, such information may become clearer, which leads to new requests.

Exhumation, identification and reburial of children: significant stages for families

Families' exhumation and identification needs

Since the Act came into force, the Direction de soutien aux familles has noted two recurring needs among the families it supports in connection with exhumation: exhumation to identify children and exhumation to repatriate children. The two needs are often expressed in related ways by the families.

Awacak offers member families a legal support service that enables them, in collaboration with the Direction de soutien aux familles, to prepare disinterment authorization requests addressed to the Superior Court of Quebec, to represent families before the Court, to follow the disinterment process with them and to cover the legal fees payable. The Direction de soutien aux familles coordinates all the partners and makes the contacts needed to perform the exhumations.

In addition to section 18 of the Act, which states that "the Minister may assist and guide 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 has, since it started its work, ensured that a budget is available to fund the disinterment and reburial of children.

As of February 28, 2025, a **total of three exhumations had been carried out** as part of a search under the Act. All the exhumations were performed thanks to an agreement concerning the identification of disinterred Indigenous children, the **Entente concernant l'identification d'enfants autochtones exhumés**, signed by the Bureau du coroner and the SRPNI in October 2023 in response to families' needs in the area of exhumation and identification.

Follow-up to the first two exhumations

The collaboration between the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Bureau du coroner and the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale (LSJML) led to the first two child exhumations, carried out from August 30 to September 1, 2023. The exhumations were followed in the subsequent weeks by identification procedures by the LSJML using scientific methods.

Based on the analysis, one family received confirmation of their child's identity and was able, during the fall of 2024, to rebury their child in a private ceremony with the ritual they had chosen, surrounded by family members.

Research for the second family is ongoing. The family is supported by a lawyer, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak, since the identification process has not led to a confirmation of the child's identity.

The third exhumation and reburial ceremony

The third exhumation was requested by a Cree family from Mistissini, supported in its search by the Direction de soutien aux familles since January 2022. At the end of the search the family, that had not until then requested support from Awacak, began the process to apply for an exhumation using its own lawyer, and then the Awacak lawyer. The family members already knew where their sister was buried as a young girl, after falling ill while attending the residential school in La Tuque. She was transferred from the school to the Saint-Joseph de La Tuque hospital and died a few hours later, at the age of 8. She was buried in the Anglican cemetery in La Tuque.

The preparation of the third exhumation relied on a strong partnership between the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Quebec government facilitator for communities in connection with residential schools, Michel Martin, the Government of Canada (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada) and the authorities of the Anglican Church. Regular meetings were held with the family throughout the summer of 2024.

The meetings were coordinated by the Direction de soutien aux familles, and enabled the family members who so wished and their lawyer to make contact with La Maison funéraire St-Louis, chosen by the family to conduct the exhumation and reburial of the child, with the Bureau du coroner, which coordinated the work on the day of the exhumation, and with the LSJML, which carried out the exhumation with support from the Maison funéraire St-Louis before the remains were transported to the family's original community.

Over twenty family members and friends were present in La Tuque on September 20, 2024 for the exhumation. Travel and accommodation were organized by the Direction de soutien aux familles and paid for by the SRPNI. The work conducted by La Maison funéraire St-Louis was paid for by the Government of Canada, from the Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund.

In addition to the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Bureau du coroner, the LSJML and La Maison funéraire St-Louis, many people were present alongside the family on the day of the exhumation. The authorities at the Anglican cemetery in La Tuque were present to help the experts consult the cemetery plan and focus the search zone. At the family's request, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec, Bruce Myers, was on site throughout the day, and said the opening prayer. Awacak was also in attendance, as well as members of the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program of the Council of the Atikamekw Nation, and representatives from the Centre Asperimowin,¹⁰ who provided dinner for the family. In all, almost 25 people were present at various stages alongside the family on the day of the exhumation—women and men gathered around the remains of a young girl who had guided their search to allow for her return to her family.

As the work proceeded, the family members made regular trips between the rest tent, which had been set up at the cemetery to ensure privacy, and the tent set up over the exhumation site. Each stage was explained to the family by experts and sometimes accompanied by prayers.

At the end of the day, the remains of the young girl were accompanied by a procession of family members and partners to the cemetery boundary. She was then transported to Mistissini by La Maison funéraire St-Louis for reburial in the community.

The child was **reburied in Mistissini on September 30, 2024 on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation** in an emotion-filled ceremony. The reburial was organized by the family with financial support from the Government of Canada. At the family's request, several political representatives were present, including the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit and the Minister Responsible for the Fight Against Racism.

Testimony of the exhumed child's sister¹¹



Objects exhibited to commemorate the child exhumed at her reburial in Mistissini (Mistissini, 2024)

I can finally say that my family and I are at peace.
We have our late sister home at last, where she belongs.
I want to thank everyone who supported us in bringing her home.

Exhumed child's sister

10. A residential centre for First Nations women and their children who are fleeing violence.

11. In the original English.

Testimony of the exhumed child's niece¹²

We honour the life and memory of a beloved daughter, sister, aunt, and cousin who was taken from her family too soon. As a family, we can now remember her for who she was rather than focus on where she was left without our knowledge or consent. We take comfort in knowing she has finally returned home to where she was always loved and longed to be — with her family.

Despite her hardship at residential school, her kind and loving spirit remained unshakable. She was joyful, helpful, considerate, humble, and deeply connected to those around her. Her caring nature provided comfort and warmth to her peers as well as her caregivers, leaving a lasting legacy of love and resilience.

After fifty-eight years, we have finally brought her home to Mistissini. We extend our gratitude to all who supported this journey. May her memory inspire us to heal, forgive, and honour the enduring gifts of our ancestors by actively working toward a better future for our children.

Exhumed child's niece

Testimony of Mtre. Géhane Kamel, Associate Chief Coroner

The Bureau du coroner is proud to have once again contributed to the exhumation of a child and the return of her remains to the community.

This tragic and upsetting event for the members of the family will, I hope, have helped soothe some of the pain and lightened the grieving process.

The meeting with the family and collaboration between the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale and the Direction de soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit made the day a human encounter that was truly extraordinary.

I dare to hope that up above us a star is shining and guiding our steps towards a more collaborative approach.



Installation at La Tuque Anglican cemetery prior to the third exhumation (La Tuque, September 20, 2024).

Géhane Kamel
Associate Chief Coroner
Bureau du coroner

12. In the original English.

Testimony of Suzanne Marchand, principal director general of the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale, concerning the first exhumations

The Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale was happy to be able to use its scientific expertise to contribute to the exhumation this year.

Preparing for and performing an exhumation involves many different people, and we are grateful to everyone who took part, including the Bureau du coroner and the Direction du soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit. Without their assistance, nothing would have been possible.

Apart from the scientific contribution made by the Laboratoire, our contacts with the family and close relatives were rewarding and encourage us to continue in our commitment to support families looking for a loved one as we help them find out the truth and move forward towards peace.

Suzanne Marchand
Principal Director General
Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale

Testimony of the Most Reverend Bruce Myers¹³

It was humbling and a privilege to be invited by the family to join with them in the sacred journey that saw the child earthly remains finally return to her home community of Mistissini.

Our church is deeply sorry for the role we played in the residential school system in Quebec. I am especially sorry that she died while a student at the residential school in La Tuque, and that it took nearly 60 years for her body to be returned to the land of her birth, her family, her nation and people.

My sincere hope is that the repatriation of her earthly remains will provide some of the closure the family has long been seeking, and that it represents a small but meaningful step on the long journey of reconciliation.

This difficult journey was made easier by the sensitive, professional, and generous intervention of the Ministre responsable des Relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit and his dedicated team. In this endeavour we have a hopeful example of First Nations, governments, and the church in Quebec working together in goodwill toward a common goal: healing and reconciliation.

(The Rt. Rev.) Bruce Myers
Anglican Bishop of Quebec

13. In the original English.

Testimony of Patrick Ballay on collaboration between Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (Government of Canada) and the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning the moving of the remains of the child exhumed¹⁴

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) is honored to collaborate with Direction de soutien aux familles du Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuits in this important work aimed at fulfilling the wish of the family to repatriate the remains of its child to her home community of Mistissini. This little girl, who attended the La Tuque Residential School, passed away during her stay in 1966 and had been buried at the La Tuque cemetery.

On September 20, 2024, her remains were exhumed to be repatriated, on September 30, 2024, to her home community of Mistissini, in accordance with her family's wishes. This event, which coincides with the 3rd National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, marks the culmination of two years of collaboration between the Federal Missing Children's Community Support Fund, the community of Mistissini, and the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Addressing the legacy of residential schools remains an urgent priority for the Government of Canada. The Missing Children's Community Support Fund will continue to support Indigenous communities, organizations, and families in their efforts to research, locate, and document burial sites associated with former residential schools, as well as in the commemoration of children's deaths and the return of children's remains to their home communities

Patrick Ballay, directeur
Programs and Partnerships, Missing Children and Unmarked Graves
Settlement Agreements and Childhood Claims Branch
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Current requests

As of February 28, 2025, **one new request for an exhumation authorization** has been filed at the Superior Court for a family supported by the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak. **Three families have also begun the process** with lawyers from Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles to request the exhumation of their child.

Several other families supported by the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak have, over the past year, expressed a wish to begin the process if possible once their search has been completed.

It is important to note that the decision to proceed with a request for the disinterment of a child under the Act does not guarantee that the Court will authorize the disinterment. Obtaining a judgment authorizing disinterment could be particularly challenging for many families whose children are currently buried in communal graves. This is because a request to the Superior Court typically requires sufficient information about the identity of the person to be disinterred, as well as their place of burial. Therefore, to help manage families' expectations and avoid adding to their distress, the Direction de soutien aux familles and its partners—including the Bureau du coroner and the LSJML—consistently inform families of the **limitations inherent in exhumation** (communal

14. In the original English.

graves, disposition of the remains, etc.) as well as **the challenges of identifying** the children (body preservation, available DNA material, etc.).

It is also important to mention that while many families have expressed a wish to request the exhumation of their child, others have opted not to pursue the process.

Regardless of their decision, families receive support from the Direction de soutien aux familles, Awacak and their partners for the ceremonies and moments of recollection they wish to organize, sometimes at burial sites, to collectively foster healing.

Work with religious congregations, parishes and cemeteries

Religious congregations

Over the past year, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued its research on the religious congregations responsible for certain health or social service institutions during the years when children died or disappeared.

As of February 28, 2025, the Direction de soutien aux familles had sent a total of 80 requests to religious congregations pursuant to the Act. Before the Direction de soutien aux familles had contacted some of these congregations, the Regroupement des archivistes religieux continued its collaboration, directing the Direction de soutien aux familles to the appropriate contacts.

Testimony of Caroline Brunet, chair of the Regroupement des archivistes religieux

It is my pleasure to write a few words on behalf of the board of directors of the Regroupement des archivistes religieux (RAR). The directors enjoyed meeting the team at the Direction de soutien aux familles in June 2024. Following the meeting, we organized an activity with our members that provided an opportunity for discussions between the RAR members and the Direction de soutien aux familles team, which led to some moving moments.

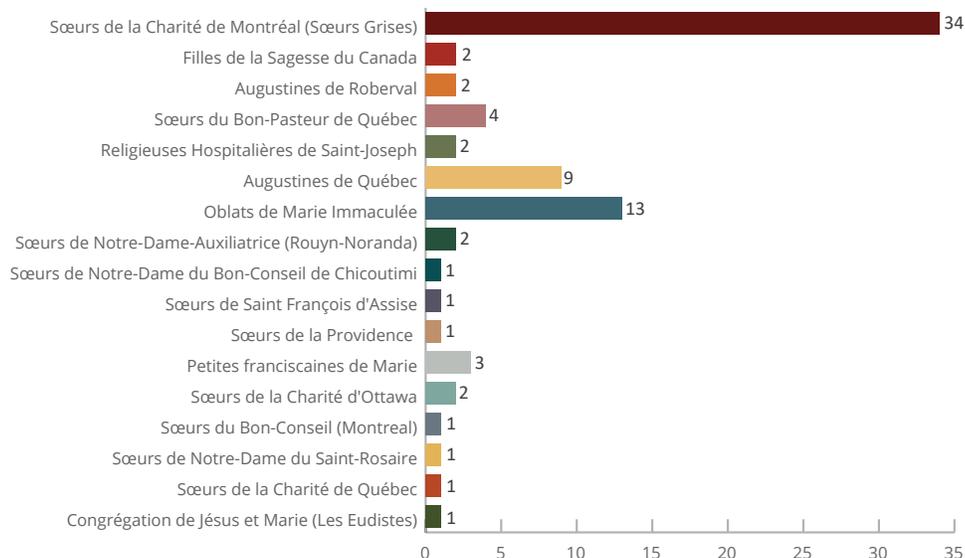
The activity also helped us understand the importance of the work performed by the Direction de soutien aux familles and to identify its needs. We see its work as being essential for the Indigenous families concerned.

The RAR board of directors is pleased to make a contribution to the search efforts of the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Caroline Brunet
Archivist
Chair of the Regroupement des archivistes religieux

Figure 13 shows the main congregations involved in the research carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act.

Figure 13: Main religious congregations involved in searches



In September 2022, the Direction de soutien aux familles went in person to the archives of The Sisters of Charity (the “Grey Nuns” at the Montreal mother house) for searches concerning several children. They were able to study photographic material relating to the Hôtel-Dieu d’Amos hospital and Hôpital Saint-Joseph de La Tuque, sometimes featuring First Nations or Inuit children. Following this work and at the request of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act, the Direction de soutien aux familles contacted the Grey Nuns to discuss the possibility of transferring these photographs to Awacak. This would give the families back a piece of their history, and the people in the photographs could potentially be identified during community events. All the photographs were digitized during the fall of 2024 to allow them to be transferred. The congregation, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak are currently working on a draft agreement to allow the transfer to take place in the coming months.

Parishes and cemeteries

Since the start of the searches made under the Act, parishes and cemeteries have played an essential role in identifying the burial locations of children. A total of 279 requests have been submitted by the Direction de soutien aux familles to provide families with information about their children’s burial. This represents an increase of almost 21% since the last report, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Main cemeteries involved in searches by the Direction de soutien aux familles

Cemeteries	Number of requests
Cimetière d'Amos (Amos)	30
Cimetière de La Tuque (La Tuque)	41
St. Andrew's Anglican Cemetery (La Tuque)	2
Cimetière St-Pierre (Joliette)	8
Cimetière Mount Hermon (Quebec City)	5
Cimetière Saint-Charles (Quebec City)	9
Cimetière de Sept-Îles (Sept-Iles)	8
Cimetière de Blanc-Sablon (Blanc-Sablon)	12
Cimetière de Havre-St-Pierre (Havre-Saint-Pierre)	9
Cimetière du Repos Saint-François d'Assise (Montreal)	6
Cimetière East Bolton (Austin)	2
Cimetière Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (Laval)	4
Cimetière de Rouyn-Noranda	1
Cimetière Saint-Louis (Senneterre)	6
Cimetière Saint-Paul (Senneterre)	6
Cimetière anglican de Mashteuiatsh	4
Cimetière catholique de Mashteuiatsh	19
Cimetière de Natashquan	4
Cimetière de Maliotenam	5
Cimetière de Pessamit	6
Cimetière Pine Hill (Magog)	1
Cimetière de Saint-Hubert (Longueuil)	3
Cimetière du Vieux-Fort (Duhamel-Ouest)	2
Cimetière Notre-Dame-de-Belmont (Quebec City)	1
Cimetière catholique de Saint-Jérôme (Saint-Jérôme)	2
Cimetière Lauredale	3
Cimetière de Baie-St-Paul	1
Cimetière d'Opitciwan	17
Cimetière des Communautés Innues	2
Cimetière de Roberval	10
Cimetière protestant de l'Île-Maligne	2
Cimetière protestant de Grande-Baie	2
Cimetière protestant de Kénogami	2
Arvida Protestant Cemetery	2
Cimetière de Winneway	2
Cimetière de Ville-Marie	3
Cimetière de Lac-Édouard	1
Cimetière de La Romaine	1
Cimetière St-Alphonse (Thetford Mines)	1
Cimetière St-Jacques-Le-Majeur (Barraute)	1
Cimetière St-Marc-de-Figuery	1
Cimetière Veakateri (Kahnawake)	2

Cemeteries	Number of requests
Manawan	4
Cimetière Saint-Patrice (Magog)	1
Cimetière de Saint-Augustin (Saint-Augustin)	1
Cimetière des Petites franciscaines de Marie	1
Cimetière des trembles (Montreal)	3
Cimetière de Lac-Simon	2
Cimetière de La Sarre	3
Cimetière Notre-Dame-de-Pierreville (Pierreville)	4
Cimetière de Belleterre	1
Cimetière Mont-Royal	1
Cimetière de Laval	1
Cimetière Shaerith Israel	1
Cimetière Shaar Hashomayim	1
Kahnawake Protestant Cemetery	1
Cimetière Christ-Roi (Châteauguay)	1
Cimetière Saint-Joachim (Châteauguay)	1
Cimetière de Kanesatake (Pine Hill)	1
Cimetière Saints-Anges (Lachine)	1
Cimetière de Macamic	1

The Table above presents a breakdown of all requests made by the Direction de soutien aux familles, rather than the outcomes of those requests. These requests have led to the confirmation of place of death for 108 children. Active searches continue for cases that have not been conclusively confirmed.

After a place of burial is determined, as discussed in the previous section on children's trajectories and burial, the amount of information available for a given child varies. Some cemeteries can provide families with burial or interment certificates, including plot or grave numbers. In other cases, however, only copies of extracts from a parish register confirming the death and parish of interment are available to guide further research.

Testimony of Robert Mc Duff, associate director for customer service at the Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise (Montreal)

Following our discussions and meeting when you visited our cemetery, I am glad to have helped, to a limited extent, answer the questions of the families trying to locate their children's burial sites.

Although we no longer have the cadastral plans for the communal graves from the period concerned, we still have a good idea where the communal sections were grouped. It is important to specify that a temporary grave is a space that is rented for a maximum of 10 years.

It will be a pleasure to continue to work with you as you take further steps to find or locate the graves of deceased children.

Robert Mc Duff
Associate Director for customer service at the
Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise

As noted in the previous report, many of the burial certificates obtained refer to children being buried in **communal graves**. This is notably the case for some cemeteries in Quebec City, Montreal, La Tuque and Amos, where such graves seem to be relatively common and are made available to any Quebecer. Burials in such sites raise many questions for families, including concerns about the treatment of their children and possible discrimination. Often challenging to come to terms with and perceived as dehumanizing, this burial method also has major implications for exhumation: any requests for exhumation from families whose children are buried in these plots will be complicated and, in some cases, impossible.

To understand more about burial methods and answer the sometimes painful questions from families, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued its work to document several burial sites. The text box below provides an overview of the issues concerning burials at certain cemeteries.

Burial locations: some issues

The Cimetière Le repos Saint François d'Assise and the use of temporary graves



The Repos Saint-François d'Assise cemetery (Montreal, September 2024).

The Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise was founded in Montreal in 1916 under the name Cimetière de l'Est. It is situated in a block covering almost 70 hectares, bounded by the streets Beaubien Est, Radisson, Sherbrooke Est and Mignault (adjacent to Boulevard Langelier). It is the second-largest cemetery in Quebec by area, and one of the largest in Canada (Le repos Saint-François d'Assise, 2024). It has received the remains of over 250,000 people in its graves, mausoleum and columbarium (Le repos Saint-François d'Assise, 2024).

The steps taken by the Direction de soutien aux familles have made it possible to obtain documents showing that at least two of the children searched for by their families are buried in the cemetery. One died at Hôpital Sainte-Justine in the 1960s and the other at the Montreal Children's Hospital in the 1970s. In both cases, the documents mention a burial in the cemetery's temporary grave.

According to the information gathered by the Direction de soutien aux familles during its searches, at the Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise, the "temporary grave" was a communal plot in which

graves were leased for a period of 10 years. Until cremation became more popular in the 1980s,¹⁵ burials in the cemetery's temporary grave were common and the communal plots covered a large part of the total area.

During the period concerned by the searches of the Direction de soutien aux familles, and even today, the deceased were buried side by side in the communal grave. A new trench was dug each year, unless the trench from the previous year was not yet full. During the lease period, a small numbered plaque indicated the location of each grave, and at each end of the trench, a monumental stele was engraved with the names of the deceased, in the order in which they were buried. On the website for the Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise, a map shows the location of the current temporary grave.

At the end of the 10-year lease period, the markers for the individual graves were removed and the monumental steles were polished for re-use. As a result, it is no longer possible to determine the exact location of the grave of a child buried in the temporary grave more than 10 years ago.

The situation is even more critical for the years covered by the searches of the Direction de soutien aux familles, for two reasons. First, the cemetery no longer has a cadastral plan for the temporary graves that existed in the past. In other words, it cannot determine where the temporary grave was situated for a given year in the 1960s and 1970s. Second, between 1986 and 2016, the cemetery conducted disinterments on 10 occasions in the temporary grave in order to build a mausoleum (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2018). It kept no record of the remains exhumed, or of the place where they were reburied. In short, at the Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise, although the place of burial is known (the temporary grave), it is impossible to know where the remains of the two children searched for are located, or if they have been moved over time. However, all the information about the deceased is still available.

15. The Vatican has authorized cremations on certain conditions since 1963 (Associated Press, 2016).

The cemetery in Amos and the children's sections

Three Catholic cemeteries were used successively in Amos. When the parish of Sainte-Thérèse was founded in 1913, the first cemetery was established near the chapel on the eastern bank of Rivière Harricana (Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, 2024). As early as 1918, because of a rapidly growing population, a second cemetery was opened to the west of Rivière Harricana and today's Route 111 West: the Cimetière des pionniers, sometimes referred to today as the "old cemetery" (Labelle, 2024). The deceased buried in the first cemetery¹⁶ were moved to the second cemetery, but no marker was added to locate their new grave (Généalogie Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 2010). Last, in 1946 or 1948, depending on the source consulted, the cemetery currently in operation was created at the corner of Route 111 East and Route de l'Hydro. It covers a cadastral area of around 90,330 square metres (Labelle, 2024).



Commemorative stele in memory of the First Nations children buried in the cemetery in Amos (Abitibi-Témiscamingue, July 2022).

According to research carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles, 18 children who died at the Hôtel-Dieu d'Amos hospital are buried in the Amos cemetery. The documents obtained show the location of the graves of four of the children, or 22%. The documents are inscribed "FP-B Ind.", which means "permanent grave for Indian babies". This refers to a communal plot of roughly 40 by 20 feet, where Indigenous children who died between 1950 and 1976 were buried. On the ground, no markers show the location of the individual graves. However, a commemorative stele installed by the Abitibiwinni First Nation honours the memory of the Indigenous children buried there.

It is important to note that according to the registers for the Amos cemetery, some of the Indigenous children may have been buried in another communal plot reserved for babies of all origins. However, this plot also has no gravestones or crosses to indicate the individual graves.

16. It is by no means certain that all the people buried in the first cemetery were exhumed. The organization Généalogie Abitibi-Témiscamingue (2010: online) states: "All the bodies that could be traced were transferred."

The Catholic cemetery of Mashteuiatsh and the location of the graves



Mashteuiatsh Catholic cemetery (source: La Route des Cimetières du Québec, Cimetière Kateri Tekakwitha [Mashteuiatsh], consulted February 3, 2025).

The Catholic cemetery of Mashteuiatsh opened on Rue Mahikan, its current site, in 1903 (Société de développement économique Innu, undated). Human remains from the previous cemetery, at the corner of Rue Uapakalu and Rue Amishk, were brought there to be reburied, without being identified. The cemetery, initially under the patronage of Saint-Charles-Borromée, was placed under the patronage of the Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha¹⁷ in 1987 at the same time as the parish of the same name (Magnan, 1925; Rivest, 2013).

To begin with, the cemetery had "very plain wooden crosses and only a few gravestones, also without much decoration" (Société

de développement économique Innu, undated: online). Witnesses have stated that gravestones were sometimes installed several years after a burial, and that they were not always placed precisely over the grave concerned.

In 1977-1978, major earthmoving and layout work was carried out in the cemetery, requiring the temporary relocation of gravestones and crosses. Once the work was completed, not all of these markers returned to their original place. In some cases they were placed in an approximate location, and in others over the wrong grave. Unfortunately, no map showing the location of burial sites before 1977 has yet been found.

Because of these historical circumstances, it is today difficult for the Catholic cemetery in Mashteuiatsh to confirm the exact location of people buried there for most of the period covered by the searches of the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Acknowledgement

The Direction de soutien aux familles would like to thank the staff and volunteers at the cemeteries where it has carried out searches for their generous cooperation. With their help, the circumstances surrounding the deaths of several Indigenous children have become clearer.

17. In 2013, the name of the parish changed to Sainte-Kateri-Tekakwitha (Rivest, 2013).

Research in provincial archives: review of the collaboration agreement with Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec



Archival documents from Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (Quebec City, September 2024).

The implementation of a **collaboration agreement signed in November 2023** by the SRPNI and BAnQ began after a coordinator was appointed at BAnQ in March 2024. It then continued throughout the period covered by this report.

The collaboration agreement has led, among other things, to a comprehensive documentation of coroners' records and changes over time, both in terms of their nature and the way in which they are archived and made accessible, to facilitate searches in response to requests from families. A search tool has been designed for this purpose by the Direction de soutien aux familles, in collaboration with BAnQ. The Direction de soutien aux familles has also

benefitted, over the past year, from several training sessions provided by BAnQ to increase its knowledge of and ability to search in the various databases available via the provincial archives.

The agreement has also made it possible to organize several meetings with religious institutions, identified throughout this report, to allow the Direction de soutien aux familles to set up and enhance the partnerships needed to conduct archival searches for families, and also to understand the religious context and its links to healthcare and social services that affect searches under the Act.

The links forged between the Direction de soutien aux familles and BAnQ's regional offices during the various presentation of its mandate have also provided invaluable support in the search for information to contextualize certain events, such as period photographs of cemeteries or press cuttings relating to certain deaths. All these elements have sometimes provided extra information for families.



Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles) and Catherine Morin Boulais (Direction de soutien aux familles) carrying research in the archives at Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (Quebec City, September 2024).

Children who went missing from residential school

Among the children searched for by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act are four children who died in an institution while attending **residential school**. The previous reports highlighted the importance of developing a **cross-sectional and ongoing vision** for searches so as not to restrict them to one aspect of the children's path and facilitate their families' quest for truth.

With this in mind, the Direction de soutien aux familles has worked on establishing various partnerships over the past year. It has continued to work with Michel Martin, the Quebec government facilitator for communities in connection with residential schools, the SRPNI teams, and the Government of Canada teams responsible for searches and programs connected to the death and disappearance of Indigenous children at residential schools. More specifically, it has continued to take part in the work of the intergovernmental monitoring committee on residential schools.

To complete the third exhumation pursuant to the Act and the reburial of the child in her community of origin, the Direction de soutien aux familles concluded a financial partnership with the Government of Canada to support families in some of the steps taken.

Over the past year, the Direction de soutien aux familles has also followed the work of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites and attended several of the events organized by the National Advisory Committee on Residential Schools Missing Children and Unmarked Burials.

Collaboration with the federal authorities, especially Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada, will continue to ensure that searches are as complete and relevant as possible in order to answer families' questions.

Placements and adoptions

Adoption is one of the hypotheses put forward by families during discussions with the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak. The previous report highlighted some of the main obstacles to tracing children placed for adoption in crèche or orphanage registers. Research on ways to answer questions from families has continued this year.

In 2022–2023, six families asked the Direction de soutien aux familles to initiate searches in connection with a child placement or adoption, and an additional family was added in 2023–2024. The Direction de soutien aux familles has continued to support these families during the year.

Appeals to the Commission d'accès à l'information

As of February 28, 2025, one request for review was still active at the Commission d'accès à l'information during the period covered by this report. The request is being processed.

Investigations under the Act

As of February 28, 2025, no investigation had been launched in connection with a search under section 13 of the Act.

Handling of complaints

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, public body or religious congregation, file a complaint in accordance with section 19 of the Act. To provide for this obligation, the SRPNI appointed a person responsible for handling complaints in 2021.

Since the Act came into force, affected families have been able to submit their complaints to the email address used exclusively for the filing of complaints. The relevant telephone numbers are also available on the web page dedicated to the [Act: Missing and deceased Indigenous children: Support for families | Government of Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#).

In spring 2022, the complaints procedure was also made available online, along with an electronic form for filing a complaint:

- Complaints procedure: [Procedure for the examination of complaints under the Act | Government of Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#);
- Form for filing a complaint: [Complaint form, support for the families of missing or dead Indigenous children \(quebec.ca\)](#).

Under the established procedure, the SRPNI undertakes to acknowledge receipt of the request within three working days of its submission and to follow up within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the nature of the actions required. Once the request has been analyzed, the person in charge of handling the complaint intervenes with the institution, public body or religious congregation targeted by the complaint to understand and improve practices, including raising awareness among the relevant parties regarding Indigenous experience.

Although all the measures are in place to handle complaints, as of February 28, 2025, no complaints had been filed under the first paragraph of section 19 of the Act.

Last, it must be remembered that the complaints mechanism instituted by the Act does not replace existing mechanisms within the specific institutions. Families can still file complaints through existing mechanisms and exercise their right to ask the Commission d'accès à l'information to review the situation (review or examination of disagreements).

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE

Since the Act came into force, the Monitoring Committee has made twelve recommendations:

- three are under the joint responsibility of Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles;
- three are under the main responsibility of the Direction de soutien aux familles and, for some of them, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit;
- three are under the main responsibility of Awacak;
- three require action by the members of the Monitoring Committee.

Some of the recommendations can be implemented over the short term, while others require discussions with partner organizations and action over the long term.

Overall, 50% of the recommendations made by the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act have been implemented. The other recommendations are being implemented.

The table below summarizes the progress made on each recommendation as of February 28, 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

YEAR 2021-2022			
RECOMMENDATION	BODY OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS MADE	FOLLOW-UP
<p>1 That the Direction de soutien aux familles and 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.</p>	<p>Direction de soutien aux familles du Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Direction de soutien aux familles has been working with the officials responsible for personal information protection, archiving and data retention at the Ministère du Conseil exécutif to establish a protocol for the filing, retention and archiving of information and documents collected as part of research carried out at the request of families. These efforts include an analysis of the risks associated with personal information protection, with the aim of implementing the required security measures.
	<p>Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière is continuing its reflections on ways to acquire a system for securely communicating, archiving and filing information.
<p>2 That the Direction de soutien aux familles and 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.</p>	<p>Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A collaboration agreement was signed in July 2023 by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière and Professor Suzy Basile (Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue), with the aim of “developing, in collaboration with Awacak, a mechanism for retrieving, classifying and storing data in the latter’s possession.” The appendix to the agreement includes a “confidentiality commitment form for participation in the collection and/or validation and/or analysis of research data,” a “nomenclature for filing and storing data,” and a new “information and consent form” for collecting data provided by families during Awacak’s intake interviews. The transfer of data to Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue from families who have already signed Awacak’s new consent form began in fall 2023 and will continue as and when more families give consent.

RECOMMENDATION	BODY OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS MADE	FOLLOW-UP
<p>3 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.</p>	Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière	Currently being implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the previous recommendation, which it embodies, the response to this recommendation involves implementing the agreement signed between Awacak and Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue . This includes aspects related to data retention and archiving with Professor Suzy Basile’s team. • Awacak has begun the process to transfer, to the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue , the documents obtained during searches by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

YEAR 2022-2023

RECOMMENDATION	BODY OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS MADE	FOLLOW-UP
<p>4 That the Government of Québec provide the necessary resources to the Direction de soutien aux familles and 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 communal grave.</p>	Direction de soutien aux familles	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To perform exhumations, the Direction de soutien aux familles has set up an expert committee bringing together the Bureau du coroner, LSJML, archaeology researchers from Université de Montréal specializing in ground-penetrating radar surveys, funeral companies specializing in exhumations, and other organizations with relevant experience. • The Direction de soutien aux familles has obtained the funding needed to cover all costs for preliminary researches, exhumation and reburial of children. Research by the Direction de soutien aux familles continues, along with legal steps taken by Awacak’s lawyers, for families whose children are buried in communal plots or graves.

RECOMMENDATION	BODY OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS MADE	FOLLOW-UP
<p>5 That the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit financially support 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.</p>	<p>Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 10, 2024, Awacak was awarded a new grant of \$265,000 by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit. This money is added to the unused funding carried over from the three preceding years, which remains at Awacak's disposal. Overall, Awacak has, since 2021, been awarded \$1,230,000 by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit and \$300,000 by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux to implement its mission, making a total of \$1,530,000 from the Government of Québec. The Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit is continuing its collaboration with Awacak and will remain receptive to the organization's financial needs.

YEAR 2023-2024

RECOMMENDATION	BODY OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS MADE	FOLLOW-UP
<p>6 That the Act be amended, and the deadline eliminated.</p>	<p>Monitoring Committee</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions continue on the upper limit of the Act's application.
<p>7 That the Monitoring Committee explore possible options to call for a moratorium on the destruction of medical archives.</p>	<p>Monitoring Committee</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter from the Monitoring Committee was sent to the Minister of Health and Social Services on November 5, 2024 to highlight the importance of introducing a moratorium on the destruction of user records connected to searches by the families of children who died or went missing after being admitted to an institution. On December 6, 2024, the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit wrote to the Minister of Health and Social Services to highlight the issues making a moratorium necessary. The members of the Monitoring Committee also asked that a letter be sent directly to Santé Québec. Discussions were held during the fall of 2024 between the Direction de soutien aux familles at the SRPNI and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux to establish the steps leading to the application of a moratorium. The information was forwarded to the members of the Monitoring Committee.

RECOMMENDATION	BODY OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS MADE	FOLLOW-UP
<p>8 That the Government of Québec help ensure the availability of necessary resources to support families and continue the campaign to raise awareness about the Act and the services offered by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière and the Direction de soutien aux familles.</p>	<p>Direction de soutien aux familles Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to acting as a partner in providing support for families, Awacak is responsible for communications with Indigenous communities, while the Direction de soutien aux familles oversees communications with other partners for the purposes of the Act. Both organizations receive the funding they need to pursue their mission.
<p>9 That a working sub-committee of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act be formed to examine the legal aspects concerning the cases handled by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière and the Direction de soutien aux familles.</p>	<p>Monitoring Committee, excluding the Direction de soutien aux familles (to ensure an independent process)</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the searches carried out to find personal information and information about the death or disappearance of a child, the Monitoring Committee stresses that families must be informed about possible legal recourses. It is currently reviewing the situation. • Awacak mentions that member families can, at any time, receive support from the organization’s lawyers, and that the decision about whether to launch legal proceedings must be taken individually by each family.
<p>10 That the possibility of partnering with Université Laval’s sociology observatory be explored to conduct research similar to that carried out between it and the Institut Tshakapesh on the forced displacement and grouping of children in residential schools in Quebec, as well as any other research priorities deemed relevant by the Monitoring Committee.</p>	<p>Direction de soutien aux familles Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Direction de soutien aux familles has contacted the research team concerned at Université Laval. Awacak, as the holder of the families’ power of attorney, has the legitimacy needed to direct this project. • Awacak believes that the current partnership with Professor Suzy Basile at Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue could be the starting point for this type of research. • The Direction de soutien aux familles is continuing to analyze some specific data to answer questions from families, including the identification of several parameters for children’s trajectories presented in the annual reports under the Act.

RECOMMENDATION	BODY OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS MADE	FOLLOW-UP
<p>11 That Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles harmonize their processes to ensure the archiving, security and confidentiality of the information gathered in the course of their work with families and individuals.</p>	<p>Direction de soutien aux familles</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the follow-up for recommendations 1 and 3 from 2021-2022.
	<p>Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the follow-up for recommendations 1 and 3 from 2021-2022.
<p>12 That the Government of Québec commit to providing the necessary resources to hire an archives technician to join the Awacak team.</p>	<p>Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On July 10, 2024, Awacak was awarded a new grant of \$265,000 by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit. This money is added to the unused funding carried over from the three preceding years, which remains at Awacak’s disposal. The hiring of the human resources needed by the organization is eligible for all the grants paid to it by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit since 2021. • Awacak can also benefit, as needed, from support from the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue for the archiving and protection of personal information under the previously-signed agreement. • The organization has also been informed of the support program of Sociétés d’archives privées agréées, administered by Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec and financed by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (Government of Quebec). • An administrative assistant began working at Awacak in January 2025. This resource will, among other things, file records.

CONCLUSION – 2024-2025 RECOMMENDATION OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE CARRYING OUT OF THE ACT

In this report, the members of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act make a new recommendation to add to those made since the Act came into force:

That a commemorative fund be created in memory of children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution.

The next annual report under the Act will follow up on this recommendation.



Miro Tehewin Meskano walk organized by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière at La Tuque Catholic cemetery, in memory of Atikamekw children (La Tuque, June 21, 2024).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Mandate and list of members of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act

MONITORING COMMITTEE ON 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

STATEMENT OF MANDATE

STATEMENT OF MANDATE

Background

On December 9, 2020, the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit (then 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 Indigenous families searching for information on the circumstances surrounding their 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 psychological needs.

Mandate of the Monitoring Committee

Sections 21 and 22 of the Act establish the Monitoring Committee, 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 progress of the processing of applications.

More specifically, the Monitoring Committee has a mandate to:

- monitor work carried out under the Act:
 - by receiving regular progress reports, in French and English, on actions carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit;
 - by regularly receiving information on the work carried out by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière and any other organization supporting families;
 - by identifying, analyzing and proposing to the Direction de soutien aux familles solutions to the challenges encountered;

- survey and obtain feedback from the individuals and families receiving help from the Direction de soutien aux familles or Awacak on support measures that exist for seeking information, especially regarding the procedure to follow under the Act;
- analyze the annual report pertaining to the Act;
- formulate any recommendation or submit any advice it deems necessary to the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit concerning the requisite improvements, especially in light of 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 opinions, in French and English, thirty (30) days after they are submitted to the Minister;
- with financial support from the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, if necessary, have the recommendations translated into various Indigenous languages.

Membership

The Monitoring Committee coordinator is appointed by the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit.

As of February 28, 2025, the Monitoring Committee comprised the following permanent members:

- Geoffrey Kelley, Coordinator of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act;
- Françoise Rupertouse, Director General, Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière;
- Marjolaine Sioui, Executive Director, First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC);
- Marjolaine Étienne, President, Quebec Native Women;
- Annick Gill, Strategic Development Advisor, Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, from March 1 to May 26, 2024, and then Florence Picard, Legal Affairs Advisor, Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, from May 27, 2024;
- 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;
- Julie Martel, Director, Direction de soutien aux familles;
- Florence Dupré, Coordinator, Direction de soutien aux familles.

Observing members (with the right to speak but not to vote):

- André Albert Morin, Official Opposition Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Quebec Liberal Party;
- Manon Massé, Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Québec solidaire;

- Pascal Paradis, Third Opposition Group Critic for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Parti québécois;
- Nicole Anne Vautour, Director of Youth Investigations, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.

Guest members

Individuals or representatives of organizations may be invited on an ad hoc basis to attend Monitoring Committee meetings at the request of its permanent members to present certain issues and achievements related to the implementation of the Act or to contribute to the Committee's targeted reflection.

Monitoring Committee meetings

The Monitoring Committee will meet three to four times a year as required. The items on the agenda will determine the duration of each meeting.

The individual appointed by the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit will oversee the coordination of the meetings.

Meetings will take place virtually, using technological platforms (e.g. Teams, Zoom, teleconferencing). Additional meetings may be convened if necessary.

If simultaneous interpretation services are required, the SRPNI will assume the costs, and the Direction des communications of the Conseil exécutif will ensure logistics.

Role of Monitoring Committee members

Participate actively and collaborate harmoniously and respectfully in the deliberations to:

- build on their expertise and provide advice and guidance on the implementation of the Act;
- provide the relevant information required to carry out activities;
- validate the minutes of each meeting;
- ensure follow-up and reporting on the progress of the work to their respective authorities;
- 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 implementation of the Act. Its mandate will be reassessed, if necessary, every two years.

Linguistic precedence

In the event of any discrepancy between the English and French versions, the French version shall prevail.

Note:

This document may be revised according to changes in the mandate. Any change must be agreed upon by 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 Pertaining to the Act

Background

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

In response to its final report calling for all the information in its possession concerning these children to be handed over to the families affected, in June 2021, the Government of Quebec passed 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).

In effect since September 1, 2021, the Act is a practical tool to support families humanely and respectfully in their quest for answers concerning their children who died or went missing from health and social services institutions, public bodies and religious congregations.

The Direction de soutien aux familles was established as part of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit to ensure the implementation of the Act. To fulfill its mandate, it collaborates with the relevant Government of Quebec 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 of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, the Interdepartmental Committee's key mandates are to:

- regularly monitor the implementation of the Act by receiving, at each meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee, a report on the work done by the Direction de soutien aux familles;
- ensure, through the active participation of each member department and body, the coherence and relevance of government action for families affected by the Act;
- collaborate on specific projects aimed at applying the Act, notably by developing relevant practices or exchanging the information necessary for their development;
- contribute to preparing the annual report on the implementation of the Act and formulate any recommendation or submit any advice concerning the Act to the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Coordination and composition of the Interdepartmental Committee

The Direction de soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit coordinates the Interdepartmental Committee. In its capacity as coordinating body, the Direction de soutien aux familles convenes committee meetings, prepares 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
- Bureau du coroner
- Ministère de l'Éducation
- Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur
- Ministère de la Culture et des Communications

The list of members is updated by the Direction de soutien aux familles whenever necessary.

Replacement of members

Departments and bodies must inform the Direction de soutien aux familles of any change in their representatives on the Interdepartmental Committee. To this end, they must submit to the Direction de soutien aux familles the contact details of the new representative to ensure the list of members is always up to date.

Meetings of the Interdepartmental Committee

The committee meets a minimum of three times per year during the following periods:

- January-February (follow-up of the work completed and preparation of the annual report under the Act)
- May-June (follow-up of the work completed and definition of working guidelines)
- October-November (follow-up of the work completed)

Other meetings can be added as needed.

The agenda will determine the duration of each meeting.

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