

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

SECRETARIAT AUX RELATIONS AVEC LES PREMIÈRES NATIONS ET LES INUIT



2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

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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 fifth annual report 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*, and it marks an important milestone in the work conducted with families by the Direction de soutien aux familles, its many partners, and Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière.

Each year, thanks to the families and the path they set out, the partnership strengthens as it gains new knowledge and new expertise. This year's work consolidated the foundations of a partnership that is unique in terms of both its nature and its scope, and saw the fourth disinterment performed at the request of a family. It also led to the conclusion of some searches, and the organization of several commemorative ceremonies.

Over four years after the passage of the Act, this new report does not just list results; it also offers an opportunity for institutions, organizations and individuals to pause and take stock of what has been accomplished, and of what remains to be done.

I also hope that it will provide an opportunity for us all to remember each child whose time was cut short, and to pay homage to the families who have kept their memory alive in their hearts after all these years.

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

Ian Lafrenière

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTION DE SOUTIEN AUX FAMILLES



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*, the Direction de soutien aux familles has provided support for 129 families.

More than just a number that unfortunately increases from year to year, these families represent several hundred individuals, members of families and communities, all seeking answers concerning the death or disappearance of 221 children.



The searches of several families have reached a concrete or symbolic conclusion this year, with the organization of end-of-search meetings and commemoration ceremonies. Other families continue on their quest for truth with emotion, courage and determination, strongly and sensitively supported by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière.

Once again this year, on behalf of the entire family support team, we offer our sincere thanks to the numerous search partners who, over the last four years, have worked alongside us to provide answers to the families' questions.

Thank you also to the children, who guide us by their presence at each stage in a search, and a heartfelt thank you to the families who allow us to join them in their search despite their immense sorrow.

Patrick Lahaie
Associate Secretary General
for Indigenous and Inuit Relations

Julie Martel
Director of Family Support

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



Greetings to all,

I am still deeply moved by the work completed by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière, the Direction de soutien aux familles, and the gouvernement du Québec during 2025.

The intense emotion we feel, as we work alongside the families for whom we provide support and organize ceremonies or disinterments, is a source of both distress and enrichment.

The year 2025 was one of grief, sadness, anger, and sometimes incomprehension. Several families were extremely pleased with the work completed, while others were less happy because they consider that the results obtained from searches conducted under the Act are unsatisfactory. However, since a majority of families were pleased with the answers received and the work completed, I remain positive. These families give me the courage and strength I need to continue this extremely difficult work, which is unlike any other job I have had in my life.

I realize how important Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles are in the lives of the families to whom we provided support this year. On several occasions, I could not help weeping with the families who, at last, received the answers they had been seeking for many years.

I thank the teams of lawyers, the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale, the archaeologists, the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Monitoring Committee and the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit at the gouvernement du Québec for assisting us in this outstanding restorative work.

The media have ensured that the general public is aware of the essential work we perform.

Nin Françoise Ruperthouse



MESSAGE FROM MARJOLAINE SIOUÏ, ON BEHALF OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE CARRYING OUT OF THE ACT



“As long as we have that belief and the need to improve the future, then the future will be improved.”

Murray Sinclair (Jan. 24, 1951-Nov. 4, 2024, Peguis First Nation, Métis/Ojibwe), former chair of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, judge and senator.

For too long, First Peoples have borne the burden of historical injustices that have marked their history and continue to resonate today. The disappearance and death of First Nations and Inuit children in health care establishments is a tragedy that has been ignored for too long and should never be forgotten. These events, which occurred in a context of colonization and assimilation policies, remind us of the extent of the harm caused and the need to acknowledge the truth and the pain experienced by so many families.

Every testimony, every research, every action taken by families and other loved ones to find their children and honor their memory is a lesson in courage and resilience. Despite the recommendations made in numerous public inquiry reports urging governments to act with courage and responsibility, no one can repair or erase the wounds caused by these years of waiting, without ever knowing...

This fifth annual report is a continuation of the commitment we have made collectively: to recognize, understand, denounce, and decolonize public services so that such injustices never happen again. We have a duty to help build a future where every child is protected, every family is respected, and every voice is heard!

On behalf of the follow-up committee, I would like to highlight the resilience and determination of the families, as well as all the work accomplished by Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière, the Direction de soutien aux familles, the members of the committee, and everyone else involved.

The families’ determination to find their loved ones, seek justice, and preserve their memory is a source of inspiration for us and an essential pillar of this collective effort.

With respect and gratitude,

Marjolaine Sioui

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I. BACKGROUND TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACT

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

The establishment of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG) was announced on August 3, 2016. The 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 Québec 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 Attikamek babies¹, evacuated for medical reasons between 1950 and 1973, went missing. Other witnesses reported the disappearance of eight Attikamek babies in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as one Innu child (NIMMIWG, 2019: 109–110).

While the NIMMIWG was pursuing its work, Anne Panasuk, then an investigative journalist, presented a series of reports on the Radio-Canada program *Enquête* and 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 Attikamek children.

In general, the families that the NIMMIWG commissioners and Ms. Panasuk met conveyed their suffering, but also stated that 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

1. In this report, the names of nations and communities are not written systematically using the spellings preferred by the First Nations and Inuit. The text has been revised based on the applicable governmental guidelines, and the ethnonyms are intended to be consistent and uniform. The spellings used by people who provided testimony for the report have been retained.

witnesses are convinced that the babies were kidnapped to be used in medical experiments or sold to non-Indigenous families” (NIMMIWG, 2019: 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, 2019: 109).

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

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 gouvernement du Québec, 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

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 death or disappearance. Some families 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 Québec, and more broadly speaking in Canada, to document, disseminate and denounce the experiences of families and First Nations and Inuit communities in the 20th-century colonial context.



Ash basket crafted by a Mi'gmaq artisan from Gesgapegiag, containing four medicinal plants and a pair of children's moccasins, presented to the community of Mistissini by the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act to mark the presentation of the 2024-2025 annual report.

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 Québec (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, especially, First Nations and Inuit 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 gouvernement du 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 Québec. 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, 2024b: 228). One concerns the Act directly, suggesting that Canada's provincial and territorial governments should "draw on the successful aspects 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, 2024a: 1460). The report also mentions that the Act "has both strengths and limitations" and has helped many families find the place where their family members are buried (Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor, 2024b: 151).

Last, Bill 32, the *Act to establish the cultural safety approach within the health and social services network*, came into force in Québec 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 their cultural, spiritual, linguistic and historic realities into account.

At the heart of these deliberations, 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 gouvernement du 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 Aboriginal 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.

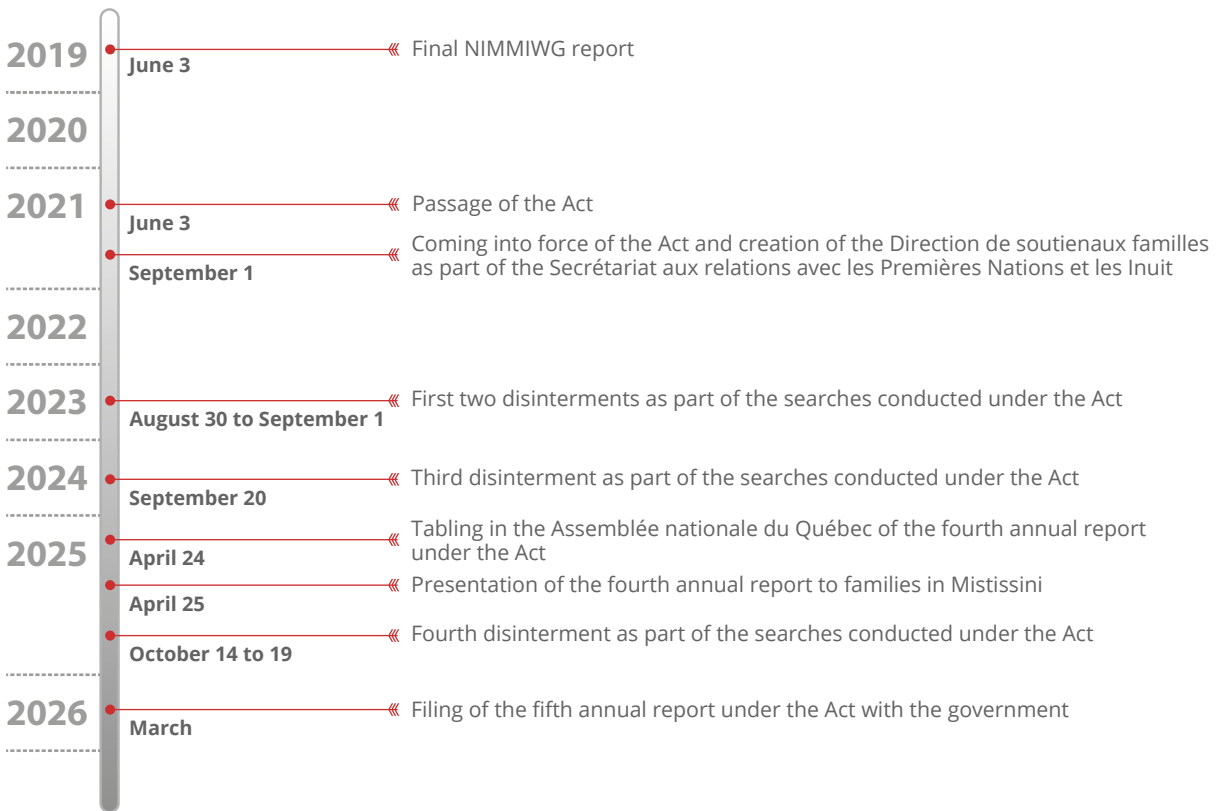
The initial amendments received a mitigated response from Indigenous families and organizations. The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) joined with the Protecteur du citoyen to request that the First Nations and the Inuit participate fully in consultations concerning the response to the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

Given that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic required prompt assent to Bill 31, the *Act to Amend Mainly the Pharmacy Act for the Purpose of Facilitating Access to Certain Services* was passed and then assented to on March 17, 2020, without the six sections dedicated to Indigenous children.

The same day, the Assemblée nationale du Québec 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 (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2020), 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 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 to a person under the Act.



Traditional Indigenous skirt.

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 the individual is dissatisfied with the services received while seeking information from an institution, body or religious congregation, and it makes the Minister responsible for reporting on the carrying out of the Act in an annual report.

Partner organizations at the heart of the implementation

In June 2021, shortly after the Act was assented to, Anne Panasuk was appointed as the Minister's Special Advisor for Family Support. Her two-year mandate ended in June 2023.

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: the Direction de soutien aux familles.

In September 2021, Awacak, formed by families of Indigenous children who went missing or died, joined these interveners to help support families in the search process. 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, which is part of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, is tasked with ensuring the implementation of the Act while respecting 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 search 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), disinterment specialists and any other relevant experts to analyze and interpret the documentation obtained;

- coordinating the Health and Social Services Support Network supporting the implementation of the Act;
- coordinating the Interdepartmental Committee on the Implementation of the Act;
- coordinating a committee of partners on disinterments;
- 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 team at the Direction de soutien aux familles. From left to right, top to bottom: Simon Charette, Stéphanie Langevin, Julie Martel, Catherine Morin Boulais, Louise Morin, Caroline Éthier, Véronique Laveau and Florence Dupré.

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 Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit.

The team also includes a search coordinator, five 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, deceased or murdered 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 Québec whose children went missing or died in touch with each other;
- help Indigenous families in Québec find their children who went missing or died;
- help Indigenous families in Québec 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 Québec whose children went missing or died;
- make the necessary representations to the authorities to assert the rights of the Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died;
- defend and promote the interests of Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died;
- heighten the general public's awareness of the situation of Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died.



Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General of Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière.

The six founding members of Awacak are:

- Mrs. Françoise Ruperthouse;
- Mr. Pierre-Paul Niquay;
- Mrs. Viviane Echaquan Niquay;
- Mrs. Chantale Awashish;
- Mrs. Viviane Chilton;
- Mtre. Alain Arsenault.

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

Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act

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

The Committee was officially set up at its first meeting on October 29, 2021, and held five meetings between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026, on:

- April 14, 2025;
- June 9, 2025;
- October 3, 2025;
- December 15, 2025;
- January 23, 2026.

The Committee had nine permanent members during this period. 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. 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 13 recommendations. The response to the initial recommendations and to the Monitoring Committee's new recommendations is presented in Section III and in the conclusion of this report.

The concerted efforts of the partners has been supported, since the early days of the Act's implementation, by initiatives and searches in a number of institutions carried out by medical and religious archivists, cemetery and parish officials, civil servants from various government departments and public bodies seeking answers and solutions to access information, as well as researchers, doctors and disinterment and identification specialists.

This fifth report marks the start of the second half of the period during which the Act initially applies, and the individual and institutional contributions made by each of these partners remain central to the work the Direction de soutien aux familles has carried out at the families' request.

II. FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT: MARCH 1, 2025 TO FEBRUARY 28, 2026

The fifth annual report covers the work completed between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026.

To ensure continuity with the previous reports, it outlines the main accomplishments in four areas:

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

The summary of the work completed alternates with testimony from families and other people involved in the searches. It highlights the progress made since the Act came into force, but also the obstacles that remain. The testimony reflects the courage, patience and determination of the families and the teams assisting them to ensure justice and dignity for their children.

Travel and communications

Travel for the fifth year was in line with previous years. The focus was on presenting search results to families and providing them with support at children's burial sites. In addition to these trips, many other results were presented via videolink over the last year, respecting the choices made by families. In terms of media exposure, the past year has seen a growing level of interest from documentary teams in the journey of families and their quest for truth.

Travel

The tabling of the fourth annual report in the Assemblée nationale du Québec on April 24, 2025 was followed by a presentation to the families of **Mistissini** (Nord-du-Québec) on **April 25, 2025**. As in past years, the Minister 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 MNAs, attended a ceremony organized in collaboration with the community.



Presentation of the fourth annual report under the Act in the Assemblée nationale du Québec on April 24, 2025. From left to right, top to bottom: Caroline Éthier (Direction de soutien aux familles), Véronique Laveau (Direction de soutien aux familles) / Catherine Morin Boulais (Direction de soutien aux familles), Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles), Richard Kistabish (Monitoring Committee), Patrick Lahaie (Associate Secretary General – Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit) / Louise Morin (Direction de soutien aux familles), Pierre-Paul Niquay (Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière), Viviane Echaquan Niquay (Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière) / André Albert Morin (Monitoring Committee – Quebec Liberal Party), Anne Panasuk (Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière), Stéphanie Fontaine-Dumais (Monitoring Committee) / Julie Martel (Direction de soutien aux familles), Nicole Anne Vautour (Monitoring Committee) / Geoffrey Kelley (Monitoring Committee), Pascal Paradis (Monitoring Committee – Parti québécois), Françoise Ruperthouse (Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière), Guillaume Cliche Rivard (Monitoring Committee – Québec solidaire), Ian Lafrenière (Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit).

The previous month, from **March 9 to 12, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles, accompanied by a doctor from the Health and Social Services Support Network, joined the members of Awacak in the Attikamek community of **Obedjiwan** (Mauricie) to meet with five families, four in a face-to-face meeting and one via a videolink. The meetings provided an opportunity to give several families their search results, discuss with them what they wanted to do next, and answer a range of questions.



Presentation of the fourth annual report under the Act to Cree families in Mistissini (Mistissini, April 25, 2025).



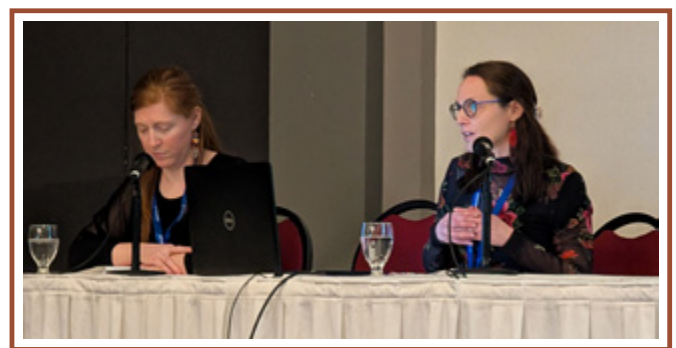
Elders' house in the community of Obedjiwan.

During this period, on **March 10 and 11, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles also travelled with Awacak to the Attikamek community of **Manawan** (Lanaudière) to meet with two families. This provided an opportunity for the Direction de soutien aux familles to present its support services to each family and to discuss the results of the searches so far and the possibilities for the future.

On **March 21, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles travelled to **Joliette** (Lanaudière) to meet with a family, along with Awacak and an archaeological firm, for follow-up concerning a possible request for disinterment.

From **May 20 to 23, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak, as well as a doctor from the Health and Social Services Support Network, travelled to **La Tuque**, and then to the Attikamek community of **Wemotaci** (Mauricie) to meet with six families. The Direction de soutien aux familles presented the documents and information located so far to the members of each family in order to determine, with their input, the next stages in the search process.

On **May 21, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles went to **Sherbrooke** (Estrie) to make a presentation at the 54th annual convention of the Association des archivistes du Québec. The presentation, entitled "*Recherches, archives, quête de vérité et guérison : quel bilan après trois ans d'application de la Loi autorisant la communication de renseignements personnels aux familles d'enfants autochtones disparus ou décédés à la suite d'une admission en établissement?*", focused on achievements, partnerships, obstacles and the elements that could facilitate the searches requested by families. More specifically, it led to new and stronger links with religious archivists.



Julie Martel and Florence Dupré (Direction de soutien aux familles) speaking at the 54th annual convention of the Association des archivistes du Québec (Sherbrooke, May 2025). Source: <https://www.archivistes.qc.ca/fr/article/actes-2025> (viewed February 5, 2026).

On **May 23, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles went to the Maison communautaire Missinak in **Québec City** (Capitale-Nationale) to present search results to a family. Along

with a doctor from the Health and Social Services Support Network, the Direction de soutien aux familles gave the family members present all the documents and information that had been located during the search. The warm welcome offered to the family and its accompanying party by the Maison communautaire Missinak, including the presence of a caseworker and the use of the centre's "family" room, set the tone for the day's events and the emotional support provided for the family.

On **May 29, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles travelled to **Laval** (Laval) to meet with a potential witness for the birth of two children, as part of a search conducted for a family. The meeting and the discussions that followed allowed the Direction de soutien aux familles to forward some new information to the family concerned.

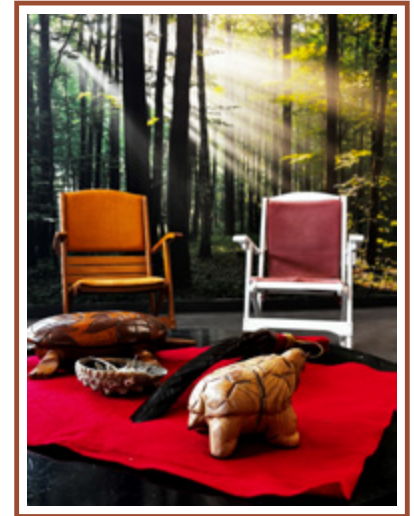
During the summer, on **August 19 and 20, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles met with a family member in **Sept-Îles**, and then in **Uashat Maliotenam** (Côte-Nord), to locate a grave in a cemetery at the family's members request. At the same time, the Direction de soutien aux familles analyzed and validated search information in the area for other families receiving support under the Act.

On **September 20, 2025**, a large-scale ceremony took place in **Mashteuiatsh** (Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean) to commemorate a child who was buried in the community's Catholic cemetery after dying in Roberval. The ceremony was organized by the child's family and Awacak, which was present at the event, and the Direction de soutien aux familles, and it gave the family members a way to come together and pay homage to their sister, aunt and cousin.

From **October 14 to 19, 2025** the fourth disinterment was completed under the Act. The Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak accompanied the members of the family to the Cimetière Saint-Charles in **Québec City** (Capitale-Nationale). Under the coordination of the Bureau du coroner, the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale completed the disinterment with help from the funeral director selected by the family, Les résidences funéraires familiales F. Thériault inc. The media were present. The section of this report on disinterments provides more details about this key event marked by emotions, strength and resilience.

From **November 3 to 5, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles was in **Montréal** (Montréal) with an Inuit family from Nunavut. Following a search conducted under the Act, the family members wanted to organize a ceremony in the cemetery where their brother's remains were laid. The Direction de soutien aux familles, along with a celebrant chosen by the family and the Family Information Liaison Unit in Nunavut, took the opportunity of this emotional event to give the family members present all the documents located during the search and to agree on the next steps in the process.

At the same time, from **November 4 to 6, 2025**, an end-of-search tour of families in **Pakuashipi** (Côte-Nord) was organized. Awacak travelled to the community to hold the meetings, along with the community's psychologist and a caseworker from the health centre. The Direction de soutien aux familles was present via videolink at each meeting to provide the latest search results. A film crew from



Family room in the Maison communautaire Missinak, set up to receive a family for a meeting to disclose the results of a search by the Direction de soutien aux familles. Sage was used for its purifying powers (Québec City, May 2025).

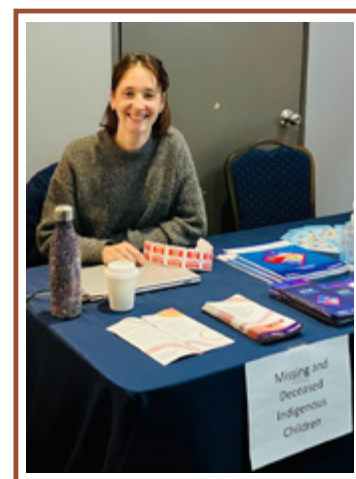
the Indigenous production company Nikan Productions was also on site. Following the tour, the families agreed to think in the coming months about the type of collective commemoration they should organize.

On **November 19, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak travelled to **Notre-Dame-de-Pierreville** (Centre-du-Québec) to meet with a family whose child is being searched for under the Act. The trip gave the family an opportunity for a moment of remembrance at the cemetery in the municipality and to become more familiar with the site.

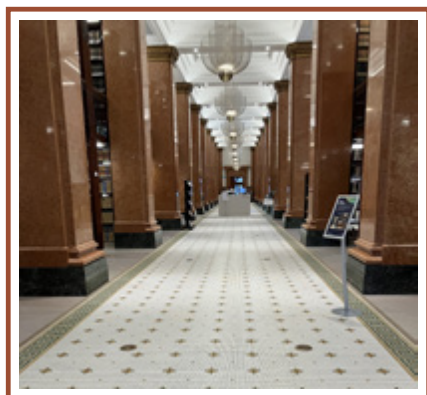
On **November 25, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles went to meet with an Innu family living in **Québec City** (Capitale-Nationale). The meeting was organized at the family's request to present the type of search that could be conducted for a child buried in a Québec City cemetery. This new request followed the disinterment completed in Cimetière Saint-Charles the previous month, discussed in the section of this report on disinterments. During this disinterment, the families of the people buried close to the disinterment site were contacted to inform them of the work that could affect the grave of their family member. The search concerning the child has since begun, as requested by the family.

Last, on **November 5 and November 26 and 27, 2025**, the Direction de soutien aux familles staffed an information booth at the Psychosocial Annual Gathering organized in **Montréal** (Montréal) by the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay. The Direction de soutien aux familles met almost 120 caseworkers from the 9 Cree communities in attendance. They discussed the support services available under the Act and the services offered by the Family Information Liaison Unit for the families of missing or murdered Indigenous individuals, whose tasks are performed by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

In addition to these trips involving meetings with families and partners, the Direction de soutien aux familles continued its archival research. Between **March 12 and November 25, 2025**, the professional responsible for broader sectoral researches at the Direction de soutien aux familles travelled at least



Stéphanie Langevin (Direction de soutien aux familles) staffing an information booth to present the services offered by the Direction de soutien aux familles at the Psychosocial Annual Gathering organized by the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (Montréal, November 2025).



Library at the Assemblée nationale du Québec.

ten times to the archive centre at Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ), the library at Université Laval and the library of the Assemblée nationale du Québec in **Québec City** (Capitale-Nationale). This research has made it possible in particular, over the past year, to gather precious information about births, deaths and causes of death in Québec during the 20th century. It has also resulted in a better understanding and mastery of the genealogical databases available, with the goal of developing the team's search tools for the benefit of families. The section of the report on researches in support of families provides more details on this work.

Communications

Between **March 5 and May 29, 2025**, these trips and other invitations provided an opportunity for the Direction de soutien aux familles, sometimes accompanied by Awacak, to present its support and search services on six occasions and to consolidate its partnerships with various organizations.

These targeted communications events can be detailed as follows:

- a presentation of the Direction de soutien aux familles and its services to the native friendship centres belonging to the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ, March 5, 2025);
- a half-day training session for coroners at the Bureau du coroner, given by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (a collaboration of the Direction des relations avec les Autochtones and the Direction de soutien aux familles), of which half was devoted to support for the families of children who died or went missing by the Direction de soutien aux familles (April 10, 2025);
- a presentation of the Direction de soutien aux familles and its services to the person responsible for the Iskweu project at the Native Women's Shelter of Montréal (May 14, 2025);
- a conference given by the Direction de soutien aux familles to the 54th annual convention of the Association des archivistes du Québec, mentioned in the previous section (May 21, 2025);
- a presentation of the Direction de soutien aux familles and its services as part of the implementation of the Act and of the Québec Family Information Liaison Unit to the persons responsible for similar units in other Canadian provinces and territories (May 27, 2025);
- a presentation of the Direction de soutien aux familles, Awacak and their services to the health directors brought together by the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (May 29, 2025).

The Act in the media

Between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026, 14 articles in the press, 9 TV broadcasts or videoclips, and 10 radio broadcasts concerning work under the Act were identified, making a total of 33 publications. There were two key moments of media coverage, together making up two-thirds of the year's media publications.

First, an investigation by a journalist at Espaces autochtones (Radio-Canada) was released on May 8, 2025. It comprises five written publications: one article giving the background to the Act, two articles covering the searches of certain families, one article on Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles, and one article on the involvement of Anne Panasuk. A radio report including the same content was also broadcast. The publication of the investigation led to other TV reports, webcasts and radio reports. In all, 11 media publications were based on the investigation between May 8 and June 10, 2025.

The second key moment in media coverage this year concerned disinterments, which continue to attract interest. The fourth disinterment, completed as part of a search conducted under the Act in October 2025, led to several publications. Between September 30, 2025, the date of the authorization issued by the Superior Court, and October 18, 2025, five radio reports, five TV reports and one print article covered the issue.

The other publications identified over the past year included a series of two written articles and one radio interview concerning the filing of the 2024-2025 annual report on the implementation of the Act in Mistissini on April 25, 2025. The series mentioned the reburial of a child in the community's cemetery after a disinterment in September 2024. The passage of the Act and its implementation were also mentioned in two articles by journalists and one TV report in January 2026 as examples of promising initiatives in the area of relations with the First Nations and the Inuit.

Although the Direction de soutien aux familles has noted a decrease in the number of media publications covering work under the Act between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026 compared to previous years, it has also seen increased interest from documentary teams concerning families' quests for truth through the various stages of a search. Several families receiving support from the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak have been approached to take part in some documentary projects currently under way.

It is important to note that when responding to media requests, the vision of the Direction de soutien aux familles is primarily guided by the wishes and needs expressed by the families concerned.

Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière: 2025 report by Françoise Ruperthouse, Director General

The mission of Awacak remains the same, and we try to abide by it as far as possible. It is to

- put Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died in touch with each other;
- complete the forms needed by families from Québec's Indigenous nations to request help in finding out more about the causes and circumstances in which their children went missing or died;
- help Indigenous families in Québec find their missing children;
- pursue all the sociological, anthropological or legal research necessary to assert the rights of the Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died;
- make the necessary representations to the authorities to assert the rights of the Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died;
- defend and promote the interests of Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died;
- heighten the general public's awareness of the situation of Indigenous families in Québec whose children went missing or died;
- visit each community in Québec to provide information about Awacak's mission and complete information and consent forms in order to work with our partners at the Direction de soutien aux familles.



Anne Panasuk and Simeon Trapper from Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière, at a public meeting in Mistissini (Mistissini, August 2025).



Françoise Ruperthouse and Simeon Trapper from Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière, at the pow-wow in Pikogan (Pikogan, July 2025).

Members of the board of directors

- Viviane Echaquan Niquay, President (Manawan)
- Sylvestre Desterres, Vice-President (Pessamit)
- Bruno Kistabish , Secretary (Pikogan)
- Marie-Josée Wapistan, Member (Nutashkuan)
- Cécile Mark, Member (Pakuashipi)

Partners

Awacak's work and mission would not be possible without its partners:

- the Direction de soutien aux familles
- the law firm Arsenault Dufresne Wee Avocats
- partner doctors
- the Bureau du coroner
- the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale
- the members of communities' band councils
- community caseworkers
- the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit and the Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit, Ian Lafrenière

Employees and their duties

Several employees left during 2025, some of whom were replaced. The current team is made up of:

Françoise Rupertouse	Executive Director
Céline McDougall	Administrative Assistant, part-time
Chantale Awashish	Recruitment and search
Pierre-Paul Niquay	Recruitment and information
Kim Rupertouse	Office coordinator
Anne Panasuk	Consultant
Maria-Louise Nanipou	Docu-theatre project leader

Visits to communities

As in past years, Awacak travelled to several communities in 2025 to present its services during public meetings. This year, we focused on Anicinape communities and made a start with Cree communities.

The meetings were quite difficult to organize in the Anicinape communities, whose second language is English. We published articles in their newsletters, made community radio announcements, placed posters, and so on. The families in these communities sometimes felt less involved, since many of their children received healthcare in Ontario rather than in Québec. We were still able to hold public meetings in the communities of Winneway, Timiskaming and Kebaowek and in the Cree community of Mistissini. Several families called on our services and their requests were shared with the Direction de soutien aux familles to allow searches to begin.

As always, the pain of the families who could not be with their children, cradle them at their death and be present at their burial was overwhelming.

Too many children were left alone, and we feel emotionally powerless.

Follow-up with families

A large part of our work involves following up with families from the Innu, Naskapi, Attikamek and Anicinape nations that have filed search requests. This year, with the Direction de soutien aux familles, we went back to meet with several families for whom information has been located. Follow-up meetings with partner doctors were organized by the Direction de soutien aux familles to explain the medical documents to the families, and discussions about future actions took place.

In addition, we organized commemorative ceremonies for families that opted for a memorial service on site rather than a disinterment.

For these families, Awacak had wooden reliquaries made to hold a little earth from the place of burial as a souvenir and, in certain cases, a tombstone.

Action was taken for other disinterments. One family obtained authorization from the Superior Court to disinter a baby buried in a communal grave in the Cimetière Saint-Charles in Québec City. This is a first.

The disinterment took place last October, with assistance from the Bureau du coroner and the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale of the gouvernement du Québec. The identification of the remains is under way.



Public meeting of Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière in the community of Kebaowek (Kebaowek, September 2025).

This disinterment led Awacak to introduce a new approach. After obtaining the names of the other individuals buried in the communal grave, it began to search for their families. The relatives of six Indigenous children learned where their loved ones were buried, leading to new requests to return the deceased children to their home community. This important decision will perhaps allow other families to hope that their children can return home after being buried in communal graves. Unfortunately, many children were buried in this way without an exact location of their grave site.

Identification work to locate the place of burial of another young girl, buried outside a cemetery, continued with the filing of a report by archaeology firm Arkéos. Dog handlers and ground-penetrating radar were used to identify potential dig sites in order to prepare a request for disinterment.

Activities completed

Awacak believes it is important to publicize the progress made under the Act, and we have continued to make ourselves available for talks, in particular to medical students at McGill University and Université de Montréal.

Awacak contributed to several news reports, in particular by La Presse, Espaces autochtones on Radio-Canada, and Noovo.

For the same reason, we are taking part in a documentary by Indigenous production company Nikan Productions, a podcast by Wendat Isabelle Picard, and the docu-theatre project led by Innu Maria-Louise Nanipou, who is in her second year of creative research.

Awacak is also involved in a research project on healing initiatives carried out by Korine Ladouceur, a student at the Indigenous Studies School of Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT).

An agreement has been signed with the Grey Nuns to obtain and use their photographs in our activities in communities.

Last, you can now view the Awacak website in English at <https://en.awacak.ca>.

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 search purposes, the data presented in this report does not enable individuals to be identified.

As of February 28, 2026, the Direction de soutien aux familles had conducted searches **concerning 221 children following requests received from 129 applicants**. This is an increase of 12 children and 8 applicants compared to the fourth annual report filed in March 2025. The searches conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles during its fifth 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.

Welcoming families and following up on searches

The considerations that the Direction de soutien aux familles outlined in its first report in 2022 continue to be relevant and warrant reiteration to establish certain methodological limitations on this report.

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

Most requests are actively processed by the Direction de soutien aux familles. This involves, among other steps, devising and implementing search strategies to answer the questions and needs determined by the family concerned.

As of February 28, 2026, 105 out of the 129 requests sent to the Direction de soutien aux familles were considered active—**over 81%**. This represents a slight decrease (seven percentage points) compared to the observations made in the fourth 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 it is important to note that several searches have concluded in the past year and the files have been closed. The next section provides more details.

The intake protocols for families, established during the initial four years of implementing the Act, have continued to be applied to ensure the most compassionate and respectful support for families, adapted to the needs they have expressed (interpretation, emotional or spiritual support, comfort with using technology, geographical distance, etc.). The Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak still consider that the establishment of trust hinges on these initial discussions, which must be maintained throughout the support process. Some applicants are accompanied by family members during these interviews: siblings, children and spouses, as well as counsellors, psychologists, interpreters and 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, 2026, 109 families for which the Direction de soutien aux familles was conducting a search, or 84% of the total, were receiving various degrees of support from Awacak. The other families were supported by the Direction de soutien aux familles or, in some cases, by other partner organizations that the families wanted to be present.

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

In a continuation of the trend noted in the last report, the fifth year of application of the Act has been marked by the families' wish to **honour the memory of their children**. The Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak made an increased effort to support the families who wished to commemorate their children.

Several searches concluded in the past year, allowing the files to be formally closed. The process applied, which involves regular meetings of a **search closure committee** set up within the Direction de soutien aux familles, ensures that each search stage is analyzed in relation to the needs and objectives expressed by the family behind the search.

The committee held five meetings between May 7 and December 10, 2025. A total of 11 search files were analyzed and closed during the meetings, taking the total of files closed under the Act to 21 since the committee was set up. Among the files closed this year, three had not led to a search because of a lack of communication from the applicants. Most of these applications had been submitted by a third party, for example a researcher or an organization, 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 case was closed after the applicant was referred to the appropriate services, which could not be provided by the Direction de soutien aux familles. Seven other cases were closed after all the steps requested 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. For several other families, Awacak is continuing to provide support in order to organize ceremonies in the future, if that is what the families decide. In each case, the Direction de soutien aux familles has notified the families that it remains available for any further search requests.

It is important to note, as in previous years, 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. Although the “end of the search” by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act is a necessary stage, which relies on humility and transparency on the part of the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning the answers obtained and the questions that remain, it does not signal an absolute end to the process for all the families. Commemorations, legal proceedings, spiritual approaches or healing paths are other options open to the families, which they can pursue at their own pace.

Awacak is often present for the later search stages, and over the past year, in collaboration with the Direction de soutien aux familles in response to a request from a family, organized a large-scale **ceremony** at the Catholic cemetery in Mashteuiatsh (Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean). The ceremony, in memory of a young girl who died in Roberval while attending the Pointe-Bleue Residential School, brought together family members from various First Nations communities. It also marked the end of the search conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act, which had begun almost four years previously in November 2021. At the ceremony, Awacak gave the family members present reliquaries containing a small amount of earth from the child’s place of burial to allow her to be brought back, symbolically, to her community.

Testimony of Françoise Ruperthouse, Executive Director of Awacak, concerning ceremonies

As a member and employee of Awacak, I can only say that the work of Awacak and of the Direction de soutien aux familles has generated a whirlwind of emotions in 2025, as we provided support for families who were suffering. Our work has made it possible for us to find ways to calm the grief and anger that the families have experienced for many years.

One example is the reliquaries we had made for the families who could not or did not want to disinter their child. Following the beautiful ceremonies these families organized, they were able to bring back with them a little earth from the place where their child is buried.

For Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles, this is a nice tool, and for the families, it is a way to capture a memory that they can keep in their homes.

Ceremonies and memorials are extremely important moments for families, and I felt the need to share this.



Nin Françoise Ruperthouse

Executive Director of Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière

Reliquary presented to families wishing to bring earth from their child's burial site back to their community.

Similarly, the Direction de soutien aux familles organized a **ceremony** for an Inuit family from Nunavut that did not wish to be accompanied by Awacak, because of the support previously received from the Family Information Liaison Unit in Nunavut. The ceremony took place in the Cimetière des Trembles in Montréal (Montréal). The child's family members were present, along with a member of his foster family in Montréal—who had taken care of the child when he was hospitalized far from his Nunavummiut family—and a deacon chosen for the ceremony by the family. Reliquaries were given to the family members by the Direction de soutien aux familles, in which they could place a little earth from the place where their brother was buried and keep it with them, despite the distance between them. The ceremony was followed, for the family, by a community meal in a room at the funeral complex.

In addition to these ceremonies, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak accompanied family members, as in past years, to the presumed burial sites of their children to become familiar with the place and gather their thoughts there.

Testimony of Donat Jean-Pierre following a visit to the place where his sister is buried

Today is a bright, sunny day in Uashat. I am thinking about my parents, Bastien and Annie, and my brothers and sisters. My spirit is filled with strong emotions. This morning I am with Simon, one of the people at the Direction de soutien aux familles who assist relatives and families looking for a child who went missing or died. 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 in 2021 by the provincial government.

Our sister Élisabeth Marie Jean-Pierre was evacuated from Sept-Îles in 1958 for medical reasons with no escort, neither a family member nor our mother Annie. Over the last few months, we have completed several administrative steps, such as obtaining documents that include Élisabeth Marie Jean-Pierre's medical record from her hospitalization in 1958, her death certificate, an excerpt from the burial register for our sister, and a telephone meeting with a doctor about the causes of death.

Our sister Élisabeth Marie Jean-Pierre was born on February 18, 1958 and apparently died on April 3, 1958. Her body was never brought back to Schefferville after her death. Our mother Annie was simply told, "Your child died in the hospital in Sept-Îles."

This morning, with Simon, we tried to locate and identify the precise place where our sister was buried. She was reportedly buried on April 7 in Malioténam, in 1958. An elder once told me that a person's body must always be buried in the presence of close family members and in a way that respects the dignity of the family and the deceased. I recited a prayer for my sister Élisabeth Marie Jean-Pierre in the cemetery in Malioténam.

My family and I would like to thank Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière, as well as Simon and the whole team at the Direction de soutien aux familles for their support throughout the search process.

I think a lot about you,
my sister, Élisabeth Marie Jean-Pierre.

May your soul rest in peace.



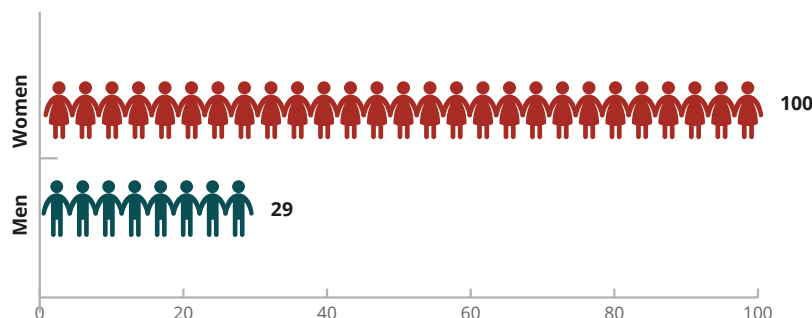
Photograph taken at the cemetery in Malioténam by Donat Jean-Pierre (Malioténam, August 2025).
par M. Donat Jean-Pierre (Malioténam, août 2025).

Donat Jean-Pierre
Brother of Élisabeth Marie Jean-Pierre

Highlights from the applications

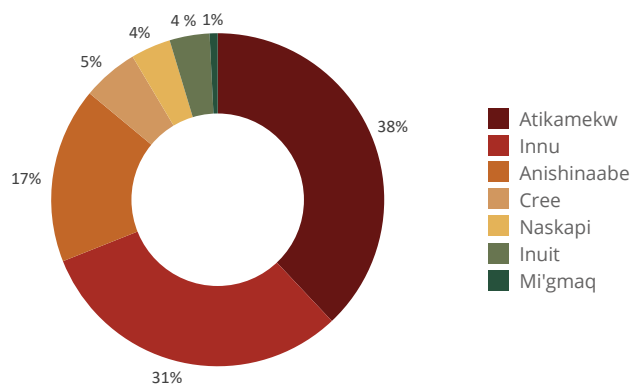
A large majority of the 129 applicants (almost 78%) were **women** (Figure 1), confirming a trend observed since the Act was first implemented.

Figure 1: Women/men distribution of applicants



Since work began under the Act, the Atikamekw nation (49 applicants, or 38% of the total), the Innu communities (40 applicants, or 31% of the total) and the Anishinaabe nation (22 applicants, or 17% of the total) are the main nations among the families represented. This representation rate has barely changed compared to the year 2024-2025 (Figure 2). One Inuit family has been added over the last year. As of February 28, 2026, five Inuit families have received support from the Direction de soutien aux familles since the Act came into force, via the liaison and information unit for families in Nunavut.

Figure 2: Nations represented in search carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles



Work to provide information about the support available under the Act will continue in the coming years with the Cree, Naskapi, Inuit, Mohawk, Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Malecite) nations, and with families living outside their communities, thanks to the partnerships consolidated over the last year with RCAAQ member centres.

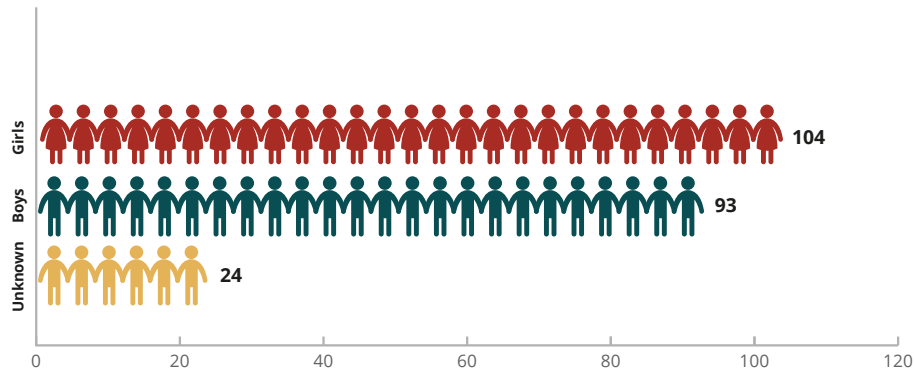
To complement Figure 2, Table 1 shows the distribution, by nation and by community, of the requests received by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Table 1: Nations and communities represented in search carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles

Nations and communities of the families	Number of requests received	Number of children covered by the requests
Attikamek	49	104
Obedjiwan	24	47
Manawan	15	35
Wemotaci	10	22
Innu	40	52
Pakuashipi	9	13
Pessamit	8	9
Uashat Maliotenam	7	11
La Romaine (Unamen Shipu)	7	7
Nutashkuan	4	7
Mashteuiatsh	3	3
Matimekosh - Lac-John	2	2
Anicinape	22	45
Pikogan	8	26
Lac-Simon	7	11
Winneway	2	3
Kitcisakik	1	1
Pine Creek First Nation (Manitoba)	1	1
Timiskaming	1	1
Information not available	2	2
Cree	7	9
Mistissini	4	4
Waswanipi	2	4
Waskaganish	1	1
Naskapi	5	5
Kawawachikamach	5	5
Inuit	5	5
Pangnirtung (Nunavut)	4	4
Information not available	1	1
Mi'gmaq	1	1
Gesgapegiag	1	1
Mohawk	0	0
Wendat	0	0
Wolastoqiyik (Malecites)	0	0
Wabenaki	0	0
TOTAL:	129 families	221 children

As in previous years, there were slightly more girls than boys (47% compared to 42%) among the children targeted by the searches (Figure 3). In less than 11% 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 well below that reported in the previous year, where the child's sex was not known in 16% of cases. **The decrease is explained by the progress made in the searches by the Direction de soutien aux familles and the discovery of new information.**

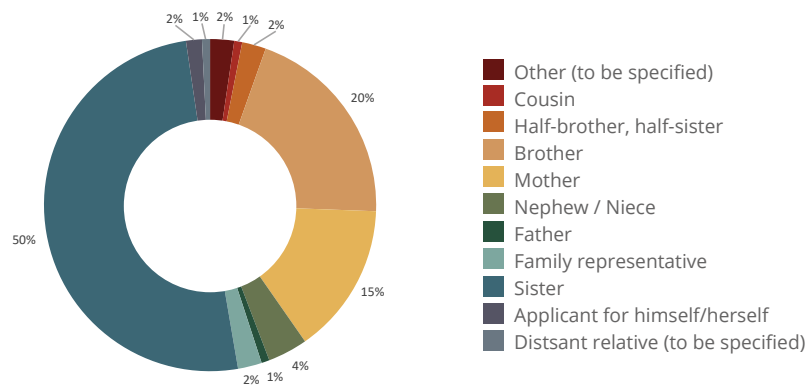
Figure 3: Girl/boy distribution among the children targeted by the searches



Most applicants were a sibling of the child or children targeted by the search (94 of the total, or over 72%, Figure 4). This number, which includes half-sisters and half-brothers, matched the trend in the previous reports. It once again underscores, more than four years after the Act came into force, 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 16% 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 12.7% 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: Link between the applicant and the child searched for



The children who are currently being searched for by the Direction de soutien aux familles were born between 1924 and 2011 (Figure 5). For 29 children (fewer than 13%), the birth date is not yet precisely known, **a drop of 4 percentage points** compared to the last report. This new decrease 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.

For two requests concerning children who died or went missing that were submitted to the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Act does not apply because the child’s birth—and therefore admission to an institution—occurred after 1992. It is also important to mention that for five children (less than 2.3% of cases), the exemptions provided for in the Act do not apply to the search because the child concerned was admitted to an institution after 31 December 1992 (Figure 6). However, the children’s families can still receive support from the Direction de soutien aux familles in their search, using the search tools available to it.

Figure 5: Children’s year of birth

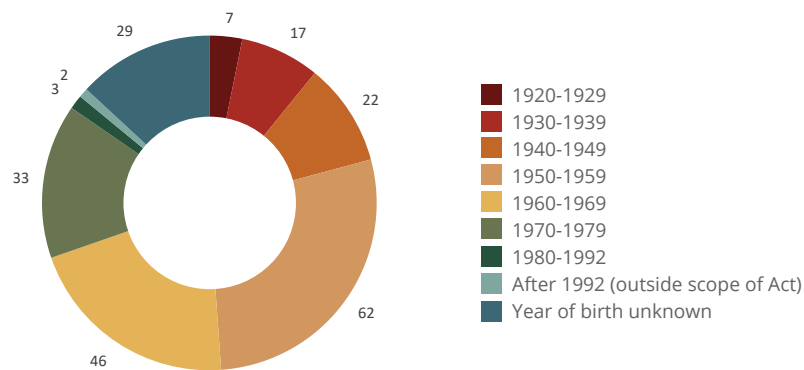
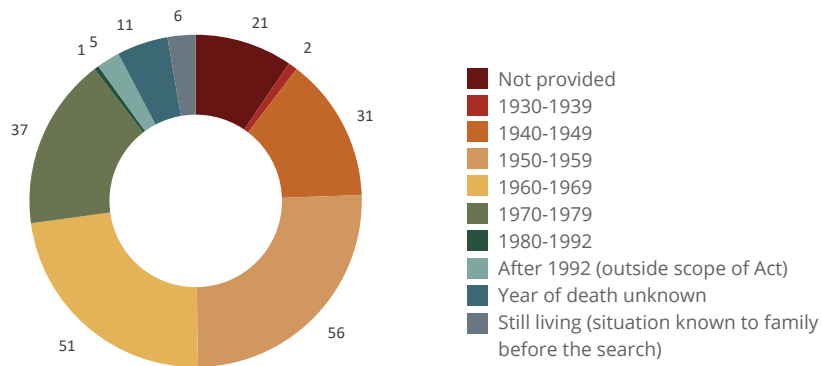


Figure 6 illustrates the most common periods of death or disappearance. As in the last report, it confirms **the substantial decrease, over the searches carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles in the last year, in the proportion of children whose exact date of death or disappearance is not known**. Whereas the first annual report indicated 33%, this date was unknown in 14.5% of cases as of February 28, 2026, 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.

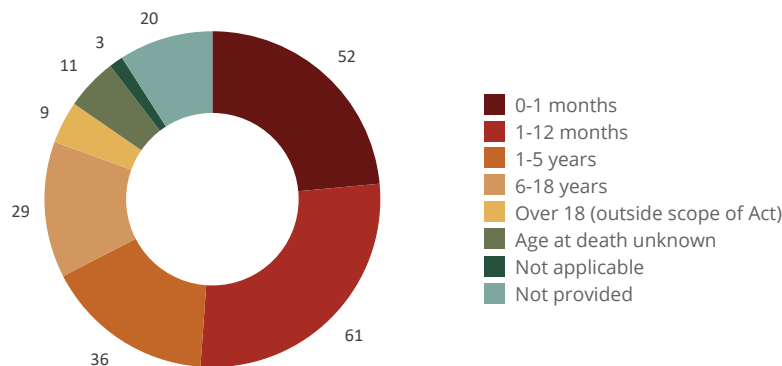
Six children (less than 3% of cases) are still alive and this situation was already known to the family before the search with the Direction de soutien aux familles began. Five of them had been adopted and one was living with the family at the time of the search.

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 51% of the children being searched for, confirming the trend observed since the Act came into force), and 46% of these deaths or disappearances before the age of one took place in the first month of life. Among the 221 children investigated, nearly 16% of deaths or disappearances occurred between the ages of 1 and 5, and 29 deaths (13%) between the ages of 6 and 18.

Figure 7: Age at which children died or went missing



Like the date of death or disappearance, in 14% 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). Once again, this represents **a decrease (4 percentage points) compared to the last report, and a significant decrease (over 18.7 percentage points) compared to the first report, thanks to the searches conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles with its partners.**

As the search progresses, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued, over the last year, to focus closely on the data collected in order to answer, as precisely as possible, the questions families ask about the cause of their child’s death, medical trajectory and burial. The development of the research mission of the Direction de soutien aux familles has provided much valuable input.

Research in the area of family support: newly completed work

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 strengthen the contacts needed to develop the projects. The research is conducted and reported here (in particular in terms of data anonymization) in compliance with the spirit of the *First Nations in Quebec and Labrador's Research Protocol* (AFNQL, 2014), as well as the guidelines of the First Nations Centre (2007) 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).

For the third consecutive year, a cross-sectional analysis of some of the data collected by the Direction de soutien aux familles has been performed for the annual report. The cooperation of the members of the Direction de soutien aux familles who provide support for families, and of the members of the Health and Social Services Support Network, was essential in this data collection process.

Over the last year, not only has long-term research continued as outlined in the previous report, but tools that were not included in the initial research program have been added, such as the genealogical databases that will be discussed below. The tools, and mastery of their use, are needed to complete certain processes for families, and so the research program has been adjusted to reflect the needs of the team members at the Direction de soutien aux familles who respond to questions from families.

Causes of death, medical trajectories and burial of children

In the following pages, the Direction de soutien aux familles provides descriptive analyses that highlight the experiences of the children searched for under the Act. The analyses concern the causes of death, medical trajectories and burial of children who died after being admitted to a healthcare institution or being transferred to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities.²

The methodology is the same as that used in previous years. It involves an examination of the attestations of birth and death issued by the Directeur de l'état civil, the medical records and death notices³ obtained under the Act, and other excerpts from registers (baptisms, deaths or burials) obtained with the assistance of dioceses, parishes and cemeteries.

Two warnings need to be made before the analyses are presented. First, some statistics may appear to contradict those presented in previous reports. This is due to the **evolution of the search and the acquisition of new information** that contradicts the statistics previously gathered under the Act by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

2. The institutions had various names over time, including "asylums" and "mental hospitals".

3. The death notices were also known as "SP-3 forms".

Second, **no generalizations should be drawn from the analyses presented.** The results are evolving constantly, and affect only some of the children being searched for under the Act, and only a tiny percentage of the First Nations and Inuit children who died during the period concerned. The objective of the descriptive analyses presented by the Direction de soutien aux familles is to describe, but not to explain, the situation; **further research is needed before any possible explanation can be provided.**

In the following pages, the Direction de soutien aux familles sets out the results in a way that **protects the anonymity of the families for whom it is conducting searches.**

Children who died in healthcare institutions

When this report was drafted, 190 of the children for whom a search was conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act had died in a healthcare institution. Since the general trends for these children are the same as those outlined in the previous report, they are simply summarized here.

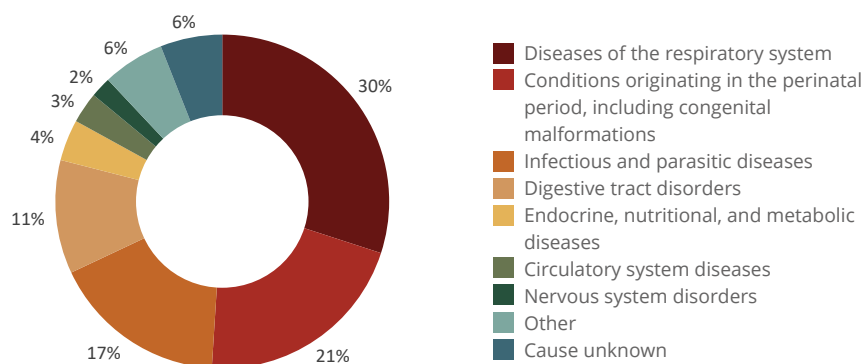
Causes of death

The causes of death of 135 of the 190 children who died in a healthcare institution (71%) have been documented following the searches carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles, which grouped the causes of death based on the main diagnostic categories defined by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (2020). The new medical information gathered over the last year has led to changes in the categories for some causes of death compared to the previous report. The new groupings were validated by a member of the Health and Social Services Support Network.

Figure 8 shows the causes of death for children who died in a healthcare institution. As in previous years, the most frequent causes of death fall into **four main diagnostic categories**, in the following order:

1. Diseases of the respiratory system (30%);
2. Conditions originating in the perinatal period, including congenital malformations (21%);
3. Infectious and parasitic diseases (18%);
4. Digestive tract disorders (11%).

Figure 8: Distribution of deaths by major diagnostic category



The “Other” category includes deaths caused by diseases of the genitourinary system, hematological or immune diseases, tumours, traumatic injuries and other consequences of external causes. The “Unknown” category is for cases in which the medical records and death notices specify “Unknown” as the cause of death.

The current state of knowledge makes it possible to provide more details about the children who died from illnesses in the four most frequent diagnostic categories. The results reflect the same trends as those presented in the two previous annual reports, and are once again summarized here.

For the **40 children with diseases of the respiratory system, the main cause of death was pneumonia (78%)**. In 93% of cases, children with a disease of the respiratory system died before reaching the age of 3.

For the **29 children affected by conditions originating in the perinatal period or with congenital malformations, fetal death (stillbirth) was the main cause of death (52%)**.

For the children born alive, **death resulted from premature birth in 57% of cases and from a congenital malformation in 21% of cases**. Among these children, 29% lived less than 24 hours and 64% less than one week.

For the 23 children who died from infectious and parasitic diseases, the main cause of death was tuberculosis (74%). The other causes of death were septicemia, meningitis and pyoderma. These children died between the ages of 1 month and 20 years.⁴

For the 15 children with a digestive tract disorder, the main cause of death was gastro-enteritis (80%). The other causes of death were celiac disease, hepatitis and intestinal disorders. In 87% of cases, the children died before the age of 2.

4. One child died after reaching adulthood, but had been admitted to an institution before 1992. The date of death and the child's age had not been determined when the search under the Act began.

Medical trajectories

The documents obtained by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act mentioned a place of birth for 102 children who died in a healthcare institution (53% of all such children), an increase of 10% compared to the last report. In the case of six children (6%), 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 state a place of death for 149 children who died in a healthcare institution (78%),** also representing a **10% increase compared to the last report.** For four of these children (3%), the trajectory between the place of residence and the place of death is hard to determine, because the documents gathered so far state two different places of residence or places of death.

The Direction de soutien aux familles is continuing its work 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 under the Act are unequivocal.

Table 2 presents **the medical trajectories of 148 children who died in an institution** (78% of the children concerned by the present descriptive analysis) 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. The research conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles over the last year has shown some **new medical trajectories:**

- La Romaine (Unamen Shipu) – Saint-Augustin;
- Mistissini – Amos;
- Oujé-Bougoumou – Roberval;
- Pakuashipi – Blanc-Sablon – Maliotenam;
- Pikogan – La Sarre;
- Timiskaming – Ville-Marie;
- Waswanipi – Amos;
- Wemotaci – Kahnawake.

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
Kawawachikamach	Québec City	Québec City
Kitcisakik	Not provided	Val-d'Or
Unamen Shipu	La Romaine Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon Saint-Augustin Not provided	Havre-Saint-Pierre Québec
Lac-John	Lac-John	Sept-Îles
Lac-Rapide	Not provided	Noranda
Lac-Simon	Val-d'Or Not provided	Amos Montréal Val-d'Or
Lac-Simon	Val-d'Or Not provided	Amos Montréal Val-d'Or
Manawan	Amos Joliette La Tuque Macamic Manawan Not provided	Amos Joliette La Tuque Manawan Montréal Québec City Not provided
Mistissini	Mistissini Montréal Not provided	Amos La Tuque Montréal Roberval
Nutashkuan	Havre-Saint-Pierre Nutashkuan Not provided	Havre-Saint-Pierre Natashquan Sept-Îles

Place of residence	Place of birth	Place of death
Obedjiwan	Amos	Amos
	Chicoutimi	Drummondville
	"In the woods" ⁵	Joliette
	Joliette	Kahnawake
	La Tuque	La Tuque
	Obedjiwan	Montréal
	Senneterre	Obedjiwan
	Not provided	Oskélanéo
		Québec
	Roberval	
	Senneterre	
Oujé-Bougoumou	Not provided	Roberval
Pakuashipi	Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon	Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon
	Pakuashipi	Uashat Maliotenam
	St. Anthony (Newfoundland)	Saint-Augustin
	Not provided	St. Anthony (Newfoundland)
Pessamit	Baie-Comeau	Baie-Comeau
		Pessamit
Pikogan	Amos	Amos
	La Sarre	La Sarre
	Not provided	La Tuque
		Montréal
		Pikogan
		Villemontel
Rapide-des-Cèdres	Lebel-sur-Quévillon	Amos
		Lebel-sur-Quévillon
Timiskaming	Ville-Marie	Ville-Marie
Uashat Maliotenam	"In the woods" ⁵	Havre-Saint-Pierre
	Sept-Îles	Québec City
	Not provided	Roberval
		Uashat Maliotenam
		Not provided
Waskaganish	Not provided	Amos

5. Literal transcription of the information noted in the death notice.

Place of residence	Place of birth	Place of death
Wemotaci	La Tuque	Kahnawake
	Wemotaci	La Tuque
	Not provided	Roberval
		Wemotaci
Winneway	Ville-Marie	Ville-Marie

Outside Québec

Place of residence	Place of birth	Place of death
Nunavut	Nunavut	Montréal

With the information currently available, **the Direction de soutien aux familles can establish the medical trajectory between the place of residence, the place of birth and the place of death of 92 of the 190 children who died in an institution (48%)**. Over half of these children (55%) were born and died in the same hospital. Two typical trajectories exist with almost equal numbers of children:

- children who never left the hospital (51%) because they were stillborn or died during hospitalization immediately after their birth, between their first and seventh day;
- children who went home but returned to the hospital where they were born days, weeks or years later to receive care, and then died in the hospital (49%).

On the other hand, 45% of the children whose place of residence, birth and death are known died in a hospital other than the one where they were born.

Burial of children

The analysis shows that **information about the burial was obtained for 131 of the 190 children who died in an institution⁶ (69%)**. The exact date **on which 120 children were buried (92%) has been documented**. In the case of 11 other children (8%), the date of burial is unclear (for example, the exact day of burial is not documented), is not stated in the document obtained, or differs depending on the source for the same child. As mentioned previously, this type of confusion between documents hinders the families' quest for truth.

For 130 of the 131 children who died in an institution and for whom burial information was obtained (99%), the town, city or community where they were buried has been documented or deduced.

In one case (1%), the information in the documents is unclear; more search will be needed to precisely identify the place of burial.

In some cases, excerpts from burial or interment registers give the number of the burial plot or communal grave where a child being searched for by the Direction de soutien aux familles is buried. Unfortunately, **the fact that a burial plot or communal grave number has been obtained does not necessarily mean**

6. The calculation method used this year is not the same as the one used last year, which included the children who died in psychiatric institutions.

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 burial plots registered as “temporary graves”, on which the markers are removed after a given period of time.

Using the knowledge currently available, some trajectories between the place of death and place of burial can be outlined. Table 3 correlates the city of death, the city of burial and the place of burial of the children who died in a healthcare institution. The search conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles over the last year has revealed **new trajectories** for deaths that occurred in Amos, La Sarre, La Tuque, Lebel-sur-Quévillon and Wemotaci.

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

Table 3: City or town of death, city or town of burial and place of burial of children who died in an institution

City or town of death	City or town of burial	Place of burial
Amos	Amos	Cimetière d'Amos
	Lebel-sur-Quévillon	Cimetière Saucier-Barrette
Baie-Comeau	Pessamit	Cimetière de Pessamit
Blanc-Sablon	Blanc-Sablon	Cimetière de Blanc-Sablon
Havre-Saint-Pierre	Havre-Saint-Pierre	Cimetière de Havre-Saint-Pierre
	Nutashkuan	Former Innu cemetery of Nutashkuan
Joliette	Joliette	Cimetière Saint-Pierre de Joliette
	Obedjiwan	Cimetière d'Obedjiwan
Kahnawake	Kahnawake	Not provided
La Sarre	La Sarre	Cimetière de La Sarre
La Tuque	La Tuque	Cimetière catholique de La Tuque St. Andrew's Anglican Cemetery in La Tuque
	Manawan	Cimetière de Manawan
Lebel-sur-Quévillon	Rapide-des-Cèdres	Former Indian cemetery in Rapide-des-Cèdres
Manawan	Manawan	"In the woods" ⁷
		Not provided

7. Literal transcription of the information noted in the death notice.

City or town of death	City or town of burial	Place of burial
Montréal	Montréal	Cimetière des Trembles (Hawthorn-Dale) Cimetière Le repos Saint-François d'Assise (de l'Est) Cimetière Mont-Royal
	Saint-Hubert	Cimetière Saint-Vincent de Paul
Natashquan	Nutashkuan	Former Innu cemetery of Nutashkuan
Obedjiwan	Obedjiwan	Cimetière d'Obedjiwan "In the woods" ⁷⁷
Oskélanéo	Obedjiwan	Not provided
Pessamit	Pessamit	Cimetière de Pessamit
Pikogan	Pikogan	"In the woods" ⁷⁷
Québec	Québec City	Cimetière Notre-Dame-de-Belmont Mount Hermon Cemetery Cimetière Saint-Charles
Roberval	Mashteuiatsh	Cimetière catholique de Mashteuiatsh Anglican cemetery in Mashteuiatsh
	Obedjiwan	Cimetière d'Obedjiwan
Rouyn-Noranda	Rouyn-Noranda	Cimetière Notre-Dame de Rouyn-Noranda
Saint-Augustin	Saint-Augustin	Cimetière de Saint-Augustin
Senneterre	Senneterre	Cimetière Saint-Paul de Senneterre
Sept-Îles	Maliotenam	Cimetière de Maliotenam
	Nutashkuan	Former Innu cemetery of Nutashkuan
	Sept-Îles	Lauredale Protestant Cemetery in Sept-Îles
Uashat	Uashat	Not provided
Val-d'Or	Lac-Simon	Cimetière de Lac-Simon
	Kitcisakik	Not provided
Villemontel	Amos	Cimetière d'Amos
Wemotaci	Wemotaci	Not provided

The information collated highlights the following facts:

- **71% of the children**, in other words a large majority, **were buried in the town or city where they died**;
- **10% of the children were taken back to their community of origin** after their death in another town or city, to be buried;
- **7% 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;
- **5% of the children died and were buried in their community**, either in the parish cemetery or “in the woods”;
- **4% of the children were buried in a town or city other than the place where they died**, but not in their community of origin.

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

Searches are ongoing for the 11 children whose death occurred after they were transferred to an institution specializing in long-term care and intellectual disabilities. Since the results for these children were set out in the previous annual report (2024-2025) and no new information has come to light, their situation is not covered here but will continue to be monitored in coming years.

Research on abortions and stillbirths

The previous report mentioned the searches conducted for three families that want to shed light on the circumstances leading up to what they have identified as miscarriages or abortions. These searches have continued.

Compilation of data on births, deaths and causes of death

The project to compile data on births, deaths and causes of death mentioned in the previous annual report has continued. It has been structured around three themes in order to release the results more quickly.

The first theme concerns the **compilation of data on births, deaths and causes of death for the whole of Québec during the period 1930 to 1980** inclusively. The compilation is scheduled for publication by the Direction de soutien aux familles during 2026. It will be used both by the Direction de soutien aux familles for supporting families, and also by members of the Health and Social Services Support Network when meeting with families to explain the medical information found. The publication will also be made available to organizations, researchers and the general public.

With the same objectives, the second theme targets a **compilation of data on births, deaths and causes of death specifically concerning the First Nations in Québec**. Currently, only data for the period 1930-1951 from Statistics Canada have been compiled. Although the first research option was expected to lead to the signing of an agreement on disclosure by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux to set the parameters for data access, the preliminary research conducted over the last year in the BANQ archive has led to the retrieval of some of the target data. The Direction de soutien aux familles will continue its research at BANQ and compile the data after 1951 during the 2026-2027 year.

The third theme concerns the **history of data collection on births, deaths and causes of death in Québec**. This history was initially intended to establish and understand the limits of the data used by the Direction de soutien aux familles in its compilations. However, it has also made it possible to gather knowledge on the initial context in which the documents obtained under the Act were produced. The first version of this research document has been revised by specialists at the Institut de la statistique du Québec, Statistics Canada and BANQ. It is expected to be published in the coming year. Its contents on the history of the registration of civil status events and on the collection of demographic statistics in Québec could prove of interest not only for the Direction de soutien aux familles and its partners, but also for a broader readership, less familiar with the Act and its implementation.

The cemetery in La Tuque

To help families understand the circumstances surrounding the burial in the cemetery at La Tuque of children for whom a search is being conducted under the Act, given that the exact location of the grave is often impossible to determine, the Direction de soutien aux familles began an extensive research project about the cemetery and its history in 2024-2025. The goal of the project is to document, for the period 1930-1980, the management process for the cemetery, the links between the former Saint-Joseph hospital in La Tuque and the cemetery, and the burial practices for children in La Tuque depending on the context in which they died. The project is currently under way and the results will be presented to the families concerned.

The research undertaken over the last year has involved documenting the legislative framework that historically governed cemeteries in the province. The role of the state, based on an examination of around a dozen statutes, and the role of the church, influenced by changes to canon law⁸ and diocesan directives, have been

8. Canon law is the set of laws and regulations that govern the Catholic Church.

established. The general context for the operation of cemeteries is now better defined, and research over the coming year will focus more specifically on the cemetery in La Tuque.

Overview of genealogical databases

Over the last year, and to meet the needs of the searches requested by families, the Direction de soutien aux familles has assessed the potential contribution of various genealogy databases to its mandate. More specifically, it has tested and analyzed:

- the consolidated index of deaths in Québec, 1926-1997;
- the Fonds Drouin;
- the Groupe BMS2000 database;
- the FamilySearch database;
- the Généalogie Québec database.

Based on its analysis, and considering the scope, imprecision and occasional contradictions in the databases, the Direction de soutien aux familles has ruled that the use of genealogical databases should not be a systematic feature of the search process, but rather based on the needs and questions of each family. For example, starting a few months ago the databases have been used to add new impetus to searches that have reached a dead end.

Work with health and social services institutions

After this review of the various research approaches and the medical trajectories of the children for whom searches are conducted under the Act, it is important to mention that the assistance provided by institutions in Québec's health and social services network has, as in previous years, been essential to the work conducted by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act.

Searches for user records

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, 2026, 470 requests for access to user records had been submitted to the network for all the active searches since 2021, including over one hundred in the last year alone (Table 4).

Table 4: Institutions targeted by requests for access as part of search carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles

Institutions or other care and social service centers	Number of requests
CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue	87
CIUSSS de la Mauricie-et-du-Centre-du-Québec	72
CISSS de la Côte-Nord	42
CIUSSS du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	40
CISSS de Lanaudière	34
CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale	30
CHU de Québec-Université Laval	23
Centre de santé d'Opitciwan	19
Immigration Hospital	14
Montreal Children's Hospital	14
Sanatorium de Roberval	14
CHU Sainte-Justine	13
Institut universitaire de cardiologie et de pneumologie de Québec-Université Laval	8
Sanatorium de Macamic	8
Centre de santé Masko-Siwin Manawan	7
CRSSS de la Baie-James	5
CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest	4
Kateri Memorial Hospital Centre	4
CIUSSS de l'Estrie-CHUS	3
Cecil Butters Memorial Hospital	2
Centre de santé de Pessamit	2
McGill University Health Centre	2
Charles S. Curtis Memorial Hospital (Newfoundland and Labrador)	2
CISSS de la Gaspésie	2
CISSS des Laurentides	2
Crèche de Québec	2
Dispensaire Matimekush	2
Ancien Hôpital Notre-Dame-des-Anges de Montréal	1
Centre de santé de Pakua Shipi	1
Centre de santé Mino Tehewin	1
Centre de santé Wemotaci	1
Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal	1
CISSS de Chaudière-Appalaches	1
CISSS du Bas-Saint-Laurent	1
CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal	1
CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal	1
Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay	1

Institutions or other care and social service centers	Number of requests
Crèche d'Youville (Montréal)	1
Crèche Gamelin (Trois-Rivières)	1
Sanatorium de Mont-Joli	1

To date, these requests have located medical documents (in addition to death notices, which often mention the medical cause of death) for 96 of the children for whom a search has been conducted.

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.

It is important to mention again, this year, that 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, several of which have closed, were not always transferred to provincial institutions and, if the archives still exist, they may be outside the health and social services network. This is the situation for the medical archives from the Immigration Hospital in Québec City (Capitale-Nationale), for which several search requests have been submitted to Library and Archives Canada since 2023. The requests have yielded over 1,500 pages of documentation. Unfortunately, no medical records have been retrieved to date, although the archives sometimes contain death records mentioning a medical cause of death.

In addition to medical records, **115 death notices** (SP-3 forms) have been made available to families as a result of searches carried out with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux 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 notices

Death notices, 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 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. Since work began under the Act, this possibility has been discussed with the families early on in the process, to establish the various possible outcomes and assure them that all possible steps will be taken, whatever the results of the search for documents.

Searches in institutions’ administrative archives

The past year has seen a steady stream of requests made to institutions’ administrative archives. While the previous report mentioned 17 such requests since the Act came into force, six additional requests were submitted to the administrative archives by the Direction de soutien aux familles made between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026, taking the total number of requests to 23. 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.

The requests are mainly intended to document certain practices that were in force during the periods concerned by the search process, 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.

Testimony of the team responsible for access to documents at the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de Lanaudière, following its involvement 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

2025 was the year in which our institution received and then processed its first request for information 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*, passed in 2021.

It led to fruitful cooperation between the teams at the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISS) de Lanaudière and the Direction de soutien aux familles. Above all, it was and continues to represent an opportunity for warm and frank discussions between Françoise Ruperthouse from Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière, the family it is assisting, and the persons who worked on the request in recent months. The discussions not only added true meaning to the actions taken and helped us perform them mindfully; they also reflected the collaboration and co-construction that are part of the approach promoted by the Indigenous nations and community in the Lanaudière region and our institution.

On a more human and personal level, it was a privilege for our team members to be involved in the search for information to help families achieve a degree of serenity. They felt personally involved in the request,

even if it led them into uncharted waters. It is impossible not to be affected by the loss or disappearance of a child who could not even be hugged before leaving. This is the spirit that guided our work with the Direction de soutien aux familles which, throughout the process, provided invaluable assistance.

M^{me} Marie-Andrée Bolduc

Senior Adviser on the Protection of Personal Information
CISSS de Lanaudière

Mtre. Jean-Philippe Gauthier

Assistant to the Executive Director, Legal and Institutional Affairs,
Coordinator for the Protection of Personal Information
CISSS de Lanaudière

Ongoing collaboration

Over the past year, collaboration with institutions has continued under the Act as requests have been submitted and searches conducted. On October 21, 2025, 76 staff members of the 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. Since the coming into force of the Act, this essential collaboration with institutions in the health and social services network has helped increase the 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 between families and the health and social services network and it also, at later stages in the search, allows other partners (the members of the Health and Social Services Support Network) to contribute to the families' quest for truth.

Deploying the Health and Social Services Support Network

To ensure that families have the fullest and clearest possible understanding of the medical information and documents found in the course of a 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 the Network help present and explain the medical information and documents obtained in the search 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, while others have worked for several years with the First Nations and the Inuit.

In all, two meetings of the Health and Social Services Support Network were held between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026. At the first meeting, on **June 4, 2025**, an instructor from UQAT gave a presentation

on the context for providing support for families based on the cultures, beliefs and spiritual approaches of First Nations communities in Québec.

The second meeting of the Network's members took place on **February 4, 2026**, when an instructor from UQAT presented the mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission of trauma and methods for taking them into account when providing families with support.

To maximize the effectiveness of the discussions and ensure the highest possible participation rate in the Network's meetings, the Direction de soutien aux familles chose, this year, to concentrate discussions at two annual meetings. Given the busy schedules of the Network's members, this approach will ensure more meaningful discussions and maximize the value of each meeting.

Testimony of Dr. Lucie Nadeau

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 has helped open up space for the recognition and healing of the families involved.

Membership in the Health and Social Services Support Network under the Act is, first and foremost, an honour: the honour of acting as an ally of the families engaged in a quest for truth, at the heart of such a painful episode in their family history. It is essential for this support to be based on a moral standpoint that recognizes how a system bearing the colonial stamp failed these children and families, separated children from their families and left their relatives without news for so long.

To heal, the families need to understand what happened to their children, in order to give meaning to the events. It is the goal of the support services provided under the Act to play a role in the healing process by attempting, as far as possible, to translate what we know about the children's time in the hospital system based on the archival documents, and to allow the families to take ownership of the story. However, the story is often hard to put together: the documents often relate only some of the facts, and leave grey zones and information gaps.

The role of an ally includes a great responsibility: to demonstrate enough empathy, know-how, humility and sensitivity to transmit what we understand from the information available while at the same time remaining responsive to the questions and emotions that emerge among the family members as the story is pieced together. There may be distress, anger—legitimate emotions when faced with colonialism—in addition to the sorrow that underlies the complex feelings of grief and intergenerational traumas. Each family member experiences the process separately, and it is a process that cannot be completed in a hurry. Time is needed for the information to sink in.

Families are not a passive player in the story: they play an active role in understanding what happened as the family members recall the circumstances and as their words shed light on what they experienced. They are also able to judge what may have happened based on their knowledge of the realities of the period within their community.

Working alongside these families is a privilege, and witnessing their strength is a source of inspiration.

Dr. Lucie Nadeau

MD, MSc, Pediatric Psychiatrist, McGill University
Member of the Health and Social Services Support Network

Meetings with families

Between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026, 24 meetings were held between doctors and families to help interpret medical documents. The meetings were held in person, via videolink, or as a mixture of both. Each time, the partner doctor, the Direction de soutien aux familles and one or more members of Awacak were present with the family. Seven doctors of the Network were involved in the meetings.

All the Network members, who play a key role with the families, make sure that they offer an individualized approach. Once again this year, several families asked to meet with the Network doctor a second time 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 implementation of the Act and, at each of its meetings, 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 on the implementation of the Act.

The committee met four times between March 1, 2025 and February 28, 2026, on May 8, September 16 and December 2, 2024, and January 20, 2025.

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 5 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 5: 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
Ministère du Conseil exécutif Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit Direction de soutien aux familles	Coordination of the Interdepartmental Committee.	Implementation of the Act.
Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux Direction des relations et des partenariats avec les Premières Nations et Inuit Direction de la gouvernance et des affaires institutionnelles Direction de l'accès à l'information et de la propriété intellectuelle Other divisions as needed	Collaboration in following up on searches.	Implementation of the process for accessing death notices. Targeted collaboration for specific needs (documentation, access to documents, presentation of targeted sectoral issues, etc.).
Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec Direction générale de l'évolution des services à la clientèle, des ententes et des partenariats Direction des services juridiques	Collaboration in following up on searches.	Collaboration on targeted search projects.
Ministère de la Justice Direction du soutien aux partenariats et aux programmes Other divisions as needed	Collaboration in following up on searches.	Collaboration on targeted search projects.
Bureau du coroner	Collaboration in following up on searches.	Collaboration on work connected with disinterment and the identification of deceased persons. Collaboration on targeted search projects.
Ministère de la Sécurité publique Direction des affaires policières autochtones	Collaboration in following up on searches.	Collaboration on work connected with disinterment. Collaboration on targeted search projects.

Government department or body	Type of collaboration	Specific work completed or in progress
<p>Directeur de l'état civil du ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale</p> <p>Direction des échanges gouvernementaux et de l'évolution de l'offre de services</p> <p>Direction de l'expertise et des activités juridictionnelles</p>	<p>Collaboration in following up on searches.</p>	<p>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>).</p> <p>Collaboration on targeted search projects.</p>
<p>Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale</p> <p>Direction des relations intergouvernementales et des mandats spéciaux</p>	<p>Collaboration in following up on searches.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>Ministère de la Culture et des Communications</p> <p>Direction générale des politiques, du numérique, des communications et de l'international</p> <p>Direction générale du patrimoine</p>	<p>Collaboration in following up on searches.</p>	<p>Collaboration on targeted search projects.</p>
<p>Ministère de l'Éducation</p> <p>Direction des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit et de la nordicité</p>	<p>Monitoring of the application of the Act.</p>	<p>Collaboration on targeted search projects.</p>
<p>Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur</p> <p>Direction des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit</p> <p>Direction générale de l'accessibilité et de la réussite</p> <p>Secteur de l'accessibilité, de la réussite et de l'expérience étudiante</p>	<p>Monitoring of the application of the Act.</p>	<p>-</p>

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	Requests for review as part of the Commission's jurisdictional activities.	Mediation meetings between families and public bodies in the context of reviews, when requested by the parties.
Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale	Collaboration in following up on searches.	Collaboration on work connected with disinterment and the identification of deceased persons. Collaboration on targeted search projects.
Sûreté du Québec Service de l'accès et de la protection de l'information	Collaboration in following up on searches.	Collaboration on targeted search projects.
Ministère du Conseil exécutif Secrétariat à la réforme des institutions démocratiques, à l'accès à l'information et à la laïcité	Support and consultation.	Support and consulting services provided to the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning access to information processes, 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 concerning media relations and the implementation of the communications plan 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	Handling of complaints.	To preserve the independence of the complaints process, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit 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 Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, has made it possible for the Direction de soutien aux familles to file 277 requests for attestations with the **Directeur de l'état civil** since September 2021 in connection with its searches. As of February 28, 2026, 185 attestations have been issued to families. The positive response rate is almost 67%, a slight drop (one percentage point) compared to 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. It is also important to note that several requests were still being processed at the time of writing.

Testimony of Jonathan Boisvert, Directeur de l'état civil

The passage 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* was a turning-point in the process to recognize the suffering experienced by Indigenous families. The actions taken will, at last, allow the families to find the truth about the fate of the loved ones who disappeared, and perhaps even achieve a degree of healing.

The Direction du soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, with the collaboration of various government departments and bodies, is fully committed to its mission, as demonstrated in this report. It accomplishes, through the support it provides, a colossal technical and human feat by implementing the measures prescribed by the Act. The benefits for the grieving families are tangible, as shown by the testimonies. There is no denying that the steps taken so far have borne fruit.

The Directeur de l'état civil, as a public officer and because of the mission entrusted to him by the legislator, is responsible for keeping and ensuring the integrity of Québec's register of civil status, but also for publishing the information it contains. To this end, his significant collaboration in the implementation of the Act through issuing attestations of death is upstream of the process to find answers. Ultimately, this will provide insight to the families concerned, in particular so that they can know the place where their children are buried and commemorate them there.

The Directeur de l'état civil is fully aware of the importance of the passage of the *Act to authorize the communication of personal information to the families of Indigenous children who went missing or died after*



Civil status "vaults" in Montréal (Montréal, December 2025).

being admitted to an institution, from a historical perspective and also in terms of its impact on First Nations and Inuit families.

This is why it has been proud to play a role and make a contribution from the outset, year after year, by responding to the requests made by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

The process benefits a growing number of Indigenous families left in doubt and afflicted by the lack of answers for several decades.

Jonathan Boisvert
Directeur de l'état civil

Collaboration with the **Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux** has enabled the Direction de soutien aux familles to forward, as of February 28, 2026, 115 death notices to the families to whom it is providing support, resulting from 186 requests made as part of its searches since the Act came into force. This takes the positive response rate to almost 62%, a slight increase (almost 3 percentage points) compared to the 2024-2025 report.

Disinterment, identification and reinterment of children: significant stages for families

Families' disinterment 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: disinterment to **identify** children, and disinterment to **return** children to their communities for **reinterment**.

In connection with disinterments, Awacac offers member families a legal support service to prepare disinterment applications to the Superior Court of Québec, 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, in turn, ensures that all the documents needed to prepare the disinterment authorization requests have been submitted, coordinates all the partners, and makes the contacts needed to perform the disinterments.

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 reinterment of children.

As of February 28, 2026, **a total of four disinterments have been carried out** as part of a search under the Act. All the disinterments 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 Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit in October 2023 in response to families' needs in the area of disinterment and identification.

Follow-up on the first three disinterments

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 disinterments, carried out between August 30 and September 1, 2023. The disinterments were followed in the subsequent weeks by identification procedures by the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale 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.

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.

A third disinterment took place on September 20, 2024. Last year's report outlined the highlights and carried the voices of the family and the various persons and organizations present. The third disinterment relied on a strong partnership between the Direction de soutien aux familles, the gouvernement du Québec 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. It was carried out by the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale, and coordinated by the Bureau du coroner, under the watchful gaze of around twenty family members and relatives. The child was reburied in her home community on September 30, 2024, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, in an emotional ceremony.

The fourth disinterment

The fourth disinterment was requested by an Attikamek family from Manawan, assisted in its search by the Direction de soutien aux familles since May 2022. The members of the family began by conducting their own search before the passage of the Act. They already knew the place of burial of their brother and uncle, a young boy who was transferred to a hospital in Québec City to receive care around the age of 7 months. The child died a few weeks later, at the age of 8 months, and was buried in the Cimetière Saint-Charles in Québec City.

The disinterment resulted from a strong partnership between the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Bureau du coroner, which coordinated the disinterment, the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale, which carried out the disinterment, and the funeral director selected by the family, Les résidences funéraires familiales F. Thériault inc. The preparatory phases involved regular meetings with the family during the summer and fall of 2025. Some of the meetings provided an opportunity for the family members to meet representatives from the Bureau du coroner, the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale and the funeral company, and to ask any questions they might have.

The disinterment took place from October 14 to 19, 2025 at the Cimetière Saint-Charles, in the presence of several family and community members, elders and people providing emotional support, along with representatives from Awacak, the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Bureau du coroner, the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale and the funeral director. During these long

days marked by cold weather, the family members displayed an exceptional degree of patience, strength and resilience.

The way in which the disinterment was prepared and carried out were influenced by the specific nature of the child's burial, in a communal grave at the cemetery with other deceased. Although the plot was clearly identified, the configuration was complex, explaining in particular why it took six days to complete the disinterment. The families of the other people buried on the same plot had been contacted and informed ahead of time about the disinterment, to ensure respect for the dignity of the adjacent graves. Some of these families, who were First Nations members, learned at this time from the Awacak lawyer representing the family before the court that one of their own family members was buried at the Cimetière Saint-Charles. This created a wave of emotion and led to more requests for searches to the Direction de soutien aux familles.

As in the previous disinterments, the work involved regular reports from the Bureau du coroner and the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale to the family members. Songs, prayers and moments of reflection set the pace for each day in the tent set up close to the site of the disinterment so that the families could rest.

During the week, documentary film crews came to the site. Their presence was not part of the program, and had to be approved by the family. It led to various questions, which the partners involved are currently reviewing. Last, with the family's approval, the MNA for Vanier - Les Rivières asked to meet with the family on site.

At the end of a gruelling week, the tiny human remains disinterred were greeted by the family and the other people present with emotion during a ceremony in the rest tent, before being transferred to Montréal for the beginning of the expert identification work. The analysis is under way, and the results will be disclosed to the family once it has been completed.

Testimony of Manon Ottawa and her family concerning the disinterment completed from October 14 to 19, 2025 at the Cimetière Saint-Charles (Québec City)



Objects commemorating Bébé Maxime, at the disinterment performed at Cimetière Saint-Charles in Québec City (Québec City, October 2025).

In 2024, I told my mother and my aunts that I planned to go and pay my respects on the grave of Bébé Maxime at Cimetière Saint-Charles in Québec City. They wanted to come with me, because since I started my search, they have always provided encouragement and supported me in my quest for the truth. So, with help from the Direction de soutien aux familles and the Awacak association, I organized our pilgrimage to the grave of Bébé Maxime.

In October 2024, we at last arrived at the Cimetière Saint-Charles in Québec City: me, my mother, my aunt and my cousin, to pay our respects at the grave of my young uncle. At that moment, I made a promise to Bébé Maxime to come again to take him back home to be with his mother, father, brothers and sisters.

In 2025, once again with help from the Awacak association, the Direction de soutien aux familles and our lawyers, Olivia Malenfant and M'Mah Nora Touré, we began the process to file an application for disinterment with the Superior Court. We were extremely pleased when the Court authorized us to proceed with the disinterment of Bébé Maxime.

The excavation began in October 2025 and, as of today, we are still waiting for the results of the identification of the remains of Bébé Maxime.

After a search lasting 12 years, I am committed to bringing Bébé Maxime home at last in the early spring of 2026.

Manon Ottawa
Niece of Bébé Maxime
And her family

Testimony of Mtre. Géhane Kamel, Associate Chief Coroner

For several years, we have been walking alongside the family support team at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit.



This collaboration extends far beyond the administrative framework: it has led to the creation of strong, but almost invisible ties between the government departments concerned and the Bureau du coroner, based on trust, openness and humanity.

Thanks to this relationship, we have been able to support families during disinterments, discreetly, with extreme delicacy. In these moments where time seemed suspended, both pain and resilience were present, and the families displayed overwhelming strength.



The past, with its load of injuries, can only open up to the future if we agree to seek the truth slowly, at the pace set by the families, and show deep respect for rites, customs and memory.

Each time, I am struck by the same image: an extended arm bears a spark. A fragile, but necessary light, offered with dignity.

Facilities installed at Cimetière Saint-Charles in Québec City for the fourth disinterment (Québec City, October 2025).

My special thanks go to Florence and Julie. Through their presence and commitment, the light they bear is illuminating a little more of the path ahead.

Mtre. Géhane Kamel
Associate Chief Coroner
Bureau du coroner

Testimony of Suzanne Marchand, Principal Executive Director of the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale

In recent years, the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale has participated in several disinterments, which require a rigorous, respectful and collaborative approach and close cooperation with our partners, in particular the Bureau du coroner and the Direction du soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit.

The process bears the weight of truth and the families' profound hope that they will find an answer. Our specialists are proud to take part in the process and we are honoured that our scientific expertise can help re-establish the truth and bring some peace to the families.

We reaffirm our undertaking to continue this work in the years to come, guided by respect, humanity and goodwill towards the people we assist.

Suzanne Marchand

Principal Executive Director

Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale

Current requests and preparatory steps

Three other families have begun the process with lawyers at Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles to request the disinterment of their child. Several other families have, in recent years, made known their intention to begin the process if the right conditions exist when their search has been completed.

Among the **major preparatory steps** taken in the past year, it is important to note the completion of a study of archaeological potential by an archaeology firm on a site outside the cemetery of a municipality. The conclusions of the study, forwarded to the family, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak in March 2025, led to an exploration of the site using sniffer dogs in May, and then to a survey using ground-penetrating radar in August 2025. The report based on a cross-matching of the results from the surveys was filed in February 2026. The specific configuration of the site made it necessary to use specialized external experts to refine, as far as possible, the location of any future excavations before filing an application with the Superior Court. All of these preliminary steps were funded by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit. The Bureau du coroner and the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale were kept informed, on an ongoing basis and with the family's approval, of the progress made at each stage to ensure that they can effectively take responsibility if the Superior Court authorizes disinterment in the future. This case demonstrates the uniqueness of each approach, the strength of partnerships and the central importance of preparatory searches before an application for disinterment is filed.

This case was also a reminder of the complexity of the parameters that must be taken into account when preparing an application for disinterment for submission to the Court, since the application requires sufficient information about the identity of the person being disinterred, as well as their place of burial. The Direction de soutien aux familles and its partners—including the Bureau du coroner and the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale—consistently inform families of the **limitations inherent in disinterment**

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

Last, it is important to mention that while many families have expressed a wish to request the disinterment of their child, others this year have opted not to pursue the process and to look at the possibility of a commemoration ceremony.

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.

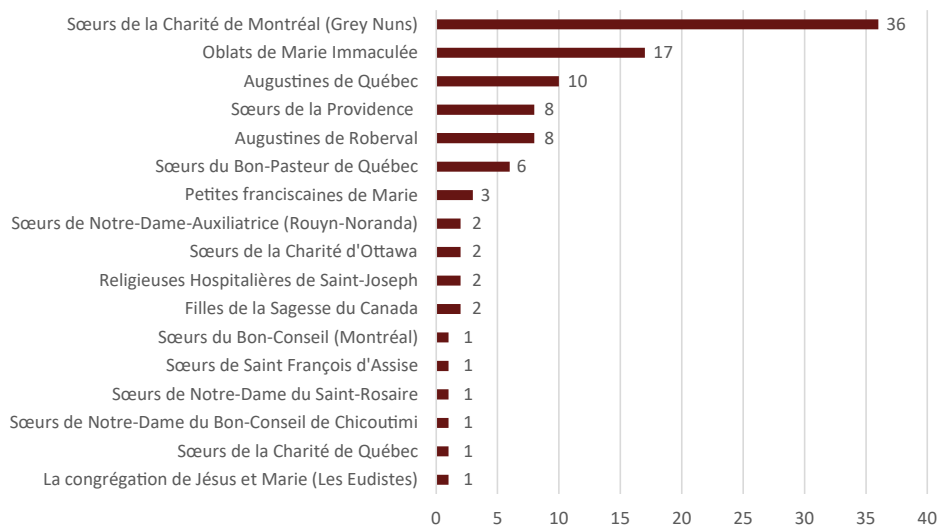
Work with religious congregations, parishes and cemeteries

Religious congregations

Over the past year, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued its search with the religious congregations responsible for certain health or social service institutions during the years when children died or disappeared. As of February 28, 2026, the Direction de soutien aux familles had sent a total of 102 requests to religious congregations under the Act.

Figure 9 shows the main congregations involved in search carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act.

Figure 9: Main religious congregations involved in search carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles



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 Montréal 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 Innu 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. An agreement between the congregation, the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak was signed for that purpose in December 2025, and the photographs were then transferred to Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles.

Testimony of Mylène Laurendeau concerning the agreement signed with Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles in 2025

The Grey Nuns of Montréal are pleased to work with the Direction de soutien aux familles at the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit.

This year, the congregation made a major donation of digitized photographs to Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles, to help with the families’ search process.

The signing of the donation agreement gives concrete expression the partnership.

Mylène Laurendeau
 Director, Archives and Collections Division
 Grey Nuns of Montréal

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 334 requests have been submitted by the Direction de soutien aux familles since the Act came into force to provide families with information about their children’s burial site. This represents an increase of almost 20% since the last report, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Main cemeteries involved in search carried out by the Direction de soutien aux familles

Cemeteries	Number of requests
Cimetière d’Amos	46
Cimetière catholique de La Tuque	45
Cimetière catholique de Mashteuiatsh	21
Cimetière d’Obedjiwan	19
Cimetière de Blanc-Sablon	13
Cimetière Saint-Charles (Québec City)	12
Cimetière de Roberval	11
Cimetière de Havre-St-Pierre	10

Cemeteries	Number of requests
Cimetière St-Pierre (Joliette)	9
Cimetière de Sept-Îles	8
Cimetière de Maliotenam	7
Cimetière Saint-Louis (Senneterre)	7
Cimetière Saint-Paul (Senneterre)	7
Cimetière de Pessamit	6
Cimetière du Repos Saint-François d'Assise (Montréal)	6
Cimetière de Manawan	5
Cimetière de Natashquan	5
Cimetière Mount Hermon (Québec City)	5
Cimetière anglican de Mashteuatsh	4
Cimetière de Saint-Hubert (Longueuil)	4
Cimetière de Ville-Marie	4
Cimetière des Trembles (Montréal)	4
Cimetière innu de Nutashkuan	4
Cimetière Notre-Dame-de-Pierreville (Pierreville)	4
Cimetière Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (Laval)	4
Cimetière de La Sarre	3
Cimetière protestant Lauredale (Sept-Îles)	3
Cimetière protestant d'Arvida (Saguenay)	2
Cimetière anglican St. Andrew's (La Tuque)	2
Cimetière catholique de Saint-Jérôme	2
Cimetière de Lac-Édouard	2
Cimetière de Lac-Simon	2
Cimetière de Uashat	2
Cimetière de Rouyn-Noranda	2
Cimetière de Winneway	2
Cimetière du Vieux-Fort (Duhamel-Ouest)	2
Cimetière East Bolton (Austin)	2
Cimetière protestant de Grande-Baie	2
Cimetière protestant de Kénogami	2
Cimetière protestant de l'Isle-Maligne (Alma)	2
Cimetière de Saint-Dominique-du-Rosaire	2
Cimetière Veakateri (Kahnawake)	2
Cimetière Christ-Roi (Châteauguay)	1
Cimetière de Baie-Saint-Paul	1
Cimetière de Belcourt	1
Cimetière de Belleterre	1
Cimetière Pine Hill (Kanesatake)	1

Cemeteries	Number of requests
Cimetière de Kitcisakik (Grand-Lac-Victoria)	1
Cimetière de La Romaine	1
Cimetière de Laval	1
Cimetière de Lebel-sur-Quévillon	1
Cimetière de Macamic	1
Cimetière de Pikogan	1
Cimetière de Saint-Augustin	1
Cimetière de Saint-Félicien	1
Cimetière de Villebois	1
Cimetière de Villemontel	1
Cimetière des Petites Franciscaines de Marie (Baie-Saint-Paul)	1
Cimetière Mont-Royal (Montréal)	1
Cimetière Notre-Dame-de-Belmont (Québec City)	1
Cimetière Pine Hill (Magog)	1
Cimetière Saint-Joachim (Châteauguay)	1
Cimetière Saint-Patrice (Magog)	1
Cimetière Saints-Anges (Lachine)	1
Cimetière Shaar Hashomayim (Montréal)	1
Cimetière Shaerith Israel (Montréal)	1
Cimetière St-Alphonse (Thetford Mines)	1
Cimetière St-Jacques-Le-Majeur (Barraute)	1
Cimetière St-Marc-de-Figuery	1
Cimetière protestant de Kahnawake	1

The table 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 the place of burial for 131 of the 221 children for whom a search is currently being conducted. 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 the search.

Testimony of Harvey Burke, person responsible for the cemetery in Blanc-Sablon

As a father and the grandfather of several young children, I cannot imagine the pain felt by the families that lost a child, and I sympathize with them.

I will do everything possible to help the families find answers to their questions about their children's funerals and graves.

Harvey Burke

Parish of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes de Blanc-Sablon

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 Québec City, Montréal, 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 creates major obstacles: any requests for disinterment from families whose children are buried in these plots will be complex and, in some cases, impossible.

To understand more about burial methods and answer the sometimes painful questions from families, the 2024-2025 annual report summarized the difficulties connected to some cemeteries where burials took place: the complexity of searches on sites identified as “temporary graves”, the lack of markers on the ground, or the fact that they have been moved, the lack of plans locating burial plots or their outdated nature, the loss or inaccuracy of information, the difficulty of documenting historical practices to shed light on changes to each site, and so on. Over the past year, the Direction de soutien aux familles has continued its documentary work to improve its understanding of the issues. Once again this year, it thanks the cemetery staff members and volunteers for their assistance. Thanks to their memory and contribution, the circumstances surrounding the deaths of several children have become clearer.

Research in provincial archives

The first collaboration agreement was signed by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit and BANQ in November 2023. The agreement, which came in the wake of the appointment of a resource person to coordinate work at BANQ, ended as planned in early 2025. It led, among other things, to a comprehensive documentation of coroners' records, several training meetings provided by BANQ to help the Direction de soutien aux familles master the various databases used in the provincial archives, and productive discussions with various religious institutions.

Based on this previous collaboration, a new agreement was signed in January 2026 by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit and BANQ. The purpose of the agreement was to consolidate the partnerships and knowledge that resulted from the first agreement and to continue its deployment. The implementation of the new agreement on collaboration will be presented in the next annual report.

Children who went missing from residential schools

Among the children searched for by the Direction de soutien aux familles under the Act are four children who died in a health and social services institution while attending residential schools. 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. This will facilitate their families' quest for truth.

With this in mind, the Direction de soutien aux familles has extended this approach over the past year, participating in the work of the intergovernmental monitoring committee on residential schools and monitoring the work of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites.

In the coming years, the Direction de soutien aux familles will continue to collaborate with the federal authorities, and in particular Library and Archives Canada, Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, to ensure that searches are as complete and relevant as possible in order to answer families' questions.

Placements and adoptions

The Direction de soutien aux familles has continued to support eight families who have requested searches concerning the placement or adoption of a child.

In addition to these cases where placements or adoptions were subject to formal arrangements, some searches conducted at the request of families have shown that children were placed, during their hospitalization, in temporary foster homes, a form of placement that has not been extensively documented. According to the information gathered over time by the Direction de soutien aux familles, the duration and conditions of these temporary placements during hospitalization varied. In this report, they are not counted in the number of searches involving formal adoption or placement, since their goal, once again based on the data currently available, appears to have been a temporary one related to care. The information is hard for the families to accept, since most often they were not aware that their child had been placed in other settings, homes or institutions. Given the fact that this type of placement is recurrent in the search results, the Direction de soutien aux familles plans to broaden its understanding of the situation in the coming years.

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

To strengthen its historic and contemporary understanding of adoptions and placements in Québec, the Direction de soutien aux familles has, over the past year, contacted the teams at the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux to present its questions and the challenges raised in searches under the Act. Three working meetings were organized.

The first meeting took place on March 24, 2025, bringing together the team from the Direction de soutien aux familles and representatives from the divisions of the department responsible for matters pertaining to adoption and placement. The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux presented a brief historical

overview of practices and Québec legislation in this field, and the Direction de soutien aux familles asked a number of questions. After this opening discussion, it was agreed to organize two further meetings, based on studies of actual, anonymized cases, to define the search options that were best adapted to families' needs. The first meeting, covering cases of placement, took place on June 5, 2025, followed by a second meeting, on cases of adoption, on September 4, 2025. In addition to enriching the understanding of the team at the Direction de soutien aux familles concerning ways to access the documents covering adoption and placements in Québec, this joint work helped consolidate the partnership and ensure the transfer of the expertise needed for searches under the Act.

Requests for review to the Commission d'accès à l'information

As of February 28, 2026, one request for review was still active at the Commission d'accès à l'information during the period covered by this report. The review is being processed.

Investigations under the Act

As of February 28, 2026, 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, body or religious congregation, file a complaint under section 19 of the Act. To provide for this obligation, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit 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 \(Québec.ca\)](#).

In spring 2022, the complaints procedure was also made available online, along with an electronic form for filing a complaint: [Complaint form, support for the families of missing or dead Indigenous children \(Québec.ca\)](#).

Under the established procedure, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit 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, organization 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, 2026, 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 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 thirteen recommendations:

- four 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;
- two are under the main responsibility of Awacak;
- three require action by the members of the Monitoring Committee;
- the recommendation made in 2024-2025 is being assessed by the Monitoring Committee with regard to its implementation.

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, over 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 pages below contain a qualitative summary of the progress made on implementation as of February 28, 2026.

YEAR 2021-2022 (3 recommendations)

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 search 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>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since summer 2022, 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 implement a protocol for the filing, retention and archiving of information and documents collected as part of searches 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. • In parallel with this work, the Direction de soutien aux familles has secured the whole of its computerized data classification network to limit access to essential workers only. • Various secure transfer methods have been introduced for documents of a medical nature.
	<p>Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awacak has completed the process for giving each member of the organization a secure email address for transfers of documents. • Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière is continuing its review of ways to acquire a system for archiving information that complies with the rules on confidentiality.

Recommendation	Body or bodies responsible	Progress made	Follow-up
<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 and Professor Suzy Basile (Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue), with the aim of “developing, in collaboration with the 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 UQAT from families who have already signed Awacak’s new consent form began in fall 2023 and will continue as when more families give consent. • The Direction de soutien aux familles has introduced relevant archiving rules. When a search file is closed, it ensures that families are informed of the rules and the conditions for the retention of their documents.
<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>	<p>Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<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 UQAT. This includes aspects related to data retention and archiving with Professor Suzy Basile’s team. • Awacak has continued the process to transfer, to UQAT, the documents obtained during searches by the Direction de soutien aux familles.

YEAR 2022-2023 (2 recommendations)

Recommendation	Body or bodies responsible	Progress made	Follow-up
<p>4. That the gouvernement du 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>	<p>Direction de soutien aux familles</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To perform disinterments, the Direction de soutien aux familles has set up an expert committee bringing together the Bureau du coroner, the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale, archaeology researchers from Université de Montréal specializing in ground-penetrating radar surveys, funeral companies specializing in disinterments, and other organizations with relevant experience. • The Direction de soutien aux familles has obtained the funding needed to cover all costs for the preliminary research, the disinterment, and reinterment of children. Search 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 graves or mass graves.
<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"> • From 2021-2022 to 2024-2025, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit granted a total of \$1,230,000 to Awacak through the Indigenous Initiatives Fund III and IV. • In 2025-2026, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit announced financial support totalling \$530,000. • The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux granted \$100,000 per year in financial assistance to Awacak in 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2025-2026, for a total of \$300,000. A further \$100,000 has been announced for 2026-2027. • In total, between 2021-2022 and 2025-2026, Awacak has received almost \$2.1 million in financial assistance announced by the gouvernement du 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 (7 recommendations)

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"> • The Monitoring Committee sent a letter to the Minister of Health 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 April 10, 2025, the Minister of Health sent a response to the Monitoring Committee, confirming that the preservation of archives was being examined as part of the definition of the responsibilities of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux and Santé Québec, without referring to a moratorium. • The members of the Monitoring Committee wrote again to the head of Santé Québec and the Minister of Health on May 26, 2025. An answer from the Minister of Health was received by the Monitoring Committee on January 23, 2026, confirming her willingness to explore, with Santé Québec, “ways to establish a directive concerning the management of medical archives for the duration of the Act.” • The Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit had ongoing discussions with his counterparts at the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and Santé Québec, to highlight the issues making a moratorium necessary. • At the same time, administrative discussions have taken place regularly since the fall of 2024, between the Direction de soutien aux familles, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and, more recently, (fall 2025), Santé Québec to determine the ideal parameters for a moratorium. The information related to these discussions have been forwarded to the members of the Monitoring Committee.

Recommendation	Body or bodies responsible	Progress made	Follow-up
<p>8. That the gouvernement du Québec helps ensure the availability of necessary resources to support families and continues 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 their partnership 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. • During the fall of 2025, the members of the Monitoring Committee agreed to organize a discussion with Awacak’s Executive Director to validate the possibility of meeting with the organization’s lawyers and exploring possible avenues for implementation.

Recommendation	Body or bodies responsible	Progress made	Follow-up
<p>10. That the possibility of partnering with Université Laval's sociology department 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 Québec, 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 UQAT could be the starting point for this type of research. As a result, a new research agreement was signed by Awacak and UQAT in the spring of 2025, with the objective of documenting the repercussions, for Indigenous families and women, of the healing initiatives conducted following searches completed under the Act. The research is under way, directed by Master's student Korine Ladouceur, under the joint direction of Suzy Basile and Sébastien Brodeur-Girard. •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.
<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 2 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 2 from 2021-2022.

Recommendation	Body or bodies responsible	Progress made	Follow-up
<p>12. That the gouvernement du 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"> • The cost of hiring an archivist is eligible for the grant made to Awacak by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit. The Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit is continuing to work with Awacak and assess its financial needs on an ongoing basis. • Awacak can also benefit, as needed, from support from UQAT for the archiving and protection of personal information under the previously-signed agreement. • The organization has also been informed of the program Soutien aux archives privées, administered by BANQ and financed by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (gouvernement du Québec). • An administrative assistant began working at Awacak in January 2025. The assistant contributed to the filing of records and their transfer to UQAT between January and July 2025.

YEAR 2024-2025 (1 recommendation)

Recommendation	Body or bodies responsible	Progress made	Follow-up
<p>13. That a commemorative fund be created in memory of children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution.</p>	<p>Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit</p> <p>Awacak – Petits êtres de lumière</p> <p>Monitoring Committee</p>	<p>Currently being implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit has informed the members of the Monitoring Committee about the amounts already available for disinterment and reinterment ceremonies at the Direction de soutien aux familles and the grants paid to Awacak by the gouvernement du Québec, in particular to fund individual or community-based commemorative initiatives. • At a meeting of the Monitoring Committee on October 3, 2025, the Direction de soutien aux familles presented the various structures that could be used to receive such a fund. • Awacak has informed the members of the Monitoring Committee that it has already received almost \$7,000 in donations that could be used for commemorations or times of reflection. • The Monitoring Committee hopes that, via this recommendation, the gouvernement du Québec will ensure that funds are made available to families that wish to commemorate the death or disappearance of their children. It emphasizes that various kinds of commemoration could be organized under the recommendation.

CONCLUSION

The members of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act have no new recommendation to make for 2025-2026.

In the coming months, they will focus on the implementation of the 13 recommendations made over the last four years, and the further study that some of them will require.

The Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak will continue to support families under the Act in a heartfelt and determined way.

Homage to the families, by Dr. Judith Morency

So much ground has been covered since the tragic disappearance of Innu children from Pakua Shipi and of children from all the other Indigenous nations that experienced the same trauma. Their children, taken from their arms to receive care, never returned. Their death, invisible, was announced with no explanation and with no remains to cherish and to weep over, to find some consolation. With no way to prepare their children for their final journey and offer them all that the Innu have learned to do, from generation to generation, to respect the order of life and death. So as not to lose themselves, even following a death. Shock, silence. The families left facing a small empty bed, in a tent or a house, their dreams shattered, their future snatched away, the brothers and sisters anguished, the grandparents dismayed, powerless. The seeds of doubt sown, painful, haunting. So long ago, and yet as if it happened yesterday.

They had to go on, without knowing what had happened. The mothers and fathers continued to move

forward, their hearts broken.

They bore, in their bodies and souls, not only the weight of the children's absence, but of their disappearance. Still, they had other children to love and console, other children to welcome in their lives. Yes, life had to continue. Despite the absence, despite the injustice, despite the pain and the doubts left unanswered. Entire families, communities, and nations had to learn to live with a nameless loss, to suffer grief with no place to rest, in silence.

For over fifty years, the Pakua Shipu river – the river of sand – and the river of everyday life continued to flow. The days passed. In silence, the memories



Children's footwear laid out on a blanket at the gathering of families at Lac Decelles in memory of the children who went missing or died (Lac Decelles, July 2021).

were covered, layer after layer, by sediment, not because they had faded, but because the people had to survive. A little as if, to avoid sinking with such heavy injuries, the spirit pushed what remained out of the canoe of memory. Human beings do what they can to survive and to continue to love. Despite everything, the families were still prey to suffering, handed down through silence, bodies and connections. It was borne in intimacy and solitude by the mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, who spoke little, or not at all, about the child who had disappeared, or about their grief and the feeling that the child was still alive that came from their hope of finding him or her one day.

And then at last the time came, for the families, to speak and be heard, to ask again what happened to their children. Supported and assisted by the teams at the Direction de soutien aux familles and Awacak, and by local caseworkers, they could at last ask their questions and obtain information, a little light, a few answers. For some, this brought peace; for others, the questions and doubts never went away. But the path remained open. By coming together and bravely sharing the truth about what they had experienced and felt when their children, brothers or sisters disappeared, the families advanced step by step, the silence was broken and healing could begin. The process takes time, patience and the ability to be present, listen and support. It requires us to no longer allow the families to bear the suffering alone. The families develop their own vision, taking back ownership of what can still be done today, of the actions, words and choices that will help them, and their children, continue to live.

The path is also one of collective healing, built on connections, recognition and shared responsibility, and extended over time. There is no finishing line, but a deep commitment to stay together, to no longer look away, to recognize what was experienced by Indigenous families and to do better, collectively. There must be no more silence. The memory of each Indigenous child who went missing must remain alive in the communities, and also engraved in the collective memory of the Québec population, as a truth that concerns us all. These realities affect the whole of society and force us to remember, to understand and to act differently, to become a force of protection, truth and engagement for future generations.

Part of my heart will always remain with the families of Pakua Shipi, and in particular with the two grandmothers who lived through the unthinkable: the disappearance of three children over a period of two years. I salute their immense courage and the courage of all the families concerned.

There must be no more silence.

Dr. Judith Morency

Psychologist and friend of the community of Pakua Shipi for 30 years

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 status 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 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, 2026, the Monitoring Committee comprised the following permanent members:

- Geoffrey Kelley, Coordinator of the Monitoring Committee on the Carrying Out of the Act;
- Françoise Ruperthouse, 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;
- Stéphanie Fontaine-Dumais, Director of Services for Members, Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec;
- Raoul Quitich, Assistance Officer for the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program, Council of the Atikamekw Nation;
- Ejinagosi (Richard) Kistabish, Anicinape Elder and advisory aid;
- 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 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 Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit will assume the costs, and the coordinator of the Monitoring Committee and the Direction des communications at the Ministère du Conseil exécutif will provide logistic support.

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.

Precedence of French

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 on the Implementation of 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 gouvernement du Québec 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 with 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 gouvernement du Québec 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.

In addition to the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (coordination), the Committee comprises the following government departments and bodies:

- Bureau du coroner
- Directeur de l'état civil
- Ministère de la Culture et des Communications
- Ministère de la Justice
- Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
- Ministère de la Sécurité publique
- Ministère de l'Éducation
- Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale
- Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur
- Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec

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 (monitoring the work completed and preparing the annual report under the Act)
- May-June (monitoring the work completed and defining working guidelines)
- October-November (monitoring the work completed)

Other meetings can be added as needed.

The agenda will determine the duration of each meeting.

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Québec 

