



Thursday, June 2, 2022

PRESS RELEASE CREE SCHOOL BOARD

BILL 96, AN ACT RESPECTING FRENCH, THE OFFICIAL AND COMMON LANGUAGE OF QUÉBEC

Mistissini, Eeyou Istchee (June 2, 2022) – The Cree School Board has been following closely the debates in the National Assembly of Quebec and in the media concerning Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec.

Under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement treaty of 1975 (JBNQA), the Cree School Board has a special mandate as the primary instrument of Cree Nation governance in education. On the one hand, the Board is expressly charged by the JBNQA with the protection and promotion of Cree language and culture. The Board therefore understands the concerns prompting the Government of Quebec to consider ways, including Bill 96, to protect and promote the French language in Quebec.

On the other hand, under the JBNQA, the Cree School Board has exclusive jurisdiction over primary, secondary, post-secondary and adult education for the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee. The Board is therefore responsible, in collaboration with the Cree Nation Government and other partners, for capacity building for the Crees so as to equip them to assume technical and professional positions of increasing responsibility in the service of the Cree Nation.

The restrictions in Bill 96 on access to English-language colleges in Quebec and the new requirements for additional French language courses at CÉGEP hinder the ability of Cree students (for whom French is their third language) to undertake and complete with success their college-level education in Quebec.

Dr. Sarah Pash, Chairperson of the Cree School Board, stated, “We are particularly concerned with the effect that Bill 96 will have on our Post-Secondary Students’ ability to enter and successfully complete college-level programs in Quebec. Not only will this affect the career plans of our youth, but it will also impact our goals of capacity development as a nation. We are intent on protecting the rights and interests of Cree students and their ability to access the education they need to build a brighter future for themselves and for the entire Cree Nation.”

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