



*Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k*

# PRESS RELEASE

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## MCK opposes Quebec's proposed legislation on Indigenous Languages

### For Immediate Release

**(Kahnawà:ke – 26, Onerahtohkó:wa/May 2023)** The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) wishes to inform the community of its opposition to the Government of Quebec's intent to propose a bill that protects Indigenous Languages and the ingenuine consultation process being employed to collect feedback from Indigenous communities throughout the province.

"It is not the role of Quebec's government to create or pass legislation in regard to Indigenous languages," said Ietsénhahienhs Jessica Lazare, lead on the Heritage Portfolio. "Our position is that if Quebec wants to make efforts to support our actions to protect and revitalize our (Indigenous) languages, they should start by removing the already existing barriers within their legislation and systems."

Kahnawà:ke maintains its position that all barriers, including the application of the French Charter, be removed. Since its introduction in 1977, Quebec's French Charter has resulted in the imposition of several challenges to Indigenous communities. With Bill 96, Amendments to the French Language Charter, these barriers are only further increased. For decades, First Nations have expressed their disdain over Quebec's French Charter due to the impacts on Indigenous Languages and education. "The negative effects that the French Charter, along with the amendments from Bill 96, put on Indigenous People cannot be corrected by further impeding legislation," continued Lazare.

Regional Chief Ghislain Picard, on behalf of the Chiefs in Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, has told Ian Lafrenière, Minister Responsible for Relations with First Nations and the Inuit, that they (Chiefs of Quebec) are in opposition to Quebec's potential proposed legislation and associated consultation process. In last year's uprising against Quebec's push to formalize Bill 96, several Indigenous community action groups across the province, Kahnawà:ke included, attempted to stop the Bill from progressing. The lack of the province's willingness to undertake discussions or consider recommendations to accommodate Indigenous peoples resulted in the Bill becoming law in June of 2022, which now serves to create more distrust in the authenticity of Quebec's consultation processes.

"Quebec's tactic is to propose legislation in an attempt to mitigate negative impacts from how Bill 96 was forced into law," said Ohén:ton I:iente ne Ratitsénhahienhs (Grand Chief) Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer. "History has shown that consultation is just a tool external governments use as a checkbox mechanism to say that Indigenous Peoples have been consulted and pass their legislation as planned. While Quebec has assured us that they will not pass this specific legislation if Indigenous peoples are in opposition, we remain cautious, yet hopeful that they stay true to their word."

The Council of Chiefs felt it important to formally announce its position against Quebec's advances to protect the French language at the expense of Indigenous languages.

Historically, Kahnawà:ke has always governed the protection and revitalization of its own language. In 1999, Kahnawà:ke created the Kanien'kehá:ka Language Law to increase revitalization efforts within the community. Any outside government that causes interference is taken as a direct threat to our right to protect, revitalize and govern our own affairs.