

# Taking Action on Systemic Racism in College Education in Quebec: An Indigenous Focus

Intercollegiate Decolonization Network

## Statement on Joyce's Principle and Viens Commission Calls to Action

We call for action and accountability from the Quebec Ministry of Education, the Fédération des Cégeps, Quebec Colleges and related unions to commit to working with Indigenous Peoples to fulfill Section 4 of Joyce's Principle (which relates to education), and the relevant calls to action of the Viens Commission ("Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec").

We are outraged by the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan and the devastating loss suffered by her family. The CAQ government's continued denial of systemic racism in this province has compelled us to act. We join the voices of thousands of people to stand with Joyce Echaquan's family, Atikamekw and other Indigenous communities, Black and other racialized communities, and multiple organizations and initiatives demanding substantial changes in public services, including education. **We denounce and demand an end to the discriminatory policies and discourses that continue to uphold systemic racism and cause irreparable harm and fuel division.**

**We strongly support [Joyce's Principle](#) and the [AFNQL](#)'s call for its adoption by the Quebec government.**

**We support ongoing struggles for Indigenous self-determination in education and other domains.**

We join the voices of the [Fédération des Cégeps](#), the [Native Women's Shelter of Montreal](#), [Resilience Montreal](#), [Quebec Native Women](#), the [AFNQL](#), the [Quebec Youth Research Network Chair](#), [academics](#), [legal professionals and many others](#) in the fight against systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous peoples. We echo the numerous demands for equity in post-secondary education by the [Network of Native Friendship Centres](#), the [First Nations Education Council](#), the [Indigenous students' Covid taskforce](#) and post-secondary [students](#).

**Current College policies and procedures continue to limit Indigenous access to higher education and create significant barriers to success.** (See page 11 [here](#) for statistics.)

**We demand that the Ministry of Education:**

- (1) Eliminate barriers and develop inclusive practices to ensure the success of Indigenous students;
- (2) Train teachers, students, staff, professionals, and administrators in anti-racism and the historical and contemporary realities of Indigenous communities;
- (3) Provide permanent funding and institutional backing for this work;

(4) Ensure Indigenous leadership and collaboration in this process.

### ***Who are we?***

The [Intercollegiate Decolonization Network](#) (IDN) is an informal grassroots collective that is composed of Indigenous and non-Indigenous College staff, professionals, teachers, and students primarily from English-language Colleges in the Tioh'tia:ke (Montreal) area, as well as Indigenous partners from local communities. We do not speak for our colleges, but to them.

This document was created by members of the IDN in direct consultation and collaboration with Indigenous stakeholders such as students, faculty, staff and education professionals as well as consultants.

### ***What are we asking?***

In the document below we propose concrete measures for College education in response to Joyce's Principle and the Viens Commission Calls to Action. Our calls actualize the recommendations of the following:

- Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan's) Indigenous Education Protocol;
- the TRC and MMIWG National Inquiry Calls to Action about education;
- the Képek-Québec Supplementary Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and Girls Call for Justice #9;
- and the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 14, which acknowledges the collective rights of Indigenous peoples to their languages and cultures and self-determination in education.

### **(A.) Joyce's Principle:**

Because Quebec Colleges play a critical role in training nurses and other health and social service workers, we urge the Ministry of Education, the Fédération des Cégeps, and all Quebec Colleges to immediately adopt all measures in proposal #4 of Joyce's Principle, on "the relationship between Indigenous peoples and educational institutions in the fields of health and social services":

"Any program offered by an educational institution to train workers in the health and social services field must include a component relating to Joyce's Principle.

Any program aimed at training workers in health and social services fields must include measures to integrate Indigenous students and ensure their success."

Adopt all measures in proposal #4 including but not limited to:

- Adequate training in Joyce's Principle for students and teachers in social services, policing and health-related programs at Quebec Colleges.
- Indigenous students' access to study and success in these College programs.
- Creation of new programs to support training of Indigenous peoples in health and social services fields - as needed and identified by Indigenous communities/experts.
- Implement decolonized social services and health-related curricula and pedagogies which honour and include Indigenous knowledge systems.

**(B.) Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec ([Viens Commission](#))**

We propose the following concrete measures in response to the Viens Commission Calls to Action.

In addressing all of these calls, we urge MEES, the Fédération des Cégeps, and Colleges to respond to the Indigenous demand "Nothing about us, without us!" This requires collaborating with (not simply consulting) Indigenous partners, and ensuring that no decision-making-as-usual prevails in this process of uprooting systemic racism in College education. To ensure that efforts are not ad-hoc and tokenistic, we demand permanent funding and institutional resources for Indigenous education at Quebec Colleges.

**Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 11**

**“Make implementation of student retention and academic success measures for Indigenous students and young people a priority. Allocate the amounts required to do so, guided by the needs identified by Indigenous peoples themselves, and complying with their ancestral traditions.”**

We suggest these Concrete Measures:

***At the Institutional level of Quebec Colleges:***

- Hiring and retention of Indigenous faculty and professionals.
- Strategic Planning across Quebec Colleges with comprehensive and coordinated plans, targets and evaluation mechanisms.
- Indigenous Governance:
  - Indigenous leadership at Colleges.
  - Ensure accountability to Indigenous communities by establishing relationships with Indigenous students, school boards and diverse community stakeholders. Create a clear process for collaboration, identifying community needs and demands, and report-back systems to track follow through.
- Cultural safety, trauma-informed and anti-racism trainings for teachers, staff, administrators, and professionals at educational institutions.

***For current students:***

- Wrap around services for students (as in Alberta/B.C. Colleges) including one-on-one advising:

- Funding for Elders in residence, Peer tutoring and mentoring, Accessible and safer mental health and crisis support, Holistic supports (academic, mental health, spiritual).
- Indigenous Student Council/Ambassadors: creation of paid positions in advocacy, and leadership roles with mentoring provided to Indigenous student leaders.
- Indigenous student centres that are **permanently** funded and staffed by Indigenous peoples.
- Incorporate land-based teaching practices for Indigenous students by Indigenous educators, including Elders, across various programs.
- Flexibility, support and acknowledgement of students needing to attend to issues back home, child care, etc.
- Acknowledging that the Western concept of religion and “religious accommodations” do not include Indigenous cultural traditions; colleges must recognize that for many Indigenous students to benefit from a comparable accommodation requires policy changes such that students should not be penalized for attending cultural activities/events that are specific to different Indigenous Peoples, such as Goose Break (Eeyou/Cree), etc.
- Revise authorized absence procedures and academic probation.

### **Language:**

Whereas current language requirements are a known obstacle to Indigenous student success;

Whereas most Indigenous students are not able to study their own languages in College, and furthermore are required to study French or English despite the fact that some students have never before studied that language;

- All Indigenous students have a right to study their own language as part of their College education, regardless of previous language-education history.
- Students must be given the option to include their Indigenous languages in their course load with equivalent language accreditation to French or English.
- Waive the two required French requirements for students who have not studied French in high school.
- If students do wish to learn French, give credits to beginner (“mise à niveau”) French classes.
- Develop college-level Indigenous language learning with communities, Kiuna College, and other Colleges currently offering Indigenous languages (John Abbott, etc).

### **Access:**

Whereas admission to College remains difficult due to the inequities in high school education;

- Create equitable measures for admission/Indigenous Admissions Protocols (eg. Holistic review of applications, designated seats in programs like STEM, etc.).
- Support self-determination, necessary government funding, recognition and accreditation for Indigenous curricula in community-run education systems.
- Ensure availability of Indigenous-specific transition programs at Colleges, such as Nunavik Sivunitsavut at John Abbott College and Journeys at Dawson College.

### **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 12**

**“Amend the Regulation to authorize professional orders to make an exception to the application of section 35 of the Charter of the French language to extend the exception to all professionals exercising their professions on a reserve, in a settlement in which an**

**Indigenous community lives or on Category I and Category I-N lands within the meaning of the Act respecting the land regime in James Bay and New Québec, regardless of where they reside.”**

- Review language requirements for Indigenous students in professional programs such as nursing. Students must not be prevented from getting a DEC and practicing a profession such as nursing in their community because they could not pass college level French or pass the professional order exam in French.

#### **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 20**

**“Carry out a public information campaign on Indigenous peoples, their history, their cultural diversity and the discrimination issues they face, in working with Indigenous authorities.”**

- Colleges can participate in this campaign through the measures under Call #21.

#### **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 21**

**“Further enrich the Québec curriculum by introducing a fair and representative portrait of Québec First Nations and Inuit history, working with Indigenous authorities.”**

- Courses in Indigenous history and contemporary issues and experiences should be mandatory for all programs; these should be developed and led by Indigenous educators.
- Teacher training in anti-racism, Indigenous history and contemporary experiences should be mandatory for all programs - Guided by an Indigenous Advisory Council or Elders Council -- with funding & support & agency.
- Recognize Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning as holistic, experiential, orally transmitted, and valid; beneficial to all students, and across all programs.
- Provide mechanisms for training Indigenous peoples to become educators in Colleges/schools in the province, and for ensuring anti-racist hiring and retention equity plans are in place.
- Work with Colleges and teacher unions to recognize Indigenous knowledge-keepers as educators.
- All future program revisions of Social Sciences and other programs with Indigenous content should be guided by an Indigenous Advisory Council. This applies as well to the programs under Call #23.

#### **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 22**

**“Introduce concepts related to Indigenous history and culture as early as possible in the school curriculum.”**

- Train students in (and teachers of) Early Childhood Education and other related fields--guided by Indigenous Advisory Council or Elders Council.

## **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 23**

**“Include a component on Québec First Nations and Inuit in professional programs at colleges and universities (medicine, social work, law, journalism and other programs), working with Indigenous authorities.”**

- Revise courses and programs, and implement required courses about Indigenous peoples -- guided by an Indigenous Advisory Council or Elders Council -- in all programs, especially the following College programs:
  - Police Technology, Adult and Youth Corrections
  - Nursing, Social Services / Social Work
  - Paramedics, Dental Hygiene
  - Communications/Journalism, other Arts and cultural programs
  - Social Science
  - Community Recreation Leadership Training
  - And other professional programs for public service careers
- Provide College faculty training and curriculum development (as in our suggestions for Call #21) -- guided by an Indigenous Advisory Council or Elders Council – for teachers in these programs.

## **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 24**

**“Make the professional orders aware of the importance of including content in their training programs, developed in cooperation with Indigenous authorities, that addresses cultural safeguards and their needs.”**

- See our recommendations for #21, 22 & 23, & see Joyce’s Principle.
- Do so in dialogue with College programs' revision of their curricula.

## **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 25**

**“Make training developed in cooperation with Indigenous authorities that promotes cultural sensitivity, cultural competence and cultural safeguards available to all public service managers, professionals and employees who are likely to interact with Indigenous peoples. Out of respect for the cultural diversity of Indigenous nations, this training must be adapted to the specific Indigenous nation(s) with which the employees interact.”**

- Comprehensive training for all Quebec College faculty, staff, professionals and administrators – anti-racism, harm-reduction, strength-based, trauma-informed approaches -- guided by an Indigenous Advisory Council or Elders Council.
- Cultural sensitivity and cultural competency training for all Quebec College students who will do internships in Indigenous communities, and/or serve Indigenous populations.

## **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 26**

**“Provide ongoing and recurrent training to all public service managers, professionals and employees who are likely to interact with Indigenous peoples.”**

- Comprehensive training for all Quebec College faculty, staff, professionals and administrators -- anti-racism, harm-reduction, strength-based, trauma-informed approaches -- guided by an Indigenous Advisory Council and/or Elders Council.

### **Viens Commission CALL FOR ACTION No. 140**

**“Include in the Public Protector Act the obligation for the Québec Ombudsman to produce and make public each year a progress report on the implementation of the Commission’s calls for action until such time as they are fully executed.”**

- Ensure accountability to Indigenous communities.

We reiterate our demand for the Quebec Ministry of Education to take action NOW in implementing Joyce’s Principle and the Viens Calls to Action, incorporating the concrete measures we have suggested above. We remind all stakeholders that all future Action Plans about Indigenous Peoples should be created in collaboration (not simply consultation) with Indigenous Peoples, recognizing the diversity of Indigenous communities.

We challenge these governmental, educational, union, administrative bodies to respond to these concrete measures as a show of good faith in recognizing the critical work ahead. We invite those in decision making roles to invoke a sense of urgency and implement these long overdue changes.