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**STATEMENT AT THE TENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

THE URGENT NEED FOR CRITERIA

HELPING TO IDENTIFY AND DENOUNCE

DIFFERENT FORMS OF FORCED INTEGRATION!

May 2011

Hello, my name is Lise Bastien. I am the Director General at the First Nations Education Council, which represents eight First Nations, including 22 communities, in Quebec, Canada.

During the past two years, our organization has been participating in the negotiation of a tripartite agreement between the First Nations, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec. This is a condition which has been **imposed** by the federal government to give us access to complementary funding and to make our schools eligible for another funding formula.

Furthermore, the status quo, namely the funding of our schools by means of an old and outdated formula, seen as such even by the Auditor General of Canada, is considered to be wholly inadequate, not just by all First Nations in Canada, but by every outside observer and analyst. The choice offered by the Canadian government to sign a tripartite agreement based on guidelines that have been decided in their entirety by government bureaucrats and **imposed** on us, leaving the already unacceptable status quo as the only other option, is thus a **forced and non-voluntary** choice.

It was under this constraint that our organization became involved in the negotiation of a tripartite agreement, which our Chiefs saw as a poorly camouflaged desire on the part of the federal government to assimilate the First Nations. Our certainty of this intention was only reinforced by the fact that the federal government refused to recognize a bipartite agreement we had previously signed with the Quebec government, wanting instead to impose **its own partnership model** on us.

I would like in particular to draw your attention to something even more unusual, namely the fact that the Canadian government, subject to unceasing pressure, finally endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. But it does not want to see any reference to the Declaration in the tripartite agreement. The indications we have suggest it wants to make sure this is the case for all agreements signed with First Nations.

As for the government's real intention, which is to **swallow up the First Nations** into all the structures of the mainstream society, our organization considers that nothing has changed in that regard. We are instead seeing continuity in the history of efforts to achieve that goal, despite the Canadian government's official recognition of a 1972 First Nations policy document entitled "Indian Control of Indian Education," and despite the recent official apology from the Prime Minister for the sombre period of the residential schools which had been created with assimilation as the stated goal.

Based on comprehensive analyses, supported by solid facts, we remain **convinced** that the intentions of the Canadian government remain fully the same as before. This thesis is self-evident seeing that even Mr. Dan Beavon, Senior Advisor for Policy and Strategic Direction at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, notes the same thing on page 115 in chapter 6 of "Aboriginal Education – Current Crisis and Future Alternatives," a 2009 document which he co-authored.

We cannot say the same thing about strategies, which have had to evolve to take account of important advancements in human rights. These advancements have made it **impossible** for the government to explicitly declare it is pursuing policies of assimilation, as was done in the time of the residential schools. Instead, the government has to turn to the ruse of adopting **official** policies allowing it to claim that it supports First Nations' rights to self-determination; meanwhile, the government sets into motion strategies to **sabotage** those very policies.

We have described above the thesis we defend in our document entitled “The urgent need for criteria helping to identify and denounce different forms of forced integration.” We are convinced that this document, which we presented in collaboration with the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador to James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, forms a fully **relevant** part of the work that is needed to apply the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We also firmly believe, as the title of our document indicates, in the **urgent** need for the UN to develop criteria that will serve to determine whether or not the **official** policies of governments are accompanied by **adequate** measures and whether or not they are accompanied instead by strategies intended to **sabotage** them.

We hope that the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will include developing these criteria among its priority recommendations!

www.cepn-fnec.com/news/document/doc_onu_en.pdf