



RÉSEAU
de la communauté
autochtone à Montréal

Montreal
Indigenous
Community
NETWORK

Press Release
For immediate release

UNSAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN YOUTH PROTECTION

Friday, May 28, 2021 - On Tuesday, May 25, 2021, a 16-year-old Indigenous youth under the care of Batshaw's youth protection program (*CIUSSS de l'ouest de l'île de Montréal*) was mistakenly sent to school in spite of the previous night's news reporting that schools would be closed. When the youth returned to the Batshaw group home, where they were staying, several hours later, Batshaw personnel assessed that due to their delayed return, they were at risk of having come into contact with COVID-19. The youth was immediately directed to a basement room with concrete walls and no window, including only a chair, and a bed. The youth was instructed to remain there for 14 days in isolation.

Thomas McCue, a concerned teacher, was made aware of the situation when he went to the group home to give the youth their school supplies, and was able to observe the living conditions in this basement isolation room. Thomas and the NETWORK quickly mobilized and advocated for the youth's release from isolation due to: (1) violation of public health directives, (i.e., isolating an individual when not necessary), and (2) violation of human rights for inhumane living conditions. Two days later, the youth was moved to a different room in the same building but remains in isolation, and has yet to see the outdoors or have access to his personal cell phone.

On Friday, May 28, 2021, a meeting between the NETWORK and Thomas was held with Batshaw (*CIUSSS de l'ouest de l'île de Montréal*) to express concerns about this Indigenous youth's physical, psychological, and mental well-being, to express outrage at the unsafe confinement conditions and negligent protocols, and to find immediate solutions. We were not met with the same outrage. On the contrary, apathy seemed to be the overarching response as we were repeatedly told that protocols take precedence over safety and well-being concerns. In fact, we were told to move on from the conversation of isolation rules because we were merely in "disagreement" and Batshaw was not going to modify its protocols. It was made clear that protocols between the *CIUSSS de l'ouest de l'île de Montréal* are incoherent and even contradictory to those of the Directeur de la santé publique. After a general assessment of the situation, **the Directeur de la santé publique (DRSP) confirmed that the Indigenous youth in question presented little to no risk and that the measures taken by Batshaw were drastic.**

Simply stated, Batshaw (*CIUSSS de l'ouest de l'île de Montréal*) has been isolating and continues to isolate a 16-year-old Indigenous youth who presents little to no risk of transmission, without question and without any particular attention to the existing traumas Indigenous peoples continue to face within the child welfare system.

CALL TO ACTION

We demand that Batshaw (*CIUSSS de l'ouest de l'île de Montréal*) release all youth in unnecessary isolation as per the guidelines of Quebec Public Health (DRSP).

CONTACT INFORMATION

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This press release was drafted by the Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK, with support from Thomas McCue.