



W8banaki

PRESS RELEASE

Bill 87

The W8banaki Nation Calls for Amendments to Protect Its Rights and Ancestral Territory

Wôlinak, January 28, 2025 – As outlined during the presentation of its brief in parliamentary committee hearings as part of the consultations on Bill 87 – An Act mainly concerning the development and enhancement of industrial lands and the governance of the Société du parc industriel et portuaire de Bécancour (SPIPB), the W8banaki Nation is calling on the Quebec government to amend this bill. The proposed legislation seeks to facilitate development within the SPIPB territory by granting it increased powers. In short, the addition of new powers must come with added responsibilities to ensure respect for the Nation's ancestral and treaty rights, as well as for the Ndakina, its ancestral territory.

The SPIPB is located within the Ndakina, the ancestral territory of the W8banaki, a cultural and spiritual gathering place of great significance for over 4,000 years. Its proximity has historically facilitated the transmission of knowledge essential to ancestral practices. Activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering, which continue to this day, play a vital role in strengthening W8banaki identity. However, industrial development, which began with the creation of the SPIPB in 1968, has significantly reduced access to these crucial spaces.

The bill, which includes provisions for adding areas conducive to ancestral practices within the Laprade park and the SPIPB territory, as well as granting new powers to acquire land and build infrastructure, raises significant concerns for the W8banaki Nation. These measures could exacerbate pressures on the Ndakina, threatening ecosystems vital to the Nation's ancestral practices, while discussions to address the harms caused by past developments have stalled for far too long.

In its brief, the W8banaki Nation offers several recommendations to ensure the bill respects the rights of the W8banakiak and promotes responsible industrial development. These recommendations include granting the SPIPB the necessary powers to address W8banakiak



W8banaki

concerns, explicitly recognizing the W8banaki ancestral territory, establishing a structured process for consultation and accommodation, and creating mechanisms to assess cumulative industrial impacts.

"Development cannot come at the expense of our rights, our practices, and our territory. We extend a hand for collaboration based on mutual respect and the recognition of our constitutional rights. The Ndakina is not only our heritage, but also our identity," stated Michel R. Bernard, Chief of the Wôlinak Abenaki Council.

Rick O'Bomsawin, Chief of the Odanak Abenaki Council, echoes this sentiment and is clear: "This is our territory, and we have the fundamental right to be part of every decision that affects it. We will accept nothing less."

The Nation also proposes the establishment of protected areas within the SPIPB territory to preserve ancestral practices and the inclusion of measures promoting the signing of impact and benefit agreements between businesses operating on this site and the W8banaki Nation. Despite the guarantees provided by the Consultation and Accommodation Agreement signed between Quebec and the W8banakiak and by the Oswegatchie and Kahnawake treaties regarding the preservation of the ancestral way of life, the W8banaki Nation denounces a lack of adequate consultation on development projects in its territory, jeopardizing the last area where intergenerational knowledge transmission remains relatively easy. In this context, the Nation reaffirms its openness to dialogue while insisting on the importance of concrete mechanisms to protect the Ndakina, the transmission of knowledge, and, ultimately, the W8banaki identity.

About the W8banaki Nation

The W8banaki Nation comprises the First Nations of Wôlinak and Odanak, located at the mouths of Alsig8ntegw and W8linaktegw (Saint-François and Bécancour Rivers), respectively. In harmony with its rich cultural heritage, the Nation is committed to initiatives aimed at protecting its territory while fostering sustainable collaborations with governments and businesses.



W8banaki

Linguistic Note: The "8" in W8banaki orthography represents a nasal "ô" sound, halfway between "an" and "on," a sound that does not exist in the French language.

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W8banaki

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