



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

Without Prejudice

Kahnawake - November 4, 2008

Re: Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Resignation of Justice Harry LaForme

Open Letter to the Aboriginal Communities

Shé:kon All My Relations;

I would like to address the issue of the resignation of the former chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Justice Harry LaForme. The current public debates and discussions regarding Justice LaForme's resignation undermine the work of the two commissioners who remain, but more importantly the work of the TRC itself.

It is unfortunate that Justice LaForme chose a public forum to air his perspective but rather than take sides, the healthy approach would be to respect his decision and move on with more important matters such as his replacement. Perhaps Mr. LaForme's public disclosure of his dissatisfaction within the Commission is an indication that he lacked the leadership skills necessary to deal with the protocol and process needed to resolve issues of conflict.

The two remaining commissioners, Claudette Dumont-Smith and Jane Morley should be given the support and respect needed to continue the important work that they have begun with communities and survivors as much work still remains to be done in their 5-year mandate.

It is disturbing to hear some of the public discussions taking place particularly the condemnations of the two remaining commissioners. It is suspect at best that certain individuals making these public condemnations are taking the opportunity to promote themselves as being the next to replace Justice LaForme. Such self-promoters claim to have the best interest of the Residential Schools survivors at

heart but through the public denouncement of the commissioners they too fail to recognize the truth involved in this story and the need to provide the two remaining commissioners a process to reconcile their side of the story.

Aboriginal peoples have inherited a legacy of oppression that must stop within this next generation. The public condemnation of the commissioners indicates that this will not stop any time soon. We as Aboriginal peoples are sometimes our own worst enemies.

The next chairperson of the TRC should be an individual whose knowledge and values are grounded in traditional Indigenous cultures. It must be a person who is searching for the truth in the history of the Residential School experience. Most importantly, it must be a person who is honest, compassionate and not a self-promoter. With the enormous amount of work to be done by the TRC, starting all over again will not only set back the existing work of the Commission but may pave the way for future dysfunction and further mistrust of the process.

For the sake of all the Residential School survivors and to those survivors who have passed on, we should all support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in hopes that current and future generations will know the true history of a genocide that took place against Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Skén:nen – In Peace

Ellen Gabriel
President