



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

“That’s enough!”: the Heart-felt Cry of Aboriginal Women Breaking the Silence

Val-d’Or, October 23, 2015. The courage of Aboriginal women publicly breaking the silence on sexual abuse they suffered from police officers of the Sûreté du Québec in Val-d’Or merits acknowledgement. The staggering declarations heard last night on Radio-Canada’s *Enquête* report regarding the behaviour of police officers whose primary duty is to ensure the security and protection of all citizens is outrageous and requires immediate action by the Québec Government in order to restore these women’s confidence in the Québec justice system.

These shocking revelations highlight the great fragility and insecurity characterising these Aboriginal women’s lives; and to this, need we to add the tragedy recently exposed by *La Presse* on the violent death of 259 young Aboriginals in Québec. A national tragedy is unfolding here, right at our doorstep. The hard-hitting testimonials of these Aboriginal women – who are also grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, wives – straightforwardly express the injustice and systemic racism that keep Aboriginal people on the fringe of society and contribute to their cultural, community and political confinement.

How many more Aboriginal women must be abused or murdered, how many more must be declared missing before Québec and Canada awake from their indifference? How many more Aboriginal children must die before a public inquiry commission is held by the Québec government on the living conditions of these young people and their mothers? The numerous violent stories of Aboriginal children and women reflect an unbearable reality for a country that prides itself of being one of the best countries in the world. Not to act now is accepting to be complicit in the cultural genocide perpetrated against Aboriginal people, of which Indian residential schools were the most insidious instrument.

The parliamentary commission announced this week by the Québec government on Aboriginal women’s living conditions is certainly good news, but it must translate into concrete actions that support the mission of frontline service organisations such as Native Friendship Centres in Québec.

The Québec and Canadian societies, governments, First Nation authorities and citizens share the collective responsibility of creating safe environments free of violence and abuse, and more particularly for Aboriginal women and children. Jointly with the *CALACS Assaut Sexuel Secours*, the Val-d’Or Native Friendship Centre encourages other Aboriginal women to break the silence and take action with confidence so that justice may be served.

A central gathering place and public forum, the Val-d’Or Native Friendship Centre advocates for the individual and collective rights, interests and well-being of the Aboriginal people faced with the reality of an urban environment.

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