



February 23, 2018

Hon. Yasir Naqvi, Attorney General of Ontario

By email: ynaqvi.mpp@liberal.ola.org

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

By email: Jody.Wilson-Raybould@parl.gc.ca

Dear Ministers:

Re: Statement from the Southwest Indigenous Justice Coordinators

We extend our sincere condolences to the Boushie/Baptiste family along with the members of the Red Pheasant First Nation. To every Indigenous person in Canada we offer prayers and hope. We recognize that situations such as this can often trigger pre-existing personal and/or systemic trauma. We hope that all can find peace. We also acknowledge the Gerald Stanley verdict has affected the safety of Indigenous people across this country and we are conscious of the trauma caused by the verdict. We must stand together in support of one another.

It is important to address the need for equity for Indigenous people particularly in the justice sector to repair the injustices and betrayals that have occurred and continue to occur. In the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' recommendations, Call to Action number 50 under "Equity for Aboriginal People in the Legal System" states:

"In keeping with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations, to fund the establishment of Indigenous law institutes for the development, use, and understanding of Indigenous laws and access to justice in accordance with the unique cultures of Aboriginal peoples in Canada"

There is a justified, continuing mistrust of the justice system as Indigenous people have been overrepresented in the legal system, marginalized, traumatized and retraumatized due to legal processes, a legal system that has not allowed for the integration or even recognition of Indigenous laws and legal principles. To begin to repair the strained relationships between Indigenous people and the colonial system of justice, we must commit to addressing and implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' 94 Calls to Action as well as the recommendations of numerous commissions and reports that have highlighted the pervasive systemic racism present in the justice system including but not limited to: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, The Ipperwash Inquiry into the death of Dudley George, and presently, the inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

On February 14th, 2018, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the Federal government's intention to create a [Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework](#). We are cautiously optimistic as we must move forward collectively to address the systemic injustices faced by Indigenous people. We must ensure

the process has full endorsement through consultation, free and informed consent, as well as the recognition of treaty rights and sovereignty of Indigenous people in Canada.

The Indigenous Justice Program is established and delivered by [Community Legal Clinics](#) in Southwestern Ontario and funded by Legal Aid Ontario. This program is an important example of how the integration of Indigenous centred services and Indigenous legal principles within legal organizations creates an environment where trust can grow between Indigenous people and members of the justice sector. Unfortunately these types of programs are far from universal and large gaps exist in the provision of Indigenous centred justice services. More work needs to be done federally and provincially to ensure the availability of such programs to all Indigenous people.

We are calling on The Federal and Provincial justice system to commit to:

- The implementation of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action and the endorsement of the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. An example of implementation of the TRC recommendations is "[A Journey to Reconciliation](#)" developed by Hamilton Community Legal Clinic.
- Increased and permanent funding for Indigenous specific programs to address the pervasive systemic barriers present in our justice system, and to facilitate a trusting collaborative relationship in which Indigenous Laws and Legal traditions are respected and utilized.
- An inquiry into Colten Boushie's death as well as the treatment of Colten's family during the investigation process.

The Indigenous Justice Coordinators invite you show your support by endorsing this letter and sending it to our list of recipients. We appreciate the hard work being accomplished by our Indigenous colleagues and our allies and understand we have a long, difficult journey ahead.

In solidarity,

The image shows five handwritten signatures in blue ink, arranged in two rows. The top row contains three signatures: the first is 'L. Roberts', the second is a stylized signature, and the third is 'Sara George'. The bottom row contains two signatures: the first is a stylized signature, and the second is 'Shawna Labadie'.

Southwest Indigenous Justice Coordinators,

Luane Roberts, Ahwenhaode, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
Lyndon George, Yén:Tene, Hamilton Community Legal Services
Sara George, Tehuwatilihwas Kenháse Ukwékóku, Elgin-Oxford Legal Clinic
Jeff Plain, Baamseedaa, Community Legal Assistance Sarnia
Shawna Labadie, Interim, Anishnaabe Gwiikchigewin Wiidookaagewin, Legal Assistance of Windsor

Endorsed by:

Waterloo Region Community Legal Services, Shannon Down, Executive Director
Hamilton Community Legal Services, Hugh Tye, Executive Director
Elgin-Oxford Legal Clinic, Ken Brooks, Executive Director
Community Legal Assistance Sarnia, Andrew Bolter, Executive Director
Legal Assistance of Windsor , Shelley Gilbert, Coordinator of Social Work Services, on behalf of Marion Overholt, Executive Director

cc. The Family of Colten Boushie
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs
Hon. Jane Philpott, Minister of Indigenous Services
Hon. David Zimmer, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
David Field, CEO of Legal Aid Ontario

