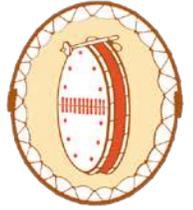




G. C. C. E. I.
est. 1974



C. N. G.
G. N. C.
est. 1978

SPEAKING POINTS

FOR

GRAND CHIEF DR. ABEL BOSUM

AT EVENT

« DE LA DÉNONCIATION A LA RÉCONCILIATION »

[VAL D'OR, QUEBEC: OCTOBER 4, 2019]

Ms. Cloutier, Mayor Corbeil, Val d'Or City Councillors, Chiefs, and a very special welcome to the women whose courage and bravery have brought us to this event today.

We are gathered here today to do several important things. First of all, we acknowledge that the Government of Quebec has begun to take very seriously, the contents of the Report of the Viens Commission which includes 142 specific "Calls to Action". We applaud Premier Legault for taking the initiative on Wednesday in the National Assembly to implement the very first call to action by apologizing, on behalf of the Government of Quebec, to Indigenous people in the province for the discrimination and the harm we have experienced from the public institutions, which include the SQ, whose roles are to provide a wide range of services.

At the same time, however, we recognize that the Report of the Viens Commission had some very serious shortcomings. The issues that gave rise to the Report in the first place—the allegations of abuse by Indigenous women in this region at the hands of the Val d'Or SQ—were not directly dealt with. There was no mention in the Report of the specific harm that was done to the women, to you, and there was no mention either of the culture within the SQ that resulted in these abuses, and no mention of what the Quebec Government must do to make changes. We share in your disappointment and we must continue to work together to address this failure. We have not, and we will not, give up in our effort to redress this failure. This is unfinished business.

But more importantly, today we must acknowledge....today we must recognize....and today we honour your tremendous courage and the remarkably bold steps to call out the wrongs that were done at the hands of those whose job it is to protect us—equally and without discrimination.

Today is the day to express our thanks, our gratitude, our admiration and our love towards those women who risked everything to make things better for all of us—particularly, our Indigenous women and our Indigenous girls. You have been our inspiration since you came forward with your words of truth, unlike the abusers who have hidden behind institutional walls, you have been our inspiration, you have begun tearing down those walls, as we have worked with determination to ensure that the Viens Commission carried out its mandate, and you remain our inspiration as we look forward to implementing all the calls to action of the Viens Commission Report.

Today is also the day to express our respect and to honour the memories of those missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls who are no longer with us—women such as Sindy Ruperthouse—who we are remembering today with the unveiling of this important and symbolic statue. This statue will always remind us of the losses suffered by the families and the communities of these women, and indeed losses for the Indigenous community across the country....and it will be a constant reminder to us of the work that still needs to be done.

It remains for the rest of us, especially we Indigenous leaders, a responsibility to make sure that the Report of the Viens Commission and its "Calls to Action" do not stay on a shelf to gather dust. It is for the rest of us to make sure that each and every one of the;

- 142 calls to action of the Viens Report,
- 231 Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women,
- 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,
- and the 46 Articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People,

are responded to by the Governments of Quebec and Canada in a positive and effective way. We must make sure that nothing gets swept under the rug, and we must re-double our efforts to ensure that there are fundamental and effective changes to the culture and to the operations of the SQ in this region.

We plan to collaborate with representatives of the Government of Quebec, the Government of Canada, municipalities like Val d'Or, Chibougamau, Matagami, Lebel-sur-Quevillon, Senneterre, Rouyn, Amos, and with all Indigenous leaders. Together, we have come this far. Much has happened since 2015. But, we still have lots of work ahead of us. On behalf of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee, we are committed and will make every effort to bring social justice and equality where it belongs : here with each and every one of us.

It is an honor for me to stand here before you today as we commit to continue the work you have started for us. It is an important path that you have set us on, one that will bring change and a better, safer society, for our families to continue to grow in, and to be proud of our accomplishments, and instill pride in who we are. Many people are proud of you. It is for all these reasons that we are truly indebted to you, our courageous women, and it is for these reasons that we honour you today.

Mista Miigwetch.