



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC supports FSIN in its call for the University of Regina to cancel lecture of poet who works with convicted killer Stephen Brown

Treaty One Territory, Winnipeg, Manitoba - The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Grand Chief Arlen Dumas fully supports the Federation of Saskatchewan Indigenous Nations (FSIN) call for the University of Regina to cancel a proposed lecture of poet George Elliot Clarke who works with Stephen Brown (formerly Steven Kummerfield), a convicted killer in the death of a Saulteaux woman from Sakimay First Nation.

The controversy stemmed from the announcement that the University of Regina would host a lecture entitled, "*Truth and Reconciliation versus the Murdered and Missing: Examining Indigenous Experiences of (In)Justice in Four Saskatchewan Poets*," which would include a presentation by Clarke. It became public Clarke had befriended and began a working relationship with Brown, who, when his name was Steven Kummerfield was convicted of manslaughter of Pamela Jean George in 1995. Despite the brutality of the murder, Kummerfield served only four-and-a-half years of a six-year sentence and was released on parole in 2000.

Yesterday the FSIN issued a release from its Executive demanding the University of Regina cancel the proposed lecture, as Clarke did not bother to confirm whether he would cite work of Steven Brown. The University of Regina stood by its decision to invite Clarke based on freedom of speech, thought and expression and academic freedom. An online petition also began calling for the cancellation of the lecture.

Today, Clarke cancelled his appearance at the University of Regina, and issued an apology to the George family. Also today, the University of Regina was reported to have heard people's concerns and are engaging Indigenous leaders, representatives, Elders, and groups.

In support of the FSIN's statement, and those who honour all Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, AMC's Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "There is something inherently wrong when a post-secondary institution chooses to favour its own pursuit rather than considering the impact of this decision on the families of Pamela Jean George, and all First Nations. The University of Regina's rejection to cancel the lecture directly opposes the meaning behind Truth and Reconciliation, and only exemplifies the injustice of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Rather than taking a bold position and pursuing the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the University of Regina has chosen to take a misguided position, applying the notion of 'academic freedom' from a white ivory tower perspective, negating the notion of 'reconciliation' and in fact pitting themselves against it."

Swan Lake First Nation Chief Francine Meeches, chair of the AMC Women's Council, stated, "In honour of our lost sister, Pamela Jean George, and in respect of her children and family, the AMC Women's Council was disappointed Mr. Clarke would first defy calls for him not to present work done by a First Nations woman killer, but are now assuaged that he came to his senses. It is also disappointing the University of Regina would defend Mr. Clarke and Mr. Brown in its approach to the proposed lecture. When dealing with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, universities and other entities should focus on the loved ones that are gone, and not provide spaces for men who kill. Now,

hopefully, the University of Regina will not only engages First Nations families, survivors and leaders, but establishes a respectful and meaningful policy to ensure this situation does not happen again.”

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, “Working with the FSIN leadership and others, I am confident that the University of Regina will learn from this fiasco that it could have prevented. It is hoped they establish a precedent-setting approach that other universities will emulate in the near future, to serve as a beacon and template on how reconciliation and academic freedom are balanced when dealing with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.”

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About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.