



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2021

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas responds to and expresses support for Senator Mary Jane McCallum's recent Senate Motion

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement in response to Independent Manitoba Senator Mary Jane McCallum's Senate Motion regarding former Senator Lynn Beyak and last week's Hill Times interview after today's AMC Facebook Live discussion.

Senate Motion

On Monday, February 8, 2021, Senator McCallum brought forth a Motion within the Senate regarding Residential Schools System and the issue of systemic racism that still remains within our Canadian institutions and needs to be addressed.

The Motion considered the following:

That the Senate of Canada:

- (a) acknowledges that racism was a cornerstone on which the residential school system was created;
- (b) acknowledges that racism, discrimination, and abuse were rampant within the residential school system;
- (c) acknowledges that the residential school system, created for the malevolent purpose of assimilation, has had profound and continuing negative impacts on Indigenous lives, cultures, and languages;
- (d) apologizes unreservedly for Canada's role in the establishment of the residential school system as well as its resulting adverse impacts, the effects of which are still seen and felt by countless Indigenous peoples and communities today.

"There are dangers to a single story about our experiences in residential school. There is danger to the stereotypes about First Nations, Metis and Inuit posted on Lynn Beyak's website. There is danger in lumping the experiences of former students as one homogenous experience - we came out with many, many different experiences," Senator McCallum said. "There is the story that there was, and is, no racism in Canada and that if we only tried harder we could do better. There is the story of who is successful and who is not - and who gets to determine that.

"As First Nations, Metis and Inuit we are, and always have been, storytellers. We have our own beautiful stories that we need to revive, believe and act on. My memories of land-based education and our teachings at the trapline and fish-camp was what saved me. We have rich traditions. The danger is that if we don't write our own stories others write for us. And we need to challenge them," Senator McCallum continued.

Hill Times Article

The Hill Times article, published on February 1, 2021 provided quotes from former Senator Lynn Beyak, who is quoted as saying, 'Mary Jane is a dentist and a Senator,' in response to a reaction to the then proposed Motion by the Manitoba Senator on the removal of Beyak and her rebuke and censure.

"I find former Senator Lynn Beyak's comments directed towards Senator McCallum to be demeaning and belittling and completely inappropriate," said AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas. "These comments attempt to publicly downplay Senator McCallum and diminish her experiences as a former residential school student and are in poor taste. The Senator is more than able to speak up for herself, as she has demonstrated within the Senate on numerous occasions. I cannot let these demeaning comments go unaddressed, as they are representative of the views of a segment of Canadian society and are also symptomatic to an archaic and outdated institutional system, structural racism and implicit bias within the Senate and other Canadian institutions," said Grand Chief Dumas.

"When I entered Senate I didn't expect a non-First Nations Senator to write a story about First Nations' experiences in residential school and have her story supersede my own and the stories told by thousands of former residential school students," stated Senator McCallum. "This Senator not only appropriated but outright misrepresented those life experiences based on a few examples. Her story, as well as those of her supporters, framed the students, and all First Nations, in a negative light - she had a single story about us. Was this story, portrayed by a white woman, more "Indian" than the stories of former students? In her story there was no possibility of a connection as humans; as equals. Why was she allowed to continue to disparage First Nations as a Senator in the Chamber of Sober Second Thought? That is one question that needs debating," concluded Senator McCallum.

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, "I appreciate Senator McCallum's work in the Senate and commit the AMC to ongoing joint advocacy on this matter and others that impact First Nations in Manitoba. The experiences of residential school students should never be diminished or downplayed; this is why I fully support Senator McCallum's Motion for a full apology from the Senate to Indigenous Peoples, along with a commitment to address the archaic and outdated systems and structures underpinning its place as the 'house of sober second thought' in the parliamentary system of Canada."

NB: The recording of Senator McCallum and AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas' Facebook Live discussion is available for viewing on AMC's Facebook page for reference.

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For more information, please contact:

Stacia Franz
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Email: sfranz@manitobachiefs.com
Phone: 204-292-1504

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 / Inineu (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.