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## **Manitoba First Nation organizations demand justice system issues highlighted by the Gerald Stanley trial be resolved**

**Treaty One Territory** – First Nations within Manitoba are disappointed but not surprised by the verdict in the trial of Gerald Stanley as many First Nation families in this province have had their own negative experiences with the justice system.

Numerous studies, across the country, have pointed out how justice is often denied for both First Nation victims and accused by the very system meant to provide due process. Manitoba's Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) made numerous recommendations that were never implemented. Study and the planning of positive steps is just part of the journey, action must follow, and the commitment and will to act has often been lacking.

There are many who feel the jury selection in the Stanley trial may have had an impact on the outcome. In Ontario, Mr. Frank Iacobucci studied how First Nations in Ontario are often denied the chance to have a jury of peers due to how jury rolls are created and potential jurors selected. However, this issue does not just exist in Ontario, but from coast to coast to coast. And this is just one example of the systemic racism within the Canadian justice system.

There have been numerous questions about how the evidence in this case was handled by RCMP. The Boushie family's story of how the RCMP officers acted towards them, at their moment of greatest pain, also calls for some questions to be answered.

The First Nation advocacy organizations of Manitoba would like to see an judicial inquiry into this particular case and how it was handled. The recommendations of the AJI and Mr Iacobucci need to be seriously considered and implemented by all provinces across Canada. There can be no reconciliation without justice.

Quotes:

"We are deeply saddened, but not surprised by a not guilty verdict in the trial of Gerald Stanley. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Colten Bushie this evening. Given all the studies, all the findings, all the indications that the justice system is not working for First Nation people, it still grinds us up and leaves us with little. We understand the pain, frustration and disappointment. But this calls for activism, not violence. We echo the FSIN's call for calm."

– Arlen Dumas, Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

"Our strength is in our resilience and our ability to maintain peace in the face of hardship. As we mourn with the family and friends of Colten Boushie, let's find a way to once again show the love we have for each other that often gets us through times like this. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the study on First Nations and juries in Ontario have outlined the problems, now they need to be solved. A positive outcome of all this would be the improvement Canada's justice system, so it better meets the realities of First Nation families and individuals, both victims and the accused. There can be no reconciliation without justice."

-Sheila North, Grand Chief of the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak

“The Boushie family should know that the First Nations in Manitoba are thinking of them. I am sure there will be much anger out there, but the best use of that energy is to work towards positive solutions. It is so important that the justice system is working for everyone in Canada and there are many First Nation people who feel that was not the case with the Gerald Stanley trial. I have spoken to so many people who have felt they fell through the cracks of Canada’s justice system. This has to stop.”

-Jerry Daniels, Grand Chief of the Southern Chiefs Organization

“I can’t imagine the pain that Colten’s family and community are going through. They hoped for closure, but it was denied them. This case just highlighted the well-known issues with the justice system in Canada. I also urge calm at this time. I understand the anger, believe me, but what is next? We need to make change. We must improve the system. We want Canada and the provinces to come to the table and discuss how change will be made. It’s time for the equal application of justice.”

-Kevin Hart, Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief for Manitoba

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