



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

For immediate release
December 3, 2021

MKO calls for an Inquiry into systemic failures of the Manitoba Justice System related to the lack of action against Peter Nygard to ensure fair and equitable justice to victims and survivors of gender-based violence

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) is extremely concerned to hear about the recent investigation made by The Fifth Estate exposing the Manitoba's justice system decision not to press criminal charges against Peter Nygard in 8 different allegations of rape of women and girls in Winnipeg dating back to the early 1990s. The concern comes with Nygard using his power and influence over the last 25 years to victimize, oppress and target vulnerable youth and women in Winnipeg and elsewhere in the world, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, alike.

A December 2, 2021, CBC news article stated that The Fifth Estate investigation “reveals a pattern of Nygard avoiding prosecution following allegations of rape reported to Winnipeg police over several decades” and that “much of the reporting to date about Nygard has questioned whether his money and connections have helped him evade prosecution in the Bahamas, where he has lived part-time since the 1980s.” The investigation uncovered Nygard's first brush with the law in 1968 when he was charged with a sexual offence. The charges were withdrawn when the alleged victim who worked in his factory in Winnipeg refused to testify. Similar stories from the 1980s and 1990s involving more victims shared.

Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Director of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls Liaison Unit states:

“The lack of action once again highlights the systemic failures of the entire Manitoba Justice System in protecting vulnerable populations. Indigenous families and survivors of gender-based violence and 2SLGBTQQIA+ have experienced the failure of justice and systems that are meant to protect society's most vulnerable. The victims that came forward trusted a justice system for security and protection which ultimately failed them and caused further harm. Our women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ citizens deserve to trust, feel safe and protected in society.”

Grand Chief Garrison Settee states:

“As an organization we stand in solidarity with the victims who used their strength and courage to come forward. We express our sincere apologies to each one of you for a system that failed you. You deserve justice. The failure of justice clearly demonstrates what privilege looks like – one for the privileged and one for the most vulnerable. If the Manitoba Justice system acted more swiftly it may have prevented a serial rapist and predator from harming other victims throughout the world.”

“I am calling for an Inquiry into the failure of the Manitoba Justice System to examine the repeated systemic failures and develop an accountability mechanism to prevent this from ever happening again.

Further to this, we call for the immediate implementation of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report – Call for Justice #5.7

“5.7 We call upon federal and provincial governments to establish robust and well-funded Indigenous civilian police oversight bodies (or branches within established reputable civilian oversight bodies within a jurisdiction) in all jurisdictions, which must include representation of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, inclusive of diverse Indigenous cultural backgrounds, with the power to:

- i. Observe and oversee investigations in relation to police negligence or misconduct, including but not limited to rape and other sexual offences.*
- ii. Observe and oversee investigations of cases involving Indigenous Peoples.*
- iii. Publicly report on police progress in addressing findings and recommendations at least annually.”*

The MMIWG Liaison Unit is here to support Indigenous survivors of gender-based violence. For support, please contact Hilda Anderson-Pyrz at Hilda.Anderson.Pyrz@mkonorth.com or at 204-307-5919.

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