



COALITION TO REMOVE LYNN BEYAK FROM THE SENATE

Coalition of Residential School Survivors, First Nations Leaders and Community Advocates Question Motive Behind Senator Lynn Beyak's Recent Training on Indigenous Issues

Kenora - June 30, 2020

"In effect, our people have once again been silenced. Heads of bureaucracy claim to know what's best for us. History repeats itself." - Danielle H. Morrison

That's the sentiment behind a letter today (attached) from Indian Residential School survivors and their families, Grand Chiefs and anti-racism advocates in northern Ontario and Manitoba. They are questioning a recent University of Manitoba-led crash course on racism and Indigenous-Crown relations custom-designed for Senator Lynn Beyak.

In this most recent attempt to enlighten the embattled Senator, the Senate Ethics Officer Pierre Legault engaged the services of an educational team headed by Dr. Jonathan Black-Branch, Dean of Law at the University of Manitoba. Black-Branch concluded in his May report to Legault that after three and a half days of virtual training this spring, Ms. Beyak "learned and was willing to learn".

First Nations and residential school survivors in Beyak's home region, where there were nine residential schools, had no involvement or input into the course. Grand Chiefs Francis Kavanaugh of Treaty #3 and Alvin Fiddler, Nishnawbe-Aski Nation have both spoken out in recent months again Beyak's continued role as a senator.

Anishinaabe lawyer and intergenerational survivor Danielle H. Morrison says, "The call to have Senator Beyak removed from the Senate has been loud and clear ... Instead of listening to Indigenous people from the territory that Beyak represents, the people who experience the most harm, someone made the decision that academia knows better."

The Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators ordered Beyak to undergo further training earlier this year after she received a failing grade in a cultural competency course delivered by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) in 2019.

All this stems from March 2017 when Beyak first lauded the "well-intentioned" staff and the "good" of the Indian residential schools' system. She was removed from the Senate Aboriginal Affairs Committee by Conservative party leaders in April 2017 and then from their caucus in January 2018.

The Senate Ethics Committee issued their first report on Beyak in March 2019 ordering her to take down racist letters from her website, apologize, and take training. She refused and was suspended from Senate. She finally relented and attended the OFIFC training. Workshop leaders asked her to leave after the first day citing her "overtly

biased views, prejudiced opinions, and insolent behaviors”. Beyak was suspended again in February 2020 following the dismal report by the OFIFC.

The Sioux Lookout Committee on Truth and Reconciliation met face-to-face with Beyak In July 2017 to share their concerns about the impacts of her public statements. Residential school survivor and Order of Canada recipient Garnet Angeconebe was at the Sioux Lookout meeting and later expressed his disappointment. "I did not expect to change her views on anything when we met with her ... but I did expect her to be a bit more understanding and empathetic to the issues.”

The Senate is scheduled to vote in September on whether Beyak’s suspension will be lifted. The Senate Ethics Committee has recommended she be given another chance based on the report from the University of Manitoba team.

Angeconebe wonders how far the Senate, universities and other longstanding Canadian institutions will go to address racism in today’s climate. “The tragic death of George Floyd has sparked global discussion on systemic racism. It is to the point now that in Canada, we have recently seen influential people being removed, or people resigning from positions of privilege due to their racism and discrimination.”

How will one of the highest chambers of the country finally deal with the presence of racism in its own quarters?

Indigenous political leaders, residential school survivors and anti-racism advocates are clear – Ms. Beyak has to go.

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