



Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc.

Yathe Hotśj Dene ʔ Edenąkane[nj] | Northern Peoples' Wellness

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Unearthing the Unseen: Canada *is* First Nations Specific Racism

Winnipeg, MB, Treaty 1 Territory - The world is watching and wondering as the Province of Manitoba in the country of Canada refuses to conduct a search of a landfill for at least three Indigenous women known to be murdered and then dumped there. It is the eve of, yet another Manitoba election cycle and the incumbent Premier has come out vociferously against the search. Worse yet, the Progressive Conservative party has politicized the issue and made it a key part of their platform.

“This is an outrageous politically polarizing stance and is ignorant to the continuous traumatization for the children of the women and their families and is further wedging the relationship between the party and First Nations people in Manitoba.”, said Dr. Barry Lavallee, KIM Inc. CEO.

Even within her own party and among card-carrying Progressive Conservatives across Manitoba, this stance by Heather Stephanson must be forcing the many rational, reasonable party members to question their party allegiance – polarizing positions along this line can't be good for those who care about all Manitobans.

There is sufficient evidence to conduct the search at this location. It is feasible if expensive, and yet Manitoba's premier publicly stated that their overriding concern was for the safety of the workers who would conduct the search. This concern is outlandish when compared to the long-standing concerns of safety for First Nations people throughout Manitoba. The question is what investments has the current government made to prevent harm and killing?

This is the issue that reaches the public via media outlets today. Canada and its federation governments, however, have long been aware of what is needed to prevent the road to the landfill and yet in the Province of Manitoba the government refuses to provide funding for the necessary services and supports that the world already knows are the solutions, well-articulated in numerous publicly funded reports containing recommendations drawn from experts - First Nations and non-First Nations.

Posited by Dr. Lavallee, First Nations specific stereotyping when combined with power inevitably leads to harms and sometimes death. “What is really at play are macro aggressions, macro dismissals, macro denials – all based on racial identity; these constitute common tools used to advance Indigenous specific racism. Premier Stephanson's stance is particularly egregious given her position at the highest level of elected leadership in Manitoba and provides for the world yet another example of how this predictability formula works in a loop of continuous feedback to the public, all systems, the people in those systems, and to First Nations people that we are not worth fighting to protect. That we are not valued. That we are not human. Harming us has become the norm.”

In fact, KIM Inc. has recommendations with respect to new federal and provincial laws around accountability and Indigenous-specific racism in the health care system that call into question that very predictability model.

Manitobans with willing hearts are wanting to take a deeper look to unearth what is really going on here. They will find a difficult road to the landfill that is anti-Indigenous racism with the resulting devaluing, dehumanizing of Indigenous peoples in Canada. If reconciliation, equity and justice hold any meaning, Canadians and the two federation governments would not hesitate to at least attempt to find the bodies of the murdered women.

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For more information:

Michael Dubé, Communications Coordinator

Email: Michael.dube@kiminoayawin.com

Web: Kiminoayawin.com

