



COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES
SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF PHOENIX SINCLAIR

Commission Disclosure 0666

First Nations of Southern Manitoba CFS Authority
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Southern First Nations Network of Care

March 17/06

SA01551

The Editor

Winnipeg Free Press

Dear Sir:

Re: *Phoenix Victoria Sinclair*

The death of little Phoenix Sinclair is a tragedy. It is difficult to come to terms with the circumstances of her young life and her death. Certainly the fact that she was known to the child and family services system, and that in spite of this, she suffered such a tragic life, adds to the anger and outrage over her death.

For the First Nations community, it is a tragic death of another one of our children. It is heartbreaking to see this little one die at the hands of adults who should have cared and protected her.

For the child welfare community, it is a reminder that the consequences of our actions and decisions can be unforgiving. The reality we live with is that children are abused and killed at the hands of adults, and that we do not have foolproof ways of predicting who those children will be. We are all acutely aware that Phoenix's death represents the failure of a system charged to protect children such as her. We would like to protect every child that needs our help. We would like to give every child that comes to our attention a better chance, a better quality of life.

Over the past 30 years, First Nations have made significant progress in reclaiming their rights to care for their own children. The commitment and energy that has gone into that comes from the fact that our children are loved and cherished. The desire to see our children grow up in their families and communities, knowing who they are, proud of their

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heritage, strong in their identity, is something we share with all peoples. It is our responsibility to address the concern about our children being removed and disconnected from their communities, struggling as young adults to belong. It is our obligation to do something about the dismal outcomes experienced by our children in the child welfare system.

The death of this little girl should not afford the opportunity to make political points. It should not be the venue for unions to push their agendas. It should not be the platform for sensational reporting that is short on facts, that rushes to judgment, and that continues to promote stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes towards First Nations people. Most certainly the death of little Phoenix should not be used to justify continued beliefs and practices that would deny First Nations people the right to care for their own children.

We have all been touched by little Phoenix's journey in this life. Surely we can work collectively to make this little girl's short life and her tragic death count for something. Rather than engaging in finger pointing, in blaming, and in partisan politics, we should support each other as we grieve, and ask each other what we can do to help. We should accept our collective responsibility for her death, and work with one mind and one spirit to find strategies and solutions that may help to prevent such profound tragedies.

Elsie Flette
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