



Statement for Immediate release  
26 February 2018

## **STATEMENT FROM THE BC ABORIGINAL JUSTICE COUNCIL ON THE NOT-GUILTY VERDICT IN THE TRIAL OF RAYMOND CORMIER FOR THE MURDER OF TINA FONTAINE**

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, BC – The BC Aboriginal Justice Council (BCAJC) express their deep sadness and concern following the not guilty verdict in the death of 15-year old Tina Fontaine, a member of the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba. Last week, Raymond Cormier was acquitted of second-degree murder charges. At the time of Fontaine’s death, she was under the care of Manitoba Child and Family Services (CFS). The case has served to renew calls for action to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in care as well as action for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

“Tina’s story is one of grossly failed systems and intergenerational trauma. Sadly, this story is not uncommon for our youth in care,” said Nancy Sandy, BCAJC Co-chair for children and family justice. “In 2014, Tina was denied counselling services by CFS following the beating death of her father and the subsequent trial for his murder. Over the next year, Tina came into contact with justice, medical and child welfare systems – all of which failed to take adequate care to protect this vulnerable girl.”

Following the recent acquittal of Gerald Stanley for the second-degree murder of Colten Boushie, the acquittal of Cormier further illuminates Canada’s justice and child welfare systems are failing our people. As confirmed in the most recent Canadian census, while Indigenous children and youth make up 7.7% of the national population, they comprise 57.7% of children and youth in the foster care system.

“It is important to make the connections between Indigenous youth in care, those who have aged out of care and fallen victim to homelessness and/or crime, and to Indigenous peoples involved in the criminal justice system. The justice and child welfare systems are built upon ideologies that have racism and misogyny at their core. These systems need to change – not mere tweaks, but full-scale, fundamental change for our people,” stated Nancy Sandy. She concluded, “Indigenous youth in care require services and supports developed and delivered by Indigenous peoples. Services need to be culturally relevant and funded to the same extent as services for non-Indigenous children in care. How many more of our young people will die or end up incarcerated before Canada stands up and does something?”

The BCAJC is strengthened in its resolve to continue working to see major reform of the justice system in BC and in Canada and reiterates its recommendation that the Attorney General of Canada establish an Indigenous Justice Action Committee at the National level led by distinguished Indigenous lawyers and judges, as well as other experts in the relationship of Indigenous peoples and the justice system. Canada must live up to its commitments to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and specifically commit to take immediate and accelerated steps to implement related Canadian Human Rights Tribunal rulings on First Nations child welfare and Jordan’s Principle. The work of an Indigenous Justice Action Committee to ensure that Canada’s legal system, including trial courts, are reflective of a justice system based on respect for

# BC ABORIGINAL JUSTICE COUNCIL



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human rights and fairness, and the principles of anti-discrimination needs to commence immediately and the BCAJC offer our assistance and support in this important initiative.

For further information, please contact:

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