

Saskatchewan Advocate in Gatineau, QC for the Closing Ceremonies of the National Inquiry on MMIWs and the release of the Inquiry's Final Report

SASKATOON – The Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, Corey O'Soup, is in Gatineau, QC today bearing witness to the closing ceremonies and release of the Final Report of the National Inquiry on MMIWs.

Throughout the Inquiry, Mr. O'Soup offered testimony as an expert in the areas of advocacy for children and youth, rights of children with specific focus on Indigenous girls and 2SLGBTQQIA youth, and First Nation and Métis education as it pertains the human rights framework. The office of the Advocate for Children and Youth also acted as a Party with Standing during the proceedings and provided written submissions and recommendations to the Inquiry.

Launched in September of 2016 by the Government of Canada, the independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' mandate was "to examine and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Canada by looking at patterns and underlying factors."

The final report, entitled, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* calls for an end to the systemic violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Canada and highlights the Inquiry's Calls to Justice that include the development and implementation of a National Action Plan to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The Inquiry also makes a call for all Canadians to be allies and change-makers in addressing these Calls to uphold the rights of Indigenous girls, women, and 2SLGBTQQIA people to be safe, secure, and protected in all ways, including the inherent right to health and wellness and culture and language, and to be supported to live to their full potential.

As the Advocate for Children and Youth in the province of Saskatchewan, a professional in education, and an Indigenous person, Mr. O'Soup submitted evidence with respect to the human rights framework as it applies to Indigenous children and youth. O'Soup emphasized the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) in his evidence to the Commission. The UNCRC is the framework within which the Advocate and his office conduct their work and lays out the basic human rights that all children and youth in this country must be afforded. Specifically, Article 12 (UNCRC) *the right of children and youth to be heard* is paramount and must be respected in all venues, hearings, and forums where issues related to children and youth are discussed or decisions made that affect them.

"The Calls to Justice are necessary for our young girls and women to be protected, said O'Soup. "There is no doubt that bringing a child rights lens to this Inquiry, with a particular focus on how the human rights framework applies to Indigenous children, was a critical part of ensuring that these concepts and legal obligations become embedded in Inquiry's Calls to Justice. Particularly, the Inquiry's call for an Advocate in every province and territory with a special focus on Indigenous children and youth, and their call for a National Commissioner is key to ensuring the rights of our young Indigenous girl's and 2SLGBTQQIA youth are guaranteed and protected," said O'Soup.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. He leads a team of professionals who work on behalf of the province's young people. Our vision is that the rights, well-being and voice of children and youth are respected and valued.

Full video of the Closing Ceremonies can be viewed at <http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>

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