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GNWT MLAs
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The Yellowknife Inuit Katujjiqatigiit is newly established not for profit association representing the Inuit residing in Yellowknife, NT.

In responding to Canadian Press Law and Order news: "N.W.T. premier defends stand in teacher sex assault suit".

Handley, who was deputy minister of education at the time of Horne's arrest, argues that the government can't be held responsible for the activities of a teacher outside school hours or of people who weren't students.

Joe Handley said:

"If some of this was consensual, if this was with adults, then it's a legitimate issue. We don't know who goes to the teacher's house, if they're not school students, if they're adults, if they're people out of school. He also said that a young Inuk in the 1970's might have been considered fully adult and capable of making his own choices by the time he was 17".

In the 1900's, Inuit feared white people with authority, Teachers, Priests, administrators were people you did not say 'no ' to, because of the colonial attitude that existed during that time, it was next to impossible to disagree or oppose a white person, especially one in a position of authority, for any Inuit, at any age.

Joe Handley's comments struck a nerve to our long-term clients that are Inuit decent and attended various government funded educational institutions across the north.

As a survivor of sexual abuse I became the problem in the eyes of society. Which added more trauma to my life. As caregivers, leaders, representatives, we need training in the areas of offering support to someone who discloses sexual abuse, because it is traumatizing to disclose sexual abuse and then enter into the court and once again

become a victim in the eyes of the community. And to relive the guilt, shame, fear and rejection of the community...

It was wrong of the Premier to try to influence the outcome of legal proceedings by discussing the case in a public forum whether 'off the record or not'. If he wishes to debate the merits of the legal case outside the court room, he should be prepared for rebuttals by the public in defense of the victims.

If Premier Joe Handley wants to debate a legal issue, he should do so as a private citizen, which means stepping down. A stronger stance should be taken, given the severity of the situation and comment made by the Premier, regardless of whether it was assumed that sex was consensual is unlawful. It is not considered to be consensual in the eyes of the law. I would like to push as much as possible for the legal defense to be withdrawn.

The Canada's Legal Age of Consent To Sexual Activity states:

*"The **Criminal Code** does not now criminalize consensual sexual activity with or between persons 14 or over, unless it takes place in a relationship of trust or dependency, in which case sexual activity with persons over 14 but under 18 can constitute an offence, notwithstanding their consent. Even consensual activity with those under 14 but over 12 may not be an offence if the accused is under 16 and less than two years older than the complainant. **The exception, of course, is anal intercourse, to which unmarried persons under 18 cannot legally consent.**"*

He took the word meaning of a 'child' who was taken to residential school at a very young age out of context. In a child is a human being that can be molded to feel love and to feel loved. In the Inuit way, a child is told stories to keep him from harm, and how to behave ethically and morally. You have to think, you have to be aware of your environment, but a holistic approach in all that you do. A child learns by observing. The child's first foundation is the family and the support through child-rearing. A person is not just a physical being. Human beings have to have a sense of belonging and to have security. Knowing doesn't necessarily mean experiencing. In Inuit society a child will learn through play from experience and even through accidents can learn not to repeat certain actions. Since a person can't live by themselves, they have to support one another as a family and as a community.

Here is a message for Inuit residential school survivors from Tasiuqti

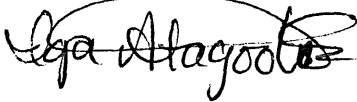
We have been through so much since we were first taken from our loved ones and from those who would have protected us against the abuse we experienced at the hands of the residential school authorities. The guardians of the residential schools who were supposed to look after us did more than what they were supposed to do — they took a part of our childhood and our innocence for their own intentions, which deeply affected our life.

Clearly the message for Inuit residential school survivors speaks for itself, as for Premier Joe Handley stating "*that a young Inuk in the 1970's might have been considered fully adult and capable of making his own choices by the time he was 17*" was totally out of character to comment on the case. His comment is very unprofessional and unethical, not to mention insensitive.

As well, his comment about an 'Inuk' is a racial slur, the residential school survivors were not only Inuit but other aboriginals as well. Therefore, he should step down as a Premier of N.W.T.

Taimalu,

Iga Atagootak
President

Handwritten signature of Iga Atagootak in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Deborah Tagornak
Director

Handwritten signature of Deborah Tagornak in black ink, written in a cursive style.

