

Premier Brian Pallister  
Manitoba Legislative Building  
204-450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8



April 15, 2017

Re: Response to “Premier Peguis Tour”

Dear Premier Pallister,

In response to your request regarding your Bicycle Tour to Peguis First Nation, I am providing this letter. I respectfully submit to you evidence through international, national and provincial policy frameworks and the research of our organization my hopes for Indigenous – settler relations in Manitoba. Please be aware I will share this letter publicly on our website.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), Manitoba office is a non-profit, non-partisan independent charitable organization that does research to advance social, economic and environmental justice. We are the lead organization for the Manitoba Research Alliance, a group of academic and community researchers that have received three successive research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The MRA and CCPA Manitoba work to make concrete improvements in communities through research mobilizing partnerships to pursue the systems and policy changes needed to overcome the root causes of poverty, ill health and social exclusion. Much of this research has been done in partnership with Indigenous communities. I encourage you and your staff to read our research, which can be found at [www.policyalternatives.ca/offices/manitoba](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/offices/manitoba) and [www.mra-mb.ca](http://www.mra-mb.ca).

For example, the 2014 study *Moving to the City: Housing and Aboriginal Migration to Winnipeg* has important recommendations to the province on how to support off-reserve Indigenous peoples’ housing needs. The 2016 State of the Inner City Report *Reconciliation Lives Here* maps out innovative inner-city Winnipeg grassroots practices towards reconciliation and the provincial funding that enables this work to continue. More investment is needed as these groups are on the front-line dealing with the complex impacts of inter-generational traumas resulting from the residential school and colonization legacies. *Finding Her Home: a gender-based analysis of homelessness in Winnipeg* shines a light on the 87 percent of Indigenous women who are among homeless women and the need for more social housing with supports to end this unacceptable crisis.

Through these partnerships we have been honoured to work with Indigenous communities in inner-city Winnipeg, Metis communities, off-reserve peoples and First Nations in Manitoba. Core to this work is to start from a place of deep respect with Indigenous peoples. The intent of your bike tour is to recognize the role of Indigenous peoples in the settlement of Manitoba and in the future. This is a good start but it will fall short unless you look deeper at history and our obligations as Treaty People.

The bicycle tour to Peguis First Nation from Selkirk appears to be a surface effort. A brief look at the history shows that this is the route the people of Peguis First Nation took when they were illegally removed from the band’s traditional home, the St. Peter’s Reserve, in 1907. The route is

known as “Canada’s Trail of Tears” and the lack of acknowledgement of this fact in the letter makes the Bicycle Tour appear ill-informed and an incomplete token gesture.

An obvious step not included in your goal of expressing “gratitude for the vital role they (sic) played in the formation of our province, as well as your optimism for the important role they (sic) will play in the future” is to listen to and engage with Indigenous peoples in a meaningful way. [Please be aware the word “they”, is othering (which means treating a group of people as intrinsically alien to oneself) and should not be used in this way]. This means starting with Indigenous peoples and not settlers. This means not asking settlers to comment on Indigenous-settler relations without first meaningfully listening to and engaging directly with Indigenous peoples. Manitobans have not to date witnessed this take place with your provincial government. Thankfully we have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action as a place to start.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action were released in 2015. The first Principle of the TRC acknowledges that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society. The province should formally acknowledge UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action in legislation and then work with Indigenous leaders and peoples to create an action plan for implementation based in meaningful partnerships. A bill to this effect was presented by the previous provincial government, prior to the dissolution of the legislature in April 2016. Does your government have a plan related to UNDRIP and the TRC? Such a legal framework is in all of Manitoba’s best interest.

The 5<sup>th</sup> principle of the TRC states “Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians”. Many of the Calls to Action are to the provinces; the word “province” or “provincial” appears 24 times in the TRC Calls to Action and on top of this many of the TRC Calls to Action are to all levels of government. These are in the areas of provincial jurisdiction: health, child welfare, criminal justice, education, language and culture, youth programs, business, sport, newcomers and more. The province has responsibility to act immediately on these Calls to Action. To not show leadership on this is a failure to all Manitobans as we are all Treaty People and have rights and responsibilities to the relationship between settlers and Indigenous people as described in the treaties, of which the Selkirk Treaty you describe in your letter was the precursor to Treaty One. We have not yet seen this leadership from you as Premier.

In fact some of your statements regarding Indigenous people related to night hunting were extremely troublesome and criticized by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Head of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Niigaan Sinclair, has offered for you to take his class as he says “While Indigenous kids in residential schools were taught that they were savage and they were heathens and they were violent, Canadians were taught the exact same thing and they were taught to feel superior, and that they had a sort of duty to control Indigenous people in every way” (CBC, Jan 27, 2017).

Those of us settlers born into white privilege have a duty to learn about history from the perspective of Indigenous peoples, to examine the stereotypes we hold and work tirelessly to transform ourselves and our communities so that racism and stereotyping ends. This is an

ongoing process that requires humility and perseverance. I have much to learn in this area as well.

I hope that you reconsider and reframe your Bike Tour as an opportunity to *start* to advance Truth and Reconciliation, take the time to learn from Indigenous leaders like Dr. Sinclair, and from Peguis First Nations members like Tim Stevenson, who wrote the attached on his reflections of your Bicycle Tour. Stevenson does research on food sovereignty and traditional land harvesting and when I received your letter I asked him to write this piece to help inform this dialogue.

Stevenson calls on the Premier to be a provincial leader in Indigenous relations, to work with Indigenous leaders to support Indigenous health frameworks, to work with Indigenous leaders and harvesters to conserve land and resources, to work with Indigenous leaders to ensure equitable participation in provincial infrastructure and social programs.

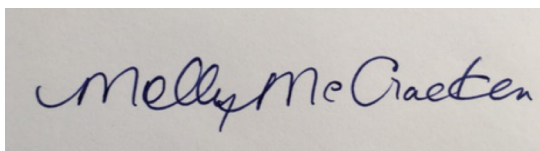
As a leader in Manitoba, it is my duty to listen and support the goals of the strong, knowledgeable and wise First Nations, Metis and Indigenous peoples. In response to your request, these are my hopes for Indigenous – settler relations so that all of Manitoba prospers.

It must be acknowledged that Indigenous peoples lived on Turtle Island (North America) for many millennia before settlers arrived. After just 200 years of settlement we are confronted with contamination of land via for example the hog industry (Commissioners' Report); of the water via for example agricultural run-off into Lake Winnipeg resulting in harmful algae blooms (Lake Winnipeg Foundation); and of the animals, for example via the loss of the buffalo and now woodland boreal caribou (Wilderness Committee Manitoba). Climate change risks irrevocably changing life in our province and our planet (Prairie Climate Centre). These concerning environmental impacts are felt by all Manitobans particularly Indigenous peoples who are spiritually, culturally, socially and economically tied to this land. Indigenous peoples persevere, often in spite of what the colonizers have done. We need to change the dial on this conversation to become true and meaningful allies, in order to stand with Indigenous peoples, culture and ways of knowing so that we can live in a true sustainable way for seven generations and more.

Just as Chief Peguis shared his resources with the Selkirk Settlers to aid in their survival, now we need Indigenous peoples to help us survive on the planet in a sustainable manner into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter. I am available to share our research with you and introduce you to Tim Stevenson if you wish.

Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Molly McCracken".

Molly McCracken  
Director  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba  
Enclosure: *Tim Stevenson on Premier Peguis Tour*

Sources:

Commissioner's Report on the Citizen's Hearing on Hog Production and the Environment. 1999. *Large-scale Hog Production and Processing Concerns from Manitobans*  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/large-scale-hog-production-and-processing> Winnipeg: CCPA Manitoba.

Brandon, Josh and Evelyn Peters. 2015. *Moving to the City: Housing and Aboriginal Migration to Winnipeg*  
[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2014/12/Aboriginal\\_Migration.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2014/12/Aboriginal_Migration.pdf) Winnipeg: CCPA Manitoba.

Drabble, Jenna. 2017. *Finding Her Home: a gender-based analysis of the homelessness crisis in Winnipeg*.  
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Lake Winnipeg Foundation: <http://www.lakewinnipegfoundation.org/promoting-agricultural-water-stewardship>

Prairie Climate Centre: <http://prairieclimatecentre.ca>

Sinclair, Niigaan. Tamara Margaret Dicks and Timothy Maton. 2016. *Reconciliation Lives Here*.  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/state-inner-city-report-2016> Winnipeg: CCPA Manitoba.

Wilderness Committee Manitoba:  
[https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/manitoba/blog/threatened\\_boreal\\_caribou\\_crisis\\_across\\_canada](https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/manitoba/blog/threatened_boreal_caribou_crisis_across_canada)