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PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tikinagan Backs 2SLGBTQ+ Community, Conversion Therapy Bill

Northwestern Ontario – December 8, 2021: For Illa Meekis, the new legislation that is moving toward an unanimous adoption to ban the practice of conversion therapy for all ages across Canada, is bittersweet.

The Wawakapewin band member has a deep connection to 2SLGBTQ+ community. Her late child Tia (also known as Andrew) passed on June 6, 2020. Her child experienced discrimination against their gender identity.

“This hurts deeply, but with more education, acceptance and love, my child would be so happy, said Meekis of Federal Bill C-4, which proposes to eliminate the harmful practice of conversion therapy in Canada, through four new Criminal Code offences.

As a Prevention Support Supervisor at Tikinagan Child and Family Services, Meekis joined the agency’s 2SLGBTQ+ Committee. At first, she was reluctant, but now embraces her story and her role for the 2SLGBT+ community. A huge part has been the support of the Tikinagan family for their support and kindness during her loss.

“Our children are given to us as gifts,” said Meekis. “We must honour their presence by again supporting, loving and acceptance. Not just children/youth who identify as, but everyone who identifies as 2SLGBTQ+. Open your hearts and get to know the person. Mine was my best friend.”

Conversion therapy is the practice of attempting to change an individual’s sexual orientation using physical, spiritual, and psychological interventions, often using counselling and behavioural modification. It also seeks to repress an individual’s non-heterosexual attraction. These efforts are widely discredited as an ineffective and potentially harmful practice aimed at trying to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Yesterday, Canada’s Senate unanimously agreed to fast track the bill.

“We support the government and the bill for the sake and safety of our children, as well for families like Illa,” said Rachel Tinney, Tikinagan Associate Executive Director and 2SLGBTQ+ Committee member. “This means there should be no barriers, no hurdles, no obstacles for our children to feel accepted for who they are and want to be.”

Although previous attempts at conversion of Indigenous peoples have been attempted through efforts like residential schools, Meekis said now is the time to create safe spaces, inclusivity and acceptance of all.

“Every person should have the right to feel safe in their community. We need to learn accept, support and overall love one another. I hope to see other organizations and businesses creating a safe place for our 2SLGBTQ+ community.

As an Indigenous child well-being agency, Tikinagan strives to be a diverse and inclusive organization that supports equality and is committed to fostering a supportive environment for all, does not discriminate by sexual identity or gender expression.

The Tikinagan 2SLGBTQ+ Committee can be reached by e-mail at 2SLGBTQ+@tikinagan.org.

For more information, contact Marlene Green by email at MarleneG@tikinagan.org or by phone at (807) 358-3855.

For over 35 years, Tikinagan Child and Family Services has been serving our 30 First Nations in Northwestern Ontario. The Creator entrusted First Nations with the sacred responsibility of protecting our children and developing strong families and healthy communities.