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Six Nations Elected Council – Deeply Disappointed by the Canadian Justice System, Again.

OHSWEKEN (June 27, 2018) - Six Nations Elected Council joins other Indigenous voices expressing shock and disappointment at the “not guilty” verdict by the jury in the trial of Peter Khill charged with second degree murder of Six Nations father of two, Jonathan Styres.

“How can Indigenous people have faith in the relationship with Canada when the justice system fails to hold anyone accountable for the taking of a life?” said Elected Chief, Ava Hill.

Reconciliation demands that the unique vulnerability of Indigenous peoples to violent victimization, including the existence of stereotypes in Canadian society generally, be meaningfully addressed. Six Nations Elected Council once again calls on Canada to overhaul the criminal justice system that over-represents Indigenous people as victims and accused persons and chronically under-achieves justice.

“These are real people,” said Elected Chief Ava Hill, “Jonathan Styres, Colten Boushie, Tina Fontaine and Cindy Galdue – they were all born with mothers and fathers, raised as children with hopes and dreams and were loved as adults with families and responsibilities. It is unfathomable that their tragic deaths are unanswered by the Canadian justice system.”

The Six Nations Elected Council also calls on the Ministry of the Attorney General to appeal this verdict. The trial proceeded with a number of questionable moments including the exclusion by the judge of a long interview that Peter Khill gave to the police shortly after he was arrested and the use of “lay opinion evidence” (a non-expert) to testify to the effect of military training of Khill.

From a Haudenosaunee perspective, the taking of Jonathan’s life is a denial of his responsibilities to his family and his community. There is an acknowledgement that is owing for the loss of his role as a partner and provider, as a son, cousin, nephew and friend, in addition to other roles he may have had to support and sustain the land, culture, community and language. The taking of his life was a violent tragedy – a loss that will continue to be endured by his family and community in the absence of the fulfillment of his roles. Accountability is important within Haudenosaunee legal principles.

Six Nations recognizes the efforts of all those involved in the trial, particularly Victim Services of Hamilton, the Hamilton Police Service and Crown Attorneys. Indigenous Victim Services attended and monitored the trial as part of its mandate to support Indigenous victims in Brantford, Cayuga and Hamilton.

- 30 -

Contact:
Barbara General
Six Nations Justice Director
Telephone: 226-227-2192
justice@sixnations.ca