SHOAL LAKE NO. 40 FIRST NATION

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PRESS RELEASE

May 27, 2014

For immediate release

Use of Shoal Lake Water Makes Museum "A Shrine to Canadian Hypocrisy"

Shoal Lake #40 FN Chief Questions Human Rights Museum Architect

In an open letter to Antoine Predock, Architect of Canada's new Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Shoal Lake #40 Chief Erwin Redsky points out the glaring contradiction of a Human Rights Museum that features water whose diversion has resulted in " the denial of fundamental human rights," to the First Nation according to Amnesty International.

Enclosing unanswered correspondence to Predock dating back seven years, Chief Redsky asks the prize-winning designer to explain why he would knowingly use such a tainted material in the iconic Human Rights building.

"He says his building celebrates the healing properties of water. Ha! I invite Mr. Predock to come to our community and see for himself what 100 years of human rights violations over water really looks like," Chief Redsky said. "While he's here, maybe he can talk to the young mom and the 70 year old elder who fell through the ice this spring. Maybe he can explain to them all about the 'healing properties' of the water he's using in his reflecting pools because it almost killed them."

The unresolved injustice of Shoal Lake #40's forced isolation on a man-made island has been a matter of public record for many years.** The community is cut off by the City of Winnipeg's water intake which was imposed on the reserve by Canada one hundred years ago. Despite being a short distance south of the busy Trans Canada Highway at the Manitoba/Ontario border, Shoal Lake #40 First Nation remains without secure road access, is denied normal economic opportunities and has been on a boil-water order for over 17 years. A number of lives have been lost as a result of the man-made water-isolated conditions.

Antoine Predock is in Winnipeg on Wednesday, May 28 to address the opening reception of the Festival of Architects to be held at the Museum for Human Rights.

For more information contact: Cuyler Cotton, Policy Analyst, Shoal Lake #40 First Nation – 807-467-1492 dovetail@kmts.ca or Chief Erwin Redsky -- (807) 733-2315

** http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/so-near-so-far-113126539.html
http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/winnipeg-native-band-battle-over-water/article7206899/
http://www.aljazeera.com/video/americas/2013/04/20134615312737735.html

attachments:

SHOAL LAKE BAND NO. 40

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Antoine Predock,
300 12th Street NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
studio@apredock.com
Tuesday, May 27, 2014

Dear Mr. Predock,

Re: Use of Shoal Lake Water in Canadian Museum for Human Rights

I am resorting to this unusual form of open letter because you have not responded to any of the earlier correspondence from our community on this subject. I hope this will at least encourage the courtesy of a reply.

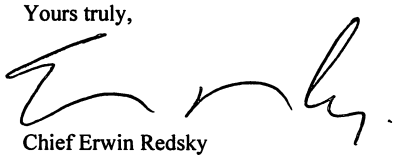
My request is simple: Could you please explain your design decision to use Shoal Lake water in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights?

In April of 2007 Stewart Redsky, a former Chief, wrote to you and advised you that the lives and livelihood of our community members have continually been put at risk by Canada's expropriation of our lands and our artificial isolation because of Winnipeg's water diversion from Shoal Lake. More recently, our Policy Analyst and former Human Rights Officer, Mr. Cotton, confirmed to you that Amnesty International had concluded that "The situation of Shoal Lake [40] First Nation amounts to the denial of fundamental human rights, including the rights to livelihood, health and culture." The 'situation' Amnesty describes results directly from Canada's ongoing refusal to correct the consequences of their expropriation of our lands for Winnipeg's water diversion. (letters attached)

Frankly, it is deeply insulting to hear your building promoted as honouring "the First Nation relationship with water" when the water taken from Shoal Lake so clearly represents Canada's continuing violation of human and aboriginal rights. Surely you must appreciate that so long as that water forces the isolation and marginalization of our First Nation …so long as our people's lives are at risk because of that water, your building will remain a shrine, not to human rights, but to Canadian hypocrisy.

We look forward to your explanation.

Yours truly,



Chief Erwin Redsky

cc- Amnesty International
Media

Antoine Predock Architect
300 12TH STREET NW
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87102
April 24, 2007

Dear Mr. Predock,
I am a member of the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation and I have just visited your website where you describe your design for the proposed Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. I find it very interesting that your design for this important building will honour "the First Nation relationship with water". Perhaps you are unaware, but there are a few important facts you should know about how Winnipeg gets it water before you consider using it as a symbol for "healing and solace", particularly in relation to First Nations.

It should interest you to note that:

- *The water in Winnipeg comes from our traditional area which encompasses Shoal Lake, one hundred miles east of the City.*
- *The Government of Canada took over three thousand acres of our reserve land away from us without our permission and gave it to the City of Winnipeg to build their water supply. Only a token payment was made. The City's water intake, aqueduct and related works are now located on the best part of our reserve land.*
- *Although they pay non-native governments for the use of their land and do not stop other municipalities from crossing their right of way, Winnipeg pays our First Nation nothing for the use of our land and for years they did everything they could to block us from accessing our own land.*
- *Construction of Winnipeg's water intake displaced our traditional harvesting and settlement area. The graves of our ancestors were destroyed in the construction and operation of Winnipeg's water works and our ancient burial area is now controlled by the City of Winnipeg.*
- *A claim against Canada for these and other damages done to our community from the expropriation of our land has been filed but remains outstanding after almost twenty years.*
- *Winnipeg's use of our land and resources forced the isolation of our community on to a man-made island.*
- *Despite years of appeals for assistance Canada, our so-called Trustee, has refused to provide the means to correct the difficult and deadly access situation that they created.*
- *The continued isolation of our community on this man-made island has not only directly resulted in deaths and injuries to our members but it also strangles any hope of an economy and has made capital works extremely expensive.*
- *Winnipeg has had running water for almost a century. Shoal Lake #40 just got running water about eleven years ago but only after Canada forced us to allow Winnipeg even more intrusions on our land.*
- *Our basic water services were found to be inadequate to protect against parasites nine years ago and a boil water advisory was imposed. Ten years later we are still on the boil water order and Canada has not built a water treatment plant because it's too expensive to build on the island that they created!!*
- *To this day, the water continues to be diverted by Winnipeg with the permission of Canada at the expense of our safety, our lives, our human rights and our economy. Recent statistics confirm that our community is dying. Unlike all other surrounding First Nations, the majority of our members have been forced to leave our homes and live elsewhere, all because of the negative effects of Winnipeg's water supply on our land and rights.*

So, you see, Mr. Predock, the water available in Winnipeg is hardly a symbol of 'healing and solace' in Canada, in Winnipeg or anywhere else in the world. The water that you would use in your building has, in fact been taken at the expense of our community and our human rights. Our friends and family members have literally died in that water. That water is making our people sick and Canada's refusal to stand up for our rights and to correct the isolation they imposed on us is killing our economy and our community.

The people of our First Nation are strong supporters and advocates for justice and human rights. We have been fighting for those principles for many, many years. We know first hand what happens when they are denied. We believe that human rights are too important to be treated superficially. We know that Human Rights is not about pretty buildings. The practice of upholding human rights in the real world is challenging and requires constant vigilance and action. We do not believe that either you or the sincere promoters of this important institution wish to be superficial about Human Rights either.

As someone who seems sincere about the principles of Human Rights, I believe that you will appreciate being made aware of the series of continuing injustices and inequities associated with Winnipeg's water. I am sure you will understand that neither our members nor anyone else who takes human rights seriously could easily ignore the tainted nature of this material in this context. So long as the human rights of our people continue to be violated in the taking of this water, you might wish to find a more appropriate symbol to carry the important message of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

I am enclosing a CD copy of a presentation prepared by our First Nation on the water issue. Should you wish any further documentation of the story of how the taking of our land and water has severely impacted on our community, please contact me by return e-mail or contact the Shoal Lake #40 band office and our Chief at 807-733-2315.

On seeing this story of our forced isolation, I'm sure you will appreciate that we must continue to fight for our human rights until the day we can get safely home.

Thank you for your consideration of our situation.

Yours truly,

Stewart Redsky

cc. Chief and Council

From: Cuyler Cotton <dovetailresources@gmail.com>
Subject: Canadian Museum for Human Rights -Use of Shoal Lake water.
Date: 6 March, 2014 11:59:03 AM CST
To: Antoine Predock <studio@predock.com>
Cc: Christelle Mekoh <christelle.mekoh@museumforhumanrights.ca>

Dear Mr. Predock,
Early in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights project, you were informed by Mr. Stewart Redsky of Shoal Lake #40 First Nation about a number of serious human rights concerns related to the City of Winnipeg's water supply. That supply is diverted through Shoal Lake #40 reserve lands and its forced imposition severely impacts people's lives and the sustainability of that community. (a copy of the April 24, 2007 letter is attached.) Mr. Redsky advises that he never did receive a reply from you about these issues.

Amnesty International have since reviewed and confirmed the concerns expressed by Mr. Redsky. In written communications to all the Canadian governments involved in the ongoing isolation of Shoal Lake #40, Amnesty described the situation as "a denial of fundamental human rights." (See June 14, 2011 letter to Canada, attached.) Coincidentally, these same three governments are also involved in promoting the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

More recently, others in the world have begun to notice the ongoing injustice of Winnipeg's water diversion and the man-made isolation of Shoal Lake #40:
http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/03/201332412813291565.html

Although you were made aware that Winnipeg's water supply effectively denied a whole community their most basic rights, you nevertheless chose to use it in your iconic human rights building. Indeed, your whole design features a water theme and you boast that "The First Nations [sic] sacred relationship to water is honored."

I hope you can appreciate that it is very difficult for the people of Shoal Lake #40 to understand how "First Nations sacred relationship with water is honored" when the very water used in your building has literally killed their relatives and friends, continues to threaten their personal safety and undermines the continued existence of their own First Nation community. Given this apparent contradiction, could you please explain your design decision to use Shoal Lake water in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights?

Thank you,
Cuyler Cotton
Policy Analyst, Shoal Lake #40 First Nation

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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The Honourable John Duncan
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H4
FAX: (819) 953-4941

June 14, 2011

Re: Shoal Lake First Nation (No. 40) 'Freedom Road' proposal

Dear Minister Duncan,

I am writing to you on behalf of Amnesty International Canada to urge the Government of Canada, along with the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba, to quickly and fairly address the pressing needs of the Shoal Lake First Nation (No. 40).

As you will be aware, a large and vital portion of Shoal Lake reserve lands were expropriated in 1916 to secure a water intake servicing the City of Winnipeg. The Shoal Lake #40 community was relocated to a peninsula that was then severed from the mainland by a diversion canal that is part of this same water supply system.

The severe limitations on travel into and out of the community throughout the year are not only inconvenient and dangerous, but also frustrate opportunities for economic development and employment. These limitations also negatively affect the cost and availability of services in the community. As a result, community members have been presented with the stark choice of living in poverty or leaving their lands and community to seek work elsewhere. Community members describe the consequences as including poor health and, for many, a loss of hope.

To make matters worse, the Shoal Lake community, which was displaced to provide drinking water for the City of Winnipeg, has been forced to live without safe, clean drinking water for 13 years. Although Shoal Lake has been named as a priority in the federal action plan for First Nations drinking water, it is our understanding that replacement of the community's inadequate water treatment and distribution system has recently been deferred until at least 2015 because of the high cost of carrying out this work in an isolated community.

An independent consultant reviewing the situation concluded:

> *Shoal Lake 40 is becoming a landless band and its members are being disenfranchised from the many benefits accorded to Aboriginal people living on reserve. More significantly, the young people growing up off reserve are being disenfranchised from the rich history of the Shoal Lake People that is founded on the relationship with the landscape of the reserve and the region. It is*

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this landscape that is bred in their bones and contributes to the continuity of the people. In many respects this sad situation is reminiscent of the dark days in the early 1900's when aboriginal people were starved off their land...

Based on information available to Amnesty International, it is apparent that the isolation of this community, which is the result of government policies and actions, is undermining its very ability to exist.

The situation of the Shoal Lake First Nation amounts to the denial of fundamental human rights, including the rights to livelihood, health and culture. These rights are protected in binding international treaties to which Canada is a party and which all levels of government are expected to uphold.

It is our understanding that the Chief and Council of the Shoal Lake First Nation are seeking the support of all three levels of government for a proposal for that would enable the completion of a secure, year-round access road – dubbed "Freedom Road" – that would resolve the problem of the community's isolation. The community has described the need for a secure, year-round access road as "a matter of life and death for the survival of the Shoal Lake #40 community."

I would appreciate any information concerning the federal government's response to the Shoal Lake First Nation's proposal for a resolution of this longstanding injustice that would restore their rights.

I can be contacted by phone at 613-744-7667, ext 235 or by email at cbenjamin@amnesty.ca.

Sincerely,

Craig Benjamin
Campaigner for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Amnesty International Canada

cc. Chief Erwin Redsky, Shoal Lake First Nation (#40)

Shoal Lake #40 First Nation location- 100 km east of Winnipeg

Lands expropriated from Shoal Lake #40 Reserve by Canada and granted to Winnipeg for Water Diversion. (in orange)

Area 3 is the remaining man-made island where the community is located.