



**National Secretariat on Hate and Racism in Canada**  
**(NSHRC)**

***FOLLOW-UP ACTION PLAN:  
IBA/QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION  
"HATE AND RACISM IN CANADA" CONFERENCE  
MARCH 20-23, 2004***

## **Introduction:**

From March 20 – 23, 2004, the Indigenous Bar Association (IBA) and the Quebec Native Women's Association (QNWA) hosted a national conference addressing ***Hate and Racism In Canada***. With funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the City of Montreal and support provided by the Law Commission of Canada, the IBA and QNWA (hereinafter the hosts) established an advisory committee with non-aboriginal partners to develop the conference program, identify speakers, and promote and assist in conference proceedings. These organizations included representatives from the National Anti-Racism Council, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, the Students Commission, National Council of Trinidad and Tobago Organizations, Law Commission of Canada, United Nations Association in Canada, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, the Chinese Canadian National Congress, the Council for Research and Action on Race Relations and B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights.

As indicated in the agenda, the conference brought together a wide spectrum of plenary speakers and workshop presenters and addressed a broad range of historical and contemporary issues related to the conference theme. The proceedings have also been documented for future promotion by Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN).

## **Background:**

In the fall, 2002, the issues of hate and racism were brought to the attention of the IBA Board after the widely publicized anti-semitic comments by David Ahenakew, former National Chief, Assembly of First Nations, and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nation Senator. Moreover, Member of Parliament, Jim Pankiw, has made similarly incendiary public comments and publications in the wake of Ahenakew's comments, condemning Ahenakew and the FSIN leadership as racists and criminals, and condemning all "race-based policies" that differentiate "Indians" from the rest of Canadian society.

Racism is a root cause of the discrimination suffered by Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Furthermore, the issues of racism and hate in Canada are not confined to Indigenous Peoples – many communities and individuals in Canada have become victims of these vitriolic acts.

The hate that motivated the terrorist attacks against American targets has bred further fear and hatred in Canada. The Government of Canada's response, the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2002 has created serious questions about the security of freedom in Canadian society. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation has reported an increase in hate crimes in Canada following September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. At the same time, thousands of representatives of both government and non-governmental organizations from around the world gathered in Durbin, South Africa for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Indigenous Peoples and others contributed to the submissions and presentations made at the World Conference, and to a greater world consciousness on racism and intolerance.

The experience of racism and hate in Canada has been discussed and studied through various institutions and commissions, including the Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System and the Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples. For these reasons, this conference was conceived to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, academics, lawyers, policy makers, educators and community activists to dialogue on existing and future strategies to address racism and hate in Canada. The conference used a multi-faceted approach, including strategies to address legal protection, public education and prevention, and community partnerships and coalitions. It built on a symposium held on March 21, 2003 sponsored by the Native Law Centre in Saskatoon and the IBA.

While convening the conference itself was a critical short-term goal, in the long-term the IBA is committed to building a lasting and working relationship with partners/associates involved in the production of the Conference in order to promote public awareness and education in seeking to find solutions for the elimination of hate and racism in Canada.

The elimination of hate and racial intolerance will not occur in a two-day conference. It will require a long-term commitment and a continued working relationship with partners and organizations. The remainder of this report addresses actions needed to achieve this goal.

### **Recommended Actions:**

Several recommendations were put forward to pursue common goals and directions as a follow-up to the conference. These recommendations concerned:

- establishing a secretariat to provide input and advice on follow-up activities;
- adopting terms of reference to guide conference follow-up actions;
- responding to recommendations for education/training, information sharing, networking and advocacy raised at the conference; and
- convening future conferences.

These are briefly discussed below.

#### ***Secretariat.***

To assist in guiding the conference follow-up, a Secretariat is needed to work with the IBA Board of Directors. Representatives on the Secretariat should represent the diverse ethno-racial and religious communities and regions of Canada.

#### ***Terms of Reference.***

It will be critical to establish Terms of Reference to set parameters for the follow-up to the conference as well as to establish a process of decision-making respectful of the IBA and of the interests of those serving on the Secretariat. These Terms of Reference will

also identify the scope of activities to be undertaken to address issues of hate and racism in Canada as well as how follow-up actions will be coordinated.

### ***Conference Recommendations.***

There were several recommendations for follow-up activities for the conference host to consider. These addressed the importance of: Education and Training, Communications and Information Sharing; Advocacy and Coalition Building; Identification of Current Issues and Best Practices; and Setting Up A Network.

Specific actions on each of these addressed:

- ***Communications and Information Sharing.*** The use of e-mail, websites, hotlinks and list-serves were suggested as useful tools to allow and enable individuals and organizations to both post and receive information on activities across Canada. Also, a list of individuals and organizations participating in this conference should be shared with all attendees and their websites, if available, linked to a central website. This could be helpful to supporting information-sharing, identifying upcoming issues and coordinating advocacy activities.
- ***Education and Training.*** Many organizations are involved in these activities now and could share with others regarding such topics as 'mainstreaming' responses to hate and racism, dealing with 'reverse' racism and internalized racism, how to build resources and develop proactive solutions;
- ***Advocacy and Coalition Building.*** It was felt that this needed more time to consider and, if appropriate, develop. While there was interest in this initiative, it was generally agreed that such activity was premature at this time and that the individuals and groups at this conference needed more time to get to know each other and understand/appreciate their issues, challenges, needs and approaches to seeking solutions and using advocacy;
- ***Identification of Current Issues and Best Practices.*** Several suggestions were made regarding the need to identify current issues and have them communicated to interested organizations quickly and effectively. It was also suggested that research on 'best practices' would be useful to all organizations, providing them with access to contemporary models of strategies to combat hate and racism and, as such, saving them from having to 're-invent the wheel.'
- ***Setting Up A Network.*** It was strongly felt that a network of organizations participating in the conference was both timely and very necessary to further advance actions to challenge hate and racism across Canada and within specific communities. It was agreed that such a network should link all interested and support information-sharing, research and advocacy, if required.

### ***Future Conferences.***

In addition to the above, it was strongly recommended that future conferences like the March 20-23, 2004 be convened, perhaps annually, to enable this dialogue to continue

and to support the growth of a movement to collectively address hate and racist activities in Canada.

### **Next Steps:**

At the final session on Tuesday, March 23, 2004, it was agreed that the conference follow-up would be facilitated by the IBA and the QNWA and that this be done at a pace that would recognize the diverse interests of individuals and organizations in this initiative and enable inclusive participation.

To this end, the IBA has drafted the following to address the way the conference recommendations can be implemented and proposes that:

#### **1. *Secretariat, Network and Terms of Reference.***

Terms of Reference will be drafted to define the purpose and scope of follow-up activities and to identify the decision-making process which respects the IBA Board's needs, the delegation of authority to the IBA as adopted at the conference, and the involvement of non-aboriginal groups in the proposed secretariat.

**Time required:** The Terms of Reference will be drafted for first and second meetings of the Secretariat.

#### **2. *Communications, Information-Sharing, Identification of Current Issues and Best Practices, Education and Training, Advocacy and Coalition Building.***

A communications link will be set up including e-mail list-serve and hot links on the IBA website. Guidelines and password protections will be set-up to ensure authors of information posted are clearly identifiable and that all information conforms to the principles of the conference, i.e., to challenge hate and racism in Canada. In terms of education and training, the IBA will encourage participant organizations to post information on their initiatives and research will be conducted to identify items to communicate to conference participants, including education/training opportunities and best practices on challenging hate and racism.

Based on research and communications from participant and other organizations, the IBA and the Secretariat will identify key matters for advocacy and coalition building and strategies on how such matters can be addressed. These matters and recommended strategies will be discussed by the IBA Board. On approval by the IBA Board, the matter will be referred to the Secretariat for decision-making and implementation.

**Time required: Ongoing.** It is anticipated that the Secretariat will meet every other month preceded by IBA Board meetings.

#### **3. *Future Conferences.***

The IBA will develop options for consideration for the convening of future annual conferences on hate and racism in Canada. These options will be decided by the IBA

Board and Secretariat and funding pursued from appropriate government and foundation sources to develop and implement.