



Aboriginal Healing Foundation

75 Albert Street, Suite 801
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7
Telephone: (613) 237-4441
Toll-free: (888) 725-8886
Facsimile: (613) 237-4442

Fondation autochtone de guérison

75, rue Albert, pièce 801
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 5E7
Téléphone: (613) 237-4441
Sans frais: (888) 725-8886
Bélinographe: (613) 237-4442

programs@ahf.ca
<http://www.ahf.ca>

*Our mission is to encourage
and support Aboriginal people in
building and reinforcing sustainable
healing processes that address the
legacy of physical and sexual abuse
in the residential schools, including
intergenerational impacts.*

*Notre mission est d'encourager
et d'appuyer les autochtones afin de
bâtir et de renforcer les processus
de guérison souhaitables qui
s'attaquent aux séquelles
des abus physiques et sexuels
dans le système de pensionnats,
y compris aux séquelles
intergénérationnelles.*

Opinion/Editorial

December 17, 2002

Re: Comments made last Friday by David Ahenakew

We have all seen the recent words of David Ahenakew. The spirit is familiar. Here, again, the ugly spectre of anti-Semitism.

What is it that Aboriginal and Jewish peoples share, if not acquaintance with this swaggering abomination called hatred? It has devoured our peoples, has multiplied despair, has forged the machinery of domination and death.

Our Elders teach us to rebuke both the thought and deeds of hate, for according to the teachings it is the work of human beings to promote through their thoughts and actions peace and respect among the world's peoples. Indeed, we are taught that this is what makes us fully human. We know therefore that Mr. Ahenakew's hateful comments have no place in the world we are meant to create for future generations.

Today, many Aboriginal people are trying to undo the intergenerational legacy of colonizing institutions whose aim was the eradication of our cultures, our languages, and our ways of living in the world. In some measure, the efforts of colonization have succeeded. Even so, nothing of our ways as Aboriginal peoples would have survived to the present day, had the logic of racial superiority prevailed. We know that racism is an enemy.

And yet many of us have internalized the notions that we are stupid, dirty, and inferior. Suicide, alcoholism, violence and self-hate continue to plague us. Healing consists in replacing the legacy of racism with a legacy of reconciliation and peace between peoples. Our well-being depends upon the success of this endeavour.

I acknowledge and honour the many Jewish people who have been active in the healing movement. As an Aboriginal person, I am saddened and sickened to see David Ahenakew's comments. He has offended Jewish people everywhere, and has marred a relationship between peoples which I nonetheless believe will remain positive.

It is my hope that people respond to the spirit of hate, wherever it appears, by renewing their commitment to the long and difficult task of healing and reconciliation. We have seen, endured, and overcome much. But when the minds and spirits of our own peoples are conquered, we are lost.

Masi,

Georges Erasmus,
President.