



For survivors' sake, inquiry must move on

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The recent resignation of Justice Harry Laforme as chief commissioner of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission was most unfortunate.

Getting the commission back to work quickly, and with a clear mandate needs to be a priority for the sake of all Canadians.

However, equally unfortunate are the attempts by representatives of the Assembly of First Nations to cast aspersions on Mr. Laforme and blame everyone, other than themselves, for his departure.

Justice Laforme has made it clear that the interference of the AFN -- first, behind the scenes, and now in a blatant frontal attack -- is the source of disharmony and has resulted in a lack of solid progress in documenting truth and seeking reconciliation. What a shame.

This commission's work is not about the AFN, the churches or the government.

It is about hearing from survivors, listening to and documenting their stories, and getting to the truth about what happened during the residential school era.

More importantly, it is about charting a pathway to reconciliation between aboriginal peoples and Canadians, not by ignoring the past but by acknowledging it and embracing a common future.

Constant backroom sniping and public fabrication of imagined wrongdoing by Justice Laforme, the government or anyone who disagrees with the AFN, does a disservice to their organization. Worse yet, it does a massive disservice to survivors who expect this commission to help them -- and all Canadians -- wrestle with the sad legacy of the residential school era.

It's time for the AFN and the other parties to the settlement agreement to back off and let the commission get on with its work, in humble service to the survivors of residential schools.

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National Chief

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