

The Chronicle Journal

Things are not fine in Thunder Bay - Chronicle Journal: Letters To Editor

Posted: Friday, September 30, 2016 6:00 am

Letter to the editor by Jim Leonard |

Re Crime Generally Going Down; Some Lawyers Hurting City's Cohesive Efforts: Mayor — CJ, Sept. 27:

I was surprised and disappointed to see this, outlining the opinion of Mayor Keith Hobbs and the Deputy Chief of Police Andy Hay's opinion that high-priced lawyers from Toronto are driving a wedge between the city and the indigenous community.

I am one of the co-complainants, along with Brad DeBungee, who asked for the systemic review of the Thunder Bay Police. I am writing because I am disappointed that your article speaks to race relations with my community but was published without a single indigenous voice being quoted. It is my hope that you will publish this letter to create some balance to the mayor and deputy chief's public comment.

As the Chief of Rainy River First Nations, I along with my council, have had concerns with the city and the Thunder Bay Police Service that arose long before we hired legal counsel. In my personal and political life, I have become well familiar with the mistreatment faced by the DeBungee family, and of other RRFN community members. I watched the Seven Youth Inquest, and three women from my community are some of the many murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Things are not fine in Thunder Bay. It is disrespectful and patronizing to cast off the experience and concerns of indigenous people by saying that they are just being manipulated by their lawyers.

Most disappointing was the mayor's suggestion that the way forward is to work together, when no one invited us to the council meeting where we were discussed. In the future, instead of attempting to pin faults in this relationship on outside agitators, the obvious answer for the mayor and the Thunder Bay Police Service Board, is to work to build a relationship with my community. We are prepared to appear in front of the police service board where we can voice our concerns. Time will tell, but we trust that we will be welcomed there.

Chief Jim Leonard
Rainy River First Nations