



Standing Against Hate
The Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies
March 10, 2023

Governor General Mary Simon, Inuk, has been receiving hateful comments on her official social media sites. Her sites have been closed to comments since February 2023. On March 8, 2023, International Women's Day, she issued an Instagram statement speaking out about these messages and calling for more respectful speech and the creation of safe digital spaces. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CpiKrz6A4j2/>).

She stated: *I am speaking about this for others who*

cannot, for fear of reprisal or retribution. But my hope is that others will join me. We must continue to speak about the repercussions of harmful discourse, and to push back against those who would denigrate women for their contributions. And we must promote respectful discourse, because engaging with each other is critical to creating a better world and addressing our planet's most pressing issues.

The Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies stands with the Governor General Mary Simon to speak out against hate speech in all its forms and at all its sites. Mary was our chancellor for two terms in the early 2000's. She exemplified the values of inclusion, acceptance, respect, and dignity that our university represents.

We are saddened by the hateful, misogynist, and racist comments that are directed against her because she is a woman and Inuk. She is a member of the original inhabitants of this land and the comments directed at her affect not just her but all Indigenous peoples. The comments also reflect the deep challenges that we face in seeking equity for men and women. Mary states: *These words hurt Indigenous peoples and damage the progress we have made together towards reconciliation. Other comments reflect harm to all women and girls in Canada—especially those who reflect the diversity of our country—and who engage in public life but suffer as a result. It hurts everyone, everywhere.*

We used to say, 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.' We now know this to be untrue. We know that hate speech hurts and, in some instances, kills. While hate speech is on the rise, we are not powerless in its face. We can speak out when we see it; we can identify those who speak hatefully; we can encourage the use of respectful speech; and we can use the values embedded in our traditional teachings to foster climates of respect and dignity. The Seven grandfather/grandmother teachings provide a foundation for our interactions with each other in both the real and virtual world.

We can use our classrooms to help our students to engage in critical and reflective thought. We can use our writing to speak out against the abuse and hate. We can stand with those who are being targeted and shield and support them. We can work to turn hate into respect and in the process create dignity for all.