

Captions:

THE LAW OF SILENCE IS WEAKENING

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Photo 01 –

The Algonquin(*) used to live in the Laurentian forest of Quebec. Since 100 years now, the Canadian government assigns some of the reserves to settle the nomads, forcing them to depend on the government for their livelihood. * *The Algonquins* are aboriginal / First Nations inhabitants of North America who speak the Algonquin language, a divergent dialect of the Ojibwe language, which is part of the Algonquian language family.



Photo 02 –

The loss of cultural references, poverty, and unemployment, the loss of their language, drugs and alcohol are among the changes that caused the increase of violence in the Amerindian communities.



Photo 03 –

In the community cemetery, the graves are decorated with Christian symbols. But among them, remains a subtle sign of the old religion: a braid of perfuming grass.



Photo 04 –

A group of women is blocking the road to prevent the social services from entering the village. Because of the "*Indian Act of Canada*", which restricts their right of access to their property, women are struggling to protect their children against family violence. Having no other options than staying with their children, women are obliged to stay in their husband home and so remain victims of violence. Social services are therefore forced to remove those children even when mothers or grandmothers do their possible to take care of them.



Photo 05 –

Because of a disagreement with the federal government about the budgetary assessment, the community Winneway is lacking of a police constant presence for over two years, jeopardizing the safety of the community. The council estimated \$ 500.000 budget for an effective police operation, while the Department of Indian Affairs offered only \$ 400.000. With such a gap and the withdrawal of federal government negotiations, the community is therefore obliged to rely on a partial presence of the "Sûreté du Québec" (Quebec safety) which costs \$ 1.500.000 per year to the provincial government.



Photo 06 –

Elizabeth Makimoot speaks only the Algonquin language; therefore she can not communicate with her grandchildren and feels very isolated. The young generations rarely learn the Algonquin, which creates a gap between generations and contributes to the loss of traditional values, those where women were respected. The First Nations (*) believed that women shared the same spirit of "Mother Earth": this is the reason why they venerated her.

* The term *First Nations* (most often used in the plural) has come into general use for the Indigenous peoples of the Americas located in what is now Canada.



Photo 07 –

Rosalyn Mathias was victim of repeated rapes when she was 15 years old: after 43 years of secrecy she knows the perverse effects of the law of silence. She admits she did acts of self destruction for more than 20 years before starting a healing process. She is 60 today.



Photo 08 –

Rosalyn found herself pregnant of her attacker when she was only 17. She had a miscarriage in the forest and she did not tell anything to her parents. 43 years later, she finds the courage to return to the same place and do a ceremony.



Photo 09 –

After wearing a skirt not to offend the Creator, she gathers cedar branches.



Photo 10 –

After that Rosalyne sits under the tree that grew on the exact site of her miscarriage and collects her thoughts in silence.



Photo 11 –

Rosalyne made a circle around the tree with cedar branches while speaking to her lost child and perhaps his own lost childhood.

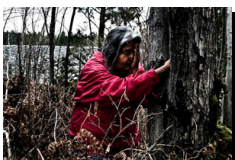


Photo 12 –

Because of the emotion she collapses and hugs the tree for several minutes. In that moment we could only hear the sound of the autumn wind from the *Lac des Quinze*.



Photo 13 –

Rosalyne gets up after the ceremony, looks at the sky and smiles.

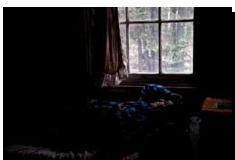


Photo 14 –

Rodgers Alphonse believes that the loss of markers associated with traditional values is an important factor for the increasing of violence. He spends more and more time in his hunting camp in the forest where he says to live peacefully. *"This life makes more sense to me,"* he said. He tried unsuccessfully to teach to the young generation how to live in the forest hoping these activities could connect them with traditional values. *"Young people who have come to my activities were not really interested and wanted to return to the village watching television and drinking with friends."*



Photo 15 –

Moushoom Eva, was also a victim of sexual assault by a person of her family circle at the age of 17: she now breaks the silence that has plagued her life for 20 years.



Photo 16 –

Eva decides to tell the painful events to her daughters: she wants them to be aware of what happened, hoping to avoid the same tragedy again.



Photo 17 –

One of Eva's daughters decides to do acrobatics in order to change her mum's ideas and make her laugh.



Photo 18 –

Little girls playing in the community park.



Photo 19 –

Mathias Rosalyne takes care of her granddaughters.



Photo 20 –

Rosalyn Mathias started to look at the future in a more positive way after the healing process that lasted for over 20 years. Unfortunately, Eva has been found dead on the street side of a village, August 10th, 2009. There was no police investigation or autopsy. To their eyes this is just another Indian woman who died of drugs and alcohol.