

Cindy Gladue: not-guilty verdict ignites outrage and sadness

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Writer

Editors Note: Content may be disturbing

The horror of the Cindy Gladue case - whose accused killer was found not guilty of first-degree murder last week - has sent shockwaves of anger and disgust across Canada.

On Sunday, about a dozen Six Nations community members held a vigil at Veteran's Park for the slain aboriginal woman, while expressing hope the Crown will appeal a jury's decision to acquit her john, Bradley Barton.

Aileen Joseph, a Six Nations woman whose daughter Shelley Lynn Joseph was found murdered in Hamilton on July 2, 2004, was among those at the vigil.

For Joseph, the Gladue case has brought back painful memories.

She says the not-guilty verdict re-victimizes the families of over 1,200 missing and

murdered indigenous women.

"It does for me," she said somberly. She held a glittery poster that read, "The time is now to add our voices to the struggle."

Joseph said the jury's decision is "unconscionable" Gladue, 36, was a mother and a sex worker living in Edmonton, Alta. She bled to death in a hotel bathtub in 2011 after what the court described as "rough sex" with Barton. According to news reports, homicide detectives found an 11-centimetre wound in her vagina which caused the massive bleeding, but the court concluded the wound was the accidental result of "rough sex" and not purposely inflicted by Bradley.

At the very least, Joseph takes cold comfort in the increased awareness of missing and murdered indigenous women.

"I've been a part of the (MMIW vigils) for over 10

years now," she said. "Before, we would only get one or two lines in a newspaper or two seconds of T.V. coverage. Now, it's all over the country. It's getting out there."

Aboriginal women are 4.5 times more likely to die of homicide than non-aboriginal women in Canada.

Joseph says indigenous women are still largely treated as second-class citizens by the justice system and society at large.

"That's what we've lived with this whole time - that we're not worth anything. It's not the best thing to say but it's the truth. We're looked down on. That's how they think about us now. We're second-class citizens."

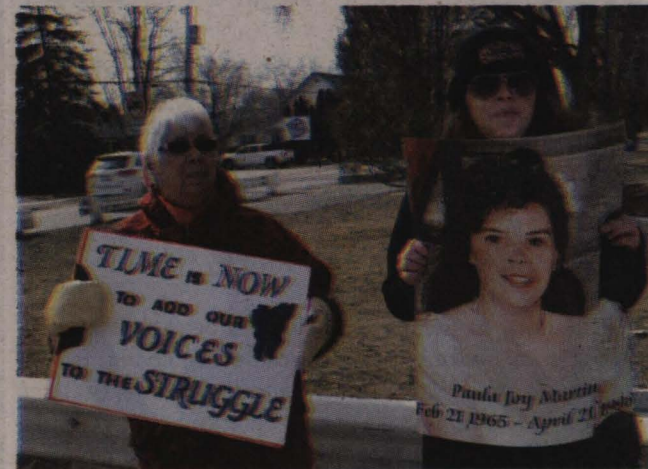
Sandy Montour, director of Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services, says Gladue was further victimized and dehumanized as her preserved vagina was presented as evidence on a slide presentation in the courtroom, in

order to allow for closer scrutiny and examination of the wound that the Crown argued was the result of an intentional stabbing, and not simply an accident resulting from "rough sex."

She, like others at the vigil, are fearful the case sends a chilling message about the worth of indigenous women. "Our women are precious," said Montour. "Canada needs to step it up to do more to protect our women. There isn't enough being done to protect our women."

Montour came out to the vigil to support Joseph, and to demand justice for Cindy Gladue.

"I know that we've lost women here at Six Nations and I don't want that to happen again," said Montour. "I think the violence in our community is on the rise. I was just at the plaza on Friday and I saw a potential altercation about to happen



Aileen Joseph, left, and Jen Mt. Pleasant, right, organized the vigil in memory of Cindy Gladue.

just at the plaza....violence is not acceptable. Because of our oppression, it's easy for our people to go into rage but I think we need to challenge ourselves as individuals and to be more loving to each other and kind to each other." The group stood out in the cold wind for over an hour handing out leaflets.

It was one of dozens of rallies

held around the country on Sunday demanding justice for Gladue. An online petition has over 2,000 signatures demanding an appeal of the verdict.

The petition can be found at: <https://www.change.org/p/honourable-jonathan-denis-gemla-minister-of-justice-and-solicitor-general-initiate-an-appeal-of-justice-for-cindy-gladue>