Statement:
Angelique EagleWoman Confirms Departure as Dean of Bora Laskin Law School, Lakehead University

THUNDER BAY, ON, April 17, 2018: Dean Angelique EagleWoman, today confirmed her departure as Dean of the Bora Laskin Law School, at Lakehead University, effective June 29th, 2018.

EagleWoman, an American Indian scholar and an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribe, started as Dean of the Bora Laskin Law School in May 2016. She became the first Indigenous Woman to be appointed as Dean of a Canadian Law School. The Bora Laskin Law School was established in 2013, with three core mandates, Aboriginal and Indigenous Law, Natural Resources and Environmental Law, and Sole/Small Town Practice.

Citing systemic reasons for her departure, Dean EagleWoman made the following statement:

June 29, 2018, will be my last day as the Dean of the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law at Lakehead University. I will not be able to answer all of the specific questions about my departure on the advice of my legal counsel.

However, I would like to take the opportunity to share some of the lessons that I have learned from my experience in the hopes that it may fuel the fires of change within legal academic institutions. Like many others were, I was drawn to and excited by the new law school’s ambitious mandate to focus on Aboriginal and Indigenous Law, Natural Resources and Environmental Law and Sole/Small Town Practice. As a legal scholar and practitioner, I undertook the challenge to foster a unique approach within this unique new law school with these unique mandates. I sought to, as we do in the North, do things differently. But this was not the work that one person could do alone, and there were many times that I felt very alone.

Law schools are important players within the justice system and they must do their part at all levels to affect positive systemic change and ought to be examples of the same legal principles that they teach to future lawyers and judges. I did everything that I could to further this effort within my time as Dean and now it is time for another Dean to continue that work. Legal institutions everywhere would be wise to pay attention to and effectively address the presence and impact of systemic discrimination. To ignore or deny its impacts is to contribute to injustice.

I am proud of my legacy as the first Indigenous woman to become Dean of a Canadian law school. As an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribe, I have dedicated my career to fighting for justice, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our societies and I will continue to do so. I remain steadfast that the mandate of the Faculty of Law holds a bold promise for brighter futures for the residents and citizens of Northern Ontario and the Indigenous peoples who call these lands home.
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It is my great hope that the leadership at Lakehead University will take my departure as an opportunity to engage appropriate measures and work closely with Indigenous and northern peoples, communities and organizations to truly realize the promise of the Faculty of Law’s unique mandates, consistent with the principle of reconciliation as called for by the TRC Report. I wish the best for the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law, and especially wish the students great success in their legal careers.

Angelique EagleWoman
(Wambdi A. Was’teWin)

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