

Truth and rumours

The Ottawa Citizen

December 17, 2009

The people of Cornwall might never get a clear answer to the question of whether there was a pedophile ring or network in their city.

The inquiry by Commissioner Normand Glaude, after four years and an estimated \$53 million, has ended. "To understand the complex, decades-long interactions of institutions with each other and with alleged perpetrators and victims, you need to read this report in its entirety," Glaude declared this week. Volume One of the four-volume report runs to 1,637 pages, so it's unlikely many people will take him up on it. It's exhaustive without being definitive, at least not on the question of how widespread the abuse actually was.

On the question of how institutions responded, the report is more useful. In his statement accompanying the report, Glaude said institutions were often more interested in avoiding embarrassment than on following up on allegations of abuse. This, in turn, created a climate of mistrust of public institutions, in which rumours could run rampant -- especially in the Internet age.

His report criticizes a number of public institutions, including the Ontario Provincial Police and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall, for responding inadequately to allegations. "When police investigations did occur, cooperation from the Diocese was grudging and guarded. All this understandably exacerbated perceptions that 'there was something to hide'," Glaude says. Certain patterns cropped up again and again, in more than one institution. They didn't understand "responses typical of boys and young men" or the complex psychology of survivors. Institutions were eager to leave the past in the past. They didn't know how to recognize the signs of pedophilia. It's not surprising that many of Glaude's recommendations have to do with training and sensitivity.

The report is hard on former MPP Garry Guzzo for criticizing institutions such as the OPP "based on incomplete or inaccurate information" and without questioning "the reliability of much of the information he was receiving." Glaude says the media, too, could have done a better job of "in-depth analysis and verification and systematic sourcing." Perry Dunlop, the former Cornwall police officer who became obsessed with uncovering the truth, refused to co-operate with the inquiry -- because, Glaude says, Dunlop mistrusted public institutions so much.

All of this left the people of Cornwall with a great deal of smoke -- so much that it obscured the extent of the fire. That's not to say that some people weren't abused, but the darkest rumours of a pedophile ring have never been proven. Glaude found no evidence

that the Cornwall police were involved in a cover-up conspiracy, but did say their investigation was "deeply flawed."

Those who are already believers in the worst conspiracy theories will probably keep believing in them. Glaude himself says that no investigation has so far "provided conclusive evidence" on the question of whether a pedophile ring was operating. This long, expensive inquiry won't remove all traces of the dark cloud that has hung over Cornwall for years.

It might, though, cause some Ontario institutions to do a better of job of responding to allegations of child sexual abuse. As Glaude points out, when institutions fail to get at the truth and communicate it to the public, rumours will rush to fill the void.

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Your Comments

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The Whole Truth

December 17, 2009 - 1:56 PM

It is not likely that the whole truth has yet to come out. This Commission tried to do a thorough job but, in the end, it failed those people that it was intended to help - the victims.

Pedophone rings exist and they are well covered up.

Perry Dunlop may have gone to extremes but when one is faced with innocent children suffering the gravest of abuses at the hands of those we are raised to trust, one can understand the anger and the vulnerability of the victims.

Gary Guzzo tried but had his hands tied by his own government.

It will take a lot of more than Mr. Glaude to uncover what many know to be true.

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Rumor Mill

December 17, 2009 - 9:00 AM

Although some abuse may have occurred, I do not believe it was on such a massive organized scale as rumours made it out to be. This follows the same pattern as the mass hysteria of the 1990s satanic abuse cases such as Martensville. The more outlandish the allegation the more it is believed. We may think we are educated & advanced but our mentality is at the same level as those during the Salem witch trials.