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**ABORIGINAL BRITISH COLUMBIANS FILE CLASS ACTION AGAINST
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

**“Sixties’ Scoop” Deprived Aboriginal Children of Culture, Religion, and
Language Rights**

VANCOUVER, May 31, 2011 – A class action was filed yesterday, by Sharon Russell against the Government of Canada on behalf of Aboriginal British Columbians who were apprehended as children by provincial welfare authorities. The class action, filed in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, alleges that between 1962 and 1996 the federal government negligently delegated Indian child welfare services to the Province of British Columbia. Ignoring its obligations to Aboriginal children, the federal government took no steps to prevent them from losing their Aboriginal identity and the opportunity to exercise their Aboriginal and treaty rights when they were placed in foster homes and adopted by non-Aboriginals.

A member of the Gitksan First Nation, Ms. Russell was taken from her parents and kept away from her Gitksan community starting in 1964, at age seven. Her story is not unique. Between 1962 and 1996 thousands of Aboriginal children were removed from their communities by the car and busload and scattered to all parts of the globe, to non-Aboriginal families across Canada, the United States, and Europe. Virtually every family in every Aboriginal community in Canada lost a child to what has become known as the “Sixties’ Scoop.”

A similar class action was given court approval in Ontario in 2010.

Sharon Russell believes that the Sixties’ Scoop “was just another way for the government to try to get the Indian out of us.” Survivors “lost a lot because taking us away robbed us of our language and culture not to mention the chance to learn important parenting skills.” To Ms. Russell, the Sixties’ Scoop resulted in “another lost generation after the residential schools began to close.”

Her lawyer, David Klein, pointed out that “for Sixties’ Scoop survivors like Sharon Russell, this is a chance to find justice for the Aboriginal rights and identities that were stolen through government neglect.” Just as residential schools began to close in British Columbia, the federal government continued to employ policies that robbed Aboriginal children of their identity. Mr. Klein continued, “the tragic practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families and communities continues to cause harm to this day.”

Ms. Russell is represented by Klein Lyons, one of Canada's most experienced class action law firms.

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