

Colette Shwetz

From: Jennifer Stienke
Sent: July 20, 2023 10:24 AM
To: George Edwards; Colette Shwetz
Subject: Formal Complaint

Good morning George and Colette,

As per my discussion with George on July 19th, 2023, it was communicated to me that Terri has been sending emails and attempting to communicate with me regarding our mutual clients and I have not been responding. I find this concern perplexing as there would be an electronic record of all the emails that have been received, sent, and deleted. In fact, I have not received ongoing communication from Terri, with the exception of an email on July 10th, 2023, inviting the central Gladue team to tour the new office.

Terri has made no effort to respond or provide any action for any of the following emails that I have sent:

- On June 14th, 2023.
- On June 16th, 2023.
- On June 26th, 2023.
- On July 7th, 2023*
- On July 12th, 2023.

Furthermore, I can state that I have not received an email from Terri between June 13th, 2023, and today's date concerning our mutual clients or anything that would suggest there is a communication breakdown on my part.

*Specifically, the email dated July 7th, 2023, was in response to a verbal confrontation that occurred in a courtroom on July 6th, 2023. After Terri introduced herself to the lawyer representing our mutual client, she immediately turned towards me and said, "We need to work on our communication. There is a communication breakdown between us." I was caught off guard – as I mentioned in my email to her – that I did not perceive a communication breakdown on my end. A couple minutes later, she asked me who the presiding justice was in the courtroom, and I told her that I could not immediately remember. She passive aggressively responded with a comment about updating the database. I informed her that I sent an email to her, George, and our staff lawyer on June 2nd, 2023, after our client's first sentencing appearance providing all of the details. I acknowledged my lack of using the database in my email to her as well as during my conversation with George on July 19th, 2023. She responded, "Oh, really?" and that was the end of the conversation. In the email, I specifically said "I really wanted to get your perspective on why you feel there is a communication breakdown between us to alleviate any future issues relating to communication. Is there something in particular that you feel could improve our communication?" She did not respond to the email.

I do not want this to be seen as a personality conflict between two people as I feel this situation has progressed to undermining my professionalism and is affecting my productivity and mental health. To illustrate, I have been questioning my work and have been anxious about submitting the reports to our staff lawyer(s) and to the court due to Terri's negative critique of my work. George has addressed this issue by indicating to only send my reports to himself and our staff lawyer(s), however, it still makes me uneasy having another person read my reports now. Moreover, I am struggling to formulate my ideas and put them into sentences because I have lost my confidence. Although I really enjoy and love my position at NALSC, these comments are encouraging me to look elsewhere for employment.

Initially, I did not want to file a formal complaint against her as I feared there would be negative repercussions. I question Terri's discernment and confidentiality and I'm worried how this information could be shared outside of the office. As I strive to complete complex reports and reach deadlines, I am respectfully requesting that I am assigned

another caseworker, so I can receive the support and assistance that is needed to better enhance my work and assist clients.

Additionally, I know that I have no authority/power to determine the outcome of this complaint, I do want to express that I do not want her to be terminated. I continue to believe that she is a valued member of the Gladue team. This was another reason that I did not want to proceed forward with a formal complaint. During the discussion that Colette and I had on July 5th, 2023, it was decided that it would be viewed as a learning opportunity, which I still hope is an option after this.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding my email, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance,

Jennifer Stienke

Gladue Writer

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Colette Shwetz

From: Jennifer Stienke
Sent: July 20, 2023 9:35 PM
To: George Edwards; Colette Shwetz
Subject: Additional Information for Formal Complaint

Good evening George and Colette,

This is a follow-up email to the previous one that I sent this morning. These are the following negative interactions that I have had with Terri that contributed to personal feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. When I first started with Gladue in July 2021, I made a suggestion that our program reach out to the LU Law School to see if they would allow us to do a presentation. Terri responded to the email stating, "We already do that." I felt my contributions were not welcomed. She later told me in-person that she was very angry with me for making this suggestion and stated she wanted to put me in my place. In November 2022, I offered to provide Alex with copies of Gladue reports for her review and Terri abruptly told me to "stay in my lane." I then felt unable to reach out to my new coworker and assist when Terri said she was too busy to provide Alex with the information.

In April 2023, I spoke to George while Terri was on vacation to create a mental health conference about the disorders that we have seen an increase in diagnoses in Gladue. I had a plan in place to contact professionals in Thunder Bay to provide education and resources to NALSC staff and NAN members about the mental health disorders. I was looking into grants to see if it would be eligible to receive funding to rent a conference room at a hotel. George was supportive of the idea and indicated that he would like to attend something like this. After Terri returned from vacation, I informed her of my idea and she said, "It's always the white people behind Indigenous organizations that do these things." I also told her that I was thinking of naming it "The Spirit Keeps The Score" due to the importance of the Spirit in Indigenous culture and spirituality. She replied, "That's cultural appropriation." As a result of this interaction, I was self-conscious and unable to go through with this idea because I knew I was not considered a contributing member of the team.

During the team meeting on April 27th, 2023, George asked for everyone's opinion regarding creating a standardized intake form for the Gladue program. To preface in 2021, I tailored a Gladue intake form that Terri had created previously and added questions from an intake form used at my previous place of employment to suit my needs. In late 2022, the team was tossing around the idea to make it a standard practice to incorporate it as part of protocol and Lenny wanted to adapt it fit his needs and Leslie took Lenny's to tailor it to suit his needs. I had no problem with this – I think this was a wonderful idea because each person on our team has different ideas and different ways of acquiring information. I was and still am not angry or discouraged that this happened. So, during the meeting, everyone shared and had different approaches to the intake idea, which was to be expected. However, Terri mentioned something about how an intake form is a Westernized philosophy and suggested that my intake form was an insult to Indigenous people. I was taken back because I did not think it was an insult because other Indigenous agencies, such as Dilico, Tikinagan and the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre have intake forms that are repeatedly used for contacting their clients.

Ultimately, these incidents have resulted in and reinforced personal feelings of alienation from the team and I often felt like I was "them," while the rest of the team was "us." Although I was receiving positive feedback from my superiors and our judicial parties, I often found myself cycling between thoughts of "Why am I here?" and "I am burdening the team with my opinions/ideas." It has intensified my anxiety, which is now being observed by other staff and I feel like it has negatively affected my professionalism and performance in our workplace. I dread going into the office and I feel a tremendous amount of stress when I am in the office, for which I am unable to relax. This anxiety is manifesting into physical symptoms of nauseousness and tension headaches, which are causing me distress as I try to focus on my reports. As I type this email, my thoughts shift from feelings of present anxiety to worries about future consequences. I am worried that my working relationships within NALSC and outside of NALSC will deteriorate because of this.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email,

Jennifer Stienke

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