

Reason for nomination as written by Karlee Anne Sapoznik

Attention: Lisa Rowson and MP Shelley Glover

On behalf of the Alliance Against Modern Slavery and the entire Université de Saint-Boniface community (who support this message), I would like to nominate Sister Norma McDonald for a Queen Elisabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal.

She has raised thousands of dollars for the most voiceless and vulnerable in our local and global communities, and impacted the lives of countless students at l'Université de Saint-Boniface where I teach as a Professor.

I first met Sister Norma McDonald, CSC as a student at Saint Boniface University in September 2003. I worked very closely with her as President of the "Comité Développement & Paix CUSB" from 2003-2006. Her approach to social justice profoundly changed my life. It led me to pursue a PhD in contemporary slavery, to co-found a non for profit charitable organization, and to work in collaboration with her and the students at St. Boniface University ever since. Through building grass roots community relationships to bring down barriers and effect change, I have witnessed Norma McDonald's ability to transform the lives and outlooks of many students, staff members, individuals and communities in Winnipeg, Canada, Peru, Haiti, Mexico, Mali and beyond.

I want to stress Norma's unparalleled dedication, leadership, vision and ability to build rapport and foster intercultural dialogues with others. Her ability to do the latter is unlike any I have observed. I have witnessed this in the last 8 years on many occasions. As Chaplain at St. Boniface University, she launched the Development & Peace Committee in 2003. In the first year of its existence, she organized a dinner for students of all religions and cultural backgrounds to encourage them to work together on projects to help the homeless in Winnipeg and construct a well in Mexico. As a result, from its inception, the Development & Peace Committee has been non-partisan and made up of members from all of the faiths of the university student body community, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, Atheists and Buddhists. It is multifaith, multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic.

Once rapport and understanding are established locally and/or globally, Norma's work is far from finished. She then leads and gives diverse groups the understanding, inspiration and skill set to address the root causes of issues and fight in solidarity for the human rights of the most vulnerable and exploited in our local and global communities. She encourages and facilitates smart activism. Consider two examples.

Firstly, our team in Peru learned in our "sessions de formation" that helping women can be a successful poverty-fighting strategy anywhere in the world. Norma, like experts from around the world, stresses that microfinance has done much to bolster the status of women and to protect them from abuse. Informed by this, members of our Peru Project led by Norma in 2007 met with micro-enterprises and now sell bracelets to support local microenterprises that assist women in need in Lima and its environs. By helping unlock women's power as economic catalysts, we are now a part of the solution to eradicating global poverty. We also maintain contact with the

political prisoners and the intellectually and physically challenged individuals with whom we worked.

Secondly, those who participated in the Mali Project in 2010 organized by Norma are now working in collaboration with reforestation advocates and anti-slavery groups combating environmental degradation, cocoa trafficking, hereditary slavery and forced marriage across the country. These initiatives were made possible through relationships Norma forged and facilitated with the staff at the *Ministère de la promotion de la femme, de l'enfant et de la famille* in Sikasso, Caroline Ouellet at the Canadian Embassy to Mali in Bamako, the Berthé family in the village of Dyou, President of the Republic of Mali Amadou Toumani Touré and his staff, and many others, all of whom we had the privilege and honour to meet.

Norma expects and gets a lot out of students. She is gifted in motivating and fostering an "ouverture d'esprit". Her latest initiative, Project ReconciliACTION, is *groundbreaking*. It is the first of its kind that I am aware of in our country that aims to connect non-Aboriginal university students and the francophone community with First Nations peoples through an intercultural process of reconciliation and focus on the human trafficking and sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women and youth.

Studies on human trafficking in Canada conclude that the majority of people trafficked within Canada are Aboriginal women and children. The RCMP estimates, however, that only 5% of Canadians are aware of this issue. Many people think human trafficking is only something international – far from anything in Canada. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Canada is a source, destination and transit country for human trafficking. In my capacity as President of the Alliance Against Modern Slavery, I recently had the opportunity to conduct surveillance with Winnipeg's exploitation and sex trafficking unit. Winnipeg is one of the hubs of a triangular trade in Aboriginal young women and youth between Winnipeg, Kenora and Thunder Bay. On average, traffickers earn approximately 300 000 dollars off of one young Canadian per year. Given the complex root causes of sex trafficking of Aboriginal women and children, any one anti-trafficking practice will be insufficient to solve the problem on its own. It is vital that programs like Project ReconciliACTION raise public awareness of human trafficking and support and strengthen Aboriginal family and community networks, including survivor-led shelters, transition programs and specialized services for those vulnerable to trafficking. Norma and the students at St. Boniface University are doing this in collaboration with key stakeholders. They are working with Aboriginal elders and leaders across Canada to identify the complex factors that contribute to the sexual exploitation and trafficking of Aboriginal children. In doing so, they are and will continue to provide awareness to a broad range of officials, community service providers, first responders, health care workers, faith-based communities and other community organizations. To my understanding, this is the first francophone community led initiative that will bring this to light in the French community and beyond. Even more important, the group will present their findings and experience on several occasions upon completion of the project in 2013 following. As Norma emphasizes, for the Aboriginal community to heal from the legacies of the reservation system, urban relocation, abuse and those concomitant with human trafficking and sexual exploitation, the non-Aboriginal community needs to come together with it. Our younger generation of students is certainly a part of the solution. Central to this is providing young leaders with first hand cultural and historical understanding, and the opportunity to work in solidarity across the boundaries of race, ethnicity, language and creed.

Norma's contribution to our community is unquestionable. Her initiatives and hard work over the past two decades have both given our community the means to take action, and drawn attention to some of the most underpublicized human rights crises of our time.

On behalf of Saint-Boniface University and the Alliance Against Modern Slavery, I therefore highly recommend and urge you to consider her as a nominee for a Queen Elisabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Sincerely,

Karlee Anne Sapoznik