



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ONWA COMPELS MMIWG NI COMMISSIONERS TO BE BRAVE

**OTTAWA, Dec-13-2018** - Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) Executive Director, Cora Lee McGuire-Cyrette inspired the heart and honoured the families of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry (MMIWG-NI) in Ottawa today.

ONWA does not speak on behalf of Indigenous women, we speak to Indigenous women's issues. The organization has always spoken from the perspective of what can we do to help in the daily lives of Indigenous women; "We talk with Indigenous women. We listen to them. And then we take action."

ONWA started out serving on average 500 community members annually, today that number exceeds 10,000. ONWA asks what do Indigenous women need to be empowered in all aspects of their lives?

ONWA does this, the Commission needs to do this. They have heard directly from the families. And now is the time to act on what they have heard.

In terms of policing, McGuire-Cyrette referenced Gerry McNeilly's Broken Trust report released in Thunder Bay yesterday as being a template for best practices across the country for all police services to help ensure safety of Indigenous women and girls.

In the early 1990's, Indigenous communities in and around Thunder Bay raised concerns about the quality of Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS) investigations into the deaths of Indigenous people. A Grassroots Committee on Native Unsolved Murders was formed.

In 1993, the committee circulated a 3,000-signature petition requesting that a federal inquiry be established to look into the circumstances of 18 unsolved deaths of Aboriginal people. ONWA fully supported the petition.

Further on, McGuire-Cyrette spoke of the sacred bond between mother and child and how that bond and the roles of mothers have been usurped by colonization: "Indigenous women have an inherent right to pass on who we are to our children. Being a mother is the oldest profession in the world. Due to

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colonial systems like the Indian Act, the Human Rights of Indigenous Women have been denied. We have to stop creating a line in the sand and create one category of status 6(1)(a) for all First Nations people”.

A part of the impact of colonization is the current Human Trafficking crisis and it’s disproportionate impact on Indigenous women and girls. “Recommendations can’t be made to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry without addressing Human Trafficking. All the issues such as housing, food security and the mother child bond are interconnected.”

McGuire-Cyrette stated, “If I’m not well, you’re not well, we need love and respect.” McGuire-Cyrette called for the reinstatement of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation with a gender specific focus included in the work.

There is a prophecy our Knowledge Keepers speak of - they say “when Indigenous women are restored to their rightful place as leaders, communities will become whole again.”

**For more information, please contact:**

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