



Media Release, for Immediate Release
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ONWA Sends Open Letter to the Inquiry Commissioners

The Ontario Native Women's Association would like to publically express our withdrawal of support for the continuation of the Inquiry in its current format and approach. After monitoring the progress of the Inquiry to date, as well as listening to the Chief Commissioner, Marion Buller on July 6th, 2017, describe the progress of the Inquiry as "lightning speed" in spite of many delays over the past 10 months. President, Dawn Harvard stated "we no longer have faith that this Inquiry will meet its mandate and work responsibly with families and communities".

We want to be clear. We want an Inquiry. We have been a part of the advocacy since 2005 that led to this Inquiry. We want the Inquiry to provide families with the opportunity to be able to share the stories of their loved ones. We want families to get the answers that they need and for their experience at the Inquiry to be part of a larger healing journey. We also want the Inquiry to honour the women and girls, to hear the lessons from their stories; and transform these lessons into powerful recommendations for governments, institutions and communities to take up.

Executive Director, Cora McGuire-Cyrette stated "This Inquiry needs to honour Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; we cannot continue to harm the most vulnerable population in our communities. When do Indigenous Women get to matter?" We want the Inquiry to assist families in their healing and to help Canada, Indigenous nations and communities to provide the guideposts to the changes we need so that we do not lose any more Indigenous women and girls to violence. We do not believe that the Inquiry in its current configuration can achieve these outcomes.

There are a number of concerns that ONWA is addressing:

- a) The Inquiry intention to restart hearings in the Fall of 2017 in Thunder Bay;
- b) The lack of commitment and willingness to reach out to families;
- c) The lack of culture and ceremony;
- d) The absence of strong Indigenous women's leadership;
- e) The lack of communication;
- f) The lack of procedural and legal fairness in the process;
- g) The lack of a trauma informed approach;
- h) The legal focus of the Inquiry instead of looking at prevention.

As we have advocated for ten years for an Inquiry, this is not what we were advocating for. Family members' having to contact the Inquiry instead of being respectfully contacted; Indigenous women's organizations being left out of the process; and the lack of a trauma informed approach is unacceptable.

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