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The Ontario Native Women's Association Welcomes Announcement of Limited Extension to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Thunder Bay, ON – The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) wishes to acknowledge the Indigenous women and children who have been lost due to violence, have survived violence, who are currently living in violent situations, as well as family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women. ONWA also wishes to acknowledge the Indigenous organizations that work to create safety for Indigenous women and their families. Healing belongs with Indigenous women and their communities, while Indigenous agencies like ONWA play an important role in ensuring that Indigenous women remain at the center of our shared responsibility.

ONWA welcomes the announcement of a limited extension to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This decision strikes the right balance between utilizing the current Terms of Reference to their fullest potential while limiting the harmful impact the Inquiry has had on some survivors and family members. Our hope is that all survivors and families who choose to participate in the Inquiry process are heard, while the reasons why some survivors and families have chosen not to participate are also heard and respect is extended to them. Over the coming months, the National Inquiry has the opportunity to renew focus on hearing from incarcerated women, street-involved women, and survivors of human trafficking.

"Families in Ontario have been deeply divided over the effectiveness of the Inquiry," reflects ONWA President Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard, "Now, we can set our minds to making Indigenous women safer, seeking justice through reform to police practices, and healing communities."

ONWA continues to endorse the National Inquiry's Interim Report recommendation to facilitate healing in communities through the re-establishment the Aboriginal Healing Foundation with a gender-based, trauma-informed lens.

"The Federal Government has announced \$21.3 million over three years to improve access through support services," says ONWA Executive Director Cora-Lee McGuire-Cyrette, "if facilitated through the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program, there will be a significant amount of Indigenous people who will be unable to access this funding as they are ineligible for this program, including First Nations women who have been excluded from Indian Status through the sex-based discrimination in the Indian Act. This money would be better invested into re-establishing of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation."

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