



## Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) Releases Journey to Safe SPACES: Indigenous Anti- Human Trafficking Engagement Report

**Thunder Bay, May 29, 2019** – ONWA released the survivor and community led [Journey to Safe SPACES: Indigenous Anti- Human Trafficking Engagement Report](#) at a press conference held in Thunder Bay today. The report, funded in collaboration with the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, provides a pathway for new collaborative and integrated working relationships in Ontario.

Input was gathered by bringing together those most directly impacted by human trafficking and the survivors who were willing to share their stories. This was done by developing key partnerships with the Métis Nation of Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the Chiefs of Ontario, the Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services and the Native Resource Centre of Toronto. ONWA has facilitated the development of an integrated network of informed frontline workers that now extends to policy makers, police officers and health workers. “Together, we have been able to look deeply at what is needed to safely exit Indigenous women and girls from human traffickers and gangs” says ONWA Executive Director Cora – McGuire-Cyrete.

“It takes tremendous time and patience to do this work, and the Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS) partnership with ONWA will continue to do positive work to end Human Trafficking”, stated Sylvie Hauth, Chief of Police - Thunder Bay Police Service.

In 2017, ONWA was selected to deliver the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons (IAHTL) project under Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking. ONWA listened to and engaged with the brave survivors, who shared their lived experiences to ensure that other women and girls could be protected. Jessica Wilson, Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison stated “many Human Trafficking survivors did not have a voice before. I was a victim, then a survivor, now I fight”

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Based on extensive engagement with over 3,360 community members and the ongoing relationship with 250 self-identified human trafficking survivors who have shared their stories, ONWA has developed 14 recommendations, which ONWA proposes to implement through a six part strategy rooted in relationships and collaboration.

It is key that when a victim is identified, all barriers are removed to ensure they are survivors. #safeSPACES.

- **Survivor- centred and survivor informed services that are culture and gender based and delivered in a trauma-informed approach.**
- **Prevention through education, training and public awareness campaigns, both in print and in person, targeting those who are most at risk and those who can respond first to the signs, namely peers, parents and educators.**
- **Access to safe and respectful spaces at service delivery agencies that offer women only programming so women can speak openly and without fear about their experiences.**
- **Core supports for transitioning to a new life, including emergency funding for immediate relocation, which is delivered in an expedient and efficient manner to ensure women and girls have no wait times to safety.**
- **Evidence-based policy and system reform informed by survivor expertise and the successful extraction of Indigenous women by ONWAs multi-partner collaborative network that works across government, disciplines and professions.**
- **Streamlined supports offered through a barrier free simplified process.**

As Chief Peter Collins of the Fort William First Nation stated, “our community and First Nation continue to work together to make our streets safe; working together is the only way we can make an impact”.

The IAHTL project brought together Indigenous agencies, survivors, and community members to amplify the voices of Indigenous women who experienced exploitation and to help us build capacity among survivors. ONWA recognizes women and survivors as community leaders, especially when it comes to safety. We need to acknowledge and honour their traumas while helping them recognize their inner strengths and resilience. Survivors are community leaders who can address safety issues because they have lived experiences. Survivors’ voices and recommendations are integral to the work moving forward.

To view Journey to Safe Spaces: <http://www.onwa.ca/upload/documents/onwa-iaht-liaisons-project-report-2017-2.pdf>

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