



MEDIA RELEASE: OPINION PIECE | Tuesday, July 30, 2019

## For Victims the Pain Doesn't End when they escape the Grips of Human Trafficking

**Jessica Desmond Solomon** – Aanii, my Spirit Name is Aki-Kwe (Earth Women). I am a First Nation woman from the Robinson Huron Treaty. As a young girl I was a victim of being targeted into Human Trafficking (HT) in Toronto, Canada's largest city. I am the face of a horror that is spreading like cancer across this country. I am the face that you don't see or choose not to see until you're looking into the eyes of your own daughter, sister, niece or mother.

I was manipulated and lured to Toronto and exploited with human trafficking by a woman in Penetanguishene Correctional Facility in 2008. I endured years of child sex abuse, my body will never heal to normal. My spirit will. My pimp got a thirteen year conviction.

On this *United Nations World Day against Trafficking of Persons* the focus is on highlighting the importance of government action. I want the people on the subway, the corner, in the bank, at the grocery store – people going about their everyday lives to open their eyes and hearts to the reality of human trafficking.

As human trafficking continues to exact its societal price I think government needs to know HT victims are not getting the services they need. I feel like I continue to be trafficked because the government never helped me when I escaped the clutches of this evil underworld. The system continues to fail me. I sacrificed myself for my people. I continue to warrior up. This is my voice calling on governments, not just in Canada, but around the world to realize that HT leaves broken people who desperately need help.

The life I live is very high risk, I should be relocated right away. Sadly, there is nothing the crown can do to help me. Even if I wanted to go back to the reserve and live, I can't. There is no housing. Everyday I'm oppressed and discriminated against. This sickness grows inside of me. I ask myself how a society could let this happen. What needs to change to ensure that all girls are safe and that no child ever needs to experience what I have experienced?

This hasn't been going on only in my generation, it's been happening over multiple generations. My ancestor's trails cross borders to the beginning of time, and here I am feeling cornered in what is considered Canada's safest city. All I want to do is live the *mino bimadziwin* and go to sundance to sacrifice, dance, pray for healing for my people. This is what is called living the good way of life or "mino bimadziwin."

The focus of organizations like the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) is keeping Indigenous women safe, while addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous women as victims of human trafficking. Currently ONWA is exploring ways to implement the actions outlined in their recently

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Head Office: P.O. Box15-684 City Road, Fort William First Nation, ON P7J1K3 ·  
Toll Free:1-800-667-0816 · Phone: (807) 577-1492 · Fax:(807) 623-1104

released report [Journey to Safe SPACES: Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Engagement Report](#). Work like this is reconciliation in action. It represents our voices. We need governments to listen to our voices – the victims.

We should not have to give up our identities to placate shifting political landscapes. Human Trafficking needs to be a national action - not just provincially. I don't want to fight. I just want to live again but not in a world under siege living dangerously close to an extinction of its own making.

We need people who support us and have our backs, not using us as a career move, “tokenizing” me. I became sick of telling my story for free. People using me and my children. Using me at their conferences, without consent or compensation. I am the Keeper of my story. I am a Knowledge Carrier on how to keep the girls safe, and get justice.

Today I am proudly a public speaker and activist for First Nation women and girls – getting justice as I did. I am an Indigenous rights activist, human rights activist, water defender, earth caretaker, peace activist, animal rights activist, anti-nuclear activist, anti-war activist, women's rights activist, judicial and citizen activist, and environmental activist.

When I heal me, I heal the next generation ahead of me. I want governments to sincerely take the action needed to help victims of human trafficking find a supportive path back to being people in a kinder, safer world.

**For more information, please contact:**

Andre Morriseau, Communications Manager  
Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)  
Email: [amorriseau@onwa.ca](mailto:amorriseau@onwa.ca)  
Tel: (647) 970-7661

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