



Media Release
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**ONWA Honours International Women's Day with the Continued Call for a National Inquiry:
Time to "Make It Happen"**

Every year, International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8th as a way to inspire women, celebrate their achievements, and encourage greater advancements and equality. This year's theme is "Make It Happen", and the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) is passing that message along to the Federal government in regards to a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Last week ONWA had the opportunity to attend the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada as part of the Ontario delegation. The Roundtable was unprecedented in that it provided a much needed opportunity to discuss the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women at a national level, and helped to bring increased awareness to the issue. ONWA supports Ontario's 10 proposed actions that can be taken right now to improve the lives of Aboriginal women and girls, including the creation of a pan-Canadian public awareness campaign and a socio-economic action plan for Aboriginal women and girls.

Although the Roundtable was a meaningful first step in addressing the national tragedy of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada, ONWA continues to advocate for a national public inquiry as a necessary step to effectively understanding the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls and to creating a solution.

"While we are certainly pleased that the Roundtable took place, and that every province and territory in Canada has taken a unified stance on the issue and have collectively committed to ongoing dialogue and coordinated action, we remain frustrated and disappointed with the Federal government's continued refusal to see the need for an inquiry," states Dr. Dawn Harvard, ONWA President. "The Roundtable was the perfect opportunity for Prime Minister Harper to finally get on board with the rest of country and do the right thing, but once again he failed to hear the collective voices of the people."

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The Federal government continues to claim that now is the time for action as opposed to a national inquiry. While ONWA absolutely supports the idea of action being taken, it is imperative that the action be comprehensive and effective - and that requires a meaningful understanding of the issue in its entirety.

“Effective action requires an understanding of the underlying social issues, and the reasons as to why the problem has been permitted to go on for so long,” explains Harvard. “The Federal government’s stance that the national tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women is nothing but individual cases of crime completely disregards the significance of the problem and doesn’t inspire any confidence that their "action" would be effective. We are dealing with a sociological problem that requires a nationally coordinated, collaborative response. This is why we continue to push for a national inquiry.”

ONWA views International Women’s Day as another great opportunity for the Federal government to prove that the lives of Indigenous women in Canada are valued and that they deserve to be protected. Too many women’s lives have already been stolen, and too many families and communities have been destroyed by violence. Once again, we implore the Federal government to hear us – we need a national public inquiry and we need it now. It’s time to “Make It Happen”!

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