

Cora McGuire-Cyrette

ONWA Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



Cora McGuire-Cyrette is a proud member of the Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point First Nation). She lives in Thunder Bay with her husband and has three children, two grandsons, and a menagerie of pets.

Cora McGuire-Cyrette has been serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), the largest and oldest Indigenous women's organization in Canada, since 2015. Ending violence against Indigenous women and their families and ensuring equal access to justice, education, health services, environmental stewardship, and economic development, sit at the cornerstone of the organization.

In her leadership role at ONWA, she has tripled programs and increased the association's employment 400%. An honest, caring, and courageous leader, her passion and dedication for creating safe spaces for Indigenous women and children in communities is the driving force behind her work. Cora is a fierce advocate. She uses her voice to champion the rights of Indigenous women and girls and to amplify Indigenous women's and youth's voices, work, and advocacy as the knowledge holders and carriers in their lives. She has been instrumental in cultivating Indigenous women and girl's healing and in the reclamation of their role as leaders within the family, community, provincially, nationally, and internationally.

Aware of the histories influencing policy and communities, Cora provides keen and critical insights into social, political, and economic contexts in Canada. She challenges colonial legacies as a role model in Indigenous women's leadership and was critical to the development of the Ontario Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Cora serves as Co-Chair of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council of Ontario, and the Chair of the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services among others.

She is committed to the social and political transformation of Indigenous women through self-determined participation. Her pedagogy brings forward original teachings grounded in her culture, including land-based practices learned from her grandparents, who were Residential School survivors. Her program and policy development work includes an Indigenous gender-based analysis and builds a community development approach focused on safety and healing.

Guided by ONWA's 2021-31 Strategy Picture, Cora is leading ONWA to expand their advocacy internationally. In 2023, Cora was a member of the Canadian delegation at the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) at the United Nations. She also led ONWA's delegations at the United Nations Water Conference and the 22nd Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). This advocacy builds on previous international work including participating in the 2016 UNPFII and the Gender Equality Forum, the 2018 Healing our Spirit Worldwide Conference, the 2019 UN Civil Society Forum, and the Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting.

In 2020, she was recognized by the Honourable Jill Dunlop, Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues in the Ontario Legislature for ONWA's work on human trafficking. In 2021 Cora was the Women's Executive Network (WXN) Canada's Most Powerful Women Top 100, Mercedes-Benz Emerging Leader recipient.

Cora holds a BA in Indigenous Learning and Sociology from Lakehead University and an MMBA from York University, Schulich School of Business.