

BIOGRAPHY:

Cora McGuire-Cyrette ONWA Executive Director



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

Cora joined the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) in 2011 and has served as Executive Director since 2015, tripling programs, increasing the association's employment 400% and increasing services to over 30,000 people across the province during the pandemic. 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. A fierce advocate, Cora uses her voice to champion the rights of Indigenous women to speak on their own behalf as the knowledge holders in their lives. She has been instrumental in cultivating their healing and in the reclamation of their role as leaders within Indigenous communities.

Aware of the histories influencing policy and communities, she 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 involved in the development of the Ontario Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and serves as Co-Chair of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council of Ontario, 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.

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. Her expertise and knowledge of the unique realities of Indigenous women and girls was crucial to the development of the Provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy. As the Lead Manager of the Summit to End Violence against Aboriginal Women, she guided the creation of the Strategic Framework to Ending Violence against Aboriginal Women in Ontario. Her international work includes participating in the 2016 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Gender Equality Forum, the 2018 Healing our Spirits Worldwide Conference in Sydney, the 2019 UN Civil Society Forum, and the Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting in Geneva.

Cora holds a BA in Indigenous Learning and Sociology from Lakehead University and an MMBA from York University, Schulich School of Business. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, she led her province-wide senior staff in Schulich Management Training, preparing them for the challenges ahead.