



Ontario Native Women's Association

Media Release

December 19, 2011

Re: Action Needed to Address Sexual Violence and Aboriginal Women

For Immediate Release

Ontario – The impacts of colonialism and paternalism in various forms, such as the residential school system, have left devastating impacts on the social, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Our women who were traditionally honoured are now in many cases devalued and disrespected. Negative ideologies surrounding Aboriginal women have manifested themselves through the pervasiveness of sexual violence in many of our Aboriginal communities, with the incidence of sexual violence being as high as 9 out of 10 in some communities.

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) President, Dr. Dawn Harvard believes discussions concerning sexual violence rooted from residential schools, systemic discrimination and on-going colonization resulting in the division of roles, community structure and culture is long overdue; a topic that has recently garnered mainstream news coverage. "Too many of our women and children are silenced by fear in their own communities. Appropriate victim supports are virtually non-existent in our communities," says Harvard.

While, ONWA is actively engaged in initiatives to end sexual violence, Canadian officials have yet to adequately respond to this issue. Sexual violence and the structural and historical issues which compound it are a reality amongst Aboriginal communities. Discussion and action is needed by all governments working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities. We believe that only through open dialogue, accountability and healing for families, communities and nations will sexual violence be stopped.

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) is a not for profit organization that empowers and supports Aboriginal women and their families in the province of Ontario.