

A DAY TO LISTEN - CORA-LEE MCGUIRE-CYRETTE

Hi, I'm Cora-Lee McGuire-Cyrette. I'm the Executive Director here at the Ontario Native Women's Association. What we need our collective community right now to know is that we need more than Half Masts here in Canada. We need action. We need to make sure everything that's come to light that's been hidden for so long never happens again to any other generation of people.

You know, we have to remember that our women and children are the centre of our community. And that's what colonization did and took from us. When you're looking at the intergenerational trauma, you look at the issues we're facing right now, but we also have to remember the resiliency of Indigenous women and Indigenous communities during all of this. I have seen nothing but leadership from women coming together to do healing to light Sacred Fires, to have conversations and continue to work and support the community, provide services, do programming, do healing, in the middle of the most horrific trauma that we face that we've known about.

But once again recently, what's shown us is we've been seeing the devastating impacts of colonization in the wake of the news of the finding of the mass graves. And we know that there is more too. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Joyce Echaquan hearing and also Barbara Kantner's justice that was happening locally, too, in Thunder Bay. The interconnection to all of those issues that have happened, we need to look at what has happened since then? What have we done recently to ensure that this never happens again? We have so many reports. We have so many calls to action. We need the TRC Calls To Action to be an election platform. There's always going to be elections, federal and provincial. This is where our allyship needs to come in. This is where we need allies. We need allies to tell their local government that this is important to them and they want to see action on this. That's where Canada can begin to improve.

This is where allies and non-Indigenous people want to help and support. And how they can help and support is by making sure that this doesn't stop here, that we do callouts for an apology. The fact that the Pope refuses to apologize, that's pretty impactful that he can't admit to being held accountable or the wrongdoing. What we've learned from all of this is we cannot address colonization with the same systems that have sustained and perpetuated violence against Indigenous women and girls. We need change. We need systemic change. We need to do things differently. We need to overcome the disruption of Indigenous women's voice. You know, we have to be strength-based. We need to include Indigenous women in political decision-making, in political life. We all need to do this together. Everyone has a role, like that- that's the beauty of this. At the end of the day, when you're living, when you're coming into crisis, and how do you get out of crisis?

You know, we're coming out of a pandemic where there's an opportunity right now for us to come out of a pandemic all safer, not just physically from a virus, but safer physically from violence. And that's what we need to change. We need Indigenous women and grassroots organizations, for them to be supported to do this work. You know, and we've been doing this work for 50 years, and a large portion of it has

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been largely unfunded and unrecognized. What we need to do is really make sure that this story doesn't stop. We need people to continue to fight together to say that Indigenous people are going to be safe in our community because if we have safe communities where Indigenous people are safe, the whole community is going to be safe. That's where the change needs to happen.