



*Kawartha Truth and  
Reconciliation Support Group*

The Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development;  
The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion;  
The Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services

November 12, 2020

**Re: Indigenous Women and Girls with Disabilities are Bigger Targets of Sexual Violence**

Dear Ministers Monsef, Qualtrough, and Miller,

We are writing to urge you as Ministers to take action on the matter of Indigenous women and girls with disabilities, both of whom are bigger targets of sexual violence. This is a human rights and social injustice issue that has received little media attention, little attention from politicians, and little attention from academics, educators, and sadly also the 231 Calls for Justice of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report. There is a dire need to make the invisible visible.

It is with appreciation that we are moving toward an understanding of “intersectional oppression”, meaning Canadians are beginning to hear cabinet ministers, and more recently the Throne Speech, rely on the discourse of the need to value an “intersectional framework”. What is of concern, though, is that many people do not have an understanding of what living as an intersectionally oppressed person really means, and thus what an intersectional framework response should or could be. Appreciating an intersectional framework means more than observing and embracing people who are intersectionally oppressed, and placing them on a list of oppressed groups. Living intersectional oppression means a harder lived reality that is greater than the sum of the various layers of oppression one struggles under. For example, an Indigenous woman with a disability lives structural oppression in a way that is greater than what simple math may imply as in 1 (gender) + 1 (race) + 1 (disability) = 3. Rather, the layers of oppression interact making the lived reality worse and greater than 3.

The June 3, 2019 MMIWG report concluded that systemic racism and human-rights violations had contributed to the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls; and that this constitutes genocide. While the report was received by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, to the disappointment of many people, Canada’s MMIWG National Action Plan has been delayed. While this is disconcerting in itself, a limitation of the MMIWG calls for justice is the lived reality of Indigenous women and girls with disabilities. It is for this precise reason that we reach out to you, Maryam, Carla, and Marc as Ministers whose mandate addresses this.

It is now understood that Indigenous women and girls are targets of sexual violence. It is also understood that Indigenous people have a disproportional number of disabilities. This is the result of Canada's history of Indigenous people being denied the right to clean land, water, housing, and environmental racism. Perpetrators know Indigenous women and girls with disabilities are easier to prey upon. Indigenous women and girls with disabilities cannot see or hear a perpetrator approach, and women and girls in wheel chairs cannot get away, and further women and girls who are confined to a bed cannot defend themselves or possibly even scream out for help.

We are aware that the reasons the needs of Indigenous women and girls with disabilities are not addressed has to do with a lack of awareness, and a lack of research dollars dedicated to the topic. It is difficult to find statistics on this topic. Despite this there are informing statistics:

- 31% of Indigenous people have a disability. This is 2.3 times the national average. In some Indigenous communities it is estimated that 40% of people live with a disability (Durst and Bluehardt, 2001).
- 83% of women with disabilities will experience sexual abuse (Stimpson and Best, 1991).
- Women and girls with disabilities experience physical and sexual assault at 4 times the national average. Neurodiverse women and girls are especially vulnerable (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2004).

As the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Maryam; the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion, Carla; and the Minister of Indigenous Services, Marc; we feel that you are most suited and politically situated to:

1. Ensure Indigenous women and girls with disabilities are included in the soon to be unfolded MMIWG National Action Plan;
2. Launch a national awareness campaign re: Indigenous women and girls with disabilities are targeted by offenders because they are more vulnerable;
3. Dedicate / direct government resources and funds to research the lived reality of Indigenous women and girls with disabilities who are bigger targets of sexual violence.

Sincerely,



Lynn Gehl, PhD, Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe, Pikwàkanagàn First Nation  
Alice Olsen Williams, Chair, Kawartha Truth & Reconciliation Support Group  
Neil Belanger, E. D., British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society  
Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of the DisAbled Women's Network  
Wendy Jocko, Chief Pikwàkanagàn First Nation  
Ann Chadwick, Pikwàkanagàn First Nation

Veldon Coburn, PhD, Algonquin Anishinaabe  
Jen Cole, PhD, Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe  
Megan Stephens, E.D., and General Counsel, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund  
Hawa Mire, Executive Director, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action  
Roy Brady, Council of Canadians Peterborough and Kawartha Chapter  
Larry Gillman, President, Beth Israel Synagogue / Jewish Community Centre Peterborough  
Charmaine Magumbe, Community and Race Relations Committee Chair Woman  
Jill Jones, Chair, Peterborough Older Women Networking  
Melodie McCullough, Journey Magazine  
Elizabeth Pickett, Co-Ordinator Canadian Feminist Network  
Marion Little, Member of the Peterborough Peace Council  
Paul Brown, Bearing Witness Canada  
Linnéa Rowlatt, PhD, Network on Culture  
Ellen Gabriel, Kanien'keháka from Kanehsatake  
Jim Abel, Kawartha Truth & Reconciliation Support Group Member  
Laurie Siblock, Kawartha Truth & Reconciliation Support Group Member  
Nadine Changfoot, Associate Professor, Political Studies and Trent Centre for Aging Studies  
Judy Rebick, Writer  
Francine Bryan  
Janice Keil  
Dorothy Boddy  
Jane Weeks  
Lori Barkley, MA  
Fiona Whittington-Walsh, PhD  
Tori Cress, Anishinaabe Kwe, Beausoleil First Nation  
Alex Wilson, PhD, Opaskwayak Cree Nation  
Joan Kuyek  
Lukayo Estrella, MSW  
Lina Sunseri, PhD  
Monica Vida  
Sheelah McLean, PhD  
Darlene Kaboni, Wikwemikoong First Nation  
Marlyn Bennett, PhD  
Anita Olsen Harper, PhD, La Seul First Nation  
thohahènte Kanien'keha:ka, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte  
Philip Kienholz  
Ziysah von Bieberstein  
Sheila Nabigon-Howlett, Peterborough  
Melanie Sangster  
Dr. Scott Simon, Professor, University of Ottawa  
Dr. Lana Ray, Assistant Professor, Lakehead University  
Jo Hayward-Haines  
Rebekah Ingram, PhD  
Cathy Remus, Ottawa, Unceded Algonquin territory

Mary Gordon  
Pamela Schreiner  
Kathleen Yearwood  
Chanel Carlson, JD Candidate 2021, Red River Métis  
Barbara Herring  
Alana Robert, Métis  
Avalon Carthew  
Danielle Mackenzie  
Ian Puppe, PhD  
Linda ManyGuns, PhD, Siksika Nation

CC:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau - Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Carolyn Bennett - Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations