

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (“MOU”)  
BETWEEN  
The Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
 (“AMO”)  
AND  
The Ontario Native Women’s Association  
 (“ONWA”)**

**1.0 PREAMBLE**

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA) recognize the importance of continuously establishing and maintaining strong and respectful relationships between municipal governments and Indigenous women’s organizations. This MOU signifies a first of its kind relationship between AMO and an Indigenous women’s organization – a gap that will be filled through meaningful dialogue and actions that are mutually beneficial and have positive collective impacts. The AMO and ONWA also recognize that Indigenous women have historically experienced and continue to experience threats to their safety and personal integrity at significantly higher rates than other members of their communities. With this understanding, the ONWA and AMO enter into a partnership agreement to work together in the spirit of reconciliation to improve Indigenous women’s safety, wellbeing and access to services in our communities and build greater understanding in municipal governments of their role in this.

**2.0 CONTEXT**

The AMO and ONWA recognize the critical role of both Indigenous women’s organizations and municipal governments in responding to the unique and diverse needs of Indigenous women and their families in Ontario. The need for stronger relationships between municipalities and Indigenous women’s organizations in Ontario has been recognized as a key gap. As such, the ONWA and AMO have determined to work together to address the ongoing systemic and socio-economic challenges and threats that Indigenous women face in order to improve these circumstances for the benefit of Indigenous women and all community members.

The ONWA and AMO seek to collaborate on initiatives that create tangible opportunities and outcomes for our respective member organizations to engage and work together on provincial, regional, and local initiatives that advance the safety and well-being of Indigenous women and their families. It is our common objective that

this MOU build a foundation for a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between AMO and ONWA for many years to come. Partnership activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Awareness building amongst each organization of the interests and challenges of our members.
- Participation at events to build understanding amongst members.
- Contribution to policy development and positions taken by each organization.
- Training opportunities.
- Collaboration on issues that affect our members such as advocacy regarding resourcing, service delivery, and capacity building.

In implementing this MOU and continuing to build and deepen the relationship between the ONWA and AMO, the parties will use the following principles and **the spirit of reconciliation** as the foundation to their engagement:

- **Safety and Wellbeing:** Ontario's communities must support the quality of life of all members. Indigenous women's safety and wellbeing must be addressed to ensure communities are truly safe and contribute to the development of all members.
- **Active Participation and Collaboration:** Municipalities have a responsibility to ensure Indigenous women's participation in policy development and decision-making processes that affect them. This principle recognizes the substance of the articles in the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- **Indigenous Women's Leadership:** The value of Indigenous women's experiences, expertise and knowledge to design, plan, implement and evaluate public policy and programs that impact the wellbeing of their families and communities is recognized.
- **Respect for Indigenous Identity, Diversity, and Culture:** The distinct identities, diversity, and cultures of Indigenous women across Ontario are recognized and respected, with additional consideration given to gender, sexual orientation, age, language, ability, religion, spirituality, belief systems, and socioeconomic differences.

The newly established relationship and MOU between ONWA and AMO is a first of its kind in Ontario, and as such, should be flexible to allow for change as needed (especially given that ONWA's work is grounded in the needs of Indigenous women and the community).

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

#### **ONWA**

The Ontario Native Women's Association ("ONWA") is a not-for-profit organization established in 1971 to empower and support Indigenous women in the province of Ontario. ONWA is mandated to work towards ending the unacceptable levels of violence Indigenous women face and this work is guided by ONWA's vision where: "We celebrate and honour the safety and healing of Indigenous women and girls as they assume their leadership roles in the family, community, and internationally for generations to come."

ONWA is committed to strengthening community responsive programming for Indigenous women's wellness across the lifecycle. The safety issues faced by Indigenous women are intersectional and critically link to ONWA's 9 key safety focus areas: Mother Earth/Environment, Family Violence; Sexual Violence, Child Welfare, Human Trafficking, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Housing and Homelessness, Justice, and Health. Emphasis is also placed on Indigenous youth, and the collective responsibility to support and assist them to develop life skills, health and wellness, and connection to culture, Elders, and community.

#### **AMO**

The Association of Municipalities is a non-partisan non-profit organization representing almost all of Ontario's 444 municipal governments. AMO's mandate is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario by working together on shared goals and common challenges.

AMO promotes the value of the municipal order of government as a vital and essential component of Ontario and Canada's political system.

Strengthening relationships with Indigenous partners to better serve Indigenous peoples and ensure greater social equity is an AMO priority. AMO recognizes that as service providers, municipal governments must be responsive to the needs of Indigenous peoples and those accessing municipal services. Municipal government leaders and staff have a key role to play in the healing, learning, and restoration needed to support reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and nations.

This MOU is a statement of intent to communicate, collaborate, build understanding, and exchange information to advance the interests of our collective memberships across Ontario.

## 4.0 SCOPE OF AGREEMENT

This MOU does not create any binding legal obligations on the parties or any authorities for one party or another.

## 5.0 SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

### a) Relationship-Building and Maintenance

- i) ONWA and AMO policy directors will meet at least annually to share information about potential partnership opportunities and to update one another on joint initiatives, with further meetings as required.
- ii) ONWA and AMO policy staff will communicate regularly on items of mutual interest or shared concern as previously specified.

### b) Information Sharing

- i) ONWA and AMO staff will share information when relevant opportunities arise for collaboration, such as joint advocacy in influencing or shaping the policy landscape.
- ii) ONWA and AMO may establish formal protocols to facilitate sharing of identified data sets that are of relevance to each organization and which may help with work in any of the priority areas for collaboration.

### c) Collaboration

- i) Policy Development and Implementation: ONWA will have representation on relevant AMO task forces and participate in AMO's policy process as deemed fit. ONWA will consult with AMO on issues relevant to municipal government.
- ii) Indigenous Advisory Committee: ONWA will have representation on AMO's forthcoming Indigenous Advisory Committee which will provide advice to AMO to build strong and sustainable partnerships between municipal governments and Indigenous service providers and communities.
- iii) Training and Professional Development: ONWA and AMO will share educational opportunities on issues of mutual interest and support mutual access to these opportunities as deemed fit by both parties.
- iv) Joint Initiatives and Partnerships: ONWA and AMO will consider opportunities to advance mutually-beneficial joint initiatives, which may include joint advocacy, policy position development, specific training or events, and other opportunities as appropriate.

## **6.0 EFFECTIVE DATE, DURATION AND REVIEW**

This MOU takes effect on the date it is signed by both parties, until it is terminated.

The AMO and ONWA may, at any time, initiate a review of this MOU by notifying the other by letter.

The AMO and ONWA may amend this MOU, or any part of it, by written agreement.


## **7.0 TERMINATION**

Either the ONWA or AMO may terminate this agreement with at least 90 days written notice to the other party.

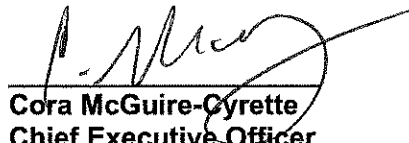
## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

In signing this agreement, we, the undersigned agree upon the elements set out in our MOU. It is further agreed that should additional activities and areas of collaboration be identified; they will be included in the spirit and intent of this agreement.

## **SIGNATURES AND DATE**



**Brian Rosborough**  
Executive Director  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario



**Cora McGuire-Cyrette**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ontario Native Women's Association

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_