



Statement on MMIWG2S Tree of Hope on Parliament Hill

DEC. 17, THUNDER BAY, ON – “I would like to begin by acknowledging Retired Constable Sharlene Bourdeau of the Thunder Bay Police Service, a tireless advocate for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

“Retired Constable Bourdeau was the driving force behind the original Tree of Hope Project, which honours and raises awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people. The Tree of Hope Project has since been adopted by other police services throughout Ontario, and for the first time last night, a Tree of Hope shone on Parliament Hill.

“On behalf of all the members of the Thunder Bay Police Service Board (Board), I would like to acknowledge and honour the counted and uncounted Indigenous girls, women, and two-spirit people who have been murdered or remain missing. The red lights on a Tree of Hope shine to honour and remember the Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or remain missing.

“The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in this country is tragic. Indigenous women in Ontario are three times more likely to be murdered than other women. The high level of violence against Indigenous women in Ontario has roots in deep-seated colonial attitudes that perpetuate racism and discrimination.

“I’ve heard hope described as the belief that even when the path is dark or the odds seem insurmountable, there is always the possibility for things to change and get better. But I don’t believe hope is just a passive feeling. I believe hope is an active choice to envision a brighter future and to keep moving toward something better in the face of tragedy and pain.

“Everyone gathered on Parliament Hill last night was doing exactly that. They were choosing hope. As more and more police services and the communities they serve light trees, there will be greater awareness and outrage over the tragedy of missing Indigenous women and girls, and more people will honor their memories. This to me is a sign of hope.”

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