



Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW)
Comments by RMWB Councillor Dogar

February 4, 2022

EDMONTON - IAAW makes the following statement on Fort McMurray City Councillor Dogar's comments regarding Indigenous people.

February 3rd, 2022 we were publicly reminded of how myths and stereotypes about Indigenous people continue to undermine efforts to address the reality of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

During a public budget meeting of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB), a motion was tabled by Councillor Kendrick Cardinal, requesting that the RMWB consider funding prevention initiatives for Murdered, Missing and Exploited Indigenous People. IAAW commends Councillor Cardinal for tabling this motion before Council.

City Councillor Shafiq Dogar, Fort McMurray, Ward 1, is quoted as publicly stating in the Council's debate that he did not support the motion because "*Indigenous people in Wood Buffalo reside in the rural areas and only come to Fort McMurray to get drunk, or fight, or have other legal issues*". This statement is false, and suggests that rhetoric of this nature is acceptable. It is not acceptable.

Since 2004 it is believed that at least nine Indigenous women from the Wood Buffalo Region have been reported missing or murdered. Only one week ago Ms. Sherri Flett was found murdered in a Fort McMurray home. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Ms. Flett's family as they continue to grieve the loss of their loved one.

In 2021 the Final Report of the National Inquiry on MMIWG concluded that "*An absolute paradigm shift is required to dismantle colonialism within Canadian society, and from all levels of government and public institutions. Ideologies and instruments of colonialism, racism, and misogyny, past and present, must be rejected.*"

Challenging positions that perpetuate myths and stereotypes is not only necessary to combat violence against Indigenous women; it is an essential legal obligation of all governments. Municipal governments like the RMWB have an opportunity to implement change in such a way that impacts the everyday lives of community members, at multiple levels and across multiple sectors.

A Councillor's position of power and authority in that influential capacity ought to be exercised in a manner that is honourable, respectful, and considerate of the real-life issues facing all citizens. Clearly, as demonstrated by Councillor Dogar's response, intentional work needs to be done to address the reality of MMIWG in the RMWB.