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HAMILTON-National Aboriginal Awareness month was ushered into Hamilton Monday evening with a gathering of community members and leaders from Six Nations, New Credit and Hamilton area. Gatherers filled the Hamilton City Council Chambers on Monday evening to hear

The Uncomfortable Truth - Canadian Policy Enables Violence Against Indigenous Women

informing the audience of the stark reality of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Listing several names of Indigenous women who have gone missing across the country in the last few weeks alone, King told the audience "We are not seeing the true number of missing women in the media. Indigenous women are going missing every day."

The event was created to further promote Indigenous lawyer and activist Pam

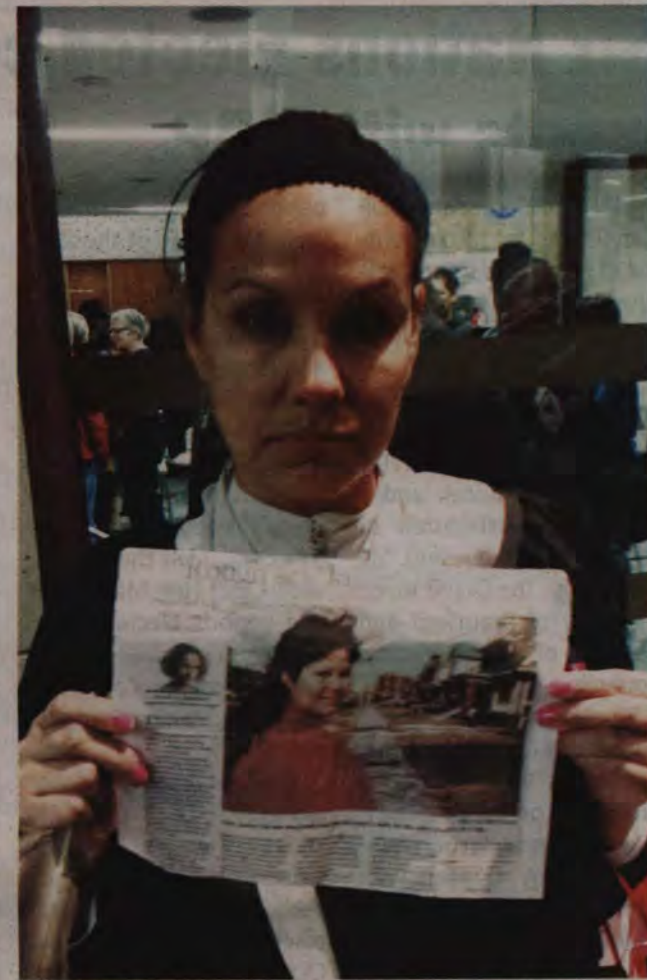
communities.

Palmater believes the numbers reported by the RCMP are inaccurate as they themselves are the perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women. "The message to Canadians is that the issue is criminals [Indigenous men] are committing crimes against other criminals [Indigenous women] and the problem can be solved by throwing more money to the police. When the vast majority of our women are going missing in

the ones who have brought the issue into the media forefront and keep the issue in the headlines."

Sterritt warned against the failures of previous inquiries performed with out genuine consultation and participation of Indigenous peoples with final reports not acted upon. "We need education and reconciliation," Sterritt told the audience, "Change is possible only with a power shift in the dynamics of Canada. Indigenous peoples can no longer be treated as second class citizens nor our women as 'disposable'."

Six Nations mother Wonda Jamieson shared the story of her mother's murder and further trauma experienced from the media's racialized representation. Jamieson's mother was murdered in the City of Hamilton a few blocks from her home. The family received little communication from Hamilton Police investigating and did not learn of the details surrounding their mother's death until the trial months later. The devastation of their family's loss was further compounded by the degrading and insensitive headlines in the Hamilton Spectator. "For a while I was ashamed because of the media representation," said Jamieson "They portrayed her as an alcoholic, not as our mother with a family and values. She was a wonderful woman." Jamieson, who is a student of Social Work at McMaster University, called for further prayers and support for Indigenous women and organizations. "Our family is living the consequences of



residential schools," commented Jamieson "the Hamilton Native Women's Centre is where I found support and its devastating to hear their Rosedene location is closing." Norma General, Six Nations Elder, explained the cultural and societal impacts of violence against Indigenous women.

"My granddaughter's murder had multiple health effects on me and our entire family," shared General. "It's been 7 years and we're still working through the emotional toll." General explained the violence against women is the ongoing consequences of residential schools and stripping Indigenous children of their

language and culture.

"Women aren't being respected," stated General "Our traditional lifestyles and ways of being have been disrupted by government policies so that we are no longer free to be who we want to be."

General called for action through prayers, education and further awareness of the value and importance of Indigenous women.

The evening concluded with a challenge to those gathered by Emcee Danielle Boissoneau. "We are challenging you to overcome the apathy you've been taught as Canadian citizens," encouraged Boissoneau "You now have a responsibility to use and share this knowledge."



what Pam Palmater describes as the "uncomfortable truth", Canadian policies and laws that enable violence against Indigenous women. The event was led by Indigenous women and families sharing the ripple effects of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. The evening was opened by EdebwedOgichidaa Val King

Palmater's call for educating the Canadian public of the "uncomfortable truth" and how Canadian laws and policies past and present contribute to violence against Indigenous women. A video of Palmater (unable to attend due to an illness in her family) was played calling for an inquiry enacted with immediate supports to Indigenous women and

urban centers not in Indigenous communities." Keynote speaker Angela Sterritt, Gitksan artist and journalist for the CBC, believes an inquiry is needed out of respect for the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women. "The families of missing and murdered Indigenous women are the real detectives," remarked Sterritt, "They are