

Whitney McGraw

NOMINEE FOR VICE-PRESIDENT REGION 1

Aanii kina wiiya, Whitney McGraw ndizhnikas miinwaa anishinaabe nooswin Mkaadehaankwat, miinwaa Forever Growing Sunflower Woman, Ajijaak Dodem, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Mnidoo Mnising Ndoonjibaa.

Hello everyone, my name is Whitney McGraw I am an Ojibwe Anishnaabekwe from M'Chigeeng First Nation, Manitoulin Island. My given name is Whitney McGraw, my Anishnaabek names are Forever Growing Sunflower Woman and Black Cloud Woman, and I belong to the Crane Clan. I strive to walk daily with my seven-grandfather teachings, reconnecting with my culture, my people, my duties as an Anishnaabekwe. I have started my healing journey over the past few years and continue to do so. I am proud of who I am and where I come from, I was not always able to say that so confidently.

I have been nursing for the past seventeen years in rural Northern Ontario, servicing the Manitoulin Island area in various capacities. I have always felt a strong pull towards advocacy, especially within the healthcare sector. In my early years of nursing, I was able to identify the areas of concern related to rural nursing and began questioning healthcare management decisions very early on in my career. Wondering why they would let the nursing staff suffer? Why would they let patient care suffer? Why would it be profits over people? Why is no one saying anything? Why is no one listening?

I then moved into various areas of nursing, acute care, emergency care, OB, surgical, home and community care, long-term care, and education. Finding various areas of concern in each rural sector of health care in our areas. For the past seven years in leadership roles and capacity building.

I began my journey with ONA in 2019, being nominated and accepted into the Bargaining Unit President Position at my long-term care home for Local 002. I accepted this role with the utmost respect and humility, to stand for and fight for our members, our rights, our residents. This was a struggle to say the least, I joined the Unions collective fight during the pandemic, when my voice was desperately needed. As everyone is able to reflect upon how union representatives and nurses were targeted by management in every sector, when we were fighting for **our safety** during one of the most challenging times in healthcare history for Canada, specifically for Ontario.

I will never stop fighting for what is right, for equality, for equity.

Upon attending my first in-person event with ONA, feeling the presence of our union, solidarity and strength. I felt this within myself, my spirit, my knowing. I knew I had to do more; I knew I had to help in any way I could.

This has always been my sword, advocacy. I am not afraid to yield or use it.

It was at this time that I decided to jump headfirst into our union, and lending my voice and views. I joined the Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Team and the ReconciliACTION working group in 2024 and have been supported and supported these members. I have felt their struggles firsthand, listened to their stories of oppression, racism and institutionalized inequity faced by nurses within our health care systems. This needs to end. We cannot move forward with this mentality, with this pressure and struggle faced by our racialized groups. For far too long our voices have been ignored, and the value of our voices have not been recognized. This is one of the areas I am passionate about, it is not only a passion, but also a part of me, it is me. Equity and equality, the rights we fight

for as oppressed and racialized groups. We need to stand together collectively, regardless of our differences, ethnicity, culture, or language.

My clan, Ajiiaak (Crane), are the leaders within our Anishinaabek communities. The Crane reminds us to think carefully and thoughtfully before speaking, to speak with intention, with care and kindness, to do so in a clear and honest way. Crane clan members are the ones we look to for guidance. I feel this so strongly, I am certain that we can find a way forward, together, as one united nation. We must. We need to be kind, listen and acknowledge everyone walking this earth. I am ready to help our union, guide us on the path forward, in the right way. I was born with a voice.

Working in rural health care has opened my eyes, we struggle with nursing shortages, safety, workload concerns, human rights and equity biases and barriers, inequity, this is only to voice a few of the major concerns as well as the concerns close to my heart. I am ready for this journey. Although my time in an ONA bargaining unit position has only just begun (five years), I know that I will be fighting for us, and our rights regardless of the outcome of this vote. That is how strongly I believe in our union. I will not give up. This is too important.

Region 1 is the largest region (geographically), this is and always will be my home, my people. I've been a part of the struggles, I can see the struggles, I've faced the struggles. I see our nurses suffering, ultimately, our patients and residents suffering. This ends now. With the new ONA, with our grassroots, with your help, with your support, with your voices and your voted leadership, we can make change. We can change for the better, we need to drown out the Ontario government voices of hypocrisy, lies, for-profit health care, screaming patriarchal, misogynistic nonsense.

Our Ontario Nurses Matter. Our Nursing Voices Matter.

It ends here and now. We can do this. I got you.

Miigwech; Nya:wen; Ekosani; Merci; Thank you

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