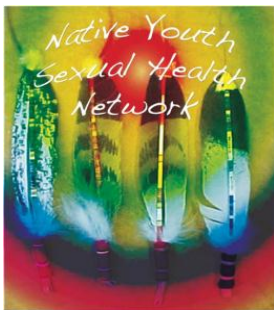


The Native Youth Sexual Health Network



www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com

NYSHN statement & resources on recent sexual assault in Thunder Bay in support of Indigenous women in IDLE NO MORE and all survivors of violence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE December 30, 2012 - The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) would first like to acknowledge the courage and strength of 'Angela Smith', an Indigenous woman in Thunder Bay who was sexually assaulted on December 27 to [speak out about the violence she experienced](#). With prayers, tobacco, and in our many Indigenous languages we send you love and community in this difficult time.

We support the requests that have been shared by the family for community members to travel in groups, stay together, take care of each other's needs, protect and love each other while not responding with violence. They want people to feel safe participating in the Idle No More movement and anywhere our peoples may be.

Violence against Indigenous women and girls has been, and continues to be used as a weapon of colonialism and a way to undermine the strength of our leadership. For this reason, NYSHN sees raising our voices together against sexual violence and making change for violence against women to stop as an integral part of ANY movement. This is especially relevant given the fact that Idle No More was started by Indigenous women. The health and well-being of our communities depends on the health and well-being of our mothers - including Mother Earth.

However, this is not only about 'protecting women' - it is also about protecting our men, Two-Spirit, Trans and gender non-conforming brothers and sisters and all our communities from the everyday violence of colonialism. Gender based violence, rape, and sexual assault are not 'social issues' that can be dealt with after the fact, they are real and happening NOW.

Resisting all forms of violence, whether it is legislative assaults like Bill C-45 or sexual assault is EVERYONE's responsibility because gender based violence affects us all. Laws not only affect our lands but also our bodies: there is a direct connection between the violence in these two areas. We affirm the right survivors or victims of violence have to be believed and supported unconditionally when they say they have been assaulted regardless of whether they report to police or media. Trust that survivors and victims know what is best for them, and support their decisions about what they would like to happen after an assault.

Whether you are *#idlenomore* or *#neverbeenidle*, here's **what you can do:**

1) Please send direct letters of love and support for our sister 'Angela Smith' in Thunder Bay (name has been changed for confidentiality) to Krysta at

kwilliams@nativeyouthsexualhealth.com who will ensure they are delivered.

2) Have specific discussions leading up to/during/after Idle No More events about how to protect each other from various forms of violence and have a list of local resources readily available to share. In the planning think about creating a "safety team"; people who are designated to respond to incidents of assault or violence should they occur and who could also organize safe transportation to and from events. Ask Elders/Grandparents that you trust and/or other helpers to attend so they can support and also be available to talk and listen.

3) Different things can potentially be "triggering" for people; meaning they can bring up past or current experiences of violence or trauma. Keep this in mind when people may express difficulty participating in a certain way or come to a place where they might be ready to share about what's happened, happening or what may happen to them. Having supports in place, as mentioned above in point 2 and resources below is also important for this. When in doubt, ask what type of supports would be appreciated.

4) Consider having 'teach-ins'; which can be workshops, talking circles, panels, or just open forums regarding the many ways in which sexual/gender-based/family violence appear and what we can collectively do to prevent them from happening. Invite local community members who are already working in these areas or contact us at NYSHN for support to make this happen.

In addition to accessing local community resources here is a list of resources for sexual/domestic/family violence:

In Canada:

Talk4Healing 1-855-554-HEAL(4325) www.talk4healing.com

Talk4Healing is a free, 24/7 confidential and culturally safe telephone help line for Aboriginal women living in Northern Ontario providing service in English, Ojibwe, Oji-Cree and Cree. They provide culturally sensitive crisis counselling, advice and support, personalized information and referrals, and acceptance of Aboriginal women's issues in a non-judgemental way.

National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence has a mandate to reduce family violence in Aboriginal communities, provides supports and resource development as well as list of all Aboriginal shelters in Canada. Contact **450-638-2968** or www.nacafv.ca

Families of Sisters in Spirit - a volunteer, grassroots, non-profit organization led by families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Contact familiesofsistersinspirit@gmail.com or find them on Facebook.

Native Women's Association of Canada - website contains various toolkits and other resources on violence against Indigenous women and girls <http://www.nwac.ca/>

Canadians for Choice information, access, and referral line for sexual and reproductive health services nationally across Canada: Call **1-888-642-2725** English available 24/7, service in French 9-5pm Monday-Friday or www.canadiansforchoice.ca

In United States:

National Indigenous Women's Resource Centre seeks to enhance the capacity of American Indian and Alaska Native (Native) tribes, Native Hawaiians, and Tribal and Native Hawaiian organizations to respond to domestic violence and safety for Indian women. Contact **1-855-649-7299** www.niwrc.org

Mending the Sacred Hoop works from a social change perspective to end violence against Native women and children while restoring the safety, sovereignty, and sacredness of Native women. Contact **1-888-305-1650** www.mshoop.org

Save Wiyabi Project Wiyabi is Assiniboine for "Women". In addition to promoting awareness to the pandemic of interpersonal violence, the Save Wiyabi Project highlights legislation that is beneficial to reservations and empowers Native women. Contact save.wiyabi.project@gmail.com or find them on Facebook and Twitter.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline creates access by providing 24-hour support through advocacy, safety planning, resources and hope to everyone affected by domestic violence. Contact **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** www.thehotline.org

The Native Youth Sexual Health Network works with Indigenous youth and communities across the United States and Canada to advocate for and build strong, comprehensive, and culturally safe sexuality and reproductive health, rights, and justice initiatives in their own communities. www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com

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