



**For each bead, moccasin top & ceremony for our missing and murdered Indigenous women and families:**

NYSHN Statement of Support & Media Advisory for Walking With our Sisters

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE October 1, 2013 - The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) is proud to support the national launch of **Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS)** in Edmonton (amisko aciy waskahi) at the Telus Atrium at the University of Alberta on October 2nd. This project is a commemorative art installation to honor and remember the many missing and murdered Indigenous women across the United States and Canada. At the heart of the organization of this work is a process of Indigenous ceremony and respect for local Indigenous protocols as it travels from community to community.

Through our work at NYSHN we know that art is a powerful and effective tool for Indigenous Peoples to express our cultures, stories and experiences. For many of us, arts-based methods offer more inclusive opportunities, especially for young people, to express their emotions and experiences, while articulating impacts of systemic violence like racism and colonization. WWOS was started from bringing together beading groups, musicians and community members to mobilize, talk about and heal from violence in our communities.

There are many reasons why we feel this project is necessary and deserves support. This is about honoring the lives of those who will not be forgotten, even though they have passed on or are still missing. There is power in this being funded and directed completely by Indigenous community members and artists. This represents a reclamation of our sovereignty and ability to do this work by and for our own communities.

By having a venue for families to voice their grief and loss, by openly talking about the violence experienced by Indigenous women, we create the type of change we want to see. This is Indigenous justice. Specifically NYSHN strongly supports efforts, initiatives and projects that honor the self-determination of our communities to tell their own stories. This means not shying away from painful realities, but also highlighting our many strengths and skills while grounding ourselves in love and respect.

We also see a critical need to address violence and harm against all members of our communities. This means acknowledging and creating space to talk about violence against Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTTTQQIA and gender non-conforming people across the generations. We hope this exhibit, ceremony and the art itself will open hosting communities to building better supports, organizing and strength based responses to these issues.

### **How you can participate**

As this exhibit tours, we encourage hosting communities to think about ways to involve young people throughout the process including community conversations, installation and related activities. Each community tour will be different so feel free to contact us directly for ideas about how to do this.

The current bookings for exhibit tours of this installation reach into the year 2019! We hope everyone gets an opportunity to witness this historic creation. While the vamps created are artistically beautiful and joyful, this work also speaks to issues of violence and trauma. For this reason, we hope participants will consider their own emotional safety while experiencing this exhibit. For example, if you attend the exhibit think about coming with support (Aunties, Elders, friends, family) or have someone to talk to after about how you are feeling. Each exhibit will also have their own availability of local supports (including traditional medicines), and we encourage you to inquire about these on site.

Thank you to everyone involved in WWOS, from its creators and artists to volunteers, donors, families and hosting communities!

### **For more information about Walking With Our Sisters please visit:**

Website: [www.walkingwithoursisters.ca](http://www.walkingwithoursisters.ca)

Twitter: @WWOS1

To make a donation towards the project visit the WWOS above website and click on "Donate" for options.

For more information about the Native Youth Sexual Health Network visit:

[www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com](http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com)

### **NYSHN Media Contact:**

Erin Konsmo @ErinMarie\_k

Media Arts and Project Coordinator

[ekonsmo@nativeyouthsexualhealth.com](mailto:ekonsmo@nativeyouthsexualhealth.com)

###