

Call out for Sacred Fires and Prayers

When: Sunday July, 9 2017
Time: All Day; Sunrise to Sunset
Where: Turtle Island – All Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Communities

From: Ontario Regional Chief, Isadore Day, *Wiindawtegowinini*

Purpose: Support, Prayers, Reflections of Hope and Clarity in the wake of rising Social Tragedy and Turmoil of First Nations Suicides

In light of the increasing number of violent deaths and suicides of First Nation children and youth in many First Nation communities across Turtle Island, this is a request for Sacred Fires to be lit and Prayers to be offered on Sunday July 9th 2017, anywhere, anytime and for anyone, any family, and any community that may be experiencing the tragedy of violence, loss and/or suicide.

Many leaders are currently discussing this issue and working hard to formulate strategies and responses specific to their communities and regions. The sad reality is that suicide is epidemic in many First Nation communities across the country. It is vital that we not only turn to political, clinical and mainstream approaches to address this tragic trend, but that we turn inward, upward and to the land for strength and clarity about this troubling time. Prayer and thoughtful reflection have always been a strong Indigenous value and cultural practice – we must rely on that more than ever at this moment.

Our Elders and Spiritual Knowledge Keepers have always been reminded as Indigenous Peoples that prayer and traditional protocols have great meaning, and have helped our Ancestors draw strength in the most difficult of times. Our Youth, Women, Elders, Children and Men, essentially Our Communities are in need of this spiritual strength now.

Prayers: A spiritual expression that comes from an individual, family or community. Prayers and reflection at home, in spiritual lodges, churches or sitting on the land – the request is that we take the time search and seek for strength, clarity and direction about the challenges that face our families and communities. Prayers can take place with oneself or with family or entire communities – spiritual expressions with a focus on faith and hope are much needed at this time.

Sacred Fires: Our sacred fires have increasingly become a source and symbol of strength and divine connection to the Creator. The sacred fires that help us govern our community gatherings, ceremonies and prayerful expressions as Indigenous Peoples, continues to be a way for our struggles to be refocused into clear understanding and clear direction about where we take challenges and painful issues facing our community.

Fires must be maintained with the utmost respect and consideration for those that come to seek a place to pray, place tobacco and medicines in the fire, and to reflect on issues weighing heavy on the mind and heart.

We are asking that these fires be lit for the day this Sunday from sun up, until sundown. These fires can be lit for the purpose of gathering to pray, lift the pipes, place offerings, or to gather as families or communities to discuss major issues facing our people. **Sacred Fires** should be tended by fire keepers, knowledge keepers, Elders or those who have experience with some of the protocols about the sacred fire.

Thoughtful and Safe Dialogue: The issues of suicide, family violence, poverty, and/or social challenges in our Indigenous Communities are often better understood and dealt with through discussion and dialogue. This means talking about these issues, and talking about them with a purpose to find the best possible way forward. Community, Family and Personal inflicted violence is tragic and must be addressed. Together we have to find common approaches and seek common solutions – it's not easy, but finding thoughtful opportunities to talk about these things can and should happen as often as needed. Finding safe spaces and people that can provide safe support is important if we are to talk about these challenges issues that face our people, families and our communities.

The most important point is that we can no longer remain silent or afraid to talk about issues of fear, abuse and confusion. Supporting one another in our communities means talking about these issues, and finding common approaches to healing and solutions that help strengthen Our Communities.

Prayer, Sacred Fires, Thoughtful and Safe Dialogue - Sunday July 9th 2017 – we are looking to all of our Indigenous Communities across turtle island to light fires from sunrise to sunset; praying for our communities and others that may need support and encouragement.

We are also encouraging the use of social media as a way to convey positive messages, live feeds, and online discussion forums about building up and encouraging our communities, their families and those that need to know that they are loved and cared about.

*“Let us put our minds together, and see what life we will make for Our Children.” - **Sitting Bull***

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The Chiefs of Ontario is an advocacy forum, and a secretariat for collective decision making, action, and advocacy for the 133 First Nation communities located within the boundaries of the province of Ontario, Canada.

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