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FASTING GUIDE

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The Moose Hide Campaign is a call to action to all men and boys in Canada to stand shoulder to shoulder; to show ourselves, each other, and all Canadians that violence is no longer tolerated in our communities and society. For Moose Hide Campaign Day each year, we invite men to fast and all people to gather with us virtually to stand up against violence towards women and children. Should you choose to respond to this call to action, we have put together a simple guide to explain the significance of fasting for the Moose Hide Campaign, and to offer some guidance in setting your intention as well as ensuring your safety.

Fasting

Fasting has always been an important ceremonial practice for traditional cultures throughout the world. Many cultures practice fasting ceremonies when:

- Conducting important work
- Addressing significant challenges and important transitions
- Seeking guidance and direction
- Deepening personal and collective intentions and commitments.

Fasting is a means of testing, practicing and deepening our personal commitment to our values and intentions. It calls upon us to make a small sacrifice of food and water and challenges us to move from intentions to action, from beliefs to experience.

Fasting is a key practice within the Moose Hide Campaign movement to demonstrate a personal commitment to honoring and protecting the woman and children in our lives. It is also a way to support each other in our collective responsibility as men to ensure all women and children are free from violence in our homes, communities and our nations.

For the Moose Hide Campaign, the practice of fasting is also a hunger strike. We go on this “hunger strike” as a public non-violent protest against the societal norms that have allowed injustice for Indigenous women and children and a call to action for all men to end all forms of violence within our society. While this fast is proposed for men, we encourage women to join in this challenge by bearing witness and supporting in whatever way they feel called.

Making this simple sacrifice is a way to show yourself and your relations that you take this commitment seriously.

Fasting can be a transformative experience, and for us this ceremony is rooted in a personal sense of commitment, action and purpose to honor and protect the women and children in your lives.

Beyond these broad notions, it is not our intention to define what fasting should or shouldn't be, how it should be done or why. Rather we hope to outline our reasons and approach to fasting within the Moose Hide Campaign for those who may find it beneficial.

We hope this serves that purpose, and we hope you will join us!

Setting your intention

The Moose Hide Campaign is founded on a belief that to change the tragic reality of domestic violence in Canada, and to walk the road of reconciliation, we need to encourage ourselves and each other to participate in the necessary growth, learning and healing that will lead to a society where all women and children are safe from violence.

The Moose Hide Campaign fast is a simple one-day fast starting from sun-up to sundown. We start our fast 20 minutes before sun-up and end 20 minutes after sundown. This practice is intended to help ensure the full day is a fasting day, and to move in and out of the fast with clarity and intention.

Setting your intention to fast with the Moose Hide Campaign is a significant personal step. And as you prepare to fast, it is helpful to reflect on your personal motivations. There are many clear reasons that are common amongst us. We sometimes are called to reflect on personal experiences as well as the fact that:

- Approximately every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner.
- On any given night in Canada, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters because it isn't safe at home.
- On any given night, about 300 women and children are turned away because shelters are already full.
- Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.
- There were 1,181 cases of missing or murdered Indigenous women in Canada between 1980 and 2012, according to the RCMP. However, according to grassroots organizations and the Minister of the Status of Women the number is much higher, closer to 4,000.
- Indigenous women are killed at six times the rate of non-Indigenous women
- Domestic violence is preventable

Though your personal intentions and journey will be unique, know that many Elders teach that when an individual fasts, the whole community benefits.

A bit of guidance

As you go into the fast, we recommend that you do not fast alone. Part of the Moose Hide Campaign fasting ceremony is to go through this experience with other men – either those in your bubble or connecting virtually – and to share the experience with friends, family and colleagues. It may also be helpful to call upon supporters such as local Elders or other mentors that you feel can help hold the intention and offer guidance remotely for the day. If you do decide to fast alone, please let others know, and share why you are doing it. This is important as you will be going through a challenging and profound experience on a number of levels.

If you decide to fast as a group, we recommend getting together virtually to check-in in the weeks and/or days leading up to the fast. At a minimum, plan some time on fasting day to get together – either virtually or safely face-to-face, adhering to any current COVID-19 restrictions. Share your experiences, thoughts and feelings together. You will not be alone; people throughout Canada will be doing this as well. Part of our fasting ceremony day is to hold circles and pass a talking piece around to share our thoughts, intentions, experiences and whatever we feel moved to share.

There is no set formula for the Moose Hide Campaign fasting day that “must” be followed. As mentioned above, we do recommend that you incorporate time for reflection both individually and in groups. We ask that you wear the moose hide pins, not only for this day but every day, and “wear and share” about the Moose Hide Campaign and in particular what it means to you.

Beyond this, you may feel called upon to incorporate other personal practices, ceremony or whatever you feel appropriate to the day. We encourage you to do whatever helps you stay focused and supported throughout the experience.

Physical wellbeing

It is an absolute must that you put your physical wellbeing first in this ceremony. While fasting is intended to be a challenge it should never be harmful. Hard, yes. A challenge, certainly. Risky or harmful to your physical health... absolutely not. That would be the exact opposite of the intention of the fast.

While the challenge is to go from sunrise to sunset without food or water, please ensure you do this only if it is safe and healthy for you. Please tailor your fast to meet your physical needs. If you have any health-related questions, concerns or conditions about fasting, please consult your health professional.

While the challenge is to go without food or liquids for the full duration, please only do so if you are confident that it will not in any way negatively impact your wellbeing. Again, this is not about harm, it is about standing by a commitment to end harm.

If you need to eat, eat. There is no room for a sense of failure in this work. You may feel you need to have water. That is fine. We are here to be healthy men, and to hold each other up. Please tailor your fast or the fasting day to meet your physical needs.

Prior to the fast, it is important to get a good night’s sleep. Before going to bed take a second to remind yourself of your intention for fasting the next day and do the same as soon as you wake up.

Upon waking and before sun-up, drink plenty of water or other hydrating fluids.

During the day, take some time to slow down and check in with how you are feeling and set some time aside, whether it’s the whole day or just a few minutes to spend with others who are fasting. Certainly, we find the more time together the better.

Breaking the fast

As with any fast, it is important to break your fast with intention. We recommend eating and drinking clean, simple foods easing yourself back into your regular diet.

It is also a good time to make a formal transition from your experience back into your day-to-day life. At our gatherings, we conduct fast-breaking ceremonies where we show our gratitude, share food, ask witnesses to share their words, and celebrate the effort and sacrifice as we reflect upon the day and the road ahead.

If you have any questions about the fast or the Moose Hide Campaign, please contact us at info@moosehidecampaign.ca

Thanks for your support!

#MooseHideCampaign #FastToEndViolence

