



Role of Women in the Moose Hide Campaign

The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children. Wearing the Moose Hide signifies your commitment to honour, respect, and protect the women and children in your life and to work together with others to end violence against women and children. This is a powerful idea and a commitment that is long over-due. But what about the role of Women in the Moose Hide Campaign?

Women have overwhelmingly borne the effects of domestic and gender-based violence, as well as the burden of advocacy to address these issues, which has become a national crisis. This is particularly true for Indigenous women and girls, who are at significantly higher risk of violence than non-Indigenous Canadians.

The Moose Hide Campaign was created as a way to engage men in efforts to end violence against Indigenous women and girls. As men took up the challenge to wear the moose hide and participate in ceremonial fasting events, so too did many women become involved. As a result, both the campaign and the role of women in the campaign have evolved. While the campaign still focuses on engaging men, it has grown to engage all Canadians in ending gender-based and domestic violence against women and children.

Having been co-founded by Raven Lacerte and been guided by a “circle of wise aunties”, the Moose Hide Campaign has always benefited from strong female Indigenous guidance and leadership.

Below are a few questions about the role of women in the Moose Hide Campaign that have been raised and what we have learned so far in answering them:

Q: Can women wear the Moose Hide Square?

Yes. Women and girls are more than welcome to wear the moose hide square. In fact, we invite and encourage all people who care about this issue to wear the Moose Hide squares in their day to day lives and be open to sharing about the campaign when people ask about the squares. The moose hide is intended to be a conversation starter, and when women wear the hide it often sparks powerful conversations about the change we are all working towards.

Q: Why is the Moose Hide Campaign targeting men specifically?

Men's violence against women and inequality towards women has been an unacceptable reality for generations. Yet men have largely been absent in the effort to end violence against women and children. For decades, women have been at the forefront of efforts to end domestic violence, gender-based violence, and inequality. It is time for men to join this effort and to take a stand against violence towards women and children. We often hear from women and women's organizations that it is important that men work together to encourage a culture of healthy masculinity and take on the responsibility of addressing negative masculinity that is so pervasive in our society.

Q: How do women participate in Moose Hide Campaign events?

The Moose Hide Campaign was co-founded by Raven Lacerte, a young Indigenous woman whose traditional First Nations territory is crossed by the infamous Highway of Tears. Her vision and spirit continue to guide the campaign and its efforts. Starting with Raven, women have continued to play important roles in the campaign, including as ceremonial witnesses for events, keynote speakers and cultural leaders and advisors. Campaign events now include women's circles which run alongside men's circles and workshops specifically for women will be an ongoing feature of Moose Hide Campaign events.

Q: Why are men invited to Fast?

Here's what some of the male organizers of the Moose Hide Campaign have shared: Men are invited to Fast for three reasons. First, it is to humble ourselves. If our society is going to shift away from patriarchy and gender inequality, then we as men will need to humble ourselves. Refraining from eating and drinking for a day is one way to embrace and practice humility. Second, Fasting is a ceremony that leads to healing. Many men are in pain and trapped in a society with few options and limited supports to help them heal. Fasting is a pathway to healing, and we believe that healing amongst men will reduce instances of violence against women and children. Third, Fasting is a sign that men are serious about making this change. It is more than words, it is a personal commitment to change as an individual and to effect change as a collective. Most ancient cultures from around the world Fast when there are important matters at hand.

Q: Can women participate in the Fast?

Yes. Women and girls are welcome to participate in the Fast. While a central goal of the Campaign is to encourage men and boys to Fast, it is not intended to be exclusive or divisive.

Q: Why are some women invited to act as “Witnesses” during the Fast?

Fasting can be a very personal and powerful experience. It can also be challenging for individuals. Sometimes Fasting can bring up deep emotions and leave individuals feeling vulnerable and open. This is a good thing as the Fasting process is intended to facilitate healing and personal growth. The role of the Witness is to provide love and support to the people that are Fasting, and to give them positive encouragement about the effort they are making to affect positive change. As well, Witnesses are asked to share what they have observed with their families, friends, organizations, and communities following the Fast. It is an honoured role grounded in the practices of some Indigenous peoples in BC.

Q: How will the Moose Hide Campaign ensure that their efforts do not reinforce and/or perpetuate patriarchy and gender inequality?

In order to answer this question, Moose Hide Campaign representatives participated in a retreat with female leaders and matriarchs and explored strategies to address this. The guidance from the women leaders at that retreat was for the Moose Hide Campaign to establish a Wise Aunties Council of women leaders from across the country. The role of the Wise Aunties Council is to oversee and guide the work of the Moose Hide Campaign and to ensure its integrity. Several women also sit on the board of the non-profit society which guides the Campaign. The Campaign continues to reach out to women leaders for guidance, encouragement and to offer whatever we can in the way of support to the broad movement to end gender-based and domestic violence.

Q: How are women involved in the production of the Moose Hide Squares?

The Moose Hide squares are cut and pinned to the cards exclusively by Indigenous women living in the Province of BC who have had difficulties in obtaining employment. The squares are provided to the public free of charge.

Note: This is an evolving journey of learning and growth. If you have any further questions or suggestions regarding this topic, please feel free to e-mail us at: info@moosehidecampaign.ca