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In Honor of Bella Laboucan-Mclean and Family and What You Can Do

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 28, 2013 - It is with heavy hearts that we express our deepest condolences for the loss of Bella Laboucan-Mclean. We stand with the family of Bella as well as with her friends and community. This loss is one that has come as sudden and difficult to understand as a young Indigenous woman with such light.

It is critical to come together during these times of grief and tragedy. Finding ways to honor Bella and her family, and to also take care of ourselves as a community is an important part of healing.

Here are some ways to take care of yourself and others now and over time:

1. **Listening** to the family's needs and supporting in ways that acknowledge their loss. At this time the family is asking for donations to help with the costs of bringing Bella home. If you are in Canada, you can directly donate online using email transfer (interact e-transfer) from your bank to Billy Joe Laboucan (Bella's father) at email: laboucanfamily@gmail.com. Or you may mail a cheque made out to Klein Lewis Productions, c/o Jackie Joiner, 832 Sunningdale Bend, Mississauga, ON L5J 1G1.
2. **Expressing** sentiments of love and support for each other, sharing memories, and letting each other know that you are not alone.
3. **Reaching out** to local community supports including Elders, healing and mental health services, and any other self-care that works for you. This loss can be difficult and "triggering" for people and bring up experiences of violence, loss and trauma. Building up and sharing community supports can help.
4. **Long-term support** and healing. Grief and healing are dealt with on different timelines for everyone, and building plans for honoring and supporting each other in the coming months and years will help community to remain strong.

We strongly urge the Toronto Police Service to maintain focus on the details regarding Bella's death and justice for the family. We will continue to pay close attention to the actions of the police regarding this particular case, knowing there is an ongoing history of (in)justice regarding how cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people are addressed. We encourage others to do the same and demand accountability from police and the justice system.

A support vigil for friends and community in honor of Bella Laboucan-Mclean and her family is being held today in Toronto at 6:00 pm at 21 Iceboat Terrace in front of the building. The timing of this ceremony is to coincide with Billa's arrival at the hall in her home community of Sturgeon Lake in Northern Alberta.

Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/221156444704913/>

RESOURCES

Talk4Healing - Call 1 855 554 HEAL for free, 24/7 confidential and culturally safe support by and for Aboriginal women.

<http://www.talk4healing.com>

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.

NYSHN & Families of Sisters in Spirit; "Police (In)justice: Responding Together to Change the Story".

<http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/policeinjusticerespondingtogethertochangethestory.pdf>

Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) 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.

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