

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hotiì ts'eeda and FOXY launch social distancing campaign: *Our Home is Our Camp*

Yellowknife, March 19, 2020 - Hotiì ts'eeda and FOXY (Fostering Open eXpression among Youth) today launched a joint social media campaign to inform NWT residents on the importance of social distancing in a culturally safe context. The campaign promotes measures to protect NWT families and communities from contracting the COVID-19 coronavirus.

The campaign is called *Our Home is Our Camp* (#homeiscamp). The two organizations are developing this campaign in coordination with Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Health and Social Services. In the unprecedented context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hotiì ts'eeda and FOXY have a role in providing information about protection from COVID-19 in culturally relevant and safe ways.

“This speaks to how we as Indigenous people across the NWT can continue to be culturally strong at a time when we are faced with a COVID-19 pandemic,” said Hotiì ts'eeda Chairperson John B. Zoe. “For those who cannot leave town, staying in our small family groups as we would on the land allows us to keep our families and communities safe.”

Hotiì ts'eeda’s mandate includes ensuring relevant health and research information reaches the general public. Hotiì ts'eeda is hosted by the Tłı̨chǫ Government. It is a SPOR (Strategy for Patient Oriented Research) Support Unit funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and supported by a partnership of NWT governments and organizations.

FOXY is a thriving made-in-the-NWT program that uses Indigenous ways of knowing and arts-based methods to bring sexual and mental health awareness to Northern and Indigenous youth. Since 2012, FOXY and its parallel program SMASH (Strength, Masculinities, and Sexual Health) have reached more 6000 youth across the three territories with their trauma-informed, strengths-based health promotion programming.

“FOXY is committed to promoting physical distance while staying socially connected,” said Executive Director Candice Lys. “It is the best way that we can all do our part to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, and ensure that we do what we can to keep our Elders and all of our community members safe.”

Indigenous cultures in the NWT emphasize community cooperation, visiting, and sharing. During a pandemic, Indigenous cultural practices of togetherness are challenged by the need for social distancing - staying physically separated from as many people as possible in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. Since it is common for families to go to camps on the land, where family groups live independently for periods of time, this campaign asks community members to live at their homes in town as they would at their camp. Therefore, only the people who live in

the house should be there, people who leave for supplies should be limited, and everyone has a role to play in staying busy to keep the camp peaceful, productive, and safe. The campaign encourages individuals to keep their distance physically from others when going outside - staying approximately the length of two Great Bear Lake trout apart or the length of a few coney from the Delta. Those are pretty big fish!

The graphics were designed by Dene artist Melaw Nakehk'ò of Yellowknife, on the advice of Indigenous cultural advisors, and Hotiì ts'eeda and FOXY staff.

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