

Sacred fire honoring those affected by suicide to be lit this Friday



By Chezney Martin

SIX NATIONS - In response to suicide within the Six Nations community and the surrounding area, Six Nations community members have come together to create a group known as Rekindling our Fires, or Tentsitewatsyenhon:ni ("We Will Rekindle Our Fire") to host a Sacred Fire within a lodge built near the Old Council House, beginning this Friday, November 20 until Sunday, November 22.

The lodge has been built within the grove beside the Old Council House. The sacred fire is hoped to be lit at 7 a.m. on Friday, and will be kept burning until 10 a.m. on Sunday.

The lodge itself is yet to be completed, but the current structure is wonderfully built. One of the lodge constructors and organizers, Michael Doxtater explained that the building of the lodge holds a lot of symbolism.

"The west side of the lodge is rounded, the east side is flat and that's symbolic," said Doxtater. "The idea is that the Longhouse is not closed off on both ends, and in fact, the east side shows there is still room to extend the rafters to build the longhouse. If

you know the symbolism of 'extending the rafters,' you know it means adding people to the longhouse," he explained. "It's symbolic for the future generations and that's why it faces east, right where the sun comes up," he said.

"It took us ten hours," he said, in regards to the construction of the lodge. "We had students from Grand River Employment and Training Welding School; about six of them came to help go and stake out the site, in regards to laying out where the poles would go. Then we went and cut forty-two poles and dragged them out of the bush, trimmed them up and on Sunday, we dug the holes and erected the structure," he said. "On Thursday, the same crew is going back and we're going to complete it by topping it off with white pine boughs, so it'll be like an arbor with the white pine boughs on top," he said, further explaining that the mens' job — which also follows Haudenosaunee roles — was to maintain the fire, maintain security and build the lodge.

"Powwow singers have been invited, water drum singers have been invited, community members who are known to

play guitar and entertain at the old folks home have been invited, a theatre group has been invited to come and do a portion of a play, and Sunday morning there is supposed to be a closing social and a feast, including the round dance and maybe a talk," he said.

A poster added to the Rekindling Our Fires Facebook Group by Lisa Green explained that the lodge and sacred fire is to offer a place "where people can gather to talk to one another, where we can commemorate those we have lost to suicide and talk about healing and health. A place to share our hopes, our fears, our dreams for the future and to show people that we care."

Not only will visitors be allowed to experience communal comfort, but a space will be hosted to share memories and photos of those lost to suicide.

The sacred fire and lodge will be bringing together people that are in need of both comfort and support, and is open to anyone wishing to visit. The event will offer healing to those wanting to learn traditional teachings and will offer the opportunity to share.