

Press Release

THE RED DRESS EXHIBIT IS AN IMMERSIVE AND POIGNANT EXPERIENCE RAISING AWARENESS OF THE HORRIFIC, SYSTEMIC AND RACIST CRIMES AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS, Two-Spirit People' (MMIWG2S) THE DRESSES TELL UNTOLD STORIES OF VICTIMS WHOSE VOICES WERE SILENCED.

On **September 2nd-4th, 2022** Artpark will host Kakekalanicks's Red Dress Exhibit. "The exhibit is intended to increase awareness of the epidemic of the on-going horrific, systemic, racist crimes targeting Indigenous women and girls and Two-Spirit individuals. It is to honor the lost lives of the victims, to teach, give space for Indigenous voices. The exhibit is to inspire a new cross-cultural generation based on inclusivity, compassion, love and to collectively offer the missing and murdered Indigenous Women and girls and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S) our love while creating a safe, nurturing and welcoming environment for Indigenous people." says **exhibit's** creator and **Artpark's Indigenous producer Michele-Elise Burnett**. With Indigenous women being victims of murder more than 10 times the national average, this exhibit is all about empathic LOVE.

Kakekalanicks, an Indigenous consulting firm spearheaded by Michele-Elise Burnett, created this exhibit in collaboration with affected families, Elders, and local Indigenous youth. **Violet Printup of Tuscaroa Nations**, an Indigenous youth collaborator said, "Missing and murdered Indigenous women is an epidemic that has recently come to light, but Indigenous peoples have been facing this since the beginning of exploration. With the Red Dress Exhibit, I want to bring awareness to all people, but also be able to help combat, as well as bring an end to MMIWG2SG."

BASED ON THE 13 GRANDMOTHER MOONS AND THE CYCLE OF WOMEN, THE RED DRESS EXHIBIT WILL FEATURE STORIES OF 13 MURDERED AND MISSING INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM INDIGENOUS FAMILIES AND FRIENDS IN THE WNY AND NIAGARA WHOSE LOVED ONES FELL VICTIM TO THESE SENSELESS CRIMES.



Artwork by Indigenous Artist Jill Lunn

Each Red dress will be as unique and beautiful as the MMIWG2S it represents and the ribbons, the beadwork, appliqués and paint on the dresses will be the keepers of their story. “As each member of an affected family and community participates in the creation of these beautiful memorial dresses, healing is happening. Every thread and fiber of the ribbons woven into the dress hold the untold story of the spirit the dress represents, essentially giving the spirit a voice, a voice that was unjustly and horrifically taken away from them.” Said **Michele-Elise Burnett of Kakekalanicks**, “The exhibit is designed to evoke visceral emotions of ripping loss and at the same time divine healing”

This exhibit starts with the experience of hearing children laughing and playing in a field of wildflowers and participants then move through a symbolic door of a Residential School, the place directly linked to the horrific crimes of MMIWG2S, and the laughing fades away... Participants can then learn from a downloadable audio produced documentary tour, interpretive signage and participate in the creation of MMIWG2S Wampum Belts, beaded heart workshops, teachings and storytelling.. Opening Night Sept 2nd, Participants will be immersed in stories from Indigenous and allied musicians and lyricists in an intimate setting sharing the story behind their MMIWG2S songs. "As a family member and survivor of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2-spirit people, I truly believe that by spreading awareness, together we can prevent more stolen sisters from happening". Said one of the creators of a Red Dress in the exhibit, **Vanessa Brousseau, Resilient Inuk**.

This exhibit kicks off at Artpark from September 2-4 and hopes to travel to 15 different communities around Turtle Island. Within each community a dress will be created by a family of a MMIWG2S to honor their Sisters in Spirit that was ripped from them before their time. The ultimate goal is not only to create awareness but allow space for healing to happen as dresses are added with each community we visit.

KENNY LEE LEWIS OF THE STEVE MILLER BAND AND RECORDING ARTIST LINDA MCKENZIE TO PERFORM AT ARTPARK FOR THE RED DRESS EXHIBIT ON OPENING NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 2, IN LEWISTON, NY. THE EVENT WILL ALSO FEATURE POWERFUL MUSIC FROM TONEMAH AND JOE SHAWANA. THE EXHIBIT WILL THEN TRAVEL TO THE CELEBRATION OF NATIONS GATHERING FROM SEPT 7-12 IN ST.CATHARINES, ON.

The exhibit will start off on September 2 with special intimate acoustic concert called *The Circle* at Artpark - featuring Indigenous and allied musicians —Linda McKenzie, a solo guitarist, singer, Native American Music Award nominee, and award-winning songwriter, Kendall (Kenny) Lee Lewis an Author-Musician, producer and writer for The Steve Miller Band since 1981, Tonemah, a Kiowa, Comanche and Tuscarora and award-winning producer and artist along with young rising Anishnaabe singer songwriter Joe Shawana. The concert will be in an intimate setting and be focused on sharing the story behind each musician's MMIWG2S song and story. **Linda McKenzie said**, “Many people still don't know that Indigenous women are targets for senseless, random violence and killing, so the song ‘Missing’ was written to not only bring awareness to these hideous crimes, but to also become the voice of the voiceless ... a cry from the grave of the missing and a cry from the loved ones left behind.”

“Missing”, a song created by Linda McKenzie, The Steve Miller Band guitarist/producer, Kenny Lee Lewis, and Gen Huitt, a Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Elder, will be performed on opening night to honor and brings attention to Indigenous Peoples who have been affected by a horrific atrocity MMIWG2S. “Missing” has been nominated for a 2022 Native American Music Award!

The Red Dress exhibit will be on display in the lower park from 1-8PM on Opening Day September 2nd. Please find the event at a glance below for more details. Look for announcements about the Red Dress Exhibit in your community!

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EVENT AT A GLANCE

September 2nd 1-8 PM | OPENING DAY

- Dresses will be on display during the day,
- Starting at 1pm people can join Perry Ground Onondaga Turtle Clan educator and renown traditional haudenosaunee storyteller to participate in creating a unique MMIWG2S wampum belt which will be gifted to the exhibit at the the opening Ceremony
- Opening ceremonies will commence at 6 PM followed by an intimate, unplugged concert at 7pm called *The Circle with Kenny Lee Lewis, Linda Mackenzie, Tonemah and special guests*

September 3rd 1-6 PM

- The dresses will be on display 1-6 PM
- Starting at 1 PM of the MMIWG2S Wampum belt by Dr Richard Hamill, Historian, treaty and wampum educator who holds the largest Wampum Belt Display in North America. He will also have MMIWG2S artifacts on display and will share his teachings during his workshop
- Heart Berry Bead workshop and teachings of living from the heart with Mary Clause and storytelling with Edwin Printup

September 4th 1-4 PM | CLOSING DAY

- The dresses will be on display 1-4 PM
- Closing of the exhibit at 4 PM with a closing ceremony and preparing the dresses to travel to Canada for Celebration of Nations Gathering September 9th-11th.
www.celebrationofnations.ca

ABOUT THE KAKEKALANICKS

Creating unique, authentic experiences to explore and discover Indigenous peoples cultures, Kakekalanicks works to create authentic discovery experiences, events and projects that aim to explore and enrich your life within Indigenous culture and ways of knowing. We believe in building a strong, respectful, cross-cultural future that our 7th generation will thank us for.

ABOUT THE MICHELE-ELISE BURNETT

Michele-Elise Burnett, Métis MNO citizen with Algonquin roots, Bear Clan, is President of Kakekalanicks, an Indigenous arts and consultancy company which helps promote and educate

Indigenous art and artists to a broad audience. Ms. Burnett is the Native Artistic Producer of Artpark's Annual Strawberry Moon Festival and serves as the Artistic Director of the Annual Celebration of Nations, both Indigenous gathering, provides a far-reaching platform for the community to embrace and honor the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding achievements of Indigenous peoples through the arts; Associate Director of Landscape of Nations 360°, a unique national Indigenous education initiative which provides guidance to teachers and programmers in the Niagara Region and beyond; LON 360° is the Indigenous Experience lead for the Niagara Parks Commission, developing year round Indigenous events and tours and co-advancement director and inaugural unveiling producer for Landscape of Nations: The Six Nations & Native Allies Commemorative Memorial, at Queenston Heights.

ENGAGE WITH US

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MEDIA CONTACT

For more details on the Red Dress exhibit, please contact: Michele-Elise Burnett, President at meburnett16@gmail.com or 905-933-1915