



Women's March Muskoka January 20th, 2018 at 11am

Grass-roots, women-led, initiative.

A Walk in Solidarity for Women's Rights & Freedoms

For Immediate Release:

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On January 20th, 2018 at 11am, **Women's March Muskoka** will lead a walk through the downtown core of Huntsville, ON. A women-led initiative, the walk aims to bring the entire community together, regardless of gender identity, in solidarity of women's issues that remain prevalent in our society both locally and globally.

The event is open to partners, children, and families, in addition to the women of Muskoka. We firmly believe that change happens when we bring the entire community to bear on these issues and challenges. This is an opportunity for unity, solidarity, and community building.

March Director, Michelle Emson, was inspired when a friend posted an open invitation to walk and realized that there was not an accessible event available for the women of Muskoka. This motivated Michelle to quickly rally support from prominent community members and kick-off the planning process, just seven days before the event. The event is already affiliated with both [Women's March Canada](#) and [Women's March Global](#)

"One of the guiding Unity Principles of the Women's March Movement is Inclusivity.", said March Director, Michelle Emson, "This single guiding principle is at the very core of our walk on Saturday. Yes, we are raising awareness of women's issues and the injustices of the past but, the sustainable solution is a team effort on the part of our community as a whole. We can all be a part of the solution."

The walk will depart from Huntsville Place Mall at 11am and stroll the down to River Walk park at which point we will turn around and return to the Mall.

The initiative has attracted considerable support from the local community including the Town of Huntsville's Mayor, Scott Aitchison who said, "The women's march is a public demonstration of our commitment as a society to achieve gender parity and to publicly denounce the generations of appalling behaviour of many men in positions of power over women. We are all valued. We are all important. We are all worthy of respect. Not one of us are above another. I am pleased to march, and I am honoured to be included in such a powerful statement."

Violence against women is as much a local issue as it is a global one. Over 80% of women, in Muskoka, who have received physical abuse, never report that crime to the Police. In 2014, the YWCA Muskoka published "A Statistical Economic and Social Profile of Muskoka" in which we learned that, 129 women and 76 children were supported by women's shelters in Muskoka that year alone, the same shelters that were over capacity for 61 days. On average, women in Muskoka earn 34.8% less than men and, that of the 2,030 single-parent families 1,645 were headed by women, surviving on as little as \$20,000/year on average.

“Thank you to everyone who is marching on behalf of women’s rights and freedoms.”, said Lauren Power, Director of [Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault Service](#), “Women’s rights are human rights, and in 2018, women may march for pay equity, for affordable child and elder care and for an end to gender based violence, which affects 1 in 3 women globally. #MeToo, begun by activist Tarana Burke more than 10 years ago, is the social media campaign this year that brought sexual violence into many conversations. It has galvanized women to speak out about their own experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault. We hope, as Oprah said, for the day when no one has to say #MeToo, and we join now with the millions of brave survivors in calling for the changes needed to create communities and workplaces where women can flourish.”

“One of the common themes that comes from participants of my workshops, is that we are not alone: women globally share the same challenges and feelings that we face and feel here in Muskoka.”, says Nancy Osborne CD, from [I Got This Space – Unlocking Your Instincts](#)., “When we join each other for a march like this, we realize that we do have a voice. But Saturday is also an opportunity for the entire community to come together in solidarity because, let’s face it, this is not a “women’s issue”. Ensuring human rights for everyone can only make our wonderful community even stronger. Let’s walk and talk together on Saturday!”

There are numerous groups within Muskoka that work specifically in supporting the women of our community including, Muskoka Women’s Advocacy Group, Huntsville Women’s Group, the YWCA, Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services, and others, many of whom are participating in the march on Saturday.

Kathleen May of Huntsville Women’s Group shared that, “It is vital that Muskoka acknowledges its complicity in inequality on issues of gender, race, ability, and class. This march is the perfect opportunity for all members of our beloved community to speak about - and learn about - these issues. Together, we will walk in solidarity toward our goal of justice for women.”

On January 21, 2017, over six million women and allies, in over 600 cities, on every continent, joined forces to march for women’s rights and human rights. [Women’s March Global](#) came together after the march and we have formed a grassroots coalition of sister marches that have continued to mobilise and push forward with this work of resistance. Our sister marches stood against hate in global elections and rallied to get women to vote; they have shared the stories of refugees and asylum seekers; they have demanded an end to violence against women and girls worldwide; and they have resisted the rise of the xenophobia and nationalism that is taking place across the world.

We are a grassroots coalition and together we have built a network that continues to unite and fight for the freedom and liberation of all people worldwide.

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About Women’s March Muskoka.

Women’s March Muskoka is affiliated with Women’s March Global and Women’s March Canada. It is a grassroots community event to inspire solidarity and social change with respect to women’s rights and freedoms. Our 2018 rally is open to everyone and is family friendly. Our theme this year is “Look Back, March Forward” recognising the injustices of the past and coming together, as a community, to ensure an equitable future for everyone.

<https://www.facebook.com/womensmarchmuskoka/>

About Michelle Emson

Michelle is an openly-out transgender woman living and working in Muskoka. In addition to owning Sanctuary Studios Inc., she is also an international human rights activist, an author, professional speaker, and award winning documentary filmmaker. She received the [2017 YWCA Women of Distinction Award](#) for Arts & Culture and was a finalist for the [2017 Mompreneur® Momentum Award](#).

<http://michelleemson.ca>

About Sanctuary Studios Inc

Sanctuary Studios is a Muskoka based digital marketing agency. The pursuit of universal human rights is at the very core of its mission and vision. In addition to its commercial work, the Studio promotes diversity and inclusivity through workshops and talks plus, produces human rights documentary films to promote the widespread acceptance of everyone regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. The Studios is the primary sponsor for this years' Women's March Muskoka.

<https://sanctuary-studios.ca>