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### **Project Blue Hands Society Announces 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Give Thanks Day - Local Artists Collaborate to Reach Out to DTES Residents In Need, September 16 2017**

Vancouver, BC – August 26, 2017 – Life is anything but easy in Vancouver's poorest neighbourhood! You can't escape the realities of poverty, homelessness and the rising overdose epidemic in the Downtown Eastside. We live in times where one resorts to pharmaceutical drugs in hopes of getting healed. Project Blue Hands believe that some may need anti-depressants, and some may need pain medications but *everyone* needs **love**. Without love, hope is bleak! Local musicians, creative artists, children ages 4 and up, and businesses around Vancouver are joining hands to promote youth philanthropy, and social interconnectedness, through a day of free music, live art, and food. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Give Thanks Day, organized by Project Blue Hands, is a free family-friendly event, encouraging all-ages to attend and participate in support of the less fortunate. The music festival will take place on September 16, 2017 at Victory Square on 200 W. Hastings Street.

Engaging hundreds of youth, humanitarians, music, healing & fine artists in support of the annual Movement of Oneness, #GiveThanksDay will unite people from all walks of life to raise awareness on the importance of altruism. Residents of the DTES will receive complimentary food sponsored by Knights of Columbus Coquitlam 5540, Dosa Factory, Prabu Foods, Dosa Corner and Kidsplay Foundation. They will also be engaged through interactive arts activities lead by Kiwi Arts Studio, and receive complimentary haircuts and dry shaves by local professional hair stylists and barbers along with reflexologies, reiki healing therapy, and massages. CDI Burnaby campus will send their dental assistant students to help promote healthy oral care provided through education and resources as well as giving away free Oral B tooth brushes to those in greater need.

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) will be providing resources to build knowledge around the current fentanyl crisis in Vancouver's DTES as well as provide training for all those interested to become first responders to Vancouver's spreading opioid emergency by learning how to safely administer Naloxone (a prescription medicine that reverses the effects of a drug overdose).

The festival builds on the success of #GiveThanksDay 2014, which drew hundreds of volunteers that helped curate a day of gratitude where almost 1200 residents of the DTES were fed fresh, hot-off the grill, organic hamburgers and a day filled with musical performances, live art installations, complimentary personal grooming services and alternative healing therapies. "In this fast-paced world, with such a prominent separation between the wealthy and the poor, it's important that we have a sense of gratefulness; because, it is this attitude of gratitude that will help bridge the gap between the privileged and marginalized communities", asserts Coco Rosario, CEO & Founder of Project Blue Hands Society.

**Project Blue Hands**, led by Co-Founders Tonye Aganaba, Coco Rosario and NaRai Sherritt, emerged from the universal knowledge that music and art can be a bridge to connect people from diverse backgrounds experiencing challenges, negligence and prejudice. In 2012, inspired by the untimely death and loss of their friend, fellow musician and Granville Street's frequent busker Randy Ponzio (1976 – 2011), the trio along with board members Roger Collins and James Calvin Thompson, initiated outreach efforts to support the people living in Vancouver's poorest neighbourhood with the help of elementary school-aged children as young as four years old, their parents, and other caring volunteers. Rosario states, "It's important to involve young children, especially from a privileged background, so that we may succeed in instilling a sense of inclusiveness and selflessness at a very young age." The music festival #GiveThanksDay, arose from the board members' equally shared profound love of live music and their knowledge of the magnitude of empathy that runs deep within many of Vancouver's local artists.

The Give Thanks Day Movement has since attracted various dynamic bands and artists including **Star Captains**, **Buckman Coe**, **Wooden Horsemen**, Calgary's very own **Lyka Fox**, **Bavubuka Dynasty's Free Nation**, **Lucid AfterLife**, **Coco Jafro**, **Mazacote**, **Los Duendes**, R&B Hall of Fame inductee, **Dutch Robinson**, **Tonye Aganaba**, **David Morin**, in addition to several local musicians from Vancouver who have participated in Project Blue Hands' world music festival.

Families are encouraged to attend and participate in this very giving music festival. Those unable to attend this event will have the opportunity to participate via social media with the hashtags #GiveThanksDay and #GiveThanks.

#### **About Project Blue Hands Society**

It was established in 2012 to restore dignity and self-worth in the people living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). PBH supports homeless and impoverished people, primarily with addiction and mental illness challenges, by helping to meet their basic needs such as the provision of nutritious meals, clean clothing, hygiene products and by spending quality time with the people to encourage and highlight the importance of inclusiveness, altruism and love.

To learn more, please visit [projectbluehands.org](http://projectbluehands.org)