

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

DAY
#11

SAFE SPACES

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month, which includes the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign calling for an end to gender-based violence. It begins on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, includes The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6th, and ends on December 10th: Human Rights Day.

Thunder Bay City Council formally declared GBV and IPV an epidemic on September 25th immediately following our deputation. In addition, City officials have invited us to present to the local social services administration board and the Intergovernmental Affairs committee, and also supply a list of actionable goals for City Council to better support survivors of GBV in our community.

Our 2023 16 Days campaign will focus on these actionable goals - efforts at the municipal and personal levels to address gender-based violence.

Why it Matters

- Public information campaigns raise awareness for survivors, perpetrators and the general public. Anti Human-Trafficking campaigns often send a message of accountability: violence against women is a crime that this community will not tolerate. It helps develop a culture of accountability. The message that GBV is a problem for everyone reinforces the idea that we are all responsible to act; providing a safe space literally opens a door to allow individuals and businesses to address the issue.
- Statistics show that women experience violence multiple times before they report it; when they do report it takes numerous attempts to be believed or to get assistance; and even then, women's safety isn't necessarily prioritized in the systemic response. Calling the police isn't always an option, especially for Indigenous women; in a small community, it can also be difficult for every woman to access special services with confidentiality assured. Women who are unhoused, have been criminalized, use substances or have mental health concerns are much less likely to get help from established supports.
- Survivors can get information about supports/services without having to access an agency, and the general public is exposed to helpful information/resources they might not otherwise encounter.
- Safety should be a right that is provided to survivors without a request for identification, verification or other eligibility criteria. The more doors that open to safe spaces for women and gender-diverse people, the better.

ACTION

- Start grassroots "Safe Spaces" program that businesses can participate in where survivors can feel safe and ask for information (i.e. pamphlets and handouts from women's shelters, VWAP and men's programs) - CKW Inquest Recommendation #49
- Similar to the "Wake the Giant" program, "Safe spaces" could include public libraries, community centres and City-operated spaces, as well as local businesses, like coffee shops and hair salons.

Creating a culture of safety and accountability lets survivors know they are more likely to be believed if they disclose.

Resources

- CKW Inquest Jury Recommendations (June 2022): https://lukesplace.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CKW-Inquest-Verdict-Recommendations-SIGNED_Redacted.pdf
- Forty-four percent: A short history of intimate partner violence: <https://lukesplace.ca/forty-four-percent-a-short-history-of-intimate-partner-violence/>
- Draw The Line: <http://www.draw-the-line.ca/about.html>
- Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Girls Global Flagship Initiative: International Compendium of Practices: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-Compendium-of-practices-en.pdf>
- How to set up a SSWG in practice: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/safe-spaces-women-and-girls-sswg-standardization-and-technical-guidance-how-set-sswg>
- Own your zone: three steps to creating a safe space (Gabby Nelson): <https://medium.com/ungei-blog/own-your-zone-3-steps-to-creating-a-safe-space-5ed44bdf914>
- Safer Bars & Spaces Training and Policy for Hospitality and Arts Workplaces: <https://dandelioninitiative.ca/referrals>
- Good Night Out: <https://www.goodnightoutvancouver.com/saferspaces>
- Make it Our Business: <https://www.makeitourbusiness.ca/training/certified-online-training.html>

