

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

DAY
#5

TECHNOLOGY

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

- Women at risk of or experiencing violence may not have access to technology (including devices, plans, internet), especially if they live in a rural area where internet coverage is unavailable or unreliable, or they cannot afford a mobile phone or data plan. Most Northern Ontario regions are still without 50/10Mbps access, particularly further away from urban centres. The Ontario Government has committed to ensuring broadband infrastructure is available to every household by 2025 (Blue Sky Net - Northern Ontario Broadband Report 2023). However, the cost to access internet service (or devices to use it) may still be prohibitive for many survivors.
- When it comes to GBV and IPV, technology can be a bit of a double-edged sword. It can provide potentially life-saving access to crisis services and other essential supports for survivors and their families, and it can also be weaponized by abusers. (See Tech Safety Canada resource below)
- Thunder Bay Public Library has discontinued its Digital Divide device lending program that launched during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increasing access to technology can improve access to essential information and services that may not be available in a small community, such as, crisis services, legal advice, counselling for survivors and their children and social supports.

ACTION

- CKW Recommendation #52: Expand cell service and high-speed internet in rural and remote areas of Ontario to improve safety and access to services
- Our municipally-owned telecommunications company could provide survivors with previously used devices for 911 calls, or provide a device and a discounted talk & text plan. The NOWC could be a program partner and serve as a depot for the collection of previously used phones that could be refurbished for distribution to survivors. Rogers has done something similar with Women's Shelters Canada (not including Thunder Bay): <https://about.rogers.com/news-ideas/digital-lifelines-for-ontario-women-in-crisis-rogers-expands-phone-program-to-womens-shelters-and-transition-houses-across-ontario/>
- Technology-facilitated gender-based violence needs to be taken seriously by law enforcement. New police services recruits should be trained in both recognizing and having knowledge of potential charges for TFGBV; and for local telecommunications and police forces to work together proactively to prevent the abuse of technology for purposes of GBV.
- Women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people are always welcome to reserve our private meeting room (at no cost) to attend a virtual legal, healthcare or counselling appointment, use a device to send emails, job search, do online research, etc. An advocate would also be available to provide additional support, if needed.



Email navigator@nwowc.org to reserve this space

Resources

- Issue 35: Gender-Based Violence in Rural, Remote & Northern Communities: https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/issue-35/Issue-35.pdf
- Six ways tech can help end gender-based violence: Addressing the shadow pandemic: <https://www.unicef.org/eap/blog/six-ways-tech-can-help-end-gender-based-violence>
- mulberry: Gender Based Violence (GBV) Services in Ontario: <https://www.mulberryfinder.ca/>
- iHeal app for survivors: <https://ihealapp.ca/>
- The Empowering Internet Safety Guide for Women: <https://www.vpnmentor.com/blog/the-empowering-internet-safety-guide-for-women/>
- Tech Safety Canada: <https://techsafety.ca/>
- INTERNET: Hard Price to Pay in the North (NWAC): https://issuu.com/kci-niwesq/docs/kci-niwesq_-_issue_17/s/20507815
- Ontario Internet Access MAP (OIAM): <https://connectednorth.ca/ontario-internet-access-map/>
- Blue Sky Net Northern Ontario Broadband Report 2023: <https://connectednorth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Blue-Sky-Net-Northern-Ontario-Broadband-Report-2023-1.pdf>



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