



**BE MORE THAN A BYSTANDER:
BREAK THE SILENCE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

PROJECT BACKGROUNDER

A partnership between the Ending Violence Association of BC and the BC Lions football team

“Be More Than a Bystander” is a groundbreaking initiative between the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) and the BC Lions aimed at substantially increasing understanding of the impact of men’s violence against women. The program will break the silence surrounding violence against women and girls by providing tools, language and practical ideas about how to “be more than a bystander”, how to speak up and how to communicate that violence and abuse is not acceptable. Founding partners are Status of Women Canada, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Encana Corporation.

This two 2-year initiative, guided by an advisory group, of women who are experts in the area of violence against women, will see sports icons from the BC Lions raise awareness about violence against women in BC and urge everyone to “Break the Silence on Violence Against Women”.

In addition to a public education program, BC Lions players will visit schools throughout BC to talk to students in grades eight to 12 about individual choices and actions that can create positive social change. The curriculum for the school program will be based on the Mentors in Violence Prevention Model developed in the United States by renowned educator and gender activist, Jackson Katz, who will be working with EVA BC to tailor the program materials. These materials will also be used to equip amateur football coaches to talk to youth about sexism, violence, respectful relationships and speaking up. The program will also create a legacy film that will be distributed to communities throughout BC to promote dialogue about breaking the silence on violence against women.

The next phase of the initiative will involve the University of British Columbia (UBC) Varsity Athletes, who will serve as champions of the Be More Than A Bystander program at UBC starting January 2012. UBC believes this program is a comprehensive approach to violence prevention and see their athletes well positioned to take on leadership roles at the university and in their communities. The UBC athletes will act as spokespeople on campus and beyond.

Background

It is widely recognized that domestic and sexual violence are serious social and criminal problems in British Columbia and in Canada, as they are elsewhere in the world. It is also widely recognized that domestic violence and sexual assault are gender-based crimes, perpetrated primarily by men against women.

Women are more likely than men to be victims of spousal assault and much more likely than men to be the victims of severe domestic violence (Randall, 2003; Statistics Canada, 2005). The 2004 Statistics Canada General Social Survey (GSS) reports that 7% or approximately 653,000 women were victims of domestic or sexual violence in the five years up to and including 2004. Women were more likely than men to suffer serious forms of abuse, more than twice as likely to be injured, and more than six times as likely to seek medical attention as a result of the abuse. (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Violence against women is typically characterized as a 'women's issue'; however, since the vast majority of perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence against women are males, the problem is equally a 'men's issue'. We know that the vast majority of men do not use violence and care deeply about the wellbeing of the women in their lives, yet few men view violence against women as 'their' issue. This initiative seeks to change that attitude by educating men to prevent violence against women and girls. The program's messages will encourage an examination of the attitudes and behaviors that allow violence against women to happen in our society and encourage people to become part of the solution.

This project is a dynamic, cutting-edge educational and public awareness initiative aimed primarily at boys and men, utilizing the BC Lions brand and credibility among male culture to market that it is 'cool' to respect women and girls. Focused television, radio, print and in-school messaging will target how negative attitudes about females form the underlying basis for violence against women and girls, and equip participants and listeners to prevent violence against women and girls by not remaining silent.

The overarching project consists of four components:

- 1) A series of 40 school-based interactive educational workshops about gender-based violence, to be facilitated by BC Lions players. The program will promote the importance of respectful relationships and teach boys ways they can help. The program will be targeted to youth in grades eight to 12. As the vast majority of males don't use violence against women, the program will have a strong focus on 'bystander' education; that is, helping boys know what to say and do when other males are abusing or disrespecting women or girls.
- 2) Training presented to adult football coaches by BC Lions players at an amateur football coaches' clinic aimed at teaching coaches ways to talk to kids about violence against women and respectful relationships.
- 3) A series of Public Service Announcements featuring BC Lions players on television, radio, in stadium, and on transit advertising throughout Vancouver and Surrey promoting the message to viewers to be more than a bystander, to respect women and girls and that it is important to speak up. Reinforcing messages will be included on the websites of EVA BC, www.endingviolence.org.
- 4) Development of a film and viewer's guide directed at youth, with positive messaging that it is 'cool' to respect women, that attitudes and behaviours are important in

preventing violence against women and girls, and the importance of bystanders speaking up.

www.endingviolence.org

We gratefully acknowledge our project founding partners Status of Women Canada, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development and Encana Corporation, as well as our municipal partners the City of Vancouver and the City of Surrey.

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