



**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 with sponsorship from Status of Women Canada, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development

“Be More Than a Bystander” is a groundbreaking initiative between 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. Funding partners are Status of Women Canada and the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development.

This 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 use their status and public profile to create 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 also be going into schools throughout BC to talk to students in grades 8 to 12 about how their individual choices and actions can be part of creating 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 for this initiative. These materials will also be used to train coaches of amateur football teams on how to talk to youth about sexism, violence, respectful relationships and speaking up. Finally, the program will create a legacy film that will be distributed to communities throughout BC to allow dialogue about breaking the silence on violence against women to continue into the future.

The next phase of the initiative will see the involvement of the University of British Columbia (UBC) Varsity Athletes who will serve as champions of the Be More Than A Bystander program at UBC when up to ten varsity athletes join the initiative in January 2012. UBC believes this program is a comprehensive approach to violence prevention that draws on the power of peer and cultural influence in society and that this model encourages all individuals,

regardless of their gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status to take on leadership roles at the university and in their communities. The UBC athletes will act as spokespeople on campus and beyond, encouraging others to get involved and will have the opportunity to serve as trainers for the program.

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 by educating men as bystanders, towards preventing 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 speak up about violence and 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 will inform participants and listeners how they can help to prevent violence against women and girls by not remaining silent. The project is an innovative violence prevention program that will promote positive attitudes and behaviours of men and boys to respect their mothers, their sisters, their wives, their girlfriends, their daughters, and their female friends, and will teach men and boys how to speak up when others' attitudes and behaviours do not demonstrate respectful interactions.

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 what boys can do to help. The program will be targeted to youth in grades 8 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 they know are abusing or disrespecting women or girls. This education will become life lessons that will no doubt assist them into and throughout adulthood.

- 2) Training presented to adult football coaches by BC Lions players at an amateur football coaches' clinic aimed at helping coaches of amateur football teams in BC learn how to talk to kids about violence against women and respectful relationships.
- 3) A series of in-season football Public Service Announcements featuring BC Lions players for television, radio and Diamondvision screen presentations to be played at BC Lions games, with the positive message that it is 'cool' to respect women and girls and that it is important to speak up if others do not show such respect, with reinforcing messages to be included on the websites of EVA BC, www.endingviolence.org. The key message of this aspect of the program is that violence against women is preventable and that those close by such as friends and family have a crucial role to play.
- 4) Development of a film and viewer's guide directed at youth, with positive messaging that it is 'cool' to respect women, how attitudes and behaviours are an essential piece of the action to prevent violence against women and girls and the importance of bystanders speaking up.

www.endingviolence.org

We gratefully acknowledge our funding partners, Status of Women Canada and the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development.



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