



BC Lions defensive back Matt Bucknor encouraged young men to think of ways they could help combat violence they see against women during a visit to Castlegar last week. (John Boivin/Castlegar News)

## “Be More Than a Bystander” encourages men to help combat violence

### CFL stars visit Stanley Humphries with message of involvement

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Two members of the BC Lions football team were in Castlegar last week with a message for students about violence against women.

“Who here has three women in their lives that they love?” asked defensive back Matt Bucknor, who along with running back Jeremiah Johnson made the presentation to about 50 Grade 10 students at Stanley Humphries Secondary School.

“That’s why I got involved, thinking about the women I care about,” he told the young men and women. “The idea of this program is to break the silence. For a long time

people have been quiet against violence against women. What we want to do is change the conversation.”

Through videos, a slide presentation, and the force of their personalities, the football stars cajoled the students to think of ways they could do more than just stand aside and let abusive or violent acts take place against women.

The “Be More than a Bystander” program is a public-awareness campaign launched in 2011 by the Ending Violence Association of B.C., working with the BC Lions football organization. The association works with hundreds of community groups across the province to address issues of violence and abuse in families’ lives.

Central to the “Be More Than a Bystander” model is the recognition that the vast majority of men do not commit violence against women, but rather care deeply about the women and girls in their lives and in the world. It then asks those men to take ownership and play an active role in creating positive change.

The message: it’s “cool” to respect women, and the importance of bystanders speaking up to prevent violence against women and girls.

“The idea is to build a culture of empathy and have kids step outside their comfort zones to take care of each other in difficult situations,” said Chantal St. Jacques, the vice-principal at SHSS. “And we thought hearing it from authorities other than us would be the thing to do.”

Bucknor and Johnson have been on a mini-tour of the Interior, visiting Vernon and Nakusp before arriving in Castlegar.

“Its been going really well,” said Bucknor. “I had students coming up to us, thanking us for coming out and sharing our time. It’s been well received, for sure.”



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