

BC Lions come to DC to speak up on violence against women

Austin Cozicar / Dawson Creek Mirror

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A full crowd came to NLC last Wednesday to listen to what BC Lions Jordan Herdman (left) and Claudell Louis (right) had to say.
Photograph By COZICAR

A pair of BC Lions players were in Dawson Creek recently, raising awareness about violence against women, asking men — or anyone, for that matter — to “be more than a bystander.”

Linebacker Jordan Herdman and Defensive Lineman Claudell Louis visited learning institutions across town, noting the importance of not ignoring the problem.

“As a man, we’ve got stand up for women,” Herdman told the audience. “It just takes that one brave person to stand up.”

Half of Canadian women experience physical or sexual violence, they say, while one in three women are sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

For Herdman, it’s a topic that hits close to home.

“My mother was in an abusive relationship, she was beaten pretty badly,” he shared with the audience, noting that sometimes he was a bystander himself.

“A bystander is someone who knows someone who is acting abusively or being abused and does nothing,” said Louis.

They used the example of seeing someone drowning to point out the importance of not being a bystander — audience members noted they would try to help the person drowning.

Abuse of the sexual or physical variety isn’t the only one to watch out for — it can take the form of inappropriate and cruel jokes, sexist comments, treating girls as objects, as well as cyber bullying.

“They may seem harmless, but they create a culture that degrades women,” said Louis.

They note that abuse takes place on a continuum. Such seemingly harmless comments or sexist/homophobic/racist jokes lie on the bottom, but help develop that culture, in which higher on the continuum, women face harassment threats and verbal abuse, and higher on the list are rape, sexual assault, and physical, emotional and financial abuse. Murder is at the top.

Marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted — 50% of transgender individuals may be sexually abused or assaulted, 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted, and 57% of indigenous women have been sexually assaulted. 66% of female sexual assault victims are under the age of 24.

They suggested some tips on being more than bystander.

The Lions cautioned against using violence against abusers, warning to not to join the cycle of violence.

“You don’t want to escalate the situation,” said Herdman.

Take action if there’s a threat of harm — call 911. In other situations, offer your presence to the victim, talk to the victim — ‘Are you OK?’ — let those causing harm know their behaviour is wrong. Don’t join in on such behaviour and leave such groups.

If you know the person causing harm, talk with them, let them know their words or actions constitute violence. Perhaps refer them to help.

For more information, go to www.endingviolence.org.

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