It’s the Season to Spring into Action

By Sonya Vellenga, Executive Director

Welcome to our spring edition of our newsletter! We invite you to read about the work we have planned for the months ahead. A Mood Walk! A High Tea! A Consent Conversation!

Real change takes time! This has been a busy winter of change and most recently our province experienced a very public sexual assault trial that held the attention of many journalists, many policy makers, many feminists, and many people in the justice systems. I had submitted an editorial to the Peterborough Examiner on February 11 regarding the Ghomeshi Trial. A viewer responded with the statement that “this trial has set back women 10 years.” Are we going backwards or will we see positive change over time?

I’ve thought a lot about this response. Has the trial only served to reinforce the widely held perception that “women lie?” Is recontacting the individual responsible for the violence an indicator that you’ve “asked for it?” I checked in with several male and female survivors of sexual violence. They noted that many people “had gone back” to their perpetrator.

Does this make a difference for you when you read this? The experience of sexual violence carries with it many complex and difficult scenarios and we cannot possibly judge the credibility of the experience with the behaviour of the person who has been harmed.

Here’s what we used to believe: that sexual violence meant that the victim was violently attacked outside by a stranger at night. Today, we know that there is a continuum of sexual violence that can include the stranger attack, but more often than not, includes the person you know. When you know the person who has harmed you, the myriad of emotions and considerations are so very complex and diverse. What will happen to me if I tell? What will happen to others if I don’t tell? Will I be blamed? Will their behaviour be excused…they were young…they were drunk…they didn’t mean…..etc? Will their family be torn apart? Will I be blamed for their family’s struggles? Will I be sued if I tell? Will anyone believe me?

Societal and cultural attitudes have changed over time. We believe that more change is possible. We believe that change happens when we reflect and grapple with our own attitudes and beliefs. In our work at the Centre, we are visioning and reinventing what this change might look like. How do we invite men into this conversation? How do we encourage parents to have conversations with their children (yes, children)? How do we engage young people when their world is so focused online? How do we experience change in a holistic and meaningful way?

Join the conversation! We would love to hear your vision of change!
Join Us in Breaking Open the Taboo of Sexual Consent

With the support of the Status of Women Canada needs assessment funding, the Centre is proud to co-present the first Sexual Consent-focused conference in Central and Eastern Canada with Conference Chair, Dr. Terry Humphreys. This conference will centre on topics addressing the intersectionalities of sexual consent, including aging, colonization, racialization, HIV/STBBI status, youth, LGBTQ+, and more. In addition, presenters will discuss issues of prevention, criminalization, and neurobiology.

MEET THE CHAIR:
Dr. Terry Humphreys is Canada’s only sexual consent research; he is a faculty member and researcher in Trent University’s Psychology Department. His primary research interests include first time sexual experiences, sexuality and technology use, and sexual consent. He also researches sexual communication, sexual violence, sexuality education and the Internet, sexual health, and social psychology.

To learn more and register today for Early Bird rates: sexualconsentconference.com

An Appreciation to our Volunteers!

In celebration of Volunteer Appreciation Week, the Centre would like to acknowledge our incredible team of volunteers, including our many champions. The Centre’s volunteers are the roots of our organization and they continue to be an inspirational part of our growth. No words can truly express our gratitude for the drive, compassion and the knowledge that each volunteer brings to our team. A special thank you goes out to our Board of Directors who always help our Centre flourish time and time again. To all who’ve contributed time to our Centre, again we thank you.
Women in Solidarity for International Women’s Day

By Lisa Trefzger Clarke, Community Engagement and Project Manager

On Wednesday, May 9, 2016, the Centre partnered with the Kawartha World Issues Centre and many local community services and community groups to host the annual International Women’s Day at Seeds of Change in Peterborough. This year’s theme of Women in Solidarity brought in a record number of over 200 attendees, all with pot luck delights in hand, to hear from an excellent line up of musicians and presenters. The audience enjoyed performances from drummer Erin Hayward-Hill, guitarist Lorinda Frudd, and the Raging Grannies.

The event was highlighted by Canadian writer, Camilla Gibb, who read from her new and outstanding memoir, This is Happy. Panelist Fadya Adnan Falah spoke of her journey as a mother and refugee from Draa, Syria to Canada. Dr. May Chazan asked if the audience came together for women through charity, through a sense of responsibility, or through the understanding of the interdependence of our shared lives in community and around the world. Indigenous two-spirit activist Dana Wesley described the simplicity of solidarity in Peterborough by “just not being a jerk,” and listening to stories of women.

Thanks to everyone who supported, participated and “listened” at IWD 2016.

Gathering Together in Circle; Meeting with Intentions

The Centre will now host two bi-weekly drop-in groups per month for survivors of sexual violence and their supporters: Circle of Care and the new Intentions Group.

WHEN: THE FIRST AND THIRD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH
10:00-11:30 AM AT KAWARTHA SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE
DROP-INS WELCOME

The Intentions group welcomes survivors of sexual violence who would like to practice grounding, relaxation techniques, meditation and mindfulness. This is not a discussion group, but an experiential group.

In this group, members will practice grounding techniques to distract the mind and calming techniques to calm and settle the nervous system in response to triggers, dissociation, flashbacks and nightmares.

WHEN: THE SECOND AND FOURTH TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH
10:00-11:30 AM AT KAWARTHA SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE
DROP-INS WELCOME

The Circle of Care group welcomes survivors of sexual violence who have participated, at some point, in services at the Centre, to gather together in a peer support and self-care circle.

Group members can expect facilitated and supportive conversation, expressive arts, group projects for advocacy, new grounding strategies and connections in community.
Support Our Sexual Violence Prevention Education

Your donation helps the Centre to offer the City of Peterborough and the counties of Peterborough, City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton and Northumberland important sexual violence prevention and public education initiatives, and our 24/7 crisis line. Please consider breaking the stigma and silence of sexual violence and harassment by lending your voice and support to our work in 2016! Please DONATE now online at CanadaHelps.org or call Sonya at 705-748-5901 ext. 203.

Thank you to all our donors, event attendees, and volunteers!