

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse 2012 Reflection Letter

As we are nearing year end at Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA) and approaching our 19th year of operations as Calgary's primary sexual abuse and sexual assault crisis, counselling and education service provider for Calgary and surrounding areas, I find myself very grateful for the opportunities offered to me during my role as Executive Director for this organization.

Throughout these 18 years I have encountered many challenges and obstacles in moving forward to impact attitudes around this crime. But within this timeframe, I have also experienced huge successes and seen considerable gains in bringing awareness of it to the public. Through our front line work and years of experience in the field of sexual violence, we have learned a considerable amount surrounding this crime and have been able to reach out to our communities and educate people about it.

Sexual violence was once thought to be an issue that occurred infrequently and only within certain genders, ethnic groups or socio-economic demographics. But we have learned and educated society that sexual violence is a crime that is very widespread and impacts a significant number of people – men, women and children alike. Sexual violence has no boundaries and anyone is at risk.

In the crime of child sexual abuse, we have been able to educate people on offender behaviours and break the myth of "stranger danger". We have been able to raise awareness of the prevalence of this crime that is predominately committed by those who are known to the child (85% of all sexual abuse occurrences).

We have been able to break the belief that sexual violence is motivated by sex, and educate society that instead it is a crime committed so to have power and control over another individual.

What I have also seen and learned in my role as a sexual violence educator is that sexual abuse and sexual assault are crimes that are very complex; and that many of the underlying beliefs and attitudes we may hold, along with the language we use and the judgments we have towards certain behaviours and groups of people, help perpetuate their normalcy. At CCASA we believe the underlying means of championing a society free of sexual violence occurs when we become aware of where change needs to occur and how to go about doing that.

CCASA has ensured communities have access to current and accurate information on sexual violence. In 2011 we set a goal of creating a leading edge child sexual abuse educational website for children, adolescents, parents, teachers and caregivers to be used across the country on what sexual abuse and sexual assault are, and how to work towards creating healthy communities free of sexual violence. We believe that education and information empowers individuals to take action in response to child sexual abuse and works to reduce the risk of this crime and its effects on victims and families. We were very fortunate to have received generous donations from two companies - Golder Associates Ltd and Vista Group Inc., to put towards the development of this website. Our child sexual abuse educational website is currently in the making and will be launched in early 2013.

CCASA has always supported the health and well-being of those directly and indirectly impacted by sexual violence in a professional, compassionate and timely manner. In 2012 CCASA was a supporter of the Third Option pilot project run by The Sexual Assault Response Team. The Third Option pilot project

provides recent victims of sexual assault with an additional and compassionate reporting choice without pressure or judgment when making decisions surrounding the crime that was committed against them.

CCASA has always challenged victim blaming campaigns and has worked to educate individuals on new ways of thinking about this crime. In 2012 CCASA was a partner in the offender accountability campaign called Don't Be That Guy through the collaborative Sexual Assault Voices of Calgary where we educated people on sexual assault responsibility redirection and the laws of consent (www.savcalgary.ca).

Looking throughout the years and seeing a shift in thought around the crime of sexual violence, I am proud of the involvement that CCASA has had in helping to move this crime out of the shadows. We as a society are having more conversations about the crime of sexual violence and are moving in a positive direction to continue breaking the silence surrounding this crime.

As we enter into our 19th year, we ask you to take the CCASA call to action – to educate yourself and empower a community! Let's work together. Let's make a difference and together we can create healthy communities free of sexual violence!

To find out more information on some of our initiatives, or find out ways that you can become involved in impacting attitudes around sexual violence, please visit our new website at www.calgarycasa.com

With heartfelt thanks and gratitude for your support of our organization,

Danielle Aubry, MSW, RSW
Executive Director
Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse