

Corner Brook Status of Women Council

NEWSLETTER - November 2021

IF?

In announcing an independent review of the workplace culture and governance of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, Justice Minister John Hogan said its aim is “to discover if there are issues that need to be addressed.” If? Is it really possible for anyone to believe that there are not issues that need to be addressed within the RNC?

A dozen women have contacted Lynn Moore with allegations of sexual assault by on-duty RNC officers – not just one officer – so it is not surprising that women are reluctant to make formal complaints, even if the officers involved in these allegations are no longer on the force. Members of at-risk and marginalized groups can find little reason to trust a system that provides so little transparency in its internal investigations.

It would be easier to accept that the problem is a few “bad apples” rather than the system itself if the problems existed only in one or two police forces. However, it doesn’t take more than a quick review of recent news to see the problem as global. The Black Lives Matter movement presents one block of evidence, and another is the kidnaping, rape, and murder of Sarah Everard in the UK by an active police officer with a history of alleged offenses that had not been properly investigated. Caitlin Urquhart, co-chair of First Voice Working Group on Police Oversight, has no illusions.

She is quoted in a CBC report (October 20, 2021) as saying, “The RNC has systemic issues, as do most police forces across the country.”

Mike King, director of the Serious Incident Response Team of Newfoundland and Labrador, said this summer (CBC, July 30, 2021) that the agency wants “to build trust in its abilities” and asserted the team’s intention to hold police officers accountable, as they would any members of the public. Surely that is the bare minimum that citizens should expect. Retired RNC chief Joe Boland spoke in the same CBC report on the issue of trust: ““The uniform for us is significant. It gives us almost instant trust in a community ... But for that one per cent or so that abuse that, there's significant damage that can be done.”



It is fair to say that the damage has been done, whether the percentage of abusers is 1% or higher. Those who hold a position and wear a uniform intended to signal to the public that they can be trusted are all the more guilty when they instead abuse that position and uniform. Surviving sexual assault is traumatic; reporting it is too often another trauma. Those traumas are only made worse when lack of transparency and

accountability leads to distrust of the system that will carry out the investigation.

If the Minister of Justice thinks it is an open question whether there are “issues that need to be addressed” within the RNC (or any other police force), perhaps he should read the news.

Upcoming:

This month our book club will be discussing *Know My Name* by Chanel Miller. The book club meets at 7pm the second Tuesday of every month. Call us for more details.

We will also be offering Healthy Relationships. A four week program that aims to help evaluate your relationships, identify warning signs and how to create healthy connections. The program starts at 9am, Wednesday, November 3rd. Call us to reserve your spot.

Thursday, November 11th - Remembrance Day - Commemorating the end of the First World War, and remembering all those who have fought for our freedoms. Our offices will be closed to commemorate the day.

Saturday, November 20th - National Child Day/World Children’s Day - celebrating the 1959 signing of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

Sunday, November 21st - International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day - an event in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection,

understanding, and hope through their shared experience.

Monday, November 22nd - National Housing Day - Celebrated with partners, stakeholders and Canadians across the country. It's a day to acknowledge the work done by hundreds of organizations and thousands of people ensuring everyone across Canada has the dignity of a home.

Friday, November 26th - International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women - Every year, this day and the ensuing 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence which follow (ending on 10 December, Human Rights Day) are commemorated around the world, providing individuals and groups a chance to mobilize and call attention to the urgent need to end violence against women and girls. Ending violence against women is one of UN Women’s key priority areas, with programs addressing the pandemic implemented globally.

Final Word:

A vaccine pass is NOT required to access services at the Women's Centre. To ensure enhanced safety for everyone, all staff and volunteers with our organization will be required to be vaccinated by Dec 17th.

