



Victoria Sexual
Assault Centre

healing, education & prevention

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Walk a Mile in Her Shoes to highlight and teach bystander intervention.

VICTORIA – Walk a Mile in Her Shoes participants take an extra step to learn bystander intervention skills to stand-up and speak-out against sexualized violence year round.

Every year in May the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre hosts **Walk a Mile in Her Shoes** to raise funds and awareness for the **Victoria Sexual Assault Centre** (VSAC). Participants walk only one mile, and although the distance is short, the significance is immense—to bring awareness to, and speak out against, sexualized violence, a topic often clouded in shame and secrecy.

While Walk a Mile has helped break the shame and silence that surrounds sexualized violence, event organizers have long understood that it takes much more than one day of action to make the societal shifts necessary to one day eradicate sexualized violence. That’s why this year Walk a Mile will incorporate the bystander approach, both at Walk a Mile itself through interactive theatre and at a pre-event workshop.

What is bystander intervention? Simply put, bystander education teaches people safe and positive ways to speak out against ideas and behaviors that tolerate and sustain sexualized violence. Research shows that bystander education is an effective method to help prevent the widespread problem of sexualized violence in communities. “Being more than a bystander is about de-normalizing violence, calling it out, and moving past it,” says Jeremy Loveday, local poet (whose poem, *Masks off: A Challenge for Men* written for last year’s Walk a mile event went viral, reaching over 875,000 on Youtube alone and viewed globally when featured by the social media powerhouse, Upworthy). In addition to performing at Walk a Mile on May 25th, Loveday will participate in the bystander intervention training on May 14th: “I am excited to attend the training and it is encouraging to see young people taking the lead on this issue.”

Isaac Rosenberg, along with a team of knowledgeable and experienced facilitators, will guide workshop participants. Involved with VSAC’s Project Respect and Hollaback!, Rosenberg believes that “the bystander approach encourages people to step up in a way that feels safe.”

Rosenberg says that when first introduced to the concept of bystander intervention, he had a feeling of men's responsibility – his own responsibility in ending violence. "Responsibility may sound like a burden, but that's not how I've experienced it. For me it's empowering to work towards ending gender based violence. I've been given this opportunity to step up and work for justice. It's an honour to work with people who are not men who have been doing this work for a long time – it's an honour to step in and fill the space where men have been missing and where men are needed."

Sexualized violence can only be prevented when the whole community commits to creating a culture of respect where everyone has the right to sexuality without violence. To get involved or learn more about bystander intervention, people are encouraged to attend Victoria's Walk a Mile in Her Shoes®, on **Sunday, May 25, 2014, 2-4pm Spirit (Centennial) Square**. Walk a Mile asks men, alongside their communities, to walk one mile wearing shoes of their own (or fancy shoes with heels if they choose) to raise funds and awareness for the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre. It's fun and it gets everyone talking about something that's really difficult to talk about: sexualized violence. For more details visit: www.walkamilevictoria.com (twitter handle: @VSACentre, #walkamilevictoria).

The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (www.vsac.ca) is a feminist organization committed to ending sexualized violence through healing, education, and prevention. We are dedicated to supporting women and all trans* survivors of sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse, through advocacy, counselling, and empowerment.