



Opinion Editorial
December 20, 2011

Domestic violence murder is a wakeup call for us all

CALGARY – At what point does someone come forward to report potentially dangerous behaviours that are – or might be – lethal. At what point are the police called to intervene in domestic violence situations. At what point will we wake up and take action when we see abusive behaviours.

The Calgary Domestic Violence Collective (CDVC) works with community partners to provide a coordinated response to violence prevention in Calgary. CDVC believes increasing public awareness and education of this issue can assist in prevention and appropriate intervention. The triple murder-suicide early Thursday morning on Highway 2 north of Claresholm, about 110 km south of Calgary is a dramatic loss on many fronts. Its core story of dating violence, jealousy and intimidation, is shocking and unfortunately - preventable.

Domestic violence is the attempt, act, or intent of someone within a relationship (characterized by intimacy, dependence, or trust), to intimidate, exploit, control, or have power over another. Violence can take many forms, including: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, financial and the violation of rights. Domestic violence may be a single act, or include a number of acts forming a pattern of abuse.

Violence does not 'come out of nowhere'. All of these risk elements are signs that a victim is potentially in jeopardy:

Controlling behaviour and ownership – eg: constantly phoning – a need to know where their partner is at all times,

Violent outbursts and jealousy,

A refusal to accept the end of the relationship.

Domestic violence affects everyone. It is the presence or awareness of bystanders, such as relatives, neighbours or friends of the victims and perpetrators, who have the ability to make a difference and help save lives. People who see or suspect violence need to seek immediate help. Immediate action will help neighbours, friends and loved ones feel less alone and less helpless. If people get help early, physical abuse, violence and severe injury can often be prevented.

Coverage of last week's murder-suicide has described a person, reportedly a 'jilted boyfriend', who was increasingly domineering, with controlling and abusive behaviour. Repeatedly phoning his girlfriend, threats, pushing, shoving and arguments - all are abusive and were indicators of violence. There was an opportunity to intervene. Police should have been alerted.

The best time to prevent or stop violence is when we see the risk elements. Collaborative services in Calgary are waiting to help people facing abuse and violence – but they need proactivity and responsiveness to instigate their involvement. It is our responsibility when we see risk elements and potentially dangerous behaviours to act. We need to act, not ignore, to ensure domestic violence does not occur in our own city.

Collaborative work is being done to help prevent domestic violence in Calgary. CDVC encourages Calgarians who suspect they know someone affected by domestic violence, to reach out and connect with the numerous agencies available for help.

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The CDVC works with community partners to provide a coordinated response to violence prevention in Calgary.

Representatives include:

Alberta Mental Health Board. Alberta Solicitor General (Probation). Calgary Counselling Centre. Calgary Immigrant Women's Association. Calgary Legal Guidance. Calgary Police Service. Calgary and Area Women's Shelter Network. Connect Family and Sexual Abuse Network. Distress Centre. Edan Counselling Associates. HomeFront. Kerby Centre. Peer Support Services for Abused Women.

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, please call one of the following 24-hour help lines:

Connect Family & Sexual Abuse Network	403-237-5888
Family Violence Information Line	403-310-1818 (Toll Free)
Distress Centre	403-266-HELP (4357)