

COMMUNITY

Prince Rupert,
Skeena-Queen
Charlotte
Regional
District, BC

Project:

Human trafficking awareness raising at the All Native Basketball Tournament

Prince Rupert, Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District, BC

Prince Rupert is located in north central BC. Known as the transportation hub for northern BC, Prince Rupert has a population of approximately 12,508. First Nations people make up approximately 38.4% of Prince Rupert's population, one of the largest numbers of First Nations people in a municipality of 5,000 or more residents in Canada. Several First Nations villages lay along the coast of Prince Rupert.

Marlene Swift is an RCMP-based victim services manager for North Coast Victim Services. Over the past several years, Marlene and the CSI-A Team have organized community events to raise awareness about important social issues affecting women, youth and Aboriginal communities in and around Prince Rupert. The CSI-A Team was concerned about young people being lured into situations of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, and wanted to help raise awareness about the dangers of human trafficking in their community.

In the fall of 2014, Marlene and members of the Community Social Issues-Action Team (CSI-A Team) coordinated a two-day "Train the Trainer" workshop on human trafficking in Prince Rupert. The workshop included community members from Prince Rupert and the surrounding First Nation villages. The workshop brought the community together to learn more about the indicators of human trafficking and supports and services in Prince Rupert and surrounding area that could be used to support emerging trafficked persons. After the "Train-the-Trainer" workshop, Marlene and others from the committee, along with community members, organized six follow-up activities to raise awareness about domestic human trafficking and the risks to Aboriginal women and youth.

“I believe it is important to provide information to the public (in general) as there are far too many people who do not understand what Human Trafficking is and how close to home it can be. By providing the information at the All Native Tournament there is a large audience of First Nations people from throughout the province that can be reached. The estimated attendance for the all native is approximately 10,000 people. I hope that some people will leave the tournament with a new awareness about the scope of Human Trafficking and how it affects all of us. That whether we want to acknowledge it or not our First Nations People can be drawn into human trafficking just as easily as a non-First Nations person.”

– Marlene Swift
Victim Services Manager

One of these follow-up activities was an information table on human trafficking at the All Native Basketball Tournament. This annual event was held in Prince Rupert in February 2015. Approximately 10,000 people from children to Elders were in attendance, coming from all over BC and the United States. At this event, CSI-AT committee members shared an information table with the local RCMP to provide information about human trafficking. Print materials were available as well as wrist bands and t-shirts with a “stop human trafficking” slogan.

A local basketball team wore the t-shirts during their warm-up session at the basketball tournament, raising awareness about the importance of ending human trafficking. This event was a unique and exciting way to generate awareness about human trafficking and the risks to Aboriginal women and youth.