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Violence prevention workshops at StFX

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A workshop, always timely but perhaps even more so now after events at St. Mary's University last week, is coming to StFX and Antigonish Sept. 13 to 15.

The Bringing in the Bystander (BITB) training program will begin with an evening workshop at the Schwartz School of Business (room 215), starting at 7 p.m.

The session is open to all, with no registration required.

Day-long workshops, requiring registration, will take place Saturday and Sunday. Participants will attend one day or the other as the training is the same for both days.

Annie Chau, project co-ordinator for preventing violence against women at StFX, suggested folks interested in registering should contact her (318-3300 or annie.awrc@bellaliant.com) as soon as possible, as the workshops are filling up.

Chau talked about the workshops coming together from work she and her advisory committee has been doing on the preventing violence against women at StFX project.

"The whole goal for this past academic year was to do a lot of research and to understand what students think about these issues on campus ... what they're experiencing," Chau said.

"While we were doing that sort of baseline research, we were also looking into programming which we could implement in year two. We're coming into year two of the program and I have done a bit of research on different programs and approaches to intervention, and this one [BITB], I think, is a newer approach we haven't been able to tap into here."

She noted the committee looked at programs such as Green Dot and Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) by Jackson Katz, who spoke in Antigonish last year, but decided on BITB.

"We decided in our conference calls with all these different programs that BITB would be the best fit for this community," she said.

"It's extremely adaptable, it's evaluation based, it comes from researchers from the University of New Hampshire, not a business per say ... all those reasons made us more inclined to go with this one."

She added it also addresses

"the power of relationships and the oppression that sort of underlies the violence we see; that manifests itself" and the fact it has been adapted specifically to campuses.

"At the University of Windsor this program is in place," Chau said. "What the folks at the University of New Hampshire have done to support the University of Windsor is adapt it into a course. So it's actually a course at the University of Windsor."

Chau said the hope with the workshops is to have people trained who can go back and share it within their communities or groups.

"So that there are a lot of people with this knowledge and then we can strategize, together, on how it will be used after," she said.

She talked more about the format of the weekend, starting with the opening night.

"Friday night, one of the trainers will be doing an open public workshop," she said. "Just to talk about what a bystander approach is to intervention. Potentially towards somewhat of what Jackson Katz shared, but more specific to this particular program. Sharing success stories and challenges with the program."

"That is open to everyone and for us we hope to create some buzz and attention."

She said Saturday and Sunday are the training sessions.

"Have people trained on the Saturday and Sunday and then they're able to take that to their community so that people know about it ... oh yea, I heard about that bystander approach," she said, mimicking a hopeful refrain.

"It [Friday] is for those who wouldn't necessarily be trained as trainers but have a keen interest. Saturday and Sunday is the training ... for 70 folks, we're hoping."

It is expected some of those folks will be from St. Mary's University, which came under fire last week following a frosh-week activity. A chant promoting non-consensual and under-age sex was caught on camera and distributed on social media. The uproar has led to the resignation of the student association president as well as the vice-president of student life.

There is expected to be more consequences from the incident and this weekend's workshop at StFX is part of disciplinary education for some of those involved.