



Annie Chau (left) and Bridget Houston are encouraging everyone to participate in Take Back the Night Sept. 24 because everyone has a part in the solution and working to prevent gender based violence and sexual violence from happening. PHOTO: Emily Hiltz

Take Back the Night continuing the conversation

EMILY HILTZ
✉ emilyhiltz@thecasket.ca

This year's Take Back the Night is reaching out to communities outside Antigonish to get involved in the powerful march around town. Along with StFX students and staff, children and community members, a bus will be bringing in a group of participants from the Paqtnkek First Nation community.

Annie Chau said the decision to bring in the group from Paqtnkek resulted, in part, from the Responding to and Preventing Sexual Violence project she has been working on in the community.

"The community is really supportive of the survivors and victims in the community and really wants to create a space that is safe and healthy for themselves and their children," Chau said. "We thought this would be a great way to bridge that community with the community here."

"It's really about building a bigger, collective effort," she added.

The event begins at 7 p.m. with a few words from emcee and Coady facilitator Robyn Bourgeois. Chau noted space for an open mic will be left for people to share in a "space that's survivor and victim positive and focused."

New this year, a rally will be held the day before the Take Back the Night march (Sept. 23) to continue to raise awareness for the event.

"We're planning to go around to various locations on and off campus to try and reach out to people and let them know about Take Back the Night," Bridget Houston, StFX bringing in the bystander co-ordinator, said.

Also on Wednesday, StFX will be presenting a second screening of the *Hunting Ground* - a chilling documentary on rape crimes at U.S. campuses, institutional cover-ups and the social toll on victims and their families. The screening begins at 7:30 p.m. in Nicholson Hall room 151.

"It's again to, kind of, get people thinking of these issues and then we're hoping that after the march we can have some kind of forum or discussion about the march, taking back the night and what that means to different people," Houston said, noting the idea is to continue having things move forward.

"After the Take Back the Nights I've been a part of here, people leave feeling really energized but not sure where to take that energy or action," Chau said.

She believes having a forum and discussion afterwards about things happening in the community, or on campus, will help people who want to learn more.

Normally, Take Back the Night is one of the first events of the school year that sets out to address gender based violence and sexualized violence, however, over the last year the conversation has continued and evolved into several events throughout the year.

"It's encouraging for sure and I think it feels like change is happening when other people are interested," Chau said, noting the fact the university is hosting the documentary screening again shows its importance.

Houston said continuing the conversation and holding events provides more open space for people, who may not have been in an environment where these issues were being talked about, to get involved.

"It's a really promising step forward because it will be a ripple effect creating dialogue and creating interest in making our communities safer for everyone," Houston said.

Chau noted everyone is encouraged to attend Take Back the Night because everyone has a part in the solution and working to prevent gender based violence and sexual violence from happening.

Take Back the Night will get underway Sept. 24 with speakers beginning at 7 p.m. at the StFX Angus L. MacDonald Library and the march beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The Casket
Sept 23/15