

# NATIONAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TOOLKIT



Leading Change:

The Alberta CFL Project, Alberta Council for  
Women's Shelters Case Study





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### About the organization

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is an ambassador for women's shelters in Alberta, providing support to members and leadership to leverage the collective knowledge to inform solutions to end violence and abuse against women and girls. ACWS has been working for over a decade to inspire men to take informed action to end violence and abuse against women –to diminish the overwhelming numbers of seniors, women and their children who access shelter each year in our province.

### Overview

Building on our experiences working with men in the community, and inspired by the success of other provincial initiatives with CFL teams, ACWS approached the two pro football organizations in Alberta in 2013 about partnering on an in-school education program and public awareness campaign.

ACWS pulled together enough funding from various projects to train the players and in March 2014 – paid four Edmonton Eskimo players and three Calgary Stampeders to undertake a three-day intensive training on our Leading Change model of violence prevention and bystander intervention.

The players were inspired by the training, and were looking forward to connecting with youth on this topic. We created a website, supported the teams in producing testimonial style public service announcements, and the fall launch of the project in both cities garnered national media attention. After the launch, the Stampeders players began presenting in schools and that 2014 football season concluded with the Stampeders winning the Grey Cup.

The Eskimos gave us access to the players to schedule presentations early in the 2015 year, and we completed a series of presentations in Edmonton and surrounding area. At the end of the 2015 football season, the Edmonton Eskimos went on to win the Grey Cup.

Each of our presentations is evaluated based upon our Leading Change evaluation matrix. We had strong outcomes that first year, which can be reviewed in the evaluation summary linked below.

A presentation hasn't gone by without a disclosure from a member of the audience, either during a presentation or afterward, and our training model includes a local shelter representative and the school counselor to help support participants in self-care. An information sheet on local supports is also provided. ACWS followed-up with the school counselors at each site and ensured that they were connected to ongoing women's shelter frontline expertise.

The Stampeders continued to conduct presentations throughout 2015- including Rocky Mountain House, a community where we were piloting our "Leading Change: Inspired Communities," community engagement model. The players visited this community on two separate occasions, conducting presentations with students, but also visiting the local shelter, Mountain Rose Women's Shelter, and hosting a community presentation.

Jiffy Lube supported the television broadcasts of our team-produced Public Service Announcements. While we have had no support from Status of Women Canada, who supported similar initiatives with the BC Lions and Toronto Argonauts, we have been fortunate to piece together funds to continue from the Government of Alberta, Telus, Edmonton Family and Community Support Services and the Stampede City Kinsmen. We continue to be challenged to secure sponsors of in-stadium advertising, a requirement of the teams to partner, but have little problem raising funds to pay the player fees to facilitate the conversation in schools.

### Key Results

Working with the players has been a rewarding experience. Not only have we planted seeds with youth around the province (85% identified that they had an improved ability to prevent or interrupt abusive behaviors against women and girls), but we know the training has had a significant impact on the players themselves. It has been inspirational to meet and work with these professional athletes who really and truly do 'get it' and have taken this on as an important issue and made it their own.

#### Project Outputs:

- Player PSA's
- Project Website
- Project Video
- Evaluation results summary – year one
- Representative media story

To learn more about the Leading Change Model, contact

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