

Sexual Assault

FACT SHEET

“I think that violence toward Aboriginal women is perpetuated within society. It is not only one person making them feel worthless, but instead is the general accepted stereotype surrounding Aboriginal women.”

- Age 19, Ontario

- In 1999, in Canada, 23,872 sexual assaults (total of all types) were reported to police. (METRAC, Stats Can 2000)
- 80% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 8 in the Northwest Territories have been sexually assaulted. (Gurr *et al.* 1999)
- 75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually abused. (Jiwani, 1998)
- Only 6% of sexual assaults are reported to the police and only 1% of date rapes are reported to the police. (Statistics Canada)
- 63% of sexual assaults reported to the police involve girls and young women under the age of eighteen. (METRAC)
- Children and youth make up 61% of reported sexual assault cases. (METRAC)
- 31% of sexual assaults occur in dating and acquaintance relationships. (METRAC, Ontario Women’s Directorate, Facts to Consider About Sexual Assault)
- Of all incidents of sexual assault, 24% took place in the victim's home, 20% in the perpetrator's home, 10% in someone else's home, 25% in a car, and 21% in a public place. (METRAC, Johnson, H. 1996. *Dangerous Domains: Violence Against Women in Canada*. Toronto: Nelson Canada).
- 54% of girls under the age of 16 have experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention. (Jiwani, 1998)

What Exactly Is Sexual Assault / Date Rape?

The word "rape" was actually dropped from the Criminal Code of Canada in 1983 and was replaced with three levels of sexual assault which are based on the level of personal injury, just like the laws concerning physical assault.



- Level 1 Sexual Assault occurs when "any" form of sexual activity is forced upon another person without that person's consent (with no physical injury).
- Level 2 is Sexual Assault with a weapon. This means that the offender:
1) has a weapon, threatens to use one, imitation or real, 2) they threaten to hurt someone else (friend, family or child), 3) they cause bodily harm to the victim, or 4) they are involved in some way in the act of sexual assault
From <http://www.sexualassaultsarnia.on.ca/book2/t-4.htm>

Some of the *Criminal Code* provisions that may apply in cases of sexual assault include

- assault – ss.265-266
- assault causing bodily harm or with a weapon – s. 267
- aggravated assault – s.269
- sexual assault – s.271
- sexual assault with a weapon – s.272
- aggravated sexual assault – s. 273
- forcible confinement – s.279 (2)

(From <http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/datingfs.html#head5>)

“I think it makes us feel small, unworthy,
always wondering what we
did wrong...”

- Age 26, Yukon

What do I do if I've been sexually assaulted?

Take steps right away if you've been sexually assaulted.

- Get away from the attacker to a safe place as fast as you can. Then call 911 or the police.
- Call a friend or family member you trust. You also can call a crisis center or a hotline to talk with a counsellor. Feelings of shame, guilt, fear, and shock are normal. It is important to get counselling from a trusted professional.
- Do not wash, comb, or clean any part of your body. Do not change clothes if possible, so the hospital staff can collect evidence. Do not touch or change anything at the scene of the assault.
- Go to your nearest hospital emergency room as soon as possible. You need to be examined, treated for any injuries, and screened for possible sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or pregnancy. The doctor will collect evidence using a rape kit for fibers, hairs, saliva, semen, or clothing that the attacker may have left behind.
- You or the hospital staff can call the police from the emergency room to file a report.
- Ask the hospital staff about possible support groups you can attend right away.



How can I protect myself from being sexually assaulted?

There are things you can do to reduce your chances of being sexually assaulted. Follow these tips from the National Crime Prevention Council.

- Be aware of your surroundings - who's out there and what's going on.
- Walk with confidence. The more confident you look, the stronger you appear.
- Don't let drugs or alcohol, cloud your judgment.
- Be assertive - don't let anyone violate your space.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in your surroundings, leave.
- Don't prop open self-locking doors.
- Lock your door and your windows, even if you leave for just a few minutes.
- Watch your keys. Don't lend them. Don't leave them. Don't lose them. And don't put your name and address on the key ring.
- Watch out for unwanted visitors. Know who's on the other side of the door before you open it.
- Be wary of isolated spots, like underground garages, offices after business hours, and apartment laundry rooms.
- Avoid walking or jogging alone, especially at night. Vary your route. Stay in well-traveled, well-lit areas.

- Have your key ready to use before you reach the door — home, car, or work.
- Park in well-lit areas and lock the car, even if you'll only be gone a few minutes.
- Drive on well-traveled streets, with doors and windows locked.
- Never hitchhike or pick up a hitchhiker.
- Keep your car in good shape with plenty of gas in the tank.

(From *Women's Health*, <http://www.4woman.gov/faq/sexualassault.htm>)

Tips Identified by NWAC Youth

- dress confidently
- avoid the pony tail-men attack women with pony tails as it is easier to grab them
- carry a whistle
- yell fire if someone attacks you or you see someone's being attacked
- if sitting in your car, undo the seatbelt so you can get away and defend yourself
- learn about numbers to call, options*/ features on your cell phone
- learn how to carry a key as weapon
- understand men are physically stronger
- know your strength and weakness
- don't put yourself in vulnerable situations (alone with someone, in closed space, etc)
- follow your intuition: does it feel right, are you uncomfortable
- trust your instincts
- make sure you have control over your environment at all times



- identify who would you turn to if it did happen; who would go to police with you
- stick to your plans for the evening out
- take a trusted friend with you
- say no assertively to something you don't agree to or doesn't feel right
- watch over your friends when you go out
- don't leave your friend with someone if it feels wrong
- don't separate from your friends in the bar
- tell someone what you're wearing that night
- plan ahead-what if your friend leaves you, you ran out gas, money, your cell is out etc
- avoid walking home /to the car alone
- be aware of effects of drugs or alcohol on you-drink water after some point- make sure how much you can take
- know that if your friend was drinking or doing drugs-she is not in a state to give consent
- beware of rape date drugs
- have a plan-what would you do if you suspect you've been drugged
- learn about safety tips
- learn about body language
- realize your own worth
- think about why do you sometimes do things to get approval of others
- know that it's ok to talk about the pain you're trying to cover with drugs or alcohol

You Should Know...

- it is not your fault
- you do not deserve it
- there are people out there that can help you out
- it is not normal nor acceptable
- it is not stupid or dumb to seek help and use available resources
- sexual violence can happen anytime
- sexual violence can happen anywhere
- sexual violence can happen to anyone

What You Can Do

- deliver NWAC's Youth Violence Prevention Workshop in your community
- form Aboriginal young women support groups
- inform yourself of your legal rights
- make youth aware they have cultural support
- if there are not enough supports in your community - try doing something about it
- educate youth on body language and safe tips
- learn what are the physical barriers to respond to an assault (especially in isolated communities) and try to identify possible solutions
- talk HONESTLY about these issues with girls
- make the society at large realize how big of an issue it is

