

Hello Eddy & Jamie,

On behalf of Western University, I wish to state our position on sexual violence, in particular in relation to a recent incident in which a disturbing message advocating sexual violence was written on the outside of a window of a rental property on Epworth Avenue near Western.

To be clear, sexual violence is not tolerated at Western. The message written on that window is a form of sexual violence. Its existence threatened the safety and security of our campus and wider community.

The incident was first brought to the attention of Glenn Matthews, Western's Housing Mediation Officer, whose role is to resolve problems between students and neighbours. Glenn responded immediately and an investigation was initiated. A subsequent story quoting him appeared in the *London Free Press*.

First, Western takes full responsibility for not responding to the incident adequately. Given the content of the message, others should have been mobilized immediately to assist the Housing Mediation Officer when the incident came to light, including Western's Sexual Violence Prevention & Education Coordinator, Campus Community Police Service and London Police Service, to ensure a thorough and appropriate response. To that end, the University is reviewing its response mechanisms in these kinds of serious situations and the current incident is being investigated by London Police, as well as Campus Police as a Code of Student Conduct violation.

It is also important to note Western's Housing Mediation Officer is not positioned to represent the views of, or speak on behalf of, the University on matters relating to sexual violence and we regret he was put in that position. Glenn has since apologized and expressed sincere regret that his comments dismissed the seriousness of sexual violence and served to damage the University's initiatives to eliminate such abhorrent activity: "The statement scrawled on the Epworth Avenue address is disgusting and there is no excuse for those words being posted. They have no place in our community, or anywhere. None of these outcomes were my intent and I am sorry my words caused harm or distress to anyone."

Sadly, we continue to live in a culture that often trivializes sexual violence and blames survivors. This incident serves to reinforce the responsibilities each and every one of us must adopt regarding sexual violence as we work toward shifting that culture to one where consent is the norm.

The following sexual violence awareness and education initiatives have either recently taken place or were planned in advance, however this incident is a stark reminder that we must continue to prioritize sexual violence prevention at Western and work to actively educate our staff, faculty and students to be upstanders, individuals who act to reduce harm and address attitudes and behaviours that are sexually violent.

- In October 2015, Western University received a \$381,000 grant from the Ontario Women's Directorate to develop, research and implement an upstander training program designed to build knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness of sexual violence on Ontario postsecondary campuses. This includes updating Western's existing upstander training program for undergraduate students and developing new programs focused on graduate students and faculty/staff.
- More than 150 senior academic and administrative leaders attended a campus sexual violence education forum (April 2016).
- Western's Centre for Education and Research on Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC) held a sexual harassment prevention training session for faculty and staff (July 2016).
- Western is currently reviewing the University's sexual violence policy and undertaking various consultation efforts with members of Western's community (September 2016).
- October 17 to 23 is Sexual Violence Awareness Prevention and Education Week on campus, during which a lunch and learn session is scheduled for faculty and staff and Jackson Katz, educator, author and filmmaker internationally renowned for his scholarship and activism on issues of gender and violence, will deliver a keynote.
- CREVAWC recently received a grant from the Ontario government to develop training for those responding to disclosures of sexual violence.
- Western is currently developing a sexual violence prevention and education program for faculty and staff that will be launched next year.

To learn more about sexual violence prevention and education at Western, please visit www.uwo.ca/sexualviolence.

Jana

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