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Local survivors speak out in video about gender-based violence

The silence is breaking. A powerful new video, It Happens Here, is calling on communities to confront a difficult truth: gender-based violence is not something that happens somewhere else, it is happening here, in our homes, on our streets, in our neighbourhoods.

This release comes at a strategic and meaningful time. May is Sexual Violence Prevention Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness, challenging stigma, and supporting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Across communities, this month serves as a reminder that these issues are widespread, often hidden, and require collective action. It is also an opportunity to amplify survivor voices, foster understanding, and encourage people to move from awareness to meaningful support and change.

Created by survivors from Dufferin County and Caledon, this deeply moving video brings raw, lived experiences into the light. It reveals the hidden realities of gender-based violence in rural and small-town communities, places often defined by trust, familiarity, and the illusion of safety. Behind closed doors, in quiet farmhouses, family homes, and apartments above local shops, survivors are navigating fear, control, and isolation every day.

Through their own voices, survivors speak to the barriers that keep abuse hidden: stigma that silences, fear that paralyzes, financial dependence that traps, and the painful lack of accessible supports. But more than anything, they speak to the urgent need for communities to listen and to believe.

?This is not a distant issue. This is ours,?says Barbara Mason, coordinator of the Survivor Group. ?For too long, gender-based violence in rural communities has been buried under the comforting lie that ?things like that don't happen here.? But they do. They always have. This video is survivors standing together: see us, hear us, believe us. Your belief could mean the difference between despair and hope?between danger and safety.?

The message of It Happens Here is both simple and deeply personal: survivors are not invisible; they are part of every community.

?I am your neighbour. Your coworker. Your friend,? one survivor shares. ?And I am a survivor.?

The video calls on every member of the community to move beyond silence and discomfort, to listen without judgment, to reject victim-blaming, and to stand beside survivors with compassion and courage. Watching this video is an important step in that process. It offers a rare opportunity to hear directly from survivors, to better understand the realities of gender-based violence in our own communities, and to reflect on how each of us can contribute to a culture of safety, respect, and support.

It also honours the extraordinary resilience of those who have lived through genderbased violence and continue to rebuild their lives.

?Being a survivor means I met fear and kept moving forward,? another voice declares. ?My story does not carry me. I am still here.?

By sharing these truths, survivors are not only reclaiming their voices, but they are also creating a path forward. A path where stigma is replaced with understanding, where silence gives way to support, and where anyone experiencing violence knows one critical thing: they are not alone.

You can watch the video here: YouTube Video: YouTube.com/watch?v=z5_fSOv4_Rw