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Working Group presents update on battle to address Sexual Assault trauma

For immediate release

(Kahnawake – 5, Kentenhkó:wa/November 2020) The Working Group created to assist with the battle against Sexual Assault wishes to advise the community that it has begun the process of developing an overall strategy to ensure those affected (victims, family, friends and perpetrators) are able to easily access any assistance needed to help deal with the impacts of such heavy trauma. It was formed by Shakotiiat'akéhnhas Community Services (KSCS), the Kateri Memorial Hospital Centre, the Peacekeepers and the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke to pool resources and access proper expertise.

Sexual assault is a long-standing issue that affects all communities. Kahnawà:ke's issues were brought to the forefront in dramatic fashion this past summer via social media posts and a rally that followed. These events brought awareness to the depth of the issue.

One of the goals of the Working Group is to ensure that every person affected is made aware of the resources available to help address the results of abuse. There is no shame in seeking help to deal with such deep trauma. For several people, the social media posting was a form of release, as many victims have been unwilling or unable to bring the issue forward.

"Many victims have been living with the trauma for many years, hiding the pain and keeping it to themselves," said letsénhaienhs Rhonda Kirby. "We have to do everything in our power to present the options available for assistance to lift the burden of shame that so many have been carrying. Sexual assault is more common than people think. And victims need to know that they are not alone."

Those affected need to know that there are several options to seeking assistance. The slogan "**You are not alone**" has been adopted as a reminder of the supports for those affected.

"The first call is probably the most difficult," said KSCS Manager of Prevention Services Stephanie Horne. "Depending on the person, there are several options to either disclose or work on her/his sexual assault experience. Kahnawà:ke Shakotiiat'akéhnhas Community Services, the Peacekeepers or your family doctor are the first to come to mind. Others may be reluctant to speak to anyone from Kahnawà:ke – which is understandable – so we will ensure that information on other organizations that specialize in this matter will be provided."

The Working Group has begun the process of increasing public awareness on both the problem and possible steps to address the issue. A commitment has been made to ensure that the issue is addressed on a long-term basis, with sustainable actions and community outreach.

"We are asking that anyone who has been the victim of sexual assault address this without further delay," concluded Peacekeeper Chief Dwayne Zacharie. "We ask that social media be avoided as a means of disclosure. While providing some therapeutic relief, it sometimes results in additional lateral violence – which is both unhealthy and unneeded."

To view a comprehensive list of available resources, please click [here](#).