

# Group raising awareness on child sexual exploitation

By Alina Konevski - Chilliwack Progress

Published: March 06, 2013 4:00 PM

Updated: March 06, 2013 4:47 PM

Concerned parents are invited to attend a variety of seminars next week on stopping sexual exploitation of children and youth, an issue that organizers say is of growing concern and affects more and more people in Chilliwack.

"This is an issue that has the potential to touch every family in every socio-economic bracket. I think there is a stigma that sexual exploitation happens only with at-risk kids, and that is simply not true," says City Life Church pastor Todd Lueck, who is co-organizing one of the events.

RCMP Cpl. Jassy Bindra will kick off the awareness week with a talk about law enforcement and human trafficking on Monday at 1 p.m. in city hall.

Following that, Merlyn Horton from the Safe Online Outreach Society will speak about online and technology safety at City Life Church on Tuesday at 7 p.m.

Children and youth have instant internet access just about everywhere they go, says Lueck, and because of that, "there is a potential for cyber sexual exploitation. Knowing and understanding that, and how that has the potential of happening, and knowing what conversations to have with your kids, is absolutely crucial to keeping them safe."

On Wednesday, Trisha Baptie will share her story of walking away from prostitution, and abolitionist Cherry Smilie will speak about violence against aboriginal women and girls. The first session at 10 a.m. at city hall will be adults-only. The second, at 1 p.m. at the Metheson Centre, will be open to youth.

Finally, the week will conclude with a talk by Dianne Sowden, from Children of the Street Society, about how Sowden's daughter, at 13 years old, was taken into a life of drug addiction and sexual exploitation. The talk will be at city hall at 1 p.m. on Thursday.

A community action team, co-chaired by Amanda Johnson from Chilliwack Community Services and James Morgan from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, is organizing the events.

*akonevski@theprogress.com*

*twitter.com/WriteInBC*

**Source:** <http://www.theprogress.com/community/195752041.html?mobile=true>