

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Howe Sound Women's Centre Announces Two-Part Sexual Assault Prevention Campaign in Whistler**

WHISTLER, BC (April 1, 2015) Howe Sound Women's Centre Society is pleased to be partnering with local businesses on an ongoing two-part sexual assault prevention initiative in the Whistler community, offering both a bystander intervention poster campaign, as well as sexual assault prevention training.

We know that violence against women, including sexual assault happens everywhere. Our goal is to decrease the rates of sexual assault in the Sea to Sky Corridor," says Sheila Allen, executive director of Howe Sound Women's Centre Society. "The Women's Centre feels confident that by partnering with local businesses we can have a positive impact on reducing these rates, while at the same time continuing to break the silence around all forms of violence against women."

The "Make Your Move to End Sexual Violence" posters, originally created by the YWCA of Montana Missoula and partners, are intended to be displayed in male and female washrooms of bars and nightclubs. The posters seek to catch patrons' attention by utilizing 'creepy sentences' with a positive twist. For example, "She was on her own so I made my move...and told the guys hassling her to back off."

This campaign is targeted toward both male and female patrons offering practical ways bystanders can intervene to prevent sexual assault. This campaign will instill confidence in locals and visitors that Whistler establishments take a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and are actively taking steps to be part of a positive, community-based solution.

In conjunction with the MYM poster campaign, the Women's Centre is offering training sessions to local Whistler businesses and their staff. This sexual assault prevention and bystander intervention training offers tips and tools for identifying vulnerable females and predatory males, and through interactive discussion, offers practical interventions that suit the reality of different Whistler workplace experiences. The most consistent positive impacts of bystander training are on attitudes: including increasing confidence as a bystander, intent to take action, and perceived benefits of action.

Whistler Blackcomb and Gibbons Hospitality Group have stepped forward to join with the Women's Centre on these prevention initiatives. A group of Whistler Blackcomb managers and supervisors have received a 2 hour training, as well as posting MYM posters in HOUSE (staff housing locations), various staff areas and locker rooms, as well as in washrooms at Merlin's, GLC, and Dusty's. Gibbons Group has received a 2 hour training as well as posting MYM posters in staff areas of Longhorn and FireRock, as well as bathrooms at Garfinkel's, Tapley's, and Buffalo Bills. "We couldn't be more pleased that WB and Gibbons Group have come forward with a continued commitment to fostering women's safety in Whistler," says Kelsey Rose, Whistler drop-in coordinator of Howe Sound Women's Centre Society. "The positive response toward

these new prevention initiatives is yet another example that Whistler truly is a community that cares." The Women's Centre invites Whistler businesses or groups interested in participating in the MYM poster campaign and/or receiving sexual assault prevention training to contact us.

### **About The Howe Sound Women's Centre Society**

The Howe Sound Women's Centre Society is a for purpose charitable organization that has been serving the Sea to Sky Community for 33 years. The Women's Centre is focused on supporting women, children and youth who are in need of emergency shelter, support, referrals and advocacy, and in particular, those who are experiencing high conflict, violence or abuse. The Women's Centre offers emergency housing through Pearl's Place Transition House and Pearl's Safe Home, children and youth focused programs such as Children Who Witness Abuse counselling, Working Through Separation and Divorce counselling, and Violence is Preventable education, multicultural outreach, and health and wellness programs. The Squamish and Whistler Women's Centres receive over 5,500 visits annually. The Women's Centre also operates Pearl's Value & Vintage, a second hand thrift store selling gently used and vintage goods, with all proceeds from sales supporting Howe Sound Women's Centre Society programs. For more information, visit [www.hswc.ca](http://www.hswc.ca).

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See: <http://ywcaofmissoula.org/services/make-move/> for all posters and additional information

Gibbons Hospitality Group: [www.gibbonshospitality.com](http://www.gibbonshospitality.com)

Whistler Blackcomb: [www.whistlerblackcomb.com](http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com)