

YRAP contributed expertise to Player's First report on abuse

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Correspondent

Canadians were shocked at the revelations of physical and sexual abuse of orphans at the hands of priests, dismayed when a community volunteer was charged with 27 sex offences against young boys, horrified that a father brutally raped his 12-year-old daughter, appalled that a choirmaster assaulted his young choristers and stunned that a young professional hockey player suffered some 350 episodes of sexual abuse by his coach over a period of almost 10 years.

When Sheldon Kennedy disclosed the painful truth of his past history as a victim of Graham James, coach of the Swift Current Broncos, the world of sports was turned upside down and another myth was exploded.

Don Cherry, in his outrage, was joined by thousands and thousands of hurt, confused, angry and concerned parents, sports fans and others.

But in sexual abuse centres throughout the country, centres like York Region Abuse Program (YRAP) that have counselled sexual abuse survivors for years, there was sorrow, but no shock.

They have known it all along. Known that sexual predators and pedophiles take advantage of authority over and close contact with their young victims; known that as many as one in five boys and one in four girls may be sexually assaulted before they turn 18; that children are easily coerced, intimidated, frightened and guilted into silence; known the extreme damage to their fragile selves and known, too, that there is no place, anywhere, where young people are guaranteed automatically, and without a doubt, safety from abuse and exploitation.

The volunteers, therapists and staff at YRAP consider Kennedy's courageous revelations and Gordon Kirke's sensitive, insightful, brave and comprehensive Player's First report, commissioned by the Canadian Hockey League, cause for celebration.

What can protect our children is heightened awareness and the willingness to face what Kirke calls "the ugly truth" of child sexual abuse.

He consulted with numerous social workers and agencies, including YRAP, in compiling the 63-page report.

The recommendations - policy and procedures around screening and hiring, appoint-

ments of qualified advisors and complaint investigators, availability of professional counselling and comprehensive education aimed at players

and employees, are consistent with YRAP's philosophies and goals. Participation in the work of Gordon Kirke's commission was very helpful

for YRAP, helping the agency to develop and solidify policies and ideas that should prove useful in training and educating many youth-oriented organizations.

For more information, call YRAP at 1-800-263-2240. All calls are confidential.

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ADVERTISING CORRECTION

Our Denim Event insert, included in this newspaper this week. Please note: due to delivery problems the following merchandise will not be available until dates specified: Page 8 - Men's Buffalo Knit Top; Pages 10 and 11 - Retreat Blues Jeans: relaxed fit (black), loose fit (used wash), relaxed fit cords (black and prairie), on August 25; Page 11 - Retreat Blues Classic Fit Jean (stonewash and black), on September 15; Page 11 - Retreat Blues Ladder Knit Johnny Collar Top, on August 22. In our Back to School insert, of this week: The end date for this insert is September 4, 1997; Page 17 - Girl's Attitude Coloured Flared Denim (olive), 7-14, \$34.99 will be available August 25, 1997.

Inadvertently, the errors listed appeared in our advertising. We sincerely regret any inconvenience or confusion to our customers.

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