

Envision Will Expand Its Rural Programs

September 24, 2015

Envision Counselling and Support Centre announced last week they have received federal funding that will enable them to expand and improve the quality of their services in southeast Saskatchewan.

The funding allows the agency to further develop its programming to meet needs in its service area and that will include expansion of services in the Oxbow and Carlyle sector.

Christa Daku, executive director at Envision that maintains offices in Estevan, Weyburn and Carlyle, said they launched a pilot project last year to attack the growing concerns related to prostitution and other underground issues that put women at risk.

“We can now move from pilot project status to implementation with an addition to programming with a part-time office in Oxbow Monday through Thursday,” Daku said.

The additional services began in early September and the counsellor stationed in Oxbow will receive back-up administrative support from the Estevan office.

Daku said Envision now boasts more than 80 employees and volunteers whose main objective is to provide support for those in need of morale, social and physical support.

Into the Sunshine, Offering a Way Out, is the name being given to the new program and it will address the issues relating to prostitution.

Envision already offers programs for women, men and families which provide support, counselling, advocacy and education, and it is a front-line support to victims of sexual assault and violence in the region through its counsellors and the 24-hour sexual assault/abuse crisis line.

The federal grant will allow the agency to enhance the scope and range of support.

“Many girls or women have difficulty exiting prostitution because they have grown up in an environment that lacks support for the process of exiting,” said Daku.

Envision’s counsellors echo those sentiments, revealing the backgrounds and feelings of current clients and further report that in 2014, there were a number of clients who would fit the profile of a woman or girl in prostitution.

“Sexual favours for another favour. A little money, a place to sleep or hang out in exchange for sex. It’s not always what we think of as straight prostitution, but it is,” said Daku. “We have recognized these signs after years with partners, it’s an underground issue in the southeast. Favours for drugs or liquor or a place to stay. Now we’re hoping we can help them out because these women absolutely need a happier lifestyle.”

Daku went on to note that “prostitution and trafficking leave scars that impact women for a lifetime.”

The project will provide these women with support and advocacy to improve their lives and build a healthier future.

With two full-time counsellors in Carlyle, and counsellor connections with nearby First Nations communities, Daku said Envision can build up a larger scope of influence in this particular region; and the federal funding is a commitment for five years of financial support with a built-in commitment to sustain it even after the expiration of the original five-year agreement.

“We can build connections based on that,” said Daku.