

Envision celebrating 25 years with a VERY special guest

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Envision Executive Director, Christa Daku

On Monday morning, we had a very special guest in studio. Christa Daku, the Executive Director of Envision Counselling and Support Centre, stopped by to give us all the details on a very big event coming up next week.

"We are celebrating our 25th anniversary this year so we have a two day event between the two cities, Estevan and Weyburn," said Daku. "'On the 15th we have Theoren Fleury coming to do a full day of trauma workshop with professionals in our community and then on the 16th we have a lunch that is having him as the keynote speaker and that is open to the general public."

The workshop will be in Weyburn on the 15th and the lunch will be in Estevan at the Power Dodge Curling Centre.

"There are tickets available at Pharmasave here in Weyburn and tickets available at Pharmasave in Estevan," added Daku. "We've made them very reasonable, they're \$25 per person or \$200 for a table of 8."

So what has the past 25 years looked like for Envision? How did it all start?

"Way back in 1994, which is 25 years ago, we had a community group in Estevan and a community group in Weyburn that came together and really wanted to look at some type of programming for victims of violence," Daku explained. "They proposed to the government to have some kind of intervention programming, we know there isn't a safe house or shelter in our area and the government wasn't prepared to fund that at that point, so they looked at options and what they came up with was a counselling position in Estevan and Weyburn and from there we just continued to grow."

From there, they also went on to add a 24 hour support line that anyone could call at anytime.

"It was based on volunteers. It was individuals who gave up their time and their energy and ultimately just wanted to help people that were in a difficult situation," said Daku. "We've had a number of volunteers over the years. The amount of support and dedication from the community volunteers that came out to help was just incredible."

As the years continued on, Envision continued to grow and expand.

"In 2008 we did a strategic plan and we came together with the idea that we wanted to expand our programming to not only serve the people who were experiencing domestic or interpersonal violence but also encompassing the whole family," said Daku. "So at the point we ended up getting funding through Justice for the children exposed to violence program and we also expanded the family support side of things."

"In 2011, after several years of proposals to the government, we received significant funding through the ministry of social services for our family intervention counselling program."

In the passed five years they have also introduced a new initiative that Daku is incredibly proud of.

"One of our really strong initiatives that we continue to do is the prevention side of things," she explained. "So that's going into the schools and community groups to provide education on healthy relationships, what violence may look like because a lot of people don't understand, still, what the concept of an unhealthy relationship looks like."

She added that they are currently looking at expanding that program.

Daku also noted that the support Envision has gotten from the community is what keeps them going.

"I always go back to when I started and that was 12 years ago. There were 5 of us employed at that time and now there's 35 so I really just want to thank the community for always rallying behind us," she said.

As for the future?

"Envision and the board really believe wholeheartedly that we want to be that yes agency so that when people phone we don't have to turn anyone away," she said. "We have excellent services in our service area but there are still gaps to fill"