

Theoren Fleury brought healing at Envision's silver anniversary luncheon

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Stanley Cup champion, Olympic gold medalist, World Junior champion and expert in the field of relational trauma Theoren Fleury was a guest speaker at the Envision Counselling and Support Centre's 25th anniversary luncheon. Photo by Anastasiia Bykhovskaia

Born in Oxbow, this not very big man at some point of his life was an NHL Stanley Cup champion.

Ten years ago he published a book named *Playing with Fire: The Highest Highs and the Lowest Lows*. This best-selling autobiography was telling his story of sexual abuse. Later it led to him becoming an expert in the field of relational trauma as he realized that helping others to deal with trauma and heal was much more important for him than anything before.

On Thursday Theoren Fleury spoke to a crowd of about 300 people that was celebrating Envision Counselling and Support Centre's 25 years in the community. Envision's silver anniversary luncheon was held at the Power Dodge Curling Centre.

Envision's executive director Christa Daku opened the event.

"As you know the impacts of trauma can impact families and communities for many generations to come. A special thank you to Theo, for joining us yesterday (for the trauma professional workshop in

Weyburn) and giving us a two-day celebration, and honouring us with your presence, your healing journey experience and your encouragement to continue to do what we all heartedly believe in in these communities," said Daku.

As the organization continues to forge ahead it was important to celebrate the impacts they've had on the communities in southeast Saskatchewan, where throughout past 25 years probably every person either received help and support from the Envision or knows at least one person whose life was affected by this non-profit organization.



Envision Counselling and Support Centre's executive director Christa Daku, right, and assistant executive director Lynda Rideout talked about the organization. Photo by Anastasiia Bykhovskaia

Envision's assistant executive director Lynda Rideout also talked about the role the community was playing in the organization's work through years.

"The support that we receive here, in the southeast is phenomenal, and I would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the families and friends that support our Envision staff... Your support and ongoing encouragement make it so much easier for us to do the important work that we do day after day," said Rideout.

And then Fleury took guests on an emotional trip, uncovering his personal story and experience of abuse, addictions and healing. As he was talking about trauma, forgiveness and hope guests would sit still in silence and some had tears in their eyes. And then Fleury would make the audience laugh, as he entwined some jokes making his speech very informal and touching.

He also shared his moment of truth when he realized the impact his book had on people.

"I showed up in the biggest Indigo Chapters store in all of Canada, three-stories-high in downtown Toronto on Young Street ... I walk through the front towards the book store and there are 400 people standing on with my book. And I'm like, 'What's the hell are all these people doing here?' This is strange. I'm not Wayne Gretzky; I'm not Mario Lemieux. I'm a decent, good hockey player, but I'm not those guys. Why are there 400 people at this book signing?" shared Fleury.

"I start signing books. Out of the corner of my eye, I spot this guy in line. And he's got my book tucked against his chest. His face is buried, looking forward. He is walking very slow. I was like, 'Hm, I wonder what's up with that guy.' So I follow him all way in the line, he gets to the front of the line, puts the book on the table, looks me in the eye and says, 'Me too.'"

Since then Fleury dedicated his life to working in the field of trauma, mental health and addiction, all of which he personally experienced and was able to overcome. Through his own life he learned that forgiveness was one of the key points in the healing process, since, according to his words, only forgiveness can set an abused person free from a traumatic experience.

Fleury also noted that healing has to happen physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Standing on the stage he was talking about being raped numerous times by his junior hockey coach Graham James. But there was no more shame not only in his words but also in his gestures, mimics or posture. Not only he was healed, but he also became a true healer.

As he was guiding the crowd through his life path of trauma, healing and recovery, a lot of people would reflect on their own past. The silence that grew in the building as he was talking, according to Fleury, was a sign that safe space was created in the audience. He used his own vulnerability to achieve that, and that's what's needed to get the magic of healing to happen.

His passion for helping others and his approach to healing through creating safe space, listening and giving people hope strongly resonates with Envision's dedication to communities they serve, and a lot of his activities in this field are compliant with Envision's work.

"I would say that the Envision is the epitome of vulnerability and home space. That's why they've been around for 25 years. It's because they change people's lives, give people hope. Because trauma, mental health and addiction is the biggest epidemic on the planet. I have not run into anything bigger than this," said Fleury.

He is on the road 250 days a year, and all he sees is pain and suffering, which he believes are unnecessary if we learn forgiveness.