

An Aboriginal Youth's Cry for Help



A Youth Skit

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An Aboriginal Youth's Cry For Help

This powerful skit shows how hard it might be for a youth experiencing dating violence or abuse in a relationship to get help.

Although abuse can happen to both girls and boys, this skit is based on a young Aboriginal girl's experience. She turns to many people, but they do not understand the abuse or know how to help her.

Eventually, the skit shows us how things could turn out differently if everybody recognized abuse and could suggest ways to end it. This skit was adapted from an educational play used by the New Brunswick Silent Witness Project called *A Young Woman's Cry for Help*.

It was reviewed, work-shopped and revised with the help of Aboriginal partners and youth. A special thanks to the staff of the Fredericton Native Friendship Centre.

Skit Instructions

Materials

- Script
- 10 White Bed-sheets
- 10 Index Cards in two sets - Scenario 1 (Dark Green) and Scenario 2 (Light Green)

Roles

- Youth Narrator
- Youth to be Meghan – (this person goes under 10 sheets – can't be claustrophobic)
- 2 people to place sheets on Meghan. (Note: One sheet goes on Meghan every time someone reads one of the first set of Scenario cards. Later, one sheet is taken off Meghan every time someone reads one of the second set of Scenario Cards.)
- 10 volunteers from the audience to read the Scenario Cards
- 10 volunteers from the audience to read the second set of Scenario Cards

Getting Started: Hand out first set of Scenario Cards

- Explain to the audience that the play is interactive and you need to have volunteers from the audience read some scenario cards.
- Ask the Audience for 10 volunteers readers
- You may ask them to raise their hand – or just have the students circulate in the audience handing out cards.
- Ask the volunteers to please stand when they read their card
- The person playing Meghan should sit on the chair with two people on either side
- When the skit is about to start, ask the audience not to talk during the skit
- Explain to the audience that this play can bring on strong emotions and that if anyone wishes to speak to a counselor or an elder afterwards, there are people available.
(The Narrator can explain these things or the person introducing the skit)

Part I – Meghan and Dave's Story

Narrative Begins

- The Narrator starts to read the script – the story of Meghan and Dave
- The Narrator asks the volunteer from the audience to read the appropriate scenario card as he/ she comes to it (cards #1 through #10).
- As each card is read, place a sheet on the female youth who represents Meghan. Those placing the sheets should whisper to “Meghan” periodically to see if she is okay and reassure her

Between Part I and Part II - Discussion

Narrator Interacts with Audience after all the sheets are on “Meghan”

The Narrator should now ask the audience the following questions. Let people shout out answers or point to people who have raised their hands.

- What do you remember about the young woman under the sheets?
- How do you think she is feeling?

The Narrator should explain that although each young woman’s experience and situation may be different, people experience abuse share many experiences such as feeling alone, confused, and isolated. Many cannot find somebody who can help them or explain the abuse. The sheets represent the effects of the abuse over time. You can see that we have lost track of the young woman.

Part II – A Positive Outcome

Narrative Continues with Scenario #2

The Narrator begins by saying to the audience “What would happen if everyone involved in the situation knew the dynamics of dating violence and acted accordingly in the Meghan and Dave scenario?”

Hand out second set of Scenario Cards to Audience Volunteers

- The Narrator will ask for volunteers to read card #1, then card #2 and so on. Helpers will hand out the cards to the audience.
- As each card is read, the helpers will remove a sheet from the young woman - Meghan.

Post Skit Discussion:

- Narrator will ask Meghan “How did you feel during the skit? And she will explain what it was like (hot, lonely, hard to breath or hear, etc)
- Ask the audience if they have any questions
- Introduce the Youth who have performed the skit
- Give information, statistics on dating violence
- Create awareness of ways to help
- Handouts, etc.

NARRATIVE – As the sheets go on:

Meghan and Dave have been dating for one month. Both are high school students on a small First Nation community. Meghan is in grade 10 and is 15. Dave is 16 and in Grade 11.

Meghan is a pretty, popular and well-liked student among her peers. She is very active in school activities and makes high marks. Dave comes from a well-known family, his father is on Band Council and his mother is a homemaker. He is the captain of the high school hockey team and is also very popular. Dave is Meghan's first boyfriend, and he makes her feel special – he cares about her and he buys her gifts.

One day, they are hanging out with some friends on the bleachers at the ball field. They start talking about the band election coming up and Meghan mentions that her aunt Rachel is running for Chief.

“Whatever” Dave comments. “A chick running for Chief! Does she really think she'll get elected, running against other men?”

So stupid; even if she did get elected she'd quit after a month. She could never handle it, especially during **that** time of the month!” A few guys at the table laugh. “But if I was older I might vote for her,” continues Dave, “she's hot, man” The guys laugh some more and slap Dave on the back.

“That's my aunt!” Meghan says. “Why wouldn't she make a good chief?” she says to Dave. “Rachel would be good for the reserve and she's a lot smarter than anyone in your family.” The girls at the table laugh and Meghan smiles to herself.

“What are you saying, Meghan,” Dave quickly snaps. “And let me guess, you're going to put up Rachel's signs?” he laughs sarcastically.

“Well actually, I was thinking about it,” she tells him.

Meghan's friends then say that they want to help too.

“Are you crazy?” accuses Dave. “No offence, Meghan, I know she's your aunt but she's going to lose and you're just going to embarrass yourself by getting involved with a chick who has no chance of winning. Women aren't good at politics. That stuff should just be left to the men.”

Now Meghan isn't sure if she should help out. After lunch, she asks her friends what she should do.

Card # 1 Meghan's Friends (Read by audience volunteer)

Meghan's friends tell her they think that maybe Dave is right. She should listen to her boyfriend and not do anything that might wreck things.

The next weekend, Dave and Meghan go to the movies. Dave arrives to pick up Meghan a half an hour late and he criticizes the way she looks.

"What's up with the makeup, you trying to impress another guy?" he asks.

Meghan tells him she was only trying to impress him. They go out, and Dave chooses the movie, saying Meghan always chooses stupid "chick-flicks." They run into some of Dave's friends and decide to go over and sit with them.

After the movie, Dave accuses Meghan of flirting with one of his friends during the movie. Meghan thinks that he must be kidding and laughs while telling him that it's not true.

Dave suddenly grabs her by the shoulders and pushes her up against his car. "You'd better not be lying to me, Meghan! If I ever catch you hitting on another guy again, we're through!"

Meghan tries to pull his hands off of her, while telling him that she barely even talked to his friend. "Just shut up," Dave barks. "You're lucky I go out with you at all. You stupid slut." After he lets her go, they get into his car and leave.

Dave's friend Sarah had been watching nearby and she decides to give Meghan a call later that evening to ask what happened. Meghan explains that it was just a mistake. "Dave thought I was flirting with one of his friends, and he overreacted a little."

Card # 2 Sarah

Sarah tells Meghan that guys are like that, especially Dave, and they are always overprotective of their girlfriends. That's how they show how much they care about a girl. She should just be a little more careful around him and his friends so that she doesn't push his buttons.

The next day, Dave shows up at Meghan's house with pizza and a movie that they can watch together. He apologizes for yelling at her the night before and assures her he just likes her so much that the thought of losing her to another guy scares him. Meghan accepts his apology.

Dave says that she should come over to his house tonight so they can watch the movie together alone. Meghan tells him she had already made plans with some of her friends.

“We never get to spend any time alone anymore,” Dave complains. “You can see your friends anytime. I’m your boyfriend, I need you more than they do.”

Meghan replies that she hasn’t done anything with her friends for weeks, and they want to hang out together like they used to.

“Forget your chick friends. You have me now and you don’t need them. If they won’t even let you see your boyfriend they’re not your real friends” says Dave.

Card # 3 Meghan’s friends

Meghan’s friends are upset that she doesn’t seem to spend time with them anymore. They think about telling Meghan that just because she has a boyfriend she can still do things with other people but they don’t want to pry and decide not to get involved in Meghan’s business.

The next week, Meghan goes with some of her friends to help get ready for the Powwow at the youth centre. She was supposed to meet Dave at 5 o’clock but she lost track of time and is fifteen minutes late. When she comes out of the centre Dave is very angry. He grabs her arm and pulls her into his car. “Why are you so late?” he yells. “Did you forget we were going out? Who were you with, another guy?”

“No one,” Meghan cries. “I just lost track of time.” Dave tells her not to do that to him again. “But you are always late and I don’t mind” Meghan states. “This is the first time I’ve ever been late to meet you.”

“Shut your mouth!” Dave growls and grabs her arm and begins to squeeze.

“You’re hurting me!” cries Meghan. Dave quickly lets go and apologizes, saying he didn’t mean to hurt her, he just got a little carried away.

“You’re my girl Meghan. I have to look out for you.”

When Meghan gets home that night, her mother asks her about the bruise on her arm. “It’s nothing, forget it!” she says starting to get angry at her mother. “Some guys were running in the hall today and I was shoved into a locker.”

Card # 4 Meghan’s mother

Meghan’s mother thinks about what her daughter said. She has noticed other bruises, and she is beginning to be concerned that Dave seems to have a lot of influence over Meghan. She’s worried and decides to talk to Meghan and get more information about Dave, but her cell phone rings and she has to rush in to work

A few days later Meghan wears a skirt to school that Dave has complained about before. “I thought I told you not to wear that slutty skirt!” he yells at her. Meghan feebly tells him it’s laundry day and she had nothing else to put on this morning.

Dave is furious at her for not listening to him. He yells at her and tells her off, screaming that she's a slut for dressing that way.

By this time, quite a crowd has gathered around and Meghan tries to calm Dave down. "It's okay, it's okay, Dave. I'll wear my jacket over my skirt. There, see, it's fine, I'm sorry." For the rest of the day she wears her jacket wrapped around her waist.

Dave continues to fly off the handle quite often during the next month, but Meghan still can't understand why Dave always gets so upset. She can't figure out what she does to make him so mad. There are times when he is a great boyfriend but the littlest thing can throw him off. Meghan feels it must be her fault so she tries to be a better girlfriend, "If I'm there for him enough, things will change," she tells herself.

But the only person changing is Meghan. Her friends notice first. Meghan stops hanging out at the ball field and she isn't getting involved with her regular activities anymore. The few times when she does go out with them she seems much quieter. She doesn't smile as often as she used to and she walks through the halls at school looking distracted and nervous. What worries her friends the most are the small bruises that she always tries to hide.

Her best friend Carla has had enough and she decides to confront Meghan and get to the bottom of this. But she's shy and decides she needs help, so she turns to their other friends.

Card # 5 Her Best Friend Carla

Carla tells her friends that they should do something or tell someone. Her friends are more concerned about embarrassing Dave. He is a popular guy at school and his father is an important man in the community. Meghan should feel lucky to be with him.

Another month passes and Meghan is spending all her free time with Dave. She is no longer thinking about her friends, her family, her community or doing well in school. All she seems to care about is making Dave happy and keeping him calm.

As time goes on, Dave becomes more possessive and controlling. In the past, Meghan was uncomfortable when Dave made crude comments about her, but now he began putting her down even when his friends weren't around. And then there were the bruises. They were little at first and easy to hide or explain but lately more and more people are giving Meghan funny looks when she makes excuses about tripping over her feet or bumping into things. At school, Meghan notices a poster on the wall about Dating Violence and decides that maybe she should talk to the school counselor for advice about her relationship with Dave.

Card # 6 School counselor

Meghan went to speak with the school counselor. She began to tell about her problems but the counselor didn't seem to be paying attention. She just got to the point of discussing the abuse when the counselor interrupted her and told her that teenagers go through rough times and she should just work harder to get along with Dave.

A few weeks later, Dave found out through some friends that Meghan had visited the school counselor. When Dave asked her why, Meghan lied and said she was doing it for one of her other friends. “Good,” said Dave, “because I wouldn’t want to think that there’s anything wrong with you.” Dave decided that maybe he should keep a closer eye on Meghan so he started following her around the school and making her tell him where she was going and who she would be with at all times. This made Meghan upset. She felt that Dave didn’t trust her but he said he was just looking out for his girl.

One day, Dave caught Meghan laughing with her friend Joe. Dave blows up at her for being alone with another guy. He accuses her of being a slut, and slaps her across the face, so hard that it knocked her to the floor.

Dave later apologizes for hitting Meghan so hard, and promises her that he’ll never do it again. He tells her he loves her, and he doesn’t want to lose her. Meghan is very scared now, but she feels completely trapped and helpless.

Card # 7 Joe (Guy in Classroom)

Joe knows that he should do something but he’s scared. He feels that he should go and get help but he’s doesn’t want to make Dave mad at him. Meghan is his friend, but Dave is the captain of the hockey team and might turn on him if he says anything. Joe decides to leave and not say a word.

Later that week, Dave and Meghan stop at the store. While Meghan waits in the parking lot for Dave to come out, she bumps into her neighbour and longtime friend, Kenny. As Dave comes out of the store he sees the two of them talking together and flies into a rage.

He pushes Kenny to the ground and screams at Meghan, “You’re screwing around on me!” He grabs her hand roughly, twisting her arm as he turns and pulls her to the car.

Meghan screams in pain as she feels her wrist crack. By this time they are both close to the car and Dave lets go of her hand. He realizes that she is seriously injured. A quick look at her swollen wrist tells them both that she needs to go to the hospital.

On the way to the hospital, Dave tells her that once they get there, he’ll do all the talking.

“I love you Meghan, I just lost my temper. This was just an accident but if people find out I’ll be kicked off the hockey team and my dad will be blacklisted. Shut your mouth and don’t say a word.”

At the emergency room, a nurse examines Meghan before sending for a doctor. “Meghan, you’ll need an x-ray but it looks like your wrist is broken. How did this happen?” she asks. Before Meghan can say a word, Dave quickly pipes up, “She fell.” “She fell?” the nurse repeats suspiciously. “She tripped while going down the stairs and I grabbed her hand to stop her fall, but she fell anyway” Dave explains.

“Is that what happened, Meghan?” the nurse asks. Meghan glances at Dave and then answers “Yes, I’m such a klutz!”. The nurse leaves to let the doctor know they’re ready.

As Dave leaves to go home, he catches Meghan’s eye and shakes his head while mouthing the words, “Keep your mouth shut”.

The nurse soon returns with the doctor, who examines her wrist and writes an order on her chart for the x-ray. He has several other patients waiting to see him, so he doesn’t have much time to talk to Meghan.

Neither the nurse nor the doctor have any training in family violence and although they think that there is more to this story than Meghan is letting on, they are not sure what they can do to help.

Card # 8 Nurse

The nurse calls Meghan’s parents and tells them about Meghan’s wrist. She tells Meghan’s parents that she fell and hurt her wrist. She tells them that Dave brought her to the hospital, but he left, so Meghan needs a ride home. The nurse tells them that they can speak to the doctor if they want to, but he’s very busy at the moment, so they’ll have to wait.

Meghan’s parents decide not to wait for the doctor. On the drive home, they ask her how she fell down the stairs. Afraid of how Dave might react if he found out if she told them the truth, Meghan sticks to her story.

Her mother isn’t convinced and once Meghan goes to bed she tries to share her concerns with her husband. “I think there’s something going on with Dave. He is controlling and I think his behaviour is very aggressive. I think we should do something.”

Card # 9 Meghan’s father

Meghan’s father feels that Dave is a good boy and doesn’t believe he would ever hurt Meghan. He doesn’t know Dave but he is good friends with Dave’s father and they both sit on Council. Meghan’s father thinks boys will be boys and sometimes they get a little rough but that is normal. Meghan’s mother decides that if Meghan’s dad isn’t worried, she shouldn’t be either.

A few months later, Meghan and Dave are alone together at his house.

“Its been three months Meghan. You know I love you, I want you. I want you so much.” says Dave. He has been saying this to Meghan a lot lately, and every time they have been alone together, he’s been all over her. She knew this moment was coming and she’s been dreading it. She doesn’t feel ready to take that step with Dave and she tells him that she’s just not ready to go that far.

“Meghan, you’re my girlfriend. You have to do this. I need this. Things will be so much better afterwards.” Dave says, starting to get angry. Meghan is afraid of how Dave will react, but she knows this isn’t what she wants and tells him again.

“Meghan you said you love me! You know I love you, what more do you want?” Dave is getting angrier. He pins her to the couch and forces her to have sex with him.

Meghan doesn't tell any of her friends that Dave forced her to have sex. She is afraid of Dave finding out that she told and she's scared of what her friends will think of her. She decides to call Susan, her older cousin, and tells her a few of the details.

Card # 10 Susan, older cousin

Susan tells her that boys are like that and that she is his girlfriend, so it's her job to keep him happy. She tells Meghan not to make this into a big deal – after all, she is 15, and what was she waiting for? Just make sure you don't get pregnant.

Over the next few months, Dave's behaviour becomes even worse. He threatens her all the time and whenever they're alone he forces her to have sex. Meghan knows she wants to break up with Dave but doesn't know how. She tells him one day that it's over. Dave gets really mad and pushes her into a wall. “You can't leave me! You can't break up with me? You're nothing but a little slut! No one else will ever go out with you! You're nothing without me!” Dave screams.

Sobbing, Meghan runs home and tells her parents everything: the abuse, the insults, the injuries and Dave forcing her to have sex. Her parents are shocked. They can't believe that this has been going on right under their noses.

NARRATIVE # 2 – As the sheets come off

Let's do this skit again and see what would happen if everyone involved knew how to act appropriately.

Ask the audience to read the second set of scenario cards one by one as follows:

Card- 1 - Meghan's friends

Card -2 – Sarah

Card -3 - Meghan's friends

Card -4 - Meghan's mother

Card -5 – Carla

Card -6 – School Counselor

Card -7 – Joe (guy in classroom)

Card -8 - The nurse

Card -9 - Meghan's father

Card -10 – Susan, Meghan's older cousin

Card-1

Scenario 1

Meghan's friends tell her they think that maybe Dave is right. She should listen to her boyfriend and not do anything that might wreck things.

Card-2

Scenario 1

Sarah tells Meghan that guys are like that, especially Dave, and they are always overprotective of their girlfriends. That's how they show how much they care about a girl. She should just be a little more careful around him and his friends so that she doesn't push his buttons.

Card-3

Scenario 1

Meghan's friends are upset that she doesn't seem to spend time with them anymore. They think about telling Meghan that just because she has a boyfriend she can still do things with other people but they don't want to pry and decide not to get involved in Meghan's business.

Card-4

Scenario 1

Meghan's mother thinks about what her daughter said. She has noticed other bruises, and she is beginning to be concerned that Dave seems to have a lot of influence over Meghan. She's worried and decides to talk to Meghan and ask around the reserve, but her cell phone rings and she has to rush in to work.

Card-5

Scenario 1

Carla tells her friends that they should do something or tell someone. Her friends are more concerned about embarrassing Dave. He is a popular guy at school and his father is a big man in the community. Meghan should feel lucky to be with him.

Card-6

Scenario 1

Meghan went to speak with the school counselor. She began to tell about her problems but the counselor didn't seem to be paying attention. She just got to the point of discussing the abuse when the counselor interrupted her and told her that teenagers go through rough times and she should just work harder to get along with Dave.

Card-7

Scenario 1

Joe knows that he should do something but he's scared. He feels that he should go and get help but he's doesn't want to make Dave mad at him. Meghan is his friend but Dave is the captain of the hockey team and might turn on him if he says anything. Joe decides to leave and not say a word.

Card-8

Scenario 1

The nurse calls Meghan's parents and tells them about Meghan's wrist. She tells Meghan's parents that she fell and hurt her wrist. She tells them that Dave brought her to the hospital, but he left, so Meghan needs a ride home. The nurse tells them that they can speak to the doctor if they want to, but he's very busy at the moment, so they'll have to wait.

Card-9 Scenario 1

Meghan's father feels that Dave is a good boy and doesn't believe he would ever hurt Meghan. He doesn't know Dave but he is good friends with Dave's father and they both sit on Council. Meghan's father thinks boys will be boys and sometimes they get a little rough but that is normal. Meghan's mother decides that if Meghan's dad isn't worried, she shouldn't be either.

Card-10 Scenario 1

Susan tells her that boys are like that and that she is his girlfriend, so it's her job to keep him happy. She tells Meghan not to make this into a big deal – after all, she is 15, and what was she waiting for? Just make sure you don't get pregnant.

Card-1 Scenario 2

When Meghan talks to her friends about what Dave said at lunch, they tell her she shouldn't listen to his sexist comments and that she should help out with Rachel's campaign. Meghan agrees, and says she'll support her aunt whether Dave agrees or not. Her friends agree with Meghan and tell her that Dave isn't a very supportive boyfriend.

Card-2 Scenario 2

After the movie, Sarah tells Meghan that Dave had no right to grab her and yell at her like he did. He had no reason to be so jealous, but more importantly no one has the right to lay their hands on her even if they think they have a reason. Dave was completely out of line.

Card-3 Scenario 2

Meghan's friends tell her that it is important to spend time with other people, not just with Dave all the time. Dave should not make her feel guilty for wanting to see her friends. If Dave does not understand that Meghan needs time with her other friends, she should leave him.

Card-4 Scenario 2

Meghan's mother acts on her concern to find out if her daughter is at risk. She discusses it with Meghan when she has time. She reassures Meghan that she can trust her and tell her anything. Once her mother finds any sign of abuse, she tells Meghan to break up with Dave and then calls Dave's mother.

Card-5 Scenario 2

When the rest of her friends try to convince her not to talk to Meghan, Carla tells them that as her friends they should realize that Meghan is in a very unhealthy relationship. Carla talks to Meghan and tells her that the way that Dave has been treating her is wrong, and that it's having a negative impact on her as a person. She tells her that she should leave Dave since she deserves a boyfriend who will treat her with respect.

Card-6 Scenario 2

The School Counselor really listens to Meghan and lets her explain herself fully before assuming this is just teenage drama. Once he discovers there was a problem he informs the principal, Meghan's parents, Dave's parents and the police.

Card-7

Scenario 2

Joe leaves the scene immediately and then informs the principal. Adult help could then be sent to protect Meghan and police and parents would be informed.

Card-8

Scenario 2

The nurse realizes that this is a situation of dating violence and that it is her duty to inform the appropriate people despite Meghan's protests that nothing is wrong. With the doctor, she tells Meghan's parents of her suspicions and then contacts the police.

Card-9

Scenario 2

When Meghan's mother tells him about her concerns about what has been going on between Meghan and Dave, Meghan's father takes it very seriously and asks Meghan to tell him the truth. He assures her that they both love and support her very much and they are not disappointed in her since she did nothing wrong. He then realizes that just because Dave's father is a friend, Dave is still capable of this abuse.

Card-10

Scenario 2

Susan recognizes that Meghan was sexually assaulted and is in an abusive relationship. She tells Meghan that it is not her fault then informs Meghan's parents who call the police.