



Guide to Starting a Silent Witness Nova Scotia Chapter

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Giving voice to Nova Scotian Women silenced by violence

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What is the Silent Witness	
History of the Silent Witness Project	
Mission & Goals	
Getting Started	3
Establishing the Project	
Definition of a Chapter	
Compliance Requirements	
Starting a Chapter	4
Phase One - Application	
Phase Two - Community Meeting	
Phase Three - Formation of a Chapter	
Phase Four - Chapter Launch	
Duties and Responsibilities	5
Possible Chapter Activities	
Revoking Chapter Status	
Responsibilities Of Silent Witness Nova Scotia	
Responsibilities of Chapters	
Appendix	
Forms	
Application for Chapter Formation	
Chapter Agreement	

Introduction

What is the Silent Witness Project?

Through community involvement and support, free standing, life sized red wooden silhouettes, each one bearing the name of a woman whose life ended violently as a result of domestic violence are created. Because these women no longer have a voice, the silhouettes are called **Silent Witnesses**.

History

Since 1990, more than 35 Nova Scotian women have lost their lives to violence at the hands of their intimate partners, forever silencing their voices. The time has come to end their silence.

Silent Witness Nova Scotia is a group of organizations and individuals working together to raise those voices. Our journey began on February 12, 2004 when individuals from across the province gathered together to learn about the Silent Witness movement, and New Brunswick women who had been killed by their intimate partners.

We were so moved by their stories that a commitment was made to honour and remember our own Silent Witnesses in this way. Our mission became clear, we would strive to give voice to women in Nova Scotia silenced by domestic violence, and commemorate their lives.

Mission and Goals

Mission

To honour women who have lost their lives due to partner/ spousal/ common-law violence.

Goals

- To raise awareness in Nova Scotia about domestic violence in our communities;
- To involve families and communities in responding proactively in ending domestic violence;
- To continue this work until such time as there is no longer a need for Silent Witness Nova Scotia.

Getting Started

Establishing the Project

The Silent Witness Nova Scotia Organizing Committee submitted a grant proposal to the National Crime Prevention Centre and in July 2005, the Project received \$25 040.00. With the initial phase of a community assessment complete, the funding would support the work of the second phase which was to conduct initial research of domestic homicide; increase awareness of domestic violence and build community capacity by holding regional meetings; develop promotional material; and construct a “Remember Me” Silhouette. The third phase is an official launch.

The Organizing Committee recognizes that community involvement and collaboration are key to giving voice to Nova Scotian women silenced by violence. The growth and success of the Project depends upon the strength and commitment of local resources and the structure and support of provincial guidelines and policies. The process for establishing chapters has been developed with that in mind and with integrity and respect as guiding principles.

Definition of a Chapter

A Chapter is a local organization of Silent Witness Nova Scotia (SWNS) formed by committed individuals having received authorization from and working within the approved boundaries of SWNS.

Compliance Requirements

Chapters are required to follow all policies and procedures as established and approved by the SWNS Organizing Committee. The Organizing Committee considers such policies and procedures to be living documents and may revise them from time to time as appropriate. Any revised or new policies will be forwarded to the Chapters.

All Chapters must sign a SWNS Chapter Agreement.

All Chapter members shall avoid conflicts, potential or real, between their own personal or financial interests and those of the organization. Any possible conflict of interest shall be disclosed by the person concerned.

Chapter members shall not receive remuneration for their services.

Chapters will provide quarterly narrative and financial reports.

For issues not covered by these compliance requirements, please contact Silent Witness Nova Scotia for guidance.

Starting A Chapter

The purpose of a Chapter is to create organized action that promotes the mission and goals of Silent Witness Nova Scotia. There are several phases required to organize a Chapter. Each phase requires approval before proceeding to the next phase.

The process identifies the responsibilities of both Silent Witness Nova Scotia and the applicant(s).

Phase One - Application

The application form must be completed in its entirety. Once/if the application is approved, a community meeting will be held. Should a Chapter already exist in the area, contact information will be supplied.

Phase Two - Community Meeting

As previously stated, community involvement is key to the success of the project. In order to generate public awareness, a community meeting(s) is to be held. SWNS recommends that there be two meetings, one during the day and one that evening. Representative(s) from the Organizing Committee of SWNS will attend.

Phase Three - Formation of a Chapter

After the community meeting(s), and a minimum of ten people have made a commitment, Silent Witness Nova Scotia may approve the Chapter. The Chapter will be named “Silent Witness Nova Scotia, Chapter (named for the area it encompasses)”. The Chapter is now responsible for following all SWNS policies and guidelines and the Chapter Agreement is to be signed.

Note: Silent Witness Nova Scotia encourages inclusion and strongly recommends that Chapter membership reflect the diversity of the community.

Phase Four - Chapter Launch (optional)

The launch is an opportunity to inform the community by involving the media of the newly formed chapter. Representative(s) of the Silent Witness Nova Scotia Organizing Committee would also attend.

Duties and Responsibilities

Possible Chapter Activities

A Chapter may:

- Work to honour a woman who was killed by domestic violence by construction of a silhouette following the established policy;
- Host and/or participate at workshops or educational sessions on the issue of domestic violence that include the silhouette exhibits (procedures regarding the use of the exhibit are to be followed);
- Strengthen alliances within the community and build community collaboration.

Revoking Chapter Status

Maintaining the integrity of the Project is primary; therefore, Silent Witness Nova Scotia may terminate the Chapter Agreement and revoke the status of a Chapter at any time for non-compliance with the policies and procedures of Silent Witness Nova Scotia.

Silent Witness Nova Scotia will, in cooperation with the Chapter, make every effort to resolve any issue prior to revoking Chapter status.

Responsibilities of Silent Witness Nova Scotia:

- To provide the Chapter with all policies and procedures;
- To provide guidelines for the construction of the Silhouette;
- To provide the honorary shield for the Silhouette;
- To provide confirmation of case information;
- To provide promotional materials and or templates;
- To monitor and support Chapters.

Responsibilities of Chapters:

- To follow all policies and procedures of Silent Witness Nova Scotia and to comply with the Agreement;
- To promote the mission and goals of Silent Witness Nova Scotia;
- To seek support and guidance from Silent Witness Nova Scotia, when required.

Silent Witness Nova Scotia



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Application for Chapter Formation

Date _____

Contact Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Email Address _____

What is your interest in organizing a Silent Witness Chapter?

Are you representing an agency? Yes ___ No ___

If yes which Agency?

Do you think there is support in your community for a Chapter?

If yes, how have you gathered this information?

How did you hear about Silent Witness Nova Scotia?

Signature _____

For use by SWNS Organizing Committee

Date approved _____ By _____

Silent Witness Nova Scotia

Chapter Agreement

We the undersigned, on behalf of _____,
(Chapter Name)

agree to adhere and ensure that all Chapter members adhere to the following:

1. Be familiar with and follow all policies and procedures of Silent Witness Nova Scotia;
2. Promote the mission and goals of Silent Witness Nova Scotia;
3. Report annually narrative and financial reports;
4. Communicate openly and in a timely manner with Silent Witness Nova Scotia;
5. Seek guidance from Silent Witness Nova Scotia when required;
6. Respect the integrity of the Project and of the women and families we honor;
7. Avoid conflict, real or perceived, and report any possible conflict;
8. The Chapter will be identified as Silent Witness Nova Scotia proceeding all Chapter identification.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____