



What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.

-Pericles



RehtaehSpeaks

Presentation Information
2014

The History



Rehtaeh Parsons was a regular teenage girl from Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia.

That all changed In November 2011, when Rehtaeh, then 15, went with a friend to a home where she was raped by four teenage boys. While being raped, she was photographed and the photo became widespread in school and around town. In the following days, weeks and months, Retaeh was relentlessly bullied and harassed by other youth who called her a slut and sent her texts and Facebook messages asking if she would have sex with them. Rehtaeh finally broke down and told her family about the rape and the picture. They immediately contacted an emergency health team and the police. No charges of rape or sexual assault were ever filed.

Tragically, when Rehtaeh was 17 she committed suicide. Rehtaeh's mother; Leah Parsons, went public with the story and started a memorial Facebook page called "Angel Rehtaeh". The page went viral, as did the blog of Rehtaeh's father, Glen Canning. Rehtaeh's story drew international attention and sparked outrage all around the world.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper commented on the case, saying he was "*sickened*" by the story and that the online bullying was "*criminal activity*." Rehtaeh's funeral on April 13 was attended by hundreds of people, including Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter, who said he came "*first and foremost as a father trying to imagine what kind of incredible, unfathomable grief could be visited upon a family*."

In response to Rehtaeh's suicide, Nova Scotia enacted a law in August 2013 allowing victims to seek protection from cyberbullying and to sue the perpetrator. The case was also featured on the Dr. Phil show in September, 2013.

In October 2013, the Government of Canada announced in its throne speech that it will introduce legislation to "*create a new criminal offence prohibiting the non-consensual distribution of intimate images*." The speech specifically mentions Rehtaeh and other teenagers who suffered from cyberbullying.

"Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones.
A legacy is etched into the minds of others
and the stories they share about you."

-Shannon Alder



The Facts



What

Rehtaeh Speaks is an presentation and workshop program for students, staff and parents on the background and story of Rehtaeh Parsons; a young life ended too soon following the devastating effects of bullying.

Who

The main presentation is by Leah Parsons, the mother of Rehtaeh Parsons. Leah is a nationally recognized advocate for change, mobilizer for action against bullying, and fierce defender of the rights of girls.

Where & When

During the 2013 / 2014 school year, Rehtaeh Speaks will be available to audiences in schools and community centres across North America. The presentation is intended for audiences aged 12 and up.

Why

The story touched countless lives and sparked outrage worldwide. Politicians, community members, youth and parents all reacted with anger and disgust. Rehtaeh could be anybody's friend, sister, girlfriend, daughter, student or neighbour. She was a normal, happy girl who changed almost overnight as a result of the abuse of her peers.

*"We change the world not by what we say or do,
but as a consequence of what we have become."*

-David Hawkins



The Speaker



Leah Parsons

Leah is an award winning change maker, compassionate global steward and powerful keynote presenter who speaks from the heart. Her love for her daughter and determination to make things right gave her the courage and tenacity to go public with Rehtaeh's story, advocate for her daughter and ensure that changes were made.



She has appeared in news articles all over the world, been featured in countless media segments, appeared on the Dr Phil show and has had personal meetings with heads of state. Recently Leah, along with Rehtaeh's father Glen Canning and Carol Todd (mother of cyberbullying / suicide victim Amanda Todd) were presented with the **Rosalind Prober Award for Advocacy** at the Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada Media Awards in Winnipeg.

"Carol, Glen and Leah's dedication to seeking change in preventing cyberbullying and online sexual exploitation has not only raised awareness about the issues, but their tireless advocacy has also motivated stakeholders to urgently address the harm done by this type of victimization," -Rosalind Prober.

*"Some are born great, some achieve greatness,
And some have greatness thrust upon them"
-Shakespeare*



The Presentation



Truth

Leah tells the whole story, right from the beginning. Unabridged. Uncensored. From Rehtaeh being a regular girl who was happy and popular, to a shy, quiet girl who took her own life.

Leah speaks with care and honesty, but doesn't glorify what happened or use scare tactics. She talks of values, empathy, dignity and respect. She uses Rehtaeh's experience as a cautionary tale of when actions go too far. Her talk will leave participants thinking of their own lives and their own experiences.

Audience

Leah is careful to speak to the audience that is in front of her however the content and subject matter is deeply personal and can at times be quite graphic. We request that participants be at least **12 years of age or older**. Special workshops and presentations are available for younger audiences separately.

Continuing the Conversation

The main part of the presentation is a 60 minute keynote by Leah. The optional second half is a facilitated opportunity for participants to bridge what they heard with their own personal experiences. To accomplish this, The Atlantic Youth team creates the conditions for people from all walks of life and histories to find common ground in identifying with Rehtaeh's story. Through a series of meaningful conversations and activities, participants are invited to channel the emotions created through hearing Rehtaeh's story, attach them to a personal experience, connect with others and as a result be the change society needs to make sure this never happens to another child again.



The Organizers



The Rae of Light Foundation is a Nova Scotian non-profit society started by Rehtaeh's parents in her memory.

They are a grassroots organization with the ultimate goal of educating Canada's youth and advocating for the rights of adolescent victims of bullying, sexualized violence and

suicide. They are currently working hard to open the 'Rae of Light Centre', a multi-faceted centre for youth in Rehtaeh's home community of Cole Harbour.

Find out more at www.facebook.com/raeoflightfoundation



Atlantic Youth is an organization based out of Halifax that provides programs and services for youth and youth-at-risk to schools, communities and families all across Canada.

Their approach is relational and strength based, using meaningful games, activities and purposeful conversations that promote

social development; focusing on engaging youth as a primary objective. Their innovative programs promote personal growth, develop positive leadership, encourage good behavior and foster sustainable change.

Find out more at www.atlanticyouth.ca

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