



CONSENT CULTURE

a provincial forum to
end sexual violence
on campus

OCT 1 - 2, 2016
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

FORUM REPORT

DECEMBER 15, 2016



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS-NOVA SCOTIA

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INTRODUCTION

Rape culture is a term first used in the 1970s referring to the idea that sexual violence is not simply an act perpetuated by criminals and deviants, but sustained by a deeply entrenched cultural misogyny. This misogyny covers up and excuses sexual assault as well as engages in victim blaming, the act of holding a victim accountable to something which has happened to them.

Students have been using the No Means No campaign to challenge rape culture and combat sexualized violence on university and college campuses for over 20 years. Today, students continue to work tirelessly to support survivors, educate campus communities, and advocate for better support services from university and government decision makers. In March 2015, the Canadian Federation of Students - Fédération canadienne des étudiant.e.s (CFS-FCEE) hosted the first National Consent Culture Forum as a means to diversify the No Means No campaign, and realize opportunities to centralize consent education throughout the campaign. The first of its kind, this Forum brought students together from across the country to share experiences, learn, and organize for the most effective ways to challenge rape culture on campus.

Consent culture is the aspiring alternative to rape culture. It is a culture in which giving and receiving consent is normalized and practiced universally. Consent culture is one in which the prevailing narratives of sexual activity, interpersonal relationships, and bodily autonomy are centred around mutual consent. The fight to end sexualized violence is central to working towards consent culture; however, consent culture is more than just the absence of rape culture. It represents a fundamental re-imagining of current cultural norms and narratives.

In Nova Scotia, home to the Saint Mary's University orientation week rape chants and the Dalhousie Dentistry incident, the need for meaningful action to combat pervasive rape culture has been prevalent in public attention in recent years. Students have garnered widespread support for legislation to combat sexualized violence on campus in spite of university administrators and government leaders, who consistently choose to sweep incidences of violence under the rug instead of working with students for change.

The Nova Scotia Consent Culture Forum brought together students from across Nova Scotia to share both victories and challenges, develop strategies to fight rape culture, sexism, and misogyny on campus, and contribute to the vision and actualization of consent culture on Nova Scotian campuses. This report provides an overview of the Forum's structure, content, and key themes of discussion, and concludes by outlining students' priorities for the coming year in the fight to end rape culture in Nova Scotia.

FORUM AGENDA

OCT 1 12:00pm-1:00pm	Lunch and Registration
1:00pm-2:00pm	Welcoming Remarks and Introductions
2:00pm-3:00pm	Anti-Oppression Training
3:00pm-3:15pm	Break
3:15pm-4:30pm	Panel: De-colonizing Consent
4:30pm-4:45pm	Break
4:45pm-6:00pm	Workshop: Misogyny in the Academy Workshop: De-centering White Feminism on Campus Workshop: Building Consent Culture in Student Life Programming
6:00pm-7:00pm	Dinner
7:00pm-8:15pm	Workshop: Trauma-Informed Outreach and Support Workshop: The How's and Why's of Peer-To-Peer Support
8:15pm-8:30pm	Break
8:30pm-9:30pm	Caucus Meetings
9:30pm-12:00am	Socials
OCT 2 8:00am - 9:00am	Breakfast
9:00am-10:15am	Panel: Consent Culture Online
10:15am-10:30am	Break
10:30am-11:45am	Workshop: Developing On-Campus Sexual Assault Policy Workshop: Advocating for Sexualized Violence Legislation Workshop: Non-Dudes in Student Governance
11:45am-12:00pm	Break
12:00pm-1:00pm	Open Organizing Spaces
1:00pm-2:00pm	Lunch and Community Fair
2:00pm-3:00pm	Caucus Meetings
3:00pm-3:15pm	Break
3:15pm-4:30pm	Closing Workshop: Vision for Consent Culture in Nova Scotia

OVERVIEW

On October 1 and 2, the Canadian Federation of Students-Nova Scotia (CFS-NS) hosted the Nova Scotia Consent Culture Forum. The Forum brought together 100 students and community allies from across the province to engage in a series of panels, workshops and facilitated discussion spaces. At the beginning of the Forum, participants were asked to share their understanding of consent culture. Throughout the Forum, participants were invited to further their reflection by contributing to an Art Build asking “What does consent culture mean to you?” The content and structure of the Forum aimed to de-stabilize normalized rhetoric surrounding sexualized violence and centre intersectionality and accountability in all discussions. At the end of the Forum, participants were asked to revisit their initial understanding of consent culture, reflect on how it had changed over the weekend, and envision plans for the next year.

PARTICIPANTS

Coordination of the Forum was led by an Organizing Committee comprised of:

CFS-NS Chairperson -

C. Kiddell

CFS-NS Women’s Representative -

J. Peek

CFS-NS Indigenous Representative -

K. Wilmot

And representatives of:

Association générale des étudiant.es de l’Université Sainte-Anne

Cape Breton University Students’ Union

Dalhousie Student Union

King’s Students’ Union

Mount Saint Vincent University Students’ Union

Students’ Union of NSCAD

Student participants attended from the following universities and colleges:

Cape Breton University

Dalhousie University

Mount Saint Vincent University

Nova Scotia Community College Waterfront Campus

Nova Scotia Community College Strait Area Campus

NSCAD University

University of King’s College

Université Sainte-Anne

Panels and workshops featured community activists and educators who lead work in sexual violence prevention and response on-campus, online and in the community. CFS-FCEE national representatives attended the Forum to resource and lead workshops.

STRUCTURE

The structure of the Forum allowed for a diversity of medium through which to engage with programming. Below is an overview of the spaces in which participants engaged throughout the Forum.

Panels and Workshops

Panel presentations addressed the broader context in which students organize to combat sexual violence and allowed participants to hear a variety of perspectives on each topic. Workshops aimed to equip participants with concrete tools to build consent culture on-campus through education, policy and supports.

Open Organizing Spaces

Open organizing spaces acknowledged the expertise participants brought to the Forum. Participants were invited to host discussions spaces on topics of their choosing. Six open organizing space discussions were hosted at the Forum; these included, Fetishization of Racialized and Indigenous Women, Rainbow of Desire, Taking Down Trolls, Talking to Kids About Consent, and Toxic vs. Healthy Masculinity.

Caucuses

Caucuses are closed-space discussions for participants with shared self-identification. Caucus discussions allowed participants to discuss Forum content from the perspective of their lived experience and fostered intersectional analysis. Eight caucuses were held at the Forum; these included Feminists with Faith, Francophone Students, Indigenous Students, Queer Students, Racialized Women, Students with Disabilities, Trans, Non-Binary and Genderqueer Students, and White Accountability in Feminist Spaces.

Community Fair

The Community Fair created and strengthened connections between students and community organizations. Community groups represented at the Fair included Adsum House, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, Connect Nova Scotia, Heartwood, Hollaback!, Mi'kmaq Women's Resource Centre, Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group, Our Resilient Bodies, Responding to and Preventing Sexual Violence Project (Pawtnkek and We'koqmaq), Sexual Health Nova Scotia, South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre, Venus Envy, and YWCA Halifax.

Care

The Forum was structured to incorporate space for participants to practice care. In addition to regular breaks, two decompression spaces were available on-site throughout the weekend. One decompression space was available to all participants and had a trained support worker present at all times. The second was a closed space for Indigenous participants, was smudge-approved, and had dedicated Elder hours. Individuals trained in active listening self-identified by wearing purple armbands and were available in programmed spaces for peer-to-peer support.

DISCUSSION

As participants reflected on their vision for consent culture in a variety of spaces over the Forum, three elements emerged as pillars for working towards consent culture on our campuses: intersectionality, accountability and lived experience. Below is an overview of pertinent points to each pillar as they emerged over the weekend.

Consent Culture Must Be Intersectional

- In “De-Centring White Feminism On-campus,” African Nova Scotia community leader and organizer, LaMeia Reddick, challenged participants to identify exclusive feminist practice and imagine feminist activism that challenges the white supremacist system of oppression.
- All panelists on “De-colonizing Consent” pressed participants to focus on those against whom violence is perpetuated most.
- Rebecca Moore, Indigenous artist and activist, discussed the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.
- Nadine Bernard and Karla Stevens shared their work on sexual violence response and prevention in Nova Scotian Mi’kmaq communities. Former Halifax Poet Laureate, activist, and teacher, El Jones, encouraged participants’ to examine intersections between our campuses and communities, asking, “how can we talk about building consent culture here when it doesn’t exist out there?”
- In “Non-Dudes in Student Governance” CFS-FCEE National Graduate Caucus Chair, Carissa Taylor, and Newfoundland Representative, Alex Noel, interrogated the dominance of cisgender, heterosexual, white men in roles of governance and shared their experience as “non-dudes” in leadership positions.

Consent Culture Requires Accountability

- Participants initiated a “White Accountability in Feminist Spaces” caucus to discuss strategies for keeping themselves accountable in student organizing.
- In light of the recent Memorandum of Understanding directive for all universities to develop stand-alone on-campus sexual assault policy, CFS-FCEE Chairperson, Bilan Arte, delivered a workshop on best practices for policy development and tactics for keeping post-secondary institutions accountable to developing high-quality policies with student engagement.
- Former Chairperson of CFS-NS, Michaela Sam, led participants through a history of students’ fight to hold our government accountable and advocate for legislation to combat sexual violence on-campus. She contextualized the fight within the history of Safer Colleges and Universities Act and Sexual Violence Action Plan Act in the Nova Scotia Legislature and students winning legislation in Ontario and Manitoba, and re-affirmed the necessity of legislation to further work to combat sexual violence.

Consent Culture Must Emerge Through Lived Experience

- Feminist academics, Erin Wunker, Kaarina Mikalson and Fazeela Jiwa led participants in “Misogyny in the Academia” through an exercise of mapping their experience of micro-aggressions onto university campuses.
- Rebecca Stuckey, Outreach Coordinator for South House, shared tips and tricks for centring consent in student-life programming and making student spaces safer for folks from all experiences.
- In “Peer-to-Peer” support, South House Volunteer Coordinator, Carmella Farahbakhsh, presented on their experience establishing the Dalhousie Sexual Harassment and Assault Phone Line and explored the use of peer support models for supporting survivors on-campus.
- In “Trauma-Informed Outreach and Support,” community organizer and support worker, Jordan Roberts, educated students on running consent campaigns that are informed by and centre the experience of survivors.

NEXT STEPS

The closing workshop of the Forum engaged participants in envisioning the next steps for work towards consent culture over the next year. Through a mix of breakout groups and report-back discussion, participants determined three short-term goals for building consent culture on Nova Scotia's campuses.

Stand-Alone Sexual Assault Policies

Across the board, students were eager to be involved in universities' work to develop stand-alone on-campus sexual assault policies. Students stressed the necessity of their voices throughout the development and implementation of sexual assault policies on their campus. Many students cited frustration with consultation processes that disregarded or tokenized their input. Other students came from campuses that had yet to initiate policy development. Students from nearly all campuses listed one of their goals for the coming year to ensure their institution was using a standardized process for policy development, with clearly defined student involvement and mechanisms for regular policy review.

Survivor Supports On Campus

Students wanted to create and/or strengthen survivor supports on their campuses. Some students discussed strategies for providing survivor supports from their students' unions, such as peer-to-peer support programs and designated safer spaces. Other students expressed frustration that this work of supporting survivors is persistently shifted to students, when universities fail to adequately protect and support their students. All students shared the vision of advocated for resources for better survivor supports on-campus.

Legislation to Combat Sexualized Violence.

The Consent Culture Forum re-affirmed students' commitment to achieving the implementation of legislation to combat sexual violence on-campus. Students recognized legislation as key to ensure quality on-campus sexual assault policies, dedicated resources for consent education and survivor support, and requiring post-secondary institutions to prevent and respond to on-campus sexualized violence. As many participants were actively involved in the fight to pass the Safer Colleges and Universities Act and the Sexual Violence Action Plan Act, students remain dedicated to passing robust legislation in Nova Scotia.

