



Protecting Youth in the Sea Cadet and Navy League Cadet Programmes

About The Navy League of Canada

The Navy League of Canada was established in 1895 to promote an interest in Maritime Affairs generally throughout Canada. As a part of this mandate we launched our first youth programme, the Boy's Naval Brigade, in 1917. The original goal of our youth programme was to encourage young men to enter the Royal Canadian Navy or other seafaring careers. However the youth programmes soon developed a much broader scope and evolved into modern cadet programmes with a focus on leadership and citizenship.

Today, The Navy League of Canada has a presence in over 260 Canadian communities. Our youth programs benefit 15,000 young Canadians every year, and we continue to grow. The modern Navy League focuses on three key programmes: *Navy League Cadets*, *Royal Canadian Sea Cadets* and *Maritime Affairs*.

About Awareness

Since the horrific and shocking abuse at Mount Cashel was exposed to the public in the late 80's, youth organizations have become aware of the risk sexual predators pose to children participating in their programmes.

Subsequent cases have helped increase public awareness and understanding of this risk. The courage demonstrated by these early disclosures has helped remove the stigma and shame often attached to sexual exploitation. This has helped more people to come forward, begin the path to recovery and seek justice. Ultimately, this trend may prove to be the best deterrent. Predators can no longer rely on a veil of silence to cover their crimes.

We encourage anyone who has been victimized as a child to seek the assistance they need to recover. This process will not only help them, but others in similar circumstances.

About Prevention

For nearly 20 years, the Navy League has asked all its volunteers that work with youth to provide a criminal record check. However, a criminal record check only showed prior bad acts. As we have learned more, we developed and implemented a comprehensive strategy which was launched in 1999. In its present form, this strategy includes three critical elements:

- Volunteer Screening
 - Education and Empowerment
 - Risk Reduction
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Volunteer Screening – All the volunteers in our youth programs are required to undergo Volunteer Screening. This includes a Vulnerable Sector Screening, Personal Background Check, Interviews, and a Probationary Period. Vulnerable Sector Screening is an enhanced police check which includes any known information concerning risk behaviours. Approved volunteers receive a photo identification card which they must carry during cadet activities.

Education and Empowerment – All cadets receive training to recognize and report all forms of harassment and abuse. They are empowered to say “No” to unwelcome behaviour and taught the various avenues to seek help. In the case of the Sea Cadet Program, this training is provided by a Canadian Forces Unit Human Rights Advisor.

Risk Reduction – The Navy League of Canada also has a Cadet Safety Policy, which prohibits one-on-one contact with volunteers and cadets. Our programmes are highly structured and well-supervised, reducing or eliminating opportunities for mistreatment of cadets.

While we are confident that we provide one of the safest youth programs in the country, we continue to re-evaluate and improve our programme. Children should always have access to quality community programs, and this is possible only when parents feel confident that their children are going to be protected and respected by the programme’s leaders.

Resources

Navy League Volunteer Screening Program - http://www.navyleague.ca/eng/get_involved/volunteer.asp

Canadian Forces Cadet Harassment and Abuse Prevention Program - http://www.cadets.ca/support/cato-oaic/intro_e.asp?cato=13-24

Kid’s Help Phone - <http://www.kidshelpphone.ca> or 1-800-668-6868

For more information, contact:

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