



# Let's Talk About Bullying In Nova Scotia

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## I Was Never Good Enough: *Bullied in the Workplace*

It took place over fifteen years ago but the humiliation I was made to feel seems fresh in my memory. A casual worker in a lab at a university, I had been hired to do preparations for a summer school course in biochemistry. This was going to be a challenge but I was confident in my ability to do a good job as I had worked as a chemistry technician before. I would be working in the prep room of a technician who had been on staff there for almost twenty years. She was doing other work that summer but she had been enlisted by the biochemistry professor to help me out.



The first inkling something may go wrong was when we were discussing the first lab. Much of the biochemistry lab prep was new to me. We talked about the procedures and techniques to be used. Instead of giving me a printed list of chemicals and concentrations to be used and equipment needed, she read it out to me and I had to scramble to write it down in my scrawl. And then she said, "Next time, please read over the lab like you were supposed to." I was shocked and hurt as I had read the lab beforehand (continued).

**PLEASE SUPPORT OUR FAMILY IN NEED (SEE PAGE 3)**

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My “mentor” continued to be sarcastic. She steadfastly refused to write a list of chemicals and their concentrations to be used for each lab preferring to make me write out the list longhand. The result of this is that I left out one of the solutions needed for one of the labs and, because I was not there, she had to make the required solution. She became even more abusive and sarcastic.

One day she criticized me for not putting glassware to dry in the warming oven. After that, I faithfully put the glassware in the place she had recommended. A short time later, she came to me with a volumetric flask in her hand. “You put this in the warming oven; it might ruin the calibration.”

Suddenly, I felt very angry. I felt attempting to please her was a waste of time. Trying to keep my anger to myself, I remained silent. “What’s wrong with you?” she asked aggressively. “You are only here for a couple more weeks. I will see you don’t come back.”

Working in the same small space as this woman meant I was under scrutiny all day, always available to be criticized. I have never forgotten how incompetent I felt under her hostility. Hindsight reveals her motivation may have been jealousy. She saw me as a competitor and didn’t want me to succeed. As she predicted, I wasn’t hired again at the end of my contract. This remains a dark, painful chapter in my history.

By Heather Frenette

## Groundbreaking: Nova Scotia's Cyber Safety Act

The government of Nova Scotia enacted the new Cyber Safety Act in order to protect victims of cyberbullying. The new law offers protection for the victims and makes cyber bullies responsible for what they have done. According to Justice Minister Ross Landry, “too many young people and their families are being hurt by cyber bullies.” This law makes it clear that cyberbullying is a very serious offence with very serious repercussions.

This legislation was put forward three weeks after Rehtaeh Parsons, aged 17, committed suicide. Her mother, Lea Parsons, has alleged that Rehtaeh was a victim of sexual assault. Photos of the event were distributed around her school and on social media. As a result of these photos, “Rehtaeh was (*continued*)

said to have been mocked by classmates, enduring relentless harassment and humiliation.”

Rehtaeh’s father, Glen Canning said this new legislation “is a step in the right direction” and maintained this legislation would have helped his daughter. To quote Canning, “I hope that a parent out there doesn’t have to go through what myself and Rehtaeh’s family and friends are going through right now. It’s just heartbreaking. Today is four months since she died.”

This new law allows victims, their parents, or the police to seek a protection order from a judge, or justice of the peace which places conditions on the bully. Those who break these restrictions can be fined up to \$5,000 or six months in jail, or both, on first offence. Victims also have the option of suing the bully in a court of law. If the bully is a minor his or her parents can be sued.

This Act has made amendments to the Education Act which allows school boards to work with our government to produce “safe and respectful cyber communications among students.” Principals will also be able to look into complaints of bullying and cyberbullying even if they happen off school grounds or after hours.

This Act will also create a CyberSCAN unit (first one in Canada). This unit will investigate reports of cyberbullying. Anybody who lives in N.S. has the right to file a complaint of cyberbullying. This unit will first seek to solve the issue informally by contacting all parties involved to find a solution. If necessary this unit has the authority to obtain a protection order for the victim. The court has the authority to order the bully to discontinue all cyber communication and even confiscate their computers or other devices that were used for cyberbullying. If the unit believes criminal charges should be laid then they will contact the police to further investigate.

This is the first step in solving a very serious and complicated issue.

By Tony Legere

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“Providence Offers More Protection for Cyberbullying Victims.”

NOVASCOTIA Canada, 7 August 2013. 24 August 2013.

<<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20130807002>>

“N.S. Cyberbullying Legislation Allows Victims to Sue.” CBCNEWS

Nova Scotia, 7 August 2013. 24 August 2013.

<<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2013/08/07/ns-cyberbullying-law-rehtaeh.html>>

## Bullying: Then and Now

Has the nature of bullying changed over the years? While many cases of bullying go unreported, both national and international statistics on bullying show how much a problem bullying is for young people:

- One in five Canadian youth is bullied regularly
- Forty-five percent of kids don't feel safe at school
- Sixteen percent of youth from grades seven to nine experienced bullying more than twelve times a year
- When a friend steps in, bullying stops in ten seconds or less fifty-seven percent of the time

The internet has made bullying easier and less likely to be reported. Bullying statistics shows that cyberbullying is a major issue facing youth today:

- Sixty-five percent of respondents reported having been targets of cyberbullying at least once
- One in four school students have been bullied online
- Seventy percent of sexual harassment incidents occurred online
- Less than fifty percent of cyberbullying is reported
- Those most at risk of cyberbullying are children aged twelve to fourteen years old
- Girls are more at risk for experiencing cyberbullying than boys
- The most common means of cyberbullying is social networking (sixty-three percent), texting (twenty-six percent) and instant messaging (eleven percent)

Worldwide, bullying is a very common problem for children. According to Child Helpline International (CHI), the number of contacts involving bullying doubled in 2012 compared with those in 2006. However, they noted that this may be due to growing awareness of bullying among children. Nine out of ten cases of bullying happen at school. Over a third of the bullying incidents involved adults and twenty-three percent of the cases involved teachers.

By Melinda Cadarette

Sources: "Bullying Facts, Statistics & Effects." n.a. Our Kids- The Trusted Source. n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.ourkids.net/bullying-facts-statistics.php>  
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## WORKING FAMILY IN NEED

The **working poor** are people who work but whose incomes fall below a given poverty line.

While poverty is often associated with joblessness, a significant proportion of the poor in our community are actually employed. The wages the working poor receive are insufficient to provide basic necessities and lead to people making choices between having food on the table or heat in the house. Largely because they are earning such low wages, the working poor face numerous obstacles that make it difficult for many of them to find and keep a job, save up money, and maintain a sense of self-worth.

## YOU CAN HELP

Shelter Me and CMHA Kings have chosen a Family in Need and are taking donations to assist this family with some home improvements before the winter is upon us again. If you would like to make a donation please call the Canadian Mental Health Association- Kings branch at 902-679-7464 or 902-679-7573.



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## Helping Kids Become Bully-Resistant

Bullying exhibits an imbalance of power between a perpetrator and a victim and involves aggressive behaviour towards those perceived as weak or vulnerable. Bullying behaviour includes insults, deliberate exclusion, physical violence and cyber bullying.

Kids bully one another because it is easier to control others rather than to find solutions to problems. Bullying replaces social skills. These kids are often also looking to maintain or improve their social standing; peer approval further exacerbates this issue. Sometimes children deflect bullying away from themselves by becoming aggressive as well. They become both victims and bullies. The following are some common features most of them share:

- ✓ A strong need to dominate
- ✓ Impulsive tendencies
- ✓ Difficulty managing anger
- ✓ Immaturity
- ✓ Poor relationships with family members
- ✓ Harsh discipline at home

Certain types of kids are more susceptible to victimization than others. Studies show that early aggression in the preschool years may be a predictor. Aggression often turns inward creating shyness, which gets perceived as vulnerability. The following reveals more insight into groups of people who are vulnerable:

- ✓ Those with developmental disorders
- ✓ Sexual orientation
- ✓ Members of cultural minorities
- ✓ People with a passive personality
- ✓ Those with a learning disability
- ✓ People who feel they are outsiders

To help bullies behave respectfully, parents can work hard to create a calm and tolerant environment at home while modeling good verbal problem-solving skills. Talking to kids about what is going on in their lives is very important because there may be an underlying reason for their behaviour that can be solved. Kids should be encouraged to focus on helping others as they may learn empathy. Service projects may alleviate boredom a possible factor in bullying. Discipline needs to be consistent. Children must learn they are accountable for their actions.

Parents can strengthen victims of bullying by role-playing with them and developing a plan of action. This may include walking away or teasing the tease (not the *teaser*). For instance, an insult like, “You’re stupid!” can be met with “Thanks for telling me” or “What made you say that?” Sometimes a firm “Leave me alone!” is called for. It is important not to give bullies what they want the most; a negative reaction only feeds their need for attention. An additional method is to encourage children to get involved in other social circles and extracurricular activities not involving the wrongdoers.

The sooner victims of bullying are helped, the better their outcome for the future, for bullying can have a lasting emotional affect.

By Dena Walker

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### A Mental Health Perspective Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring faith, hope and courage to members of the local mental health community of Kings County, Nova Scotia, as well as others who are involved with a mental, emotional or psychological condition.

Donations (cheque or money order) to support this newsletter and other important programs and services can be made to CMHA-Kings, 11 Opportunity Lane Suite 3 Box 10 Coldbrook NS B4R 0A5

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