

For Immediate Release
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Canada Walks to Remember

In the next few weeks hundreds of families, their relatives and friends will come together across Canada to acknowledge, remember and honour children who died far too early - either during pregnancy or shortly after birth. Bereaved parents and grief support organizations in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Manitoba and Nova Scotia have all organized awareness walks in their communities.

October 15th is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, a special day to recognize the devastation and grief bereaved parents experience and to acknowledge the existence and importance of their babies. Many people don't realize how common it is for babies to die during pregnancy or soon after birth. Nationally, in 2011, Statistics Canada reported 1,810 infant deaths and 2,818 stillbirths. These reports omit the number of miscarriages, which are not tracked for statistical purposes. Whether it be at four weeks gestation or forty, or soon after birth, the death of a baby is a painful and devastating loss. Many of these families grieve in silence.

The core purpose of the walks and awareness campaign is to form strong communities of support around and between bereaved families and to end the social stigma that arises from the loss of an infant. The death of a baby not only affects the parents, but entire families and communities; siblings, grandparents, relatives, friends and colleagues can all be deeply affected by pregnancy and infant loss.

Despite the thousands of deaths each year and the tens of thousands of people profoundly affected by the loss, the shocking statistics are hardly known nor, in many cases, are families properly supported. Other issues that require attention are; lack of basic research into causes of death, specialized health care equipment, and a lack of training opportunities for health care professionals in bereavement care.

The awareness walks aim to help the public better understand the devastation families endure and how bereaved parents can best be supported. People are often at a loss for words and may stay silent at a time when many parents are longing to have their children and their grief acknowledged.

While some walks require advance registration, most walks are open to the general public. Join us if you wish to show your support.

Quotes:

"It's so hard to lose your child/children. It never gets easier. We learn to live differently without them and bring them with us in our hearts as life keeps moving forward." - **Tiffani Warnick, a mom from Vancouver**

"To me, acknowledgment was the most important thing. I hated when people never mentioned my daughter, worse acted as if I had never been pregnant. Or people would say 'I didn't want to upset you by talking about it'... unfortunately its more upsetting that they pretend my baby never existed." - **Sheri Hall, a mom from Langley**

"People will ask how does one get over the loss of a baby? My answer is that you don't, not really. There is no excitement of the first steps, or first day of kindergarten. No celebration of school graduation or their wedding day. It is a lifetime of memories we do not get to make, but that serve as a constant reminder of the void left in our lives." - **Joel Neufeld, a dad from Abbotsford**

Learn More:

Please see the listing of all events for details: <http://www.october15.ca/category/events/>

Some basic information how to support parents can be found at: <http://www.october15.ca/support/>

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