



local documentary tackles youth sex trafficking on vancouver island

Empress Avenue Media Inc. is starting principal photography this week on a new independent documentary about sex trafficking and gang recruitment of youth on southern Vancouver Island. Told through the eyes of local counsellor and filmmaker, Mia Golden, *Tug of War* will pull the curtain back on growing issues affecting young people in our communities.

Empress Avenue Media – based in Cobble Hill in the Cowichan Valley – will follow Mia Golden and other members of a specialized team called MYST (mobile youth services team), comprised of 2 counsellors and a police officer. MYST’s mandate is exploitation-prevention in all 13 municipalities of the Greater Victoria Region.

MYST reports steady increases in their caseload over the past few years. Of note is the impact of both social media and the opioid crisis playing significant roles in this disturbing trend. Police officers, counsellors, street nurses, social workers, and policy makers are struggling to keep up with the demand to support those in need. Well over 1000 people die every year in BC from Fentanyl, and Victoria has the 3rd highest illicit drug overdoses of all BC communities.

Predators have quickly come to realize that being online allows for easy access to youth. The explosion of social media, easy accessibility to the internet and pornography, and the normalization of highly sexualized and often violent content are issues that contribute to the exploitation of young people. Exploitation is taking place in every community and every neighbourhood and isn’t limited by class or background. No one is immune, and everyone is a potential target.

Through interviews with past survivors, front line workers fighting to support vulnerable youth, and parents fighting to get their children out of harms’ way, *Tug of War* will provide insight into the realities of what is taking place in young peoples’ lives, and what we can do reduce the risks and protect our children from these predators.

Funding for *Tug of War* made possible through the Province of British Columbia’s Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch.

about empress avenue media inc.

Empress Avenue Media Inc. is a film production and digital media startup based in Cobble Hill, BC. The company provides commercial film, interactive and graphic design services, as well as producing independent features and documentaries. The company’s debut documentary, *Penny Girl* (2019), is a profile of Victoria philanthropist and Jeneece Place co-founder Frankie Edroff. Learn more at empressave.com.

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