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Verdict sends strong message: no woman deserves violence

Today's verdict in the trial of Dr. Sean Buckingham shows society has come a long way in recognizing all women matter, say local women's groups.

"We watched this story unfold from the beginning," says Gail Thornhill, the Program Coordinator of Naomi Centre, who worked with many of the young women involved in the Buckingham case. "We were so afraid no one would believe his victims. The public would just see a prominent St. John's doctor accused by girls struggling with addictions."

"We've been holding our breath in fear that the women would be discounted and disbelieved because of their troubled lives," says Leslie MacLeod, President of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. "It's a huge relief they were heard and justice has been carried out."

Buckingham was convicted today on 12 of 18 sexual assault and drug trafficking charges. The verdict comes on the heels of the Robert Pickton trial. Yesterday, the British Columbia man was found guilty of murdering six sex trade workers. Similarly, the women victimized by Buckingham led troubled lives.

"There was a time," says MacLeod, "when victims were only taken seriously if they were of a certain race and class and had squeaky clean backgrounds. These verdicts send the message that all women deserve to live free of violence, no matter how they live their lives."

"These young women had the courage to finally stand up to this man and we were concerned about what an acquittal would do to them," says Thornhill. "A guilty verdict tells them they matter."

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