

# Citizen Thompson

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FREE



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## Men step out in style to oppose violence against women



Thompson Citizen photos by Ian Graham

Fifty participants raised \$11,673 for the Thompson YWCA in the organization's fourth-annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event in Thompson on Sept. 21.

### POLL QUESTION OF THE WEEK

The Old Farmer's Almanac, published in Dublin, New Hampshire, North America's most popular reference guide and oldest continuously published periodical since 1792, says, "Winter temperatures will be colder than normal." What do you think?

It was a nice summer

57%

Bring it on! Cross country skiing on the Jack Crolley Trail, snowmobiling on Paint Lake and ice fishing on Partridge Crop Lake at -40°C

43%

Total Votes: 115



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BY IAN GRAHAM

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Fifty Thompson men with good balance and strong arches donned red high heels for a stroll around the block in Thompson on Sept. 21, raising a total of \$11,673 for efforts to stop violence against women and girls at the Thompson YWCA's fourth-annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes fundraiser.

Ron Bruneau was the top fundraiser, collecting a total of \$1,220 in pledges, and was rewarded for his efforts with a power leather recliner donated by The Brick.

"Ron has participated in the walk every single year so this is his fourth year so this is a well-deserved prize," said Britany Lamb, president of the Thompson YWCA's board, who announced the top money-raisers at the conclusion of the walk. "I'm sure he's raised more than that over the course of the four years."

The next best fundraisers were neck-and-neck, with Mike Dixon beating out Dr. Hussam Azzam by \$7 for the second-

place prize, bringing in \$1,110 and taking home a 40-inch TV donated by sears as a result. Azzam received a painting by Audrie Brooks and a pair of Oakley sunglasses donated by Bob's Auto for his total of \$1,103.

"He's also been a big fundraiser over the years," said Lamb.

Four other participants in the walk raised more the \$500 each.

"To all the walkers of course, the prize you take home today is knowing that you did something good for your community and that you're a role model for men and boys throughout Northern Manitoba," said Thompson YWCA executive director Joy Thompson.

Prior to starting the walk, Thompson told the men taking part and their supporters about the statistics that show why such anti-violence efforts are required.

"Nationally, 600 aboriginal women and girls are murdered or missing and today we want to restate our demand that the federal government launch a national inquiry," said Thompson.

"Half of Canadian women experience physical or sexual violence in their lives. Look around you, men and boys, half the women here have experienced physical or sexual violence in their life. Unfortunately, 60 per cent of sexual assault victims are under 17. Provincially, Manitoba is the province that has the second-highest rate of domestic violence in the country. In 2011 alone, 12 women, Manitoba women, and some of you here today know one or two of these women and our condolences and sympathies are with you, 12 women were murdered by their intimate partner."

In Thompson, she said, the RCMP reported 176 cases of domestic assault in 2011, which, based on estimates that only 22 per cent of such incidents are reported to police, means at least 800 assaults against women took place that year, though the actual number was likely closer to 2,000, Thompson said.

"So tonight after you've walked and you're soaking your feet, remember your pain here today is

actually worth it," said Thompson. "Today we are standing for the four or five women that tonight will be assaulted by their intimate partner and every night of every week of every month of every year. Let's turn that around together."

The executive director also recognized the students taking part, noting that a survey of high school students conducted by the School District of Mystery Lake found that 21 per cent said they had been victims of sexual violence or sexual assault.

"This is sombre and so today is actually meant to be a day where we say that although the news is sombre, although it's a tremendous tragedy in our community, we together with men and boys and allies say, 'Not in our town, not in our communities,' and you brave and honourable men step into our shoes for an hour and walk a mile for us and for your wives and your girlfriends, your daughters, your nieces and your grandmothers and for that we are very grateful.

Thank you."

Lamb thanked the many volunteers who helped with the event and the donors of decorations, food and other equipment.

"This is a huge help for the YWCA in doing our programming and helping to end violence against women and girls. It's wonderful to see so much of the community come together for such an important cause. It's also very nice to see so many young kids here, little volunteers I call them, here to support everybody. Hopefully they can see it happen year after year and make some changes so when they grow up the statistics aren't as bad for this community as they are right now."

Lamb and Thompson both reminded the participants to curb their competitive instincts to avoid any accidents in the unstable and unfamiliar footwear.

"This isn't a race so don't hurt yourselves," said Lamb.

"You don't have to run," said Thompson. "We don't want any turned ankles."