

‘A rock couldn’t break this, and that’s how survivors are’: Renfrew sexual assault centre resolute after monument vandalism

In an act of vandalism that damaged a monument for victims of sexual violence in Eganville’s Centennial Park, the Women’s Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County is determined to find the positive.



When centre spokeswoman Jancy Brown described the vandal’s failed attempt to shatter the glass orb at the centre of the monument, she focused on the glass’ resiliency rather than the harm done.

“A rock couldn’t break this, and that’s how survivors are,” she said Tuesday.

Despite the obvious damage to the monument’s glass and stone, Brown said, the centre doesn’t have any plans for its repair.

“We’re going to leave it as is,” she vowed. “The monument now truly represents sexual assault survivors, because it now has trauma and it has scars.”

OPP continue to investigate the incident, which was reported last Friday.

Killaloe detachment Const. Catherine Yarmel said police have no suspects and that there were no cameras at the park.

Brown said she doesn't have any idea who the vandal is, and what his or her motive might have been.

Unveiled in the fall of 2016, the Eganville monument is the largest of four built by volunteers with the Countdown Public Art Project, led by the Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County.

The others sit in Killaloe, Pembroke and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation.

Brown, who worked on the Countdown Public Art Project, said she doesn't have a price tag for the cost of the damage. "In our eyes, it's priceless," she said.

May is sexual assault prevention month in Ontario, and the centre had a vigil planned for May 31 at the monument. They're going to persist, despite the vandalism, Brown said, though she expressed uncertainty about how news of the incident might affect turnout.

Normally, between 50 and 100 people attend this type of event, billed as an opportunity to honour survivors and to unite people to end community sexual violence.

"It could either really expand a lot, or it could make people, survivors especially, even more fearful.

"You just never know, because we don't know what their trauma is, what their experience with violence is, and they might not feel safe now to come out."

The vigil will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday.

"As our monument, we are most 'strong at the broken places,'" the centre reminded readers in a news release.