

Giving Boys Guidance and Respect

The Chief, October 20, 2006, Julie Remy

Over 300 parents turned out to hear speaker Barry MacDonald describe how they might become better at guiding and teaching their sons to become “courageous, caring and ethical men.”

MacDonald, author of *Boy Smarts*, was in town for the first time last Monday to present his observations at a sold-out public talk at the Eagle Eye Theatre.

Through a lively, interactive and direct presentation, MacDonald explained the unique and varied needs of boys: how culture interfaces with biology making each boy different. He explained why there is a strong tendency for boys to struggle with expressing emotions and parents to struggle in return.

MacDonald believes that some boys reactions can be mistaken for a lack of feeling, aggressiveness, or even misinterpreted as a disorder, like ADHD. “In BC, prescriptions for ADHD medications rose 430 percent between 1993 and 1997, adding that even the medical community sees this to be too high. The increase in the U.S. is even more

pronounced at 600 percent between 1994 and 1999.

Boys tend to have fewer conversations about intimate matters with their parents than girls, he said. They are more secretive and isolated when preoccupied, while in reality, “boys are emotionally tender and feel life experiences very deeply. Many of their questions and concerns have at their root a profound worry about the loss of control. Boys are socialized for power and control, and need parents to guide them to become caring and compassionate.”

MacDonald went on to explain that our culture is filled with mixed messages that can leave boys confused about what’s appropriate and challenged parents to talk with their boys about touchy topics like video games and internet pornography. He asserted that parents should guide their sons through the “corridors of boyhood”, helping them to make sense of today’s masculinity.

Clair and Jim Harvey, parents of two teenagers, said they enjoyed MacDonald’s talk, and in particular learned practical tools to reach out to their son to talk about sex and other important issues.