

# THE FOG OF RAPE

## NORMALIZING A CAMPUS CRIME

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Frosh week 2011 at St. Thomas University was a whirlwind for Nicole Munro. ([Three years of silence](#)) For the final event, a toga party at her new residence, all the single sheets had been sold out. So the first-year student bought a double sheet and ripped it in half to share with a friend. Then she wrapped it over her sports bra and Spandex shorts and secured it over her shoulder with a hair elastic.



Nicole Munro and Ben Beyea before the frosh week toga party in 2011.

A gifted athlete, Munro rarely drank. That evening, to celebrate the end of the frosh-week liquor ban, she opened the first of many vodka coolers. She was 18, under the legal drinking age in bars. In her eagerness to fit in, she soon lost count of how much she drank.

After the toga party, she wandered drunkenly through the halls. She remembers passing someone sitting on the stairs, a second-year student and an organizer of the toga party who had signed a contract to stay sober that night.

After that Munro remembers nothing until waking up the next morning, naked, in her dorm room. A man was getting dressed. It was the person she'd seen sitting on the stairs. Munro never went to police. The man, who has since graduated, didn't respond to texts and Facebook messages requesting an interview.

"I was dazed, confused. What had I just done?" says Munro, a sloop-eyed gamine who is ethnically half Scottish, half Chinese.

The next night, he came to her dorm room, so drunk he could scarcely stand up. He suggested they hang out again. When Munro demurred, he said he knew everyone in the residence. "He said, 'They're going to believe me over you. I can ruin you.'"

Munro saw her new life at university being destroyed before it even began. "Everyone I socialized with I met a week ago," she recalled.



So she smiled and made nice. When he messaged her on Facebook, she usually replied. As time passed, she became confused. "He made it seem like it was something I had really wanted."

Convinced that she had agreed to have sex, Munro confessed her perceived infidelity to her then-boyfriend from high school. He concurred that she'd been unfaithful. They both wept.

Now in her fourth year and an All-Conference athlete and member of the varsity volleyball team, Munro finally understands what happened to her. The insight came during this investigative project when her professor discussed the issue of consent in class.

Munro, now 21, turned to a classmate in whom she'd earlier confided. "Do you remember what happened first year with ... ?" she whispered, leaving the rest of the question unasked.

"Yeah," he said softly.

"Oh my God," she said.

This is the fog of rape. It casts shadows and shrouds university campuses across North America. Rape culture is so devoid of moral condemnation, so accepted, that deviance has become the new normal. This normalization of a campus

crime, the deafening silence around it, the widespread impunity of those who rape and the stunning ignorance about consent—all conspire to confuse many young women. Of course, some know instantly. Others, like Munro, have no idea until later on that they may have been violated.

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[\*The Fog of Rape: Normalizing a Campus Crime\*](#)

[\*Three years of silence: When a victim internalizes her pain\*](#)

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[\*Editorial: Start teaching consent and stop ignoring the problem\*](#)

Our investigation focused on two universities that occupy a single campus. Ours, St. Thomas University (STU), shares a pleasant hillside campus in Fredericton with the University of New Brunswick (UNB). Whereas STU is a small liberal-arts undergraduate institution with 2,000 students, UNB is one of Canada's oldest, with 11,000 students, graduate programs and specialized schools including law, nursing and engineering.

For this project we interviewed six young women. Five were allegedly raped. The sixth, Megan Beaulieu, ([\*\*\*Student fights off friend to avoid potential rape\*\*\*](#)) repulsed a physical encounter that could have ended in rape. Under the Criminal Code, unwanted sexual touching—grabbing, kissing or fondling—meets the definition of sexual assault.

Three women agreed to use their real names, two spoke on condition of anonymity and one didn't want her name used to avoid a lifetime of Google searches, but still allowed us to publish her photo. Four young women, including Beaulieu, attend STU. The fifth attends UNB and was allegedly assaulted by a STU varsity athlete. The sixth, a former student, was allegedly assaulted by a UNB varsity athlete.

*The Fog of Rape  
Investigative Team*









University of New Brunswick. Photo: Facebook/UNB

Three women declined to provide the names of their alleged attackers. One woman knew only his first name. Two named their alleged attackers, but we have withheld their names. We attempted to interview both men, but reached only one. Wherever possible we interviewed friends of each side to corroborate or amplify the women's accounts.

We also filed Right to Information requests about sexual-assault complaints. UNB disclosed 11 between Jan. 1, 2008 and Dec. 31, 2014. STU disclosed seven between 2010 and the fall of 2014. Five involved students in residence, the other two lived off campus.

Five of the seven reported incidents at STU involved alcohol. In our own investigation, four alleged incidents involved excessive alcohol, either for the woman or the man or both. Megan Beaulieu was relatively sober. Another woman was drugged.

The STU official who handles sexual-assault reports, Academic Vice President Barry Craig, ([University reaction](#)) says he has never encountered a single false complaint. But the official numbers of sexual assaults are artificially low because

most go unreported. Indeed none of the six alleged victims we interviewed told UNB or STU. Only 6 per cent of sexual assaults in Canada are reported.

As part of our investigation, our journalism class took an anonymous and voluntary poll on sexual assault. Of the 12 female students who participated in the poll, four said they had been raped. That number includes Munro, who decided to write a first-person account and be interviewed on camera.

Currently UNB and STU are revising their reporting policies. STU's current protocol, for instance, imposes a 12-month reporting deadline, even though Canada has no statute of limitations on sexual assault. STU's existing policy states that consent can't be given by someone who is asleep, unconscious or incapacitated by alcohol or drugs.

Meanwhile universities everywhere juggle a conflict of interest: hurt their image or help the victims. Craig, the vice president, says STU's reputation is the last thing on his mind when handling sexual-assault complaints. He adds it is never a good idea to sweep something under the rug to protect the reputation of the university.

"Every university that's gotten in trouble over this issue is by trying to cover something up or trying to pretend that something isn't involved."



From left: Jenna and Sarah at Fredericton's Chess Piece Cafe (not their real names.)

Sarah (not her real name) is a dark-haired student who began wearing a purity ring in Grade Six. And until one night last September, she was proudly a virgin. ([From purity ring to PTSD](#))

She was 19 then, and still is. A second-year science student at UNB, she went to a party at an apartment on College Hill

Road last September where she showed others her chastity ring, a symbol of her vow to abstain from sex until marriage.

An inexperienced drinker, Sarah downed Pinnacle Tropical Punch Vodka with Sprite, as well as cans of beer and mixed drinks. During a drinking game she fell asleep. Her girlfriend, who'd also had plenty to drink, helped her into a bedroom.

Sarah vaguely recalls someone removing her underpants. Then she passed out. She awoke in the middle of the night beside a guy she'd met that night at the party. Her bra was unclasped. She was naked from the waist down.

Sarah, who has never had a boyfriend, jumped out of bed and yanked on her shirt and pants. She grabbed her cell phone and ran outside where she called her younger brother. He called the police, and then their parents.

Jennifer (not her real name) a petite woman with big brown eyes, is a 4th-year criminology major at STU. **(Date Rape: Bruises fade, trauma lingers)** Last September 27, she went with her boss and several friends to celebrate her 21st birthday two days early at a bar at Base Gagetown in Oromocto.

She remembers dancing with a stranger, a lieutenant nearly twice her age. She also remembers leaving the bar, propped up between him and another man. "It felt like it was a dream," she says.

Then blackness.

She remembers nothing else until she woke the next morning, naked, in the lieutenant's bed. He admitted they had had sex. She had to ask several times whether he had used a condom. He had not.

Jennifer called her boss, who picked her up. At home she showered for hours—she thinks three—and then friends took her to the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital. A blood test revealed traces of a date-rape drug. She was given Plan B pills (an emergency contraceptive) and nine other drugs, including one to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

Like Munro, Jennifer was distressed, but didn't immediately grasp that she'd been assaulted. Their experiences didn't fit the stereotype: a stranger dragging a victim into a dark alley at knifepoint. Munro took several years to understand. Jennifer understood one day later when a friend told her, "You were raped." Two days later, bruises the size of baseballs appeared all over her body.

Jennifer was drugged, but alcohol was a factor, as it was for both Munro and Sarah. But alcohol alone can't be blamed. Lack of awareness about consent is a huge problem. All five alleged rapes we investigated meet the legal definition of sexual assault because in our opinion all five lacked consent. Four awoke to find a man they barely knew, or didn't know at all. In the fifth incident, consensual sex abruptly changed into non-consensual anal rape that left a young woman we'll call Amy bleeding and unable to sit comfortably for almost two weeks.

Amy **(When 'yes' turns into 'no')** has jet-black hair and stunning turquoise-blue eyes and loves children. At 20, she had already dropped out of university when she attended a gathering at the house of four UNB varsity athletes last May. She'd had a few drinks and was buzzed, but not drunk. Another varsity athlete, whom she won't name and who didn't live in the house, was very drunk.

We'll call him Tom. He and Amy agreed to have sex. But at one point, he began asking over and over again for anal sex. Amy repeatedly refused. Suddenly Tom grabbed her and sodomized her. It hurt so much she screamed and pushed him off. She ran to the bathroom where she discovered she was bleeding.

Amy never went to the police or UNB. She didn't think what happened to her was rape because she initially agreed to have sex. She understood only after she confided in her boss, who told her she'd been raped.

Amy says she's not traumatized. The other four women are. It's a trauma they can't always articulate. They weep. They have nightmares. They are ashamed and blame themselves. Some fall into depression.

Munro suffered some anxiety at the time. Jennifer dropped one course, got two incompletes and won't graduate on time. Sarah's marks have plummeted. Last December she contemplated suicide.



Rape culture means alleged assailants mostly go unpunished. They roam freely about campus with the result that alleged victims are terrified of chance encounters in the classroom, cafeteria, coffee shop, gym and computer lab. Some stop going out.

And no wonder, considering what happened to Tanner Wilson. *(Student speaks out)*

She has blonde hair and a big smile. She loves dance and teaches it, too. Last year she was in a bar with friends when some men began laughing at her and pointing to someone in their group.

“They started calling me all kinds of names. And they were, like, ‘Do you remember who this is?’”

Wilson realized it was her alleged rapist, a man she otherwise would never have recognized. She tried to walk away, but the men followed her. A bouncer eventually intervened.

Tanner Wilson wants to speak out about her alleged rape to help others.

Her alleged assault happened two years ago, when she was 18 and a first-year student at STU. She had drunk two rum-and-grapefruit cocktails at a friend’s apartment. When the others left to go to the bars, she stayed behind because she was under the legal drinking age.

Instead, she crawled into an empty bed to nap. By nature a deep sleeper, she suddenly awoke in the middle of the night to find a stranger on top of her, having sex with her. He pinned down her shoulders, but she managed to kick him off. When she began to cry, he rubbed her back.



“What’s wrong? Why are you upset?” he said.

“I don’t know who you are,” she said, sobbing. “I didn’t give you permission. I don’t know what’s going on right now.”

She pulled on her clothes and took a taxi home. Several months later she told her parents. She later approached a police officer who was a friend of her mother’s. But after filing a police report, Wilson decided not to press charges.

In another era, young men might have beaten up someone they thought had sexually assaulted a classmate. Today it’s a laughing matter in a downtown bar. As for alleged perpetrators, some mistakenly believe they’ve started a relationship. Sometimes they contact the women afterwards via Facebook or texting. In Munro’s case, he showed up at her dorm room, hoping for a second encounter.

The women’s friends are often sympathetic, even as some dismiss it as a one-night stand. While others sense a problem, few think to report it to anyone in authority.

In our investigation, only Sarah and Wilson contacted police. Wilson decided against pressing charges because she feared a court case would put her life under scrutiny. In Sarah’s case, police arrived at the scene that night, but she, too, decided against filing a formal complaint.

Sarah identifies her alleged assailant as a first-year STU student and member of a varsity team. We’ll call him Al. Approached at the gym before a practice, Al confirms he told his coach the next morning, who reportedly called police. It’s

unclear what transpired after that. A coach who was approached at practice declined comment. AI remains a team member in good standing.

AI says what happened last September was “just a misunderstanding” that is “cleared up.” He adds, “Everything is good now. Nothing happened. It was just ‘he-said, she-said,’ so we’re all good.”

Only Jennifer and Sarah went to the hospital. Both declined rape kits – the head-to-toe medical exam that collects and preserves evidence following a sexual assault.

Jennifer feared the rape kit would hurt, especially after the volunteer from the Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre who was called to the hospital agreed. Sarah’s parents, who accompanied her to the hospital, urged her to take the rape kit. She refused, she says, because she couldn’t bear anyone else touching her that night.

Studies show that between one-third and one-half of women who are assaulted will develop post-traumatic stress disorder during their lifetimes. Four of the six women we interviewed have sought counseling. Jennifer has struggled with PTSD since her attack. Sarah, who removed her purity ring a few days after the rape, has also been diagnosed with PTSD and takes anti-anxiety medication and antidepressants.

Wilson is recovering, but already she wants to help others. “I think about how I can make a difference in other people’s lives and help people that have gone through the same thing.”

Disclaimer: None of the allegations in this series have been proven in a court.

