



LONDON, ONTARIO – July 24th 2025

Courtroom outcomes are not a judgement on what actually happened, only what can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Anova stands solidly in support of EM and all survivors. We believe EM, despite the judge's finding.

Given what happened in court during this trial, this outcome is not surprising. Over the course of eight weeks we saw a revolving door of juries due to their complaints about defense counsel; we also witnessed rampant victim blaming, and the repeated use and reliance on rape myths. We watched as EM bravely withstood nine days on the stand, reliving her trauma over and over again as her experience was picked apart and denied by five teams of defense attorneys.

We know that only 6% of sexual assault survivors engage with the legal system. Having watched the treatment of EM on the stand and final judgement in this case, we don't see that number increasing any time soon. From the investigation in 2018 that was closed despite the egregious nature of the facts, to the weaponization of EM's civil suit against Hockey Canada in 2022 being used against her during the criminal case, to the absolute circus of a trial in the last months, this case has highlighted the many ways that our institutions remain unequipped to deal with the realities of sexual violence.

Despite the push towards more trauma-and-violence-informed practices within the legal system, recent rulings (R. v. Hoggard 2024) have set us back and limited the Crown's ability to call on expert witnesses in trauma. We saw the impact of that ruling in this case. Without expert witnesses testifying about how complainants respond to trauma, defense counsel were able to discredit EM by painting her as a liar, party girl and "porn star" based on behaviours that we know are actually very common responses to trauma. For the judge to find that EM was "not credible or reliable" as a witness based on well-understood trauma responses is not only disappointing, it is infuriating.

The idea— as stated in the R. v. Hoggard decision— that knowledge of trauma reactions is commonsense and instruction by a judge is sufficient in myth-busting clearly did not work in this trial. Many of EM's reactions to the trauma she experienced were openly questioned and presented as evidence that she was not a credible witness. The void left from the absence of expert testimony allowed defense lawyers to question, reject, and even mock EM's very real trauma responses. Testifying in court as a victim of a crime should not create new trauma, but that is the unfortunate reality for all too many sexual assault survivors. It's really no wonder why most survivors choose not to report.

As long as we have a system where complex trauma is not understood and a trauma informed lens is not used, survivors face similar questions about their credibility. Defendants have the right to remain silent and are presumed innocent until proven guilty, but survivors are forced to undergo brutal cross examinations and are often treated as liars until "proven" honest. Rape myths continue to prevent a proper assessment of the facts and victims have to defend what are normal reactions to trauma. There is no justice where credibility is questioned simply because a victim did not respond the way defense counsel, police, or judge think they should have responded.

The verdicts may have closed this legal chapter — but it is not the end of the story. EM deserves privacy, peace, and time to heal. But we all deserve systems that survivors don't have to heal from. We need change in hockey and athletics, but also culture-wide. We need care-centred systems, and real commitment towards dismantling environments where women are treated as objects to be used and then disregarded when they speak their truth. We need a public that stands with survivors, not just in headlines, but every day.