

<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/11/23/winnipeg-photo-studio-warns-of-potential-human-trafficking-scam.html>

Winnipeg photo studio warns of potential human trafficking scam

Someone pretending to be with a Winnipeg photo business is using it as a front to lure young girls on Facebook.



KAREN BLEIER / AFP/Getty Images File Photo

The impersonator, who gave the name Michael Chang, used Facebook to ask a 15-year-old to send three nude photos for a profile.

By: Winnipeg Free Press, Published on Mon Nov 23 2015

WINNIPEG—A Winnipeg couple who own a photo studio are warning that someone pretending to be with their business is using it as a front to lure young girls on Facebook.

Rodney and Sonya Braun run Eve Studios, which specializes in beauty and art nude photography.

Rodney says clients contact them requesting to be photographed, but last week strangers in Saskatchewan and Ontario called him to ask about the studio contacting young girls for photo shoots in Winnipeg.

He says they are speaking out to defend the reputation of their business and to warn possible victims about a potential human trafficking scam.

The Brauns have contacted Winnipeg police and the RCMP and have been told both are proceeding with investigations.

Rodney Braun, a photography instructor at Winnipeg's Red River College, was named Manitoba's Photographer of the Year in 2014 by the Professional Photographers of Canada.

Braun said last Thursday he received an email from a Saskatchewan female saying her 15-year-old cousin had been approached through Facebook by someone claiming to be from Eve Studios.

The impersonator, who gave the name Michael Chang, asked the 15-year-old to send three nude photos for a profile and said he would fly the girl to Winnipeg for a photo shoot.

Then during a Friday night gallery show, Braun received a phone call from a female in Ontario asking why her friend needed to stay three weeks in Winnipeg for the calendar shoot, for which he was supposedly flying her to Winnipeg this Wednesday.

She had also been contacted through Facebook.

"At first I thought this had to be a prank. Who is this? This is just an out-of-this-world kind of thing," said Braun.

"My fear is that if two people actually contacted us about this, how many didn't?"

Braun — who has a daughter and two sons — noted that he saw a TV documentary recently about human trafficking in Europe.

"It's so terrible that you think, 'How can that be?' And to think that this could be in the process of happening here in Winnipeg."

He said anyone who has received similar offers that appear to be related to Eve Studios should contact Winnipeg police.