

Women's Events Network/ Réseau d'Evenements pour femmes
211 Bronson Ave., Room 205 Ottawa, ON K1R 6H5

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tell 20: December 6th is the 20th Anniversary of the École Polytechnique Massacre

November 30th, 2009, Ottawa, Ontario: Sunday, December 6th, 2009 marks the 20th anniversary of the massacre of 14 women at École Polytechnique by a man who hated women. We will honour and remember Geneviève Bergeron; Hélène Colgan; Natalie Croteau; Barbara Daigneault; Anne-Marie Edward; Maud Haviernick; Barbara Maria Klueznick; Maryse Laganière; Maryse Leclair; Anne-Marie Lemay; Michelle Richard; Sonia Pelletier; Annie Saint-Arnault; and Annie Turcotte. We will also remember all women in our community whose lives have been affected by men's violence against women.

Women's Events Network (WEN) invites you to the 20th anniversary memorial vigil of the Montreal Massacre on Sunday December 6th at 6pm at the Women's Monument in Minto Park, (corner of Elgin and Gilmour Streets. This will be followed by an ecumenical gathering at First United & All Saints Westboro Church, at 347 Richmond Road. The gathering will honour & remember all murdered women.

Every year since 1989, December 6th has become a day on which we all reflect on what we can do individually and as a society, to end male violence against women. December 6th has also been marked by the Canadian government as a *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women*.

Here's what you can do today to respond to the call for action...

1. Tell 20 people about the 20th Anniversary of December 6.
2. Tell 20 people about why violence against women concerns you.
3. Ask your doctor, dentist, gym or workplace to put 20 violence against women pamphlets at their reception desks.
4. Have a violence against women presentation for 20 people in your community or workplace.
5. Volunteer 20 hours of your time at a local women's organization.
6. Donate \$20 to a local organization working to end violence.
7. Speak to 20 men and boys about the importance of women's rights, healthy relationships and respect.
8. Join the Women's Events Network and help us take action today.
9. Write to your local MP about the importance of the Long-gun Registry and its role in preventing violence against women.
10. Attend the Dec 6 vigil and the gathering at 347 Richmond Rd with 20 friends.

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For more details about the Vigil and Call to Action, please visit www.octevaw-cocvff.ca.

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Herstory of December 6th Vigil

On December 6th, 1989, Geneviève Bergeron; Hélène Colgan; Natalie Croteau; Barbara Daigneault; Anne-Marie Edward; Maud Haviernick; Barbara Maria Klueznick; Maryse Laganière; Maryse Leclair; Anne-Marie Lemay; Michelle Richard; Sonia Pelletier; Annie Saint-Arnault; and Annie Turcotte were murdered by a man who had a hatred for women. He despised women's participation in engineering, a male dominated field, thereby challenging all women's rights to equal participation in Canadian society. His actions were intended to 'put women in their place.'

The connections between the Montreal Massacre and violence against women

Contrary to the public media's explanation of the perpetrator's actions as a hatred for feminism, our analysis in the violence against women movement is that he was motivated by his hatred for women and his desire to control women. He did not see women's rights to pursuing careers; his way of controlling women was to murder them. Hatred for women who do not follow the mould of their gender (also known as misogyny) is the motivation behind the violence that women continue to experience in Canada and abroad today. The actions of the perpetrator of the Montreal Massacre are not isolated from all other issues of women's equality and women's rights, in Canada and abroad. What unites women in fighting women's oppression; particularly male violence against women are our shared experiences of powerlessness, whether we identify as feminists or not. Any form of violence perpetrated on a woman, threatens every woman's equality and freedoms.

As we remember the 14 Montréal massacre victims, we also remember all women who throughout history have been murdered by men's violence against women, and all those who have experienced other forms of men's violence against women. We cannot forget our Aboriginal sisters who are missing because of men's violence. We must also remember our sisters around the globe who experience men's violence through various means especially through war.

Women are marginalised along the lines of socioeconomic class, race, ability, age, sexual orientation etc. The power structures that maintain women on the margins of society are the same structures that create an environment in which violence against women is conducive, tolerated, excused, and maintained. For example, the extent to which women experience poverty in Canada is unimaginable. Women also continue to face barriers in accessing justice, affordable housing, stable and sustainable employment, legal status in Canada, and access to various other important areas of life in Canada. The distribution of national resources ignores the gender imbalance that keeps women at the margins. An example of this is the under funding of women's services, and the undervaluing of women's caring roles in the domestic sphere, and the undervaluing of women's work in the paid workforce.

Fighting violence against women requires efforts on all fronts, individual, societal, political, and global. Individual approaches to fighting violence against women require men to recognize the privileges that maintain their power as a group, and how that power oppresses women as a group.

Political responses to violence against women require the recognition by our elected officials that violence against women is a result of gender inequities. All levels of government should take on the responsibilities of revising socio-economic policies that push women to the margins of society. At the federal and provincial government levels for example, women's advocates have long demanded economic policies that incorporate an analysis of gender. Municipal governments' differ from one province to another; however, they should also take it upon themselves to make cities safer and liveable for women. In Ottawa for example, women's safety in public spaces and

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private spaces is under threat; women have been sexually assaulted on public transit stations, on bike trails etc. In addition, women continue to face the greatest risk of violence in private settings, such as in the home and work places. Municipal governments should prioritise women's safety in their budgets for example, by providing affordable housing, and dialoguing with women's organisations on the different approaches to ensuring women's safety.

Ontario women's organisations launched the Step it Up Campaign in 2005. This campaign demands government action in ending violence against women. Here are the ten steps of the Step it Up Campaign (click on each step for a detailed description).

The 10 Steps to End Violence against Women

1. **Understand that violence against women is an equality rights issue.**
2. **Recognize that male power is upheld by rape and sexual harassment.**
3. **Stop racism/ oppression; make Ontario accessible.**
4. **End poverty — NOW!**
5. **Create and maintain housing, non-profit childcare, training — NOW!**
6. **Provide fair access to justice for women.**
7. **Hold violent men accountable for their actions.**
8. **Stop criminalizing and psychiatrizing women.**
9. **Demand secure funding for women's organizations.**
10. **Listen to survivors and women's advocates — they are the experts!**