



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

## Call for action to end violence against women as Canadians remember victims of Montreal Massacre

Nearly three decades ago today, Canadians from coast to coast were deeply shocked and saddened by the biggest mass killing in our nation's history.

It was December 6, a brisk winter day in Québec, when a lone gunman entered École Polytechnique de Montréal, separated the female and male engineering students, and opened fire on the young women, murdering 14 of them and injuring several more.

Why? Because of their gender.

Known as the Montréal Massacre, the date is commemorated every year in Canada as the National Day of Remembrance and Action to End Violence against Women.

Since that tragic day in 1989, women's groups, human rights activists, Canada's gun control coalition, and community supporters have lobbied governments to address the issue of violence against women and girls.

Yet every year, the problem and its contributing factors – economic inequality, societal attitudes, inadequate preventative, response and remedial resources – remain.

That's why the YWCA's Rose Campaign is urging Canadians to take part in this year's NOT OKAY social media initiative – using the hashtag #NOTokay. They're asking Canadians to stand together and call for the new government to finally address violence against women and girls.

The YWCA of Canada and the Coalition for Gun Control both report that, on an annual basis, about 100,000 women and children seek refuge in shelters to escape domestic abuse. Research also indicates that about four billion dollars a year are spent providing medical, legal and social services to treat victims of physical and sexual assaults.

Here in B.C., the heartbreaking case of missing and murdered Aboriginal women has been in the spotlight for years. And HEU is one of many concerned organizations to support an ongoing call for action and to demand a national public inquiry.

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In 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada and Sisters in Spirit did extensive federal and provincial research to create a database, and attach names and faces to their statistics.

At the time, their national stats revealed 582 documented cases, including 160 in B.C., but those numbers don't reflect all of the missing Aboriginal women and girls who have gone unreported.

According to their study, a staggering 63 per cent of confirmed victims were murdered, while 27 per cent were reported missing. Forty-three per cent were women under the age of 31.

In 2013, the RCMP launched a formal investigation. Their stats showed 1,017 homicides and 164 missing Aboriginal females, totalling 1,181. From 1980 to 2012, the RCMP reported 120 unsolved murders of Aboriginal women in Canada.

### **Awareness and action**

That's why HEU continues to raise awareness about this critical, and preventable, issue. As we mark December 6, the union encourages members to remember those 14 women gunned down in the prime of their lives, and take action to end the violence.

For more information about national actions to end violence against women, visit the YWCA of Canada (<http://www.rosecampaign.ca/>), the Canadian Labour Congress (<http://canadianlabour.ca/issues-research/ending-violence-against-women>) and the Canadian Coalition for Gun Control (<http://guncontrol.ca/>).

**Remembering:** Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz

*December 6, 2015*