

## **We Remember December 6th**

### **Reflections of a survivor... (English)**

“December 6th, 1989, Marc Lépine walked into my classroom. He separated the women from the men. He told us he was going to kill us because we were feminists. Shots rang out

*I died. Only a few seconds, just for a moment.  
Enough to feel my world collapse, my wounded body.  
My beliefs, my hopes, my dreams died with lives of my classmates...  
Enough to learn about solitude, fragility, loss and doubt...  
I died. Only a few seconds, just for a moment...  
And after all of the chaos, insanity, a sort of deep silence...*

However, on December 8, 1989, I spoke up. I testified, told, named, and repeated my story, my understanding, my sadness and my rage. I also talked about an enormous discovery: the will to live, the need to move forward, the energy to go on. And at the heart of this discovery, I learned about the strength of sharing, exchanging, and of encounters.

December 2014 -- 25 years have passed. Today, I see women and men together, remembering this tragedy and being able to testify together about the sadness, the loss. But above all, I see young people, my children, and their friends, taking the helm and filled with the desire to build a world where we can thrive in togetherness, despite the great challenges that lie ahead.

*I have hope...”*

By Nathalie Provost, eng. (November 24th, 2014)

### **Réflexions d'une survivante... (Français)**

Le 6 décembre 1989, Marc Lépine est entré dans ma classe. Il a séparé les hommes et les femmes. Il nous a dit qu'il nous tuait parce que nous étions féministes. Il a tiré.

*Je suis morte. Quelques secondes, pas longtemps.  
Assez pour sentir mon monde s'écrouler, mon corps meurtri.  
Mes croyances, mes espoirs, mes rêves évanouis avec la vie de mes consœurs...  
Assez pour apprendre la solitude, la fragilité, la perte et le doute...  
Je suis morte. Quelques secondes, pas longtemps...  
Et après le brouhaha, la folie, une sorte de grand silence...*

Mais, le 8 décembre 1989, j'ai pris la parole. J'ai témoigné, raconté, nommé, répété mon histoire, ma compréhension, ma tristesse et ma rage. J'ai raconté aussi une immense découverte : la force de vivre, le besoin d'aller de l'avant, l'énergie de continuer. Et au cœur de cette découverte, j'ai appris la force du partage, de l'échange et de la rencontre.

Décembre 2014... 25 ans se sont écoulés. Aujourd'hui, je vois des femmes et des hommes ensemble se remémorer cette tragédie et arriver à témoigner ensemble de la tristesse, de la perte. Et surtout, je vois des jeunes, mes enfants, leurs amis prendre la relève et avoir envie de bâtir un monde où il fait bon vivre ensemble, malgré les grands défis qui se dressent devant nous.

*Et j'ai espoir..."*

Par Nathalie Provost, ing. (24 novembre 2014)

### **25 years of Achievements and Missed Opportunities**

Before December 6, Canadians largely understood violence against women as isolated and inexplicable events, as symptoms of stress or poor impulse control. But the Polytechnique killings were a strategic attack of hatred and fear targeting women – no less, women's pursuit of gender equality.

Following the Montreal massacre, women's advocates and their allies drew important connections between the events of December 6, 1989, and issues of gender equality, cultural attitudes about women, and the role of Canadian policies and laws in achieving women's safety.

In this commemorative issue, we remember the 14 women who were killed because they were women and all the other women who've been killed or hurt by gender-based violence.

Personal remembrances bring to life a timeline marking achievements and missed opportunities in the prevention of gender-based violence within Ontario, Canada, and the global stage.

For additional events and information on each event, as well as additional and full reflections of our guest contributors, click on the quote or the timeline.

### **Quotes**

For additional quotes and full quotes of the following excerpts, visit the link: <http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/25-years-after-december-6th-personal-remembrances-and-reflections>

“Hate made visible  
Chosen, selected victim  
Because I'm female”

- Robin Mason from Women's College Research Institute

"... We, the survivors, feel it the most: So what do we do? We mourn, we mobilize, we advocate until all women everywhere live lives free of gender based violence."

-Nneka MacGregor, ED, WomenattheCentrE

"The evening of December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1989 is vivid in my memory. It was a cold night, I was about to give birth to the first of my three sons. Having always identified as a feminist, the attack was personal..."

- Lise Martin, ED, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses

"This horrific event motivated me even more to be involved in the feminist men's movement to end femicide, sexual assault, beatings, coercive control, and other highly injurious patriarchal practices that hurt thousands of women on a daily basis."

- Walter S. DeKeseredy, Director of the Research Centre on Violence, Professor of Sociology, West Virginia University

"... I was a member of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women... Hearing about the violence was overwhelming but even more frightening was the many ways our helping systems ignored or re-victimized abuse victims..."

- Peter Jaffe, Academic Director, Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

"... Every year, we female engineers remember and mourn the loss of these fourteen bright lives to senseless violence and we refuse to let fear stop us from living life. We stand strong against gender-based violence that tells us women can't..."

- Karen (Fong) Chan, P.Eng, Vice-Chair, Ontario Society of Professional Engineers

"... This is not personal. This is systemic. It is political. It is about race, gender, and class... We need a critical mass of 10% of the population to turn the 'Titanic' around. I hope it happens in my lifetime..."

- Deborah Sinclair, Independent Practice & Consultant

"Lépine was not alone. As a Superior Court Justice for Ontario on the bench for 25 years, I have participated in many trials where women and children have paid the ultimate price..."

- The Hon. John F. McGarry, Q.C. Retired Superior Court Judge

"... The women gathered quietly in a circle, lighting candles, sharing words and tears the murdered students. There was an overwhelming feeling of fear in the room..."

- Bev Lefrancois, founder of Halton Rape Crisis Centre (now SAVIS of Halton)

"Although I am proud of our work on the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women many years ago, I am still discouraged by our lack of progress to fully acknowledge the plight of Aboriginal women..."

- Claudette Dumont-Smith, ED, Native Women's Association of Canada

“... This was the tragic outcome of what I saw on the playground on a daily basis: the awful consequences of living in a world that normalizes and glorifies oppressive binaries...”

- Ben Barry, Assistant Professor, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, School of Fashion, Ryerson University

“... The anniversary serves as a reminder to educators that we have a responsibility to do all we can to instill in our students the values of equality, including the rights of women.”

- Amit Chakma, President & Vice-Chancellor, Western University

“... Their legacy is the lesson we all learned on that day: make change, expose wrong, celebrate right and never forget the young women of December 6.”

- Sally Armstrong, Human Rights Activist, Journalist, Documentary Filmmaker, Author

## Timeline

For a detailed version of this timeline, visit the following link:

<http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/commemorating-december-6>

### **1989:**

Montreal Massacre on December 6 at École Polytechnique leads to the death of 14 women.

The government of Canada cuts \$2 million in core funding to the Women's Program.

### **1991:**

White Ribbon Campaign is created in Ontario.

The Parliament of Canada establishes December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada.

*The War Against Women: First Report of the Subcommittee of the Status of Women, Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women* is released.

Federal government establishes the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women.

### **1992:**

Federal government funds a national survey on woman abuse in university and college dating relationships.

Five research centres on violence against women are established across Canada.

### **1993:**

The Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres is established.

The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women releases *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence – Achieving Equality*.

The federal government funds the national Violence Against Women Survey.

**1994:**

Release of *Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide in Ontario, 1974 – 1994*.

**1995:**

The Supreme Court decision in *R. v. O'Connor* prescribes a process for the disclosure of documents in criminal proceedings in the possession of third parties to the accused.

The Firearms Act establishes a federal long-gun registry in Canada.

**1996:**

Section 264, “Criminal Harrassment” is added to the Criminal Code of Canada with the intent of protecting women from physical attacks and harassment.

*Canadian Human Rights Act* amended to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

**1997:**

The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits female genital mutilation (FGM).

**1998:**

The inquest into the deaths of Arlene May and Randy Iles contributes to changes in responses to domestic violence cases.

**1999:**

The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) is founded.

The Supreme Court rules implied consent is not a defence for sexual assault in *R v. Ewanchuk*. This decision becomes known as the “No means No case”.

The Supreme Court upholds restrictions on the use of personal records of the complainant in sexual assault cases (Bill C-46).

**2002:**

The inquest into the deaths of Gillian and Ralph Hadley directly links the murder of women to the broader context of legal, policy and resource development needed to protect abused women and their children.

The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee is established under the authority of the Coroner's Act.

**2004:**

The Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan (DVAP) is announced.

**2007:**

A Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women is released by the Ontario Native Women's Association and Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.

The inquest into the deaths of Lori Dupont and Marc Daniel resulted in major changes to the role of workplaces in recognizing domestic violence as a health and safety issue.

**2008:**

United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) calls on Canada to report on progress addressing violence against First Nations women.

**2009:**

Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit report on murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is released.

Transforming our Communities: Report from the Domestic Violence Advisory Council for the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues in Ontario is released.

**2010:**

Ontario amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to address workplace violence, harassment and domestic violence.

**2011:**

The Ontario Government releases its Sexual Violence Action Plan.

Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action and the Native Women's Association of Canada request that the CEDAW committee initiate an inquiry into the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

**2012:**

The Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan Progress Report is released.

Bill C-19 is passed, dismantling the federal long-gun registry in Canada.

The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action's submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council criticizes Canada's efforts in addressing gender equality.

**2013:**

Progress Report on Ontario's Sexual Violence Action Plan is released.

M-444: A motion is made to establish a coordinated National Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women.

The Global Gender Gap Index decreases Canada's ranking to 20<sup>th</sup> in the world for equality for women.

**2014:**

Results of the first Canadian study on domestic violence in the workplace are released.

The Progress on Women's Rights report indicates that the equality gap persists in terms of violence against women, political representation, economic security, and access to social services.

The Supreme Court of Canada affirms that those accused of sexual assault cannot have access to the unrelated records of the women who accuse them.

**Video Links:**

Esther Enyolu Remembers (ED, Women's Multicultural Resource & Counselling Centre of Durham):

<http://youtu.be/Vjza1-EtTpU>

The Co-hosts of CTV's The Social Remember:

<http://youtu.be/rwGXNlfxjq4>

Nicole Pietsch Remembers (Coordinator, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres):

<http://youtu.be/JfwHCJL0EAs>

Kim Gibson Remembers (Member of the Learning Network Resource Group):

<http://youtu.be/8zh8DSxgUdl>

The Learning Network Team Remembers:

<http://youtu.be/LG1JLvnsbuM>

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**Please let us know what you think of this issue by sending your comments to:**  
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