

Monthly Message: FTP issues community call-to-action for National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

A lone gunman entered l'École Polytechnique de Montréal in the early evening of Dec. 6, 1989. He methodically targeted female students ? in corridors, in the cafeteria, and in classrooms.

Beginning in a mechanical engineering class, he separated female and male students, ordering the males to leave the room. The killer told the women he was fighting feminism and opened fire on them from left to right where they stood, shooting every woman in the classroom. In 20 minutes, the gunman used his semi-automatic rifle and hunting knife to kill 14 women and wound 10 women and four men before killing himself.

Fourteen young women were murdered because the man who killed them hated women.

Also known as the Montréal Massacre, this antifeminist mass shooting was the deadliest mass shooting in Canada at the time. Members of the legislature were swift to respond by passing stricter gun control laws and by changing emergency services policies during shootings to reduce casualties.

In 1991, Dec. 6 was commemorated by the Parliament of Canada as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women ? and informally, White Ribbon Day. Annually, flags on all federal buildings in Canada are flown at half-mast, and Canadians coast-to-coast are implored to both wear white and purple ribbons and recognize a minute of silence in solidarity and as a demonstration of their commitment to ending violence against women (VAW).

Each year, for the last 34 years, Family Transition Place (FTP) has remembered the women whose lives were senselessly taken and recognizes this important day. Annually, FTP also honours all the womxn on the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses' (OAITH's) Annual Femicide List. OAITH's femicide definition includes a gender-based killing of a woman, child, trans woman, 2-Spirited Person, or gender non-conforming individual where a man has been charged in relation to the death in Ontario. By this definition, we know there are many womxn?known and unknown?who are not counted on this list because charges are outstanding.

Moreover, there are countless more victims of gender-based violence (GBV) who are not safe in their homes, safe at work or safe in their communities. Make no mistake, this is happening in all our communities. Yes, this means Dufferin and Caledon, too.

Last year, there were 62 women and children on OAITH's Femicide List. Mothers, sisters, aunties, friends, daughters? people we all care about. One of these womxn was from our own community. Nowhere is immune to the devastating impacts of GBV.

Every year, this day serves as a painful and poignant reminder that we continue to have much work to do to end GBV ? and we know we can't do it without the support of our communities.

This year, FTP will be hosting an outdoor candlelight vigil on the evening of December 4th, to recognize the 14 women murdered in 1989, as well as the many more womxn who have lost their lives across Ontario. Additionally, on Dec. 6, we will recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on our social media channels. We hope you will join us at the vigil in solidarity and share our social posts within your networks.

We are also asking every member of our community to please consider the important actions you can take in your day-to-day lives ? this and every month ? to demonstrate your commitment to creating a world free from GBV. While it's important to recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, this commitment needs to be enduring if we truly want a future free of violence.

So, what can you do to help us end the stigma and break the cycle of violence?

Please consider our calls to action below to generate important awareness of, and advocacy for, ending VAW throughout the year, at home, and in the workplace.

? Attend our candlelight vigil on Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025, from 5 to 5:30 p.m. at 20 Bredin Parkway, Orangeville.

This will be an outdoor event ? please dress accordingly.

? Share this Call-to-Action letter and engage with and share FTP's social media posts within your networks.

? During the month of November, help us Shine the Light on Woman Abuse (an initiative developed by London Abused Women's Centre) by lighting up your home with a purple bulb. Add a Shine the Light polybag sign to your order to show your community the meaning behind your purple light. Let's turn our communities purple to raise awareness.

- Visit familytransitionplace.ca to access FTP's online store for all awareness items.

? Reach out to your local members of parliament, municipalities and community leaders to ask about their awareness activities and actions related to femicide and ending GBV in our communities and our country. Advocate for more.

? Educate yourself on GBV and VAW issues and rates in Ontario by visiting OAITH.ca.

? Research to understand our current government's position and policies on VAW.

? If you have a flagpole, lower your Canadian flag to half-mast on December 6th.

? Model and talk about healthy relationships and behaviours at home and in the workplace.

- Need support or resources? FTP is available 24/7 to help. Just call 1-800-265-9178.

? Donate to FTP.

- Visit familytransitionplace.ca/give to learn about the ways you can support our critical programs and services?many of which are completely donor-funded. Right now, this is more important than ever.

For businesses:

? Support staff to take time away from work to attend GBV and VAW advocacy and remembrance activities.

? Share your Workplace Violence Policy with staff. If you don't have one, create one.

? Familiarize yourself with Bill 168, and your responsibilities as an employer to support and protect staff experiencing GBV.

? Create opportunities for staff to learn about and discuss this important issue, and advocacy efforts you can undertake as an agency or company to help break the cycle of violence.

If you have any questions or ideas not shared here, we would love to hear from you. FTP also provides healthy relationship education and can present to staff and community groups. Please contact Brennan Solecky, director of development and community engagement at 519-942-9142 ext. 240, or brennan@familytransitionplace.ca to learn more.

Please know that any advocacy efforts are helpful. If you are sharing on social media, please tag FTP on Facebook, Instagram or

Threads ? @familytransitionplace.

If you need support, our compassionate staff are available to help 24/7. Call 1-800-265-9178. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

Thank you for your support. Woman abuse is not a women's issue. It's a human rights issue and affects us all.

This Community Voice submission was provided by Lynette Pole-Langdon, executive director of Family Transition Place.