

Montreal Massacre victims to be honoured through virtual vigil

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Family Transition Place to honour Montreal Massacre victims through virtual vigil

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Family Transition Place (FTP), will be commemorating the victims of the Montreal Massacre and women who have lost their lives to femicide this year, through a virtual vigil on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (Dec. 6).

"We didn't want the day to go completely unmarked so we are going to be doing something online," said Norah Kennedy, executive director at Family Transition Place.

The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women has taken place annually on the anniversary of the 1989 Montreal Massacre for the last 29 years. The day honours the 14 women murdered and 14 women injured by lone gunman Marc Lepine, when he attacked an engineering school affiliated with the University of Montreal, which he said was a "fight against feminists."

"It was a very concrete example of misogyny and hatred towards women by somebody who believed that his position as a male, entitled him to something that women should not have been entitled to, which was access to the engineering programming at universities," said Kennedy.

"Now, this is a huge extreme case, but what it demonstrates is that when that sort of attitude prevails, terrible things happen and we see that on a daily basis, on individual levels, where women who are exposed to violence have to come and live in the shelter, because it is not safe for them being at home, because usually their male partner believes he has the right to hurt and abuse them."

In recent years the vigil has been held outside of FTP offices on Bredin Parkway in Orangeville and for the 30th anniversary the organization held its memorial at Town Hall in Orangeville. This year the vigil has been moved to a virtual format on the FTP's social media accounts, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kennedy will start the virtual vigil by speaking about the 14 women murder in the massacre, followed by presentations highlighting the 14 women, as well as women in our own community who have been killed through gender bias violence.

"It's important for us to continue to remember that because it's only by examining our behaviors that were able to affect any change. And so by looking at the attitudes, and the policies and the systems that engender that sort of violence and attitude, we are able to see where maybe we are able to grow," said Kennedy.

As part of the memorial event this year, Kennedy says the will be focusing on kindness.

"We're going to be focusing on kindness, and asking people to look for ways in which to spread kindness, especially during this really challenging time that we're all living," she said.

While Dec. 6 marks a day of remembrance for the women who died during the Montreal Massacre, it is also a day to remember women across the country who have died by gender violence.

Thus far in 2020, there have been 35 women in Ontario who have lost their lives to femicide ? the act of a man killing a women because they're female. There have been no deaths by femicide recorded in Dufferin County in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent lockdown measures was a big concern for FTP, said Kennedy.

?In the month after the pandemic started, calls to crisis lines and requests for shelter space dropped considerably, which made us really concerned about what was happening that we weren't able to know about,? she noted.

Between 2019 and 2020 FTP was able to shelter 79 women and 78 children, while they've had 36 women and 21 children in 2020.

The FTP virtual vigil will be held on Dec. 6 at 11:30 a.m. and can be found on FTP's social media accounts.