

National Day of *Remembrance and Action* on Violence Against Women **December 6**

December 6, 2021 marks the 32nd anniversary of the 1989 massacre of 14 women at the École-Polytechnique in Montreal. 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 were the targeted victims of a raging misogynist simply because they identified as women.

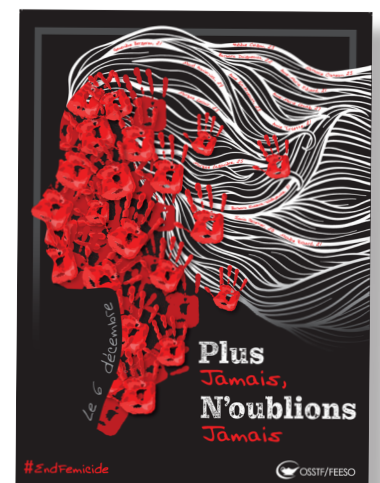
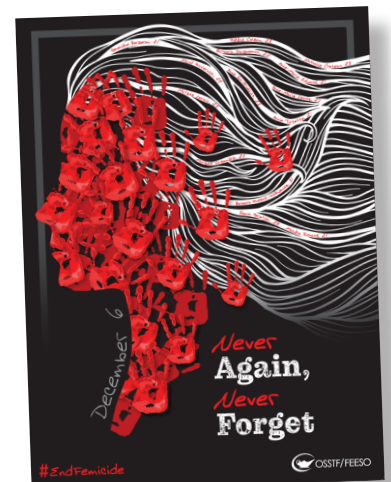
As Canadians, we often pretend that gender-based violence is not an issue in our country, our province or our community. We are slow to call it out and identify it for what it really is: a hate crime. The 1989 attack in Montreal is not our first case of gender-based violence, and it certainly is not the last.

Throughout the last 18 months or so, a shadow pandemic of violence against women has unfolded, with instances of domestic abuse and gender-based violence soaring. This is no surprise given that women have borne the brunt of the economic and social repercussions of COVID-19. Stuck isolating at home, often tasked with being the unpaid caregivers of children and elderly parents, women have been trapped with little or no access to resources and supports.

So where do we go from here? If there is a silver lining to living through a global pandemic, it is that the inequities that exist in Canadian society have been placed under a giant microscope. Our news feeds have been flooded with stories recognizing the value of essential workers, the need for a living wage and affordable housing, the importance of universal childcare and the necessity of investing in the care economy—all of which are essential if we are to eradicate violence against women.

This intense scrutiny has created ideal conditions to advocate for real, sustained change. On December 6, as part of our 16 days of action, I urge everyone to call their local MP and ask what they are willing to do to help eradicate gender-based violence and improve the lives of all Ontarian women. Talk to friends and co-workers about why we need to pressure the government to invest more money and resources into social programs and policies that benefit women. Write to newspapers expressing that the time to end violence against women is **NOW**. With COVID-19 lessening its grip and an upcoming provincial election, it is the perfect moment to push hard for lasting changes. Let's honour the victims of the Montreal massacre and all the other Canadian women affected by gender-based violence by fighting for a safe and equitable post-pandemic world.

—Sarah McLaren, District 4, Near North
and provincial Status of Women Committee member



ARTICLES/VIDEOS OF INTEREST

- 10 Organizations that empower Black communities in Canada
- 15 Black creators to follow and have on your radar
- 17 Black-owned business to shop in Toronto and the GTA
- Afghan women brace for uptick in domestic violence under Taliban
- How the Catholic Church spent money meant for residential school survivors
- Transformation: Young feminists creating the future
- Afghanistan's Taliban nightmare—and how women are resisting
- The gender health gap: Misogyny in Medicine
- Would Gabby Petito's story receive as much coverage if she were an Indigenous woman?
- 'How will they survive?': Entrepreneur Nazaneen Qauomi worries for Afghan women who were their family's breadwinners before the Taliban takeover

Domestic Violence Legislation Comparison



10 myths about violence against women and girls



MYTH 1

REALITY

Violence against women is an issue that only concerns women.

Violence affects the physical and mental health of women and children in the long run and leads to poverty and marginalization. It is an issue that concerns both women and men. We can all promote a culture of respect and non-violence.



MYTH 2

REALITY

There is nothing we can do to stop violence against women.

Violence against women is the product of learned attitudes and norms. Domestic violence can be ended by eliminating gender stereotypes and promoting a culture of respect and equality in family and society.



MYTH 3

REALITY

Men can't control their anger.

Feeling angry does not automatically lead to being violent. Men who are violent towards women choose violence as a way of exerting power and control over their partners.



MYTH 4

REALITY

Violence only affects certain groups of women.

Research has repeatedly shown that violence crosses all boundaries and can affect women from all social, economic, cultural, and family backgrounds.



MYTH 5

REALITY

Domestic and sexual violence are the only types of violence affecting women.

Physical abuse is just one of many forms of violence. International law defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women.”



MYTH 6

REALITY

Men have no role in ending violence against women.

Men from around the world step up and demand ending violence against women. They participate in public events, look out for their friends, and raise their sons to treat women as equals. Men have a crucial role in ending violence against women.



MYTH 7

REALITY

Domestic violence is a private, family matter.

Violence against women is a human rights violation and a serious, widespread crime. It is a joint responsibility to end gender-based violence.



MYTH 8

REALITY

There is nothing wrong with a sexist joke.

Sexist attitude and sexist jokes promote gender stereotypes and discrimination against women. We should not tolerate sexist jokes.



MYTH 9

REALITY

Survivors are unable to break the vicious cycle of violence.

While violence brings serious consequences, many survivors are able to recover and take a stand to help other women.



MYTH 10

REALITY

Sexual violence is more likely to be committed by a stranger.

Just the opposite. In fact, two thirds of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the survivor. According to some studies, only 2% of abusers are complete strangers.





Have you heard of the OSSTF/FEESO Women's Advocate Program?

OSSTF/FEESO created the Women's Advocate program in 2020 to provide support to members of OSSTF/FEESO who were either experiencing domestic violence at home or who knew someone experiencing domestic violence.

There are at least two Women's Advocates in most of the 37 Districts in Ontario. Women's Advocates have been jointly trained by OSSTF/FEESO and the University of Western Ontario's Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women.

A Women's Advocate, can provide you with much needed confidential support to help you navigate the complicated search to find help when you or a loved one is experiencing domestic violence. Whether you need help to find housing resources, shelters or supportive counsellors for you or your children, Women's Advocates are here to help.

Women's Advocates can also provide you with assistance when dealing with your union representatives and employer. They are not counsellors, but can provide you with information on how to find a counsellor or a domestic violence worker in your community. They can also help you understand what types of leaves or assistance are available from your employer and your union.

For more information on the Women's Advocate Program, or to find out how you can become a Women's Advocate, contact your local District office.

Fueling hope amid heartache:

5 ways to support feminist movements

Let's face it: for anyone who cares about gender equality, these have been tough and exhausting times. The UN has estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic is pushing an [additional 47 million women](#) into poverty. A shadow epidemic of gender-based violence has spread along with it. A rising wave of authoritarian governments are sowing fear and distrust in gender equality movements, [weaponizing them](#) as a tool to divide, confuse, and distract. Now a wave of crises—in Afghanistan, Haiti, Lebanon, and beyond—threaten the safety and futures of millions of women, girls, and non-binary people.

And yet, there is cause for hope. Against all odds, feminist movements continue to forge ahead. They are building power, shifting laws and policies, and fighting for a future of equality and dignity for everyone.

As Canada celebrates [Gender Equality Week](#), we are celebrating feminist movements, the single most important driver of women's rights and a gender equal future.

Today, the world [has even more proof](#) that feminist movements play a pivotal role in demanding and securing women's rights across a wide range of issues, including: violence against women, economic rights, reproductive rights, and political representation. Still, [data](#) show that feminist movements still receive less than one per cent of all gender-focused bilateral official development assistance.

As we mark Gender Equality Week, we are challenging the world to remember: **gender equality is impossible without strong and autonomous feminist movements**. From Monday through Friday, we will be highlighting five ways that we can come together to support their transformative work. And we will be spotlighting perspectives and examples from others across the sector who have long been advocating for these principles, and whose work offers a model for others.

1. Trust feminist movements

Big donors often love to use images of girls and women in glossy promotional materials—and then refuse to trust those same girls and women with funding commensurate with their work. Feminist movements, are led by those with lived experience of injustice, who hold the wisdom and perspectives needed to build solutions that are lasting and that reach everyone. **Yet traditional charity models are designed to keep power and resources at the top, assuming answers and strategy come from outside movements rather than from within.** Governments and philanthropic funders should listen deeply to feminist movements, trust in their leadership, and back up that trust with direct and sustained support.

"Too often, we have had rhetoric about gender equality as central to world well-being that is not followed through with money. If we don't have resourcing, it becomes rhetoric without action," notes Theo Sowa, co-chair of the Equality Fund Board.

Our sister [women's funds](#) offer a powerful model for philanthropy that trusts in girls, women, and non-binary people as experts and agents of change in their communities. This approach is rooted in a belief that complex social problems are best solved by locally-owned and driven solutions. They offer a model for building lasting change—and power—from the ground up.

2. Provide long-term, multi-year support

Put simply: achieving gender equality is a marathon, not a sprint. It takes time to shift attitudes, behaviours, norms, policies, systems, and laws. Women's rights organizations deserve long-term, multi-year funding that matches the scope, ambition, and potential of their visions. **Long-term support frees up the precious time of feminist mobilizers, letting them focus on their work (and our collective future), rather than on chasing small grants and managing short-term budgets.** As Beatriz Gonzalez Manchon, Co-Vice President of Global Programs at the Equality Fund, describes: "We need our most promising feminist changemakers to be out in the world—dreaming and doing—not in their offices deciphering grant agreements and filling out applications and endless reports."

Mukami Marete, Co-Executive Director of the East Africa Sexual Health and Rights Initiative and a [Black Feminist Fund](#) board member offers an [additional perspective](#): "My dream is Black feminist movements being able to organize, knowing they're supported in the long term. Because the problems aren't going away any time soon."

3. Provide flexible funding

In the fight for gender equality, progress is often two steps forward and one step back. Pushback is not only inevitable, it is by design—[part of a concerted, well-documented effort to turn back the clock on advances made by feminist movements](#). In the meantime, pandemics, natural disasters, and conflicts rise without warning. Through it all, women's rights activists and organizations must adjust and pivot to meet rapidly shifting challenges—and opportunities—on the ground. In the rise of COVID-19, for example, digital security and broadband access, and all of its associated costs, training, and infrastructure, became essential overnight. **Flexible, general operating support—rather than heavily restricted funding tied to projects favoured by an outside funder—gives these organizations the space and power to set their own course, grow their work according to their own visions, and win the fight for lasting change.**

Feminist funders like [Foundation for a Just Society](#) have consistently championed this approach. As its director of programs, Maitri Morarji, [explains](#): "Flexible multiyear support allows grantees the ability to be adaptive. When the political context or other things change at the local level, they have the ability to adapt how they're using their funds to address emergency needs."



4. Shift power along with resources

Whether contributing \$100 or \$10 million, donors and funders of all kinds must actively acknowledge, and work to disrupt, their own power. Philanthropists should show up with solidarity: listening deeply to feminist movement makers, acknowledging privilege, and unlearning habits and perspectives that centre themselves over those doing the work. As Equality Fund Co-CEO Jessica Houssian [says](#): “We must ensure that we are not simply shifting resources but shifting power in meaningful and durable ways, most especially to women, girls, and non-binary people who have been pushed to the margins.” **As funders, we should lean into participatory practices that give frontline feminist leaders greater say in how resources are distributed.** And we should target organizations and leaders who have been historically underfunded—breaking through deep patterns of bias that leave many of our most innovative changemakers in a perpetual cycle of underfunding.

Funders like [FRIDA](#) have long served as a model for others, showing what it looks like to put values and vision into daily practice. Its [participatory grantmaking process](#) shifts decision-making power into the hands of young feminists themselves.

5. Let feminist movements lead

Feminist movements are already leading, but the world keeps putting barriers in their way. All around the world, feminist movements are reducing gender inequality, weaving lasting peace, expanding economic and social rights, fighting climate change, and securing a just future for all. Yet the expertise of grassroots women’s organizations and activists is routinely dismissed and sidelined. Governments, for example, often pay lip service to women peace builders—but then claim they are unable to find enough “qualified women” to appoint to positions of authority to lead peace processes. **This systemic refusal to follow the leadership of women—and feminist movements—is baked into powerful institutions across every sector.**

Riya William Yuyada, co-founder of [Crown the Woman—South Sudan \(CREW\)](#), a [grantee partner of the Equality Fund](#), offers a powerful perspective: “My prayer and wish is to see a better South Sudan where women are respected, where women are able to be part of the decision making in our country, where women don’t have to beg to be part of the leadership.”

As we mark Gender Equality Week, the most important collective step we can take is to finally let feminist movements lead us forward with the authority, solidarity, and respect they deserve.



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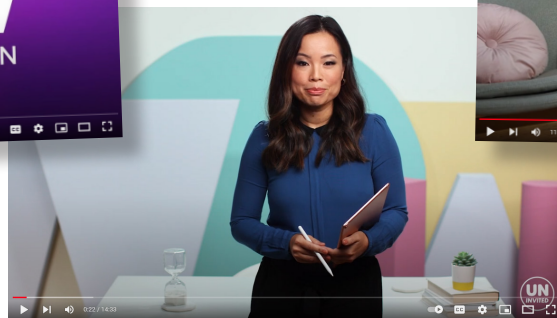
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Uninvited: Working Ontario Women News

Hosted by: Karman Wong

We're not asking permission for a seat at the table. We're pulling up our own chair, uninvited, to bring you news stories about the issues important to working Ontario women and their families.

We'll shine a bright light on your success stories and struggles, and hold the government accountable for its decisions in the process. It's free to access, with no restrictions.



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Person's Day and MMIWG2S

As we reached and passed the 89th anniversary of “Person’s Day,” October 18, 2021—the day that Canadian women became legally regarded as “persons under the law,” I found myself deeply ruminating about what it means to be a woman and a person in Canada.

Have we greatly improved the lot of all women, since then? Are all women regarded equally or even equitably under the law in Canada when considered through a broad societal lens, within the government, or by the RCMP and other police services agencies within this country?

Imagine, for a moment, that a wealthy, white, privileged woman suddenly goes missing. There would likely be a huge investigation into her disappearance by whatever police service organization is pre-dominant in her province. Now imagine the missing woman, belongs to a marginalized sector of the population—perhaps she is impoverished and/or homeless, under educated, lack, racialized, gender diverse, differently abled—either intellectually or physically, elderly, alone, struggling with mental health or Indigenous. How might the police response differ for any of the women who belong to marginalized groups?

Based upon research presented by The Native Women’s Association Fact Sheet: Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA People in Canada, if a woman is Indigenous or gender diverse, they are far more likely to experience violence than other women. These women “face life-threatening, gender-based violence, and disproportionately experience violent crimes because of genocide based on sexism and racism.” Female Indigenous children are more likely to experience both physical and sexual violence than male children and are three times as likely to be a victim of spousal violence when compared to non-Indigenous women. (Boyce, 2016) Statistics Canada concluded that Indigenous identity itself remained a risk factor for violent victimization of women but was not found to be true for men. (Boyce, 2016) Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals also experience a high rate of physical and sexual violence. (Holmes and Hunt, 2017) The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) created a database to track systemic violence impacting Indigenous women, families, and communities; they have been recording this data for four decades. From 2005 until 2010, NWAC’s Sisters in Spirit (SIS) initiative confirmed 582 cases of Missing and/or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). For 20 years, NWAC has worked to increase awareness of human rights issues. They have concluded that: most homicides involving Aboriginal women are more likely to go unsolved; only 53 per cent or murder cases in NWAC’s SIS database have been solved compared to 84 per cent on all other national murder cases; NWAC believes the problem is far more prevalent than public information access indicates; and in 2013, the RCMP released a report acknowledging 1,181 cases of MMIWG.

In December 2015, the Government of Canada initiated the National Inquiry into Missing/Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This resulted in 231 individual calls for justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries, and all Canadians.

One conclusion stated:

“...rates of violence against Métis, Inuit, and First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are much higher than for non-Indigenous women in Canada, even when all over differentiating factors are accounted for. Perpetrators of violence include Indigenous and non-Indigenous family members, partners, casual acquaintances, and serial killers.” (Executive Summary, 2019, p. 3)

According to Barry Ellsworth, as of June 3, 2021, there may be as many as 4,000 MMIWG who have disappeared during the past three decades in Canada. (www.aa.com.tr) The foot dragging on the part of police agencies and the RCMP, as well as governmental lack of action on this issue, is appalling. When an entire sector of the female population is regarded as “less than” or “disposable” it leads to the kind of violence and murder that many Indigenous women and gender diverse individuals have experienced.

In Canada, we have enjoyed a long-standing, international reputation as being “polite.” COVID-19 has removed some of our polite veneer and examples of overt racism and discrimination are becoming more prevalent. If any individual, group, or gender diverse person is regarded as “less than” or “disposable” by anyone, there will continue to be inequities and inequalities in the treatment of many and there will continue to be MMIWG2S.

I want to recognize and acknowledge that I am writing this article from a position of white privilege, but I am also writing this based upon my experience as a both a woman and as a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

—Karen E. Kading, District 11, Thames Valley
and provincial Status of Women Committee member

