

November 25 marks the launch of the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence* that begins on the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women* and ends on December 10, the *International Human Rights Day*. The *16 Days* campaign has been used as an organizing strategy around the world since 1991 to call for the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence.

Violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV) are widespread human rights violations that occur in all parts of the world. Violence against women is pervasive in Canadian society and presents a significant barrier to gender equality.

In Canada December 6 falls within the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence* and is called the *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women*.

It has been over 30 years since the murder of 14 young women at Polytechnique Montréal (December 6, 1989). This act of violent misogyny shook our country and led Parliament to designate December 6 as The *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women*.

On December 6, we remember:

- Geneviève Bergeron
- Maud Haviernick
- Michèle Richard
- Hélène Colgan
- Maryse Laganière
- Annie St-Arnault
- Nathalie Croteau
- Maryse Leclair
- Annie Turcotte
- Barbara Daigneault
- Anne-Marie Lemay
- Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz
- Anne-Marie Edward
- Sonia Pelletier

As we mourn their loss and honour their memory, we reaffirm our commitment to fight the hatred that led to this tragedy, and the misogyny that still exists today. In Canada and around the world, women, girls, LGBTQ2 (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two spirit) and gender diverse individuals face unacceptable violence and discrimination. Gender-based violence in Canada has been magnified and amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been reports from police services, shelters, and local organization of an increase in calls related to gender-based violence across Canada during the pandemic.

The *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women* is about remembering those who have experienced gender-based violence and those who we have lost to it; it is also a time to take action. Working together we can help prevent and address gender-based violence by remembering and learning from our past, listening to survivors, and speaking up against harmful behaviour.