

Victims of Montreal Massacre remembered at vigil

By Bill Rea

Tuesday marked 27 years since 14 women were shot and killed at École Polytechnique in Montreal, and they were remembered at vigils all over the country.

Locally, people gathered at the Albion-Bolton branch of Caledon Public Library.

Library CEO and Chief Librarian Colleen Lipp observed this was the sixth year the Library had partnered with Family Transition Place (FTP) to hold the vigil.

“They died because they were women,” she remarked.

Lipp recalled the tragedy struck her on a personal level, as she was in university at the time, and she was originally from Montreal.

Stacey Tarrant of FTP recalled the victims of the massacre were young, intelligent and ambitious.

“They wanted to change the world,” she said, adding they did, but in a way they wouldn’t have chosen.

The problem is still there, as Tarrant pointed out a woman in Canada is killed every six days by an intimate partner. She also said FTP offers refuge for women trying to get out of abusive situations, adding they would serve more of them if they had room.

Tarrant observed that values of a society allowed events like this to happen, in which one man thought his life carried more weight than those of those women.

“A culture can’t change from the top down,” she observed, adding it must start with the individual and teaching people to value human dignity, equality and respect.

“We must respect life; all life,” she declared. “Each life has a value, just because it is.”

Steve Bunyan of MENtors, a group of men who have been working with FTP to help combat violence against women and girls, wondered why violence still goes on. He argued men commit such acts weren’t born hating women.

“Clearly it’s learned,” he observed.

Bunyan observed that society has boys thinking if they are sensitive, they’re not real men, meaning they are supposed to be tough, dominant and aggressive. He added that’s reflected in sports, in the lyrics of popular songs, video games, etc. In order to change that, he pointed to the need to change youth and the society in which they grow up.

“It’s going to take a lot of work and it’s going to take 365 days a year,” he said.

Local resident Emily Rowsell brought a young woman’s perspective to the problems they face in society.

“We have to keep talking about it,” she said. “We have to break the stigma.”

Peel District School Board Trustee Stan Cameron commented on the need to work with men and get them to stand up against violence against women.

“We remember so that no family has to lose a loved one in such a tragic way,” he said.

Mayor Allan Thompson reflected on his thoughts when he first heard of the tragedy.

“It’s horrible this is actually happening in Canada,” he remembered thinking.

“We’ll always remember them, and I think it’s important that we do,” he added.

Maureen Davis, from the Domestic Assault Review Team (DART), said the group includes 19 agencies that work together to serve victims of violence.

“Collectively, we can have a stronger voice,” she said, adding they can give a voice to women who have been silenced or not been heard. “Clearly, we have our work cut out for us.”

“These women died for nothing,” library staff member and FTP volunteer Kelley Potter commented, “for no reason whatsoever, other than they were women.”

She said it’s important to make sure their lives stand for something.



While Bolton vocalist Carly Cianflocca performed a song, participants in Tuesday's vigil held placards bearing the names of the victims of the Montreal Massacre.



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