

An illustration of ten diverse hands reaching towards the center of the frame. The hands are of various skin tones (light, medium, dark) and are wearing different styles of clothing, including patterned sleeves, solid colors, and a watch. The background is a light blue, textured surface.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

NOVEMBER 25 -
DECEMBER 10
2023

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What is the 16 Days of Activism Campaign?

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that begins on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and ends on December 10, Human Rights Day. It was started at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and is one of the largest organizing strategies in the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence around the world.

Commemorative Dates



- **November 25:** International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- **November 29:** International Women Human Rights Defenders Day
- **December 1:** World Aids Day
- **December 3:** International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- **December 6:** National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
- **December 10:** International Human Rights Day

During the 16 Days, Canada observes the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6. This marks the anniversary of the École Polytechnique massacre (also known as the Montreal Massacre). On this day, we remember the 14 women who were murdered simply because they were women. The École Polytechnique massacre is an example of the deadly impacts of gender-based violence and anti-feminist sentiments. Many CFUW Clubs host vigils on this day to remember the victims and commemorate their lives.

We remember the victims of the École Polytechnique massacre. Their names are Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, and Annie Turcotte.

What is Gender-Based Violence?

“Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. The term is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials place women and girls at risk for multiple forms of violence”

([Frequently Asked Questions: Types of Violence Against Women and Girls](#)).

Gender-Based Violence takes many forms, including:

- domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV)
- sexual harassment or assault
- child marriage
- psychological or emotional abuse
- human trafficking
- financial abuse
- stalking
- femicide
- female genital cutting/mutilation
- online/digital violence

In Canada, Indigenous women and girls, women with disabilities, newcomers, youth, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and non-binary individuals, and those living in rural or remote communities are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence ([What is Gender-Based Violence?](#), 2022).

Terms to Know

COLONIALISM

“Attempted or actual imposition of policies, laws, the economies, cultures or systems, and institutions put in place by settler governments to support and continue the occupation of Indigenous territories, the subjugation of Indigenous nations, and the resulting internalized and externalized thought patterns that support this occupation and subjugation” (Gender-Based Violence Glossary, 2021).

CONSENT

“Defined in the Criminal Code as the voluntary agreement to engage in the sexual activity in question at the time the activity takes place. This means that all parties must actively, willingly, and continuously give consent to the sexual activity. Consent cannot be assumed or implied, and an unconscious person is not capable of giving consent” (Glossary, 2021).

INCEL

Incel is defined by Oxford Languages as “a member of an online community of young men who consider themselves unable to attract women sexually, typically associated with views that are hostile toward women and men who are sexually active.” It is often also referred to as someone (usually a person who identifies as a man) who is “**in**voluntarily **cel**ibate” (Our Incel Problem, 2019). Incel culture is often linked with radicalized young men, several of whom have been motivated to commit acts of violence or encourage others to do so (Who Are the ‘Incels’? The Involuntary Celibates Who Want Women Punished, 2018). Two examples close to home are the Toronto van attack in 2018 and the stabbing at a massage parlour in Toronto in 2020.

Terms to Know

INTERSECTIONALITY

“Intersectional approaches recognize that every person’s identity is made up of multiple identity categories such as (but not limited to) ability, attraction, body size, citizenship, class, creed, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, race, religion. The ways a person may experience systemic privilege and oppression are affected by the intersection of these identity categories, depending on how they are valued by social institutions” ([Glossary](#), 2021). Intersectionality was a term coined by lawyer and professor Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw in a breakthrough paper around anti-racism and identity politics. Crenshaw describes how “intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects” ([Crenshaw](#), 1989).

FEMICIDE

“Femicide refers to the intentional murder of women because they are women, but may be defined more broadly to include any killings of women or girls. Femicide differs from male homicide in specific ways. For example, most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex-partners, and involve ongoing abuse in the home, threats or intimidation, sexual violence or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner” ([Types of Violence Against Women and Girls](#)).

2SLGBTQQIA+

This term has and will continue to evolve as more people feel safe to openly express their gender and sexual identities. The acronym stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual. The ‘+’ is inclusive of all other identities, including pansexual and non-binary.

Focus Area: Gender-Based Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS, AND 2SLGBTQQIA PEOPLE LIVE WITH AN ALMOST CONSTANT THREAT TO THEIR PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL SECURITY.

-[Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)

Gender-based violence has a disproportionate impact on Indigenous women and girls in Canada. While Indigenous women constitute about 5% of all women in Canada, they accounted for 21% of all women killed by an intimate partner between 2014 and 2019 ([What is Gender-Based Violence?](#), 2022). Indigenous women are also more likely to be victims of sexual assault: more than four in ten (43%) Indigenous women have been sexually assaulted since the age of 15, compared to 33% of all women in Canada ([What is Gender-Based Violence?](#), 2022).



This violence is a systemic, national crisis that is rooted in colonial laws and practices. The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls outlines four pathways that maintain colonial violence:

- historical, multigenerational, and intergenerational trauma;
- social and economic marginalization;
- maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; and
- ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people ([Reclaiming Power and Place](#), 2019).

Gender-Based Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

As shared by National Inquiry Expert Witness Josie Nepinak, executive director of Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society in Calgary,

“Violence for Indigenous women is a result of colonization, and the whole experience around colonization and the dispossession of our sacred ways, the dispossession of our grandmothers and the dispossession of our Elders. And it is manifested through oppressive policies such as the Indian Act for First Nations women, and it is manifested through the residential school by killing the Indian in the child and killing the spirit of the child. And it is manifested in those abuses that we have suffered through, whether it’s being placed in a dark room or being told that we’re savages or being told that we cannot speak our language” (Reclaiming Power and Place, 2019).

The National Inquiry produced 231 Calls for Justice—actions that institutions, organizations, governments, and individuals need to take to end colonial violence.

According to CBC’s analysis, just

2 / 231

calls have been completed, and over half have not been started (A Report Card on the MMIWG Inquiry's Calls for Justice, 2023).

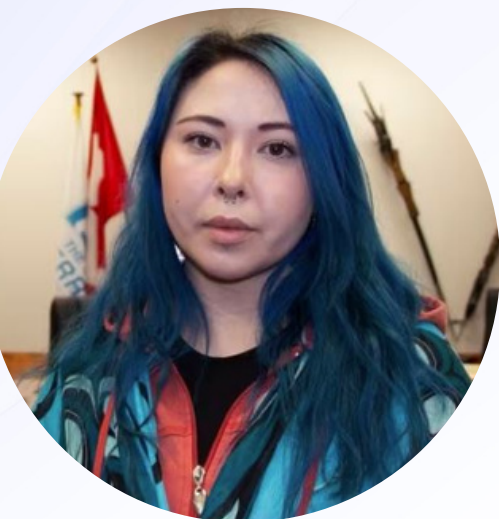
Read through the Calls for Justice [here](#), particularly the section ‘Calls for Justice for All Canadians’ on pages 199-200, and take action on those calls.

Focus Area: Violence Against Women in Politics

ANY WOMAN WHO HAS POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS THAT SPENDS 10 MINUTES ON TWITTER FOLLOWING THEIR FEMALE MENTORS MAY BE SIMPLY AFRAID TO RUN. WOMEN SEE HOW WOMEN ARE BEING TREATED AND THEY GET THE MESSAGE. THEIR RESPONSE IS, 'THANKS, I'LL TAKE A PASS.'

-Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff, as an individual, [Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving the Representation of Women in Canadian Politics](#)

Violence against women in politics (VAW-P) is a form of gender-based violence that remains a serious problem in Canada and around the world. A 2016 global survey found 82% of women parliamentarians experienced psychological violence. Among them, 44% received threats of death, rape, beatings, or kidnapping ([Sexism, Harassment and Violence Against Women Parliamentarians](#), 2016).



Hlox-Majagalee (Jessica McCallum-Miller), a city councillor in B.C. who resigned due to the sexism and racism she experienced.

Photo: Michelle Ghoussoub/CBC

While politicians of all backgrounds and identities are increasingly facing aggression, a study of candidates' Twitter feeds during the 2019 Canadian federal general election found that women, Indigenous peoples, and racialized individuals were more frequently subjected to *identity-focused* attacks ([Violence Against Politicians in Canada and Internationally](#), 2022). These attacks are often graphic in sexuality- and gender-based insults and focus on individuals' physical appearances.

Violence Against Women in Politics

Violence against women in politics can have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of women in politics, who often experience psychological and physical symptoms as a result ([Raney et al., 2019](#)). The violence has broader consequences as well:

“While violence in politics is usually directed at a specific person, its implications extend beyond those targets, serving to frighten and deter other politically active women from engaging in politics. It also communicates to the broader society that women generally do not belong in public life” ([Raney et al., 2019](#)).

By signaling that women are not welcome in politics, VAW-P is a key reason why women—racialized and Indigenous women in particular—are still under-represented at all levels of government. We cannot ensure women’s full participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal target 5.5) without effectively addressing VAW-P.

The Internet and social media have provided platforms for a violence that is significantly more widespread, anonymous, and toxic in nature. CFUW calls upon social media companies to act decisively to address the online increase of VAW-P. The responsibility to combat VAW-P also lies with individual members of the public, politicians, and political parties to call out all manner of violence when it happens and make it clear that such misogynistic behaviour is not tolerated.



Focus Area: Gender-Based Violence and Gun Violence

A LOT OF FACTORS CAN TURN A VIOLENT SITUATION INTO A LETHAL ONE, BUT THE SINGLE GREATEST RISK FACTOR FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BECOMING FATAL ISN'T A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE, OR EVEN PRIOR DEATH THREATS.

IT'S GUN OWNERSHIP.

-Canadian Women's Foundation

Gun violence is not only a public safety issue—it's a gender-based violence issue too. 25% of female victims of firearm related violent crimes were victimized by a current or former intimate partner, compared to 2% of male victims (Trends in Firearm-Related Violent Crime in Canada, 2009 to 2020, 2022).

The presence of guns makes situations of intimate partner violence much more lethal: an international meta-analysis of intimate partner violence found that access to a firearm is linked to a more than tenfold increase in the likelihood that a man will kill his partner, as opposed to committing non-fatal violence (Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission, 2023).

While gun violence against women and girls can include femicide and murder, guns are also used as tools to intimidate, control, and coerce. They can make it dangerous and difficult for women to leave abusive situations.

Gender-Based Violence and Gun Violence

Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms), represents a significant step in protecting women and girls from firearms-related violence. It was passed in the House of Commons in June 2023 and, at time of writing, it is under committee study in the Senate. In addition to legislating a freeze on the sale, purchase, and transfer of handguns,

BILL C-21

- Introduces a 'red flag' law that allows anyone to make an application to a court to immediately remove firearms from an individual who may pose a danger to themselves or others, for up to 30 days.
- Introduces a 'yellow flag' law that would allow Chief Firearms Officers to temporarily suspend an individual's firearms licence for up to 30 days if there is reason to suspect they are no longer eligible to hold a licence.
- Permits Chief Firearms Officers to revoke a firearms licence in cases of domestic violence and/or criminal harassment (stalking), or when a protection order has been issued against a license holder.

CFUW has worked in partnership with the #Women4GunControl coalition to advocate for a total ban on assault weapons and strong provisions regarding intimate partner violence in Bill C-21. Read the National Association of Women and the Law's brief to the Senate—endorsed by CFUW—here, to learn more about the successes and shortcomings of Bill C-21.



16 Facts About Gender-Based Violence

44% of women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence since the age of 15^{1,2,3}

61% of Indigenous women

67% of LGB+ women

A woman or girl is **killed** in Canada every **48 HOURS**⁴




OVER 6000 women and children **sleep in shelters** because it isn't safe for them at home on any given night in Canada⁵



497 victims of **intimate partner homicide** between 2014 and 2019—80% were women⁶

Women with a **disability** are almost **3x** more likely to experience **violent victimization** than women without a disability⁷

Only 5% of sexual assaults are reported to the police⁸



While Indigenous women account for **5%** of all women in Canada, **Indigenous women** accounted for **21%** of all women **killed by an intimate partner** between 2014 and 2019⁹



Women in **rural areas** of the provinces experience rates of intimate partner violence that are almost **2x** as high as women in urban areas¹⁰




4 in 10 Indigenous women have been sexually assaulted since the age of 15¹¹




1 in 3 women have been sexually assaulted since the age of 15¹²




12% of women have experienced sexual abuse **before the age of 15**¹³




61% of women aged 15 to 24 from the provinces experienced **unwanted sexual behaviours** in a public place that made them feel unsafe or uncomfortable in the previous year¹⁴



Women account for **58%** of victims of **family violence** aged 65 and older¹⁶



15% of women **post-secondary students** in the provinces were sexually assaulted in the post-secondary setting at least once since they started their studies¹⁵



^{1,2,3,6,9,10,11,12,14,15,16} What is Gender-Based Violence?, 2022 ⁴ #CallItFemicide, 2022 ⁵ The Facts About Gender-Based Violence, 2023 ⁷ Criminal Victimization in Canada, 2019 ⁸ Gender-Based Violence and Unwanted Sexual Behaviour in Canada, 2018, 2019 ¹³ Profile of Canadians who Experienced Victimization During Childhood, 2018, 2022

16 Ways to Act Against Gender-Based Violence

1

Write to your city's Mayor/City Council urging them to declare **gender-based and intimate partner violence an epidemic** in your jurisdiction (if they have not already done so), as was recommended in the [Mass Casualty Commission](#) on the 2020 shooting in Nova Scotia and the [Renfrew County Inquest](#). Download a template letter for CFUW clubs [here](#) (Ontario clubs should instead use the letter in Ontario Council's Toolkit on Intimate Partner Violence) and a letter for individual members of the public [here](#).

Donate to a women's shelter in your community. Find a list of shelters by province or territory [here](#).

2

3

Wear orange (the international colour) **or purple** (the Canadian colour) on November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to raise awareness.

Call out misogynistic and gendered violence when you see it: call out victim-blaming and counter the idea that it is women and girls' responsibility to avoid situations that might be seen as "dangerous." Call out catcalling and inappropriate sexual comments. Call out sexist jokes and challenge peers to reflect on their behaviour. Read this resource on "[How to be an Active Bystander in 6 Steps](#)."

4


5

Wear a white ribbon or rose and plan or attend a vigil on December 6, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Hang posters raising awareness about gender-based violence in your community. You can download posters [here](#).


6

16 Ways to Act Against Gender-Based Violence

 **Support survivors** of gender-based violence. Tell them “I believe you,” “I am here for you,” and “this is not your fault.” Learn more about identifying the signs of relationship abuse and how you can help [here](#). Learn about the [hand “Signal for Help”](#) that survivors can use to subtly indicate they are in need of help.

Read the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls’ Calls for Justice [here](#) and consider how you can act on them.



 **Write an op-ed** or letter to the editor in your local media outlet to raise awareness about gender-based violence. You can write a letter on specific topics related to gender-based violence, such as the National Inquiry’s Calls for Justice, gun control, and the need for action on bilateral agreements on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in your province.

Host speakers, panel discussions, public forums, or film screenings on topics related to gender-based violence.



 **Write to your city’s Mayor/City Council** urging them to **light City Hall orange or purple** throughout the 16 Days of Activism. Download a template letter for CFUW clubs [here](#), and a letter for individual members of the public [here](#).

16 Ways to Act Against Gender-Based Violence

12 **Reach out to Indigenous community partners** about hanging red dresses in your area to raise awareness about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The [REDress Project](#) serves as a “visual reminder of the staggering number of women who are no longer with us” and draws attention to the “gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and evoke[s] a presence through the marking of absence” (Jaime Black, creator of the REDress Project).

13 **Host kitchen table talks** with your friends or CFUW club members to discuss gender-based violence, how it affects your local community, and what you can do to support survivors and end the violence.

14 **Write a letter** as an individual to your local university/college/alma mater’s President or Board of Governors demanding better policies and support for survivors of gender-based violence on educational institution campuses.

15 **Take a course** on gender-based violence to learn more about the issue and what you can do to support survivors. Find links to several free courses [here](#).

16 **Share** CFUW’s and other organizations’ 16 Days of Activism social media posts, or post your own.

16 Resources on Gender-Based Violence

- 1 **Report:** “Preventing Intimate Partner Violence in Two-Spirit, Nonbinary, and Trans Communities and Supporting Survivors” by the TransFormed Project
- 2 **Film:** “The Body Remembers When the World Broken Open” by Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers and Kathleen Hepburn
- 3 **Book:** “Unbroken” by Angela Sterritt
- 4 **Book:** “Know My Name: A Memoir” by Chanel Miller
- 5 **Webinar:** “A Comprehensive Guide to Campus Gender-Based Violence Complaints” by Courage to Act
- 6 **Book:** “Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence” by Anita Hill
- 7 **Video:** “The ‘Victim’ Onscreen and How She’s Been Misrepresented” by The Take
- 8 **Book:** “For the Love of Men: From Toxic to a More Mindful Masculinity” by Liz Plank
- 9 **Book:** “The Break” by Katherena Vermette
- 10 **Podcast:** “Welcome to Paradise” by Anna Maria Tremonti
- 11 **Book:** “Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance” by Allison Hargreaves
- 12 **Book:** “Nobody’s Victim: Fighting Psychos, Stalkers, Pervs, and Trolls” by Carrie Goldberg
- 13 **Report:** “Rooting Resilience: Women, Girls, and Non-Binary People With Disabilities and the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence” by Dr. Jihan Abbas, DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada
- 14 **Book:** “The Power of Women: A Doctor’s Journey of Hope and Healing” by Denis Mukwege
- 15 **Podcast:** “Missing and Murdered” by CBC
- 16 **Book:** “Transgressed: Intimate Partner Violence in Transgender Lives” by Xavier L. Guadalupe-Diaz



Conclusion

Together we can raise awareness about the ongoing problem of gender-based violence by supporting survivors and taking action against sexism and racism. We are thankful to CFUW members and clubs that have organized vigils to commemorate the École Polytechnique massacre, sent letters to members of government, and supported the 16 Days Campaign. We will engage in various actions and social media campaigns during the 16 Days Campaign to draw attention to the strong movement around the world working to end gender-based violence. Thank you for your dedication to campaigning against gender-based violence.

Contact Us

For more information, visit CFUW's website: <http://cfuw.org> or contact CFUW's National Advocacy and Policy Specialist at advocacy@cfuw-fcfdu.ca

Follow CFUW on Social Media



Crisis Resources

<p>Nova Scotia <u>Transition House Association of Nova Scotia</u> Toll-free: 1-855-225-0220</p>	<p>Assaulted Women's Helpline Toll-free: 1-866-863-0511 (multilingual services available) Toll-free TTY: 1-866-863-7868 or #SAFE (#7233) on your Bell, Rogers, Fido or Telus mobile phone</p>
<p>British Columbia <u>Victim Link BC</u> Phone: 1-800-563-0808 (multilingual services available)</p>	<p>Talk4Healing (Helpline for Indigenous Women) Toll-free: 1-855-554-4325 (multilingual services available)</p>
<p>https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/support/ Find support all over Ontario for sexual assault survivors.</p>	<p>Femaide (Francophone survivors) 1-877-336-2433</p>
<p>Alberta <u>Family Violence Info Line</u> Phone: 310-1818 (multilingual services available) <u>Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence</u> Toll-free: 1-866-403-8000 Text: 1-866-403-8000 Email: mailbox@aasas.ca</p>	<p>Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre Toll-free: 1-800-726-2743 Iris Kirby House (St. John's) Local line: (709) 753-1492 Toll-free: 1-877-753-1492 Hope Haven Local line: 944-2200 Toll-free: 1-888-332-0000</p>
<p>Manitoba <u>Domestic Violence Crisis Line, Family Violence Prevention Program</u> Toll-free: 1-877-977-0007</p>	<p>New Brunswick <u>CHIMO Helpline</u> Toll-free: 1-800-667-5005</p>

Prince Edward Island
PEI Family Violence Prevention
Services Inc.
Toll-free: 1-800-240-9894

Saskatchewan
Provincial Association of Transition
Houses and Services of Saskatchewan
Phone: 211
Text: 211

Quebec
SOS violence conjugale
Toll-free: 1-800-363-9010
(bilingual services available)
Text: 438-601-1211
Online chat:
[https://www.resourceconnect.co
m/sosvc/chat](https://www.resourceconnect.com/sosvc/chat)
Email:
sos@sosviolenceconjugale.ca
Sexual Violence Helpline
Local line: (514) 933-9007
(Montreal) (bilingual services
available)
Toll-free: 1-888-933-9007

www.sheltersafe.ca
Find a shelter near you (across Canada)

<https://safepet.ca/>
(Ontario) For foster care for a pet
for someone fleeing violence

Ontario Victim Help Line
24/7 Toll-free: 1-888-579-2888
Greater Toronto Area: 416-314-2447
or Crisis Line - Call 211