



# Collective Wisdom

Quesnel Women's  
Resource Centre  
publication

Collective Wisdom  
December, 2009

## Why Mark December 6 ?

By Ellen Facey

Why do we mark December 6 as important on the calendar of Canadian women's history?

On that date in 1989, a man took a semi-automatic weapon into the Ecole Polytechnique, a College in Montreal, and began searching classes for women, shouting, "I want the women! I hate feminists!" He methodically separated the men from the women, drove the men off, then opened fire on the women. He went from room to room and floor to floor until, having shot 27 people, he finally shot himself in the face and died. Fourteen women, most of them students in the engineering program, died of their wounds. Nine more were wounded along with four men.

It is hard to describe how people, especially women, all over the country felt the next day. Shock. Horror. Disbelief. Fourteen families lost their daughters by violence in a matter of minutes, and for what? Not just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, but for simply being female. And to some degree also because they were attempting to gain an education in a traditionally male field in a program their killer had failed to

get into.

The next day I was teaching a class at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick. It was called the "Anthropology of Gender" and the vast majority of the students were women. We used "the f word"-- that is, "feminist"-- many times in every class. That day it was hard to avoid glancing at the door repeatedly, wondering if there could be a woman-hater in our hallway, too, waiting to storm in and kill us in cold blood. And why not? It could have happened there, as easily as in Montreal, or in Winnipeg, or in Quesnel. It felt much more dangerous to be female that day, let alone to also be a feminist, than it had been the day before.

The Massacre-- still the largest mass murder in Canada-- also resulted in some men realizing they could, and should, take action, too. Many men's support groups were formed shortly after the Massacre. One of these, Montreal Men Against Sexism, maintained a web site for many years in which they listed by name and counted all women and children who are killed by men



Plaque on the exterior wall of the Ecole Polytechnique commemorating the victims of the massacre.

each year in Quebec since 1989. They number in the thousands.

Violence against women is never acceptable. We need always to recognize violence and name it. We need to find solutions to stop the cycle from repeating itself from generation to generation and we must do this for ourselves. December 6 reminds us that violence can strike any of us at any time so we must form a strong alliance against violence of all kinds.

We need to remember and mourn the women who died in Montreal that day:

### Remember these women, and work to prevent

#### the loss of any other woman:

Genevieve Bergeron, age 21  
Helene Colgan, age 23  
Nathalie Croteau, age 23  
Barbara Daigneault, age 22  
Anne-Marie Edward, age 21  
Maud Haviernick, age 29  
Barbara Maria Kluczniak, age 31

Maryse Laganier, age 25  
Maryse Leclair, age 23  
Anne-Marie Lemay, age 27  
Sonia Pelletier, age 28  
Michele Richard, age 21  
Annie St-Arneault, age 23  
Annie Turcotte, age 21

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### What Men can do about violence:

- Listen to women, learn from women
- Promote gender equality as a mans issue
- Be aware of your own biases and language use
- Remember and commemorate important dates such as IWD
- Educate your sons about healthy relationships
- Challenge sexism, homophobia, and degrading jokes and language
- Speak out about violence against women
- Be a good role model

## Walk for Justice

By Maureen Trotter



**Bernie Williams and Gladys Radek met the press at the Quesnel Women's Resource Centre recently. The two women are working tirelessly to educate the public about missing and murdered women in BC.**

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, Bernie Williams and Gladys Radek brought Vancouver Sun reporter to the Women's Centre to listen to families of disappeared and murdered women.

Bernie's mother and two of her sisters were murdered in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. Gladys' niece has gone missing on Highway 16, the Highway of Tears. These two women, with no financial support, have worked tirelessly for change: to educate the public about the murder and disappearance of so many women in our province, for more focus on finding and convicting the murderers and ultimately for an end to violence against women

Three years ago, at a symposium in Prince George, the families of the missing and murdered

women made 33 recommendations for change. One of these was a call for a full federal public inquiry into the handling of these cases by the RCMP. The two have been urging the leaders of aboriginal organizations, municipal councils and provincial ministers to press for this inquiry. To keep public attention focused on these mothers, daughters and sisters, Gladys and Bernie organized a national march across the country and another last June from Vancouver and up along Highway 16.

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Valentine's Day Walk through the Downtown Eastside to protest violence against women and that commemorates the women who have been murdered in the area will go ahead as planned, in spite of the Olympic committee's pressure on them to change the date this year. Organizers see this as a time when the eyes of the world will be focused on their demand for justice. The families in Quesnel have been invited to attend and stand with the other families to be acknowledged and honoured at the Walk. Bernie and Gladys hope they will come.

## Sticks and Stones

By Jean Birch

She wondered why she hadn't seen it happen and stopped it.

How could she have been so stupid to not know or realize? It had happened slowly, like a seeping fog that clouded her thoughts and beliefs, destroying her self-esteem, convincing her she was not a good wife and mother. These thoughts had haunted and nearly destroyed her. It took her 18 years before she realized she was a victim of the invisible violence — verbal and mental abuse from a controlling husband. She wondered how she could have become a victim. She remembered the childhood saying, *Sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me.*

Words can never hurt me? If that's the case, how could words have resulted in her plunge into the depths of depression and such low self-esteem?

She realized that she was living proof that words can and do hurt, especially words from one you love. Words could completely destroy you, leaving you a shell of your former self. *Con't on page 6*

## An Idea for Change

*By Poonam Migliani*

The public comes to know about violence only after it has happened or reported. Why is this?

If we involve our youth, this can be nipped down to a great extent. By youth, I mean not only our young girls, but also our young boys who are to become our future husbands and fathers. Our youth watch things happening at home and in society. Very few have the courage to either stop or report the violence. By guiding our young people and making them aware, we give them the courage and strength to stand up to any kind of violence.

Girls will learn to stand up for themselves and will be able to tell what is right and what is wrong; boys will understand how to respect women and not to follow in the footsteps of their father or brother. By making youth aware, we are equipping them with methods both to handle violence and to avoid situations which lead to violence or which aggravate such situations.

The girls and boys can be the ones to get a grip on this violence in society and at home. We can also provide youth with the information as to where to go for help as most of them are too scared to go and talk to someone. Small moves can make a big difference. If this act of ours saves or reduces violence even by a small percentage, we have made a difference and achieved something.

**"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."**

Martin Luther King Jr.

## Quesnel's Memorial to our Missing and Murdered Women

We expect the groundbreaking for the Memorial to take place this spring. Fund raising for the memorial has been a success with most of the \$13,000 needed already in the bank. We are still short a little over \$2000. Call the Women's Centre at 250-992-8472 to help.



**Amata Transition House Society**

Abuse affects everyone. You are not alone.

Contact the Amata Transition House

at 250-992-7321.

## A Moment of Clarity

*By Cheryl Baker-Rivers*

Others, more qualified than I, will offer tips on how to avoid becoming a victim—or suggest strategies to survive the ordeal.

But what if circumstances are dire and the victims fear they may not prevail? Who will speak for them? Who will tell their story?

These questions bring to mind two women, one little more than a child. They would have answered a resounding, "I'll speak for myself, thank you!"

Maria was just fifteen years old when she was kidnapped. Her mother was involved in the drug trade and Maria's kidnapping and murder was meant as a lesson to the mother.

But Maria had other ideas—and the presence of mind few of us could aspire to given her desperate situation. Bleeding profusely and left to die in the trunk of a car, she found the strength to write the names of her attackers on the inside of the trunk—in her own blood.

Rita's story has a happier ending. She turned the tables on her attacker when she placed a bare foot on a window inside the car.

The latent foot print was later recovered by scientists processing the suspect's vehicle. Jurors cited the print as "compelling evidence...made more so upon learning the victim understood its forensic significance and left it deliberately."

What do these women have in common?

Grit, certainly — the determination to survive. But more than that, clarity. They wanted someone to know what happened. For Rita and Marie, silence was not an option.

Thanks to growing public appreciation of forensic evidence and the story it can tell, victims can and do fight back by deliberately leaving clues—strands of hair, DNA, fibers from their clothing, finger, palm and foot prints—even words, written with their blood.

They are my heroes.

*Cheryl Baker Rivers is a veteran forensic scientist, now living in the Quesnel area. She retired from the State of Washington Crime Laboratory, where she served as a major crime scene responder and supervising forensic scientist.*

## Her Story

*By Pawla Moore*

I wish I could remember her name. I watched her story on a news special one evening and was moved and inspired. One thing that did remain firm in my memory was the strength and determination this young woman showed while living on the street.

She was sixteen; her mother had died of Aids a few years ago. The news clip showed her walking with her father who was also withering away with Aids. Her parents had both been drug addicts and they had lived on social assistance for all of her life. Now she was on the streets, her father institutionalized with his illness.

The sad fact at this point in her life was that she was poor and homeless; the best part was she didn't leave school. Instead she concentrated on her studies and managed to stay safe, God only knows how. Her one desire was to keep her grades up and apply for scholarships. The local food kitchens, McDonalds and Subways were her study spots – lots of light and warmth.

She got her scholarship in the end, to Harvard.

I just couldn't help being impressed that this young woman whose life seemed surrounded by other people's bad choices, violence and sickness broke free and decided not to become a victim of circumstances; instead, she found the spirit and strength to rise up and take more.

Her father has most likely died by now and she would be finishing her education, I hope she's doing well. I would love to meet this exceptional young woman and tell her how inspiring she really is. It seemed sad that she would never experience a hug or words of praise for her accomplishments from her family but this too was part of her story.

I wish I could remember her name.

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## Protecting Vulnerable Adults & Seniors

*By Mary Gradnitzer*

For nearly a decade, Community Response Networks (CRN) have been responsible for keeping adults with physical or mental disabilities as well as seniors safe from abuse, neglect or self-neglect.

What is a Community Response Network (CRN)? They were organized in 2000 as a response to the Adult Guardianship Act to address and prevent abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults and seniors in communities across BC. A CRN is a citizen's group made up of interested individuals as well as representatives from organizations that offer programs to adults and seniors. As well as the primary goal already mentioned, an other Important objectives identified are to provide community, public and professional education, support the development of agency, inter-agency and community protocols and track how well the community response is working.

The Adult Guardianship Legislation also mandated the regional Health Authorities as designated agencies. The Home & Community Nursing staff and Mental Health staff are required to investigate reports of adult abuse or neglect and arrange for assistance or protection as needed. Community Living staff are designated to investigate reports related to adults with developmental disabilities. The RCMP becomes involved if there is a safety issue or a criminal offense has taken place. Self determination is a guiding principle: "all adults are entitled to live in the manner they wish and to accept or refuse support, assistance or protection as long as they do not harm others and are capable of making decisions about those matters." Relatives, friends and community members are encouraged to refer to a designated agency if they think a person they know is in need of help or is experiencing abuse.

What we lack in Quesnel and all other communities is core funding to hire a co-coordinator. When the opportunity arises we apply for grants and have been able to offer two Health Fairs at the Senior Centre, produce some educational pamphlets and hold a forum on financial abuse.

*Con't on page 5*

## The Hurt Never Ends

By Maureen Trotter

Paula Braem dreads Friday nights, especially rainy ones. That's when she has to drive home from her late shift right by the spot where her daughter, Deena, was last seen alive, walking alone and bedraggled in the rain. "The pain doesn't go away. If anything it gets worse." Deena's Dad, Jim, struggles with his anger and frustration. "When something like this happens, you find out how little control you really have over your life".

It's been 10 years now, since their daughter was murdered. They have never, will never, recover. Deena was just a young girl, out having fun with her friends. She was starting to realize she would have to start focusing on graduating if she wanted to move to Victoria. She was a spunky, independent-minded girl who should have had a whole lifetime ahead of her.

Jodie Oakley hasn't given up hope of finding her sister's body. Julie went missing August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006.

She was a mother with two young children. Jodie believes that someone who knew Julie very well, who had threatened and abused her in the past, is responsible and she is frustrated that nothing seems to be happening with the investigation. With great courage, Jodi does what she can to keep attention focused on her sister's disappearance. She puts up signs but they get torn down. "They tell you not to do things on your own but I don't want to be nice anymore."

These two families told their stories to a Vancouver Sun reporter and to the coordinators of the Walk for Justice who came to the Women's Centre in Quesnel November 26. The families stressed how hurtful the misconception is that women and girls who are missing and murdered lived risky lifestyles has been for them.

Oddly, it is easier to blame the victims because if it weren't something they did, the rest of us would have to face the fact that this could happen to anyone, to us. It is important to be clear that violence is the responsibility of the perpetrator alone.

Both families expressed frustration with the apparent lack of progress on the cases. They are rarely told anything about what the police are doing or not doing. Information they provide seems to go into a black hole. When will there be justice for their loved ones?



**Jodie Oakley, Paula Braem and Jim Braem talked to a Vancouver Sun reporter on November 26. All three are frustrated by what they perceive is a lack of progress trying to find their missing loved ones killers.**

### **Protecting Vulnerable Adults con't from page 4**

The Quesnel Community Response Network (QCRN) participates on the Adult Services team of the Quesnel Child Youth and Family Network. We are sponsored by the North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society. The QCRN is a member of the BC Association of Community Response Networks.

If anyone wants to join the QCRN call Donna ( 250 992 9160) at the North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society for information re. upcoming meetings. It is important that we raise awareness and initiate programs to protect vulnerable adults and seniors in Quesnel from abuse, neglect or self neglect.

Chris Dunlop

Legal Information  
Advocate

Friendship Centre



**Drop In Hours:** 9:00—4:00,

Tuesday—Friday

**690 McLean Street**

**Quesnel, BC 250 992 8472**

**We're on the Web:**  
[www.qwrc.ca](http://www.qwrc.ca)

Collective Wisdom has been written by the  
QWRC Women's Writing Collective

## What's Happening at the Centre

**Groups: Free of charge**

**Self-esteem and assertiveness:** Currently a group is underway.  
Call the Centre to be put on the waitlist for Spring 2010.

**Anger Management Training:** This new group starts January  
12th, at 10 AM. Call to reserve a spot.

**Memorial for the Montreal Massacre:**

**WHEN:** Dec. 4th, Friday from 12:00—2:00.

**WHERE:** At the Women's Centre

**WHAT:** Lunch and Highway of Tears video.

Everyone is welcome

**Luna Wellness Clinic:**

Drop in, QWRC, Thursdays 12– 4 PM

### **LEGAL AID CLINIC:**

Tuesday and Thursday morning, 8:30 – 12:30

342 Kinchant Street

Call 250-992-8387 to see Nancy, the intake worker, about whether, based on your income and the seriousness of the situation, you are eligible to have a lawyer paid to work on your case.

### **Sticks and Stones *Continued from page 2***

She had no visible bruises; just those inside her. \no broken bones, just a broken when she was in that vulnerable state, her spirit, all brought about by years of being told by her husband that she was not good enough, smart enough to do anything right. Complete control was his goal and he achieved it.

She also hadn't noticed the growing isolation from her friends and her family \he convinced her that her friends were boring, therefore unpleasant to visit for him. \her family lived in places he didn't like to visit. His family and his friends, of course, were great people and were constantly visited.

If anyone around her noticed the isolation or the change in her personality, nothing was ever said.

The abusive words were not used except at home at first. \no one ever heard a bad word said to wife and children, but eventually after many years, his guard was dropped. The abuse was said out loud in front of others, but by then her self-esteem had sunk so low that she even defended his words as being a joke and meaning nothing.

Looking back now, she often thinks that it would have been better if he had used physical violence because then others may have noticed and helped her. She may even have left by herself to escape the pain.

The way out of her nightmare happened when she had finally sunk into deep depression, causing her to be unable to work or function normally. Her husband left her after revealing his affair. Instead of being a relief, this only added salt to the wound.

She took a long time to heal from this emotional battering, but looking back now, she realizes she is alive and herself again. Free to be who and what she wants to be.

Abuse of any kind is not acceptable.