

**16 DAYS**

**OF**

*Activism*

**AGAINST  
GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE**



**NOVEMBER 25 -  
DECEMBER 10, 2024**



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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.

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.

## WE REMEMBER

the victims of the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre:

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.

## COMMEMORATIVE DATES

**November 25:** International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

**November 29:** International Women Human Rights Defenders 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

# 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” ([UN Women](#)).



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## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TAKES MANY FORMS:

- domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV)
- sexual harassment or assault
- child marriage
- psychological or emotional abuse
- human trafficking
- financial/economic 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 ([Government of Canada, 2024](#)).

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# TERMS TO KNOW

## COLONIALISM

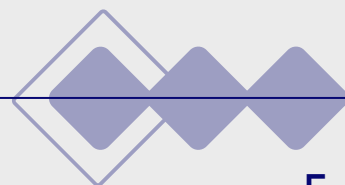
“The attempted or actual imposition of policies, laws, the economies, cultures or systems, and institutions put in place by settler governments to support and continue the occupation of Indigenous territories, the subjugation of Indigenous nations, and the resulting internalized and externalized thought patterns that support this occupation and subjugation” (National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017).

## 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” (Government of Canada, 2023).

## 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 used to refer to someone (usually a person who identifies as a man) who is “involuntarily celibate” (Beauchamp, 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 (Halls, 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

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## 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” ([Government of Canada, 2023](#)). 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” ([UN Women](#)).

## 2SLGBTQQA+

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.



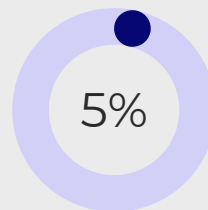
Source: Mike McArthur/CBC

# VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

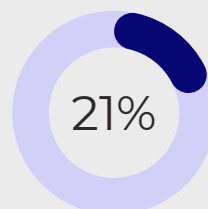
Gender-based violence has a disproportionate impact on Indigenous women and girls in Canada. From 2009 to 2021, the homicide rate against First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women and girls was six times higher than the rate among their non-Indigenous counterparts ([Statistics Canada, 2023](#)). Indigenous 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 30% of all women in Canada ([Statistics Canada, 2020](#)).

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

-[National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls](#)



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 2019 ([Government of Canada, 2024](#)).





# VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

Violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals 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 (National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019)



Source: Spencer Colby/The Canadian Press

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” (National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019).

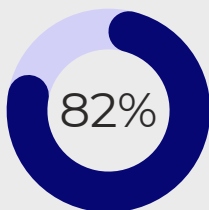




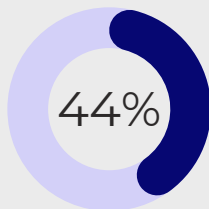
# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

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. While politicians of all backgrounds and identities are facing increasing aggression—particularly on social media—women, Indigenous people, members of 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, and racialized individuals are more frequently subjected to identity-focused attacks. These attacks are often graphic in sexuality, gender, and race-based insults and focus on physical appearances. This violence can have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of women in politics (Raney et al., 2019).

## A 2016 GLOBAL SURVEY FOUND:



82% of women parliamentarians experienced psychological violence.



Among them, 44% received threats of death, rape, beatings, or kidnapping.

**“IF YOU’RE A WOMAN...EXPERIENCING NEGATIVITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA, THAT NEGATIVITY BY FAR AND AWAY TARGETS YOUR SOCIAL IDENTITY, IN A WAY THAT’S NOT THE CASE FOR WHITE MEN...IT’S NOT JUST GENERAL NEGATIVITY ABOUT NOT LIKING THEIR POLITICAL POSITION, IT’S NOT LIKING THEM BECAUSE THEY ARE WOMEN OR BECAUSE THEY ARE RACIALIZED WOMEN.”**

*-Erin Tolley, Canada Research Chair in Gender, Race, and Inclusive Politics*

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

VAW-P 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.

**“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, Senator and former Mayor of Banff

In June 2024, The Canadian Association of Feminist Politicians launched “a parliamentarian-led initiative to call for improvements to our workplace with respect to harassment and civility.” They created a pledge and asked MPs to sign it, to commit to calling out harassment and abuse when they see or experience it and support women in office.

CFUW is also encouraging our Clubs, members, and allies to

**write to your local representatives** 

to urge them to stand against violence and harassment of women in politics and to promote and practise greater civility.

# GUN VIOLENCE

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Gun violence is not only a public safety issue—it’s a gender-based violence issue too. The presence of guns 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 (Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission, 2023). In rural Canada—where the risk of gender-based and intimate partner violence is particularly high—firearms are the most common method used to kill an intimate partner or child (Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative, 2021).

Furthermore, there is an established link between gender-based violence and mass shootings. A United States study found that more than two-thirds of mass shootings are domestic violence incidents or are perpetrated by individuals with a history of domestic violence (Geller, Booty, and Crifasi, 2021). This has been the case in many mass shootings in Canada, often with red flags not being taken seriously enough in the lead-up to the killings, such as in the Portapique massacre, the Desmond family shooting, and the Sault Ste. Marie mass shooting.

Guns are also used as tools to intimidate, control, and coerce. They can make it dangerous and difficult for women to leave abusive situations, thereby forcing them to remain in situations where the safety and wellbeing of themselves and/or their children is at risk.

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**“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

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN GUN CONTROL IN CANADA:

Following the Portapique massacre, the federal government prohibited over 1,500 models of assault-style firearms from being used, sold, or imported in May 2020. We are in an “amnesty” period in which current owners of prohibited firearms can continue to own the weapons until October 30, 2025.

As a part of its ban on assault-style firearms, the government plans to implement a buyback program. However, the program’s development has been slow and mired with problems, including heavy opposition from firearms industry groups. Gun control activists are concerned that the buyback program will not be in place before the next election.

Additionally, in October 2022, a national “freeze” on the sale, purchase, or transfer of handguns came into effect.

**Bill C-21 received royal assent in December 2023.** The law:

- Codified the national handgun freeze into law
- Increased penalties for firearms smuggling and trafficking
- Introduced 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

Bill C-21 contained several important intimate partner violence-related provisions that have not yet been implemented through new regulations, and thus are not in effect. These include:

- Individuals subject to a protection order or convicted of domestic violence are ineligible for a firearms licence
- Automatic revocation of an individual's firearms licence if they are subject to a protection order
- An individual's firearms licence must be revoked if a Chief Firearms Officer reasonably suspects them of domestic violence or stalking

In June 2024, the National Association of Women and the Law and PolySeSouvient published a brief, endorsed by CFUW, calling on the government to introduce the regulations and implementation protocols needed to ensure Bill C-21 is effective.



# 16 Ways to Take Action

1

Write to your city's Mayor urging them to light City Hall/public buildings in purple or orange throughout the 16 Days to raise awareness about gender-based violence. Download a template letter for CFUW Clubs [here](#).

5

Call out gendered violence when you see it: counter victim-blaming and the idea that it is women and girls' responsibility to avoid "dangerous" situations. Read this resource on "[How to be an Active Bystander in 6 Steps](#)."

2

Donate to or volunteer at a women's shelter, sexual assault or crisis centre, or an Indigenous women's support centre in your community.

6

Wear a [white ribbon](#) and plan or attend a vigil on December 6, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

3

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

7

Write a letter to your representatives urging them to stand against violence against women, harassment, and toxicity in politics. Download a template letter [here](#).

4

Wear purple on November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to raise awareness.

8

Write an op-ed or letter to the editor in your local media outlet to raise awareness about gender-based violence and ways to combat it.



# 16 Ways to Take Action

9

Support survivors of gender-based violence. Tell them “I believe 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.

13

Encourage women to get involved with politics and support them as candidates. Call out and report misogynistic, racist, and homophobic comments made towards women in politics, and commit to civility in your interactions with politicians and candidates.

10

Reach out to Indigenous community partners about hanging red dresses in your area to raise awareness about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, as a part of the [REDress Project](#).

14

Host kitchen table talks with your friends or CFUW Club members to discuss gender-based violence issues, how they affect your local community, and what you can do to support survivors and end the violence.

11

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

15

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

12

Meet with your MP to express your concerns about gun violence in Canada and affirm your support for strict gun control measures.

16

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



# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

## BOOKS

- [“Unbroken”](#) by Angela Sterritt
- [“Know My Name: A Memoir”](#) by Chanel Miller
- [“Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence”](#) by Anita Hill
- [“For the Love of Men: From Toxic to a More Mindful Masculinity”](#) by Liz Plank
- [“The Break”](#) by Katherena Vermette
- [“Nobody’s Victim: Fighting Psychos, Stalkers, Pervs, and Trolls”](#) by Carrie Goldberg
- [“The Power of Women: A Doctor’s Journey of Hope and Healing”](#) by Denis Mukwege
- [“Highway of Tears”](#) by Jessica McDiarmid

## FILMS/VIDEOS/PODCASTS

- [“The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open”](#) by Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers and Kathleen Hepburn
- [“A Comprehensive Guide to Campus Gender-Based Violence Complaints”](#) by Courage to Act
- [“The ‘Victim’ Onscreen and How She’s Been Misrepresented”](#) by The Take
- [“Welcome to Paradise”](#) by Anna Maria Tremonti
- [“Missing and Murdered”](#) by CBC

## REPORTS

- [“Preventing Intimate Partner Violence in Two-Spirit, Nonbinary, and Trans Communities and Supporting Survivors”](#) by the TransFormed Project
- [“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
- [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)
- [Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving the Representation of Women in Canadian Politics; Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#)



# CRISIS RESOURCES

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## CANADA

- Assaulted Women's Helpline: Phone: 1-866-863-0511; Text: #SAFE (#7233)
- Shelter Safe (to find a shelter near you)
- Hope for Wellness (for Indigenous people): Phone: 1-855-242-3310
- iHEAL app

## ALBERTA

- Family Violence Info Line: Phone: 310-1818
- Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence: Phone/Text: 1-866-403-8000

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Victim Link BC: Phone: 1-800-563-0808

## MANITOBA

- Domestic Violence Crisis Line, Family Violence Prevention Program: Phone: 1-877-977-0007

## NEW BRUNSWICK

- CHIMO Helpline: Phone: 1-800-667-5005

## NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

- End Sexual Violence Centre: Phone: 1-800-726-2743

## NOVA SCOTIA

- Transition House Association of Nova Scotia
- Neighbour Friends and Family Line (Provincial Government): Phone: 1-855-225-0220

## ONTARIO

- Ontario Victim Support Line: Phone: 1-888-579-2888
- Phone: 211
- Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres
- Femaide (Francophone survivors): Phone/Text: 1-877-336-2433

## PEI

- PEI Family Violence Prevention Services Inc.: Phone: 1-800-240-9894

## QUEBEC

- SOS violence conjugale: Phone: 1-800-363-9010; Text: 438-601-1211; Online chat: <https://www.resourceconnect.com/sosvc/chat>
- Sexual Violence Helpline: Phone: 1-888-933-9007

## SASKATCHEWAN

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

See further services [here](#).




# cfuw fcfd

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