



Rory Begin holds a sign of peace as he takes part in the march and vigil to end violence against women and militarism on Monday afternoon. (Richard MacKenzie photo)

March in the name of peace

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Those enjoying their lunch in downtown Antigonish Monday might have noticed a group marching up Main Street from Chisholm Park to St. James United Church.

Or maybe they heard the singing?

Both were part of the peace march and vigil to end violence against women and militarism which was put on as a combined effort by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) and the Naomi Society.

The activities were held in conjunction with International Women Human Rights Defenders Day (Nov. 29), a day set aside to recognize women human rights defenders and commemorate activism, advocacy and courageous acts of resistance.

The global day of action is part of the 16 Days Campaign which takes place annually for the period beginning on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (Nov. 25) and continues through International Human Rights Day (Dec. 10).

As part of the local event, the group gathered in the church hall following the march to hear St. FX. professor Nancy Forestell talk about militarism in our society and the role it can play in violence against women.

Militarism, which has a wide range of definitions ranging from the belief or desire of a government or people that a country should maintain a strong military presence to the glorification of military, is playing a role in Canadian society Forestell said, as our involvement in Afghanistan continues.

Some of those in attendance also took part in adding to a large mural which will be

displayed first at the AWRC and then at Naomi Society.

"It was for anyone who wanted to paint images or messages of peace and hope," Krista DeCoste from AWRC said. "It's always great to see what people can do when they come together."

DeCoste was very pleased by the turnout for the march and vigil and her thoughts were echoed by Naomi Society crisis counsellor Nicole Mann.

"It was fantastic," Mann said. "The support we received. Just walking down the street, people joined us, they sang and celebrated with us."

Mann said the occasion is an important time to bring awareness to the fact that

violence against women is an all too common problem which is evident by how much work she and her colleagues take on.

"We work with women and children who are involved in family violence, and we do it every day," she said. "We work with a lot of families, so it's important to have a day where we can have people become more knowledgeable about what is happening in their own community."

As for an overall message, Mann said it's about stopping the violence all together.

"It's for every person, man, woman, child to live free of violence. That's really our message today."