

80 Turn Out for Local Vigil Program

by Dawn Currie

Some 80 individuals took time out from the pre-Christmas rush last Friday, December 6, to attend the mid-day Vigil remembering those who are victims of violence. The federal government proclaimed December 6 National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Last Friday was the second anniversary of the Montreal massacre where 14 young women, students at Montreal Polytechnique, were indiscriminately killed by Marc Lepine.

The local Vigil took place in St. James United Church Hall, with the Antigonish Women's Association and the Naomi Society for victims of family violence co-ordinating the program.

In her introduction, Naomi executive director Dorothea Gilson explained, "The co-ordinators of this Vigil invite everyone here today to remember the 14 women who were massacred in Montreal on December 6, 1989, by Marc Lepine. We are also here to commemorate the 13 women who were murdered in Nova Scotia since 1988. Only four out of the 13 perpetrators have gone undetected by the police. The remaining nine perpetrators were either husbands, partners or boyfriends."

As 13 candles were lit, Gilson continued, "Today we are here to remember the pain of loved ones left behind, mothers, daughters, grandparents sons...We cannot bring back these women. We know that in death these women cannot speak out against violence against women, but we also know that those of us remaining can and in fact are doing so."

"Today we are also here to remember the women who remain in danger: the women who remain in abusive marriages and relationships; the young women whose boyfriends are abusive; the women who are sexually assaulted. The numbers are too great to overlook...one in 10 women is battered by a partner, one in four women will be sexually assaulted sometime in her life, 75% of men who abuse their wives witnessed family violence as children. In Canada, on average, 100 women are murdered each year by their male partners or ex-partners and the statistics go on."

"Today through a community effort

we know that we can make a difference. Each participant here, whether an agency representative, or a concerned citizen, is making a difference. We share our concerns openly, we work towards ending family violence, we speak within our communities, to colleagues in our work places, we share, and as a consequence we increase awareness and education."

"All gathered here today know that this must continue so that more people will recognize what is happening to women and as a result be prepared to take action. Violence against women must stop, let us continue to work towards doing just that."

Others participating in the meditation included:

Town councillor Kay Chisholm who stressed that "working together we can promote harmony built on mutual respect and trust."

Warden Hyland Fraser referred to December 6, 1989, as one of the saddest days this country has ever had. He said, "Men and women were created to complement one another. What an awful price to pay to bring about this awareness. It is a sad situation if we haven't learned the lesson of two years ago."

Cameron MacDougall, social worker with Family Service of Antigonish, recalled a tragedy which left three young children suffering. He said that the roots of violence are multi-causal. Violence needs to be addressed on many fronts, because it touches many lives. Hurt people, hurt people," he stressed.

Psychologist with the Antigonish District School Board Doreen Smith reminded the assembly that children imitate what they see. She also said that children are the silent victims of violence.

St. Ninian's CWL member Margaret Briand reminded the gathering that one root of violence is pornography.

Rev. Robert MacNeil pointed to awareness and education as necessary to address the issue of violence. He said that we must realize what constitutes a full human being. "No one of us ought to dominate or have power over another human being. We must work together to develop qualities that make for a full human being," he added.

Psychologist with the mental health



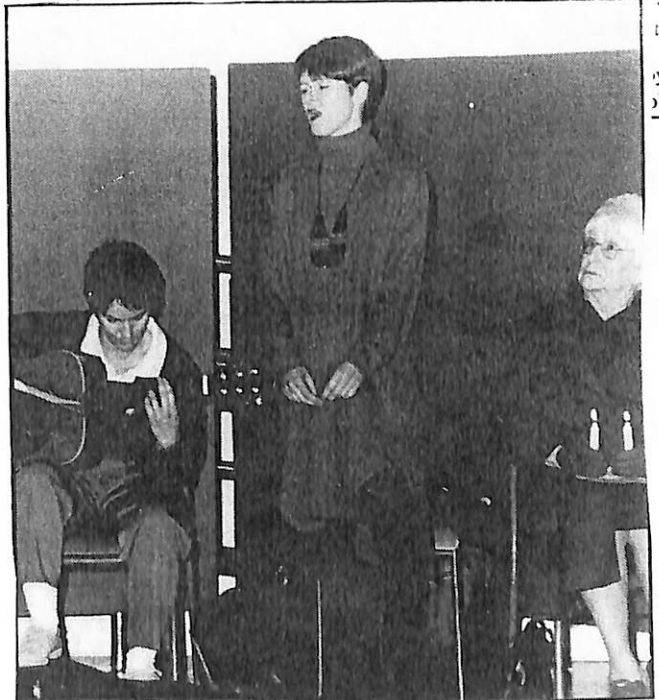
STAFF MEMBERS of the Naomi Society for victims of family violence Brenda Silver (left) and Jean Crosby participated in the mid-day vigil held at St. James United Church on December 6. The 13 candles which they lit were symbolic of the 13 Nova Scotia women who died as a result of violence since 1988. Approximately 75 attended the mid-day meditation which remembered the 14 young women murdered at Montreal Polytechnique, December 6, 1989.

department at St. Martha's Regional Hospital Sister Jean Collins, csm, commented on the repercussions of acts of violence. She mentioned that most patients she sees are women and half of these are sexually abused as children. "One act can devastate several lives," she said.

United Church minister Shelagh McCulloch-Taylor pointed out that violence often comes from a society responding to patriarchy and imperialism, rather than to the life of Christ. "We must grow toward a faith expressed in solidarity with those who

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Last Friday was also the anniversary of the Montreal massacre, and several events were held in the community in commemoration of the 14 young women who lost their lives to indiscriminate violence two years ago. County folks joined many of the representatives from town at a mid-day vigil at St. James United Church to meditate on violence,



especially against women. County resident Emmy Alcorn (center), accompanied by Katherine Reed (left), offered a musical heartfelt plea to 'Believe in Humanity'. Lucile Sanderson (right) also participated in the meditation.