



Those who took part in a vigil at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women included Krista DeCoste (left), Wyanne Sandler, Martha White, Jean Crosby, Wendy Panagopoulos, Darlene Rushton and Vangie Babin. The women are seen next to a tree tied with purple ribbons in honour of those women who have lost their lives to violence, and those still living with the effects of violence. (Heather MacAdam photo)

Vigil sheds light on violence against women

by Heather MacAdam

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A small but mighty vigil of remembrance and action against violence towards women was held at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre on Friday night.

The event marked the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, which is Dec. 6. Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, the day marks the anniversary of the massacre in 1989 of 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. They died because they were women.

Locally, women gathered to remember and share thoughts and experiences, as well as honour all women who lost their lives to violence and recognize those still living with it.

Women were encouraged to tie a purple ribbon, the symbol of the day, to a tree and share their thoughts.

Participants also lit a candle and sang a special version of *This Little Light of Mine*.

Darlene Rushton said she

has attended the service at the Women's Resource Centre every year since moving back to the area from Toronto – about five years ago.

"Once I became involved with the Women's Resource Centre, I found I was more aware and I just felt it was the proper thing to do – to be more aware and to be a part of it."

Having seen violence against women all her life, Rushton said she wants it to stop.

"This is the best way – to be involved and be proud of your purple ribbon. There is meaning for it."

Rushton said it makes her especially happy to see men wearing the purple ribbon.

Talking about it is one of the best ways to prevent it, she added.

"Not everyone is educated on it. So if someone asks you why you have a purple ribbon on, tell them about it."

A ceremony was also held at Province House in Halifax on Friday.

"Violence against women affects our ability to achieve equality," Carolyn Bolivar-

Getson, minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, said. "We worry about how we dress, where we go and with whom, how we will get there and back. Fear of violence limits our lives and shrinks our daily existence."

Statistics presented by the advisory council state: two-thirds of spousal violence incidents are not reported to police; aboriginal women are at least three times more likely to have experienced spousal violence than non-aboriginal women; about 88 percent of sexual assaults in Canada are not reported to police. In more than two-thirds of reported cases, victims know the accused. Forty-four percent of all victims are younger than 25; about two-thirds of calls that come to the Nova Scotia Senior Abuse line are from women; between 1975 and 2007, there were 90 spousal homicides in Nova Scotia. In 66 of these cases (73 percent), the victims were women.

More information is available at women.gov.ns.ca/pubFactSheets.asp.