

# Remembering for a purpose

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It was an event to remember and honour those affected by violence against women.

Dec. 6 was the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women and an event was held locally at the StFX Schwartz School of Business auditorium.

Dec. 6 was the date, in 1989, that 14 young women were murdered at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. In 1991, the Parliament of Canada established the remembrance and action day.

The afternoon event in Antigonish was organized through a partnership that included the Naomi Society, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC), the StFX office of human rights and equity advisor and the StFX student union.

StFX student leaders Dayna Barnes, Charlton Elliott and Bilha Ndomo took on the role of emcee for the event and they introduced nine speakers to the stage.

Speaking at the event were; Lori Castle - outreach worker with the Naomi Society, Frank Comeau - Chair of Engineering

at StFX (who presented General Motors women in science award and memorial scholarship for women in engineering to students Erin Carroll and Erin Aucoin), Rex Delanyo - Coady International Institute participant, Marie Brunelle - StFX human rights and equity advisor, Laura Swaine - project co-ordinator for healthy relationships for youth, Annie Chau - project co-ordinator for preventing violence against women StFX, Murdock MacLellan - StFX student-athlete leader, Cst. Michael McKenna - RCMP community policing officer and Molly Peters - Aboriginal student advisor StFX.

The well-attended event also featured a candle lighting ceremony for participants, as well as for audience members, and concluded with an opportunity to socialize while enjoying snacks and beverages.

"Today's ceremony is so important and it's such an honour to be a part of it," Swaine said as the auditorium emptied following the ceremony.

"I think it's great to highlight the good work that is already being done in our communities and to [encourage people] keep supporting it."

Swaine talked about her work which is about prevention and focuses on youth.

"I'm doing healthy relationships for youth program across the province," she said. "We're in several school boards right now and our program works with youth to train them to work towards skills and understanding about the root causes of violence and help them take action against that."

"You have to start with prevention ... getting to youth and creating an understanding and ability, before they become adults, so they can take action at an earlier age."

Chau, who works out of the AWRC, said she was pleased the focus was on remembering "for a purpose."

"For the purpose of action and highlighting the really positive programs and initiatives that are happening at StFX and around Antigonish," she said.

She talked about the fact many in attendance were university students who weren't born in 1989 so it's important to reflect on the tragedy and help them to understand the issue historically.

"Taking what happened in 1989, on this day, to the

present," she said. "I hope people left acknowledging this is still a big issue and that there are positive programs happening to address it ... [programs] they can be involved in," she said.

Peters, who offered amongst her words a Mi'kmaq prayer, noted she does get emotional at the event.

"As I'm sitting through the ceremony, all of these other stories come through," Peters said. "And I was even asking myself, when is the first time I dealt with this violence ... sexual violence against women, domestic violence or just violence? All

those things start to come back and ever since then [when she first dealt with it] I've always asked 'why?'"

She said it's that exploration which brings about the emotion.

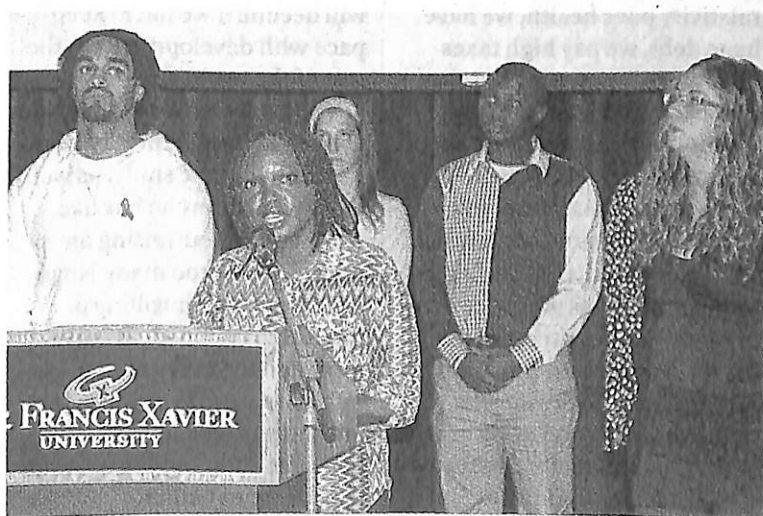
"So I've asked a lot of questions and had to find my own answers," Peters, who talked about murdered Mi'kmaq women Nora Bernard and Annie Mae Aquash in her speech, said.

"Whether spiritually or historically, with the history of Aboriginal people in Canada, in order to understand why there is this violence to begin with. It's what gets me emotional."

*The Casket*



Audience members light candles at the conclusion of the ceremony last Friday (Dec. 6) afternoon to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. The event was held at the StFX Schwartz School of Business auditorium. PHOTO: Richard MacKenzie



Emcee Bilha Ndomo, with fellow emcees and student leaders Charlton Elliott (left) and Dayna Barnes beside her, addresses the audience on hand for a ceremony last Friday (Dec. 6) afternoon to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. PHOTO: Richard MacKenzie