

Timeline: 20 Years After the Montreal Massacre - The PEI Story

Prior to 1989, women and their allies across Canada and on Prince Edward Island were already working hard to prevent violence against women. They had already responded with grief and with action to earlier murders of women. They had fought for changes to laws and government services. They had worked together to set up supports such as an emergency women's shelter and a rape crisis centre for the Island.

The 1989 Montreal Massacre reminded women how much remained to be done to end violence against women. It brought people together to mourn and work for change with a new sense of urgency and purpose. In the last 20 years, the efforts of women and others in the community have led to improvements. But even while these improvements were taking place, seven women on the Island were murdered by men in their lives.

1989

A 27 year-old woman, is killed by her estranged husband in Summerside.

Victim Services (the PEI government's support system for victims of violence and crime) begins operating province-wide.

The Province of PEI establishes a Committee on Family Violence Prevention.

In Montreal, 14 women are murdered at l'École Polytechnique. PEI women's organizations hold vigils across the Island.

1990

The first anniversary of the Montreal Massacre brings together people from all across Prince Edward Island to express their continuing sadness and shock. Memorial services inspire people's commitment to work together to end violence against women.

1991

Response to the Massacre and to the local murders starts to take solid form. PEI sets up an inquiry, the McQuaid Inquiry, to explore how the police and the courts deal with intimate partner violence and violence within families.

The Province of PEI creates a position for a Provincial Family Violence Coordinator.

Community consultations on family violence take place across PEI.

A 36 year-old woman, is murdered by a neighbour and acquaintance in Charlottetown.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women begins the Purple Ribbon Campaign Against Violence.

1992 -1993

Work continues. The RCMP sponsors training on family violence in 1993 to improve police responses.

1994

A conference reveals the results of Island-wide consultations about Family Violence. A Sex Offender Program gets set up for the province.

A 32 year-old woman, a victim of well-documented violence and abuse by her estranged common-law partner, goes missing on October 3 in the west end of PEI.

1995

The 32 year-old woman's body is found in May.

The Province of PEI creates a Family Violence Consultant staff position.

Shocked by two murders in two years, PEI's Premier, Catherine Callbeck, appoints a Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention (PAC) to come up with a five-year strategy against violence.



1996

The Premier's Action Committee directs new money to the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre and Transition House Association to increase services.

Island MLAs pass a new law, the PEI Victims of Family Violence Act, which includes among other things provisions for victims to apply for Emergency Protection Orders or Victim Assistance Orders to have the offender removed from the family home.

1997

Atlantic Canada provinces proclaim a designated week each February as Family Violence Prevention Week.

Turning Point Program (for abusive men) is offered for the first time in western and eastern PEI.

1998

A woman, age 77, is murdered by acquaintance and past-neighbour, a 20 year-old man, in Charlottetown.

1999

Women's groups present *Herstory: A Report on Woman Abuse and the PEI Legal System*. Women who experienced abuse tell their stories about what supports they needed to end the violence in their lives and receive justice. Some of these supports were available to them. Some were not.

Community members start the Justice Options for Women Who Are Victims of Violence project to recommend changes to the justice system.

2000

Victim impact statements are read in PEI courts for the first time.

The Province conducts a Family Violence survey across the Island and establishes a Victims' Roundtable on Criminal Justice.

A woman, age 45, is murdered by her estranged common-law partner, in Summerside.

A woman, age 30, is murdered by her common-law partner, in Cardigan.

2001

PEI develops and begins to use Woman Abuse Protocols (step-by-step guidelines for supporting and helping abused women) for hospital emergency rooms, income assistance and justice-related services.

A woman, age 46, is murdered by her ex common-law partner, in Stratford.

Concerned citizens hold weekly demonstrations for months at the Provincial Courthouse to protest the light sentencing (short jail times and other punishments) of those found guilty of murdering women.

The Premier's Action Committee holds community forums across the Island.

Premier Pat Binns renews the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention for another five years.

2002

A woman, age 23, is murdered by an acquaintance and left on the Confederation Trail in Charlottetown.



2003

A man is found guilty of the 2001 murder of the 46 year-old woman. The decision makes legal history in two ways. It is the first conviction in Canada of first degree murder on the grounds of stalking a victim. It is also the first conviction for first degree murder in Prince Edward Island. (No one had been convicted of first degree murder on PEI since the law was changed from the older crime of "capital murder" in the 1970s.)

2004

The union UPSE creates the first PEI "Silent Witness" silhouette. The "Silent Witness" symbol becomes an important part of public events remembering murdered women and raising awareness about violence.

2005

S.A.V.E. (Students Against Violence Everywhere) forms its first group on PEI in Montague.

A report on *Police Response to Domestic Violence: A Provincial Overview* is released with more recommendations of how to respond better to violence.

2006 - 2007

Women in the community create the first Circle of Safety and Support, (a circle of people such as violence prevention workers, friends, neighbours, police, school officials, and government workers) to help a woman in danger of violence to make plans to keep herself and her family safe.

Sisters in Spirit Vigils, to remember missing and murdered Aboriginal women, take place across Canada, including PEI. A national report highlights that more than 500 Aboriginal women are known to be missing or murdered across Canada.

2008

Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter opens on Lennox Island.

Violence prevention services from across PEI (Transition House Association, East Prince Family Violence Prevention Services, West Prince Family Violence Prevention and Eastern PEI Family Violence Prevention) merge into a provincial organization. The organization is renamed PEI Family Violence Prevention Services Inc.

2009

People from across Prince Edward Island look back over the 20 years since the Montreal Massacre and continue to work for changes to laws, services, and supports for women so that no more Island women and families live in violence - or die by it.

