



Overview of Violence Against Women Prevention Activities on PEI: 1989 to 2009



**Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women
February 2010**



Overview of Violence Against Women Prevention Activities on PEI: 1989 to 2009

Please note: There have been many initiatives in the past 20 years by both government and community, and some may be missing from this overview. If you know of an initiative that you would like to see included, please contact the office of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

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 men 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

- The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women releases *Believe Her! A Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse of Women and Children*.
- Victim Services (the PEI government’s support system for victims of violence and crime) begins operating province-wide.
- Victims of Crime Act was proclaimed.

Carrie Ellen McMurrer, age 27, is shot and killed by her estranged husband, Kevin Kenneth McMurrer in Summerside.

- The Province of PEI establishes an Inter-ministerial Committee on Family Violence Prevention.

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

- Island 24-hour Help Line is established providing information; support; and crisis counseling on family matters, child abuse, alcohol and drugs, parenting, and suicide.
- PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre establishes a 24-hour crisis line for victims of rape and sexual assault.

1990

- The Province of PEI appoints specialized crown attorneys to prosecute sexual assault offenses.
- A full-time therapist is hired at the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre.

1991

- The Province of PEI sets up the McQuaid Inquiry to look into police and Department of Justice policies and procedures in cases of inter-spousal and intra-family violence.
- The Province of PEI creates a Family Violence Prevention Coordinator staff position.





- The newly established Partners for Prevention Committee holds community consultations on family violence in six locations across PEI.

Elaine Edith Myers, age 36, is stabbed multiple times and has her throat slashed by neighbour and acquaintance Roger Lee Burke, in Charlottetown.

- The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women initiates its first Purple Ribbon Campaign Against Violence.
- The Provincial Child Sexual Abuse Advisory Committee is established.

1992

- Eastern PEI community establishes a Family Violence Prevention Committee.

1993

- The RCMP begins to sponsor family violence training.
- Victims of Family Violence Priority Placement Policy is implemented, giving victims priority placement in provincially administered social housing.

1994

- Partners for Prevention host a conference and present their final report.

Shirley Ann Duguay, age 32, a victim of well-documented violence and abuse by her estranged common-law partner, goes missing on October 3 in Richmond.

- The Province of PEI establishes a Sex Offender Program.

1995

In May, Shirley Ann Duguay's battered and beaten body is found in a shallow grave in North Enmore.

- Eastern PEI Family Violence Prevention Committee hires an outreach worker.
- PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre hires a second therapist.
- Premier Catherine Callbeck appoints a Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention (PAC) to coordinate the implementation of the provincial Family Violence Prevention Strategy.
- A Child Sexual Abuse Protocol is endorsed by the Province of PEI and PEI Police Services.



1996

- The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention directs new funds to the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre and Transition House Association to increase services.
- The *PEI Victims of Family Violence Act* is proclaimed.
- An outreach worker position is created in Queen's region.

Leo Douglas Beamish is found guilty of the second-degree murder of Shirley Ann Duguay. It is the first time in Canada that animal DNA is admitted as evidence linking the accused to the crime.

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

Della Waddell, age 77, is stabbed and bludgeoned to death by acquaintance and past-neighbour, 21 year-old Edmond John Aylward, Charlottetown.

1999

- Women's groups present *herStory: A Report on Woman Abuse and the PEI Legal System*.
- A workshop is held about abuse of older adults.
- Community members start the Justice Options for Women Who Are Victims of Violence project.

2000

- Victim impact statements are read in PEI courts for the first time at the sentencing of Edmond Aylward for the murder of Della Waddell.
- The Province of PEI conducts a PEI family violence survey.
- The Victim Services Advisory Committee releases a report *Family Violence and the Justice System Response*.

Mary Waite, age 45, is beaten to death by her estranged common-law partner John William Fennell, in Summerside.



- Woman Abuse Protocols (step by step guidelines for supporting and helping abused women) are developed and implemented for income assistance and Victim Services.

Kimberly Ann Byrne, age 30, is beaten to death by her common-law partner Frederick Francis Sheppard, in Cardigan.

2001

- Woman Abuse Protocols are developed and implemented for police, Community and Correctional Services, the Community Justice Resource Centre, Family Court and Turning Point.

Deborah Holmes, age 46, is murdered with an axe and hatchet by her ex common-law partner James Barry Bradley, in Stratford.

- The *Victims of Family Violence Act* is evaluated.
- The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention releases *Best Practices for Workplace Promotion of Violence Prevention*.
- Concerned citizens hold weekly demonstrations for months at the Provincial Courthouse to protest the light sentencing (short jail times and other punishments) for those found guilty of murdering women.
- The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention holds community forums across the Island.
- The City of Charlottetown forms a committee to focus on family violence prevention.
- Abuse of Older Persons' consultations are held across the province.
- Premier Pat Binns renews the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention mandate for another five years.

2002

Chrystal Dawn Bearisto, age 23, is beaten and stabbed to death by acquaintance John David Rayner and left on the Confederation Trail in Charlottetown.

- Woman Abuse Protocols are developed and implemented for hospital emergency rooms.
- The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention releases a five-year strategy for family violence prevention, developed with input obtained through the 2001 community forums.





2003

James Barry Bradley is found guilty of first-degree murder in the death of Debbie Holmes. 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. Stalking became grounds for a first-degree murder finding in 1997. It is also the first conviction for first-degree murder in Prince Edward Island. (No one has 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 Attorney General’s Ad Hoc Working Group on Spousal Abuse presents its report and recommendations to the Attorney General and to the Premier’s Action Committee on Family Violence.
- The union UPSE creates the first PEI “Silent Witness” silhouette, in memory of Kimberly Byrne. “The Silent Witness” symbol becomes an important part of public events remembering murdered women and raising awareness about violence.
- The Spousal Abuse Police Charging Policy is reviewed and updated.

2005

- Additional Victim Services workers are hired (one part-time, one full-time).
- 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 recommendations on how to better respond to violence.

2006

- Women in the community create the first Circle of Safety and Support (a collaborative safety planning process for women in crisis).
- Sisters in Spirit Vigils, to remember missing and murdered Aboriginal women, take place across Canada including PEI. A report by Amnesty International highlights that more than 500 Aboriginal women are known to be missing or murdered across Canada.
- Due to on-going conflicts between the PEI Transition House Association Board and regional/ outreach boards, the Province of PEI suspends PEI Transition House Association board activities until further notice.

2007

- The Province of PEI appoints a new board to PEI Transition House Association.
- The Province of PEI appoints a male Interim Executive Director to PEI Transition House Association, a community-based, feminist organization (likely a Canadian first).



2008

- Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women’s Shelter opens on Lennox Island.
- A merger of PEI Transition House Association, East Prince Family Violence Prevention Services, West Prince Family Violence Prevention and Eastern PEI Family Violence Prevention is completed, creating the provincial organization, PEI Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc.
- The Province of PEI increases funding to PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre and Family Violence Prevention Services Inc.

2009

- Premier Robert Ghiz renews the Premier’s Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention for another five years.
- An additional family law legal aid position is added to the Legal Aid office in Summerside.
- People from across Prince Edward Island look back over 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 with violence – or die by it.