

Remember December 6

Concert following memorial used to establish bursary

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Saturday night Nelsonites will remember the day eight years ago when 14 women were separated from their male peers and shot down by a man who hated feminists.

A vigil will be held on Victoria Street next to the library for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, which honors the memory of the 14 female students killed by Marc Lepine at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989.

"It has become a symbolic day about violence against women," said Moe Lyons, women's centre co-ordinator. "It's good to have a day to recognize how prevalent violence against women is in this culture."

The Ministry of Women's Equality estimates that violence against women costs the provincial economy at least \$385 million a year, and according to a Statistics Canada survey many women live in fear of violence — 83 per cent are worried about walking alone to their cars in a parking garage and 39 per cent are afraid just to be home alone at night.

Lyons said December 6 is also important because it's a day to remember the victims of violence, not the perpetrators.

Lyons never says Lepine's name because it bothers her that more people remember Lepine's name than remember the name of even one of the 14 women killed.

"One of the things that I remember, that I'm so aware of, is these women become a number," she said. "They end up being 14 of many faceless victims of violence."

This year there are two events to commemorate December 6 in Nelson.

Shortly after 7 p.m. a candlelight ceremony and speakers will be featured outside on Victoria Street at Stanley.

The vigil will be followed by a concert called "Singing for our Sisters" at the Legion hall, a new event for Nelson. The cost will be \$5 or whatever a person can afford, and the proceeds will be used to establish a bursary for a West Kootenay woman entering a non-traditional field of study.

There are a couple of reasons for the added event, Lyons said.

Last year's vigil at the library was so moving that it was hard to think of a way to keep this December 6 equally powerful, she stated.

The concert also symbolizes a change in the way the day is viewed.

"We wanted to shift it from just a funeral, a memorial of how these women died, to a celebration of how they lived," Lyons explained. Lepine targeted female engineering students in his shooting spree, so Nelson is remembering them with a bursary for women with similar dreams.

The bursary fund was first established last year and some money was collected at the 1996 December 6 vigil; this year organizers hope to collect enough to start awarding the prize.

"We decided this year we would make it a major focus of what we're doing," Lyons said.

The concert, which starts at 8 p.m., will feature singers from Salmo, Nelson, the Slocan Valley and the local Doukhobor community. The Circle, Just Friends, Chakra and the Images Ad Hoc Singers will perform,

with the last group leading a sing-along.

"All the performers are women except in the sing-along. You can sing along if you're a man," Lyons said with a laugh.

Speakers and performers at December 6 events in Nelson have always been female, although men are welcome to attend.

Putting only women up front and centre reinforces the understanding of what happened in 1989, according to Lyons.

"Then you look and see all women, which is what happened," she said. "He ordered the men to one side of the room and women to the other side of the room. It was all women who were killed."

The women killed on December 6, 1989 were Genevieve Bergeron, Nathalie Croteau, Anne-Marie Edward, Barbara Maria Klueznick, Maryse Leclair, Sonia Pelletier, Annie St.-Arneault, Hélène Colgan, Barbara Daigneault, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganier, Anne-Marie Lemay, Michele Richard and Annie Turcotte.