



The Daily Courier

Students at Okanagan College and UBC Okanagan held a remembrance ceremony Thursday to pay tribute to those who died in the 1989 Montreal massacre.

Students mark grim anniversary

By Daily Courier Staff

Women commemorated the Montreal massacre at Okanagan College and UBC Okanagan a week earlier than usual Thursday.

Students and staff usually observe Dec. 6, 1989, the day a deranged gunman killed 14 women at Ecole Polytechnique, by lighting candles, reading out the victims' names and focusing attention on violence against women and girls. They held vigils early this year because no classes are scheduled next Thursday.

"This day is indelibly imprinted on the minds of women and men," said Kathleen Baker, a college student who's trying to start a women's centre on the KLO campus.

"People are aware of what happened Dec. 6, but they often wonder why we continue to mark that day."

Marc Lepine, who was 25 at the time, separated the men from the women and screamed "I hate feminists" before opening fire on the female engineering students. Two years later, Canadian lawmakers declared Dec. 6 a national day of remembrance and

action against violence against women.

Anniversaries of the massacre have spawned rituals of mourning and galvanized women to transform their outrage into changing the status quo. At Okanagan College, women want to set up a refuge where women can go for help and support if they've been assaulted or verbally abused.

"Violence doesn't necessarily happen on campus," said Marlo Edwards, who teaches women's studies.

"We want a women's centre because we have young women who have left home and don't necessarily have a social network or family support that others have."

Andrew Nelson of the college's student union encouraged men to wear white ribbons until Dec. 6 to show their disdain toward violence against women. He challenged men across Canada to do the same.

Nedine Scott, 21, recited facts collected from Statistics Canada: in 2006, 58,000 women and children sought refuge from women's shelters in Canada to escape abusive relationships. Of the women who were abused, 44 per cent said they suffered physical injury, she said.