

## A day to remember and act

December 6th marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada. On this day, we remember the multitude of women who have experienced violence or whose lives have been taken in an act of violence. But beyond remembering, we renew our commitment to act to end violence against women.

In this issue of *the Rose*, several CUPW Sisters have agreed to share very personal and devastating stories of violence. We'd like to thank our Sisters for sharing. We believe these stories will help us in our fight to end violence against women. Because of the personal nature of the stories, all writers will remain anonymous.



## Violence Against Women

Violence against women is never an easy issue to talk about. We sometimes analyse a woman's behaviour by her actions. Yet sometimes those actions reflect violence from her past. Abuse not only leaves a physical and emotional scar on the victim but it leaves a scar on those close to her.

My stepdaughter started to have behavioural issues that I knew were beyond mine and my husband's parental skills. I started to witness extreme aggression, mood swings and her obsession for attention. It was time to call for help.

Some of my worries were put at ease after speaking with

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[www.cupw-sttp.org](http://www.cupw-sttp.org)

CUPE 1979

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## Jessica's Story

the child psychologist. He/she reiterated that certain behaviours were not unusual coming from a child who may have witnessed or loved someone who was a victim of violence.

Writing is a method of healing, so I asked my stepdaughter if she would like others to understand how violence against her mother has impacted her life. This is Jessica's story in her own words. Jessica is 13 years old.

### Jessica's story

*Violence against women is not only wrong but it's disgusting. Men who hurt women just for the hell of it make*

*me sick. I honestly think that just going to jail isn't enough of a punishment. I think they should also be beaten just as bad as the woman they have hurt. But that's just my opinion.*

*When I was younger, my Mom dated this man named Micheal. He seemed so nice and he would always play at the park with me and my little sister. But something about him wasn't right, some days he seemed angry for no reason. Later that year I found out that he beat my Mom. I would always see her with bruises all over her. I would ask her what happened and she would always make up lies like, "I fell". At the time I was around eight years old.*

*Micheal went to jail for what he had done but as soon as he got out he went to my Mom's apartment and he choked her to death and then he stabbed himself with a knife and died. I was nine and*

*my sister was six. Thank goodness he died because if he hadn't I swear I would have killed him.*

*I'm almost 14 now and still to this day what Micheal did is affecting my life. What hurts me most is that stuff like this is happening every day around the world.*

*The exact same thing almost happened to my friend's older sister but she managed to get away when her boyfriend choked her. He is in jail now but eventually he'll be out and the thought of that is scary.*

*Why do men hurt women? I'm not sure, but all I know is that it has to stop because everyday it is ruining women and children's lives.*

Jessica

## Enough is enough

I am writing because I was a victim of psychological abuse which happened to me 18 years ago. I hope this helps someone.

I moved in with my boyfriend who proposed to me in front of our whole church congregation. He was a very sweet and lovely man but very possessive. Whenever I came home he would ask me where I had been and would want to smell my underwear to see if I was having an affair with another man. This went on for about two years. When I argued with him, he would slap me. I was ashamed to tell my friends. Sometimes, he would show up at my work place pretending to give me a ride home. When I came home one day, he told me I smelled like garlic and that I must have gone out with a white man. I felt so diminished that I told him enough is enough. He thought I was joking.

My family and friends supported me and I secured my own place. He tried to beg me but I refused because I did not know if this man would one day take my life.

My advice to anyone in any form of abusive relationship is to get help or opt out before it is too late.

Anonymous



# Date Rape

I was fifteen years old when I started dating. It was the mid-seventies and I lived in the farming community where I had been born and raised. In the small town where I attended school and my parents did their shopping, everyone knew everyone else and there were no “big city” problems, no fear of strangers.

When I began dating “John” my parents were not alarmed, why would they be? He was a nice kid from a good family. True, he was a little older than I, but he was bright, funny and popular with a good future ahead of him. There was no reason at all for Mom and Dad to be concerned about “John”.

The term “date rape” had not yet been invented. The phrase used to describe a woman being sexually assaulted by someone she's dating wouldn't be used for years to come. And yet that was what I experienced on a cold winter night on the prairies all those years ago. I won't go into the details of my experience except to say that it played a part in shaping the woman I would become.

What I remember most about the entire experience as I look back is the dread that someone would find out what had happened. I was terrified at the possibility that I might be pregnant and the relief was over-



whelming when I realized I was not. I had been raped by someone I cared for and trusted and yet I was the one to feel shame.

The first time I heard the expression “date rape” it was like a revelation. There was actually a label for what had happened to me. After years of feeling angry and ashamed, I was finally able to recognize what happened as a crime.

I recently shared this story with my teen-aged daughters and it was a very emotional evening in our home. There were a lot of tears and a lot of questions. They wanted to know if I'm okay now. I was able to truthfully answer yes.

Years have passed since that night on

the prairies and although I will never forget what happened, I won't dwell on it either. The person I am today is the result of my lifetime of experiences. I am a strong independent (some would say stubborn) woman, very grateful for my family and my friends. I speak my mind and am an advocate for women's rights and worker's rights. There are things I would change about my past, but as far as the present is concerned, I wouldn't have it any other way.

\*According to Statistics Canada, only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to police. Only 1% of women who have been sexually assaulted by an acquaintance report the incident to police.

*Anonymous*

## Rose Resource Centre

Check out some of the websites with information on violence against women.

[http://www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/svaw\\_overview.php](http://www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/svaw_overview.php)

Amnesty International Canada's cam-

paign to stop violence against women

[http://www.criaw-icref.ca/factSheets/Violence%20against%20women/Violence%20fact%20sheet\\_e.htm](http://www.criaw-icref.ca/factSheets/Violence%20against%20women/Violence%20fact%20sheet_e.htm)

A fact sheet about violence against women and girls

<http://www.whiteribbon.ca/>

Men working to end men's violence

against women

<http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/background.html>

A description of the Sisters in Spirit program that aims to address the violence facing Aboriginal women

<http://www.wecanbc.ca/>

British Columbia campaign to end violence against women

# It's time to end violence against women

**Prime Minister Harper - it's time to end violence against women.**

On December 6th and on every other day of the year women have a right to be truly safe from violence in our homes, workplaces, and communities.

Individual men have a role in eradicating violence against women.

The Federal Government also has a responsibility in ending violence against women. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's law and order agenda won't stop violence against women. It won't protect one woman from being beaten or raped.

If Stephen Harper is serious about ending violence against women here are some things he could do:

- increase the amount of social housing so women fleeing violence have some place to go,
- implement pay equity legislation so women are financially independent,
- develop a national child care program so both women and their children can be safe,
- improve pensions so older women are not left in poverty,
- stop privatizing health care so women who are physi-



cally of psychological ly battered can receive the help they need,

- provide real legal aid that will help women protect themselves and take action against their abusers,
- improve the immigration system so that women fleeing violence will not be deported,
- hold a full public inquiry into the disappearances and deaths of women from all walks of life from urban and rural communities,
- respect the rights and status of Aboriginal women,
- ensure that federal funds flow to grass roots supports and services such as shelters for abused women, rape crisis centres and culturally-specific violence against women programs,

- restore and increase funding for organizations that advocate and defend women's rights.

Women need real support, not measures that will chip away at our reproductive, legal and economic rights.

Violence against women can be ended. It takes political will.

Stephen Harper has a choice. He can either continue on his agenda of cutbacks, privatization, and deregulation or he can take real measures to end violence against women.