



"Violence against women is the greatest human rights scandal of our times. From birth to death, in times of peace as well as war, women face discrimination and violence at the hands of the state, the community and the family."
from Amnesty International's "Stop Violence Against Women" campaign

December 2005

In 1991, Canada declared December 6th a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. It is the day we commemorate the 14 young women who lost their lives at Montreal's École Polytechnique in 1989. It has become a day when we mourn all women who have been victims of violence.

Violence against women is an international human rights issue that cuts across income, class and cultures. Some groups of women are more vulnerable to violence than others. Aboriginal women, refugee women, racialized women, women with disabilities and older women often have low social and economic status which becomes both a cause and consequence of violence. It is often compounded by a media and public which are indifferent towards those living in the margins of society.

Amnesty International states that young Aboriginal women are five times more likely than other women to die as a result of violence. Their report, *Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada*, takes a close look at the discrimination and violence faced by Aboriginal women. Their findings expose the racism, depth of poverty and marginalization experienced by Aboriginal women in our own country.

According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, more than 500 Aboriginal women have gone missing in the last 20 years, including a number of women from Saskatchewan.

On November 3, 2005, the United Nations Human Rights Committee condemned Canada's "failure to protect Aboriginal women from violence, to address the poverty of Aboriginal women, and to correct overt discrimination in the law." The *Stolen Sisters* report calls for all levels of government to develop a plan of action against violence that ensures the safety and well-being of Aboriginal women.

In Saskatchewan, we have a proud history of supporting human rights, yet it's clear that we must do more to protect those who are most vulnerable. In honouring those women who have been victims of violence, let us work towards ensuring that the promise of equality becomes a reality for all women.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donna Scott".

Donna Scott, Q.C.
Chief Commissioner
Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission