

PRESS RELEASE

Montréal Welcomes the First International Conference on Violence against Women

MONTRÉAL, October 12, 2006 – The first International Conference on Violence against Women will be held in Montréal from October 22 to 24. The conference will bring together numerous researchers, practitioners, policymakers and students, from different disciplines and more than 40 countries. Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, will give the opening address.

Renowned specialists lead to greater understanding

The event is organized by the research team for *Les réponses sociales à la violence envers les femmes* (RÉSIVI) – social responses to violence against women – which is connected to the *Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women* (CRI-VIFF). There will be some 200 presentations during the conference. The goal is to report on the range of social contexts in which violence occurs, and the impact of violence on women, as well as the various social responses that have been developed in numerous countries on five continents. The conference intends to be the first step towards building a partnership among experts in the field.

“In addition to permitting both a greater understanding of the violence against women that is deeper and more nuanced, and the social responses to such violence, the conference is an opportunity to initiate or consolidate collaboration among the people involved in research and those in intervention, and among countries,” explained Dominique Damant from the École de service social at Université Laval and director of the CRI-VIFF.

The conference will also be an opportunity to hear presentations on the particular forms violence against women can take, including human trafficking, violence in the context of armed conflict and genocide, violence towards women who are sex workers, indigenous women, elderly women, immigrant women and women who are refugees, etc. Presentations will also address the issues of policies and legislation, prevention, intervention, assistance and treatment, and means of action, here and elsewhere.

“Clearly, this conference will be a unique opportunity to share information, skills and experiences,” explains Ms Damant. “It is also hoped that this event will have a positive influence on the health and security of women all over the world.”

The conference poster gives homage to Athanasie Mukarwego, the symbol of the “Mothers Courage” in Rwanda.

Violence towards women – a high cost for society

According to the United Nations¹, at least one woman out of three in the world has been beaten, forced to have sexual relations or otherwise brutalized during her lifetime. Indeed, violence is the main cause of death among women 16 to 44². By recently decreeing that violence towards women is one of the “ten subjects that the world does not hear enough about,” the UN underscored that this violence represents a grave social problem throughout the world, and that it is vital we actively pursue our actions to try to eliminate it.

Violence towards women comes at considerable cost, for the health and social services, the criminal justice system and the labour sector. Ten years ago the cost was estimated at \$4.2 billion per year in Canada, 87% of which were government expenditures.

Statistics on homicides in Canada, for the year 2003, indicate that nearly two thirds of the women murdered were killed by a partner with whom they had had intimate relations, and that 4.5 times more female partners than male partners were murdered³.

About the CRI-VIFF

The *Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women* (CRI-VIFF) was created in the aftermath of the massacre at the École Polytechnique in Montréal in 1989, during which 14 young women were murdered.

The CRI-VIFF constitutes an experiment in real partnership among universities and institutional and community organizations. Its operational structure is based on parity between the partners in the academic milieu (Université de Montréal and Université Laval) and those in practice (*Association québécoise d'établissements de santé et de services sociaux* (AQESSS) and *Relais-femmes*).

For more information about CRI-VIFF: www.criviff.qc.ca.

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REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION: The conference will be held from October 22 to 24, 2006, at Hôtel Doubletree Plaza Montréal Centre-Ville, 505, rue Sherbrooke Est. The press room will be located in the Dufy room. Journalists who would like to attend can obtain the **registration form** on line at www.criviff.qc.ca/colloque/media_fr.asp.

To request an interview with a CRI-VIFF spokesperson or a lecturer, please contact Sophie Allard, *Allard Hervieu Communication*, at 514 808-9474 or at sa@ahcom.ca or Marie-Françoise Hervieu at 514 972-9112 or mfh@ahcom.ca.

By visiting the Web site, members of the media can also obtain a new **information kit** for journalists likely to cover events related to family violence. The kit is entitled *La violence conjugale : des faits à rapporter, des mythes à déconstruire, une complexité à comprendre*, and will also be available at the media registration table during the conference, and will also be the subject of a special workshop for journalists on Monday, October 23 at 2:00 PM. during the conference.

References

¹ UN, 2005

² Council of Europe, 2002

³ Statistics Canada, 2004