

News Advisory

November 2, 2004

The silence that speaks a thousand words

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is pleased to present the first Silent Witness Project in Alberta at the Diverse Voices Family Violence Conference, Nov. 4 & 5th at the Westin Hotel.

The Silent Witness Project began in the US to honour women killed by their partners in acts of domestic violence. In 1990, a group of women artists and writers, upset about the growing number of women in Minnesota being murdered by their partners, formed The Arts Action Against Domestic Violence. They felt an urgency to do something to commemorate and honour the lives of 26 women who had died in 1990 as a result of domestic violence.

They decided to create 26 free standing, life sized red wooden figures, each one bearing the name of a woman who once lived and worked in the community and whose life ended violently at the hands of her partner. These wooden figures are called Silent Witnesses.

Today, all 50 American states participate in this project as well as several other countries. With the addition of Alberta's participation, Canada has two provinces committed to the project. The first Canadian Silent Witness Initiative began in New Brunswick.

The silhouettes in the Alberta exhibit represent women who were killed in acts of family violence. Although the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters work focuses on women and violence, we are acknowledging in this display the victims of triangulation like a brother, sister, father, new boyfriend or a child (third party homicide victims whose death was caused by family violence). All victims are being represented with the permission of their family.

"Response has been favourable with the victims families. Our sense from them is that their loved one is not a lost statistic, but in this display is represented as a human being whose life has been cut short unnecessarily – a person who enjoyed walking her dog, working in her community. A person who loved her children very much. The project is as much about healing as it is about public awareness and prevention. Currently, we are researching victims of homicide related to family violence between 2000 - 2004," says Jan Reimer, Provincial Coordinator of ACWS.

The media is welcome to attend the Opening Ceremonies of Diverse Voices, where Jan Reimer will speak about the project and the silhouettes will be displayed.

WHAT: **Diverse Voices, Family Violence Conference
Silent Witness Display**

WHEN: **November 4, 2004
8:30 – 9:30 am**

WHERE: **Westin Hotel, 10135 100th Street**

November is Family Violence Prevention Month – It's Your Business

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For conference information call: Dorothy Morris, 780-437-8013
For Silent Witness information or to set up an interview call: Patricia Poohachoff, 780-456-7000