

**The Silent Witness  
Canadian National Initiative**



**A Guide for  
Establishing A Silent Witness Project  
In Your Province or Territory**

**April 2005**

## A Message from the New Brunswick Silent Witness Organizing Committee

We have a dream. Our dream is to tell everyone in Canada about the Silent Witness Project. Our dream is to ensure that the work that we have started in New Brunswick to identify and honour women killed in acts of domestic violence will spread across Canada. Our dream is to engage other Canadians who are dedicated to ending violence against women. Our dream is to know that the lessons we have learned from the women who lost their lives at the hands of their intimate partners will help create changes that may save the lives of other women. Our dream is to see the Silent Witness Project become a National Initiative.

Having presented the New Brunswick Silent Witness Project at events all over New Brunswick, Atlantic Canada and to more than 400 participants at a national victim's conference in Ottawa, we know that there are countless individuals and organizations that are interested in becoming involved. The response has been amazing. We have heard from women and men, front line service providers, crisis workers, teachers, police officers, unions, and people from every walk of life and background. There appears to be a strong interest in making the Silent Witness Initiative a national reality. Our Committee is willing to act as a catalyst to achieve this goal, by sharing our experiences and helping others to develop their own provincial or territorial projects.

Together, we can make it happen.

Best Wishes,

Deborah, Gail, Helen, Joan, Lee, Leslie, Lindsay, Lynne, Rina, Sylvia, Therese, Wanda

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## Section A: An Introduction to the Silent Witness Initiative

### What is the Canadian National Silent Witness Initiative?

The *Silent Witness Project* is a travelling exhibit of life-size red wooden silhouettes. Each represents a woman who was murdered by a husband, common-law partner, boyfriend or intimate acquaintance. Because these women no longer have a voice, the silhouettes are called the *Silent Witnesses*.

Each figure bears the name of a woman who once lived and worked among us. Through research and information sharing we eventually hope to craft a silhouette to honour every woman in Canada who has died tragically as the result of domestic violence.

### Mission

To work together to end domestic homicides and family violence throughout Canada.

### Objectives of the Initiative

#### *To remember...*

by honouring women who were murdered by a spouse, partner or acquaintance.

#### *To create awareness...*

by sharing information in our communities, provinces and territories, about the nature and extent of family violence.

#### *To promote action...*

by profiling local resources that support women coping with violence in their lives and encouraging community and government action to end all forms of violence in our society.

### History and Background

The Silent Witness Project began as an American initiative to honour women killed by their partners in acts of domestic violence. You can find out more about the history on the **American National Website** [www.silentwitness.net](http://www.silentwitness.net). In 1990, an ad hoc group of women artists and writers, upset about the growing number of women in Minnesota being murdered by their partners, joined with women from other organizations to form The Arts Action Against Domestic Violence. They felt an urgency to do something to recognize the lives of the 26 women who had died in their state 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, worked in the community and whose life

ended violently at the hands of her partner. A 27<sup>th</sup> figure was added to represent women whose murders went uncounted or unsolved. These wooden figures are called Silent Witnesses. The Silent Witness Exhibit was officially launched on February 18, 1991, when more than 500 women marched single file, carrying the Witnesses from a church across the street to the Minnesota State Capitol Building. Eventually, it became a National American Silent Witness Initiative with all 50 states, and numerous (30) countries participating in the project. Our goal is to turn the Silent Witness Project into a National Canadian Initiative.

## The First Silent Witness Project in Canada

In 2000, the Charlotte County Family Violence Committee in New Brunswick collaborated with the Maine Silent Witness Project to offer a community education initiative for Family Violence Prevention Month (November). The Witnesses were brought to Charlotte County from Portland, Maine, and exhibited throughout Charlotte County, as well as, in Saint John and Moncton. The goal was to promote awareness of domestic violence.



This effort was so successful that the Charlotte County Family Violence Committee (CCFVC) decided to bring the Silent Witness Initiative to New Brunswick. The project was underway and in October 2001 the first two Witnesses were created in Charlotte County, bearing ***“Remember Me - Silent Witness”*** on the gold shield on the chest. They

were displayed at a number of family violence conferences. To promote and facilitate a province-wide Silent Witness project, the Charlotte County committee developed a collaborative partnership with the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation and the Provincial Caring Partnerships Committee (PCPC). The project was officially launched at a reception at Old Government House in Fredericton, November 7, 2002. The first in Canada, the Organizing Committee now works to promote this project across Canada.

## **Our Vision – A Canadian National Silent Witness Initiative**

- Collective responses across Canada for commemorating women killed in acts of family violence;
- Widespread awareness of family violence issues, locally, regionally and nationally;
- Action and advocacy strategies at all levels and across sectors to address violence in personal relationships;
- A National Canadian Silent Witness Song (*I'll Stand in the Rain*), along with pins, bookmarks, t-shirts, and buttons;
- A Canadian Silent Witness Web Site;
- Connection to Silent Witness Projects in the USA and around the world;
- Reduction in the number of domestic homicides and eventually the elimination of family violence altogether;
- National Silent Witness March on Parliament Hill.

***Together, we can make this a reality!***

## Section B: Step-by-Step Guide to Start a Provincial/ Territorial Silent Witness Project

### Step One: Getting Started

Initially, you should educate and inform yourself as much as possible about the Silent Witness Project and about family violence issues in your region. Check out the International Silent Witness Web Site at [www.silentwitness.net](http://www.silentwitness.net) to learn what is happening around the world. If you are still interested in becoming involved, you can contact the New Brunswick Silent Witness Organizing Committee - the first Silent Witness Project in Canada, which is prepared to assist in your efforts to start a Silent Witness Project in your Province.

To this end, as resources permit, we will:

- Share our experiences in developing a Silent Witness Project in our province, including the role played by funders, community partners, and supporters
- Provide you with protocols, criteria and documentation developed for the New Brunswick project (no need to reinvent the wheel), so that you can adapt these for your own Silent Witness initiative
- Offer insight into the research component of the project
- Suggest ways of incorporating family contact and community healing into your project
- Offer valuable insights on the technical aspects of constructing silhouettes
- Travel to your area to make a presentation about the Silent Witness Project (if possible)
- Act as a Clearinghouse for the Canadian Silent Witness Initiative to help us all stay connected, supported and
- Work with national organizations to facilitate collective and collaborative action and advocacy strategies in the area of family violence awareness and prevention.

***We can share a wealth of information, ideas and support to make this project a Canada-wide initiative.***

## Step Two: Forming an Organizing Committee

Starting a Silent Witness Project throughout a province is a significant and time consuming undertaking. We suggest that you form an “*organizing committee*”. Although a particular organization or group may be motivated to create a silhouette, perhaps to commemorate a woman killed in their community, the intent of the Silent Witness project is to identify and create silhouettes for *all* of the women in your province or territory who lost their life to domestic violence. Those who wish to become involved in the construction of particular silhouettes will be able to participate as well. However, given the enormity of organizing this initiative on a large scale, it makes sense to bring together several provincial and/or regional organizations, which can work collaboratively to achieve goals. Partnerships and coalitions allow you to muster a variety of networks, skills, connections and strengths that enhance the likelihood of success. If an individual leaves, somebody else from the organization is usually willing to become a replacement.

In larger provinces, you may wish to establish a main organizing committee that can provide support to several “regional subcommittees”, each of which implements the project in more manageable geographic areas. However, the goal would be to operate under the same provincial criteria and standards and for the silhouettes to come together at appropriate times for public education and advocacy events, such as provincial or national conferences, rallies and so on.

***So Who Should Be Involved?*** Anyone interested in ending violence against women, might become involved. Generally, the organizing committee for a Silent Witness Project would include representatives from the many organizations and agencies concerned about domestic violence. (The list of potential

representatives is endless!) Be sure to consider the demographics of your province and the diverse backgrounds and contexts of the women killed in acts of family violence. Include representation on the committee that

A key group of individuals must be willing to take leadership and become responsible for mobilizing support. They will need to have dedication, energy and commitment to the goals of this project.

reflects your diverse communities. Do you have immigrant populations? First Nations communities? French and English communities? Rural and urban-based service providers? Here are a few suggestions for representation:

- Transition houses and service providers who work with abused women
- Victim services
- Police and/or RCMP
- Violence prevention organizations
- Advisory Councils on the Status of Women
- Unions and employers
- Corporations/Businesses
- Research centres
- Public Legal Education organizations
- Organizations with multicultural, Aboriginal, and other representation
- Men’s groups who support an end to violence against women
- Schools and many others

## **Step Three: Establishing Criteria for the Project**

We will share the criteria adopted in New Brunswick; however, we realize that these criteria may be adapted to better reflect provincial legislation and realities in your area. In any case, you may wish to consider these questions and develop specific criteria:

**1) Who will you honour as a victim of domestic violence?** This project began as an attempt to draw attention to the large number of women killed by intimate partners each year. New Brunswick has decided to keep this focus. The silhouettes we construct are of the women killed by partners. If the woman was killed with children, other family members or a new partner, it is important to relate this information on the shield. However, we do not create a silhouette for each of these other victims. Although all domestic violence deaths are equally tragic, this project is about creating awareness of woman abuse issues, so we do not construct silhouettes of male victims.

**2) At what age will you consider a murder victim to be a victim of domestic homicide?** In New Brunswick, we selected 16 years because our child protection legislation covers children less than 16 years who are involved in violent relationships. It is not essential that every province choose the same age. Your province may use 18 years as the child protection cut off. However, it is important to make a decision about what age you will use to include a woman in the project and why.

**3) What date will you choose as a starting point for researching domestic homicides?** New Brunswick decided to conduct research on provincial domestic homicides dating back to 1990 - the year that the initiative began in the USA. However, we also decided that at the request of a family member or community group, we would include women killed by partners prior to 1990.

**4) Who is considered an intimate partner?** In New Brunswick we made the decision not to adopt Statistics Canada criteria for domestic homicides because these national domestic homicide statistics do not include ex-common-law partners or boyfriends who commit homicides. In New Brunswick, one-third of the women killed were in relationships with ex-common law partners or boyfriends. It was important for us to include women killed by spouses, common-law partners and ex-spouses, as well as ex-common-law partners, boyfriends and intimate acquaintances.

**5) How do you know the case is a “domestic homicide”?** The women included in the exhibit are those whose partners were convicted of the murder and those who died in a murder/suicide that was confirmed by the Coroner’s Office. In some cases, there has not been enough evidence to charge a spouse and the community has suggested that we construct a silhouette because of the history of domestic violence. Unless there is a conviction, we have chosen not to construct a silhouette.



**6) How do we honor all women affected by domestic violence?** Be sure to create several silhouettes with a shield that says “*Remember Me*”. These silhouettes commemorate women who are still suffering from domestic violence and those whose killer was not charged or convicted. These silhouettes can also represent the women who committed suicide to escape a violent relationship.

**7) What information will you include on the shield?** We include a brief description of the murder as well as the personal information about the woman provided by her family. We do not include the name of the intimate partner who killed her. We feel that it was extremely important to provide a brief overview of what happened because it contributes immensely to the goals of the project - to educate people about family violence issues and to seek change. Without this information, people would only know that the woman was murdered. We have seen the reactions when people learn that these murders happened when she decided to end the relationship, or after many years of abuse. They may see someone they know when they hear that a woman was murdered after countless jealous accusations. This information helps people realize that many women are currently living in similar circumstances. It motivates people to become involved in finding ways to improve our services, programs and responses for abused women. (See Appendix A – Sample Text from Two NB Shields)

## **Step Four:           Developing Terms of Reference**

The next step is to develop terms of reference for your project. Remember, the New Brunswick Organizing Committee would be pleased to share theirs. The Terms of reference will include such items as

- Mission Statement and Mandate that is in keeping with the national vision of the Canadian National Silent Witness Initiative
- Research agenda, including the date at which you will start the research
- Policies for such matters as:
  - Project criteria
  - Family contacts
  - Construction of silhouettes
  - Information included on shields (NB ensures that all text is in French and English)
  - Loaning silhouettes and booking contracts

As you are developing these terms of reference, you will have to decide:

How will you make decisions?

Who will do the research?

Who will make the family contacts?

Where will you build and paint the silhouettes and who will do it?

Where will you house the silhouettes?

Who will take calls and process requests to exhibit the silhouettes?

How will you transport the silhouettes? Who will cover the costs?

How will you protect the silhouettes from damage?

How will you promote the project?

Who will you invite as community partners?

How will you get funding?

**If you are interested in reviewing the Terms of Reference developed by the New Brunswick Silent Witness Organizing Committee, we would be pleased to share these with you.**

## Step Five: Researching Domestic Homicides

To develop a Silent Witness Project, you will need to know about the women who lost their lives in acts of domestic violence and under what circumstances. This is not an easy task as their voices have been silenced. There is no record or registry that you can turn to that sets out the names of domestic homicide victims. Clearly, national statistics on domestic homicide do not put a face and context to the deaths, and they do not capture the full range of “intimate partnership” violence that ended in death. Your job will be to find out about all of the deaths that meet the criteria you have established while keeping and maintaining accurate records and files. It is important to have accurate information since you will want to include a brief synopsis of the murder on the shield.

Somebody on your committee should take on the task of conducting this research. This may be a committee member with the expertise, perhaps someone representing a research center or a public legal education and information (PLEI) group. Or you may wish to hire or seek a volunteer such as law student or law professor or lawyer in your community to conduct the research. The research will involve:

- Case law searches (recorded and unrecorded)
- Acquisition of supporting documentation such as transcripts, sentencing reports, victim impact statements and coroners reports
- Acquisition of archived court files
- Searches of newspaper archives for articles on domestic homicides
- Confirmation of records from the Coroner’s Office
- Information provided by relatives of the victim, transition houses and other individuals who knew a woman killed by a partner

***Analysis of the cases – a better practice:*** In New Brunswick, we decided that analysing the cases to obtain some aggregate statistics about domestic homicides was an important better practice. Although each murdered woman has a unique story, when we examined the cases collectively many common and reoccurring factors emerged. Together, the witnesses create a poignant picture of risk factors, barriers and gaps in services that contributed to their deaths. In this way, the Silent Witnesses are no long silent and their collective voices create a strong message that informs our public education initiative and generates discussion of family violence issues including action and advocacy strategies.

The analysis is also important because of the insights that it provides and the discussion points that it raises. Several findings in New Brunswick differed from the national statistics on domestic homicide. The majority of the murders (about 70%) happened in small towns and rural areas- speaking to the unique challenges of addressing family violence in a largely rural province. Other findings, such as the increased danger for violence after separation, clearly reinforced national statistics. Likely, when you analyze the collective cases in your own area you will see issues that are shared across Canada, as well as unique factors that must be addressed regionally or provincially. (For more information about what we learned from the New Brunswick Silent Witnesses, see Appendix B.)

## Step Six: Making Family Contacts

In New Brunswick, we felt that a “better practice” in promoting healing would be to include family contact as an element of the project. We would recommend that once you have completed the research and determined that a particular case meets the criteria, that you not create a shield that only includes a description of the “murder”. We felt that the silhouette would better come to life as a woman who lived and worked among us, if we contacted a relative or family member of the woman, explained the project and asked that person to write some additional text for the shield - personal information about their loved one. The response of family members to date has been overwhelmingly positive. They feel touched and honoured that

the community is recognizing their mother, sister, daughter or aunt. They recognize that her

*“We had barely spoken my aunt’s name in 10 years. It was just so tragic. This project was the catalyst our family needed to begin to heal; to remember the good times, and feel thankful that my aunt’s voice could finally speak out against family violence.”*

*Niece of New Brunswick Silent Witness*

participation in the project gives her a voice that will contribute to the dialogue on how to protect women and put an end to family violence. Family involvement promotes healing and some times family members want to participate in building the silhouette and even speaking out on family violence issues. Families often chose the “shape” of the silhouette that best suits their loved one.

In order to facilitate family contacts, you may wish to consider the following methods:

- (1) **Victim Services:** Victim Services staff is important partners in the development of a Silent Witness Project. Often, a Victim Service’s worker has supported the family of the murdered women. In New Brunswick, the Victim Services staff was willing to make many of the family contacts. To assist them, the Organizing Committee prepared a “script” that explained the project and requested participation. We anticipated many of the questions that a family member might ask, and prepared a Q&A fact sheet to help the Victim Services worker.
- (2) **Personal contact by committee members:** Occasionally, members of the committee were willing to make a contact.
- (3) **Responding to inquiries from family members.** Considerable publicity is created when the silhouettes attend events. Afterwards, be prepared to receive calls from family members wondering whether you are going to build a silhouette of their loved one. This provides an immediate connection and opportunity to involve the family to the extent that they wish to be involved.
- (4) **Liaison with the crisis community.** Transition house staff, police officers and other social workers may have been involved with the family of the victim and often times, are willing to participate in the project and make the family contact.

## Step Seven:      **Garnering Community Support**

Once you have conducted your research, identified women killed in acts of domestic violence, and started contacting families to complete the text for the shields, you will be ready to construct some of your silhouettes. You will also be in the position to start promoting your Silent Witness initiative through public events and awareness raising initiatives. The attention that comes through such activities serves to move the project forward as new partners, families and others learn about your work and ask to become involved. It is extremely important to garner widespread community support.

To help build public awareness and support, consider the following:

- Produce a **Silent Witness Kit** to share with the public. Our kit included several fact sheets with background information, goals, membership, a pledge, and so on. We also created bookmarks and a brochure so that we could distribute these widely at conferences, events and through various mail outs.
- Build two “**Remember Me**” shields so that you can take them to events during the time that you are researching and constructing the other witnesses.
- Invite the Silent Witness silhouettes from New Brunswick, or eventually from another neighbouring province, to come to your early events. This will provide support and inspiration and help create media and public interest. The presence of the witnesses at an event creates tangible and highly emotional reactions.
- Write press releases about your initiative and include write-ups about it in the newsletters and e-newsletters of a variety of professional associations and organizations.
- Hold related promotional activities – a rally against violence, and bring the witnesses. People will start to ask questions.
- Offer to speak about the project at schools, conferences and workshops dealing with violence prevention.
- Ask the public to tell you about domestic homicides that happened in their community and the impact that it had.
- Look for in-kind support from a variety of sources, including:
  - Graphic artists
  - Translators
  - Counsellors
  - Media
  - Transportation companies
  - Paint and wood supply stores
  - Corporate sponsors

## **Step Eight: Creating Silhouettes & Building Foundations of Trust**

Once you have completed some of the research and obtained the text for the shield, you will be ready to create the silhouettes. Construction of the silhouettes is an opportunity for community involvement, public awareness, engagement and advocacy. Detailed instructions on how to construct the silhouette are included in Section C. We developed several elements of the project that we feel are definitely “better practices”. These include:

***Community partnerships – a better practice.*** Although somebody may offer to construct all of the silhouettes for you, we resisted the temptation. It is preferable to go through the process of involving people in the communities who have suffered the tragic loss of their neighbour and friend. It is preferable to involve the families and the services agencies that had helped the woman during her lifetime. Consider waiting to see if someone steps forward and asks to become involved. There are many who are committed to ending violence against women. Partnerships will emerge at many levels, among those who wish to build a silhouette; those who wish to donate materials, those who wish to paint the silhouette; and others who want to be involved in the project because they had a personal relationship with the victim. We hope this overview of some of the partnerships created in New Brunswick will inspire you.

**Members of the Organizing Committee:** In New Brunswick, the members of The Organizing Committee from Charlotte County created the first two silhouettes with shields of “Remember Me” printed on them. The committee felt it was important to have that experience, if they were going to talk to others about it. The Victim Services Coordinator and the Crown Prosecutor cut out the silhouettes and the entire family violence committee sanded and painted them. A worker from the transition house sewed the protective covers and a family violence committee member’s father made most of the shields.

**Transition House Staff and Boards:** Transition houses are on the frontline helping women deal with abusive relationships. In New Brunswick transition houses in several communities have been involved in this project. A board member from the Fundy Region Transition House cut out the first silhouettes named Elda Armstrong and Dorothy Ann Archer-Waycott, taking great care, sanding and re-sanding until he felt that they were ready to be painted. Following the initial construction, the board member also helped Fundy High School students to construct their silhouettes. Later, the Sussex Vale Transition House created two silhouettes for women killed in the Sussex area, while Passage House is doing the same for two women murdered in the Bathurst area. Transition houses have also provided a safe space for family members to drop over and help paint the silhouette of their loved one.

**Police:** Policing communities do not go untouched by working on a domestic homicide case. The Fredericton City Police approached the Silent Witness Organizing Committee after they had learned of the nature of the project. Many of the investigating officers involved in the Theresa Legacy murder wanted to find a way to recognize Theresa’s life. Police officers were anxious to participate. They were especially supportive of the projects’ goal of creating public awareness of family violence issues and working

towards change. The group approached a local company to donate the necessary supplies to create a silhouette. Over several months officers and victim witness workers, cut, sanded, and painted the silhouette. The group took this time to speak of their experiences with the case and the final outcome. Policing communities can be a positive addition to the creation of a silhouette. This process can be a healing mechanism for both police and family members.

**Schools:** When a woman is killed in her community, especially a rural community, everyone is touched by the violence including children. They are likely to know somebody impacted by the murder. After some initial public awareness about the Silent Witness Project, a teacher at Belleisle Creek School approached the Silent Witness Organizing Committee to say the school would like to cut out a silhouette for a local woman whose fiancée had been killed her less than a year earlier. The family of the murdered woman was touched to learn that the school wished to honour their daughter in this way. After a presentation to the students and a lively discussion about violence issues, the “Shop Class” took on the task of building a silhouette. A “*Remember Me*” silhouette was left at the school, and a template for construction. With money raised in funding activities, the school purchased the plywood and paint. Some students made a special cover for the silhouette – a woolly sheepskin to keep her warm when she travelled. The students kept a diary of their experiences and feelings as they built the silhouette. When

the silhouette was ready, members of the Organizing Committee went to the school for a dedication

*“I felt proud to be part of the Silent Witness Project, but I also felt sad. When I painted the silhouette, I got red paint under the stone of my ring. Every time I look at it now, I think of Karen Bailey.”*

*Student at Belleisle Creek School*

ceremony at an assembly of the entire school. The school has since asked to create another silhouette. Another high school, Fundy High in St. George, also went through the process of constructing a silhouette and learning more about family violence issues and possible solutions. The students at Fundy High created a CD-Rom of their experience building the silhouette. They later held a dance to raise money for the Silent Witness Project song - *“I’ll Stand in the Rain”*.

**Unions:** Many women today are in the work force so it is not surprising that Unions would be interested in creating awareness of the deadly consequences of family violence and of the possible impacts on the workplace. The New Brunswick Union (formerly known as the New Brunswick Public Employees Association) had formed a Women’s Committee to focus on family and workplace issues. After a presentation by the Silent Witness Organizing Committee, they quickly saw a connection. Several of the murdered women belonged to unions or associations, and two women were killed at their worksite – one while on picket duty. The group created silhouettes that eventually will become “Remember Me” silhouettes. The provincial member of this Women’s Committee brought the project to her colleagues at the National Union level. A presentation was made by the NB Silent Witness Committee. Since this presentation, several provincial unions have collaborated with their local silent witness projects.

**Coalition of Family Violence Service Providers:** Existing networks of family violence workers can play a crucial role in the Project. In the Acadian Peninsula, five women have been killed by their partners over the past several years, four of which were murder-suicides. Almost everyone in this close-knit region had been affected by these tragedies. A local multi-disciplinary committee, which had been meeting for many years, took on the task of making family contacts, explaining the project and obtaining personal information for the shields. To date, this network has built silhouettes and organized dedication ceremonies for two of the five women. Large crowds of people attended the ceremonies to honour the women.

***Dedication Ceremonies – a better practice.*** Whenever possible, we have encouraged the families and the communities involved in the construction of a silhouette to hold a *dedication ceremony* when the silhouette is ready. The purpose of the ceremony is to honour a particular woman, welcome her silhouette into the exhibit, acknowledge that her voice will join the other silhouettes in calling for solutions to family violence and educating the public, and to promote family and community healing. Some of the dedication ceremonies have been private family matters, attended only by committee members and trusted friends, in part because the perpetrator is already back in the community. Other ceremonies have been well advertised, with over 300 people from the local community coming out to honour the woman and show their support for ending all forms of violence against women.

***Protective covering – a better practice.*** You should consider the protective covering that you will make for each silhouette. Remember, the silhouettes will be traveling and they can be damaged or the paint can chip. In New Brunswick, those involved in the construction generally sewed a protective covering, often from bedspreads or curtains. Eventually, a local company custom designed a protective carrying case, which feature a flap to insert the name of the silhouette, straps to secure the silhouettes within the zippered case and handles to make carrying the silhouettes into events much easier.

***Acknowledgment Plaque – a better practice.*** In order to acknowledge those who participated in the construction of the silhouette, whether directly or through in-kind contributions or donations, we decided to create a plaque to place on the back of silhouette. The plaque indicates who constructed silhouette and/or donated materials, etc.



## Step Nine: Creating Awareness and Evaluating Your Project

The ultimate goal of the Silent Witness Project is to create awareness of family violence and promote action and advocacy. Whenever possible, members of the Silent Witness Organizing Committee attended family violence events, conferences and workshops to present on the project. We also spoke extensively to service clubs, women's groups, schools, university classes, nurses, police associations, union groups, community organizations and many others. Our members have corresponded with, or travelled to several other provinces to share information or make presentations to groups and organizations that are interested in starting Silent Witness Projects in their own province. As well, we have presented the project at the national level including traveling to Ottawa for a Victim's Conference, a presentation to Justice Canada and a presentation to Nation Union of Public Employees – National Executive of the Women's Committee. One of our members, Leslie Monaghan, wrote the words and music for a Silent Witness song called *I'll Stand in the Rain*. We hope this song will become the Canadian Silent Witness anthem. It is a fitting and moving way to end a presentation. If you wish to purchase a CD, which includes the English and French versions of this powerful song, please contact us.

In order to promote awareness, not only of the project but also of family violence issues generally, as well as the barriers that women face in getting help to deal with the violence in their lives, we often present a play called "*A Woman's Cry for Help*" as a component of our presentation. For younger audiences, we offer a more appropriate version called "*A Young Woman's Cry for Help*". This play is interactive. The audience participates by reading a series of cards from two different scenarios. As each card is read in scenario one, a sheet is put over a volunteer sitting on a chair at the front of the room. The first scenario is the story of an abused woman who encounters blame, roadblocks and indifference from family, teachers, police and the criminal justice system. Eventually she is stifled, losing her identity, just like the woman buried beneath the sheets. The second scenario depicts what would happen if everyone in the community acted appropriately.

This play is an excellent springboard to discussion about why services and resources can become overwhelmingly difficult for abused women to access and what we might do, as individuals, as communities and as government policy and program deliverers, to better support women living with intimate partner violence. We offer this play freely to others who might wish to use it, so feel free to contact us for more information and to obtain the script and instructions. Our play depicts a rural setting. You can adapt the play to suit your own context.

We have developed a **Presentation Evaluation Form** to help us determine how well we are doing in presenting the Silent Witness initiative, sharing information about family violence issues, and promoting discussion. The goal is to gather feedback, respond to suggestions and continually strive to improve our work and create positive outcomes for everyone. Our evaluation template is attached as Appendix C.

## Section D: Technical and Administrative Tips

### Construction of the Silhouettes

Silent Witness silhouettes all conform to a standard shape, size and colour. They should not be constructed by individuals who want to make one to keep for their organization. The purpose is to construct silhouettes to include in a provincial or territorial Silent Witness Initiative. Those involved in construction will need to obtain the following materials and tools. Consider approaching your local hardware and building supply stores for contributions. They may be willing to donate the required plywood, hardware and paint. Perhaps somebody you know in the community would donate their woodworking skills to cut out the silhouette.

#### *Silhouette Template:*

The silent witness silhouettes are constructed in three standard shapes using a cardboard template. By reversing them, there are actually six shapes.



In some cases, the family of the “witness” may wish to have a particular silhouette constructed of their love one; for example, they may choose the smallest silhouette because the victim was petite in stature. In some American States, the shape of a pregnant silhouette is made for women who were killed during pregnancy. The Silent Witness Organizing Committee can provide you with the cardboard template or blueprint of the three standard silhouette(s) that you will be cutting out.

### ***Tools:***

- ❑ drill with 1/8<sup>th</sup> bit & slightly larger drill bit than head of the screws
- ❑ screwdriver – to fit head of screws
- ❑ sand paper – 3 different grades
- ❑ putty knife
- ❑ power driver bits
- ❑ saw
- ❑ staple gun

### ***Materials Required:***

#### ***Wood: (the quantities you need are in brackets)***

- ❑ one sheet of half inch plywood (one sheet makes 2 silhouettes)
- ❑ outside rails (2) 58” long of 1½” x ¾” thick pine or cedar (1X2)
- ❑ middle rail (1) 52 ¾” long of 1½” x ¾” thick pine or cedar (1X2)
- ❑ Floor support (1) made of ¾” plywood, 20” long x 4” wide

#### ***Hardware: (the quantities you need are in brackets)***

- ❑ screen door handles(2) (brass or steel handles)
- ❑ 1 ½” deck screws (14) – Roberts or square drilling holes
- ❑ **(Do not use gyproc or black screws)**
- ❑ 2” screw for hinge (1)
- ❑ ½” screws for handles (4)

#### ***Paint & Other Materials***

- ❑ Front - Benjamin Moore Brilliant Red. High Gloss, enamel paint 133-20
- ❑ Back - Benjamin Moore High Gloss Black Paint 133-80
- ❑ Dark grey or black oil base primer
- ❑ yellow wood glue
- ❑ gyproc crack filler

### ***Method - Building Instructions:***

\*\*\* Read information about countersinking screws first.

1. cut rails to measurements listed in the wood section above
2. corner of middle rail must be cut to reflect the pattern on the diagram, this allows the stand to work as an easel without being unstable
3. predrill holes on outside rails 7½” from the top, on the wide edge
4. predrill centre rail 1 ¼” from top on the wide edge
5. cut floor support with better side of plywood up
6. test fit two outside rails 3 ¾” from the top of the silhouette in an inverted V-shape so they are behind the legs of the silhouette, make sure the middle rail fits between them 7 ½” below top of outside rails (curved edge against back of look centred at the bottom, this is of no consequence)
7. Screw 2” screw in side hole to fasten middle rail between outside rails, place two staples over screw head to form an X. (See diagram for clarity)
8. predrill holes & countersink in silhouette base 4 each & for outside rails 5 per rail
9. apply glue to the front edge of base & screw silhouette to the base **from the front** with 1 ½” deck screws

10. apply glue to 1 edge of ¾" side of outside rails
11. screw silhouette to rails **from the front of the silhouette** making sure screw heads are countersunk
12. locate handle positions, predrill holes and install handles (Space these in a good position to carry silhouette. Best to attach top one first then go by the feel of where the other would best be positioned for the lower one.)
13. cover screw heads and outside edges of plywood with filler & let dry overnight.
14. sand carefully, spend a good amount of time sanding the silhouette to smoothness as the quality of the sanding job greatly effects the look of the finished product
15. prime complete silhouette front and back with primer – 2 coats
16. paint front of silhouette with red paint, paint back & edges with black paint

\*\*\* To counter sink screws it is advisable to put drill in reverse with a drill bit slightly larger than the screw head and indent about 1/16" deeper than the top of wood to allow filler to cover screw head. These silhouettes are moved often so be sure to glue and screw rails securely.

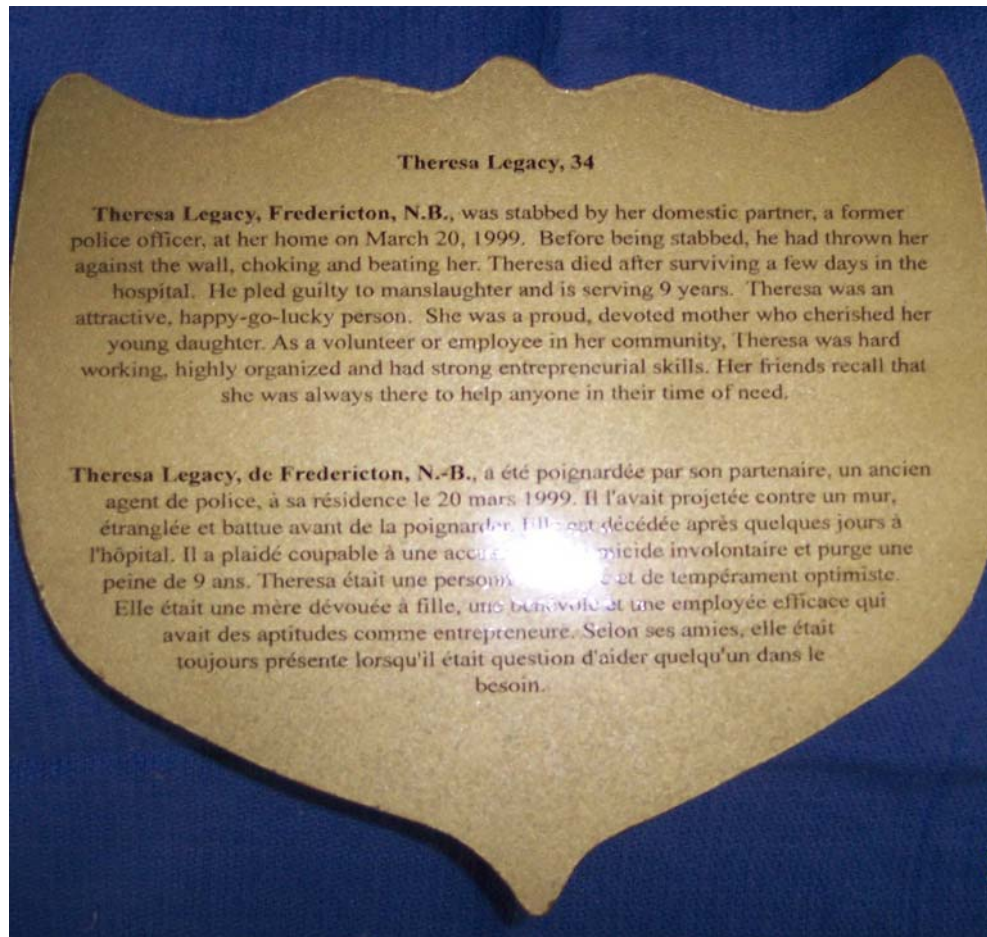
## Construction of the Shields

### *Materials required:*

- 1/4" plywood or MDF (medium density fiberboard)
- Crafter's gold paint (Krylon)
- spray adhesive (Krylon)
- liquid nails and caulking gun
- overhead transparencies
- Clear Glaze (Krylon)

### *Method:*

- 1) Cut out the shield from the template (the size depends on the size of the silhouette and the amount of text). Sand edges. Paint with gold paint. (Some of the US shields have black trim around the edges, which really makes them stand out.) Other possibilities for shield production that we have seen include wooden shields with the text engraved into the wood or metal overlays that contain the text.
- 2) Print the text on an overhead transparency and attach it to the shield with spray adhesive. (After spending countless hours manually reformatting text to fit different sized shields, we have found a computer program to assist us. We have scanned the outline of the shields and now format the text as we are typing). Because New Brunswick produces a bilingual shield, the amount of space available is restricted. We wanted the shields to have a consistent look and we chose Times Roman 14 as font for the text. You may wish to include more information or make your font size larger if you are working in only one language.
- 3) After securing the transparency, spray a couple coats of clear glaze to protect the shield. Another option is to use a clear piece of Plexiglas, attached to the shield with tiny gold screws.



- 4) Attach the shield to the silhouette with liquid nails. (It works better if the silhouette is laid flat during this process since the shield tends to move before the liquid nails dries.)

**Note:** Over time, the text does lift from the wooden shield and the corners may begin to roll. The silhouettes and the shields occasionally need repairs and touch ups.

## Booking Silhouettes

If you decide to allow the silhouettes to attend events, you will have to come up with a booking policy. For example, you may wish to stipulate that an individual, group or organization that books the silhouettes agree to certain conditions. Our booking conditions are:

1. You will follow the appropriate “rules” set out on the Rules sheet (see our NB Kit)
2. You will promote the goals of the Silent Witness Project and acknowledge the Silent Witness coordinating partners.
3. If a silhouette is lost, broken or damaged, your organization will be financially responsible for replacement or repair.
4. You will be responsible for the costs of getting the silhouettes to your event and returning them to the host site of the silhouettes.

## **Section E: Staying Connected**

We would like to see Silent Witness Projects across Canada, all of them communicating with one another, sharing information, announcements, media coverage, emerging “better practices” and outcomes of advocacy and educational initiatives.

We hope eventually to develop a National Canadian Silent Witness website to share information with the broadest possible audience, and to link with the National Silent Witness Program.

In the meantime, please stay connected. If you wish, send us information about your Silent Witness Project. Let us know who is involved and how they can be contacted. We sometimes hear from different groups in other provinces who want to start up or be involved in a Silent Witness Project and they are not aware of one another. We will act as a liaison to put people in contact with one another, share progress and let people know what others are doing.

### **New Brunswick Silent Witness Organizing Committee**

**C/o 678 Windsor Street**

P/O 4400

**Fredericton**

**New Brunswick**

E3B 5A3

Tel: (506) 453-3595

Fax: (506) 453-4788

## ***Appendix A – Sample Text from Two NB Shields***

Here are two examples of the information that we include on the shields of silhouettes in the New Brunswick Silent Witness initiative. Our shields present the text in a bilingual format. If the woman's mother tongue was French, then the French text appears first, followed by the English, and vice versa if the mother tongue was English. The Organizing Committee researches and prepares the information about the murder, which after family contact has been made, is shared with the family who writes the personal information.

### **Karen Bailey, 34**

**Karen Bailey, Belleisle Creek, N.B.**, was found lying on the kitchen floor of the bungalow she shared with her common-law partner on November 15, 2001. She had been shot at close range with a 20-gauge shotgun. Just three weeks prior to her death, the couple had announced their engagement. However, in response to his drinking and abuse, Karen decided to break it off. She packed a suitcase and moved into a motel. It was not the first time she tried to leave the relationship. He called her and talked her into going home where he shot her and left the scene, calling 911 more than an hour later. He was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 9 years in a Federal penitentiary. Karen was a kind and generous person who had an instantaneous rapport with children. She was very athletic, with an interest in baseball. She enjoyed crafts, loved her job and shared a special closeness with her family.

### **Michèle Renault, 41**

**Michèle Renault, Shediac, N.B.** was killed on July 13, 1992 by her common-law partner who struck her repeatedly with a hammer. The relationship had begun to deteriorate, and Michèle had sought legal advice. A few days before the murder, her lawyer had sent him a letter asking that he leave the house within three weeks and offering a financial settlement for his investment in the home. Angry and jealous that Michèle would not tell him where she had been, an argument broke out and he killed her. Michèle's 8 year-old daughter was in the home at the time. He admitted to the slaying and was convicted of second degree murder. Michèle had 2 daughters and was a translator. She enjoyed playing the piano and reading books. Her love of music ranged from classical to jazz. She was adventurous and would not hesitate to stand up for what she believed in. She was a hard working individual.



## Appendix B:

# Domestic Homicide: The Witnesses Speak Out

NEW BRUNSWICK

Silent  
Witness  
PROJECT



UNE TÉMOIN  
Silencieuse

AU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

Between 1991-2001, 738 Canadian women were killed by current or ex-partners, compared with 197 men.<sup>1</sup> To develop a Silent Witness Project in New Brunswick, we needed to know about the circumstances of the women killed in our province. Unlike Statistics Canada, whose data only includes women killed by spouses, common-law partners, and ex-spouses, we also include women killed by ex-common-law partners, and intimate acquaintances. We investigated cases as far back as 1990 to coincide with the commencement of the project in the United States. However, women murdered prior to this may be included on specific request of the family. The research involved searching newspaper archives, conducting case law searches, acquiring archived court records, and information from the Coroner's Office. As of November 2003, we know of 24 New Brunswick women killed in acts of domestic homicide - 8 of these murder-suicides. Killed along with them, were 2 children, a mother and a current boyfriend. Although each woman has a unique story, their voices point to many common factors. The New Brunswick Silent Witnesses have taught us<sup>2</sup>:

- **Home is not a safe haven:** 92% of the New Brunswick silent witnesses were killed in their homes or cottages – places where one should feel safe and secure. Two women (8%) were killed in the parking lots of their work places.
- **Family violence happens in rural areas and small towns, as well as big cities:** New Brunswick is a rural province, so it is not surprising that about 70% of the women were killed in rural areas. The silent witnesses came from every corner of the province - from tiny rural communities, small towns and larger cities.
- **Anyone can be a victim - murdered women came from diverse backgrounds:** The silent witnesses came from English, French and First Nation communities.

1. Johnson, Holly and Hotton, T., 2002, Spousal Violence, in Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2001. Statistic Canada, catalogue no 85-224, PG 26-36.

2. The analysis of the silent witnesses cases and the development of this fact sheet were undertaken by Dr. Deborah Doherty, Executive Director, Public Legal Education and Information Service of NB, who extends appreciation to the law students working for the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research who assisted in the compilation of the data. This analysis is not intended to be a scientific study. Moreover, with such low numbers, percentages can change significantly with the addition of new cases. However, the analysis does enable us to identify many common factors.

They came from diverse backgrounds and occupations. They were nurses, translators, factory workers and homemakers. A third of the women were married; the other two-thirds had been in a common-law or intimate relationship.

- **Homes with firearms can be deadly for women:** Although women were killed by beatings, strangulation and knives, nearly 46% of the silent witnesses were killed with firearms (11 of the 24 murders). All 8 murder-suicides involved firearms. A recent New Brunswick study found that rural and farm women experiencing family violence commonly described a cycle of intimidation with guns, often including their pets and farm animals.<sup>3</sup>
- **Ending the relationship does not end the risk of violence:** At least 10 of the silent witnesses were killed after they had ended the relationship with their partner. This is consistent with national data showing separation is a particularly dangerous time for women. Statistics Canada found that although more married women are killed by their spouses, the rate of homicide is greatest for women after separation. Nationally, almost half of the homicides committed by ex-spouses happen in the first two months of separation and 80% of murders by ex-spouses happen within a year of separating.
- **Women leaving violent relationships are often stalked:** At least 4 of the New Brunswick silent witnesses had been harassed and stalked by the killer. Statistics Canada reports that stalking behaviour was associated with 12% of all homicides committed by male ex-partners.
- **Marital status may be a factor:** Of the 24 silent witnesses, 5 were killed by spouses, 2 by ex-spouses, 8 by common-law partners, 9 by ex-common-law partners or intimate acquaintances. Of the 10 New Brunswick women killed after separating, 8 had ended common-law partnerships or acquaintances, while two had separated from spouses. Four of these women were killed within hours or weeks of ending the relationship. Of the 8 murder-suicides, 7 were committed by ex-common-law partners or ex-boyfriends.
- **Most of the murdered women were middle age:** Although Statistics Canada's found that married women under the age of 25 are at significantly higher risk of being killed in acts of domestic violence, especially at separation; we discovered that over 80% of the New Brunswick silent witnesses were between 31-50 years. Only two were under 30 years, and 2 were over 50. The silent witnesses left behind more than 30 children.
- **Drugs and alcohol can exacerbate the violence:** Drug and alcohol use does not cause family violence; though it can worsen the consequences. In 15 of the New Brunswick homicides (63%), the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol or

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3. Hornosty, J. and Doherty, D. (2003) Responding to Wife Abuse in Farm and Rural Communities: Searching for Solutions that Work, In R. Blake and J. Nurse (Eds.), *Trajectories of Rural Life*, Regina: Saskatchewan Public Policy Institute.

drugs at the time. In cases that went to court, this was often cited as a contributing though not a mitigating factor.

- **Previous history of domestic violence, past criminal record and mental illness are all risks factor:** We have little information about the 8 murder-suicides. However, in the 16 court cases, files show 6 cases of previous domestic violence. Other relationships were described as troubled, violent or stormy. Some of the women had fled to transition homes. Several had tried to leave the relationship. It appears most struggled with violence and abuse in their relationship. Court records show 10 of the 16 offenders had prior criminal records, many for violent crimes. In 5 of these cases, the perpetrator also had a history of mental illness.
- **Many perpetrators do not take responsibility for their actions:** Many of the offenders blamed the woman or others for provoking them to murder. Most said they were jealous, angry that she ended the relationship, or upset that she had defied him during an argument. Where provocation was used as a defence, the courts did not accept it.

# ***Appendix C: New Brunswick Silent Witness Project Presentation Evaluation Form***

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. It will help us evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of the presentations that we offer.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nature of Event:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **1. Content of the presentation**

**The Silent Witness Presentation that I attended included:**

- Silent Witnesses and information kits
- History and background of the NB Silent Witness Initiative
- A discussion of family contacts and community partnerships
- Information on how to construct a silhouette
- A dedication ceremony for a silhouette(s)
- Assistance on starting a silent witness initiative in another Province
- A reading of the names and shields of women represented by the silhouettes
- A statistical profile of the common experiences of the murdered NB women
- Presentation of the skit \_\_\_A Woman’s Cry for Help or \_\_\_A Young Woman’s Cry for Help
- Discussion about family violence issues, prevention and social change.
- Song “*I’ll Stand in the Rain*”

**What impact did viewing the silhouettes have on you? Please describe** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Did the presentation provide you with a better understanding of family violence issues generally and domestic homicide in particular? Did it tell you what you wanted to know?** Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Did you identify any gaps in the information? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
If yes, what were these gaps?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**(over)**

**Did the presentation offer**

- too much information?
- too little information?
- the right amount?

**2. Organization of presentation**

**Was the presentation well organized?** Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**Were presenter(s) knowledgeable & informative?** Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**Was the presentation**

- Too short?
- Too long?
- Just right?

**Were the Kits and other materials useful?** Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**3. Community Action**

**Did the presentation**

Encourage you to remember and honour women killed in acts of domestic homicide? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Create awareness about the nature and extent of family violence? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Promote action by encouraging community and government responses to end violence against women? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**4. Overall Impression**

**Did you learn anything new?** Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**What did you like best about the presentation and why?**

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**What did you like least about the presentation and why?**

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**Would you recommend it to others?** Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Explain why or why not.

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***Thank you!***

***(Please put your completed evaluation form in the box at the front of the room at the completion of the presentation)***