



“VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A GLOBAL, GENDERED AND SYSTEMIC PHENOMENON”

A global portrait of violence against women and girls was presented by Ms Louise Langevin, Lawyer. She invited the members of the Network to better understand the global, systemic and gendered characteristic of violence against women and girls and to define the violence they are subjected to, because “if you do not talk about it, then it doesn’t exist”.

THE NETWORK IN A NUTSHELL

A meeting of the Federation’s Women’s Network took place on May 23 and 24, 2013 with the theme “*La violence, un fléau sournois aux multiples visages*” (Violence, a devious scourge with a thousand faces). In order to continue the discussions and the reflections begun over the last few years on this subject, the members of the Network were invited to attend a conference entitled: “*Perspectives du droit comparé sur les différents modes de résolution de conflit en matière de harcèlement au travail*” (Comparative legal perspectives on the different forms of conflict resolution for harassment at work), given by Ms Rachel Cox, Lawyer and professor at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*. Despite the limits and the traps of comparative law, the members of the Network were able to target the possible solutions that are essential and that they can apply to their role as a union representative.

During the second day, a conference entitled: “Violence against women, a global, gendered and systemic phenomenon”, given by Ms Louise Langevin, Lawyer from the *Université Laval*, was on the agenda. The members of the Network were thus able to see an overview of the violence in Canada while bringing out the possible solutions that can be applied in order to put an end to the cycle of violence against women and girls.

Following a survey and an analysis of the Canadian statistics linked to the phenomenon of violence against women, Ms Langevin indicated the different solutions possible and foreseeable for putting an end to the cycle of violence against women. Right off the bat, she gave a demonstration of the violence against women and girls being a phenomenon as well as a global concern. In fact, the theme of the 57th annual meeting of the Status of Women Commission at the UNO that took place last March was “Violence against women and girls”. In addition, the, 3rd objective of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals aims to eradicate the phenomenon of violence against women and the costs related to this violence.

Domestic violence exists throughout the world and it is synonymous with a major social issue. To better understand and analyze it, the historical, economic and cultural context in which women find themselves in patriarchal societies must be remembered and the different inequalities they suffer not forgotten. The perpetuation of men/women inequalities ensures that the violence against women persists. In addition to the costs for those that suffer the violence, Ms Langevin reminded everyone to be aware that violence generates economic costs for all of society.

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At the microphone: 1. Sylvie Boulet, *Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont* 2. Véronique Bédard, *CSSS de la Haute-Yamaska*

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VIOLENCE: ALWAYS A QUESTION OF GENDER

Violence against women is an ever-present reality and remains a universal problem¹. Thus, we cannot leave this to its own devices when we tackle the issue of violence. The social services setting is composed of a majority of women and they are specifically affected by violence and are too often considered as legitimate targets.

There is a direct link between the healthcare professionals' working conditions and their physical and mental health. Several factors can then exacerbate the problems related to violence such as the workload, the schedules and the shifts as well as overtime. Also think about more abstract factors such as support from colleagues or the feeling of being autonomous². This is why the FIQ has already addressed the issue of violence for more than 20 years. After all those years, we unfortunately still see too many cases of violence.

Today, the following question must be asked: "Are they really all cases of violence or is it rather a question of disrespect, or of a conflict, etc.?" Violence can be carried out in a relationship of power and is connected to the notion of domination and compulsion. Violence exists "in all cases where an individual seeks to impose his will on another person, whether by physical force, verbal threats, humiliation, etc."³ It is critical to be aware of the power women have in order to eradicate this suffering in the workplaces, to take their rightful place and to assert themselves as women and healthcare professionals.

Michèle Boisclair

Michèle Boisclair, Vice-President and Political Officer for the Status of Women Committee



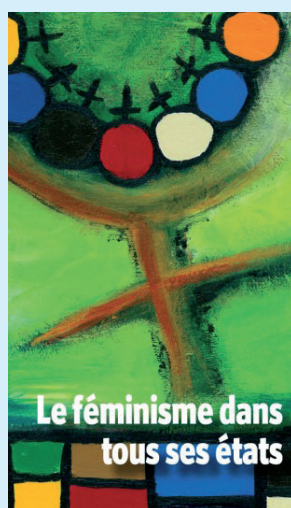
NEWS FROM THE STATUS OF WOMEN SECTOR

Amnesty International: I love my body, I love my rights campaign

In 1994, 179 countries signed the Action Programme of the International Conference on Population and Development. Under this programme, women's rights are a priority and are part of the crucial issues in development. This programme is supposed to be reviewed in 2014 and this is why the Canadian section of Amnesty International is demanding, through a petition, that the States commit to respecting, promoting and protecting the sexual and reproductive rights of women. This petition is available on the FIQ website.



For more information on this campaign: www.amnistie.ca/droitssexuels ■



Estates General on feminism

The *États généraux de l'action et de l'analyse féministe* will be held November 14 to 17 at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*. This will be an opportunity to discuss, learn, reflect and debate the issues affecting women and the women's movement. Action priorities will emerge from this major forum for the years to come for the feminist movement in Québec.

To obtain more information or to register: forum2013.etatsgenerauxdufeminisme.ca ■

Fédération des femmes du Québec

The symposium and annual general meeting of the FFQ was held on May 25 and 26. The FIQ attended. This year, the symposium was on "*l'intersection des oppressions*" (Intersecting Oppressions). The FFQ is currently holding a fundraising campaign. The theme of this campaign "*12 mois - 12 dons - 12 marraines = Les 12 dons féministes!*" (12 months - 12 donations - 12 sponsors = The 12 feminist donations!). Michèle Boisclair, Vice-President and Political Officer for the Status of Women Sector at the FIQ is one of the 12 sponsors.

For more information, please consult: www.ffq.qc.ca ■



1. www.un.org/en/women/endviolence
2. www.emploi.belgique.be/publicationdefault.aspx?id=5112
3. S. Cantin, *La violence envers les femmes : y a-t-il abus dans la manière de la définir et de la mesurer?* dans « *Informelle* », Université de Montréal, Vol. 4, N° 1, March 1994, p. 6.

**“VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:
A GLOBAL, GENDERED AND SYSTEMIC PHENOMENON”
(CONT’D)**



Ms Louise Langevin is a professor in the Law Faculty at Université Laval

**“VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:
A GLOBAL, GENDERED AND SYSTEMIC PHENOMENON”
(CONT’D)**

Defining violence is far from easy. What must be included in the definition of violence? Ms Langevin gave an overview of the different definitions found in the international statements ratified by Canada. For example, the following definition is found in Article 2 of the Declaration on the elimination of violence against women by the United Nations High Commission on human rights¹:

“Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence, and violence related to exploitation;
- b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.”

According to Ms Langevin, child or forced marriages, incest, genital mutilations, rape and sexual harassment at work are examples of violence against women. In Québec, domestic violence is defined in the *Politique du Québec en matière de violence conjugale* (Québec Policy on domestic violence)². Domestic violence is composed of the four following elements:

- A relationship of domination;
- A persistent pattern;
- Violent behaviour;
- Consequences.

It is still difficult today to measure the scope of the problem, because the victims do not always denounce the acts of violence that they suffer, and this, for several reasons. The following are a few of them:

- The biases against the victim;
- Fear of breaking up the family;
- The stigma and fear of the victim;
- The traumatizing experience for the victim;
- The victims do not want to send their spouse to prison; they want the violence to stop.

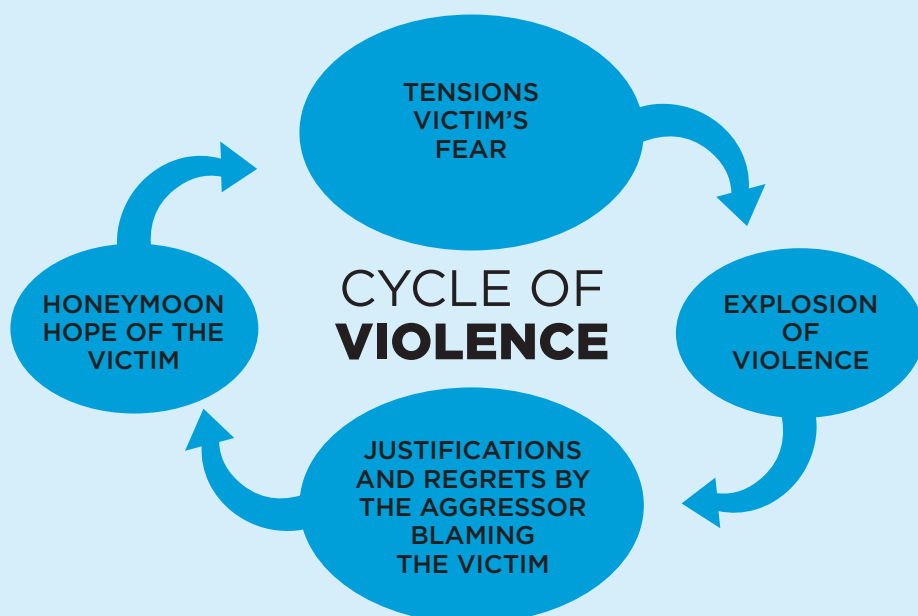
In 2011, the victims of sexual crimes in Québec were 83% of women and girls.

In Canada, certain women are more at risk to be victims of violence. Among them are Aboriginal women, immigrants and the elderly. ■

WAYS OF ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

According to Ms Langevin, for this systemic violence to stop, the end of the inequalities between men and women is a key premise. She moreover reminded the participants that some progress has been noted since women have had greater financial independence. This violence must also be qualified as a crime and the perpetrators must suffer the consequences. Lastly, the possibility for the victims to be compensated through civil lawsuits must also be made available. It will always be relevant to continue research to improve our societies’ response to this many faceted problem.

Women caught in domestic violence situations find themselves in a never-ending cycle:



Source: Louise Langevin, Université Laval (our translation)

1. Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, United Nations High Commission, December 20, 1993, 85th plenary session.
2. Politique d’intervention en matière de violence conjugale : Prévenir, Dépister, Contre la violence conjugale. Gouvernement du Québec, 1995, p. 23.

“HARASSMENT IN A UNION SETTING”



Ms Rachel Cox is a professor in the Political Science and Law Faculty at UQAM

“HARASSMENT IN A UNION SETTING”

The speaker, Ms Rachel Cox, Lawyer, presented a very interesting portrait to this Network on the comparative legal perspectives of the different styles of conflict resolution for harassment at work, a current problem.

According to Ms Cox, organizational constraints such as tensions, an imbalance between the tasks and the lack of support are conducive to intensifying harassment in the workplace. Nonetheless, the consequences of harassment are exceedingly harmful: feeling of distress and alienation, sustained suffering, psychological distress, depression, increase in absenteeism, increase in work accidents, etc.

It is important to understand what is suffering related to work. It can start with discontent, irritation, disrespect, conflicts, hyperconflicts, significant interpersonal tensions, etc. The legalization of this problem in union settings is a real fact and this brings about negative results. We can thus see an increase in the harmful consequences:

- A stigmatization of the two parties;
- An increase in conflicts;
- The system is focused on the conflict;
- High economic and human costs;
- Deterioration in working relations.

The dispute settlement system leans towards the legislative and in Québec, there is no structure that allows for setting up informal practices before legal proceedings. An Act respecting labour standards does not stipulate any structure, mechanism, recourse or support in the unionized workplaces¹. It might however be better to put informal practices into a formal setting. The positive consequence of this in the medium term would be early detection of the problems which would lead to effective primary prevention.

Another interesting element of Ms Cox’s presentation is the managers’ inertia that amplifies the conflicts. Here are a few examples of that inertia:

- “That does not excuse the action, but it does explain it because inertia on the part of the immediate superior results in the workers being left alone, so, at some point, there is a breakdown. It’s the law of the jungle, here, there.”
- “The employer really doesn’t move and the staff are left to their own devices. I just want my little corner of paradise.” ■



Inspired by Bilgram, 2009, Brun, 2004



1. Exception: mediation at the *ministère du Travail* possible in cases where a joint request is made

At the microphone: 1. Linda Barbagallo, *CSSS Jeanne-Mance* 2. Line Larocque, *MUHC* 3. Isabelle Trépanier, *CHU de Québec*

THE NETWORK'S FAVORITES



“Femmes autochtones: au-delà d’une solidarité papier” (Aboriginal Women: Beyond solidarity on paper) In the magazine, *Relations – Féminismes : état des lieux*, is a very interesting article written by Marie-Iris Légaré. For some time the Québec feminist movement has tried to create ties with the women’s community in Québec’s various aboriginal peoples in order to identify the issues for building cooperation between the two groups.

To make this rapprochement successful and to develop cooperation, the feminist movement must take into account the different realities that aboriginal women have depending on the location where they live. One of the major challenges is to find a way to standardize the ways of doing things during meetings in order that the aboriginal women feel respected. For example, taking the floor and the time for discussion is done differently in the aboriginal culture. Every issue is discussed without a time limit being set and no one interrupts the person who is speaking.

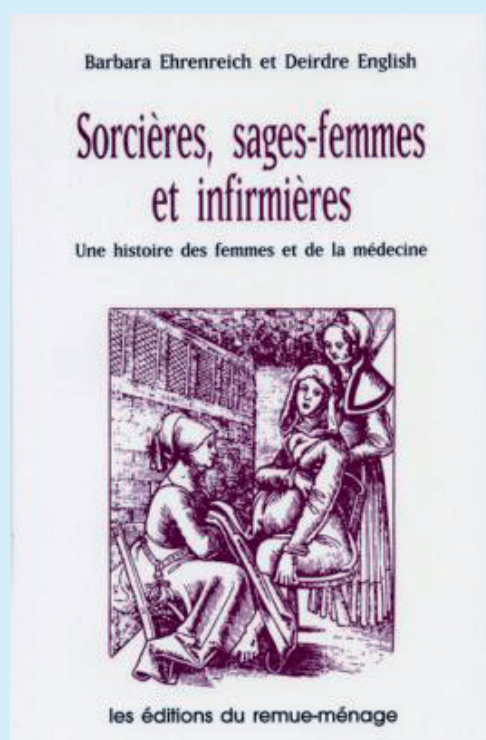
For a long time aboriginal women have feared feminism, because it comes

from the White People. In 2009, the *Fédération des femmes du Québec* and the *Femmes autochtones Québec* signed a Solidarity Protocol. Despite some scepticism about the value of this protocol, the aboriginal women realized that there were benefits to creating an alliance between the two groups when the time comes to wage the battles, to make their realities more visible and to broaden their networks.

There are more and more feminists among aboriginal women. However, they do not want feminism to hurt their family and their community. They are much more receptive to the talk about the common good than that of equality between men and women.

As a member of the Status of Women Committee, a woman and a feminist, I am happy that there is a solidarity protocol between our two groups. Our realities, sometimes very different, make us forget our similarities. This collaboration will no doubt bring us new paths to continue our struggles in the future. ■

By Line Mercier, member of the Status of Women Committee



“Witches, Midwives and Nurses”

This book, written by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, is very interesting because it tells the history of women healers. At the very beginning care was delivered by women from the middle or poor social classes. Then, an elite group of bourgeois men wanted to take control of the practice of medicine, condemning all those who wanted to continue to heal with more traditional methods.

These male physicians had very little medical knowledge at that time, especially since they burned “witches” at the stake, not being guaranteed the transfer of knowledge, thus leading to a great loss of knowledge for the medical field. Despite it all, women were able to continue to act, for a certain period of time, as birth attendants. However, the men quickly took the power in this field by creating obstetrics and not including midwives in the law.

When women wanted to practice medicine, making a place for themselves was not an easy thing to do, because in addition to being a male-dominated area, this profession was reserved for the bourgeoisie and one had to be part of the elite to have access. Women found themselves relegated to the rank of a nurse, which, at the time, meant being the physician’s servant.

With the training of physicians, women lost a lot of their knowledge and also the chances of practicing their art. With time, they succeeded in regaining some ground, by being more autonomous in their profession as a nurse and by establishing themselves as professionals in their own right. I hope that today we can still continue in this vein in order to take our rightful place. ■

By Patricia Lajoie, member of the Status of Women Committee

THE NETWORK'S FAVORITES
(CONT'D)



“Les oubliées du Plan Nord” (The forgotten issues in the Northern Plan)
In reading the article published in the *Gazette des femmes* magazine written by Suzanne Dansereau, I noticed that no Québec women’s group seems to have been consulted during the discussions leading to the creation of the Northern Plan. Certain aboriginal women’s groups were approached, but they did not seem to feel concerned.

The great majority of the jobs were created in construction (98.8%) and in the mines (85.6%). These jobs are dominated by males. No steps were taken to increase access for women to this type of work that is normally well paid.

There are three main problems affecting the women in northern Québec:

- The shortage of daycare places;
- The shortage of housing and the exorbitant cost of those that are available, because of their rareness;
- Violence.

Women are often stuck in an endless rut, because there are few jobs for them and they wouldn’t have places in daycare anyway. The owners of the mines and the construction have rented the major part of the housing to house their male workers. Consequently, there is little housing available and incidentally, the cost of rent is exorbitant. If there is an outbreak of violence in a couple, the woman finds herself without housing and often without any work. There has also been an increase of violence against women and sexual harassment.

For aboriginal women, the success of a project like the Northern Plan rests first and foremost on adequate social and health conditions with the appropriate funding to set it up.

The Northern Plan seems, according to what I have read, a long way from the concerns of women. ■

By Véronique Fois, member of the Status of Women Committee

Power Women's Way ♀





Caroline Flageol and Danae Turgeon Gauthier

SOLIDARITY INTERNSHIP IN NICARAGUA

With the goal of putting the desire expressed by the delegation in Federal Council into practice, the FIQ set up a first solidarity internship in 2012. A second group, composed of nine activists from the Federation, had a new opportunity to be introduced to international solidarity during an internship in Nicaragua that took place April 8 to 18, 2013.

This internship made it possible for the participants to become aware of the different realities of the communities in a country of the South like Nicaragua. They participated in particular in different activities and meetings in order to learn the issues in this country and to promote ties of solidarity with the Nicaraguan community. The interns also met with health workers and representatives of women's groups and held discussions with specialists on the country's history and the struggles of the social and union movement.

Nicaragua is a country where the differences with the wealthy are immense. 82% of the population live in poverty and 55% in extreme poverty. Most of the people try to support their basic needs on less than \$2 a day.

THE MARIA ELENA CUADRO GROUP

The Maria Elena Cuadro Group is a unique organization in Nicaragua that was founded by a union activist in order to defend women's rights. Created in 1994, the mission of this organization is to develop a feminist vision in a country known to be chauvinist and where the interests of men come before those of women.

In Nicaragua, it is taboo to post these feminist demands. The superiority of men is very evident in male/female relationships. Many women have

suffered reprisals for being active for this organization. Information and training sessions are organized for both men and women's groups, and for families in order to make the entire community aware of the different aspects affecting women's rights, the relationship between men and women and sexual and reproductive health (ex.: sexually transmitted diseases).

This organization fights with the government, among others, to protect women who are victims of violence, a significant problem in Nicaragua. The organization also tries to reach the women working in the mines and in the maquiladoras where they are more and more numerous. The maquiladoras are manufacturing plants where a very large number of women work because they are paid less than men. In addition to having their rights constantly trampled on by the employers, they often put their safety in danger because these plants are mostly located in isolated and remote areas. These manufacturing plants are expanding in Nicaragua and they benefit from cheap labour to maximize their profit margins. ■

By Caroline Flageol, member of the Status of Women Committee, and Danae Turgeon Gauthier, Licensed Practical Nurse at the CSSS de la MRC-de-Coaticook

The motto of the Maria Elena Cuadro Group is "Soy defensora de los derechos de las mujeres" which means "In defence of women's rights". There is still a long way to go, but their presence contributes to the advancement of fundamental rights and the promotion of gender equality in Nicaragua.

The FIQ group was composed of Christiane Côté, from CSSS Lucille-Teasdale, Caroline Flageol, from CHUM, Élyse Fortier, from CRDQ, Martine Gagné, from CSSS Les Eskers de l'Abitibi, Lynda Groulx, from CSSS de St-Jérôme, Nancy Moss, from CSSS de St-Jérôme, Isabelle Taquet, from CRDQ, Nathalie Turgeau, from CSSS Les Eskers de l'Abitibi, Danae Turgeon Gauthier, from CSSS de la MRC-de-Coaticook as well as Roberto Bomba, Treasurer of the FIQ, Karine Crépeau and Sylvie Dallaire, Union Consultants at the FIQ. They are accompanied in the photo by union representatives of the public sector workers.

