Dec. 3, 2020

To the UTM community:

On December 6, Canada observes a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. The day commemorates the 14 women murdered at l’École Polytechnique de Montréal in 1989—and the many other women who have lost their lives to gender-based violence since. It enables an opportunity to condemn misogyny, to understand systemic gender inequalities and to work toward a better future.

Gender-based violence continues to harm women disproportionately, especially Indigenous women, LGBTQ2+ women and women from other disenfranchised populations. COVID-19 has only exacerbated the disparity. During the pandemic, on top of other social, economic and physical pressures, rates of intimate partner violence against women have increased, both in Canada and around the world. The necessity of social distancing, plus the isolating effect of required lockdowns, have made it harder for abuse survivors to access important support services and find a safe space.

At the University of Toronto, we have a collective responsibility to take action against gender-based violence, both in this challenging year and in the years to come. Most immediately, on December 4, from 10:00am—11:30am, I invite you to attend U of T’s virtual event for Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, organized collectively by the Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre, the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering and Hart House. I also encourage you to participate in our ongoing initiatives, coordinated across the tri-campus system, that confront gender-based violence, educate our community and provide support to people in need.

The webpages below describe relevant resources available at U of T and exemplify our collective commitment to equitable action—to supporting, creating and sharing solutions against gender-based discrimination and violence.

- Community Safety Office
- Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre
- Sexual & Gender Diversity Office

Yours truly,

Alexandra Gillespie
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