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Charlottetown memorial service draws hundreds to remember victims of gender-based violence

By **Vivian Ulinwa**

Published Dec 08, 2025 1 minute read



Guest speaker Alyssa Coghlin, a therapist at the P.E.I. Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, addresses the crowd on shame and accountability at the annual Montreal Massacre memorial service in Charlottetown. PHOTO BY VIVIAN ULINWA /The Guardian

During the annual memorial service marking the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre and commemorating Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, attendees were reminded

that “Shame must change sides: No stigma on survivors.”

The theme was inspired by a French survivor of multiple rapes, Gisele Pelicot, who insisted her identity be public so those who assaulted her could be held accountable.



One of the women especially remembered during the ceremony was Mary Ann MacKinnon. She was killed in 1951 after supporting her daughter, Estelle, who had reported an assault to police. PHOTO BY VIVIAN ULINWA /The Guardian

Hundreds filled Memorial Hall at the Confederation Centre of the Arts on Dec. 5 for the service hosted by the P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

The service brought together survivors, families, advocates and community members to remember women whose lives were taken or changed by gender-based violence.



A piece of art created with glass by Susannah Rutherford, as an honorary commemoration of women, was on display during the Dec. 5 memorial event in Charlottetown to mark Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. PHOTO BY VIVIAN ULINWA /The Guardian

Candles were lit for the 14 women killed in the 1989 Montreal Massacre, along with the 10 Island women murdered since then by men they knew.

A Mi'kmaw ceremony and prayer was offered by Julie Pellisier-Lush.

This year marks 36 years since the gunman targeted women at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal.



Hundreds of people filled Memorial Hall at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown on

TRENDING

Dec. 5 for P.E.I.'s annual Montreal Massacre memorial service. PHOTO BY VIVIAN ULINWA /The Guardian

One of the women especially remembered during the ceremony was Mary Ann MacKinnon. She was killed in 1951 after supporting her daughter, Estelle, who had reported an assault to police.

As shared during the memorial, MacKinnon's daughter told her she had been abducted and raped by her former boyfriend.

After the family went to the RCMP, charges were laid, and the accused publicly blamed MacKinnon.



Gladys Alombro lights a candle in honour of women murdered during wars and ongoing conflicts around the world as part of a Montreal Massacre memorial event in Charlottetown Dec. 5. PHOTO BY VIVIAN ULINWA /The Guardian

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On Nov. 8, 1951, just before the trial, the accused went to MacKinnon's Eastern P.E.I. farmhouse and shot her through the kitchen window while she was kneeling with her children for evening prayer.

MacKinnon, already widowed, left behind 11 children. The man was found not guilty by reason of insanity and didn't face the original charges.

Vivian Ulinwa is a reporter for The Guardian in Prince Edward Island. She can be reached at vulinwa@postmedia.com and followed on X [@vivian_ulinwa](https://twitter.com/vivian_ulinwa).



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