

Victims of Montreal school massacre remembered 15 years later

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MONTREAL (CP) - Every year, in memorial ceremonies across the country, Genevieve Bergeron's name is heard first when the list of the victims of Canada's worst mass shooting is read.

Link: [White Ribbon Campaign](#)

The tragedy of her death overshadows her life for most Canadians. They're seldom told she was a loving, inspirational sister, a top student, a gifted musician and a talented athlete.

"For me, she was like the sun," said Catherine Bergeron, who fought tenaciously for tougher gun laws after her sister was killed.

"I see her like sunshine. She was a beautiful blond, with blue eyes, always smiling."

Genevieve was 21 when she and 13 other women were killed during Marc Lepine's hate-fuelled rampage at Montreal's [Ecole polytechnique](#) engineering school on Dec. 6, 1989.

Lepine, only a few years older than most of his victims, proclaimed he was getting even because feminists had ruined his life.

Also killed in the rampage which took Bergeron's life 15 years ago Monday were Helene Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Maryse Leclair and Annie St-Arneault, all 23; Anne-Marie Edward, Michelle Richard and Annie Turcotte, all 21; Barbara Daigneault and Anne-Marie Lemay, both 22; Maryse Laganier, 25; Sonia Pelletier, 28; Maud Haviernick, 29; and Barbara Maria Klucznik, 31.

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Genevieve was in her second year of studies in civil engineering when she died. She had proudly gained admittance on a scholarship because of her high grades in junior college but lost it the second year because the crushing workload caused her grades to slip.

"We were laughing about that because Genevieve was the kind of student who got 100 per cent in high school and junior college," Catherine recalled.

"It tells you how hard it is to go through Polytechnique and how hard you have to work."

Genevieve could easily have become a musician instead of an engineer, her sister said. A gifted clarinet player, she also sang in a professional choir.

"She loved Mozart."

In the end, Genevieve, who looked at things with a level head, weighed the career prospects of music and engineering carefully.

"We discussed it," said Catherine, who is now a lawyer. "She didn't know if she could have a nice living with music. It's harder. So she decided to go into engineering and have a more sure career."

"She was still singing in a choir while studying engineering," Catherine said, with a touch of sisterly pride in her voice. "She could do both."

Bubbling energy seemed to power Genevieve.

"She was a very happy person and a very sensible person too. I remember her crying easily, a very emotive person," Catherine said with a fond chuckle.

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"She was like energy."

Laughter came as easily as tears.

"She was the type of person you liked to have as an audience because she laughed at everything. She was a giggler."

One of the most widely seen pictures of Genevieve shows her with her head thrown back, apparently laughing loudly at some joke or incident, her eyes squeezed into a mischievous squint by her big smile.

In her spare time, what there was of it, she also swam, did gymnastics and played basketball.

"That's why I play basketball now too because she started to play basketball in high school and I joined the club because she was there.

"I used to follow her a lot," said Catherine, who was two years younger than her sister. "I was the o-ne who wanted to do like she was doing, like a little sister."

Genevieve was a cherished mentor to Catherine, but not the type to always be offering advice. Just when it counted.

"She was always there when I needed her," she said. "Always there."

On the last day of her life, Genevieve had gone to the school to work o-n a project with her friends.

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"I think it was a computer project," Catherine recalled. "I remember she was in the computer room and she went down to the cafeteria with her friend when Marc Lepine just came in and started to shoot."

Bergeron was with Edward, who had just been named to the university ski team.

The cafeteria was decked out for the holidays with festive red and white balloons, while free wine was also being offered to celebrate the end of term.

Late-day meals were being chosen when people rushed into the cafeteria and began pushing others into the facility's small kitchen, slamming the door behind them.

Bergeron and Edward were among those who didn't make it.

They made a run for it. Lepine apparently caught a glimpse of their long, flying blond hair as they dashed for cover.

Edward's mother Suzanne, who like Bergeron's mom Therese Daviau became a leading gun-control advocate, said later the two young women were holding each other tightly in their arms when Lepine calmly strode over to their hiding place and raised his rifle once again.

The effects of that day would unleash the efforts of survivors and relatives of the victims of Lepine's rampage to tighten Canada's gun laws, legislation that still faces challenges in the form of the controversial gun registry.

Wendy Cukier, president of the [Coalition for Gun Control](#), said the families of the victims never shrink from fighting to preserve the law and the registry.

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"Many of them consider the legislation a monument to the young women who were killed that day and it's ironic they have to work so hard to preserve it," she said.

Catherine Bergeron acknowledges the gun law is part of her sister's legacy but it's not the only way she wants her to be remembered.

"I would like Canadians to remember her and the other 13 women, not to be sad but to go on in life in a better way," she said.

"Think more about other human beings and be more open. More tolerant too."

Here are brief sketches of the 14 women who were killed Dec. 6, 1989, during a rampage at the University of Montreal's Ecole polytechnique school of engineering. They are listed in alphabetical order.

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Genevieve Bergeron, 21, was a second-year scholarship student in civil engineering. She played the clarinet and sang in a professional choir. In her spare time she played basketball and swam.

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Helene Colgan, 23, was in her final year of mechanical engineering and planned to do her master's degree. She had three job offers and was leaning towards accepting one from a company based near Toronto.

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Nathalie Croteau, 23, another graduating mechanical engineer, planned to take a two-week vacation in Cancun, Mexico, with Colgan at the end of the month.

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Barbara Daigneault, 22, was to graduate at the end of the year. She was a teaching assistant for her father Pierre Daigneault, a mechanical engineering professor with the city's other French-language engineering school at the University of Quebec at Montreal.

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Anne-Marie Edward, 21. She loved outdoor sports like skiing, diving and riding and was always surrounded with friends.

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Maud Haviernick, 29, was a second-year student in engineering materials, a branch of metallurgy, and a graduate in environmental design from the University of Quebec at Montreal.

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Barbara Maria Klucznik, 31, the oldest of the victims, was a first-year nursing student. She arrived in Montreal from Poland with her husband in 1987.

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Maryse Laganier, 25, of Montreal, was the only non-student killed. She worked in the budget department of the engineering school. She had recently married.

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Maryse Leclair, 23, in fourth-year metallurgy, had a year to go before graduation and was one of the top students in the school. She acted in plays in junior college. She was the first victim whose name was known and she was found by her father, Montreal police Lieut. Pierre Leclair.

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Anne-Marie Lemay, 27, of Montreal, was in fourth-year mechanical engineering.

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Sonia Pelletier, 28, was the head of her class and the pride of St-Ulric, Que., her remote birthplace in the Gaspé peninsula. She had five sisters and two brothers. She was killed the day before she was to graduate with a degree in mechanical engineering. She had a job interview lined up for the following week.

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Michele Richard, 21, of Montreal, was in second-year engineering materials. She was presenting a paper with Haviernick when she was killed.

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Annie St-Arneault, 23, a mechanical engineering student from La Tuque, Que., a Laurentian pulp and paper town in the upper St-Maurice river valley, lived in a small apartment in Montreal. Her friends considered her a fine student. She was killed as she sat listening to a presentation in her last class before graduation. She had a job interview with Alcan Aluminium scheduled for the following day. She had talked about eventually getting married to the man who had been her boyfriend since she was a teenager.

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Annie Turcotte, 21, of Granby, Que., was in her first year and lived with her brother in a small apartment near the university. She was described as gentle and athletic - she was a diver and a swimmer. She went into engineering so she could one day help improve the environment.

Some facts about the Ecole polytechnique massacre where 14 women were killed and 13 other people wounded:

When: Late afternoon, Dec. 6, 1989.

Where: Ecole polytechnique, the University of Montreal's engineering school.

Who did it: Marc Lepine, 25, armed with a Sturm Ruger Mini-14 semi-automatic assault rifle, knives and bandoliers of ammunition.

Why: Lepine ranted during his rampage that feminists had ruined his life.

Victims: Fourteen women killed; 13 other people, mostly women, wounded.

Aftermath: Tougher gun-control measures, increased awareness of violence against women.

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Links:

[Coalition for Gun Control](#)

[Ecole polytechnique](#)

[CBC Archives - Marc Lepine, mass murderer](#)

[White Ribbon Campaign](#)

see also: [The Montr?al Massacre](#)

Summary

The Montr?al Massacre of December 6, 1989, in which 14 women students at the ?cole Polytechnique were systematically killed and 13 other students wounded by a lone gunman, is indelibly imprinted o-n the minds of Quebeckers and others who struggled to comprehend the worst single-day massacre in Canadian history.