

venerated, it is reported that even the great defenders of virginity, which was viewed as the highest of values, were found guilty of rape.

The law considered rape to be a crime against a man's property, because it caused harm to the "owner" (father or husband). Rape was not, under any circumstances, perceived as a violation of women's rights.

Canadian laws were no exception. Until 1983, a woman's husband could not be accused of rape as the marriage vows proclaimed that a woman must give herself to her husband. Other rules of evidence and procedure which perpetuated women's lack of faith in the judicial system were abolished in 1983. However, our experience and the analysis of observers confirms that the perception of the judicial system continues to be based primarily on prejudice.

REPERCUSSIONS FOR ALL WOMEN

Regardless of the nature of the sexual assault (rape, harassment, incest, exhibitionism, etc.), the fact remains that the personal repercussions are considerable. Sexual assault implies that our life has been endangered, that our sense of intimacy and physical and mental integrity has been violated. After a sexual assault has occurred, even the most basic of daily activities becomes difficult.

Listen to what Suzanne had to say several weeks after she was assaulted:

"My family and friends told me to put it out of my mind and everything would soon be all right again. So, I went back to work, but I had trouble concentrating. My boss commented on this and threatened to fire me if my performance didn't improve. I realize that I am not the same person at all since the attack. Now, I'm afraid to walk along the street by myself. I'm afraid I might see him again. I no longer go out unless it's with friends, and I was always such an independent person before. I no longer take part in activities, even those I valued the most..."