

Women cross Canada and round the world

Ojibway woman targets feds

SASKATCHEWAN — After an eight-year struggle, Mary Pitawanakwat, an Ojibway in Canada, may finally win her racial discrimination case — against the same government department responsible for educating Canadians about racism.

Pitawanakwat was hired in 1979 as part of the federal government's first affirmative action program for aboriginal people.

For years, Pitawanakwat endured ongoing racial slurs by various staffers. Pitawanakwat also says she was repeatedly sexually harassed by a co-worker.

Within a month, she filed a formal complaint of racial and sexual harassment with the federal Canadian Human Rights Commission.

According to Pitawanakwat, her complaint only brought on more racial insults and an increased work load. In 1986, Pitawanakwat was fired for alleged "incompetence".

In 1989, the commission's investigation finally recommended that Pitawanakwat's case be heard before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, which is expected to issue its ruling by the end of the year. She is asking for job reinstatement, a letter of apology, back pay, and additional cash compensation.

Women want harassers stopped

MONTREAL — Sexual harassment is not an issue only in the United States, where the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings had North Americans glued to their TV sets.

At Concordia University, the Office of Sexual Harassment has issued its first annual report, which shows that harassment is very much alive on the university campus.

But according to sexual-harassment officer Sally Spilhaus, most people who bring complaints of sexual harassment are more interested in having the offensive behavior stopped than in seeking vengeance or punishment.

In its first 17 months of operation, Spilhaus's

office dealt with 62 inquiries and complaints, 49 by women against men.

East meets west on abortion

GERMANY — A new law may soon bring safe, legal abortion to Western German women for the first time. (Eastern German women have had access to abortion on demand for more than 40 years.)

Ending a debate that has raged since unification, the new Bundestag (parliament) approved a compromise in June; it legalized first trimester abortions only after confidential "counseling".

But conservatives still challenged the law in the constitutional court, gaining a restraining order against it in August. Until the court reaches a decision (expected by year's end), old laws

remain in effect in the two regions. (Western Germany permits abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or doctor-certified health risk.)

Though Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative Christian Democratic Party opposed the law, many of the party's women — including Bundestag President Rita Süssmuth — defied Kohl and voted for it.

Murder and the Military

HONDURAS — For the first time in a decade, thousands rallied against the military on July 13.

In five cities, protesters gathered on the first anniversary of a brutal murder, allegedly by an army colonel; they demanded prosecution of the colonel and other soldiers accused of human rights abuses.

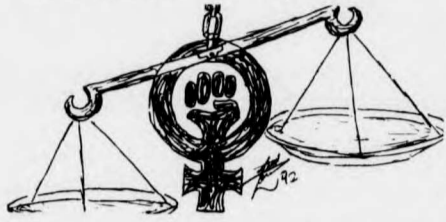
Ricci Mabel Martinez, a 17-year-old stu-

dent, disappeared in July 1991, near an army base outside Tegucigalpa. Witnesses say she was abducted into a truck owned by Colonel Angel Castillo Maradiaga. Martinez's body was found two days later; there were signs of rape and her genitals had been mutilated.

After public outcry, Maradiaga was arrested for murder in August

1991 — the first time a high-ranking officer has been accused in a Honduran civilian court. But full prosecution is a long shot: politicians and judges fear retribution by the military, which essentially runs the country.

compiled by Sara Singer
with files from Canadian University Press
and Ms. Magazine Vol III.2



Student raped, murdered near Montreal university

by Byron Chu
Canadian University Press

OTTAWA — A brutal murder near the Université de Montréal last month has created a climate of fear among students at the school.

Chantal Brochu was found brutally raped, beaten and strangled in a neighborhood close to the university Sept. 18.

Brochu, a 22-year-old master's student at the Université du Québec in Montreal, was last seen alive by friends at an on-campus bar with an unidentified young man.

The rape-murder of Brochu was the fourth incident of its kind in the neighborhood in the past two years. It occurred a day after a man molested a woman on a nearby sidewalk. The same man is believed to have been seen masturbating in a telephone booth earlier in the day.

These incidents have made students at U de M angry and anxious, especially those living in the university's residences.

The U de M student newspaper, *l'Affranchi*, reported Oct. 5 that the murder has made students living near the residence nervous.

"This climate is creating, consciously or not, the fear of a new explosion of violence, with all the following consequences: loss of

independence, distrust of strangers (male), etc."

In response to these fears, some residence students have independently instituted a student escort service. Floor representative Julie Emond said she is pleased with the response.

"What is surprising is that, following last week's events, the idea (of starting a service) was proposed spontaneously by guys," she said. "Currently, eight names appear on the list of escorts. What's good is that everyone knows each other on the floor. We feel more secure."

Following the apparent success of the service, Daniel Boucher, head of the university's residence association, is working with other students to expand it to all the residences.

Alain McPherson, campus news editor of *l'Affranchi*, was surprised by the positive response of male students in light of the sexism that has existed on campus in the past. As evidence of this sexism, he said a recent edition of a newspaper published by students at l'Ecole Polytechnique, U de M's engineering school, published material that bordered on pornography.

"It was very silly frat humour," said McPherson. "Polytechnique has always been like that, but people are saying 'No more.'"

The publication is now under review by the university. After the shooting at l'Ecole Polytechnique in 1989, when 14 women were

murdered by a lone gunman, the university's administration implemented security measures at the school.

Increased security staff, cars, radios, video surveillance and a 24-hour hotline were started thanks to a \$4 million government allocation. Another \$175,000 was allocated to residences, where a magnetic card entry and video surveillance systems were added.

However, in spite of these measures, McPherson said there was nothing more the university could have done to prevent the Brochu murder.

"She was across (the street) from the campus and couldn't be protected by guards when she went to the bus stop," said McPherson.

McPherson indicated only an escort could have protected her, but as she was with someone she evidently trusted, she would probably not have opted for assistance.

McPherson said the emotional outcry of the campus community has subsided in the last few weeks.

But women's fear will not likely disappear soon.

As soon as night falls, I don't dare go out alone. I cannot remove from myself the idea that the murderer is still on campus," said one anonymous female student.



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