

Moving Women's Voices

Examining the Challenges and Strategies to Moving
Forward on Women's Equality and Inclusion

Labrador City, Newfoundland and Labrador
March 5, 2005

**Facilitated by:
Provincial Advisory Council
on the Status of Women**

Foreword

The Labrador West Status of Women Council invited the Provincial Advisory Council to assist with a number of activities planned for International Women's Week. Advisory Council President Joyce Hancock and Community Liaison/Communications Director Michelle Smith traveled to Labrador West to work with Noreen Careen of the Labrador West Women's Centre and Marsha Power-Slade of Hope Haven Shelter. During the five-day visit, a number of exciting activities took place: a roundtable, *Moving Women's Voices: Examining the Challenges and Strategies to Moving Forward on Women's Equality*; an evening session with Board members of the Women's Centre and Hope Haven discussing the importance of feminism as a basis of unity for equality-seeking work; three sessions with grade IV students on bullying/gender at J.R. Smallwood Primary and Elementary School; a meeting with the provincial Minister Responsible for the Status of Women; a forum discussing the proposed Family Violence Legislation; and a wonderful Bread and Roses celebration dinner with the theme, *That Takes Ovaries*.

In this report we have attempted to capture the challenges and barriers women are facing in this region, as well as the strategies and recommendations. We have identified the major themes and the major concerns brought forward to the provincial Status of Women Minister when she visited Labrador West. At the request of the Labrador West Status of Women Council we have included the recommendations from the *Effects of Mining on Women's Health in Labrador West* study when these recommendations were referenced by women attending the *Moving Women's Voices* roundtable.

A very warm thank you to the Coordinator of the Labrador West Women's Council and the Administrator of Hope Haven, as well as Advisory Council Board Member Jacqui Winter, for the work in coordinating, facilitating, hosting and participating in the International Women's Week events. We look forward to continuing our mutual work in advancing women's equality, equity and inclusion in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In Sisterhood,

Joyce M. Hancock

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Reflections

One of the women who participated in the March 5 Labrador City session brought her young daughter along to the afternoon roundtable discussions. Miranda, who had just turned nine, spent the first part of the afternoon quietly listening to the women discuss the challenges and barriers to women's equality, as well as the strategies for moving a women's agenda forward. Miranda became engaged in the discussion when the facilitators began flip-charting women's ideas, and using her pencil carefully copied down the flip-chart notes on a sheet of paper. By the end of the afternoon, Miranda had decided that she wanted to be a "flip-chart facilitator" too; at the end of the day she wrote this poem about women's equality and left it for us as a gift. We felt that Miranda's words should be included in the final report.

Men and women are the same
But the only thing different
About men and women is that
Men are a little bit stronger
And women are pretty strong
And some women are stronger than men
Just because men look stronger
Doesn't mean that men are stronger than women
Some people just think that.

Miranda Currie
Age 9

Summary of Key Issues and Concerns Brought to the Attention of the Provincial Minister Responsible for the Status of Women on March 7, 2005

- < There is a lack of adequate housing or alternative housing arrangements in Labrador West for senior women living alone or with partners.
- < The Labrador West Women's Council / Centre is under-resourced for the increasing workload and high expectations from women's organizations and government agencies.
- < Hope Haven is not accessible to women and children on a continuous basis; due to inadequate resourcing it is not open twenty-four hours a day.
- < There is a lack of accessible, affordable child care options for women living and working in Labrador West.
- < Women's lack adequate access to justice, including the following concerns:
 - < the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary building is not open 24 hours a day; the Corner Brook RNC answers calls for Labrador West after midnight;
 - < Labrador West residents only have access to a circuit court;
 - < there is no full-time Victim Services Coordinator in Labrador West;
 - < there is no Legal Aid office in Labrador West. Legal Aid lawyers must periodically travel to the area from Newfoundland.
- < There are a myriad of health-related concerns including:
 - < the lack of specialized services for women including psychology/psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology;
 - < the lack of financial resourcing to access outside health and medical services (travel subsidies);
 - < the local hospital is in a state of disrepair;
 - < Labrador West women wanted the Minister to be aware of and attentive to the plight of more than three hundred area women who have been affected by the use of unsterilized instruments used on them during pelvic examinations.

Moving Our Voices
Women's Voices Needed to Move Forward
Saturday, March 5, 2005

Women from Labrador West are invited to a day of discussion with the Labrador West Women's Council and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PACSW). Come along to add your thoughts and experiences to our mutual work in moving forward on issues of women's equality and inclusion.

Agenda

- 8:00 a.m. Registration / Coffee and chat
- 8:30 a.m. Welcome and Introductions - Women's Centre and Hope Haven
- 8:45 a.m. Overview of the work and mandate of the PACSW, Joyce Hancock
Video: Re/Claiming Feminist Activism
Reflections / Questions
- 9:45 a.m. Overview - Women's Equality in Newfoundland and Labrador / Canada,
Michelle Smith
- 10:15 a.m. Feedback - Questions / Observations
- 10:30 a.m. Nutrition Break
- 10:45 a.m. Small group discussions: Barriers and challenges to moving forward on
women's equality and inclusion
- 11:45 a.m. Report back from small groups on challenges / barriers
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. Small group discussions: Individual / organizational and community strategies
to dealing with our challenges
- 1:45 p.m. Report back from small groups on strategies
- 2:30 p.m. Where to from here?
- 3:00 p.m. Closure

Women's Equality in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada An Overview

The Status of Women in Newfoundland and Labrador

Women's equality and inclusion are essential to the decision making which guides the direction of our organizations, communities and province. However, women are still not equal in our society and, despite the advances of recent decades, violence and gender discrimination are pervasive in many dimensions of life worldwide. The following are indicators of the current status of women's equality in our province and country.

Labour Market and Income

While more women now participate in the labour market, they are more likely to be employed in part-time, temporary or seasonal employment without long-term security, health benefits or pension plans. Women also continue to be clustered in lower-paying, traditionally female-dominated sectors, such as retail, and are vastly under-represented in technology and resource sectors (Hussey, 2003).

While incomes are rising in Newfoundland and Labrador, they remain lower than the rest of Canada. Over the last decade, provincial per capita income has consistently been about 25% lower than Canada as a whole. The lowest income earners in the province and, consequently, those most vulnerable to poverty, violence, and further exclusion, are women. In 1998, 31% of women working in full-time, full-year jobs earned only \$15,000 or less, compared with 16% of men (Strategic Social Plan, 2003). In contrast, of the highest income earners, only 1% of women earned over \$75,000, compared with 5% of men. One quarter (25%) of women earned \$35,000, compared with nearly half (45%) of men (Strategic Social Plan, 2003).

The gender wage gap also remains quite large. In 1960, women in this province earned 51.3% of men's earnings. Now, forty years later, women still earn only 62.7% of men's earnings (Hussey, 2003). In fact, the gap between high and low incomes is becoming larger in general. In 1999, the gap between people with high and low incomes was larger than in 1990, widening income inequality (Strategic Social Plan, 2003).

Education Participation

More women are attending university in the province than men, but they are still clustered in traditionally female-dominated programs. Women received 61% of undergraduate degrees in 2002, and 52% of graduate degrees. However, women are most likely to graduate in the Arts, primarily Sociology, English or Psychology. Men are most likely to receive Science degrees, usually in Biology or Computer Science (Strategic Social Plan, 2003). In 2002, women comprised six percent of those working in trade-related occupations, 14 percent in occupations unique to primary industry and 19 percent in natural and applied sciences (Women's Policy Office, 2003).

Family Status and Poverty

Poverty is a key concern for women, families and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Women primarily head single parent families and, although the number of children in the province has declined by 30% since 1991, the number of children - and women - living in poverty has not declined at the same rate. During the 1990's about half of all single-parent families were living in poverty. In 1991, women headed over 82% of lone parent families. In 2001, the number of lone parent families had increased, with women still heading 82% (Women's Policy Office, 2003). Women also form the majority of individuals who do the unpaid work of childcare, senior care and housework.

In 2002, women headed over 92% of single parent families in subsidized housing (Women's Policy Office, 2003). Nationally, 56% of single parent families headed by women are poor, compared with 24% for men (Morris, 2002). 41% of single women under 65 live in poverty, while 49% of single women seniors are poor.

Violence

Poverty puts women at increased risk of family violence, as lack of economic security and independence often prevents escape from abusive living situations. Women who experience violence within the home often have two choices: violence or poverty. Either "choice" will mean deepened inequality and further vulnerability to violence.

According to the Violence Prevention Initiative of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2002), the following are distressing indicators of women dealing with violence in our province:

- In 2001, 1,282 women and children were admitted to shelters for abused women.
- In that same year, these shelters received 2,625 crisis calls directly related to abuse.
- In a 2001 survey, Newfoundland and Labrador had a 39% higher incidence of sexual assaults reported to police than the national average.
- In 2000, women made up the vast majority of victims of sexual assault (86%) and other types of sexual offences (78%).
- Rates of spousal homicide among Aboriginal women are more than eight times higher than for non-Aboriginal women.
- Only 10% of sexual assaults on women are reported to the police. Extrapolating from these data, there are 509,860 sexual assaults in Canada per year, or 1,397 per day. This means that every minute of every day, a woman or child in Canada is being sexually assaulted (Violence Prevention Initiative, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2002).

Violence and inequality is expensive, and the costs can be measured in both human and economic terms. Billions of dollars are spent in this province and country each and every year on the aftermath of the violence against women alone, while the organizations who have the knowledge and ability to provide cost-effective equality-seeking/anti-violence services, advocacy and education remain undervalued and underfunded:

- A 1995 study showed the total annual measurable health costs alone amounted to over \$1.5 billion (F/P/T Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2003, p.23).
- A second study in 1995 estimated preliminary partial social services/education, criminal justice, labour/employment and health/medical costs of violence against women to be at least \$4.2 billion (F/P/T Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2003, p.23).

Age

Demographic trends in Newfoundland and Labrador indicate that our population is ageing. Women tend to live longer than men; in 1999, life expectancy was 80.2 years for women, compared with 75.2 years for men (Strategic Social Plan, 2003). The implications for women's equality will become increasingly evident as the population ages, given that women tend to live longer than men, to head single-parent families, to obtain precarious employment and to live with poverty and violence.

The work to improve the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador will be of increasingly critical importance in the years ahead.

Canada and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 by the United Nations signalled the acceptance by the international community of the necessity of an international bill of rights for women, and an accompanying agenda for action that would guarantee women's enjoyment of these rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is one of seven United Nations human rights treaties. CEDAW provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to - and equal opportunities in - political and public life, as well as education, reproductive health, employment, family law, child care, and social security. Countries (i.e., states parties) that ratify CEDAW agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Many of the 178 countries that have ratified the treaty have used it for guiding the passage and enforcement of national laws.

The Convention stipulates that signatory countries submit reports every four years to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, an international body charged with reviewing the measures taken by countries to honour their obligations under the Convention. Canada has submitted five reports, in 1983, 1988, 1992, 1995, and 2002. Canada intends to submit both its sixth and seventh report to the Committee in 2007. At this point in time, the information Canada has submitted to the CEDAW Committee is already seven years out of date, ending with the 1994-1998 period.

In October 2002, Canada ratified a new treaty that creates additional procedures to enhance compliance with CEDAW:

- < Communications Procedure. Individuals and groups can submit a formal complaint to the United Nations about alleged violations of CEDAW by their country.
- < UN Inquiry. The UN Committee can demand information and an explanation from a country where grave or systematic violations of CEDAW may be occurring.

Many women in Canada are not familiar with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in part because the Canadian government has not publicized its own obligations under this international treaty.

In January of 2003, over 20 years after Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN oversight body which reviews countries' compliance with CEDAW expressed serious concerns about Canada's progress toward women's equality and issued 26 recommendations for change.

The committee found Canada was not living up to its obligations to women. It found poverty rates of 54% for single mothers, 43% for Aboriginal women, 37% for women of colour, and 48% for female recent immigrants unacceptable in a country as wealthy as Canada. The UN group was concerned that government cuts to social programs were deepening women's social and economic vulnerability, since these cuts eliminate good jobs, increase the burden of unpaid work, and make women less able to leave abusive relationships. Other criticisms included the following:

- Canada's Fifth report submitted in 2002, covering the period from 1994-1998, was five months late, did not comply with the reporting guidelines and did not provide integrated information between federal, provincial and territorial levels of government.

- The federal government does not seem to have the power to ensure provincial/territorial governments establish legal and other measures to fully implement the Convention.
- The transfer of federal funds to provinces and territories since 1995 is no longer tied to conditions that ensure national consistent standards for health and social welfare.
- Gender-based analysis is not mandatory at all federal/provincial/territorial levels of government.
- Women are under-represented in all areas of political and public life.
- There is a lack of employment-related measures for women, increasing numbers of non-standard work arrangements for women without benefits.
- The serious persistent, systematic discrimination faced by Aboriginal women in all aspects of their lives.
- The high percentage of women living in poverty, in particular: single, senior women; female lone parents; Aboriginal women; older women; immigrant women; and women with disabilities.
- Strategies to eliminate poverty are mostly directed toward children, and not these vulnerable groups of women.
- Equal pay for equal work as a principle is not implemented in practice by all provincial/territorial governments, and progress is too slow.
- The provision of social housing is inadequate.
- Women lack adequate access to the justice system, including services and programs such as legal aid.

- The Committee also criticized Canada for not working with non-governmental women's organizations in preparing its report.

Despite the clear message from the United Nations that Canada has serious homework to do, the federal government has not yet indicated how it will respond to the UN recommendations, or how it will work with the provinces and territories.

When Canada made its decision to ratify CEDAW back in 1981, it did so after securing the full agreement of provincial and territorial governments, who assumed responsibility for implementing the Convention in their areas of jurisdiction. So far, no government in Canada has mapped out a process for implementation, nor have governments jointly done this. Canada has an intergovernmental process for ratifying treaties, but appears to have no meaningful inter-governmental process for implementing them or for monitoring compliance with them.

Living up to Canada's human rights commitments matters. Canadian women need to be able to hold federal, provincial and territorial governments fully accountable for the implementation of these commitments. They also need a chance to work with governments on the practical challenges of realizing their human rights. Without concrete steps, Canada will continue to promise equality to women but fail to make good on that promise. And in unmistakable terms, the U.N. expert body on discrimination against women has sent a message to Canada: to be a credible international leader on women's human rights, you have to be a leader at home.

Cited/adapted with permission from the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action. FAFIA (2004). *Commitments Abroad, Inequalities at Home: The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; what it is and why it matters*. Ottawa: FAFIA, p. 17-18

Presentation by Michelle Smith

Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Facilitators' Guidelines

Roundtable Discussion

Facilitators should start with a quick round of re/introductions. Participants can begin with a discussion on the challenges to moving forward on issues of equality. Everyone should be encouraged to think about the challenges facing women within their community/region/province/country, the challenges in workplaces, the challenges to us as mothers and caregivers and the challenges facing women who work on issues of social and economic equality. These challenges should be named and flip-charted. When this list begins to grow, it is time to move to a large group discussion on the strategies for addressing these challenges. These strategies/suggestions should be named and flip-charted.

Roundtable Discussions

March 5, 2005

Challenges and Strategies to Moving Forward on Women's Equality and Inclusion

Jacqui Winter and Michelle Smith facilitated small group discussions with Labrador West women to talk about the challenges and barriers to moving forward on women's equality and inclusion. Participants were encouraged to think about the challenges facing women within their community/region/province/country, the challenges in workplaces, the challenges as mothers and caregivers and the challenges facing women who work on issues of social and economic equality. These challenges and barriers were flip-charted and presented back to the large group.

Next, Joyce Hancock facilitated a large group discussion with participants to talk about strategies for moving forward on women's equality and inclusion. Participants were asked to think about individual, organizational and community strategies to dealing with our challenges. These strategies were named and flip-charted.

Challenges and Barriers

The following issues were raised by participants as the challenges and barriers to moving forward on women's equality and inclusion.

Senior Women

- Poverty is a serious issue for senior women, many of whom are living on fixed incomes / pensions and cannot afford even the basics such as heat and light or groceries.
- There is no seniors' housing or alternative housing arrangements for women as they age in Labrador West.
- Senior women are not able to keep their pensions while on income support, keeping women "old and poor."

Poverty

- Income support rates are inadequate, which contributes to keeping women poor.
- There is a lack of awareness in our community as well as by the provincial government regarding the situation of the working poor.

Public Awareness

- There is a lack of support / interest / involvement by women in the area to participate in equality-seeking work. Women are too busy trying to balance work, family and care giving responsibilities. We need more women supporting women.
- We are not reaching all of the women who are in need of our Women's Centre's programs and services. A challenge is how to help women while ensuring that women can live with dignity.
- Some women in the region are working for the largest employers (e.g., mining companies) in secure jobs with good salaries and are not experiencing inequality. This means women don't see the inequality that negatively impacts on other women who are less secure in employment.

- Women are uncomfortable challenging inequality, as they may encounter resistance and/or backlash within the community.
- Women are not aware of their rights. For example, some women are experiencing traditional workplaces and have been conditioned / trained to conform and accept inequalities rather than challenge the way things are done.
- Men in the general community, and men in positions of power, do not speak out against women's inequality.
- Girls and young women are overly sexualized by society. In particular the media portrayal of women and girls is highly sexualized in terms of clothing, behavior, etc. Girls and women receive very strong messages from corporations, marketing campaigns and advertising in this regard that we don't know how to combat.
- Girls don't have enough exposure to strong, independent women role models (not Britney Spears, etc.)

Education

- School curriculum does not adequately include women and girls nor teach them messages about equality from an early age.
- Teachers do not receive training around gender/equality issues.
- We need to find ways to educate and involve younger girls and boys at an earlier age.
- There is still a very strong perception in the community that boys and girls / women and men should take on traditional gender roles. We are not teaching girls how to think for themselves. We may even be teaching women how to be helpless.
- Curriculum in schools should be more inclusive of social and life skills. For example, we need to teach girls and women skills in financial management so that they can work toward financial security and independence rather than being reliant upon someone else (e.g., a spouse) for financial planning and decision making.

- It is a challenge in a town that has been “male dominated” to increase awareness of gender inequality perpetuated by parents, teachers, coaches, etc. in the community.
- There is a lack of recognition in the general community that women’s issues are everyone’s issues.
- There is a lack of awareness of the reality of sexual assault, and that assaults do happen in Labrador West. There is a lack of accountability by the community in terms of addressing the issue and preventing further violence.
- There is concern that the strategies of the local men’s advocacy group might jeopardize the hard-won gains by women in the area. The new Hope Haven women’s shelter took years of concerted effort by women to become a safe place for women and children. The men’s group has suggested that men should also be accommodated there rather than investing the necessary work and time as local women and the Labrador West Status of Women Council / Centre did to raise awareness, lobby and fund-raise to finally achieve a shelter for women and children who are victims of male violence.

Women’s Political and Public Representation

- There is a lack of women participating in decision making at all levels, i.e., town councils, provincial / federal governments, as well as within local and regional organizations.
- Women and women’s organizations are expected to pay fees and travel costs to participate in regional organizations, e.g., Chamber of Commerce.

Employment

- The perception is that this is a “Cadillac town.” The reality is that it is generally men who receive the higher incomes. The population of Labrador city is 10,000 citizens yet only 1000 people, mainly men, are employed by the mining companies.
- Women in the community don’t always speak out against inequality and sexism for fear of backlash or repercussions to themselves, spouses or family members in the workplace.

- There is a general lack of awareness regarding the impacts of non-secure work arrangements, as has happened to women working at the recently opened Walmart in Labrador West in part-time, low paying jobs.
- Women are discouraged from entering into the workforce because of the stigma or guilt associated with being a working mother (i.e., a stereotypical “good mother” should stay at home and look after the children).
- There is a lack of full time employment opportunities which include benefits such as health plans, pensions and annual leave in Labrador West.
- Workplace harassment continues to be an issue for women. Women are afraid to challenge harassment in the workplace for fear of job loss.

Resources and Support

- Women are too busy trying to balance work, family, care giving, etc. and don't have time to volunteer and become involved in the Women's Centre / Council.
- The Women's Centre / Council and Shelter lack adequate money and staff to provide education and awareness on issues of equality, violence, stereotyping, etc,
- Hope Haven Transition House is not open twenty-four hours a day due to lack of resourcing, and is therefore not truly accessible to women in the community.
- There is a general territorialism and lack of collaboration in the services provided within the region. For example, seven organizations in the region are currently working on economic development in the area. On the other hand, basic resources (e.g., Legal Aid offices) are not present in the area at all.
- Women and women's organizations are busier than ever providing services that used to be provided by Government.
- There are no services or supports in the area for single parents.

- Cuts to social programs have negatively impacted on women in general (e.g., downsizing and amalgamation of regional boards).

Health

- There is a lack of specialized services for mental health (psychiatry/psychology) in Labrador West.
- There are not enough doctors providing medical services in the area.
- We now have only four Health Boards to oversee the province. This removes community and grassroots involvement in decision making about the health needs of people in the region.
- There is a lack of awareness and programming for addictions issues within the context of a traditionally male-dominated mining town.
- Women who do or want to become involved in equality-seeking work are too busy and overworked, and needing to take care of their physical and mental health. Too many of us are burning the candle at both ends, which contributes to poor health.
- There is a lack of specialized health services and extensive waiting times for health services in the area (e.g., 1-3 year wait to get a tubal ligation). There is also a lack of resources to access services outside the area when they aren't available locally.
- Very little government subsidy is available for medical travel outside the area. There is an initial \$500 deductible, and then the Province only pays half of the remaining costs. A trip to St. John's for pediatric services, for example, may cost \$1500, including airfare and accommodations, or more. Other barriers to medical travel include family issues, the elimination of compassionate seats on Air Canada for medical appointments and no air ambulance service.
- Communities lack adequate facilities and resources to support healthy living choices in communities (e.g., recreation facilities). In addition, many people are living on low incomes or in poverty and cannot afford healthy living (e.g., the cost of fresh produce is prohibitive for many people living in Labrador). Yet Government is spending money and developing campaigns around healthy living, and placing responsibility for good health on individual choice (e.g., don't smoke, eat healthy food, exercise).

- There is a lack of adequate and safe gynecological/obstetrics services for women in the region.
- There is no midwifery legislation in place, and therefore a lack of choice, for the women of Labrador. This is a particular concern given the geography and isolation of Labrador communities, and the lack of access to reproductive health services for women.
- There is a lack of respect for women's experience in healthcare. For example, women's experience regarding the unsterilized pelvic examination instruments, the risk of infection of sexually transmitted infections, and the fact that Labrador West has the highest incidence of sexually transmitted infections in the country, was absolutely minimized, even though more than 300 women have been affected.
- There is a lack of funding and trained individuals to provide quality home care.
- Family counselling services are lacking in the community.

Childcare

- There is a lack of flexible, quality, affordable, accountable child care services in the community.

Justice

- The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary building is not open 24 hours a day. The Corner Brook RNC answers calls for Labrador West after midnight.
- Labrador West residents only have access to a circuit court, and there is no judge residing in the area.
- There is no Legal Aid office in Labrador West. Legal Aid lawyers must periodically travel to the area from Newfoundland.

- Women cannot take out restraining orders against violent men until a judge travels to the area to sign the order, which could mean a one or two month wait.
- Victim Services has no presence in Labrador West. There is no full-time Victim Services Coordinator in Labrador West, and no office or business number available locally. Due to the nature of living in a small town, often calls for the Victim Services Assistant go directly to her home. This is a concern both in terms of safety and confidentiality.
- There is an expectation by the community and victims of violence that the Victim Services Assistant “volunteer” her time to assist victims in the post-court process.
- Justice only covers the cost of visits to court by the victim Services Assistant when a victim is subpoenaed, even though she may require/request assistance for multiple visits to court or for additional post-court support.
- Women trying to leave abusive partners are experiencing many barriers (financial, lack of housing, loss of social status, stigma associated with family violence, and emotional issues). Other issues include lack of extended family, isolation, the cost of leaving, and being mandated to stay in area due to child custody and access agreements.
- There is a lack of financial accountability by men after marriage breakdown in terms of child and spousal support.
- The fear/stigma of living in a small community and issues around confidentiality means women do not always come forward to deal with difficult personal issues.

Strategies and Recommendations

The following ideas were raised by participants as recommendations and strategies to dealing with the challenges and barriers to moving forward on women's equality and inclusion.

Mining Study Recommendations

- Make sure the work and recommendations around the mining study, *Effects of Mining on Women's Health in Labrador West*, continue to move forward.
- Review the mining study, *Effects of Mining on Women's Health in Labrador West*, and incorporate any of the recommendations from that study that are highlighted during today's discussions in the final Roundtable Report prepared by the Advisory Council. (These recommendations have been included in this report, and are denoted by italics.)

Education

- *The Department of Education in partnership with the local school authorities should include entrepreneurial training, budgeting and financial management in the curriculum for high school students.*
- *The Labrador West Status of Women Council and the Femmes Francophones de l'Ouest du Labrador should:*
 - *work with the Women's Policy Office and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women to become more involved in education, promotion and acceptance of women in non-traditional employment;*
 - *work with the Public Library and the library at the College of the North Atlantic to catalogue materials of interest to women, and provide better publicity about what is available.*
- *The banks and financial institutions should work in conjunction with the chamber of commerce to provide education programs in budgeting and financial management.*

Health

- Ensure that issues specific to women's health are high on the agenda of the Women's Council / Centre. Make women's health issues political, not merely concerns directed to the Regional Health Authority.
- The Labrador West Status of Women Council and Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women should monitor the progress and follow up around the obstetrics / gynecology clinic and the use of unsterilized instruments on women. If we don't get what is appropriate for women, explore other options to have this issue addressed.
- *The grocery stores should ensure that the produce being sold is of good fresh quality.*
- *Labrador-Grenfell Health Authority should:*
 - *provide increased specialized health care (oncologist, rheumatologist, obstetrician, gynecologist, ophthalmologist, children's neurologist and assessment team) including services geared for the elderly (podiatrist/foot care clinic and laser surgery for cataracts);*
 - *promote the availability of female doctors;*
 - *actively lobby government for extensive repairs or a new hospital;*
 - *recruit a psychologist to provide specialized counselling;*
 - *mandate visiting psychiatrists to provide ongoing counselling in addition to medications review;*
 - *work with the Department of Health and Community Services to establish an addictions treatment centre as one of the outcomes of the proposed Mental Health Strategy;*
 - *work with the Department of Health and Community Services to provide bilingual specialized mental health workers.*
- *The Labrador West Status of Women Council and the Femmes Francophones de l'Ouest du Labrador should continue to move forward on the work and recommendations from the 2004 study, Effects of Mining on Women's Health in Labrador West.*

Child Care

- *Hyron Regional Economic Development Corporation should work with the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce and the mining companies to establish a day care centre, paying particular attention to the needs of shift workers.*
- There is a need for accessible, affordable child care options for women and families living and working in Labrador West.

Employment and Training

- *Hyron Regional Economic Development Corporation should*
 - *work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs and HRSDC to provide entrepreneurial training for community members;*
 - *work with the Chamber of Commerce and HRSDC to identify and promote better paying jobs for women;*
 - *provide better marketing of distance education courses available to both internet and non-internet users.*
- *The unions should work in conjunction with the mining companies to conduct a study on the specialized needs and working conditions of female miners.*
- *The College of the North Atlantic should work in conjunction with the Department of Education, Human Resources, Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) to conduct a needs assessment of employers in the area in order to determine where training is needed and to provide more community based training related to jobs that are available.*
- *The mining companies should:*
 - *put resources in place for women from other cultures, who come to work or who come with husbands who work in the mines. These resources should be in place prior to their arrival in Labrador West;*
 - *work with suppliers to ensure that properly fitting work apparel is readily available for female workers (eg. work boots, coveralls, etc.).*

Housing

- *Newfoundland and Labrador Housing should cap the rent in their low income housing units to encourage occupancy by working families.*
- There needs to be an effort from our Women's Council / Centre to advocate for new housing arrangements for the increasing seniors' population.

Public Awareness

- Educate the community about what the Women's Centre / Council can do for them and what they can do for the Women's Centre / Council. Ensure our Women's Centre / Council is to be a voice for women and a focal point in the community.
- Profile women's issues in local and regional media, such as *53 North*. A journalist who writes for *53 North* has committed to devote columns to women's issues weekly/biweekly. The first few stories could profile the Women's Centre, the work done by the Women's Council and the resourcing and volunteer needs.
- Educate and connect with other women's groups in the community and encourage them to become involved (e.g., service organizations/faith groups/unions).
- *The Labrador West Status of Women Council and the Femmes Francophones de l'Ouest du Labrador should work with the Labrador-Grenfell Health Authority, Community Mental Health, Addictions Services, Child Youth and Family Services, First Steps Family Resource Centre and Hope Haven Crisis Shelter, to provide increased health education and information sessions for community members.*
- Create more opportunities for women as mothers to come together. Form a group today to plan an activity geared towards women and daughters, "Connecting with our mothers," as a way to learn from one another about working for women's equality.

Women's Political Participation

- Ask/lobby for designated seats on boards, commissions, agencies, etc. working on issues important to the women of Labrador West for the Labrador West Status of Women Council.

- Advocate for a Labrador women's voice on the Ministerial Justice Committee on Violence Against Women.

Outreach and Networking

- We need to do more outreach by going out into the community and working with other groups of women (e.g., economic, faith and fund-raising organizations) to provide education on the issues and raise awareness of equality.
- Individual women can join the Advisory Council's listserv to find out what is happening around the province.
- *The Femmes Francophones de l'Ouest du Labrador and the Francophone Association should:*
 - *conduct further research and provide programs to deal with the problems of low self-esteem, addictions, gambling, eating disorders, family breakdown, cycles of suicide, family violence and women abuse;*
 - *work with the Ministerial Association and other stakeholders to create an independent position to identify and coordinate interdisciplinary solutions to community problems, including food banks and furniture donations.*

Senior Women

- Ensure that the issues important to senior women are on the agenda of the Women's Council / Centre.
- Find new ways of connecting across generational lines as women, mothers, grandmothers and girls. Plan specific events targeted at this.

Girls and Youth

- Form a committee consisting of volunteers from the Women's Centre / Council to visit schools and youth organizations to facilitate discussions about equality issues.

- Create opportunities to educate both girls and boys about equality issues. This can be accomplished through our individual involvements with Brownies, Scouts, school councils and family resource centres as well as specific initiatives from the Women's Centre / Council and Hope Haven Shelter.
- Initiate special activities with girls while ensuring that there is an underlying theme of encouraging girls to discuss issues related to equality, body image, harassment, and healthy relationships.

Gender Inclusive / Feminist Analysis

- *The Labrador West Status of Women Council and the Femmes Francophones de l'Ouest du Labrador should work with the Women's Policy Office, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the ministerial association, unions, mining companies and other community stakeholders to provide gender sensitivity training.*
- *The town councils of Labrador City and Wabush should:*
 - *facilitate a new dust study in partnership with the mining companies, unions and provincial and municipal governments, to test the health of mine workers, retirees living here and outside the area and community members not working in the mines; and*
 - *work with the Labrador West Status of Women Council and the Femmes Francophones de l'Ouest du Labrador to provide a gender analysis of the results.*
- Strongly encourage workplaces, businesses and companies to examine what they are doing for women and how their decisions and policies are impacting women (i.e., encourage gender inclusive analysis).
- Re/examine our core values as women's feminist organizations, i.e., feminist principles, practices and processes. We need to examine how we are different from economic and fund-raising organizations, and how we make space for/involve a diversity of women.

