

On November 29, 2000 the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women hosted a gala evening during which we unveiled our newly created design. To celebrate our twentieth anniversary we offered a gift of Women Speak to the three hundred people who attended. Below is the collection of writings from the twelve women who wrote about their experiences living and working throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Women's Work - The Pandora's Box

Frances Ennis

Life is full of meetings. I attended one today. Anne's input was thoughtful as usual and to the point. Mary listened a lot. She's a good listener, always has been. Angela is tired. No, we are all tired, she's worn to the bone, a serious woman, very clever and desperately in need of a break. Susan was there too. Neat as a pin. Doesn't say much. Often has a faraway look in her eyes, but not today. Jenny was late, another crisis.

Funny how most of the tables I sit at are surrounded by women. Did I consciously seek this out or was it something that unconsciously happened? Perhaps a bit of both.

I remember playing house when I was about five. One of my playmates thought I should be the mother. "No, I don't want to be the mother cause then I'll have to change my name." Someone else took the role and we carried on. That brief interaction came and went, but the conviction of my position surfaced some twenty years later when I decided to get married. There was no question about whether or not I wanted to change my name. However, it's 1975, I'm twenty-six years old and I'm thinking. "This is my name. I'm quite happy with it, so why should I feel that I have to change it?" Well I shouldn't, but despite my longstanding conviction on the matter I did have some misgivings.

People tolerated my inability to accept the norm, but most often with a half smile or whole sneer that said, "oh, you're one of those . . . Women's Libbers." No question, I was made to feel different. Some scorned my choice, some were uncomfortable with it, some were puzzled by it and some applauded it. My husband applauded it. But mostly my support came from married women who had kept their own name or who would have liked to do that. I'm grateful to those women. I'm also grateful to the women, who fifty years before that, won the right for women in this province to be given equal status with men and be considered persons. In 1925 we were finally allowed to vote.

Soon after I was married, I went to work with the Women's Institutes. Sixty-five branches all over the province with women gathering together to do things that would make their lives more fulfilling and contribute to their families' and communities' well-being. Hundreds and hundreds of women, not very different from the women in my life - my mother, grandmothers, aunts, cousins and friends. They were the movers and shakers in their families and in their communities. They were the women who knew how to stretch the dollar beyond proportion. They were the women whom after a long day tending home and hearth had the table set for next morning's breakfast before anyone else was up. They were the ones who nurtured the babies, nursed the sick, laid out the dead.

They were the ones who mended the socks, baked the bread, starched the shirts. They tended the fish, opened the day cares, financed the church halls. They did all that and much more. Yet the value of their contribution to family and community was not seen. It was as though the fairies had come in the middle of the night to do their good deeds.

These women also knew there was much more to be done. They heard it every day from each other - from their mothers and grandmothers, from their sisters and daughters, and from their friends and neighbors. They heard it loud and clear. And they saw it in the anger and pain on children's faces, in the knowledge of where that fear in another women's eyes was coming from. They were the ones who knew that sometimes it was best to keep quiet and they knew that things had to change if life was going to be better for them and for their daughters and sons.

At the same time I was becoming more acquainted with women who were committed to the Women's Liberation Movement. They too were much like myself - mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and cousins. And like those in the Women's Institute, these women also knew there was much work to be done.

I remember being in a meeting one time trying to come to terms with a particular issue and trying to decide if we should, and how we could, move forward on it. After a long and difficult discussion we came to our decision. Then ever so hesitantly, one woman seemed to echo all of our sentiments when she quietly said, "But if we do that we'll open a Pandora's Box." We all sat silently and struggled with our thoughts and emotions. It was an "ah hah" kind of moment. Amid our silent reflections, each of us knew we had to open that box. We also knew what would happen when we did and we were not looking forward to the disdain we would face from our critics.

The image of Pandora's Box has come to my mind many times over the past twenty years. What I saw was a beautiful hand-painted wooden box. A hand opened it, and like a jack-in-the-box out popped all these bits and pieces of broken toys. They lay gnarled and twisted and sprawled all over the floor. It was our job to choose one of them to fix and to figure out how we could do that.

I still think about that image, especially when I'm working with a group of women. I remember how we had to choose one thing because we knew we couldn't fix everything at once. We could only do it bit by bit. We have worked long and hard and have had many discussions around many tables to win the right to vote, to run for political office, to own fifty percent of the wealth accumulated in a marriage, to expect police protection from those who assault us, to have accessible reproductive choices, to be protected from discrimination because of our sexual orientation, to have access to education, to expect equal pay for work of equal value, to have affordable, quality childcare, and so on, and so on, and so on. We have fixed many things.

Many more are still broken. Some we will be able to fix, some we will have to leave to our daughters and hopefully our sons.

Here we are in the year 2000 - feminists, used to be women's activists, used to be suffragists, used to be witches. Names that some of us are proud to wear and others are still uncomfortable with. Names that are voice from some with respect and from some with contempt. Names that meet around tables to figure out how to fix what needs to be fixed, how to mend what needs to be mended, and how to nurture those who need to be nurtured. Much work still needs to be done.

Frances Ennis is a feminist, a wife and a mother of three daughters who are now young women. Her

background is in community development and adult education. She is currently a program consultant with Health Canada and works with federally-funded family resource centers and healthy baby clubs in the province.

POVERTY and VIOLENCE

Helen Murphy

I'm presently working on a project called Women Wise which is a process of self awareness that highly values the information and wisdom we hold in our bodies and teaches us how to access and trust it. I've listened to my body a lot these last few days as I prepared to write this piece. I listened and waited attentively because I wanted something, not statistics or theories, but a word, an image, anything that would give me a sense, a felt sense, of what poverty and violence is about in the lives of women and children. I wanted to get a sense of where I am with poverty and violence and how I carry it in my body.

The longer I stayed with the words, the more I felt a dead weight.

My body felt like two huge pieces of concrete had been caught somewhere between my throat and my belly. I was feeling poverty and violence like a cold, ridged, powerful, uncaring, non compassionate, concrete structure. Lodged, anchored. I took the risk of staying with this discomfort.

I do not easily digest structure. I began to have an inside sense that all the talk about poverty and violence wasn't about poverty at all! Poverty didn't fit.. it certainly didn't name the oppression I felt in my body. I remembered a conversation I'd had with a woman activist in the community and I realized why it didn't fit. Poverty is not about lack of food, resources or lack of anything. It is about greed, greed, and more greed.

These are not profound insights. Poverty is about greed, and violence is about killing. Greed and violence is killing all of us. It's killing women. It's killing children. It's killing men and their hope of ever developing the feminine dimension of their personhood. And it's killing our beautiful planet. The underlying force that keeps it all spinning in motion is man's insatiable greed for power. It is kept neatly and tightly in tact by our patriarchal system.

A few visual snapshots stand out for me. Picture this:

The president of NIKE owns forty-five billion US dollars in assets, including an annual salary of one million US dollars. An Indonesian woman working for NIKE earns the equivalent of three hundred sixty US dollars per year (thirty dollars a month!).

As women, we represent half of the world's population and labour two thirds of the world's working hours. However, we earn only one tenth of the world's income.

Six billion people are presently living on this planet. Four billion live below the relative poverty level; one point three billion live below the absolute poverty level, seventy per cent of whom are women.

We who live in the richer countries have fifty-nine times the income of those who live in the poorer countries.

What's wrong with this picture? Why does this happen? How does this happen?

It happens because our system is an appalling corrupt system, particularly now in our so called global market. Corruption is a system unto itself and the global market legalizes it on an international level. How else can one explain the excessive wealth concentrated in so few hands?

So while we have witnessed amazing developments in science and technology, increases in industrial and agricultural productivity, and amazing communication technology, billions of people are without work, without basic access to food, safe water, housing, and without health care.

It's the crime of humanity that we refuse to care for each other. Studies have told us over and over again that there is enough food and resources on this planet for every one.

We have enough food. We don't have enough justice. We have enough resources. We don't have enough compassion.

Who said hierarchy is the natural order? Who said poverty is a natural or inescapable phenomenon? Who said unequal power relations between rich and poor is a fact of life? The patriarchy.

With this kind of belief system is it any wonder that violence against women is still internationally present in the form of wife battering, sexual assault and abuse, genital mutilation and systematic rape in wartime? Is it any wonder that this is the fate of millions of women in all societies regardless of income, class and culture?

Women across this province know the impact of greed and violence. We know

It's about the women and children (approximately one thousand) who came through our shelters last year to escape from the war zones of their own homes.

It's about walking into the Avalon Mall and being faced with pornographic magazines that tell men we love to be humiliated, assaulted and even killed.

It's about being stalked by an ex partner day and night when your restraining order, peace bond and constitutional rights mean absolutely nothing...until the violence has happened.

It's about shock, fear and tremendous grief over the loss of Samantha and many other women who have died violent deaths in this province.

It's about racism and refusing to fund police protection for the women in coastal Labrador who are beaten and battered daily....aboriginal women.

It's about having a seventy- five per cent chance of having an income below the poverty line ourselves when we reach sixty-five.

It's about being blamed, scrutinized and judged because you don't have a paid job or because you're not in the "right class" system.

It would be difficult to find one woman who, at one time or another in her life, has not been afraid merely because she was a woman.

Who said women are naturally inferior to men? Who said compassion, emotion, empathy and other feminine values are signs of weakness? Who said go forth and dominate the earth?

A patriarchal system based on male values has said and taught us this for centuries. But women have never accepted this and women will never accept this.

Violence against women is violence against the feminine.(Marian Woodman).

I believe a system based on values that exclude the feminine is violence against all humanity and the hurt of it runs deep within us.

Feminine is strength, I compassion, inclusion and openness. It is body and the greatest body is the great earth body, the essence of all that is feminine. The patriarchal system excludes the feminine in women and the feminine in men. It excludes the earth. The balance between women, men and nature has been gravely upset.

We see the imbalance and destruction of the feminine around us every day and we hear the results of it from our politicians and multinational corporations.

It is doing economics without taking into consideration the social conditions of people and actually excluding them.

It's about unbridled competition and productivity depleting natural resources, raping the environment making vulnerable populations, mostly women suffer poverty as a result.

It's about making our water, to which access is a universal privilege, into a commodity of a powerful few.

It's about not allowing men to experience their femininity without being labelled effeminate, sissy and a wimp.

It's about keeping us invisible by marketing and commercializing our bodies.

It about promoting a two tier health system because some governments no longer believe in the right of all to receive equal health care.

It's about having genetic engineering transform our economy, our health care and even our food without any legislation governing it, regardless of the devastation it could cause to all of us, not to speak of the earth. One of the greatest arguments for this genetic engineering is so we can feed our planet. Did you ever hear of such hypocrisy?

This violence against the feminine has pushed our culture into a state of shock causing many to retreat into religious fundamentalism where the end result is racism, sexism, homophobia and general intolerance to differences. (March 2000)

Take heart...Poverty and violence is a phenomenon that is created. It's man made. Therefore, women can change it. I choose to find the hope. I believe that events like the World March and other women's gatherings by their very existence challenge the structural causes of this phenomenon.

"Some of us lost the dream, some had it wrenched from us, some of us had it stolen, some of us do not remember where....

What we do remember, some of us at least, is we promised if ever the time came when the Earth needed us, the children of her daughter, First Woman..., would come together again and learn to

live..., in love and in balance. I think that's what feminism is" she said. " The coming together of sisters and cousins". (Ann Cameron)

There is a deep yearning in us to recover the dream. We are challenged on all levels as women to be open to the new questions and to find new answers. I believe answers are in our deeply feminine bodies. I believe it even more as I experience being bombarded by the information explosion that leaves so little time for integration. Something in us waits for attention and I believe it feminine dimension, the wholeness that comes from knowing in our bodies that we are female and male, dark and light, earth and sky. It is a wholeness that we as women yearn to embrace so that we can call it forth in an unbalanced and unjust world. Even as women we must rediscover the feminine within ourselves because we have taken on the scars of an aggressive and uncaring world.

"The first thing I learned, in a long list of strategies to survive my childhood, was not to trust anybody. The second thing I learned was not to trust myself."(Elie Danica)

"I know, the way I know the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, patriarchy flourishes on fear and dissent. I know as surely as I know my name that patriarchy condones abuse of children to ensure we all grow up frightened and afraid to trust others." (Ann Cameron)

And I would add ...afraid to trust ourselves and our own bodies.

I began this piece by referring to how I had to be attentive to how I carry all this poverty, violence, greed and structure in my own body. If I don't listen there will be no room in me to create a space for something new and receive the dream to which Ann Cameron referred. If the space is filled with despair I will collapse within myself or I will take on the aggressive patriarchal values of my culture and become hardened. In other words, I lose touch with the feminine and all the wisdom it teaches me.

Rediscovering the feminine side of who we are brings some balance into our lives and into our society. We have never accepted a world vision that our brothers have shaped in their own image and likeness. We have always refused to acknowledge the patriarchal structure which condones and endorses all kinds of violence and oppression in the name of order..

This is the energy that gave birth to the World March 2000. Those days of celebration were born out of the protest and political activism of women in Quebec...not unlike the political action that gave birth to I. W. D in the US and Europe at the turn of the century.

Women's advocacy groups, cooperatives, community kitchens, women's centres and shelters have resisted these uncaring structures for centuries. Women have been the initiators and leaders.

So we will do well to root ourselves in the passion, energy and power of the great and wonderful women who have motivated us to action.

Those who have gone before us:

Our mothers and grandmothers

Our spiritual leaders:(Machtilde, MaCally, Nagle, Hildegard)

Our political leaders (... Fanny MacNeil, Armaine Gosling, Jessie Murray Almon and The Famous Five.

Our present leaders: the women in this province and women all over the world who celebrated the Women's World March. Our women friends. The women we work with every day. We allow ourselves to joyfully celebrate each others gifts and diversity while keeping our eye on the larger goal - to create a kinder world for women and men.

The unknown and unsung, unpaid heros and activists that work along the Labrador coast and rural communities throughout this province.

"We are all walking scar tissue trying as bravely as we can to define love in a world sadly devoid of it... but we know beyond any hint of doubt that love is alive and well and doing very nicely in the hearts of many women." (Ann Cameron)

Yes! We want bread and we want roses! We've always made our own bread. Lets gather our own roses.! They come freely from the great Earth Mother and our primal connections with her.

Let's go back to our centre, the centre of our being, our feminine spirit, our goodness, our integrity, our heart of hearts. Let us own and acknowledge the wisdom in our own body we know to be true. And let's take it on the road. Take our vision for a better community, a better world, to our lobbying, to our social action and celebrate who we are! Let's celebrate the fire in our feet and the songs in our heart and dance the truth in the streets. Let's take back the feminine for women all over the world. Let's take back the dream for a just world.

Let the joyous marching begin for women everywhere!

Helen Murphy is the coordinator of the Provincial Association Against Family Violence. "Power and Violence" is taken from her keynote address to the Newfoundland and Labrador World March of Women in Gander on October 8, 2000.

PROVINCIAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2000:

A YOUNG WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Sandi Ackerman

There is one word which can express my feelings toward the Provincial Women's Conference 2000 . . . Overwhelming. On October fifth, this year, I left Wabush with no idea of what it was, exactly, that I was getting into. To be honest, I was a little nervous. Where would I fit in? I would be sitting in a room with more than four hundred women, most of whom had probably spent a fair amount of their lives involved in the women's movement, or were women who had outstanding involvement within their own communities. And, I was just a seventeen-year-old who thought I really hadn't much knowledge about what women's equality is all about today.

To be honest, I have grown up with the notion that men and women are equal in all aspects of life. I guess this just goes to show how far the women's fight for equality has come in the last one hundred years. I guess that for today's teenagers, there are many misconceptions about the inequalities which still exist between men and women, even now, in the year 2000.

I cannot say why these misconceptions are there. Whether it is lack of interest, or lack of awareness, there is still a general unawareness among teenagers. The Provincial Women's Conference 2000, opened my eyes to the fight women have ahead of them. In listening to other women - their

experiences, their ideas, I began to get an understanding of why I was there. We, as females of all ages, are on this earth together not to be treated unfairly, but as equals, a goal which has yet to be reached. It impressed me that with all their different beliefs and backgrounds, all the women were able to come together as one group, with one goal, to "explore common ground."

The conference itself provided information which was helpful in understanding what challenges are ahead of us. Through speakers and panels, an awareness was raised about how women are influential in communities, politics, and jobs in which men once dominated, but women are moving in, slowly but surely.

I feel women's voices and opinions should be heard - not only the voices of women who have experienced a lot in life, but also the voices of young women. I am only seventeen years old, still young in many ways, inexperienced in many aspects of life, but I am not afraid to say what I feel.

Since the conference, I have personally taken it upon myself to make young women more aware of the many inequalities and issues that women are facing.

I have become part of the Labrador West Status of Women's Council, and through that, have been busy making arrangements for a lunchtime "mug-up" to discuss with high school students, issues such as gender violence.

But I, too, have a lot to learn; I don't know as much as I would like, but I am willing to learn. Every woman, young and old, is affected by the issues of inequality and, if positive changes are to take place, people need to become more aware that such inequalities still exist.

For me, the Gender Women's Conference was just the beginning.

Sandi Ackerman is a Level III student at Menihek High School in Labrador West. She is originally from Wareham, Bonavista Bay and enjoys visiting family on the island. Following high school, Sandi plans on attending Memorial University.

The Call to Feminism ~

Rising to the Challenge

Marie Ryan

Twenty-five years ago, while I was studying in the U.S., I registered for a course by a feminist theologian, Dr. Mary Daly. My first reaction was culture shock. I was "born and bred" in a society and church based on male supremacy.

Patriarchy - although I didn't name it that - was alive and well. But what I was exposed to in that course was so different - scary in some ways, exciting in others. College campuses are wonderful places to be enriched by differences and to be challenged by new ideas. Soon I was able to come to terms with the fact that I had lived in an oppressive system ignoring the unease I often felt at the way things are and suppressing the anger that rose up within me. I became aware that patriarchy is psychologically unsound. It is socially destructive, for it separates the sexes and deprives the world of a total worldview.

Painfully I became aware that the theology which influenced so much of my life was written from the perspective of male questions, male concerns, male priorities, male pressures. My eyes became wide

open to the evils of domination, the sin of exclusiveness. I knew I could no longer adhere to a patriarchal worldview. There was no turning back to old ways of thinking and acting.

I came back to Newfoundland after three years with a new vision and lots of energy. Then there was struggle. I found I didn't "fit" in places where I once felt accepted and understood. My views came in conflict with the official views of the church. I chose to move off-centre to the margins where many people are forced to live - voiceless, invisible, and without any sense of themselves. I saw the need to work for freedom and liberation of all people. I did that with friends and colleagues who were also breaking out of the patriarchal system. We knew it was our responsibility to name and critique all systems that are unjust. But there was still something missing. As a group we were working in isolation - sometimes distant, always cautious.

Then ten years ago our Congregation, in General Assembly, committed itself "to collaborate with others in changing unjust systems, especially those of which we are a part. Our special concern will be for all victims of abuse with special attentiveness to women and children." That mandate and the support of our total congregation have become the driving force of my life. To live this mandate called us to broaden our vision of church beyond denominational boundaries and to go beyond ourselves and network with others who are involved in actions to change the unjust structures that we find all around us.

With an invitation and some gentle nudging to become actively involved in some of the women's groups I ventured forth. How grateful I am for that "push and pull." Today I know that for me to be a good Christian I must also be a good feminist.

I have watched with growing admiration the achievements of the women's movement over the last twenty years, especially as I have known it in our own province. With courage and determination, leaders in the movement have faced every difficult question, every troublesome issue, every unresolved challenge squarely. As more and more women - and men too - reject the worldview of patriarchy, they embrace the worldview that feminism promotes. The basic components of this worldview are respect for otherness, equality, mutuality, interdependence and nurturance. Living these values necessarily changes the configuration of the human community from a pyramid to a circle. Feminism as a worldview challenges male - female relationships. It challenges roles. It challenges institutions as we know them. The rise in the consciousness of women is changing social expectations, changing attitudes, changing systems.

It is changing spirituality, too. It is changing what we call holy, what we call good, what we call necessary.

The Women's Conference in Gander this past Thanksgiving weekend with the theme "Exploring Common Ground" was evidence of the growth of the women's movement in Newfoundland and Labrador. It wasn't just the large number present. It was the spirit that prevailed throughout the whole weekend. Walls and divisions seemed to disappear as women from varied backgrounds - old and young, quiet and articulate - spoke with one voice demanding an end to the violence and poverty of women around the world. We realized that all of us need one another, that no one of us has all the answers, the whole of wisdom. The piece of life that each of us brings to the adventure of life is guide and gift to the rest of us. There is reason to hope that we will go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are today - building on the foundation that has already been laid by wise, committed, and courageous women.

Marie Ryan is a Presentation Sister who works as a counselor, spiritual director and group facilitator at The Lantern Centre in St. John's. She is also a social activist.

The Realities of A Woman's

Life in Northern Labrador

Charlotte Woolfrey

For most women in Northern Labrador the first reality they have to face is a lack of money. The economic situation in the communities is pretty desperate. There is a high unemployment rate and most jobs are seasonal, so during the winter there is a big dependence on the EI system. Living with very little money in a Northern Labrador Community can be difficult to say the least. Buying groceries probably takes seventy-five percent of your cheque. It is a struggle to survive and feed your family. Food is also taken from the land but that also costs money to buy gas for the snowmobile or boat trip to the country.

On the political scene at the regional level, women have little influence. For the most part the leaders are male. However, on the municipal scene women are a little more visible. We have two women mayors and from a total of thirty-five councillors, eight are women. One of the big successes for women in Northern Labrador was successfully lobbying to get police stationed in Postville. This was the only community in Northern Labrador that didn't have a permanent police force. The challenge of getting police stationed in the communities has been a constant battle for women. They have dedicated their lives to this task, and with the help of the Town Council's, the combined councils and many other groups, this has finally happened.

Women believe that now police are here the reality of violence against women will finally be addressed. Women now have the option of being protected and have a policeman / women respond to their call for help. Prior to our having police, women had to wait for up to four or five weeks to have cases investigated. They had to face the reality of having no one to enforce court orders that were given to their spouses to keep away from them. For the most part, family violence was not reported, and in some cases not even looked at as a crime. Women are now hopeful that violence will be reported and charges will be laid. However, we don't think this will happen overnight. There will be a time for getting use to having police, building up a trust, and even then women may not call the police when they need them.

The fight against violence needs to be addressed at a political level. We need our elected representatives to speak out. We also need a change in attitude. We need education campaigns and we need a zero tolerance policy that is enforced. With the success of getting police stationed in the communities brings the challenge of bringing a "family violence publicity campaign" to the forefront. Also, there will be a challenge of keeping our police force. In these days of budget trimming it will be a struggle to maintain the level of policing in all the communities.

Another challenge we face in the communities where there are police is one that we been fighting for years. After five p.m. the phones are answered in St. John's or Corner Brook where there are no people who speak Inuktitut, so there is a language barrier.

Women in our communities must keep on speaking out and challenging governments to listen and to act. Women need to become involved on a regional level and even on a national level in the political scene. We need to become more active in the regional organizations that represent us. Women are outnumbered on these boards and organizations. To make real change, we need to be a part of the decision making or better still we need to form the majority and make the decisions. Women need to be encouraged and empowered. One of the successful ways this is accomplished is by women getting together and talking about what they can do collectively. It gives women encouragement and strength when they realize they can make a difference.

Charlotte Woolfrey is from Rigolet, Labrador. She was instrumental in the formation of TIA, Torngiat Inuit Annait. Since losing her daughter to violence, Charlotte has devoted her work to acquiring a full time police presence for communities on the North Coast.

The Feminist Struggle for Equality for All Women: Facing Differences

Lorraine Michael

For the over twenty years that I've been involved in the feminist movement I have always been aware of what I see as the conundrum that exists because of the small "p" political versus big "P" political choices that face women. In the women's movement there is agreement on such issues as reproductive rights and the right to choice, employment and pay equity, rights of lesbians, etc. And looking at the participation in the two marches against poverty which have taken place in this country since the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women I believe women are also agreed that there can be no equality while women continue to live in poverty conditions around the world.

However, when it comes to aligning themselves with political parties that will further the cause of women, there certainly is not unanimity. Feminists are found in most of the parties in Canada and have tried to work together at different times from those positions. This issue of political choice is so much at the heart of the women's movement that even today, 25 years since its founding, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), continues to have a policy of non-partisan politics and to be unaligned with any one party.

This position has not been taken lightly and does have an analytical basis. Many believe that it does not matter where one finds oneself ideologically. It is merely important that the issues of women's equality be raised wherever feminists are found. Working together in solidarity we can create change. This position is based on a social analysis of women's inequality which concludes that changing social structures on a gender basis alone will result in equality for all women.

My own experience causes me to question this conclusion since, while it recognizes that inequality is based in unequal power distribution, it does not automatically acknowledge that gender is not the only basis for inequality. This past decade has seen some real progress in the women's movement because of such recognition. Feminists are now saying that race, class, sexual orientation, age and ability are some of the other major factors. So, for example, the move in the early nineties to elect the first woman of colour as the president of NAC was a positive step forward, but one which did not happen without controversy and difficulty. It actually became a federal political issue, with the questioning of her election being framed in lightly veiled racist terms.

This past decade has been a time of dealing with inequalities among women. We are not all white,

middle-class, abled, heterosexual and in our mid-thirties. The acknowledgment of this reality is challenging. It means that, just as women struggle to get equity programs based on gender-inequality put in place, they also are now struggling for equity on these other levels.

Recognizing differences even among those with whom one is in solidarity is a very difficult thing to do.

It does not come easily for women to look at a sister and ask her to recognize the privilege which she may enjoy because of her race or class, for example. While none of these inequalities is easy to overcome, the one which I have always believed and continue to believe is the major stumbling block is that of class.

Class differences are at the root of the issues that we choose to work on as well as the political choices that we make. A woman living in poverty understands the economy very differently than does a woman who has never had to deal with being poor. She is going to view the taxation system differently than does a woman who is in an upper income bracket. It is not surprising that such is the case since women are formed by their place in society just as are men. Women who have never had to struggle to live or to create their own space are going to have a different perspective on economic policies.

Not too long ago, I was in a situation with a woman who plays a key role in the determination of federal social policy. At one point she talked about her annual fall trip to northern Italy with her millionaire husband to enjoy the delicacy of truffles and I was trying to get this woman to understand why the federal government needed to change its position concerning funding for women's programming. I didn't succeed.

In this reflection I am not coming up with answers but trying to raise the complexities of what we are dealing with in the women's movement as we struggle for social and economic equality for all of us. Sometimes I have dreamt about trying once again to start a women's political party. In the past in our country it was tried unsuccessfully by our dear deceased sister Kay Macpherson in Ontario. But it is not impossible. Women in countries such as Iceland have proven what can be done when women are united politically. It may be the only way to focus all policies on the key issue brought out by the World March 2000 the majority of women are poor and the situation is not improving. If there were a women's party then all women who want to remove the dichotomy between economic and social policy could be united in developing the policies which will bring equality for women and therefore for the whole of our society.

Am I harking back to the past as I put forward this thought?

Or has this idea failed in the past because it has always been too revolutionary since it really is the ultimate way to break the male bastion of political and economic power? Has it failed because women are still afraid to be seen as "men haters" when we unite to work together as women? These are difficult questions with challenging answers.

What would happen if women with money and those with less really got together on all levels and showed a united front politically?

I'm not too old to ask the questions; I'm not too old to dream.

Lorraine Michael is currently the Executive Director of Women in Resource Development Committee. She came to this position after a long public career of social and political activism on a

provincial, national and international level.

Democracy is a Feminist Issue

Dorothy Inglis

A few weeks ago I was sitting in Trinity Church in the heart of downtown Toronto marvelling at the beautiful architecture that had managed to escape the wrecker's ball in the late sixties. We lived in Toronto during that period when there were massive demonstrations and public meetings full of determined people gathered to save the church from the architects of the big, splashy, new Eaton's Centre. Miraculously, the people won that battle.

It was a happy reminder that City Councils don't always get their way. Once in a while democracy breaks through. And you can't help but notice that the Eaton's empire has gone, but the old church remains, surrounded by skyscrapers, all glass and glitter, reaching into the heavens while throttling breathing space on the ground.

The church continues its role as a community centre, ministering to the needs of the people who live in the downtown core, bringing intelligence and caring and public debate to the issues of our time, rather like our Lantern and Gathering Place in St. John's.

Members of the Council of Canadians, attending the annual general meeting in a nearby hotel, were in the church to enjoy our Saturday evening banquet, meeting friends and listening to powerful speakers.

Mel Hurtig, originator of the Council of Canadians, gave chapter and verse of the sellout of Canadian companies swallowed up by American transnationals under Free Trade and NAFTA. He said the smartest thing he ever did was to phone Maude Barlow to join him in organizing a fight-back against the loss of Canadian sovereignty.

Dr. Ursula Franklin, Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto, author and recipient of the Order of Canada, spoke on the loss of parliamentary democracy today. "We are no longer being governed in Canada, we are being administered." Our elected government once protected the sovereign rights of citizens, she explained, but it now exists to further global corporate interests.

Ursula used to write brief after brief for committees meeting in parliament because she felt that politicians were mostly well intentioned people but often ill-informed. She doesn't do that anymore. She now believes that the people in control are in fact very well informed and ill-intentioned.

Maude Barlow had spoken the night before at our public meeting on the impending threat of globalization to Canadian control over our water and to the loss of law-making power of our municipalities and provinces under yet another proposed world trade agreement. This time it's coming in under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Canada has the leading role with Sergio Marchi in the Chair.

This is another so-called "trade" proposal where the subject has nothing to do with trade and everything to do with the real agenda of finding ways to allow the privatization of our health care and educational services by destroying the powers of local governments.

It's on a par with the recent news story that because of Free Trade and NAFTA, we must pay fifty million U.S. dollars to a firm in Ohio because of a ban we placed on PCB exports. Three years ago the Prime Minister apologized to the Ethyl corporation for daring to ban MMT, a gas additive injurious to our health. He revoked the ban so that they can continue to pollute our country, and paid them \$19 million dollars for interrupting their profit-making.

Who ever said that our governments had the right to tie us into such damaging agreements?

In spite of continuing attacks Maude feels there is every reason for optimism. Information on the corporate agenda is finally getting around the world and citizens are mobilizing to stop this madness. The huge success in Seattle when citizens stopped the Multinational Agreement on Investment (MAI) has raised awareness and confidence that what we need to be working for is a world-wide citizens agenda based on human rights.

Gordon and I walked the old familiar streets where memories of our children when they were very young bounced out at us from every corner. The Toronto we knew was the one which City Planner Jane Jacobs had said was one of the last major cities in North America with the ability to do it right, because the downtown still had community neighbourhoods. (And neighbourhoods still had clout).

Today's Toronto is more reminiscent of the San Francisco we saw ten years ago after Ronald Reagan had closed hospitals and sent mentally ill people out onto the streets. I never thought we could ever see in our country those sickening scenes of helpless people sleeping in doorways, with riches all around them. But that is the Toronto of today.

We walked around the old Connaught Laboratory where Banting and Best developed their great discoveries on diabetes, recalling the time when it was owned by the citizens of Canada and produced generic drugs at a tiny fraction of the cost of brand-name pharmaceuticals. So government privatized it for a song, allowing drug companies to have the field to themselves and crippling our health care system in the process.

Talking to a local friend who happened to be in the city the same weekend, we both sadly agreed that we didn't like Toronto anymore. She told of being stopped by a young man for money and learned he was from Halifax. She gave him money and when he objected saying it was far too much she said, "go home...the money is yours...just go back home to Halifax, this place is not good for you." And then she added to me, "he was just a year older than my son."

Starting down the aisle on a Spadina street car we were stopped by a young man who used to work at Mary Jane's on Duckworth Street. We only had moments to speak but as we went to get off he called out "you don't know how good it is to talk to someone from the rock." And I thought, and I've thought ever since, "I do know. I wish you were coming back home with us". And I've wished ever since that we could just have taken him back to this civilized place.

Anyone out there willing to work for democracy?

Dorothy Inglis has spent a lifetime working on feminist issues. She is a writer, activist, member of the Council of Canadians and a recipient of the Persons Award for a lifetime of work to improve women's social and economic equality.

SHARING OUR GLOBAL VICTORIES AND STRUGGLES

Linda Ross

As I look back over the past two decades of the women's movement, I am struck by how far we have come globally. Women have come together from all corners of the earth, in Nairobi, Beijing, and New York to share our victories but recognize how far we have yet to go.

Working in countries of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean has always presented a clear picture of the social and economic marginalization of women. Women cared for the elderly, looked after the children, tended to the communities' needs, delivered the babies, fetched the water, produced over half the food grown globally....., but all of this went unrecognized. In most cases, women were not consulted in decision making, were not permitted to own land, did not hold political office, were the last to receive an education and usually, if there was enough, the last in the household to eat!

Over the past twenty years, that began to change. Women in the south began to organize. They came together in the 'barrios' of Lima, Peru, ostensibly to prepare the donated powdered milk to feed the children. In so doing, however, they began to talk about the issues affecting them personally as women - violence, poverty, lack of education, lack of health services, family planning and the myriad of issues that connect women globally. Women came together in the townships of South Africa, seeking help to deal with the violence that permeated a nation under apartheid. They began to talk about their vision for a new South Africa and what it would mean for the lives of women. Caribbean women began forming their own organizations to address issues of violence, parenting, unemployment etc.

As women in the north were putting 'gender' on the political agenda, women in the south were gaining strength from each other and voicing their demands for change.

For many working with southern partners, these changes meant a new way of approaching development. I recall some of the early 'gender' workshops being conducted and the debates around whether or not addressing gender issues meant funding a project for women. There were endless discussions as to whether or not women constituted a 'sector' in the same sense as the health sector or the agricultural sector. Those debates and the old way of addressing 'women's' issues, have thankfully long since passed.

Women are connecting with their sisters around the world, whether via the internet or through regional and international gatherings. Women from north and south are sharing information and as we know, "information is power". They are sharing ideas and strategies to bring about change.

The past ten years have seen women from South Africa join women in Newfoundland and Labrador to learn about the democratic process, women in politics and women and the law.

South African women have shared laughter and tears with their sisters in this province who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Women from Chile, Nicaragua and El Salvador have met with women locally to share experiences of health care restructuring and the unfair burden it places on women. Women have stood together recognizing the bonds they share as women.

As we look back over time, there is genuine cause of celebration. Apartheid has ended in South Africa and many of the leadership positions from the municipal level through the national level are held by women. The women from Peru's "Glass of Milk" programme have increased in number and are now an influential national body, making demands of government that cannot be ignored.

Nicaraguan garment workers have organized and succeeded in pressing for labour legislation that curtail sweatshop abuse. Others have gained the right to own land and have their own livestock and produce from which they are generating an income. From Durban through Santiago and on to our own community, as women globally we can rejoice in the victories we have achieved.

However, as women globally, we have a long way to go! While over the past few decades we have been industriously working to bring about change in women's lives, the forces of 'globalization' have been working to undermine the advances we have made. Young women are labouring long hours for very little pay in sweatshops around the world manufacturing everything from the computers we use to the clothes on our backs. The pressure for the creation of more low waged, exploitative jobs is one felt by women everywhere. Despite promises from government upon government around the world, the numbers of people living in poverty have escalated. Sixty per cent of humanity lives on less than \$2.00 a day most are women. Few countries in the world have been left untouched by the swath of cuts to social programmes health, education, social services all of which have been disproportionately felt by women. And tragically the spectre of abuse and violence against women continues to loom worldwide.

As women we must celebrate our victories, recognize the challenges that lie ahead of us and take heart and strength in knowing that we're not alone women in country after country are marching and singing with us. Together we WILL make a difference!

Linda Ross is the Canadian Programme Coordinator, Oxfam Canada based in St. John's. She has traveled and/or lived in Africa, Central and South America and the Pacific islands. Linda has spent the past 20 years as an activist and educator on social justice and development issues.

The Struggle Continues . . .

Connie Snow

At a time when recruiting women for operational policing was still new, I challenged myself to sign up. Having strong feelings about the need for justice and a crime free society (I was still a naive teenager), getting involved on the side of the law seemed like a natural direction to take.

While my parents had always been supportive of our ambitions and independence and my high school principal had told me I could be anything I wanted to be, I was not prepared for the non-inclusive environment ahead.

In retrospect, I am not surprised about the path my policing career took me down. I probably gravitated toward issues of domestic violence because I often felt as if I were in an abusive relationship myself. There was tremendous pressure to conform and behave. The expectations were that you act like a police officer in certain sets of circumstances and like a woman in others. If I didn't go along with the status quo, I was ostracized. I wouldn't complain or correct and walking a fine line became the norm. I might even accept intolerance because everyone wants to be accepted and "fit in," yet I still felt isolated. No matter what the frustration, I kept it inside. There was no one to talk to (or so I thought) who could really understand. You didn't want your family or friends to know the situation - it was too embarrassing and shameful - they might encourage you to leave! It wasn't the issue that someone was saying or doing something to you that they shouldn't be - it was the problem

that you had with it being said or done.

So why do women struggle in such climates for so long? It has been my experience that women do not quit easily. Even as victims, we continue to take the bad with the good and we always live in hope that things will change. If we did not persevere and remain strong, we could definitely lose the struggle for equality. I have always gained strength from courageous women who have challenged themselves, other people, and organizations. In the face of adversity, women are not afraid to speak up and become involved. The high value that women place on relationships bodes well for them in building safer work environments and more peaceful communities. Our "rank" is left at the door as the move to a "we" type of climate is created and joint improvement efforts are envisioned.

I still struggle for justice and equality even though the battles are somewhat different than those of 1975. I truly want "living" to be easier for my children, especially my daughter. Everyone can contribute to an improved quality of life as we draw on our inner strength and look for new and better ways to do things. Never give up!

Connie Snow has been a police officer in the province since 1975. She has been a forerunner on awareness of family violence issues and an outspoken advocate of victim's rights.

Feminists and the Christian Churches in Newfoundland and Labrador

Delores Hall

In many ways, the women's movement in this province happened outside the Christian churches and it may even be seen by many as happening in opposition to them. It is certainly a fact that Christian traditional structures and values have favored the patriarchal status quo and have contributed to the oppression of women in subtle and not so subtle ways. It is also a fact that many church women involved in the pursuits of the women's movement have abandoned their churches; but it is not the whole story. There are also women who are feminists who stay with their churches. It is their story I want to reflect on here.

First, however, we need to look generally at the place of women in the churches today. There are obvious improvements over the twenty years: women ministering effectively in parishes, chaplaincies and pastoral care settings; but the "glass ceiling" is still rather obvious. In the Roman Catholic Church priestly ordination is still reserved to males and only rarely does a woman have any kind of "powerful" position in the main line Protestant churches. More fundamentalist churches remain dedicated to maintaining traditional "family values" rather than supporting women's equality. With both men and women we notice dwindling attendance as people find traditional churches out of touch with their real lives and their needs for a meaningful spirituality. Added to this are the disillusionment and credibility problems related to the ongoing sexual abuse tragedies.

Given the general context, then, feminists in all the churches are faced with great difficulties. While some women come to a feminist awareness in their personal and social lives before doing so in their religious ones, more often awareness begins with the personal experience of anger at structures or theologies or pastoral practice. For others, it is a more gradual realization of exclusion or a growing discontented realization that somehow what once was meaningful no longer is so. Whatever the initiation, there are common threads in each story, a process that includes confusion, a sense of "what's wrong with me", trying harder to fit in, guilt, and then grief at one's loss, all of this before moving on to a moment of choice: either stay on different terms and work at creating a new women's

place or move on and find it elsewhere, often in New Age, Eastern or other religious expressions.

For those feminists who stay with their churches, the reality is usually a painful one; from within they are often marginalized, even demonized, as they try to create and take their rightful places; from without they are often ridiculed by other feminists who consider their choice a ridiculous and hopeless one. Yet, for the women themselves, there are finally some signs of hope and church feminists are beginning to celebrate some of the results of their persevering efforts.

There are now formal and informal women church groups throughout the province, women who meet together in kitchens or offices or church basements, etc. to celebrate their feminist Christian spirituality, to pray or study together in more feminist ways.

There are spirituality groups, circle groups, scripture groups, and reading groups. More and more there are materials and resources available for these groups as the results of feminist theological studies are made popularly available. Questions like can a male savior save women? Is there a God/ess who looks like me? Are there women's ways of prayer and ritual? Are there women's stories and perspectives in the scriptures? Was Jesus a feminist? etc. Have all been explored from a feminist perspective. This contribution of Christian feminist theologians is a major one, nothing less than a whole deconstruction and reconstruction of the Judeo/Christian scriptural and theological traditions and a finding of the lost stories so that women's lives and interests have a place. While all this has yet to find itself part of the dominant thinking, women have made new connections with their stories that will influence the next generation. Christian feminist spirituality is flowering and women are rediscovering the richness of the Christian mystical tradition and the writing of great women of the past are available to us in English language paperbacks.

Increasingly there are supportive and educational organizations to encourage all this. Women's studies courses have expanded their horizons to include these materials, and Christian centres like my own offer experiences and opportunities for exposure to this good news. The more official women church groups and their publications now claim a "Christian feminist" identity, as does, for example the Women's Inter-Church Council on Canada, the newly formed Women's Solidarity Network, the Catholic Network of Women's Equality, etc. Other church groups are increasingly experiencing right/left tensions within their membership as more "traditional" women begin to feel the tensions of change.

Perhaps the most that Christian church feminists can say at this point in the struggle is "we're here too!" But we say this with a good deal of conviction and passion, and a sense that we're involved in a massive although a "quiet" revolution, one that will effect change in the structures and values, not just of the Christian church, but eventually of the society it has helped to create.

Delores Hall is a Presentation Sister and a staff member at the Lantern, a Christian Life Centre in St. John's. She works as a feminist activist involved with church and community issues with special emphasis on spirituality and social justice.

Reflections on A Life in Academia

Phyllis Artiss

Unlike many women of our generation, my three sisters and I grew up believing that we needed to prepare ourselves to earn our own living. The message I got from my parents, especially my mother, was that although we girls might never need to support ourselves, just in case we didn't marry or in case something happened to a husband (and we knew that something happened to many husbands of women in our community, leaving them without support) we needed our own meal ticket. In fact the message was that girls needed an education more than boys, since boys could make a good living for themselves and families from farming, fishing, and other physical labour whereas girls generally couldn't.

At the age of nineteen I got my meal ticket in the form of a teaching diploma at Acadia University, and after teaching for two years I went to the University of Edinburgh where I completed an Arts degree in 1965. I was appointed to the English Department of Memorial University of Newfoundland that year, and the following year married a colleague from the Department of German and Russian who arrived at Memorial the same year I did.

There were a number of women teaching at Memorial in 1965. In fact, my own department (English) had about the same number of women as men. Most women in the English Department (and the university) were married to faculty members and taught first year courses part-time. The full professors in our department were all male, and these professors constituted the department's advisory committee on appointments, promotion, tenure, and other important matters. I remember only one departmental meeting in my first two years at Memorial, and no committee meetings in which I was expected to participate.

At times I felt angry and frustrated at specific situations that seemed unfair. One instance was when, after three years at Memorial, I approached my Department head for funding to attend a conference (the so-called Learned's: annual meetings of national professional associations of most departments in Arts and Social Sciences). The head asked me if my husband was being funded to attend the meetings and when I said yes, he replied huffily that he and his wife (who also taught in the English Department) always attended the Learned's but that they wouldn't dream of asking for funding for her as well as for him. Even then, before I was able to bring a feminist analysis to the situation, I felt this terribly unfair, stood my ground and got the funding. But I didn't protest when I was asked to discontinue my pension contributions when I married, and take a refund of all contributions I had made up till that time.

For the most part I was grateful to have the university job, and more often indignant at the treatment of other women at Memorial than I was for myself: for example, one who was appointed to a tenure-track position but demoted to part-timer when she married, and another who was told she must take unpaid leave when she became pregnant. I looked on these situations as unjust treatment of individuals by administrators responsible for the decisions, without recognizing how they were linked to larger patterns of privilege in the university and beyond. Insofar as I did identify widespread patterns of discrimination against women in the university, I considered these minor in comparison with discrimination suffered by both men and women without the financial, professional and other benefits we faculty enjoyed. I didn't see then, as I came to do later, how one form of injustice breeds others. . . or how much more difficult it is for many of us to name and challenge the oppression we ourselves are subjected to than to name and resist the oppression of others. And I didn't understand how hard it is to challenge the very practices in which we were successful, and the ideologies that rewarded us.

My husband and I moved to England for three years while he completed his PhD, and I was glad to have this opportunity to stay home with our children (one a toddler, and the other born in England). I was especially grateful that Memorial held my job for me until my return. It didn't occur to me until years later that what seemed like free choice to me was largely a pattern that I had never questioned. He completed his PhD, was rapidly promoted through the ranks to full Professor, served as Head of Department, and won research awards.

When we returned to Memorial, I continued to teach mostly first and second-year English courses, and most of these were writing courses, so I was constantly meeting students outside class time and marking papers (including endless rough drafts of papers and revised versions of papers). No one required that I do this. Indeed I had the clear message from a number of colleagues and administrators that such labour-intensive ways of teaching undergraduates was inefficient at best, not to mention unprofessional. Why spoon-feed university students in this way? But I found this work intensely rewarding, especially when I discovered and became an active participant in the renewed discipline of rhetoric and the emerging field of critical pedagogy, both committed to education that encourages students to integrate personal knowledge with academic study, and to consider the political implications of our own language and that of others.

I came to feminist activism late in life, mainly through searching for better ways to teach. At the request of students, I designed and taught an English course in Writing and Gender, cross-listed with Women's Studies in the early 80s. I started attending Women Studies Council meetings and have felt at home in Women's Studies ever since.

It has been inspiring to work with colleagues who have courageously done feminist research for decades, in spite of many obstacles. I've been motivated by both students and faculty who play an active role in feminist work in the community. Writers, scholars and activists from inside and outside Memorial contribute enormously to Women's Studies seminars and social activities.

In many ways Memorial has become more enlightened than when I arrived in 1965, partly because of the women (and one or two men) who fought to introduce Women's Studies back in the 70s, and partly because of changes in legislation and attitudes on gender issues in this country. Memorial now has a collective agreement that legislates equal pay for men and women with the same qualifications doing the same work. We have women appointed to positions as full professors, heads of departments, and deans (though none yet as Vice-President or President of the University). Women now are paid when on maternity leave and enjoy other benefits most of didn't even dream of in 1965.

As Judy Rebick pointed out in her keynote address to the Provincial Women's Conference in Gander in October 2000, we now know, and most people in Canada seem to accept, that women can do what men do; but until men learn to do what women have traditionally done, and accept their share of responsibilities women still shoulder, women will not form a critical mass in positions of power, and patriarchal structures will remain in place. Domestic labour is an obvious example. Studies consistently show that few men share the load of childcare and housework equally with their wives, even if both work the same number of hours outside the home, with similar responsibilities. Similarly in the university. Traditionally men went out and brought in the research dollars, while women stayed home and looked after the kids. Now women are bringing in more research dollars than a few decades ago, including funding in disciplines such as medicine where they lagged far behind. But

they continue to carry more than their share of teaching, especially the individualized, personal support that many students need from their university teachers.

There have always been male teachers (like male parents) who were dedicated to teaching undergraduates in caring, attentive ways, working around the clock and calendar to help students clean up their texts, and offering support for those first tentative steps into the discourse of the culture students want to enter. But I still see a division of labour in the university not unlike the division of labour in most households I know. In most departments it is still women who take responsibility for helping students integrate their academic work with the rest of their lives. And like housework, this labour is for the most part a labour of love. The professional rewards for teaching are not in any way commensurate with those of funded research.

In fact, now that universities in this country are under greater pressure than ever to produce tangible results (i.e. to bring in lots of money, and produce increasing numbers of graduates, preferably ones who are immediately streamed into the work force, at less cost) teaching undergraduates is increasingly devalued. A great deal is said about the importance of teaching, but when it comes to decisions about appointments, tenure, promotion and other tangible rewards, I cannot see that these have improved at this university in the thirty-five years since I came.

Phyllis Artiss was born and grew up in rural Nova Scotia. She has been on the faculty of Memorial University since 1965, teaching in the Department of English, in Women's Studies, and in other interdisciplinary programs. She has been active in organizations such as Oxfam and the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, and is currently a member of the Community Alliance for Better Solutions (CABS), the St. John's Status of Women Council, and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Am I a Feminist?

Susan Hollett

People often ask me "Am I a feminist?" While the question is often a loaded one my answer is always easy. It is a resounding "yes". If for no other reason, I call myself a feminist as a (small) way to pay tribute to all of the women before me who have committed their lives to improving the positions and the possibilities of women in this province and country.

I frequently remind the person asking the question, that I can vote, have my own business, attend University, and own property. The reason my grandmother could not do those things is not because I am any smarter than she is.

It certainly is not because I have ever worked any harder than she did! It is because there have been changes in the world. And those changes did not just "evolve", or occur as a result of "new technologies". They were the result of women Feminists- making themselves and their beliefs into immovable objects around which the system had to move and thereby forcing those radical changes.

So, yes, I am a feminist. Because of the fights that are in the past. But I also make sure the person who asked the question (if they haven't left yet!) that I am a feminist mostly because of the fights that are still before us. What's on the list as far as I'm concerned? To:

" get more women on decision-making bodies and positions;

" change society's perception that women can do anything (but only as long as they don't forget to do almost all of the household, volunteer and family work at the same time).

" change society's view that if a woman does a job, it is automatically deemed to be worth less,

" eradicate violence,

" help create a society that is honest and honors relationships and individuals, and

" improve women's economic position as individuals and as a whole.

No small list. Yet there are those who say the job is done - that we no longer need a women's movement. Now that we have achieved a critical mass in a lot of places, the system will naturally "evolve". But it didn't evolve in the past, and it won't evolve in the future, unless we make it. There is a place and a need for every voice and every body out there especially yours.

Susan Hollett is Vice-President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. She has her own market research consulting business in Shoal Harbour where she lives with her family.

Leading From the Center:

Women's Ways of Leadership

Debbie Armstrong

The image is one of connections, interwoven across strands, intricately joined in many places&it could be a quilt, a crocheted doily or a hand woven piece of cloth. It is assembled out of individual strands, but its beauty lies in its wholeness, the pattern created by the connections of people working together. This representation illustrates for me what it means to be a woman, a feminist and a leader.

Where am I in the picture? I'm somewhere in the center reaching out, building and maintaining the relationships that are needed to create the whole. I recognize that my leadership exists to nurture other's learning in order to strengthen the fabric whatever it may be. I realize that as a leader I value this hierarchical image as one in which the attributes of feminist leadership are honored.

As a leader I work to create a collaborative environment which is very inclusive. I nurture the people I work with so they can tap into the potential they all possess. Even though I am recognized in my position as the formal leader, I believe leadership resides in all of us. I reach out to people, asking for help when I need it and acknowledging that I don't have all the answers. I value connectedness and strive to build an atmosphere where relationships are strong. Within this environment people are more apt to take risks and challenge the "taken for granted" way of doing things. It is in this climate that "other" ways of doing are learned.

This leads into my second core belief which is a strong sense of knowing I can make a difference in my chosen work. This sense of efficacy keeps me going when there are many challenges facing me on a day-to-day basis. However, because I have built connections, I often call on others for their help and support. Just as I give support, when I need it, others offer. These reciprocal relationships which strengthen the organization also provides strength to the individuals who belong there.

As a feminist I would name my leadership as relational in that it reflects care and concern for colleagues, both male and female. As an educator, care for children is one of my main responsibilities, therefore as a leader I must model this in the workplace. To be caring as a leader is to work at understanding others' perspectives and responding to the awareness that comes from that knowledge.

To do this is to recognize that others' viewpoints are as valued as your own.

To be collaborative, connected and caring requires another quality and that is courage. To achieve a leadership position in a male-dominated profession means having to push the boundaries, often by myself.

The accepted behavior and structures have been established out of the world view of men and are not always conducive to women's ways of knowing and leading.

There are few female role models so my experience has been to find male mentors who have helped me understand the dominant culture. I recognize like minded people and build alliances with them.

As a feminist leader I often find myself in a dilemma&in order to move through the system I had to be able to understand the game and decipher the rules. Once there I had to untangle them in order to build new ones. I had to know when I could do that and at what cost. This is where courage comes in &there are many times I reach way down inside myself for the strength to challenge and to find alternate ways to lead. I have to be true to myself but I also have to recognize when to push and when to pull back. I am often in negotiation with my values as I continually judge them against my actions.

It sounds like the work of leadership requires a lot of energy and it does! As a woman I struggle with the demands of home and work. I often feel I have to work harder and smarter to prove myself. I sometimes feel the responsibility of being "one of the first". I constantly strive to maintain a balance in my life.

I have learned to accept failure and discover the lessons in that. I have accepted that I am a role model and offer myself as a mentor to others. I acknowledge that I can only do this work because of the support of those around me. Though most of all I have found ways to put my passion into action. I have a lot to learn but enjoy the learning.

Reflecting then on my journey of leadership I sense there are many women in our province on the same quest. Some of them will coupe senior positions in business, in government and in community; others will be leaders in less formalized places. My experience has taught me it won't always be easy but it will be worth the effort.

We need women's voices at all tables where decisions are being made because women bring a different experience, they value diversity, and they create different dialogues. The challenge is for women to make their way to the table to demonstrate that feminist leadership is powerful and can make a difference. As one of the leaders at the table my intent is to make room for others, to work to change the rules to provide access, and to ensure that feminist attributes are respected.

To go back then to my vision of leadership&I remain in the center weaving the strands which will enable other women access to all layers of the fabric. The pattern will become more elaborate as their experiences are shared and woven into the cloth. Its value will increase as it is recognized to be unique. As the pattern evolves it becomes apparent that there are many spaces for connections to be made and there are many opportunities for leaders to emerge. I am okay with that because from my place as a leader I can see the potential of the pattern. It's a thing of beauty!

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Reflections on the Women's Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador

Joyce M. Hancock

In my role as President of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I have been for nearly a year now listening and talking with women. This all started as a project, a simple exercise to find a way to invite women to explore common ground. We have met with women in communities, women in unions, women who work in business, students, youth groups, church women, aboriginal women, francophone women, women with disabilities, advocates and activists, victims and survivors, leaders and women who work behind the scenes.

What better way to spend your days if you are privileged for a small space of time to work for and with the Advisory Council. The focus of our discussions has been women's experience in decision-making and leadership. This experience is both exhilarating and exhausting. Yet, like any good feminist one is expected to reflect on the meaning of every conversation, meeting, or conference. So I have been contemplating what I have learned from the experience of the Provincial Women's Conference 2000: Exploring Common Ground.

I have learned that there is a women's movement alive and well in this province. I have learned that women have a desire to work toward understanding our differences through first understanding that which we have in common. I have learned, as well, that women who are concerned for the survival of their communities are still concerned for the plight of women in countries where poverty and violence are everyday realities.

Hundreds of women who have never heard of the Advisory Council or a Women's Centre, never visited a transition house, never claimed feminism as having anything to do with them personally answered the call when the relevant question was offered as the focus for discussion. More than four hundred and fifty of these women also decided to spend Thanksgiving weekend in Gander participating in the Provincial Women's Conference and the World March of Women.

We simply offered women an opportunity to define community, to talk about community strengths and challenges, and to examine the values women bring to community decision-making and leadership.

Throughout the process of community forums and the October conference, I do think women came to understand one another better. Women were bridging their differences. Union women were appreciating the work of the community activists.

Feminists' activists recognized as sisters those who choose to work for change in church, schools, government structures, businesses, and bureaucracy. Young women were learning from older women. There were tears and laughter as aboriginal women explained their lives to the conference participants.

There were many poignant and precious moments during the Gander conference . . . An Inuit woman who stood up to speak on the final day of the conference saying that she had lived in Labrador all of her life but this was the first time that she had felt a part of our province. Women from the Labrador Straits who traveled to the conference from the money raised through an old-fashioned bake sale. The

dozens of women from the Burin Peninsula and Conne River who laughed and sang their way to the conference on a bus. The young pregnant women from Burgeo who told all of us that she will find a way to raise her children in that community. The students from Memorial University who found a way to get to the conference by volunteering to work before, during and afterward . . . they have told us that they now understand what equality and the women's movement is about.

Perhaps though, for me, I have learned that the strength of our movement is found as it always has been in taking the time to listen and understand women in the context of their personal lives. No great theory about feminism, oppression or the patriarchy will take the place of these simple dialogues. Women need to be validated for their choices before we challenge one another on the systemic reasons that we as women have made those choices.

We can never tire of explaining the women's movement and simple explanations work best . . . feminism is common sense and for many of us it is a way of living, thinking and working. It is about recognizing that many of us enjoy privilege born of social status education, race, ability or life experiences. It is about our daughters and the world we hope to create with them free from violence and free from the fear of violence. It is about our sons and the men with whom we share a common agenda for peace and equality. Feminism is also about insisting that our women's experience, our vision and values become incorporated into every institution, policy and practice that affect our communities, province and country.

Finally feminism is also about working toward a balanced world and knowing that this task requires many hands, many voices, many experiences.

On a rainy Sunday morning in the town of Gander, I learned as well that feminism and this wonderful work for social change . . . "the women's movement" is about joy.

And who in that motley parade could not feel the joy as young women, teenage girls, women in their seventies and eighties, women in wheelchairs, single moms, lesbian women, students, and more than sixty women from Labrador communities took part in the Newfoundland and Labrador World March of Women.

The majority of the women attending the Thanksgiving weekend conference identified themselves as "first timers" at a conference organized by feminists. But their unabashed joy as we walked, sang and chanted... "Here we go women . . . here we go" will remind us for many years to come that "women united will never be divided."

Joyce Hancock is the President of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. She was appointed to that position in 1996 following many years of work in community development and feminist organizing.