

International Women's Day 2011

Strong Leadership. Strong Women. Strong World: Equality



Celebrating 100 years of Unity

By Ikinder Chohan

"The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world." - Charles Malik

International Women's Day (March 8th) is an occasion marked by women all across the world. It was first established in the early 1900's, and now exactly one hundred years later it is still celebrated to honor the hardships that women are forced to endure on a daily basis. IWD enables us to commemorate the intelligence, strength, and courage of women by showing our appreciation and love towards their achievements.

When women from different countries – most of whom are divided by ethnic, political, economic, and cultural differences, come together to pay tribute to their day, they can look back to a tradition that represents a century of struggle for equality and development. Moreover, by doing this they are capable of reflecting on the challenges and barriers that remain, and are able to contemplate the potential steps they can take to achieving equality for all women.



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Women of Distinction

For the 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day, it seems fitting that we honour inspiring women from our community .



Darlyn Alec

By Maureen Trotter

Darlyn was born at home with the help of a midwife, on Trout lake, out towards Kluskus, in October of 1957. Darlyn was the oldest of 7 children born to her parents. She attended day school, which at that time was located on the reserve and she was able to walk to school. Darlyn says, "It was horrible. I didn't know a word of English and was punished

because I couldn't speak English. I remember crying and crying and not wanting to go to school".

Even though the school was located on the reserve, there was a lot of racism in the school and Darlyn was picked on because she was "dark skinned". An example was that the "white" kids from the valley would tell tales to the non-native teacher about what the reserve kids had done wrong and sit back and watch while the teacher punished them.

One teacher they had for several years had a particularly bizarre way of punishing students. He used to "put a quarter outside till it got really cold and then put it on your forehead and then bang our heads on the blackboard. That's why I have no sense of smell or taste. Before that, I had all my senses".

Because of the way they were treated, Darlyn's dad decided to send her in to Quesnel to school when she was in grade 6. So at the age of 12, Darlyn began what became years of being shunted from place to place, in both Quesnel and Williams Lake, basically on her own for the most part, with little support, in order to attend school. Some boarding situations were good, most were not.

While she was on her own in Williams Lake, at about 15 or 16, Darlyn, along with other kids, started to drink. The years of rootlessness, racism and punishments finally resulted in rebellious behavior. After she left school, she was basically homeless, living here and there, sleeping on couches. Then, at age 17, she became pregnant and

Darlyn went home.

After her son Kevin was born, Darlyn worked for the band's logging company as a receptionist. Then baby Kevin, at almost one, suffered kidney failure. She had to move to town to get treatment for him. This time of her life was very stressful. For three years until his kidneys began to work on their own, there were numerous trips to Children's hospital in Vancouver.

Darlyn began working at the Friendship Centre but her drinking worsened. She became pregnant again with her second son Desmond. Then she ended up with a man who was charming but an alcoholic as well. Darlyn had two more boys with him, Gary and Jeff. He treated Darlyn badly, beat her. "These were awful years. Those were the years I lived to drink."

Finally the Friendship Centre board told her that if she didn't quit drinking they would fire her. At about the same time, Darlyn had a car accident while she was driving drunk and with her kids in the car. "That scared me."

So on November 2, 1985, Darlyn went to treatment at Round Lake in the Okanagan. "What I learned there made me want to not drink anymore". When Darlyn came back she enrolled in a new College program, the Native Social Development Worker program designed to train First Nations social development workers. She learned more about what alcohol does to people and it strengthened her resolve to stay sober. The program also helped her see that she was in a battering relationship with Gary's father and while she was pregnant with their son Jeff, she left him.

When Darlyn finished the NSDW program, in 1987, she began working in a variety of social service jobs, as a referral worker at the Friendship Center, as the Education coordinator for the Red Bluff band, an Education support worker for the Nazko band.

In the late 1980's, Darlyn began a new relationship with another man. They had a couple of good years. Their daughter, Darlyn's fifth child but her first girl, Tiffany was born. But then he went back to drinking and drugging and started beating her. She knew she had to leave him and it was then, in her 40's, she moved to Prince George and went back to College to do her upgrading and take university courses.

When she returned she went back to work for the Nazko band as their Family Support worker, a job she still holds. This is an extremely difficult position to be in as she provides service to people, relatives and friends she has known all her life. She has had to figure out how to maintain objectivity in situations where she knows and has a relationship with all the parties. She has to be able to

keep confidences. She also can't leave the job at the end of the day, so essential to prevent burn-out. She couldn't tell someone who calls in crisis in the night to go somewhere else. There is no where else for them to go.

In 2005, the first tragedy struck when her son Desmond was killed in a car accident. She had a really hard time after that. She was really tempted to start drinking. It is still hard. She took some time off work but the system does not give her much time to grieve. There isn't money for courses, for healing workshops.

Then Darlyn's dad died; then Jeff and Gary's dad died and then in 2009, her first son, Kevin, died of cancer. She found herself trying to be supportive of everyone else and not getting a chance to do her own grieving. Because she has no vehicle, she hasn't been able to attend grief groups in town or get grief counseling herself.

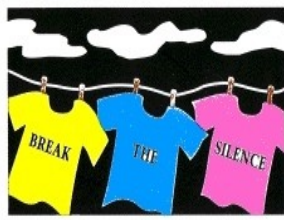
Darlyn's work, while extremely difficult, gives Darlyn a

sense of accomplishment. There are fewer children being taken into the care of the Ministry of Child and Family Development. While there are still younger people acting out, she sees more and more people quitting drinking, even her own family.

Being a role model, showing people that it doesn't help to drink when you need to heal, is an important role Darlyn plays for her community. That she can survive the tragedies she has had to deal with, that she can deal with these with dignity, that she is strong woman and leads by example – these are immeasurable contributions she makes to her community. That she is a stable, intelligent, fair, caring and nonjudgmental source of support is clear to those who know Darlyn.

Darlyn knows that what she does now will impact the next generation. Now I have a grandson and that's what keeps me going. After Des died, I wanted to die too but now it's different". "We have to live each day like it's our last.

THE CLOTHESLINE



PROJECT

*Bearing Witness to
Violence Against Women*

A visual display that bears witness to violence against women. Help break the silence by decorating a shirt for our Clothesline Project.

Save the Date...

Shirt making sessions:

March 31st, 10-12 pm

April 6th, 1-3 pm

April 7th, 10-12 pm

Join us April 13th from 10am to 4pm as we hang the shirts on the clothesline for National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, April 10-16 2011

Quesnel Women's Resource Centre

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Quesnel, BC, V2J 2P6
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Fax: 250-992-6160
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Quota for Women in Politics, good or bad?

By Jean Birch

Women who are members of lower houses of parliament around the world number around 19%. Surprisingly, the highest percentage of women elected is in Rwanda at 56.3%. Where does Canada sit in the world? Canada is 51st in the chart of world participation of women, having only 22.1% elected.

What is wrong with this picture where 51% of Canada's population is represented by only 22% of it's women? Also the question needs asking, do all the women elected really represent all Canadian women, rich and poor?

Quotas for women in politics, has been debated for many years. Incumbents holding the seats currently are, of course, men who are for the most part, unwilling to give up their seat to women due to a required quota. Quota systems are made easier in a new political system where the seats are not "occupied". For the most part when men have control of laws they do not usually vote for quotas for women that would result in them being displaced.

Many feel that quotas are damaging to democracy, while others feel that it is not democratic to have such a small number of women elected to represent women's point of view.

The inequality of women in society, and the marginalization of poor women, some would say, is a direct result of this imbalance in governing bodies in Canada and around the world.

Some governments use the quota system for their own purposes. By selectively choosing the women to run, governments in the world can get the "controllable" women elected, while claiming they are in favour of promoting female quotas. This could even be seen as a problem in Canada when you hear some of the statements made by elected women. Do they represent your thoughts and wishes?

One advantage of quotas is that it forces political parties to have an active recruitment process.

Ensuring that women's political participation no longer remains token is the whole idea behind quotas.

An increasing number of countries are introducing various types of gender quotas. In fact, half of the countries in the world use parliamentary or political party electoral quotas of one type or another.

In the past there has been a "gender gap" between men and women turning out to vote with men being the greater number of voters. Recent research, though, points to a turn around in this statistic with women showing greater interest in politics and the election process.

We can make change by turning out to exercise our right to vote. Many brave women before us worked at great risk to ensure our right to vote.

If you support quotas or not we still have a loud voice if we choose to use it.

Fast Facts

A long way to go in business:

- In Canada 13% of directors on the boards of the country's TOP 500 companies are women
- In Canada, 21 of the TOP 1000 companies have women CEO's—representing 2% of CEO's
- Of 4200 global companies, only 9.4% of directors on US corporate boards are women.

And in politics:

- Of the G20 countries, the richest 20 countries in the world, a record-breaking 4 countries have women heads of state—Argentina, Brazil, Germany, and Australia.

Source: Herizons Magazine



Did You Know...

International Women's Day (IWD) is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. In some countries like China, Russia, Vietnam and Bulgaria, IWD is a national holiday. The first IWD event was run in 1911 so 2011 sees the Global Centenary.

- ♀ Women use 20,000 words a day while men only use 7,000
- ♀ Females in developing countries on average carry 20 litres of water per day over 6 km
- ♀ 530,000 women die in pregnancy or childbirth each year
- ♀ Of 1.2 billion people living in poverty worldwide, 70% are women
- ♀ Women own around only 1% of the world's land
- ♀ Only in Japan and Peru are women more active in starting a business than men
- ♀ Women spend more time researching before they invest than men do
- ♀ Women do two-thirds of the world's work but receive only 10% of the world's income
- ♀ Women's education is the most powerful predictor of lower fertility rates
- ♀ Women on average are away from workforce for 14.7 years compared to 1.6 years for men
- ♀ From 1945 to 1995 the percentage of women MPs worldwide increased four-fold

Women in Afghanistan By Maureen Trotter

The US invasion of Afghanistan was partially justified because of the oppression of women in that country. The Coalition forces were supposed to bring liberation to women. However, the condition of women has not noticeably improved in the country. In one study, only 5% of girls and 11% of boys have access to education to the high school level. Women continue to wear the burqa even in the capital city of Kabul, a garment which covers the entire body, with a mesh in front of the eyes to allow limited vision. In many regions of the country women can still not leave the house unless accompanied by a male relative. The UN Development Fund for Women found that 60 -80% of marriages are still forced and young girls are still traded and sold like commodities. There are high rates of violence and sexual assault against women. Afghani women have the highest rates of depression in the world and high rates of women commit suicide as the only escape from lives of violence and oppression.

Malalai Joya, duly elected representative to the government in Afghanistan, was banned from parliament because she spoke out against the warlords who have great power in the US backed government and who have and continue to terrorize the population in their regions. They pass legislation that denies women's rights. For example, it is extremely difficult to get a divorce regardless of whether the woman has been a victim of violence. Anyone who challenges the warlords' actions can be abducted, raped, tortured and murdered. These warlords also dominate the justice system so legal redress for victims is denied and atrocities go on with impunity.

The bright light in Afghanistan is not the US military and their puppet government but young women who continue to organize and speak out and demand justice in spite of death threats.



Luna Women's Wellness Clinic

Thursdays 12pm—4pm

**Pap Exams, Low Cost Birth Control,
Pregnancy Testing, Emergency
Contraceptive, STI Testing,
Information and Referrals**

**We are located at:
690 McLean Street
Quesnel BC
250-992-8472**

**We're on the Web:
www.qwrc.ca**

Quesnel Community Garden

Did you know that Quesnel has a community garden?

It is located beside the Aboriginal Education Centre and behind Quesnel Junior Secondary. If you would like to get involved call the Women's Resource Centre at 250-992-8472 or visit www.qwrc.ca for more information.

The Women's Resource Centre supports approximately 2000 local women each year in Quesnel; providing Stopping the Violence Counselling and Outreach services, Drop In services, 24 HR Sexual Assault Response Line, Luna Women's Wellness Clinic, crisis intervention, advocacy, information and referrals, public education, and access to computers and a lending library.

**We appreciate generous support from our
community members.**

If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to the Women's Resource Centre please contact us at 250-992-8472, go on our website and donate through *Canada Helps*, or drop by anytime.

Become a member of the Quesnel Women's Resource Centre!

As a member you can contribute as much or as little as you feel comfortable.
Attend meetings, events, or sign up for our email distribution list to stay informed.

Membership fees range from \$1.00 — \$15.00

Contact us for more details!