

COLLECTIVE WISDOM



Connecting Northern Women: Northern Women's Conference

The Quesnel Women's Resource Centre hosted a Northern Women's Conference on April 17-19, 2009 at the North Cariboo Community Campus. More than 150 women attended the conference from communities across BC and the Yukon Territory, with participants commenting that the event was well organized, informative, inclusive, respectful, and relevant.

The event served to educate women, politicians, and the public about current concerns of women in the north and allowed women from across the north to come together and discuss the important issues that affect their daily lives. It also gave women the opportunity to network, collaborate, and problem solve with other women facing similar challenges.

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Maureen Trotter (right), Collective Member of the QWRC, addresses the conference participants and political candidates; Bob Simpson (left), NDP political candidate, listens attentively during our political panel discussion Sunday, April 19, 2009.

Photo by Josie Whitehead.

Various recommendations came out of the conference from the workshops that were hosted on the issues of Violence against Women, Addictions, Northern Housing Issues, and Poverty in the North. In response to some of the recommendations, Melanie MacDonald – Administrative Coordinator at the Women's Resource Centre, has written a proposal to Service Canada that would address food security in the North by creating a community garden and increase public knowledge surrounding women's issues with various public education initiatives. You can access the final report and see all of the recommendations on the QWRC website at: www.qwrc.ca.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Famous Five or **The Valiant Five** were five Canadian women who in 1927 asked the Supreme Court of Canada to answer the question, "Does the word 'Persons' in Section 24 of the British North America Act, 1867, include female persons?" in the case *Edwards v. Canada (Attorney General)*. On April 24, 1928 Canada's Supreme Court summarized its unanimous decision that women were not persons. The last line of the judgment reads as follows: "Understood to mean 'Are women eligible for appointment to the Senate of Canada,' the question is answered in the negative." This judgment was overturned by the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. This case, which came to be known as the Persons Case, had important ramifications not just for women's rights but also because in overturning the case, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council engendered a radical change in the Canadian judicial approach to the Canadian constitution, an approach that has come to be known as the "living tree doctrine".

Women, as 'non-persons' had no rights to own land, or serve in government and had very few legal rights prior to 1929.



A Statue in downtown Calgary of **The Famous Five**. An identical statue exists on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. The two statues were sculpted by Canadian artist Barbara Paterson.

The five women, all of whom were from Alberta, were: Emily Murphy (1868 – 1933), the British Empire's first female judge; Irene Marryat Parlby (1868 - 1965), farm women's leader, activist and first female Cabinet minister in Alberta; Nellie Mooney McClung (1873 - 1951), a famous suffragist and member of the Alberta legislature; Louise Crummy McKinney (1868 – 1931), the first woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, or any legislature in Canada or the British Empire; and Henrietta Muir Edwards (1849 – 1931), an advocate for working women and a founding member of the Victorian Order of Nurses.

Historical fact:

Women in Canada did not always have the same electoral rights as men. They won the vote through their tireless insistence upon it, expressed through intense and imaginative campaigns. Their efforts were finally rewarded. In 1916, Manitoba was the first province to pass legislation allowing women to vote in provincial elections. This breakthrough paved the way towards new suffrage laws throughout the country, where similar lobbying was going on. Within nine years of Manitoba's suffrage legislation, the federal and most other provincial governments passed laws granting women the vote (1916-25), with Quebec following suit in 1940. Since the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, universal electoral rights are protected in Canada through constitutional law.



Take Back the Night, Sept. 18, 2009

A group of about 50 people gathered at the Women's Resource Centre on McLean St. at 7 pm as the starting point for the annual Take Back The Night march. They eagerly donned signs and hoisted banners to demonstrate their support for ending violence against women, and with an RCMP escort the crowd marched down McLean Street and ended up at Spirit Square. As dusk settled, candles flickered throughout the crowd as women and men stood to listen to the speakers for the evening.

Melanie Macdonald was the emcee for the event and the crowd also heard from Catherine Forbes, Jenny Collins, Vicki Chartrand,

and Maureen Trotter. Thank you to all who took part in the walk and a special thank you to those who spoke, and to the RCMP who showed their support.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT; A brief history

From the late 1970's through present day, Take Back The Night events have been held by college and university women's centers, YWCA's, rape crisis centers, community centers, high school student groups, battered women's shelters, and other organizations dedicated to helping women achieve safety and empowerment. Events have been held in England, Belgium, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean Islands, the United States, and likely other corners of the globe.

Initially called 'Reclaim the Night', the first march was held in Belgium in March 1976. Women marched together holding candles to protest the ways in which violence permeates the lives of women worldwide. The term 'Take Back the Night' came from the title of a 1977 memorial read by Anne Pride, a National Organization for Women activist, at an anti-violence rally in Pittsburgh.

Early events focused on unsafe streets, cities and campuses; and then as a protest to pornography and the degradation of women and sexuality. Today, events highlight the problem of violence against women as well as the broader issues of sexual violence: sexual assault, rape, dating violence, sexual abuse, domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, child abuse, internet harassment and other unhealthy relationships. Take Back The Night fights to end child prostitution and world-wide sexually related crimes.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE CENTRE?

The QWRC Collective AGM is scheduled for October 15th at 5:00 pm. This will take place at the QWRC house at 610 McLean Street and will be a 'Pot Luck' dinner meeting. This meeting is open to the public and everyone is welcome to attend.

Check out the new QWRC website: www.qwrc.ca



Flowers

for you

Can we Afford to Save Money by Cutting Vital Services?

Cuts to services that accompany an economic downturn create barriers and obstacles for women who are attempting to leave violent situations.

Research evidence and the experience of front-line service providers indicate that violence against women and their children increases during times of economic distress. Increased poverty and high unemployment rates can result in increases in the use of dysfunctional coping behaviors such as violence and substance abuse.

The results of violent acts include injury, disabilities; physical or emotional, unwanted pregnancy and miscarriages, and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS.

Directly or indirectly, these immediate and longer term

consequences of violence against women have enormous ramifications for the rest of society in the areas of health, education, social services, labor, policing, courts, crime, housing, public income support, unemployment insurance and income tax. Studies of the national economic costs of violence against women for health, criminal justice, social services and lost productivity range in the billions of dollars yearly.

Economic downturns often result in service cuts as a component of cost-saving measures. The service cuts may include legal aid, violence prevention, employment and re-training, and emotional support and counseling. The loss of these kinds of programs make it more difficult for women and their children to get the assistance they need to leave abusive relationships, to access practical

and emotional support when leaving, and to become financially independent.

There is a critical need for adequate levels of service for women who are victims of violence or at risk of violence, as well as for essential support structures for the anti-violence service sector. The need for these vital services is always acute; however, the need is even greater as a result of the current economic downturn. Women, their children, and their abusive partners require more rather than less services during economically difficult times in order to address both the stresses that may exacerbate the violence and the impact of the violence itself.

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse there are services available to you within your community. In Quesnel you can contact the Quesnel Women's Resource Center or the Amata Transition House Society for more information.

Quesnel Women's Resource Centre

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The Quesnel Women's Resource Centre has a mandate to work to improve the status of women and to provide services to women in the Quesnel area.

The QWRC would like to thank the Rotary Club of Quesnel for their assistance with rebuilding our wheelchair ramp and repainting the house in the spring of 2009.



Look for our next newsletter issue scheduled to appear in December 2009.

Photo by Jodi Baker