

Activities Update

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women



Chairperson's Message

During my association with the Advisory Council, first as member and now as Chair, I have frequently heard laments about government's seeming reluctance to hear from communities about vitally important issues. Council noted several areas of needed improvement for community engagement in its Equality Report Card released last June.

First, the fact that the Island Prosperity Plan was developed without public consultation is cause for worry. Second, the delay in the establishment of the proposed Office of Public Engagement is another concern for Council since the Office is dedicated to community involvement and inclusion. In another example under this same theme, the Council observed a growing community concern "about this government's uneven and unpredictable interactions with grassroots organizations who are the drivers of the social economy."

And yet at the same time I see the government's newspaper ads calling for public input and presentations to its committees of MLAs. These committees are struck to hear from the public and then to make recommendations to government on such topics as Employment Standards, Rural Development, and Smoking in Public Places.

So why this disconnect? Is government really consulting with the community in a meaningful way? Is this government's method of consultation serving the community interest or only those few who are extrovert, formally organized and able to be present and participate in legislative consultations?

In preparation for input into the Commission on Land and Local Governance and Rural

Development Strategy, Council undertook a two-pronged consultation to gather perspectives from women of diverse backgrounds on two critical topics. The result of these conversations with rural women became the Consultation Paper on Land, Local Governance, and Rural Development. Notable items of common ground were observations about a lack of accessible, inclusive, respectful consultation processes. Hearings were held during summer months when these female seasonal workers are in peak activity and unable to leave rural communities to consult with government. They were unable to consult on critical matters even though the women in this discussion were clear in their expectation that PEI women must benefit equally from economic stimuli, injections of resources, or new models, as aspects of local government and rural development.

As I reflect, I wonder: how pervasive are concerns about short circuiting community input? Reading the submission of the Institute of Island Studies (June 2009) to the Commission on Land Use and Local Governance, I learn that similar concerns are expressed. The terms civil society, social economy, and civic engagement are different, but the message is consistent with that of the Status of Women: "Mechanisms for engaging a willing and concerned public..." are necessary because "...widespread citizen engagement is critically important when... crafting overarching development policies that affect people's daily lives." As a public policy mechanism, inclusive consultation process may be easy to say and hard to do but certainly it is not impossible. A starting point could be to ask Islanders how they want to be consulted: Town hall or kitchen table? Blogs? MLA open houses? An Office of Public Engagement? A timely uptake on requests by the community to meet?

Women care about the substance of policy decisions. Sometimes they will find the decision unfavourable to their interests, and at other times it will serve them well. In all cases, a positive process of consultation can carry the day. Before volunteers and community builders give up, reform in this area will be worth the effort.

Isabelle Christian

Isabelle Christian, Chairperson of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Fall/Winter
2009



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Sisters in Spirit - Charlottetown



Girls drumming and singing at the Charlottetown Sisters in Spirit Vigil, Oct.

Photo by Sandy Kowalik.

On October 4, a Sisters in Spirit Vigil took place in Charlottetown and in cities across Canada to remember more than 500 missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. The Aboriginal Women's Association and an organizing committee of supporting partners led the Vigil. This fall, through the Sisters in

Spirit project, Island Aboriginal women have started to tell the stories of their own missing and murdered Island Aboriginal women. Some families carried pictures of these women at the Vigil. Photos of Hilary Bonnell, a woman who went missing from Eskinuopitjik First Nation (Burnt Church, NB), added poignancy to the Vigil.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women was honoured to be included in the Organizing Committee, and Isabelle Christian spoke proudly at the vigil on behalf of the Council. She was touched by the very good community involvement in the Vigil, with lots of men and women and children participating. Council member Roseanne Sark's sister, June K. Lewis, coordinated the Vigil and sang a moving original song.

Sisters in Spirit is a campaign of the Native Women's Association of Canada. Find out more at <http://www.nwac-hq.org>



***First mourn, then
work for change.***



Violence Against Women Events

Exhibit

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

UPEI - Victims of Gender and Sexuality Violences Exhibit, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., W.A. Murphy Student Centre, UPEI
Contact: 628-4332

Memorials

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

Charlottetown – Memorial Hall, Confederation Centre of the Arts, 12 noon to 1 p.m. Featuring a performance piece by spoken-word poet and musician Tanya Davis.
Contact: 368-4510

O'Leary – O'Leary United Church, corner of Main & Brackley, 12 noon to 1 p.m. Featuring candle-lighting in remembrance of victims of violence.
Contact: 859-8849

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

Summerside – Heritage Park and Garden (Ottawa Street entrance), 1 p.m. Unveiling of PEI Federation of Labour's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women monument. Reception at St. Mary's Anglican Hall, 74 Summer Street, sponsored by the City of Summerside. Contact: 436-9856.

Wellington – Old Mills Park, 12 noon to 1 p.m. Featuring lighting of candles to victims of violence, blessing by priest, release of balloons, lighting of a tree.
Contact: 854-3584

2009 Purple Ribbon Campaign Highlights

On December 6, 1989, fourteen women were murdered at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal. They were murdered because they were women. December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Memorial Services will be held across PEI on Friday, December 4 and Sunday, December 6 to remember all women who have been victims of violence.

The theme of this year's Purple Ribbon Campaign Against Violence is "Twenty Years After the Montreal Massacre: The PEI Story." It will focus on the many things that have been done on PEI over the last 20 years to help end family violence while also recognizing that at least eight women have been murdered on the Island since 1989 and that many more are still being abused.

The Charlottetown Memorial Service will highlight a commissioned performance by spoken-word artist and musician Tanya Davis and commentary by Purple Ribbon Coordinator Sandy Kowalik summarizing highlights of research into prevention and violence over the past 20 years.

As a special project for this year's Campaign, PEI Status of Women staff have prepared a Resource Guide for PEI Teachers to complement the Grade 7 Social Studies curriculum on Empowerment, offering information handouts, curriculum connections, and resources on the topic of violence against women. It will be available to anyone who is interested through the 2009 Purple Ribbon Campaign website.

Purple ribbons and information cards will be available to everyone who wants them, with special distribution planned again this year to groups including PEI civil servants, religious organizations, PEI municipalities, Grade 7 classrooms, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, sports organizations, and Women's Institutes. Additional ribbons will be distributed during Family Violence Prevention Week – February 14 to 20, 2010.

The PEI Status of Women is grateful to the hundreds of volunteers Island-wide who pinned ribbons on information cards to make another successful year for the Purple Ribbon Campaign.



Equality Report Card: 2009 Results

In June, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women released its second report card on the PEI provincial government's progress meeting recommendations for women's equality. The PEI Status of Women assessed government on more than 20 initiatives in seven categories and awarded a C overall, averaged from a range of grades from D to B- on priority categories. Here's a summary:

C+ for Making Equality a Priority: Up to June 2009, we saw uneven but positive signs that government is willing to consider women and other under-represented groups in decision-making. But we're not yet convinced that provincial economic development plans take women into consideration.

C for Women in Decision-Making: The province is showing leadership in hiring women to the public service. Government is taking steps towards more equity and diversity in appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions. But little is being done to reduce barriers to women in government.

B- for Family Violence Prevention: Government has increased funding for community-based services for survivors of violence. Health and justice systems are using Woman Abuse Protocols well. But more is still needed. Specific programs for preventing violence against vulnerable groups show potential for funding.

C+ for Access to Justice: Government has taken steps to support justice options for women, including behind-the-scenes work towards a domestic violence court option. But accessing legal aid for family law is a problem. A newly hired family law legal aid lawyer will help – but many women still face long waits for legal assistance for family law. New models are needed.

D for Women's Economic Status: New funding for affordable, accessible housing units is good news. But people surviving with less than a livable income need adequate support from



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social assistance that meets their basic needs. Non-unionized workers need the protections of updated employment standards. Government inaction towards poverty reduction is a great concern.

C for Supports for Caregiving: Women still require more access to affordable, high-quality childcare. Kindergarten is moving to the public school system – but government needs to act quickly on what they've heard from educators and parents about this. For seniors, we are hopeful new homecare funding will help them stay in their homes and communities longer.

C- for Women's Health: For women's whole bodies to be healthy and well, mental health systems need attention. Increased funding for addiction services needs to result in more treatment choices. In healthcare, there is more to be done to integrate nurse practitioners. And there is much more to be done to support better birthing options for Island women.

Commenting on the overall grade, Chairperson Isabelle Christian said, "A C grade means that government is taking small steps towards women's equality goals. This is not a bad mark," she continues. "Small and incremental changes are meaningful. Over time, small steps will improve quality of life for the Island's most vulnerable women and their families. Still, we want to make sure it doesn't take too long."

The 2009 Equality Report Card is available in English and French from our website, <http://www.gov.pe.ca/acsw>. Also see the video news release at <http://vimeo.com/5181032>. The next Equality Report Card will be released in two years, in 2011, and will use the 2009 results as a benchmark.

2009 Publications

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/acsw>

Publications since March 2009:

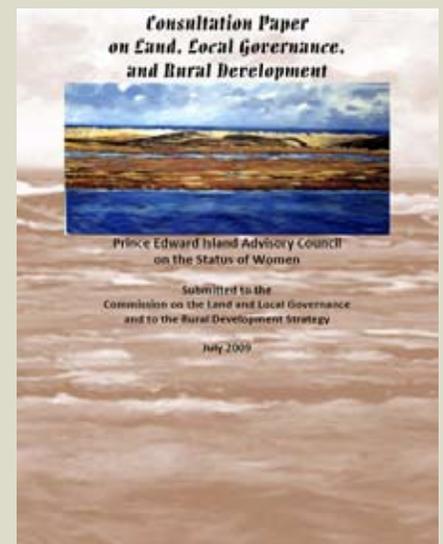
2009 Equality Report Card (June) - Fiche de rendement de l'égalité 2009 (Juin)

Council's second ever assessment of government's progress towards women's equality goals on Prince Edward Island.

VIDEO News Release: 2009 Equality Report Card (June). View at <http://vimeo.com/5181032>

Consultation Paper on Land, Local Governance, and Rural Development (July)

Insights from community consultation on issues that matter to rural Prince Edward Island women, for the Commission on the Land and Local Governance and to the Rural Development Strategy.



News Releases & Editorials:

Government Earns a C on 2009 Equality Report Card (June) - Le gouvernement obtient un C sur la fiche de rendement de l'égalité 2009 (Juin)

Coalition of Status of Women Councils Meets on National Issues - Les conseils sur la situation de la femme se rencontrent au sufet d'enjeux nationaux (October)

PEI Status of Women Praises National Award Winner (October)



Artists and supporters of the Women's Work(s) Art Promotion and Fundraiser at a celebratory reception in June 2009. Photo by Phil Matusciewicz.

Women's Work(s) a great success!



Organizers of the Women's Work(s) Art Promotion and Fundraiser, held at the Confederation Centre of the Arts

on July 12, have distributed the fifty plus pieces of artwork created for the project to new owners and tallied the proceeds from the auction and raffle sale.

"I'm pleased to say that the Women's Work(s) project met several important objectives," says project coordinator Dianne Porter. "Our primary interest was to profile Island women artists and their work based on the theme of women's paid and unpaid work." The artwork was displayed in the concourse of the Confederation Centre for the week prior to the July 12 Auction. "The venue was ideal for the show and auction. We know that several thousand people viewed the show meaning maximum exposure of the artwork and artists."

In addition to an initial art supplies stipend, each artist received half of the sale of their artwork, "Thus meeting a second important project goal," says Porter. "Islanders in the arts and entertainment field so often donate their work for shows and fundraisers and we wanted to create a formula that offered participants financial compensation."

A third objective was to raise money for the repairs and upgrades that need to be done on Anderson House Women's Shelter. "Thousands of dollars were raised from the sale of artwork for the Shelter," says Porter. "We know that many individuals donated directly to the Anderson House capital fund after viewing the artwork so I'm delighted with the money the project has generated directly and indirectly."

"And in the spirit of generosity and compassion towards the women and children that use the services of Anderson House, many of the artists who can afford to have decided to donate their share of the proceeds to the capital fund."



Mother Study II by Julia Gregory, one of 50 artworks created for Women's Work(s).

PEI Status of Women Council Meetings

Council members have met three times since March 2009. Council is mandated to meet at least four times a year. Here are some themes from recent meetings.

May 5 - Charlottetown Equality Report Card Workshop

Council conducted a workshop to determine grades for government for the 2009 Equality Report Card. Council members pored over evidence provided by government and by community organizations and tested it against research by Council staff and their own knowledge and experience. They reached consensus on draft grades for all areas.

June 16 - Stratford 2009 Equality Report Card Launch

Radio, television, and print media joined Council members and representatives of community organizations, unions, and provincial and federal governments for the release of the Equality Report Card.

October 27 - Cornwall Planning & Visioning for Council Action

At October's meeting, Council members welcomed Marcia Enman, the newest appointment to the Council. Marcia, from Wellington, is the director of La Voix Acadienne French-language newspaper. She is vice-president of the national board of directors of l'Association de la presse francophone, serves as a councillor on the Wellington Village Municipal Council, and sits on the Junior Achievement PEI Board.

Marcia's first Council meeting focused its attention on future directions and actions to follow up the Equality Report Card. Then, while pinning ribbons to this year's Purple Ribbon information cards, Council members shared their hopes and visions for Council's ongoing work on violence against women.

Next Meeting: Council's next meeting will be on December 4 in Charlottetown. The memorial service for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women will be the centrepiece of the meeting.

PEI Hosts Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils



For the first time in its history, the national Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women held its annual meeting outside Ottawa. Their October consultation, hosted in Charlottetown by the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, provided an on-the-ground view of how Status of Women Councils provide a bridge between community groups and government systems that are tasked to work to improve the status of Canadian women. During their meeting, the Coalition put a priority on national and federal issues that affect women across Canada.

“No matter how effective provincial and territorial Advisory Councils are, there are always national dimensions to the work we do towards women’s equality,” says PEI’s Chairperson, Isabelle Christian, who chaired the Coalition meeting. “Women across Canada tell their provincial and territorial Advisory Councils that they need national child care programs, anti-poverty strategies, support for programs and services to end violence against women, equal rights for Aboriginal women, and affordable, accessible, and safe housing.”

“These national issues have federal dimensions. They require shared ideas and resources among the provinces and

territories to develop a national viewpoint,” says Coalition co-chairperson Marlene Bertrand from the Manitoba Council. “The PEI meeting gave us a window into the links between what women are experiencing in their homes and communities and what they expect as support from their governments.”

A highlight of the Prince Edward Island meeting was a networking and workshopping luncheon with PEI’s Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Hon. Valerie Docherty, and other invited guests, including other female PEI MLAs, a female band chief and other First Nations community leaders, current and former Chairpersons of the PEI Status of Women, Status of Women Council members, and leaders from community-based women’s organizations. The luncheon honoured Charlottetown lawyer Daphne Dumont, a recent recipient of the Governor General’s Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

During the meetings, a special presentation by Christiane Pelchat, the inspiring Présidente of the Québec Conseil du statut de la femme, outlined current work by the Quebec council to shore up hard-won equality measures and to get ahead of emerging challenges to equality in Quebec.

Coalition members consulted with PEI Minister Responsible for the Status of Women Valerie Docherty as part of an October luncheon on national issues.

Back Row, Left to Right: Lorraine Phaneuf (Northwest Territories), Lisa Murphy (Prince Edward Island), Marlene Bertrand (Manitoba), Shylah Elliott (Nunavut), Neevee Wilkins (Nunavut), Linda Ross (Newfoundland and Labrador), Jean d’Entremont (Nova Scotia). Front Row, Left to Right: Dollie Simon (Northwest Territories), Yvonne Spyropoulos (Manitoba), Hon. Valerie Docherty (PEI Minister Responsible for the Status of Women), Isabelle Christian (Prince Edward Island), Christiane Pelchat (Quebec).

Photo by Louise Vessey for the Province of PEI.



A consultation with Canada’s Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Egmont (PEI) MP Gail Shea, provided unique insight into strategies to get more women into elected positions at all levels of government. As a former provincial Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Shea also shared a perspective on Status of Women Councils’ role in advising on the issues they hear provincially and territorially in national forums.

“At its meeting next year, the Coalition plans to invite senior federal officials to meet with the Coalition members on high-priority issues that emerge over the coming months,” says Coalition co-chairperson Linda Ross, from the Newfoundland and Labrador Council. “The Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women will continue to be effective in national debates by sharing what it hears from Canadian women and their families.”

The Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women formed after 1995, when the federal government eliminated the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Government's New Gender-Based Analysis Committee

Committee members (left to right). Back row: Donna Reardon, Wendy Morrison, Ellie Reddin, Thilak Tennekone. Front row: Michelle Harris-Genge, Vicki Francis, Jane Ledwell, Christine MacKinnon.



Photo by Brian Simpson for the Province of PEI.

The PEI Status of Women was pleased last year that the provincial government passed Minister Valerie Docherty's motion to set up a committee on gender- and diversity-based analysis (GBA). The Committee is tasked with identifying best practices for gender-based analysis across Canada, then assessing training needs and resources for people working within the PEI provincial government. The GBA Committee has already held a consultation with a provincial reference group of community leaders with an interest in gender and diversity lenses.

Gender-based analysis is used around the world to help decision-makers develop policy that responds better to the everyday needs of both female and male citizens. The PEI Status of Women is pleased the Province's committee is learning more about this tool and how to apply it and thanks the Minister for including an Advisory Council representative on the Committee.

Says Council Chairperson Isabelle Christian, "We are sure government will discover, as we have, that GBA is a helpful way to get a deeper understanding of what parts of society are doing well and what parts are struggling, and how to more equitably benefit all groups." Christian concludes, "We know that Islanders benefit in direct, everyday ways from responsive policy-making. We look forward to seeing what comes out of the committee on gender-based analysis."

Interested in joining the PEI Status of Women Council?



Are you interested in sitting on the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women? Members are appointed by government. You can put your name forward through the *Participate in PEI* process. Advisory Council Staff would be happy to provide more information or to

help you prepare a letter of interest for yourself or a friend. Call our office for more information.



Council Members

Isabelle Christian, Chairperson, Stratford
 Andie Bulman, Vice-Chair, Charlottetown
 Sadie MacKenzie, Treasurer, Montague
 Sister Norma Gallant, Wellington
 Pauline Thomson, Canoe Cove
 Gwyn Davies, Gairloch
 Roseanne Sark, Summerside
 Sue Connolly, Breadalbane
 Marcia Enman, Wellington

Staff

Lisa Murphy, Executive Director
 Jane Ledwell, Researcher/Policy Analyst (on leave)
 Becky Tramley, Office Administrator (p/t)
 Sandy Kowalik, Purple Ribbon Coordinator

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Location

Sherwood Business Centre
 161 St. Peter's Road



Members & Staff of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women wish you, your families, and your loved ones a season of peace & goodwill.

