

SPOKESWOMAN



From the Editor

By *Sheila Keats*

In this issue, we feature two women challenged by a physical disability: Claudia LeRouche and Joanne McDonald. Claudia is Deaf and Joanne is in a wheelchair. We also bring attention to the recent Wheelway issue and how this service should be a given if persons with disabilities are to have parity in this city.

People are becoming more aware of the rights of people with disabilities and are beginning to be inclusive by providing ramps, wider doorways,

service dogs and visual aids, etc. But some barriers such as charity models and exclusive social attitudes are invisible, and are just as debilitating for women with disabilities. Providing services and accommodations does not necessarily translate into respect and dignity.

Joanne McDonald is an accomplished athlete, a public service employee and we celebrate her recent Order of Canada award. As you read about Claudia LeRouche, you will see how remarkably talented she is and how she, too, overcame barriers of disability to

achieve her goals.

There are disabilities we can see and some we cannot. Whether the disability is physical or mental, as women struggling for justice and parity, we must work under the mantra that we are all "women first." As women we battle for equality. Women with disabilities face inequalities on top of this. The fact is any of us may be challenged by a disability any day ... think about how much more difficult the struggle would be. As sisters we must work together to eliminate barriers to equality.

Congratulating...Joanne McDonald

By *Glenda Cabot*

We are privileged to have in our community a woman who has dedicated her life to achieving excellence in sport while working to remove barriers and breakdown stereotypes for persons with disabilities.

Joanne McDonald was recognized publicly for this work when she was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in the fall of 2007. She will receive her Order during an

investiture ceremony on December 10, 2008. There are three levels of the Order - Member, Officer and Companion. Joanne has been named to the 2nd level - Officer of the Order. This is a rare honour. The Order of Canada's motto is:

DESIDERANTES

MELIOREM PATRIAM

(They desire a better country.)

The motto certainly fits Joanne. As an internationally acclaimed wheelchair athlete,

Joanne has brought home over 60 medals and several awards, making her an inspiration for women everywhere.

As a passionate activist on behalf of persons with disabilities, Joanne has enriched this community and the world. She is a member of the NL Sports Hall of Fame and was named to the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2004.

www.joannemcdonald.ca/nomination.htm

Executive Director's Report

*By Charmaine Davidge
SJSWC Executive Director*

With so many things happening at the St. John's Status of Women Council and the Women's Centre, it will be impossible to include all developments in this article. But I can give you some of the highlights!

We would like to give a big welcome to Lisa Molloy, who is doing her fall Social Work placement with us and Rhonda Sampson our new Office Manager. We would also like to welcome all the new volunteers who are signing on to boards, committees and programs for 2007-2008.

We have been has been very busy fundraising for Marguerites Place as well as our annual programs. Check out Wendolyn's article for all the exciting updates on Marguerite's Place. The Women's Centre had a very successful Back-to-School program and was able to assist many families in our community. We would like to thank the all the volunteers and sponsors who helped make this wonderful initiative a success.

On November 15th the *Headline Honeys* celebrate their one year anniversary with a charity show for Marguerite's Place! This promises to be a night of great entertainment – all for a good cause. The Women's Centre is currently seeking do-

nations for our very popular Christmas Program and any support you can provide would be greatly appreciated!

I would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support and belief in the wonderful work we do at the St. John's Status of Women Council and Women's Centre!



Local Para-Transit System Under Review

*By Marie White
Past President of Coalition of
Persons with Disabilities*

Access to transportation is something all require to actively participate in one's community and in society in general. For persons with disabilities who cannot safely and with dignity avail of a regular transportation system, access to a para-transit system is critical.

In the metro region, para-transit services have for some years been under the auspices of the City of St. Johns, with the contract awarded to and services provided by Wheelway. In the intervening years, the demand for the service has grown astronomically.

With increased opportunities for participating in employment, education, cultural and recreational activities, persons

with disabilities are on the move. Unfortunately, for some who need access to the para-transit system, the desire to be on the move is constrained by the numbers accessing the service.

As with many such para-transit systems, priorities have been established and include education, employment and medical appointments. There is little

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Marguerite's Place: Fall 2008 Update

Coming Soon: Construction Site & Benefit Show!

By Wendolyn Schlamp-Hickey
Marguerite's Place Partnership Coordinator

Marguerite's Place is a new initiative jointly supported by SJSWC and the Women's Centre. It will be the new home for the Women's Centre, and will house all services, programs and offices of both the Women's Centre and SJSWC. In addition, Marguerite's Place will provide eight new supportive housing units for single women over the age of thirty.

We have identified a **building site** for *Marguerite's Place* on Cashin Avenue and expect to have completed all public consultations and the required rezoning process very soon. We recently met with some neighbours in the area and are

very excited about the location, the community spirit and nearby amenities; it promises to be a good fit with our plans for development. We anticipate a spring '09 start for construction.

We are thrilled to announce that **new partners** have made contributions to our capital campaign including the United Way of Avalon and the Gill Ratcliffe Foundation, as well as the Canadian Alternative Investment Cooperative.

And last but not least, we welcome you to join us at the Majestic Theatre with the "Headline Honeys" as they celebrate their one year anniversary with a **benefit show** for *Marguerite's Place*. The show will be held on Saturday,

November 15 (doors open at 8 pm; show begins at 8:30). For ticket details or for more information on *Marguerite's Place* please contact Wendolyn @ 754-8500, or visit www.margueritesplace.ca.



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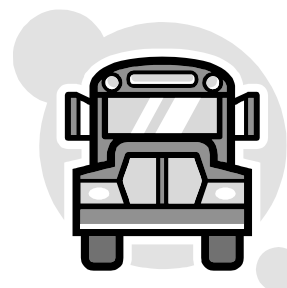
spontaneity enabled by this system – and we are not alone. This is the reality across the country as persons with disabilities are becoming more active participants in their communities...in some cities, a person has to book a week or more in advance to access a ride.

Like any system, when there is a concern about over use, peo-

ple cite "abuse" of the service in question. However, I suggest this is not a significant issue for the local para-transit service – but our ever evolving inclusive communities are. People availing of our para-transit service do so out of need.

Let us hope therefore that efforts by the City of St. John's together with the Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment will, in the

foreseeable future, contribute to increasing Wheelway's capacity to transport consumers who are rightfully seeking greater participation in their cities and towns.



Happenings at the Women's Centre!!

*By Nicole Kieley
SJSWC Program Development
Coordinator*

While looking out my window I see the hues of maple leaves turn from vibrant greens to crimson reds. Aside from the cold, fall is a beautiful season. It carries change, colour, and excitement. Similarly, the Women's Centre has been growing and changing as we move ever closer to the vision of Marguerites Place. Here are some highlights of the exciting initiatives that I have had the opportunity to be apart of!

In recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week, the Women's Centre in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association provided an information session that touched on various aspects of mental illness including stigma barriers and recovery options. Staff, volunteers, and the public were welcomed to attend. The event fostered engaging discussion and highlighted the everydayness of mental illness in the lives of individuals in our community. Special thanks

to Geoff Chalk of the Canadian Mental Health Association for his presentation.

As the cold weather sets in, the need for warmer clothing has risen. To assist women in preparing for the harsher weather, we hosted the event "Warm Up For Winter". With the help of wonderful volunteers and staff, our main floor became an exciting outlet of hats, mittens, boots, and coats. Women were invited to browse and avail of any items that would assist her and her family this winter.

Over the past summer, the Women's Centre has been partnering with the Community Centre Alliance in order to enhance employment supports for women taking part in our program. Community Employment Facilitators have been on site to meet, connect, and support women with a diversity of employment supports. The employment process can be a very intimidating and overwhelming experience. Through this partnership women are able to find the answers and support in an environment in which they feel

empowered and safe.

As we are clueing up a successful Back to School Program, our next big annual project is also on its way. The 2008 Christmas Program has begun and we are looking for your support! If you are interested in sponsoring a family, donating, or volunteering this season, I warmly welcome you to contact us and get involved.

This is just some of the work that has been taking place here at the Centre. With the input and support of wonderful volunteers and staff, programming and initiatives continue to grow and develop. I look forward to reporting on more new and exciting work!



Support the St. John's Women's Centre 2008 Christmas Holiday Program

How can you assist?

- **Make a financial donation**
- **Take the Corporate Challenge**
- **Sponsor a family**
- **Volunteer**
- **Drop off a few gifts**
- **Phone: 753-0220**

Newfoundland or Bust - One Woman's Perspective

By Linda Corbett: A Stay-In-Newfoundland Mom

One weekend last December I attended a firearm and hunter safety education course with my then 15 year-old son. I am now certified as a big game hunter. Will I ever shoot a moose or other big game? That remains to be seen, but it wasn't the point of the exercise in any event. It was another of those tasks that I assume as one parent in a household where the other does the Newfoundland-Alberta trek for a living.

My husband Joe and I have three sons - now ranging in ages from 16 to 25. The concept of one parent at home while the other travels for employment is not a new one for families in this province; still, we are constantly asked how we manage. Well, to me parenting means taking on whatever roles the job requires. Tying up skates, learning, along with my sons, how to bait a hook for trouting, and helping out with softball teams are just some of the tasks that I have undertaken. This is apart from

the everyday routine of providing meals, laundry, and helping with homework. Life is extremely challenging when you have three active boys, work fulltime at MUN, and have a one hour commute each morning and evening.

The challenge is how to juggle a limited amount of time between paid work, housework and 'kidwork'. My priorities have always been the kids, then my job, with housework a distant third. My dishes would still be in the sink at 11:00 p.m. on a Sunday night waiting for my arrival but my son's specific hockey game would only be played once. It was a struggle, trying to make the boys understand that we had to be selective about our activities and trying to be fair. This compromise doesn't end at home but is in fact greater for the parent who travels. Joe has to be content with being home for the milestones and parenting by phone, missing out on the joys of daily living.

How has this lifestyle affected our boys? Kyle, Robert, and

Dylan have learned to be strong and independent as Joe and I have had to depend on them to take care of household duties and each other. They have learned the art of compromise and to value every minute of our time as a whole family when the five of us are together. Now that our sons are older and have taken on ironwork for a trade, they sometimes work on the same project as their dad. As a consequence, he gets to spend more time with them than I do.

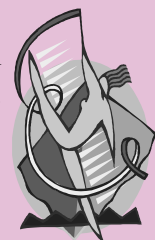
Have I enjoyed this lifestyle and would I live it all over again given the choice? You be the judge:

This past September during the Labour Day Weekend, I was the trophy winning angler in our family as I bagged a three pound mud trout. My husband, who was home from Alberta at the time, stayed at the cabin and cooked up a Jigg's Dinner while my now 16 year-old son and I took to the pond in our aluminum boat. Yah!

The Headline Honeys Celebrate and Share!

The Headline Honeys are reaching out on November 15th at the Majestic Theatre with an evening of burlesque! The celebratory shimmy will support the SJSWC/WC project, Marguerite's Place. The event begins at 8:30 PM. Advance ticket \$18. At the door \$20. Sales locations to be announced.

Come out for a night of glitz and glamour which supports a wonderful cause!



Torture: Does it happen in our Homes, in our Communities?

By Jeanne Sarson & Linda MacDonald

Maybe you have never thought about this possibility before? However, acts of torture do happen within Canadian relationships, in homes and other private places within our communities and are referred to as *non-state actor inflicted torture*. *Actors* refers to perpetrators who are parent(s), other family members, a guardian(s), a spouse, human traffickers or others known or unknown to the person tortured.

Non-State versus State Actor Torture

Non-state actor torture differs from *state actor torture* which refers to torture committed by police or military personnel or by government employees such as prison guards. Canada has a due diligence obligation to prevent, protect, investigate and punish acts of torture committed against its citizens regardless of who the perpetrators are: parent(s) or police, human trafficker or prison guard, spouse or soldier.

Due Diligence Obligations

Canada is legally mandated to uphold its due diligence obligations regarding state torture as seen in the recent case of Maher Arar. When Canada neglected to protect Mr. Arar he had a legal right to be heard and compensated for the state inflicted torture he endured.

He states having his victimization correctly named as torture is the first step to healing. However, having non-state actor torture victimization named correctly is not a legal right that, for instance, tortured Canadian women have. Why? Because even though the Canadian government was informed, in 1993, that some women in Canada reported non-state actor torture victimization their reality remains minimized and misnamed because of the federal government's "existing provisions" position. Meaning that if a woman has endured acts of non-state actor torture her torture will be criminally named an assault or an assault with a weapon for example. Thus perpetrators are not held responsible for the acts of torture they inflict and she will not receive the specialized care and compensation required. It is our opinion that the failure to acknowledge and accurately name non-state actor torture victimization is discriminatory and involves specific gender-based discrimination when sexualized and reproductive tortures such as forced impregnations and forced abortions occur.

'Living' in Torture

Living in such an environment involves surviving acts of non-state torture that have been de-

finied as state torture by Amnesty International for instance. The accompanying box provides a very brief list of acts of non-state actor torture that we have documented in mainly women's testimonials since 1993.

Taking Action

State torture is specifically criminalized under section 269.1 of the *Criminal Code*; non-state actor torture is not. To help secure legal and equality rights for women (and others) who have endured non-state actor torture we initiated a certified petition addressed to the Government of Canada requesting that non-state actor torture be specifically named and criminalized.

If you have a Canadian residency address (you do not have to be over 18 to sign) join us in this action. Enlarge, print off and sign the petition enclosed in the petition box. It must be mailed to us as regulations require signed petitions be originals. We will deliver the petition to our Member of Parliament who presents the request for action to the House of Commons.

We believe that gaining legal recognition will open spaces for women and others to truth-

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fully reveal their victimization and gain their legal and human rights as persons not to be subjected to torture by non-state actors in their homes or in our communities.

Contact information:

flight@ns.sympatico.ca

www.ritualabusertorture.org.

361 Prince Street, Truro, NS, B2N 1E4



Jeanne and Linda standing with the Person's Case Monument

Provincial Advisory Council Status of Women's Council Update

By Phyllis Artiss

PACSW Vice-President

Congratulations to PACSW board member Jackie Jenkins (Grand Falls-Windsor). On September 25, 2008, Jackie became the newest provincial court judge and has already begun her new job in Stephenville! We'll miss her energy, commitment and good humour on our board as well as her valuable insights and hard work on legal and other issues. But we know Jackie will continue her good work on women's equality in her new position.

We're also losing Danielle Finney, Communications Director at PACSW, who is moving back to Western Canada after

one and a half years on our staff and 8 years (in total) in St. John's. Danielle acted as a liaison between the St. John's Status of Women Council and PACSW. She's perhaps best known to Spokeswoman readers for moderating our listserv: keeping us abreast (often several times a day) of the Cameron Inquiry, the gynecological oncologist's dispute, and news and views from every part of the province and beyond. Thanks for a job well done, Danielle.

At the most recent PACSW board meetings, we were joined by Minister Burke on day one and on day two, by coordinators and other reps from the province's eight women's centres. Poverty and the lack of safe, decent, afford-

able housing dominated the discussions. In Happy Valley - Goose Bay, people are forced to live in tents in the woods. In Lab City modest trailers are going for \$289,000. Across the province women are forced to stay in abusive relationships because they can't find safe, decent, affordable accommodation. Professionals can't be attracted or retained in rural and remote areas in large part because of the lack of suitable housing. A Provincial Housing Strategy is to be released this fall, but what is desperately needed is a strategic plan, especially for areas of high growth, to ensure that increased economic development is coordinated with long-term, sustainable plans for housing, education and health, and for social,

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Claudia

By Sheila Keats

Spokeswoman often highlights women have had a special impact on our communities. It is my pleasure in this issue to introduce you to a rising star, a young woman who is making her mark throughout this country.

Claudia Larouche grew up in La Baie, Quebec. At two, her parents learned she was deaf. "Parents", she says, help you decide how you'll manage this disadvantage and how you'll overcome it. I decided at a young age that being deaf does not mean I cannot do anything I want." Her schooling was in the regular system where she learned to read lips in French. She graduated with a degree in Journalism from the University

of Quebec. This degree, combined with her love of sports, landed her a job at the Deaf Youth Games. At one such game in Australia, the Deaflympic Summer Games, she met a Newfoundlander; started dating and moved here to attend Memorial.

Moving to Newfoundland and attending MUN meant learning English. This is where I met Claudia and realized how amazing she is. She learned English, without ever hearing it (after French and LSQ-French sign Language), and ASL (American Sign Language) as a fourth language. (Deaf people in this province communicate in ASL.) I questioned Claudia about her success, and whether she ever felt discriminated against. She told me "It

(discrimination) often happened in elementary school because kids do not understand the differences in people, but otherwise, I have not felt this way. There are a lot of challenges in my job but I have managed to overcome them and I think it gives people confidence when I am integrated and we adjust together."

As a journalist, Claudia has worked at CBC's Sports Website and was a collaborator for several magazines. While studying for her Masters degree at Memorial, she worked at La Gaboteur, the only French newspaper in Newfoundland. She was on the committee for the first Canadian Deaf Games held in St. John's this past summer.

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Troubling Sex-Ed Classroom

By Melody Morton-Ninomiya

A junior high school teacher of sex-ed comments "in real life, sexes are not separated, so why in class?" Junior high educators from schools across Newfoundland and Labrador were recently invited to participate in a research study looking at teachers' feelings, attitudes and comfort levels with the topic of sexual health education. One of many observations from this study draws attention to the

taken-for-granted idea that teaching sex-ed is best done with boys and girls together – in a co-ed setting. I would like to critique the co-ed classroom and our (including teachers) role in encouraging (intentional or through silence) gender performances.

Comments like the one above imply an assumption that same = equal = transparent = respect. This assumption relies on students being articulate, honest,

uninhibited in asking questions, sensitive to others' naivety, respectful and uncomplicated of sexual relationships within the class (something that we rarely expect of adults). Studies have found that adolescent boys in co-ed classroom settings frequently disrupt class through homophobic, sexist and other inappropriate comments that put teachers in a

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position of addressing such comments in ways that facilitate learning and/or take time away from class to discipline the male students (Mearor, 2004; Mearor, Tiffin, & Miller, 2000). Unfortunately, most teachers do not feel equipped to transform offensive or disrespectful comments into a learning opportunity for the class (Mearor et al., 2000; Strange, Oakley, & Forrest, 2003). Rather, teachers in a state of panic and discomfort, “waste time” disciplining behaviour and thinking about ways to prevent such dynamics from occurring in subsequent classes (Strange et al., 2003).

A study by Strange et al. (2003) found when questioning boys about their disruptive patterns, they reasoned that sex-ed was irrelevant to them, questions they had were uncomfortable to ask in front of girls, and that there was pressure to conform to particular forms of (hetero)masculinity so as to not be victimized or rendered sexually inadequate (Strange et al., 2003). The nature of gender inequity, performance, roles and expectations are damaging to both boys and girls. The problem of male-initiated dis-

ruption in sex-ed classes is complex.

Careful examination of informal sex-ed at home and other influences may suggest that boys feel pressured to perform a certain rigid and stereotypical gender role – one that predominantly relies on their peer group and pornography that is readily available and widely circulated.

It is particularly disturbing also knowing that many girls feel that some boys’ behaviour provide an opportunity to use sexual matter and language to denigrate girls. The study by Strange et al. (2003) also found near universal descriptions of girls’ victimization, harassment and teasing in co-ed sex-ed classes. Undoubtedly, girls frequently do not feel comfortable speaking about experiences of physical and sexual assault that happen on a daily basis outside of class in front of their male peers.

What I found curious in my research study is why teachers in this research did not express much frustration in having co-ed classes – and instead, many were strong advocates for ex-

clusively co-ed classes. It seems unlikely that boys in this province have risen above the kinds of disruptive behaviour addressed in other studies. The questions worth asking may be how would describing disruptive behaviour reflect on the participating teachers and their ability to discipline? What are teachers teaching (or in many cases, not teaching) in sex ed that disrespectful behaviour does not present itself in the classroom? Or, what do teachers consider as unacceptable behaviour?

Much work needs to happen in the way of teacher education – one where educators are exposed to the problematic and oppressive qualities of sex-ed curriculum, stereotyping, gender performance and sexual identities. A place we can all start is to begin critically thinking about how we form our own gender and sexual identities....and perhaps how we, through silence, do not challenge gender performances (e.g. masculinity and femininity) with children starting at young ages. What will it take to someday have open and respectful conversation about sex, sexuality and relationships in a co-ed classroom?

Many thanks to those on the Spokeswoman Committee

who contributed to the compiling of this edition:

Sheila Keats Danielle Finney

Melody Morton-Ninomiya Phyllis Artiss

Glenda Cabot Sheri Woolfrey

Phyllis Artiss Experiences the Federal Election In Labrador

Phyllis Artiss from St. John's reports on her recent (unexpected) experience as federal NDP candidate for Labrador.

I've worked for the New Democratic Party all my adult life, but was never a candidate. I agreed to run in this election because no NDP candidate from Labrador came forward by the deadline, because no other woman in the province was running for the NDP, and because I love The Big Land and its people, and welcomed the opportunity for another visit.

So off I went for ten days to a riding where federal NDP candidates have not done well over the decades. . . and what a wonderful experience it was! Elizabeth Penashue traveled with me to Nain, where we were hosted by Fran and Brian Williams and others, interviewed by OK Radio, held a public meeting in the Family Resource Centre, and played Senior's Bingo in the Community Hall. In Labrador City I was met and chauffeured by Union workers/NDP stalwarts Karen Stagg and Theresa Anderson, and joined federal candidates from the Liberal and Conservative parties to make presentations at the Chamber of Commerce annual dinner. In Happy Valley/

Goose Bay, I stayed with Robin McGrath (author of Donovan's Station, one of my favorite Newfoundland novels), who also fed me from her organic garden, drove me everywhere, and entertained me with amazing stories of Labrador. I met the mayor and members of the HV/GB town council, spent an evening with Kati-mavik students, and an afternoon and overnight with the Penashue family in their tent, where we ate porcupine and doughnuts cooked on the tent's woodstove and slept soundly on spruce boughs.

I visited Women's Centres in Lab City and HV/GB, did door-to-door canvassing in all three communities, passed out flyers and Jack Layton buttons to early-morning queues at Tim Horton's and A&W, did many media interviews, and tried to keep up with the daily demands of being a candidate in an unfamiliar riding. Most challenging was the realization that some people seemed to be influenced by my words. Well, uh, what did I expect? I had canvassed many times before in other NDP campaigns, but this was different. Now I was expected to be the expert. And could I be sure that our party's platforms would be the best for Labrador? It was reassuring to remind myself that the party provided solid arguments I could fall back on when I was in unfamiliar territory.

But most of the time I was dealing with issues I've thought about for a long time, such as education, health, housing, the environment and whatever affects the equality and wellbeing of women and communities. And often the most important role I could play was that of listener, trying to understand the complicated and often difficult lives of people I met, and trying to help them figure out what they and their governments can do to improve things.

In the end we got just under 18% of the Labrador vote, taking second place to Liberal incumbent Todd Russell, the only Labradorian candidate in the riding. I was pleased. This leaves the NDP in better shape financially than it was when the election was called. I learned a lot about Labrador and myself that I might never have known if I hadn't run. And I enjoyed the experience. Taking on more responsibility in the political process felt good.

I'm more convinced than ever that it's important for greater numbers of women, of all ages and backgrounds, to run for office. We can't get elected if we don't put our names forward.

According to Equal Voice (a

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non-profit organization that works with all parties to increase the number of women elected to all levels of government) we need at least 33 % of women in Parliament to make sure women's perspectives are adequately reflected in Canada. This week's result gave women just 22% of the 308 seats. (We elected only 68 women, up from 64 women in 2006, whereas we should have over 100 seats, according to Equal Voice. And to be really equal of course we need half the seats: 154 women elected). Canada is far behind other democracies in the number of

women elected: we rank in 46th place!

I know we can do better, and encourage all of you to consider running for your party. If you can't get your head around that possibility, encourage women you know to think about it and offer your help in planning and running their campaigns. You may feel as I did: I'll never be a Lorraine Michael or Alexis McDonagh so I'll stand back and wait for another star. But if you do find the courage to run you may discover that you have the personal qualities, friends and other kinds support that make

it rewarding for you, your party and the country. Let's start the planning now and prepare to elect more women for the next federal, provincial and municipal elections.

For more information, ideas and inspiration on women in politics in Canada click on <http://www.equalvoice.ca/>

For a more partisan perspective email Phyllis at: partiss@mun.ca.



From left to right: Fran Williams, Elizabeth Penashue and Phyllis Artiss taking a break from canvassing to pick partridgeberries/redberries'.

October in Nain

Fran (from Nain), recently retired Executive Director of the Inuitut/English radio station OKalaKatiget,society. Elizabeth (from Sheshatsiu), an outspoken activist for the preservation of the traditional land and culture of the Innu people, recipient of honorary doctorate from Memorial. Phyllis (from St. John's) was the federal NDP candidate for Labrador. Both Fran and Elizabeth have given presentations at the Women's Centre in the past two years. Phyllis sits on the Marguerite's Place Management committee.

Spokeswoman encourages any woman who stood as a candidate for any political party in the federal election on October 14 to send a report to SW on her experiences and reflections.

Signs of the Times

By Lori Ann Campbell

Campbell questions 'pornification' trends in our contemporary culture and questions the increasingly blurred line between freedom of public expression and sexual obscenity.



It is a mauzy Sunday afternoon in St. John's, and I am traveling up Topsail road with my 5 year old son and 3 year old daughter. My son, who was affected by autism and has been reading since the age of 2, reads out the names of all the business advertisements we pass while my daughter jabsbers about princesses and lucky stars.

We pass the sign that my son has never read out loud or even asked me about: The Strictly Adult Video billboard.

The messages are simple enough for him to read but unlike advertisements for restaurants and toy stores, my son has no tangible social reference for what the Strictly

Adult Video sign is selling to him. My neurologically typical daughter, on the other hand, may not be able to read, but her own toy box and social observations may have already given her some insight into a broader phenomenon which the sign represents, which some authors refer to as the "pornification of a generation".

Kevin Scott told Newsweek magazine that the idea for their book "The Porning of America" arose from his personal angst over his 5 year old daughter's incessant requests for a Bratz doll; a doll that wears heavy makeup, suggestive clothing and resembles a "Barbie hooker". Newsweek reporter. Far from being 'taboo', Scott's coauthor Carmine Sarracino contends that porn has become so prevalent in every medium of our lives "it has almost ceased to exist as something separate from the culture."

In discussing the issue of the Strictly Adult Video sign with other parents, I learned of countless examples of moments when they felt uncomfortable about the hypersexualized environment our children are growing up in. But I also learned that they felt confused about where to draw the line in terms of their children's natural tendency to imi-

tate what they *constantly* see and hear.

A case in point was one Father's chagrin at overhearing his six year old child singing Katy Perry's top 40 hit "I Kissed a Girl and I liked it". A mother expressed concern that while her local radio station beeps out the word "f**kin" in the chorus to 50 Cents' song "Just a Little Bit", it has no problem playing the beginning of the chorus "I wanna unbutton your pants just a little bit, take 'em off... pull them down just a little bit...get to lickin and a f**kin just a little bit."

Debates about how and whether pornography affects self perceptions and subsequent behaviors always boil down to the question of the social value of the right to free speech. The Western civilized culture we claim to be fighting for in our 'War on Terror' is constituted on the idea that freedom of speech is synonymous with concepts such as democracy and liberty.

Indeed, when I asked members of the "Strictly Adult Video Sign" Facebook group (who are proponents of the sign) whether they thought it was appropriate to advertise pornographic video titles to those who are not legally permitted

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to rent them, I was met with many declarations about the right to free speech as well as the argument that ‘sex is not a bad thing...violence is’. Current and former managers of the store emphasized that they operate within the boundaries of city by-laws and that their titles do not ‘cross the obscenity line’ per se. But those adults who have filed complaints to the Mayor of St. John’s about displayed titles such as “Stuff My Hot Pink Oven”, “Little Oral Annie” and “Swallow my Squirt” clearly disagree.

Feminists interpret pornography in different ways, with many insisting that it is sexism not sex that degrades women,

and that one woman’s trash may be another’s treasured art or a source of boredom. Some of these feminists claim that censorship has historically hurt women and that countries with no pornography such as Saudi Arabia and Iran also fail to empower women with human rights. In facing a situation where sexual images (or video titles) disempower women, many feminists argue that these images should not be restricted, but that better images (or titles) should be made.

What does any of this mean for parents with small children, in a world where ‘signs of the times’ increasingly borrow from what Scott and Sarachino describe as the central ideas and characteristics of American porn; sex as com-

modity, and narrow views of women and male-female relationships, bad girls and dirty boys, domination and submission? As parents I think we are partly right to go on believing that our young children lack the emotional sophistication to understand sexuality. But it is the very lack sophistication that requires us to be vigilant about communicating with our kids and ourselves. Going beyond what the authors of “So Sexy So Soon” suggest, I believe that the ‘pornification’ of everyday life is sending a clear message to *everyone* that one’s value as a human being is becoming increasingly defined by the market’s understanding of the sexual functions.

“MILF and cookies”- anyone?

Foster Care: Meeting the Needs of Children and Families

By Diane Molloy
Executive Director of Foster Families Association

There is very little doubt that all parents want to do their best for their children but sometimes due to life circumstances, they are unable to meet their parenting responsibilities. When this happens, children are placed with another family while their parents receive the help and support they need to resume their primary parenting role. In our province, there are approximately 700 children in foster care. Most maintain

regular contact with their family and eventually return home, but until that happens these children live with a foster family. There is a shortage of foster families throughout the province and some children are placed in staffed apartments until there is a foster home vacancy which may take days or months. This is far from an ideal situation but there is no alternative; children cannot remain in their homes if it is determined they are not safe. A shortage of foster homes also means children may have to leave their home communities,

may be separated from their siblings and there is no ability to match a child with the home that might best meet their needs.

Foster Parents work as part of a team with children, parents, social workers, and other community resources toward the goal of family re-unification or, if this is not possible, permanency planning for the child. Foster Parents are ordinary people who do extraordinary things.

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What the Hebron Deal Means for Women

By Rebecca Newhook

There was a sense of disappointment around the province in August when Regatta Day came and went without a whiff of a Hebron deal announcement. When Danny said “long before Regatta Day,” maybe he got his dates a bit muddled. In the end, he didn’t keep us waiting long. Two weeks after Regatta, I found myself at the Fairmont representing Women in Resource Development Committee, sitting among a crowd of darkly suited grey haired men awaiting the announcement.

It is a well known fact women are seriously under-represented in occupations and industries most prominent in the development of Newfoundland and Labrador’s natural resources. Both government and industry have recognized the importance of redressing the imbalance with the provisions for women’s employment written in to the benefits agreement of the Hebron oil development and we applaud them for doing so.

The Hebron deal is hugely significant for the women of this province. The deal contains strong and unambiguous language about the employment of women in all phases of this project. All companies in-

involved are subject to a Women’s Employment Plan, drawn up by the operator, which will establish quantifiable objectives and goals for women’s employment as well as training and recruitment programs targeting women. The deal also outlines the need for physical changes in terms of living accommodations and facilities to create safe and respectful working environments. With more oil discoveries and other megaprojects coming up, the wording and provisions laid out for women’s employment in this deal should serve as an example and a precedent for future benefits agreements.

Women need to start preparing now to take advantage of the opportunities for high-paying jobs associated with Hebron. They need to start training so they can be experienced in their chosen field when fabrication starts.

Renee Ducey is preparing for Hebron. She recently completed the Orientation to Trades and Technology (OTT) program at College of the North Atlantic, which is offered in partnership with Women in Resource Development Committee. Renee is a single mother with a three-year-old son. She is planning for their future and making sure her son has every advan-

tage he deserves. She always knew an office job was not for her and that she wanted to learn a trade but didn’t know which trade. During the OTT program, Renee had a two-week work placement at Newdock working as a pipefitter and loved every minute of it. She applied to the UA740 Plumbers and Pipefitters union school and was accepted to start a steamfitter/pipefitter program in January 2009.

“As for the Hebron deal, I feel it offers tremendous opportunities for the people of this province, especially women,” says Renee. “Being such a large project with a very long projected life span, there are opportunities for many jobs, for many trades and specialties. With the standard nowadays and companies being required to hire a certain percentage of females, the opportunities for us are endless! I am quite excited about it!”

Renee knows it could be difficult to get experience in Newfoundland and Labrador as a first-year apprentice and is prepared to do a rotation in Alberta for a couple of years. She has the support of her son’s father and her family to do the long commute that’s familiar to us all.

“If all works out as I plan and

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They nurture and care for children, knowing they will have to let them go when the time comes to return home. They open their homes up to public scrutiny and are held to a higher standard than average families. They must demonstrate through an assessment process, an ability to protect and nurture children, to support families and to connect children to relationships intended to last a lifetime.

The ideal situation is one in which biological parents are able to recognize that they need help and are open to working with the support team and where foster parents understand their role and are able to develop respectful helping relationships with biological parents. It is common that parents experience emotional turmoil including feelings of anger, guilt, shame, and powerlessness when their children come into care. Foster parents also experience mixed emo-

tions; they may struggle with their own personal values while working to be non-judgmental and supportive of the biological family. They may feel anger as they comfort a child, when Mom or Dad hasn't shown up for a visit. Foster parents must be respectful to biological parents even when they are the target of their anger and must be able to not take it personally. Biological parents may also fear that they will be replaced by the foster parents and foster parents worry that when the children return home, the problems that led to the child coming into care may reoccur. In spite of these challenges, foster parents and biological parents, with support from their social workers, develop positive working relationships which are often maintained long after the child has returned home.

While foster parenting does have challenges, it is also one of the most worthwhile and rewarding things you can do in

your lifetime. Foster Parents experience the joy of knowing they are making a difference in the life of a child and pride at the accomplishments of children placed in their home. Perhaps the greatest reward is the tremendous satisfaction they feel, knowing they have helped a child find their way through a difficult situation. If you have ever thought about fostering, now is the right time to take that first step by contacting your local Child, Youth and Family Services office or the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association at 754-0213 or toll free at 877-754-0218. The need has never been greater!



Cheers

- Michelle Boutcher for the 7 years of hard work dedicated to the AIDS committee and Brenda Kitchen for the 3.5 years of hard work devoted to Planned Parenthood: NL's Sexual Health Centre...wish you both well as you start new positions at the YMCA/YWCA and Arthritis Society of NL respectively.
- Janet Maher of Mt. Pearl is named "Female Athlete of the Year" by Special Olympics Canada, recognized as a multi-sport athlete.
- Dr. Lesa Dawson, Dr. Cathy Popadiuk, and Dr. Patti Power for standing up and demanding improved health services for women in this province.

Jeers

- The Telegram for choosing all men for both the selection committee and the selection of the ten best athletes of Newfoundland and Labrador list.
- Beijing Olympic Committee for replacing 7 year old soloist, Yang Peiyi, in the opening ceremonies because 'her expression...was not flawless in image.' The 9 year old girl who got to lip-sync the 'Hymn to the Motherland' to Yang's voice received all the accolades because she resembled China's image of perfection. Two little girls and one twisted message.
- Joan Burke and her PC colleagues for interfering in the process of hiring a President for Memorial University. It's getting down to the wire and there is still no one at the helm. Some may wonder why.

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as Hebron is projected, I hope to have my Journeyperson status by the time fabrication starts. Imagine, to be a FE-MALE Journeyperson on a project of this magnitude,”

says Renee. “The Hebron deal will open many doors for women and those few people who still feel that the trades sector is not a place for females will be shown otherwise. I hope that you will hear of me supervising my own crew on

the Hebron project in the not too distant future!”

To discuss your future in trades and technology, call me at Women in Resource Development Committee at 738-3713.

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It was mainly Claudia’s interest in youth sports that led to the recognition by Chatelaine, where she is listed her as one

of the top 80 young women to watch in their May 2008 issue. Her work as a journalist brought her to the attention of the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympics and

landed her an incredible opportunity. She has taken a two year hiatus from her studies to take a job working on the French version of the website for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, BC.

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legal and community services.

were discussed, and board members were dismayed to learn that no federal minister attended the second national Aboriginal Women’s Conference in Yellowknife this summer.

provincial women’s conference, possibly similar to the one in Gander (October 2000). I agreed to ask whether others are interested, and coordinate the responses. Please email me your thoughts at:

partiss@mun.ca.

In our meetings, specific reports were tabled on Family Violence Courts, on a Centre for Multicultural Women, and on challenges faced by persons with disabilities. The special needs of Aboriginal women

Several members suggested it’s time to start planning a pan-



Welcome!
New staff members
(left) Lisa Molloy
(right) Rhonda Sampson

The Spokeswoman Committee welcomes submissions and comments.

Please email us at: spokeswomannl@gmail.com

St John’s Status of Women’s Council And Women’s Centre

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