

# BPW Virtual Newsbytes

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## Reminders:

- Shannon MacNeil (BPW Virtual Club Membership Chair) with the help of Sue Calhoun, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, National are working on recruitment & retention, Dual membership motion carried October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006
- The Virtual Club is now listed on the BPW Canada Website [www.bpwcanada.com](http://www.bpwcanada.com)
- MSN Messenger – a way to virtually chat – remember is your job to create a hotmail account and download the Messenger software so that we can communicate
- Resolutions: We need to work on formulating resolutions, as they are our means to advocating at the political level for change. For examples see the 2006 Brief submitted by National:  
<http://www.bpwcanada.com/Resolutions/2006-Brief-eng.pdf>



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## **United BPW Action on BPW Virtual Club First Resolution – July 2006!**

**November 20, 2006**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### High-level panel recommends women-specific agency BPW Canada commends United Nations panel report

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPW Canada) commends the UN High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment, for its recommendation to establish a new independent women-specific agency at the United Nations. The recommendation is included in the Panel's recently-released report, *Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel*. The Panel was established earlier this year by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The report states that gender equality is central to the delivery of effective development outcomes, and recommends the establishment of "one dynamic UN entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment." BPW Canada, founding member in 1930 of the International Federation of BPW Clubs, passed an emergency resolution at its 2006 biennial convention in Toronto earlier this year, calling on the United Nations to establish such an agency. The resolution also commended Stephen Lewis, Special Envoy to the United Nations on HIV/AIDS, for his efforts to convince the UN to establish a new agency that would specifically defend women's rights, health and security. The emergency resolution was brought to the floor of the convention by the recently-established BPW Virtual Club, one of approximately 45 BPW clubs in Canada. There are BPW clubs in more than 100 countries around the world. "This recommendation is certainly good news. A new UN agency for women is an idea that is long overdue and we certainly hope that the agency moves on this issue," said BPW Canada President Fran Donaldson. While the report is addressed to the Secretary-General, it notes that many of the recommendations will require commitment from and action by heads of government and organizations of the wider UN system. "Only through their leadership - and the commitment of the incoming Secretary-General - can we realistically forge the consensus and action required for a more cohesive UN system," it says. Kofi Annan finishes his term as Secretary-General at the end of this year.

[For more information on the ideas of Stephen Lewis see: *Gender Equality Now or Never: A New UN Agency for Women*. By Paula Donovan, Senior Advisor, Women's and Children's Issues – Office of the UN Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa – July 2006]

## **Editorial: “Beware of Women”**

Lately in the media women have been making headlines and many questions have been raised. From the funding cuts to women’s agencies to the questionable “dog comment” in the House of Commons. Women with any degree of power are being analyzed, reviewed, assessed and picked apart. Did a certain reference get made, and if so was it against the woman in question or women in general? Do certain ministers understand the plight of women? Is the government doing all it can for women?

My focus in this issue is on the touchy subject of the view of women who hold public roles in society. Women only make up approximately 21% of the members of our government and it seems that all too often they are analyzed far beyond their public role. Granted one of the women’s movement’s arguments has been “the personal is political”, but that does not mean that an assessment of a woman in public life must always include her private life too. For instance, the September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006 edition of the *Ottawa Citizen* carried an article “Stronach slams ‘inaccurate’ attacks” with a picture of her in the middle of a web of people she’s connected too including friends, lovers etc. While the blame cannot be completely put on the media, shouldn’t the real concern be on whether the individual is adequately meeting and maintain her responsibilities as a public figure? From there we can ask questions such as: Should we hold our public officials to a higher moral standard? Should their private lives be any concerns to us? In the reverse would we be willing to have our private lives on display?

This kind of media treatment is not new. Key public women such as Marie Antoinette, Queen Elizabeth, and Margaret Thatcher had to put up with much the same thing. It seems that women have yet to reach the ‘critical mass’, especially in Canadian politics, where their presence is no longer so strange as to focus primarily on their public actions versus their private lives.

Women need to engage in politics in an increased number so that the focus can change. And all of us need to help refocus the role of our elected officials - when the media tries to sensationalize an irrelevant issue we can and should take them to task and ask them to focus on the actual job at hand. The same goes for those elected representatives who allow themselves to get drawn into the ‘soap opera’ drama.

So let’s get back the proper focus!

This issue also focuses strongly on violence against women and I urge you to read and comment on the Special Feature on this topic!

All topics discussed and reported are open for comment and are hoped to encourage discussion, discussion that will lead to positive action and positive change – please engage in any one of the topics herein!

- Crystal

## **Highlights of Things in the News**

- **New Liberal Women’s Caucus ‘Pink Book’**  
Check it out and see what it contains – what are you comments, thoughts, questions?
- **Status of Women Cuts – What can we do?**  
How can we ensure that our voices are heard? We need to start writing letters about the cuts and the slated closings! Also BPW National is doing press releases on our position and urging letter writing. There are going to be hearings of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women House of Commons Committee and BPW will ensure a brief is presented as well.
- **View of women in politics, in business...see editorial and throughout key question to ask:**  
How can we change attitudes?
- **Check out this interesting site:**  
<http://www.thewomenareangry.org>

## **Interesting Find on the Internet –**

**Irene Mathysen – M.P. London-Fanshawe (NDP) website: “5 Things Feminism Has Done For Me”**

- 1) **Though there still is a long way to go – feminism helped me and other women realize that we did not have to settle for the job ghetto.**
- 2) **Gave me the courage to stand up when someone tried to play the gender game and attempt to demean my abilities and my intellect.**
- 3) **Made it possible for my daughter to pursue her dreams and achieve more than I have been able to achieve.**
- 4) **Helped inspire me to make my voice heard in the public sphere. Today, as the Member of Parliament, I am able to help others make their voices heard as well.**
- 5) **Establish that a woman’s body is her own. Ensured that I would have choice if I were ever faced with an unwanted pregnancy and that I would not be re-victimized by the justice system if I were raped.**

[source: <http://irenemathysen.ca/?p=470> To read other Canadians contributions

<http://www.progressivebloggers.ca/> ]

## **SPECIAL FEATURE:** **Violence Against Women Article**

As December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 approaches women we are once again reminded to take time and remember those women who have lost their lives to violence. All over Canada on this day memorials will be held, memorials that started in remembrance of the 14 young women at École Polytechnique who died in 1989.

This section is dedicated to those women and women who have been lost on account of violence. It is also dedicated to those of us still living in this world who are ruled by fear on account of the threat of violence. As noted later on in this article while much has changed much remains the same:

**National Business Woman/ March 1974 [American]**  
**p.24-25 [MG31-K7 Volume 22 File #18]**  
**“rape”**

**“Women live according to a rape schedule, whether they realize it or not. Where they live, how they work out their jobs, their transportation, the way they relate to men on the street—everything a woman does conforms to that schedule.”**

**-Michelle Wasserman**

Moreover violence against women in the last couple of months has repeatedly made the international headlines:

- **Safia Amajan** – provincial director of Afghanistan’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs in Kandahar killed September 25, 2006 [Feminist Daily News Wire – [www.feminist.org](http://www.feminist.org)]



<http://michellemalkin.com/archives/005982.htm>



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna\\_Politkovskaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Politkovskaya)

Anna Politkovskaya – Russian journalist, 48, “renowned for her probes of the brutality of Russia’s military campaign in Chechnya as well as the banality of corruption permeating Russian life, from the remote provinces to the bright lights of Moscow....was shot twice...authorities described the attack as contract killing, which they said was carried out by a young man dressed in black.”

“There is no doubt she was killed for her professional activities,” said Igor Yakovenko, general secretary of the Russian Union of Journalist.... [Ottawa Citizen Sunday, October 8, 2006]

The Montreal Massacre, women activists, women professionals, women and children of Dafur, Native women, nameless women... So much violence, so much death – it is easy to want to give up – after all what can one person, or one organization do against the vicious circle of violence?

There is hope, and as professional women we must seek it out, and do all we can to keep the flame alive, to nurture it, and ensure that it grows into a blinding light for all to see - as we work to bring an end to violence, victimhood, and fear. We owe it to those women who have lost their lives in violence to work to end repeated situations.

If we look hard enough, we will see that the light is there:

- At the BPW National Convention in July, Resolution 2006/2 by BPW Montreal called for a commemorative stamp to ensure the memory of the Montreal women of December 6, 1989 lives on. [See resolution next page]
- In Ottawa at the end of September the annual Take back the Night walk saw 450 women challenge the fear women often face on account of increased violence at night. [Ottawa Citizen September 29, 2006]
- October 22-23, 2006 witnessed the First International Conference on Violence against Women in Montreal, Quebec.

As noted by Governor General Michaëlle Jean who opened the Conference:

“Denying more than half of the world’s population the most basic human rights, including the right to live in security, is the most flagrant form of subjugation and one of the worst scandals of our time.”

She said Canada has a vital role to play in stopping violence against women.

“Women have always understood how precious life is,” she said. “Women have always endeavoured to pacify the tensions that grip certain regions of the world, just as they have chosen to build strong communities rather than embrace the ‘every man for himself attitude.”

“To attack the dignity of women is to fly in the face of life itself, to make a mockery of humanity,” Ms. Jean said.

“Let there be no doubt that since becoming Governor General a little over a year ago, I have only strengthened my resolve and have made it a priority to fight violence against women,”  
[*Ottawa Citizen* Monday, October 23, 2006]

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So, what can we as BPW Virtual Club members do to take action? One thing is to support the motion noted before to ensure that historical memory stays intact. We need to ensure that the young victims are not lost to violence, but remembered, thus living on in our collective memory, and keeping our resolve strong to call for an end to violence.

RESOLUTION 2006/2

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

by BPW Montreal

**WHEREAS** BPW Canada has a firm policy addressing violence against women, which has been included in the organization’s Brief to the Canadian Government;

**AND WHEREAS** the Canadian Government has declared December 6, the day when 14 women were murdered at École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989, to be a Day of Mourning;

**AND WHEREAS** many communities across Canada have erected memorials to honour these 14 women and other victims of violence;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that BPW Canada urge the government of Canada to create a national symbol to perpetuate the memory of victims of violence in Canadian history by issuing a commemorative stamp on December 6, 2009, the 20th anniversary of the day when 14 women were murdered at École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989.

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And, we must work to change attitudes. This is no easy task. We must challenge the situations we see around us and refuse to condone the violence, remembering that not speaking out is allowing the cycle to continue.

Ursula Franklin’s recent book, *The Ursula Franklin Reader: Pacifism as a Map*, makes a strong statement in this regard:

*“Peace is the absence of fear.... Consequently peace is not the absence of war—peace is the absence of fear. This again links peace tightly to justice, because it is only in the presence of peace and justice that fear can be absent. Justice in both the temporal and the spiritual sense, is guarantee against the arbitrariness of power that is the source of so much justifiable fear.”*

[“The Indivisibility of Peace” in *The Ursula Franklin Reader: Pacifism as a Map*, Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006 p. 76]

Thus, we can continue to work for peace and justice in hope of a better world. Alternatives to the expected responses have been demonstrated in response to the recent violence, one need only look to the response of the Amish people this fall after the school violence inflicted on their community in Pennsylvania.

Here in Canada we must also remember our Native sisters. A recent report from Amnesty International, “Canada: Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada” from October 2004 calls for our action, noting:

*“Violence against women, and certainly violence against Indigenous women, is rarely understood as a human rights issue. To the extent that governments, media and the general public do consider concerns about violence against women, it is more frequent for it to be described as a criminal concern or a social issue. It is both of those things of course. But it is also very much a human rights issue. Women have the right to be safe and free from violence. When a woman is targeted for violence because of her gender or because of her Indigenous identity, her fundamental rights have been abused. And when she is not offered an adequate level of protection by state authorities because of her gender or because of her Indigenous identity, those rights have been violated.”*  
[“Canada: Stolen Sisters,” page 4]

Women must also learn to have confidence in themselves and their inner strength so that they can say no to personal violence and defend themselves. One pro-active means is to enroll in a women’s self-defence class – for knowledge is power and often the best defence is knowing simple tips to protect oneself. Women’s self-defence classes focus on women in usually a women-only environment in order to ensure that learning can take place in a neutral place amongst other women.

The emphasis is on defence and means to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation, while at the same time providing necessary skills and training should one be caught unawares. Often time simply standing ones ground and being assertive are enough to prevent a situation from escalating.

## Member Profile

### Dr. Shannon MacNeill



Shannon was born and raised in Regina, SK. She attended the University of Regina, receiving a B.Sc. (1988) and Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, receiving a D.C. (1992). Shannon was in private chiropractic practice in Regina for 13 years. She was concurrently in hospital practice for four years performing tertiary assessments on advanced MVA cases. Shannon was chairperson for seven years of the Investigation Committee for the Chiropractors' Association of Saskatchewan. In this capacity, she would investigate complaints made against members and recommend any disciplinary charges.

Shannon was a 10 year member of BPW Regina. She was active in the club, serving seven years on the executive, including president (1998-2000). She chaired the Careers Unlimited program for high school girls for three years, bringing together over 500 students and 80 resource women for this mentoring event. Shannon acted as Facility Chair when BPW Regina hosted the National Convention in 2004 and was on the National Resolution committee (2004-2006). Shannon was the recipient of the YWCA Women of Distinction Award (Health and Wellness) in 2002 and BPW International Young BPW of the Year (3<sup>rd</sup> place) in 2002.

Shannon and her family (husband Russ, sons Reid (8) and Cole (4) and Socks the cat) moved to Vernon, B.C. in September 2005 when Russ took a job transfer. She has re-established a new practice in Vernon with her former classmate. Shannon has also continued with BPW through the new BPW Virtual Club. Shannon is currently chairing Membership and Promotion and is looking forward to the challenges of this new adventure

Member Profile is a new feature that will run in each newsletter. Not only does it help our members to get to know one another, but it allows for a way to virtually meet each other and match a name, email, and face together.

Stay tuned as we get to know each other better!

## Member News

Shannon MacNeill - Membership Chair

BPW Virtual Club was chartered on April 29, 2006. Originally, the club was put together with individual members from across the country who did not have a local club to call home and some new members who joined in the spring. A big job that Vi Andersen, our BPW Virtual president, and myself had to work on this fall is to figure out our membership list and have up to date member dues paid to BPW Canada for the year.

After lots of emailing back and forth, we finally updated our membership list. Currently we have eight paid up members for 2006-2007. Four members who joined in the spring have decided to not renew, and two members have transferred to local clubs. On the positive side, we have five young BPW members, and the members we have are active and enthusiastic.

An important issue in all organizations is retention, so we have to ask why the four members resigned. Each person would have individual reasons, but my feeling on this is that we have a hurdle with communication, as emailing is not the most effective means. The executive are working on this, and we hope to have a website set up with National's assistance in the near future.

Another issue is value for the money spent on fees, particularly when we don't have a website. I can say from my 10 years with BPW Regina, this was also a thorny problem, as currently very little of our fees stay at the local level and most are sent to National and International. For new BPW members, it is important to emphasize the bigger picture of our club. We are a small group, but we have an ability to advocate to the government and others with a larger organization behind us, that being BPW Canada and BPW International.

This fall I put forward two motions involving membership, both which have passed. The first was a request from a member in Calgary, who wanted to join the Virtual club. We have decided to pilot an associate member category, and fees would be paid only to our local club as the national and international fees had already been paid. The virtual members still have to decide on all the rights of this new category, and this will be an evolving situation.

The second motion was a fee increase for 2007-2008. This would mean our dues would increase from \$60 to \$75. Currently, we pay \$35.80 for national dues and \$16.00 for international dues. With only \$60 being collected, the local virtual club would keep \$8.20. At the requested increase to \$75, we would keep \$23.20 at our local virtual level, and allow us some funds to work with to enhance our communication.

## **LEAF Breakfast in Sudbury in October 2007**

-Vi Andersen

It's 7:00 a.m. and several hundred women are gathered in The Great Hall of Laurentian University in Sudbury. It's the annual L.E.A.F. Breakfast. Needless, to say we are dedicated women mostly to gather at that time of the day on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The organizing committee, co-chaired by a BPW Sudbury member and member in this capacity with L.E.A.F., Tina Junkala and Dr. Chris Nash, have a fabulous draw, guest speaker Sally Armstrong, Canadian journalist and well known writer.

Jolted by caffeine and the chatter of voices, we brace ourselves for a powerful message about women in Afganistan. Sally has been writing about these women and filming a documentary with a CBC crew in parts of that country where many would not dare to travel. Her stories about women living under oppression, first of the Taliban, and now the war lords and their own families reveal incidences of human trafficking, annihilation and out right abuse and violence against women.

Yet, amidst the dark side, she focuses also on the universal concerns of mothers as being the same as ours to love, care and strive for their children. She reveals a story of hope in literacy and education. She urges us to continue our own efforts to advocate and lobby for women everywhere. She says it is now more imperative than it has ever been before. It is the only way we have of curtailing the adverse effects of funding cut backs to women's organizations nationally and internationally.

The CBC documentary "Daughters of Afghanistan" may be rented from Blockbusters and you can find out more about Sally Armstrong at [www.breakinggroundforwomen.com](http://www.breakinggroundforwomen.com)

L.E.A.F. is an acronym for Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

If you want to donate to L.E.A.F., you may e-mail [donate@leaf.ca](mailto:donate@leaf.ca) OR call Toll Free: 1-888-824-5323

### **More Information About LEAF!**

Often times acronyms are tossed around especially in relation to women's groups and those not completely familiar are left to try and reason out what they mean. Here's LEAF's Mandate to help you understand what it stands for! (<http://www.leaf.ca/about-mandate.html> )

**LEAF** is a national, non-profit organization committed to using the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to promote equality for women.

**LEAF** has a two-fold mandate: to ensure that the rights of women and girls in Canada, as guaranteed in the Charter are upheld in our courts, human rights commissions and government agencies and to provide public education on the issues of gender equality.

**LEAF** undertakes legal action by intervening at the Canadian appellate courts on significant cases that will establish important principles of equality for women. LEAF's cases are selected by its National Legal Committee. Unfortunately, LEAF does not undertake individual cases at the trial division.

**LEAF** has since its inception in 1985 intervened in over 140 cases and has helped establish landmark legal victories for women on a wide range of issues from violence against women, sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, sex bias in employment standards, spousal support and reproductive freedoms.

## **Great and Small Accomplishments by Canadian Women**

-Vi Andersen

"The unveiling of The Valiants Memorial created by Marlene Hilton-Moore and John McEwen took place on Sunday, November 5, 2006 at Centennial Square in Ottawa. Attending the ceremony was her Excellency Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean Governor General of Canada".\*

Marlene Hilton-Moore and John McEwen are well know Canadian Sculptors / Artists residing in the Barrie area. Vi Andersen recently traveled with Judy Watson depicted in the enclosed photo with John McEwen and one of The Valiants. Judy's editing contribution helped to more clearly translate the original Latin quotation into English.

Whether they are great or small accomplishments, Marlene and Judy, as Canadian women, each made significant contributions to Canadian History recently.

\*Cited from North Bay Arts and Entertainment under Marlene Hilton-Moore using Google Canadian Search  
[For more information on the revealing of The Valiants see: <http://www.valiants.ca/english.html> ]



## News Update

There have been many things since the first newsletter occurring in relation to women's situation around the world and in Canada. Some of the specifics include the following:

### **CRIAW/MATCH 30<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries**

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006 there was a luncheon to celebrate the combined anniversaries of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advance of Women (CRIAW) and MATCH (MATCH is not an acronym but stands for the idea of matching the resources of Canadian women to those in the South.)

The Keynote speaker was Peggy Antrobus. Her talk was entitled: "Contexts for Women's Organising". She focused on what has women have accomplished through the women's movement and what still remains to be done. A few lines from her address generate a strong sense of her ideas:

*"Feminist activism appears to be in retreat in many countries, and women seem intimidated by the claim that males have been 'marginalised' by the attention paid to women, and by advances in women's rights. Funding for women's programmes has been cut, and in some places there is open hostility; and organizing on behalf of women is fraught with political risk."* (5)

*"Finally, let me acknowledge that there are times in our personal lives when we struggle against enormous odds. It can happen in our work as well. This is such a time; and for women, the personal is often political: the forces that threaten to reverse hard-won gains and services that are of fundamental importance to women will also cut resources that enable us to work to protect these rights and services."*

*What can we do? We are in the trenches (as my friend from Brazil is fond of saying). We can hold our ground. But we must keep moving or our muscles will atrophy and we'll soon be unable to move at all.*

*This is where we need the solidarity of our sisters in other countries. Because these are global trends, there are women everywhere engaged in similar struggles.*

*This is what I would do: in the words of one of my favourite poets, the Guyanese Martin Carter –*

*"I walk slowly in the wind  
I walk because  
I cannot crawl or fly".* (9-10)

[For the entire speech see:

[http://www.criaw-icref.ca/indexFrame\\_e.htm](http://www.criaw-icref.ca/indexFrame_e.htm) and her book: *The Global Women's Movement: Origins, Issues and Strategies*. Global Issues. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing Ltd., 2004.

## **Women's Professional Image – Cassie Campbell**

Hockey is a truly Canadian sport. As Canadians many of us take our hockey pretty seriously. Over its recent history the most attention has usually been garnered by the all-male NHL teams, which most know by name.

Women's role in hockey has never received the same amount of coverage, but it really moved into the spotlight after amazing returns by the women's hockey teams at the Olympics. These women became instant heroines for Canada and especially for young women looking for role models in the hockey world. However, like many male-dominated professions the norms are not easily challenged, a point noted by Ken Fidlin's article in the *Toronto Sun* on October 18, 2006 when Cassie Campbell sat in Harry Neale's seat to provide commentary:

"All they did was ask a Canadian hockey hero to sit in Harry Neale's seat beside Bob Cole and, you know, talk a little puck. What's the big deal?"

But four days later, Cassie Campbell's surprise debut as a colour analyst on Hockey Night in Canada's featured game between Calgary and Toronto still has chins wagging....

Campbell's performance has been reviewed from coast-to-coast and back again, in French and in English. She was good. She was bad. She was a victim. She was an opportunist. She was out of her league. She was right in her element. Take your pick...."

What is abundantly clear from the various reactions is that women still have a long way to go before they will truly be considered equal, even in 2006. It was noted that had she been male it would not have been such a big deal, but as a woman "she was going to be under the microscope." **Once again this illustrates the point that as women we must work to change attitudes as well as minds!**

In response Campbell noted "To be honest, the only people whose opinions I worry about are my mom and dad, my family and friends and, of course, my producers. For me, everybody who matters that it was OK."



**CASSIE CAMPBELL**

<http://www.thelavinagency.com/canada/cassiecampbell.html>

## Song of the Month "They" by JEM

*Who made up all the rules? / We follow them like fools,  
Believe them to be true, / Don't care to think them through*

*And I'm sorry, so sorry / I'm sorry it's like this  
I'm sorry, so sorry / I'm sorry we do this*

*And it's ironic too / 'Cause what we tend to do  
Is act on what they say / And then it is that way*

*And I'm sorry, so sorry / I'm sorry it's like this  
I'm sorry, so sorry / I'm sorry we do this*

*Who are they? / Where are they?  
How can they possibly / Know all this?  
Who are they? / Where are they?  
How can they possibly / Know all this?*

*Do you see what I see? / Why do we live like this?  
Is it because it's true / That ignorance is bliss?*

*Who are they? / Where are they?  
How do they / Know all this?  
And I'm sorry, so sorry / I'm sorry it's like this*

*Do you see what I see? / Why do we live like this?  
Is it because it's true / That ignorance is bliss?*

*And who are they? / Where are they? / How can they  
Know all this? / And I'm sorry, so sorry / I'm sorry we do this*

<http://www.azlyrics.com/j/jem.html>



### The Overwhelming Nature of it All

It seems that all the news as of late in relation to women is disheartening. Millions of dollars cut from budgets, increased violence, and negativity. I chose the above song for this month because it really does ask important questions. Who are "they" and why do "they" control our lives? As women we have often been told time and time again what social standards and expectations we are to conform to and also what is possible and what is not, and what women should and shouldn't do. But why do we have to listen to "them".

Members of the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women have challenged such expectations and ideas time and time again. They have refused to be defined by standards other than their own.

Today despite the often bleak atmosphere we meet there is reason to hope and reason to seek a better future. We can look at the landscape before us, the projected future and we can choose to accept or challenge it. If we accept it without question, without action then "what we tend to do/ Is act on what they say/ And then it is that way".

If "they" tell us we are weak, powerless, and too insignificant to make a difference and we accept it – then we are, but if we refuse to conform to such projections then we choose to define and redefine who we are and who we say we are and will be! Are we up to the challenge? I think we are!

### Thoughts in Verse

#### A FEMINIST

#### **I AM NOT A FEMINIST!**

I am strong willed and independent,  
I think for myself and make my own decisions  
I come and go as I please  
I don't take no for an answer, but  
I am NOT a FEMINIST!

I believe in equality  
I will take a stand if looked down upon  
I will fight for my rights  
I believe I have the freedom to be who I choose, but  
I am NOT a FEMINIST!

I am not a man-hater/man-eater  
I don't burn my bras  
I don't go to rallies and demonstrations  
I don't even know any "feminists" because  
I am NOT a FEMINIST!

#### **I AM a FEMINIST! – Contrary to common belief it is not a negative word**

I AM a FEMINIST!  
I come from a family of sisters and brothers united  
United for freedom and equality for all  
I AM a FEMINIST!  
I AM one of many, each unique and special  
All colours and nationalities of the world a part  
Each with a goal and purpose to achieve in her or his own way

I AM a FEMINIST!  
Like it or not the freedoms, privileges & rights we have today  
Exist because of feminist and feminism – Believe or not...  
Many who shout the loudest "I am NOT a FEMINIST!" are  
Feminists!  
In everyway but acknowledged identity – living in denial of what  
history has allowed them

Today we must take pride in feminism, and claim it as it is –  
rightfully ours  
Today we are seeing increasing backward movement...  
Against hard won rights & freedoms  
Today we must look back...  
Today we must celebrate where we've been  
Today we must take stock of the situation at hand  
Today we must look to the future we want to create  
Today we must plan the route to that future  
Today we must stand united and with pride shout: **WE ARE**  
**FEMINISTS!!!**

-Crystal Sissons