



VIUFA Chair for the Status of Women Committee Annual Report
Melissa Stephens, Chair for Status of Women Committee



Photo credit: Rachel Stern

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<https://www.facebook.com/VIUStatusOfWomen/>

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VIUFA Status of Women Committee:

Melissa Stephens (Chair), Kathleen Reed, Sonnet L'Abbé, Meg Ecclestone, and Janis Ledwell-Hunt (please see overview and "special thanks" for clarification of their roles)

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Overview:

I've served as an organizer and promoter of many events, as well as an advocate and consultant for individual Faculty members, VIU committees consisting of faculty, staff, students, and administrators, and Nanaimo community organizations. I've been invited to speak and participated in a range of media platforms (for example: radio interviews, podcast, social media video, telephone interviews, and print journalism)

As Chair for the Status of Women Committee, I've acquired 300+ new followers on Facebook since September (currently 441 people "like" and 445 "follow" the Facebook page).

Many of my collaborations this year were with **Chantelle Spicer, VIUSU Women's Rep and her assistant /VIUSU Campus Life organizer Jessica Sandy**. Seldom did I work with VIUFA members on a formal SW "committee." This was an oversight as I tended to seek the assistance of my colleagues on an individual basis. A goal next year is to establish a formal committee next with a diverse range of members working across campus. I received many encouraging comments from community organizers regarding my collegial commitment to working with VIUSU and the community organizers. I have been told by many that I have done well to promote the role and work of VIUFA Status of Women via social media.

Special thanks:

Special thanks to the Nanaimo Women's Action Committee for welcoming me into the realm of Nanaimo community organizing and social justice initiatives for women. Thank you to the VIUFA committee members listed above who were especially active in the planning and delivery of the January 2018 Women's March. I am grateful for their work in solidarity with me and other organizers of this event. Thank you to VIUSU for their solidarity, labour, and material contributions to co-organized events. Special thanks to VIU International for their very generous donation of \$500 for a VIU International Women's Day catered lunch. Special thanks for FPSE for their support of my work in a range of ways. Special thanks to the VIUFA Executive for supporting me in a range of ways in my first year of this position.

2017-2018 VIUFA Status of Women Budget: \$1000.

The full amount was spent. Money spent served sponsorships for Elders, speakers, events, etc., in addition to supplies ranging from food and drinks to red dresses and materials for visual campaigns. My budget is expected to increase to \$1500 for the 2018/2019 school year.

Events and Meetings

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2017

1. **ROCK VIU Information Booth** for students organized and hosted in association with Haven, Nanaimo Family Life Association, and Zonta. Table included resource information on issues ranging from sexual harassment education to counselling services. **Janis Ledwell- Hunt and Kathleen Reed** assisted with set up and Janis Ledwell-Hunt helped to host the table.
2. **Sisters in Spirit attendee hosted by VIU Shq'aphut**
3. **“Be a Man” by Kismet Theatre Collective: September 30-October 1, 2017.** VIUFA Status of Women provided \$200 sponsorship for the Theatre Technician needed for campus-based theatrical production. This was a fundraiser for Haven Society's Men Choose Respect Program. Actors included some members of the program. I invited the Moosehide Campaign to table the event.
4. **VIUFA Status of Women Meet and Greet Friday, October 13, from 10:15 am-12:00 pm:** hosted and catered by Melissa Stephens/VIUFA Status of Women.

Outcomes: Thirty female attendees across a range of sectors including tech industries, indigenous youth council, students, faculty, staff, and community members of women's organizations. Cost of food from event was approximately \$150 (acquired from grocery stores)

5. **VIUSU Women's Collective Speaker Series, Friday October 13, 2017 with Dr. Aaron Devor,** University of Victoria Chair of Transgender Studies, Founder and Academic Director of Transgender Archives. VIUFA Status of Women co-sponsored this event, hosted by the VIUSU Women's Collective. VIUFA Status of Women sponsored \$100 to help cover Dr. Devor's accommodation fee.
6. **Red Dress Project** with VIUSU Women's Rep Chantelle Spicer: collected red dresses and statistical information about violence against indigenous women and girls. We strategically posted clothes and messages across campus. Part of a nationwide initiative to raise awareness about violence against indigenous women and girls.
7. **16 Days of Activism** collaboration with VIUSU Women's Rep Chantelle Spicer, Deborah Hopper (CUPE), Haven, Nanaimo Family Life Association, and Nanaimo Women's Resources Centre. The Clothesline Project was staged in solidarity with other clotheslines pitched around Nanaimo. Ours was pitched outside of the Main cafeteria

with messages of hope and critique regarding sexualized violence. We did videos with VIU Media rep Rachel Stern and these were circulated on Facebook and Twitter.

8. **Canadian Federation of University Women Luncheon: October 21:** invitee (complimentary ticket). Susan Juby was the guest speaker.
9. **FPSE Status of Women Committee Meeting in Vancouver, B.C. (November 24-25):** I learned that not all Status of Women Chairs are members of their Executives nor do many have course release or compensation for their work. Most women do not have a budget, it seems. As a FPSE committee we concluded that SWC Chairs should be part of their Executives. Reports suggested that workplace sexual harassment is a widespread problem and colleges and universities are undertaking efforts to develop policies and procedures as mandated by the B.C. government. Many representative cited the challenge of coordinating collective agreements with institutional policies and procedures. **I won a draw and was selected to host a Doxa Film Festival film sponsored by FPSE (see Spring events for outcomes).**
10. **National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada: December 6 Memorial of L'Ecole Polytechnique de Montreal murder of 14 women in 1989:** VIUFA Status of Women coordinated the vigil and included students, faculty, staff, and community members as speaker at the event. The event was followed by an activist Stitch and Bitch event organized by VIUSU Women's Collective
11. **Nanaimo Women March On (Women's March) planning meetings:** My role was to organize and facilitate the planning meetings as well as to maintain communications between all subcommittees. I also created a draft of the Nanaimo March 2018 vision statement for the organizing committee to revise and approve. I provided a strategic planning schedule for organizers to help the day run smoothly (e.g., detailing who needs to be where when for set up, traffic flow, participation). VIUFA members Kathleen Reed, Janis Ledwell- Hunt, Meg Ecclestone, and Sonnet L'Abbé participated in this process during Fall term.
12. **KNOW MORE VIU CAMPAIGN (continuous): Sexual Conduct Education and Response Steering Committee and Education Subcommittee meetings:** I am an active critical thinking member of these two committees. I've offered advice regarding promotions, education, as well as sustained critique of video production initiatives. I am now on a subcommittee focused on creating a more inclusive second video called *Know More: Perspectives, Places, Practices* which will feature a range of diverse voices, groups, etc., on campus who can speak to issues of sexualized violence and its prevention in service of creating a safer and more educated campus culture and environment. Committees include faculty, staff, student representatives, and administrators.

13. Attended biweekly VIUFA Executive meetings and updated Executive on events

JANUARY-APRIL 2018

14. **Nanaimo Women March On (January 20)** co-organizers **with Kathleen Reed** (VIUFA/Positive Space Alliance), Chantelle Spicer (Women's Rep for VIUSU Women's Collective), Anne Taylor (Haven), Deborah Hollins (Nanaimo Family Life Association), Lesley Clarke (Nanaimo Women's Resource Centre), and Lauren Semple (Nanaimo Pride). **Additional VIUFA support from Meg Ecclestone, Janis Ledwell-Hunt, Sonnet L'Abbé, Theo Finigan, Eliza Gardiner,** and Marni Stanley. Placard-making was co-organized with VIUSU.

People First Radio and Island Mental Health were huge supporters and designed social media memes for Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness around poverty, mental health, and women's social justice in order to promote the event.

My specific role was to facilitate the planning meetings and maintain communications between all subcommittees. I also created the vision statement for the organizing committee and the strategic planning schedule for the day (who needs to be where when for set up, traffic flow, participation).

Guest Speakers at this event included: Shalema Gantt of the Nanaimo African Heritage Society, Ally Mehl, Director for VIU Student Organization for Social Change (SOSC), and Ashwak Sirri – President of Equal Voice Central Vancouver Island. Generation Q youth will be with us to honour the memory of Makayla Chang, Brooke Whitney, local entertainer, and Justice Chalifoux, Indigenous Activist and Youth Leader for the Streetwise project. Tracy Myers, a spoken word performer from Haven Society will be closing out our post-march program. Along with our incredible lineup of speakers and performers, we had a child-friendly Clothesline Project for "Why I March", Info Booth, and a coffee table at Maffeo-Sutton Park, where we gathered after the march.

Outcomes: We raised over \$300 for Women's Action Committee Nanaimo as a result of marchers donating to a jar available at the free coffee table. We received positive feedback for the intersectional, pro-LGBTQ, intergenerational approach we took to representation and participation. Facebook suggests that 423 people attended this event, although I think it was less. March attendance was in the hundreds, but the numbers decreased over the speaker series section at Maffeo Sutton Park (likely do to the weather).

Event Sponsors: VIUFA (\$200 park insurance fee); VIU (\$200 Elder Honorarium); People First Radio (donation of sound engineer and sound system); Starbucks (free coffee and free cookies for kids)

15. International Women's Day Luncheon (March 8): hosted by VIUFA Status of Women Chair, Melissa Stephens and co-organized with VIUSU.

Keynote guest: Shelia Malcolmson (Nanaimo/Ladysmith MP)

Speakers/Special Guests/Performers: Elder Aunty Geraldine Manson, Indigenous activist Rose Henry, Darrell Harvey (VIU International), Shaofang Li (Visiting Scholar from China to the VIU English Department), Dema Maksod (Syrian artist and recent immigrant), female VIU students recently celebrated for their selection as QE Scholars to conduct overseas research (Lainy Nowak, Dally Haines, Kristina Vaudry, Jamie Humphrey, Avryl Brophy, and Celina Glabus), incoming VIUSU Women's rep Anouk Borris, Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo/Ladysmith NDP MP and Status of Women advocate), Lesley Clarke (Nanaimo Women's Centre), and Shruti Ramani (VIU Music student from India).

There were over 60 people in attendance. The event include a sponsored lunch, guest speakers, singing, musical performances, visual art displays, tabling with women's social justice information.

Sponsors: VIU International (\$500 catering); VIUSU (\$150) for catering, signage, decorations); **VIUFA Status of Women (Elder Honorarium);** Melissa Stephens (thank you cards and flowers for guest speakers honoured)

16. International Women's Day Short Film Fest (March 8) co-organized with Gillian Anderson (Sociology). Attendance: 5 people

17. FPSE Status of Women Committee Meeting (March 2-3, 2018, Vancouver, B.C.) See item 9 for details, as we tended to review and continue to discuss these issues.

18. Our People Will Be Healed, Our People Will Be Heard: A VIU Cowichan Campus Film Fundraiser for grassroots indigenous women's organization, Red Willow Womyn Family Society. Co-organized with Gayle Hurmuses (key organizer of Cowichan Valley International Women's Day). We watched several short films produced by B.C. indigenous students in grades ranging from 6 to 12 and then enjoyed a feature length film called Our People Will Be Healed (2017) by indigenous filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin. Beverages and popcorn served. Approx. 30 people in attendance.

Speakers: Elder Florence James, Red Willow Womyn co-founder Patricia Dawn, incoming Chair for the VIUFA Decolonization, Reconciliation and Indigenization Committee Lexis Linkater, Educator MaryDawn McWatt.

Sponsors: VIUFA Status of Women Committee (Elder Honorarium), FPSE Status of Women Committee (sponsorship for the Doxa Film Festival film)

Outcomes: \$270 was raised by donation for Red Willow Womyn Family Society

Special thanks to VIUFA member Sally Carpentier for assisting me with organizing speakers for this event.

19. Caring for Self & Others: A Yoga Fundraiser for Faculty, Students, & Staff.

April 10, 2:30 pm-4 pm.

Sponsor: VIUFA Chair for Status of Women Committee (covering cost for Instructor plus refreshments). Yoga Instructor: Meg Watkins (Om Studio). Meg Watkins generously donated her fee to Nanaimo Women's Action Committee Social Justice initiatives. 6 attended.

MAY-JULY 2018

20. FPSE Annual General Meeting, Whistler, B.C., May 14-17, 2018. Report TBA

21. UC Berkeley Labor Center 37th Annual Western Regional Summer Institute on Union Women (SIUW). July 10-14, 2018 at Sonoma State University. Funded by FPSE Status of Women Committee. Report TBA

Internal and External Committee Memberships

- Women's Action Committee (external, city-wide committee of women from a range of organizations such as Haven, Nanaimo Family Life Association, Nanaimo Women's Resources Society, Zonta, Canadian Federation of University Women)
- Sexual Conduct Education and Response Steering Committee and Education Subcommittee meetings (internal VIU committees consisting of administrators, staff, students, and faculty)
- Sexual Harassment Committee (VIUFA and Human Resources collaboration) to review, revise, and hopefully harmonize the Collective Agreement and VIU Policies and Procedures

VIUFA STATUS OF WOMEN PRESS (A Selection)

- People First Radio and Vancouver Island Mental Health Society, "Nanaimo Community Groups Prep for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" (November 20, 2017). Podcast: http://www.vancouverislandmentalhealthsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/776_16-days-activism_anne-taylor_melissa-stephens_deborah-hollins_nov-20_2017_40.mp3
- Vancouver Island News & Events, "What Can We Do to Take Action Against Gender-Based Violence?" (December 1, 2017). 16 Days of Activism Video, Vancouver Island News & Events. <https://www.facebook.com/VIUnews/videos/1969629973312244/>
- Tamara Cunningham, (January 17, 2018), "Nanaimo Marches for Women's Rights," *Nanaimo Bulletin*. <https://www.nanaimobulletin.com/news/nanaimo-marches-for-womens-rights/>

- Rebecca Chan, (January 21, 2018). “Marching, once again: The 2018 Nanaimo Women’s March,” *News Nanaimo*. <http://newsnanaimo.ca/analysis/marching-once-again-the-2018-nanaimo-womens-march/084355>
- CHLY Call in Radio Show, *A Sense of Justice* (2 hours), with "Empowerment--How To Outshine the Barriers and Biases Facing Women" with Radio Host Rae Kornberger. I was an invited guest on panel with Nanaimo City Council rep. Diane Brennan and with Lauren Semple. Organized, in part, by concerned citizen Wanda Thompson and Melissa Stephens. Podcast link: https://www.mixcloud.com/A_Sense_of_Justice/empowerment-how-to-outshine-the-barriers-and-biases-facing-women/

VIUFA Statements: Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

In response to the November 2017 *Global and Mail* article entitled “Former administrator leads sexual harassment complaint against B.C. university,” I wrote a VIUFA Status of Women Statement Concerning Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and published it on the VIUFA Status of Women Page the day after the news publication. It was subsequently posted on the VIUFA webpage: <http://www.viufa.ca/viufa-statement-concerning-sexual-harassment-workplace/>

A follow up Position statement of VIUFA Executive re sexual harassment on campus was published to the VIUFA webpage on December 19, 2018. I supported this statement as written by the Executive: <http://www.viufa.ca/position-statement-re-sexual-harassment-campus/>

I am working with Kathleen Reed and other VIUFA Executives on ways to continue to support members who seek assistance in relation to a Human Rights Tribunal process which is underway as a result of specific campus-based experiences.