

**VIUFA STATUS OF WOMEN REPORT: VIUFA General Meeting**

**December 12, 2018**

**Submitted by Melissa Stephens, Chair for the VIUFA Status of Women Committee**

**The events, reported below, could not have occurred without the support of numerous people. Extra special thanks to:**

- the VIUFA Executive and VIUFA members Joy Gugeler, Imogene Lim, and Lexis Linklater for their contributions of time, support, and/or funding related to 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based violence;
- the Faculty of International Education and to the Sexual Conduct Education and Response Steering Committee (SCERSC) for funding support for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based violence;
- the VIU Student Union, especially Chantelle Spicer, Anouk Borris, and Jessica Sandy, for their commitment and collaboration on several events including 16 Days of Activism;
- Deborah Hopper, CUPE Local 1858, for her collaboration on 16 Days of Activism;
- community organizations, especially Haven, Zonta, Nanaimo Women's Resource Centre, and People First Radio, for their commitment to education and advocacy, and for their spirit of collaboration;
- MP Sheila Malcolmson and Lauren Semple, Sheila's constituency assistant, for their support and contributions during 16 Days of Activism and in connection with the upcoming Nanaimo Women March On.

**EVENT REPORTS**

**Budget note: the majority of funding spent this term went to 16 Days of Activism events. Approx. \$750 of the \$1500 annual SWC budget has now been spent.**

**September**

**1. Status of Women Drop in/Meet and Greet: Friday, September 21**

This lunch hour event was hosted by me to encourage faculty to network and share ideas about relevant events, partnerships, and sponsorships for the year. Coffee and snacks were served. Only a few people attended this event, although I received positive feedback from interested colleagues via email. I suspect that attendance was low, in part, because the event was on a Friday.

**2. SCERSC Team Meeting: Friday, September 28**

I attended this event hosted by Brian Tinlin, current Director of Student Services. It functioned to introduce new team members to each other and to address new directions for the team during a transitional period. The team decided that a Working Group and a Policy group should be formed with distinct missions: the former will focus on specific

actions to educate around sexual conduct on campus and the latter will focus on revisions to policies and procedures.

### **October**

#### **3. Sisters in Spirit and the Red Dress Project: Wednesday, October 3**

I helped to promote and then attended the annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil at Shq'apthut and represented VIUFA and VIUFA Status of Women. This event was in honour of missing and murdered indigenous women. In solidarity with the vigil and ongoing movements to educate the public about racialized, colonialist, and gender-based violence experienced by indigenous women and girls, the VIUFA Status of Women committee also collaborated with the VIU Student Union and their Women's representative, Anouk Borris, to participate in the Red Dress project during that week. Red dresses were hung in the quad area (near the main cafeteria and library) and in select spots around campus to provoke discussion about these issues. Each dress carried a written message, a statistic, or a relevant piece of information about the ongoing history of this violence. The Red Dress Project was originally conceptualized by Metis artist Jaime Black.

#### **4. Canadian Federation of University Women (Nanaimo) Luncheon: Saturday, October 20**

In support of the CFUW, I purchased tickets on behalf of 13 female faculty (and was reimbursed by them) to secure two tables at this event. Female professionals representing a range of industries were present at this event and VIUFA was officially acknowledged, as was the VIUSU table, in opening remarks. My role as Status of Women Chair was also recognized. VIU's Louise Mandell was the keynote speaker. She discussed law and its relation to sexual harassment cases and Canadian indigenous issues. We enjoyed a collegial and thought-provoking afternoon together.

#### **5. FPSE Status of Women Committee Meeting (Vancouver): October 26 & 27, 2018**

I represented VIUFA Local 8 at this two-day meeting in Vancouver. We discussed the AGM (which I attended) in May, President's Council, and issues surrounding whether or not FPSE should continue to fund the Don't Be a Bystander Campaign run by EVA and the B.C. Lions. We discussed gender equity issues at various locals, provided local reports, and contributed insight into topics for upcoming workshops. I also provided feedback on the experience of having a Doxa film sponsorship last year, via FPSE.

### **November/December**

#### **6. Indigenous Women's Cultural Production and Political Activism in Taiwan: The Cases of Four Indigenous Women with Dr. Skaya Siku and Dr. Yi-Chun Tricia Lin: November 2.**

This event included a lecture at Shq'apthut followed by a luncheon. It was organized by Imogene Lim, Chair for the Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee. I provided support by sponsoring one of the honorariums for the guest speakers (\$250 from the VIUFA Status of Women funds). I helped to advertise and promote the events and attended both the lecture and luncheon, where I met with people and discussed relevant issues.

**7. Sheila Malcolmson's Campaign Kick-off for Funding Women's Organizations: November 16.**

Upon invitation, I attended a small gathering hosted by Sheila Malcolmson for Nanaimo women demonstrating leadership in various women's organizations. She asked for us to report on struggles faced by women in our various sectors and introduced her petition to the Liberal federal government to urge sustained funding to women's services and organizations.

**8. 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign: November 25-December 10**

I formed the 16 Days of Activism Working Group in collaboration with the VIUFA SWC, VIUSU, and CUPE members to organize and host many events to support this campaign throughout the month of November and into December. The United Nations, the Canadian government, Nanaimo City Council, and many community and campus organizations support this campaign to educate, engage, and empower.

I curated a feminist film series throughout November and wrote letters to SCERSC, the Faculty of International Education, and VIUFA to obtain partial funding for major events. As a group, we collaborated on major events such as the **"Only Yes Means Yes" (OYMY) workshop** and the **#Why I Didn't Report panel (November 27)**

The OYMY workshop was run by a representative of West Coast LEAF and it focused on consent and sexual misconduct. It was open to all VIU students, staff, and faculty. The panel was open to the public and was attended by several students and Nanaimo community members. There was an estimated 25-30 people in attendance. Panelists included Jamie Lee Hamilton, an established activist for sex workers and indigenous communities whose work is based in Vancouver, a representative from West Coast LEAF, and a representative from Nanaimo's Haven Society. We invited many Nanaimo organizations in addition to campus communities. The discussion passionately engaged in ongoing discussions around disclosure, reporting, macro and micro-aggressions. We had a multicultural and international audience and so were able to also engage with issues of policing and reporting as it may impact non-citizens.

Another major event included **RISE UP: An evening of Art, Activism, and Education**. Special thanks to Joy Gugeler whose vision and leadership made this event a huge success. Twelve performers—ranging from faculty, students, to community members—offered creative responses to the 16 Days of Activism campaign based on their individual talents and interests. The event took place in the campus art gallery and refreshments and snacks were served. Zonta and the VIUSU had tables of information at the event and we promoted the upcoming Nanaimo Women March On event scheduled for January 19. The event was well-attended by campus and community members.

Other events during this period included a Men's Wellness Circle (run by counsellor Albert Seinen), a Sexual Health Workshop, hosted by VIUSU and run by a VIU Nurse practitioner, the Dec. 6 Vigil for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and a Stitch and Bitch focused on embroidery and activism.

The group effort involved several planning meetings and we worked directly with Haven Society and People First Radio to share memes on social media to educate audiences about various forms of gender-based violence. Memes were themed in relation to UN-designated dates and addressed topics ranging from anti-indigenous racism, LGBTQ+ experience, violence against elders, to challenges faced by people with disabilities.

**9. Secrets and Other Things We Don't Talk About: December 14-15, 8 pm, at Malaspina Theatre.**

VIUFA Status of Women is proud to partner with Haven Society and to sponsor funds (\$200) towards the non-profit Kismet Theatre Collective who is presenting a play run by teens on topics of mental health, bullying, and learning disabilities.

**Ongoing**

- Representing VIUFA and VIUFA Status of Women Committee, I am currently on the hiring committee for the new Associate Vice President of Student Affairs. This activity has required numerous full and half days of service. We have shortlisted candidates and will be conducting in-person interviews shortly. Deliberation will follow.
- VIUFA Status of Women and VIUSU are working with a number of Nanaimo Community organizations to host the **third annual Nanaimo Women's March—Nanaimo Women March On—which will take place on Saturday January 19**. We can confirm that the march will begin at Maffeo Sutton Park and it will end at the Nanaimo Entertainment Centre. At this indoor venue, we will be better equipped than last year to accommodate people with various needs. Stay tuned for further details.

**Closing remarks/highlights**

Since I have been Status of Women Chair, I have acquired over 300 additional followers on the VIUFA Status of Women Facebook page and I have taken part in directly organizing two of the three Nanaimo Women's marches (in addition to organizing other events reported here and last year). Over the Spring/Summer of 2018, I attended the FPSE Annual General Meeting and a one-week Summer Institute for Union women, where I acquired skills, knowledge, and training that will prepare me for future movement-building.

I believe that one of my significant contributions to the SWC Chair role has been to forge strong connections with the VIU Student union and with some key community organizers in Nanaimo. Working with VIUSU, I believe, helps us to focus on union movement-building and it builds trust and collaboration between students and faculty. Solidarities forged among the campus unions, generally, better positions us to make persuasive calls for action to administrators so that we can cultivate the campus culture that we desire and deserve.

I will be taking maternity leave on January 21, 2019, so I will be leaving this position after 1.5 years of service. The single course release, regularly assigned to the SWC Chair, was not used during this Fall term of my service; therefore, it will be transferred to Joy Gugeler, who has kindly accepted our nomination to serve as the VIUFA Status of Women Committee Chair, from January-April 2019.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve. I hope to return to VIUFA union organizing in the near future when I return from maternity leave.

In solidarity,

Melissa Stephens

