



VIUFA Status of Women Committee Report, 2020-2021
Report by Melissa Stephens, VIUFA SWC Chair, April 22, 2021

Chair: Melissa Stephens

Committee Members: Joy Gugeler and Kathleen Bortolin

VIUFA Status of Women Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/VIUStatusOfWomen>

Zoom In: Women Making Impacts (link to interviews): <http://www.viufa.ca/zoom-in-women-making-impacts/>

Special thanks: to Laura Buechler for help with communications via listservs and the VIUFA website; to Imogene Lim (HRISC Chair) for mentorship; to the HRISC committee for collaboration and funding support; to Sylvie Lafrenière and Gillian Anderson for guidance around Panel and Mingle events; to Robin Boxwell for technical expertise and assistance with the 16 Days of Activism Light campaign; to the Canadian Federation of University Women, Nanaimo Chapter, for 16 Days event collaboration; to the VIUFA Executive, Faculty, community organizations, and activists who participated in and supported campaigns.

Report

In 2020-2021, the VIUFA SWC adjusted to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions by using Facebook, Zoom, YouTube, and the VIUFA email listserv to produce events and communicate activities. Three committee members met by Zoom twice during the year, but we communicated primarily via email.

This year, VIUFA Status of Women focused on the following **three major projects:**

1. Zoom In: Women Making Impacts on Vancouver Island

Founded and launched by Melissa Stephens in Fall 2020, this is a video interview series featuring women from all paths of life on Vancouver Island. The series is intended to amplify women's voices, ideas, passions, projects, labours, and visions, especially as they serve the interest of building a more just and equitable society. *So far*, five hour-length episodes have been created:

Ep. 1: Stretching Our Imagination with Joy Gugeler (November 2020)

Ep. 2: Hope is the Risk that Must be Run: Silent No More with Dr. Imogene Lim (December 2020)

Ep. 3: We're All Made of Particles: Song, Blackness, & Community with Sonnet L'Abbé (January 2021)

Ep. 4: Educating Ourselves, Educating Our Kids: Sex Positivity, Safety, and Research with Kerri Isham (February 2021)

Ep. 5: Homes and Homelessness: Women's Struggles, Resilience, and Action (March 2021) (Special Edition panel for International Women's Day)

*This special episode consisted of a panel of women who shared diverse insights and expertise about women's resilience and their intersectional experiences of homelessness. The event was attended by citizens, politicians (including Paul Manly, MP), faculty, unions organizers, and activists. Special thanks to Sylvie Lafrenière and Kathleen Bortolin for assistance with guest speaker recruitment.

Moderators: Melissa Stephens (VIUFA SWC Chair) and Hannah Crawford (she/her), MSW Candidate and Research Assistant, Wilfrid Laurier University; Case Aid, Kw'umut Lelum Child and Family Services.

Ep. 5 Panel Speakers:

Dr. Imogene Lim, VIUFA Chair for International Human Rights & Solidarity Committee and Professor in Anthropology and in Global Studies

Aimee Chalifoux, Outreach Support Coordinator, Society for Equity, Inclusion, & Advocacy and Indigenous Literacy Coordinator at Literacy Central

Hawa Y. Mire, Principal Consultant, HYMIRE Consulting

Jennifer Fowler, Executive Director, Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society

Michèle Biss, Project Manager of the National Right to Housing Network

Ronell Bosman, Samaritan Program Director for Samaritan Women's Housing, Island Crisis Care Society

Stacy Middlemiss, Registered Psychiatric Nurse & Duncan City Councillor

**2. 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence
Orange Light and YouTube Campaign**

VIUFA SWC collaborated with the Canadian Federation of University Women, Nanaimo chapter, to create an orange light display, and signage, in honour of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (Nov. 25-Dec. 10). Lights and signage were displayed in downtown Nanaimo and at the Art Gallery at the VIU Nanaimo Campus. Special thanks to Robin Boxwell for technical assistance. We also launched a video campaign of twenty-one 1-2 minute videos created by people in Nanaimo who spoke to gender-based violence. Videos were released each day of the campaign. Feedback was very positive:

MP Paul Manly publicly credited VIUFA Status of Women for helping to lead this campaign locally (Facebook), and I received personal messages from community members who felt gratitude for the momentum the campaign created, even while we were never able to gather in person. To review the videos again, see here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bD7Ewq8Q44&list=PLIkoTTWTmIPWZ3Jp7X7AxMFWD3xTTqtKj>

3. VIUFA SWC Monthly Mingles

Six events were held as informal Zoom gatherings to discuss the following topics.

October: How is Covid-19 Impacting your Work/Life Balance?

November: Mentorship Makeovers: Building Collegial Support Here & Now

December: Creative Practices that Inspire Us Beyond Our Professions

February: Resilience

March: The Burden of Care: Exploring the Gendered Impact(s) of COVID-19 on Mothers' Caring Labour with Gillian Anderson and Sylvie Lafrenière"

April: A Discussion of Sara Ahmed's lecture "Complaint, Diversity, and Other Hostile Environments"

FPSE Status of Women Meetings: Highlights from Fall and Spring Meetings.

Note: I attended both FPSE SWC meetings. The committee met once per term, via Zoom, for approximately 4 hours each time. Further communications and decision-making took place via email throughout the year.

- Meetings have focused significantly on the impacts of the Pandemic on women and members identified a need to account for and report on those impacts. It is my understanding that FPSE SWC has played a role in articulating a need for formal documentation. (note: FPSE circulated a Survey of Covid-19 Work Experiences towards the end of Spring 2021 term).
- Meetings have also focused on the need to promote equity within FPSE and to diversify FPSE leadership.
- A subcommittee of FPSE's SWC has been launched to update and thus revise its committee name and terms of reference with the interest of including diverse gender/sex equity-seeking groups into its priorities. The committee expressed concern that the current language of the Status of Women Committee suggests a prioritization of only cisgender female experiences and concerns. The committee indicated a potential need to provide opportunities to educate FPSE SWC members around current best practices for supporting equity-seeking groups. Not all members shared a common understanding of this topic.
- Reps continue to express concern about having no funding or course release for their SWC position. They also do not hold positions on the Executive. I was told, anecdotally, by 2 members that they achieved gains in these areas and pursued support in response to the fact that VIUFA does provide funding and course release for equity-seeking Executive positions.

I've been involved in additional "behind-the-scenes" work that has been ongoing and in response to inquiries around collaboration, and requests for feedback, support, or promotion on projects relevant to the Status of Women. This work has been ongoing and is related to projects or projects are not yet complete or ready for public reporting.