



VIUFA STATUS OF WOMEN COMMITTEE REPORT, 2021-2022

Report by Melissa Stephens

Email: Melissa.Stephens@viu.ca

Chairperson:

Melissa Stephens (English)

Committee Members:

Naomi Bailey (Acting Manager of Indigenous Protocol)

Joy Gugeler (Media Studies and Creative Writing and Journalism)

Katharine Rollwagen (History)

Vicki Nygaard (Studies in Women and Gender)

Extra Special thanks: to Elder Geraldine Manson and Elder Stella Johnson for opening many of our events this year and for offering wisdom, blessings, and reflection; to Robin Boxwell, Eliza Gardiner, and Theatre students, at Malaspina Theatre, for supporting numerous events hosted by VIUFA's Status of Women Committee; to VIUFA Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenization Committee for generous funding of Trans Day of Visibility; to the on-campus and community-based stakeholders with whom we've collaborated and learned from all year.

Committee Highlights: the VIUFA SWC continued to honour key events focused on the status of women and gender equity, such as 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence and International Women's Day, and the committee also initiated new engagements by co-hosting such as the Women's Memorial March with Shq-aphut, focusing on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and Trans Day of Visibility with Positive Space Alliance.

The Committee successfully advocated for the emergency donation funding of Risebridge's temporary Warming Centre, in December 2021, collecting \$500 financial support from VIUFA's equity committees and from the Executive.

As Committee Chair, I personally worked with **VIU'S STEP committee** (formally SCERSC) to facilitate its change in name and mandate, as it transitioned from policy and procedure formation to a focus on education and training about sexualized violence prevention. I also participated directly in revising FPSE's Status of Women Committee name and Terms of Reference when I attended two official day-long, WGEC meetings, and a few informal ones throughout the year. This committee is now known as **FPSE's Women and Gender Equity Committee (WGEC)** and new Terms of Reference are being finalized to advocate for more intersectional and gender-diverse approaches to gender equity, inclusive of members of 2LGBTQI+ communities. The name has officially changed, but the revised Terms of References have not yet been published. Stay tuned: <https://fpse.ca/committees/WGEC>

Stakeholder Outreach Engagements:

The Committee worked with gender-equity stakeholders at the VIU Nanaimo campus, on events and actions, including, but not limited to:

- Positive Space Alliance
- VIU Student Union
- STEP (Sexualized Violence: Training, Education and Prevention)
- VIU Thrive
- Shq'aphut
- Studies in Women and Gender Department (Students and Chair)
- Malaspina Theatre (Students and Faculty)
- VIUFA (specifically Decolonization, Reconciliation & Indigenization Committee and Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee).

The Committee worked with gender equity stakeholder organizations within Nanaimo, on events and actions, including, but not limited to:

- Nanaimo Family Life Association
- Risebridge
- Haven Society
- Nanaimo Pride Society
- Island Crisis Care Society
- Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
- Literacy Central Vancouver Island
- PowerUP Education (Kerri Isham)
- Canadian Federation of University Women
- Lisa Marie Barron, Nanaimo-Ladysmith MP
- Post-secondary Initiatives, Moosehide Campaign

Major Events hosted, co-hosted, or participated in:

1. **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence: Nov. 25, 2021 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to Dec. 10, 2021 (Human Rights Day).** The Committee initiated and/or participated in several actions and events. Please see highlights below.

- a) **YouTube Video Campaign:** We ran our second annual video campaign in support of 16 Days of Activism. **Our video campaign aimed to raise awareness and to motivate action and accountability all year round.** This year, we extended special invitations to vital organizations and educators to contribute informational videos about issues ranging from gaslighting, to pornography's impact on children, to risk reduction strategies for BIPOC communities. We also made public calls to contribute,

encouraging diverse delivery. We collected 25 videos this year (approx. total run time: 50 mins). See campaign here: <http://www.viufa.ca/16-days-of-activism-video-campaign/>

- b) **Day for Elimination of Gender-based Violence : A Time to Stand in Unity. Nov. 25, 2021.** As VIUFA SWC Chair, I spoke about the work of VIUFA, VIUSU, and VIU to eliminate gender-based violence at this event hosted by Nanaimo Family Life Association.
- c) **“Orange the World”:** In collaboration with the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Nanaimo, VIUFA’s Status of Women Committee created two orange light displays for the period of Nov.25-Dec.10. One is located at the Bastion on Front Street in downtown Nanaimo, and other is located in the Quad area of VIU’s Nanaimo campus, near the Cafeteria and Malaspina’s Theatre. Banners, located at both locations, declare: UNITE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. As Chair for VIUFA’s SWC, I spoke at CFUW’s public event.
- d) **“Where is Lisa Marie Young?”: An Interview with Laura Palmer Dec. 9, 2021. Public Zoom Event.**
- e) **“Sex Trafficking: A Discussion with Kerri Isham (PowerUP Education)”:** Dec. 10, 2021. Public Zoom Workshop.
- f) **National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women: Dec. 6, 2021.** The VIUFA Status of Women Committee hosted an event in recognition of **The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women**, as part of our ongoing work to support 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence. We were honoured to have Elder Geraldine Manson and Elder Stella Johnson offer opening messages and prayers. We followed with reflections and calls to action from guest speakers including Lisa Kremer and Tod Ralph, two VIU students who spoke to personal topics of survival, resilience, and action; Aimee Chalifoux, from Literacy Central Nanaimo, who read her moving poem; Esther Charlie, Program Coordinator for Nanaimo Family Life’s Indigenous-informed Sexual Assault Program, who offered personal and professional insights; and Jovanne Johnson, former VIU student and co-founder of Risebridge, who spoke to the importance of services for BIPOC communities and offered a very moving creative reflection focused on struggle and strength. Attendees were then invited to write phrases, names, or words related to the event on wooden ornaments and hang them on a seasonal tree. We moved to Jardin Quatorze for poetry offered by Joy Gugeler, and to leave orange roses (in honour of Oranging the World and Every Child Matters, and in memory of the 14 university women who were murdered at Ecole Polytechnique on Dec. 6, 1989). Rachel Stern took photos and posted them at the VIU Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/viuniversity>

2. **Women’s Memorial March: February 14, 2022.**

We were grateful to Naomi Bailey, Acting Manager of Indigenous Protocol at VIU and a member of VIUFA’s Status of Women Committee, for her leadership to guide this event. We hosted a campus-based Memorial March, and we followed this action with speakers. We also thank Shq’apthut and Community Cousins for welcoming us to gather, and to VIUSU and other student organizers, along with speakers who attended. We are honoured that Carol Frank, Aunt of Lisa Marie Young, and Seth Recalma, First Nations Engagement Coordinator for the Moose Hide Campaign, offered us some reflection.

3. **International Women’s Day: March 8, 2022**

Event included several diverse student speakers, faculty, and MP Lisa Marie Barron, speaking to the theme of “Sheroes: Past, Present Future.” Speakers: Susan Garcia; Zeel Desai; Melika Nazer; Katharine Rollwagen; and Lisa Marie Barron (NDP), the current MP for Nanaimo-Ladysmith.

4. **Trans Day of Visibility: March 31, 2022**

Event included speakers, activities, and information booths. It was a day of reflection, advocacy, and celebration. **Speakers included:** Ajay Booth (Nanaimo Pride Society, President); Irlanda Gonzalez-Price (VIU, Associate Vice-President of Student Affairs); Qui Sepulveda (Literacy Central Vancouver Island, Youth Coordinator); Eli Bean (VIU Studies in Women and Gender, Student); Jack Bruckman (Nanaimo Pride Society, Treasurer); Kerri Isham (PowerUp Education); Casey Brisson (Gender Journeys Program, Nanaimo Family Life Association). **Activities and Info booths included:** Risebridge; Literacy Central Vancouver Island; Gender Journeys Program; Nanaimo Family Life Association; Nanaimo Pride Society; PowerUp Education; Positive Space Alliance; SWAG; ROAR (Reaching Out Assisting Refugees). **Livestream recording of event:** <https://fb.watch/cyBwbh-2QJ/>

VIUFA SWC 2021-2022 Recommendations to the Future Committee:

- The 2021-2022 Committee supports a change of name and Terms of Reference for the Local 8, VIUFA’s Status of Women Committee to mirror FPSE’s changes, so that intersectional and gender-diverse approaches to gender equity are assumed and so that 2LGBTQI+ faculty are formally included and recognized in committee and union advocacy. We hope that the committee next year will formalize such changes. FPSE’s committee is now named the Women and Gender Equity Committee. The name has officially changed, but the revised Terms of References have not yet been published. Stay tuned: <https://fpse.ca/committees/WGEC>
- The Committee hopes that future iterations of the Committee will continue to expand its itinerary of events to support racialized and 2LGBTQI+ faculty. For instance: support

Trans Day of Visibility and Women’s Memorial March, annually. Include/collaborate with relevant advocacy groups in planning, hosting, and funding.

- Continue, if possible, plans for a podcast: the Committee is in its early stages of launching a podcast, the F-Word, with Katharine Rollwagen and Joy Gugeler assuming leadership on this project. We hope it might be carried forth by committee members next year.
- Solicit the VIUFA Executive to purchase a VIUFA community tent that can be used for outdoor events in event of rain: we needed to request tents from other groups throughout the year, and this is a good investment given our climate and given unpredictable health and safety measures. It also provides advertising for the Executive and can be used by all Faculty.

A Personal, parting note from 2021-2022 VIUFA’s SWC CHAIR:

I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve as VIUFA’s Status of Women Chair for 3-4 years now (I’d need to double check years of service!).

This position enabled me to learn from and collaborate with many stakeholders and organizations who are committed to vital gender equity work. I am heartened by the tireless efforts of so many—the voluntary or paid, the expert or creative work—faculty, students, and community members.

I feel honoured to have been a key organizer in previous Nanaimo Women March On events for IWD over the years, and to have launched two 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence video campaigns. We can come together meaningfully through social media if we do it conscientiously!

I am especially grateful to the VIUFA Committee members this year—to Naomi, Joy, Vicki, and Katharine—for their ideas, expertise, energy, contacts, and commitment. This is the largest committee I’ve worked with as VIUFA SWC Chair.

I am excited about the future work of this committee and hope it continues to support anti-racist, gender-diverse, queer-friendly approaches to gender equity. As Black lesbian, anti-racist feminist Audre Lorde famously stated: **“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”**

I look forward to supporting the new Chair and Committee from the sidelines while I am on parental leave next year, and hope to rejoin advocacy work in new ways thereafter.

In solidarity,
Melissa Stephens