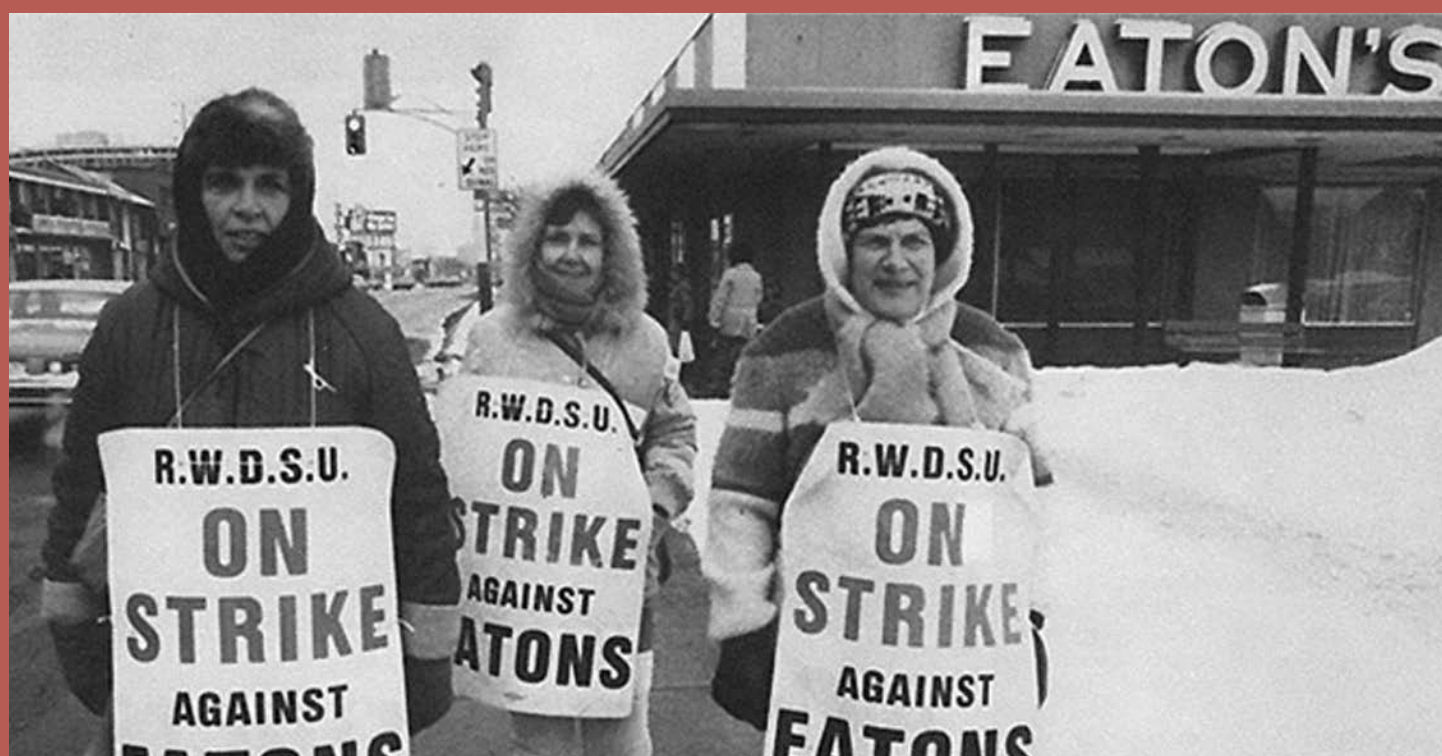


Canadian Women and Political Activism in the 20th and 21st Centuries



Eaton's Strike, 1985. Rise Up Digital Archives.

Acknowledgments

Authors of the lesson plan: Janet Lee and Rose Fine-Meyer

Reviewed by: Lorna McLean, Sharon Cook, Rose Fine-Meyer, Marie-Hélène Brunet, Janet Lee, Tifanie Valade, Béatrice de Montigny, Alexanne Levesque, and anonymous reviewers.

As part of this research project, we are also grateful to the many expert reviewers that provided constructive feedback

© 2025 Framing Our Past 2.0
All rights reserved.

We acknowledge the generous support of Ontario Women's History Network, Canada's History, Thinking Historically – for Canada's Future Research project, University of Ottawa Faculty of Education and SSHRC – CRSH.

We also want to thank McGill-Queen's support in granting the rights to use content from the Framing Our Past (2001) original book.

Typesetting and cover design: Dany Lagueux

Image de couverture : Eaton's Strike, 1985. Rise Up Digital Archives.
<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/eatonsstrike.png>



Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Canada

Introduction

Despite facing numerous barriers to political participation, Canadian women have been involved in a variety of forms of political activism including grassroots organizing, protesting, and striking.

In this lesson, students will examine how women in the 20th and early 21st centuries played an integral part in advocating for societal change. From anti-war advocacy and consumer and worker rights to equity demands and Indigenous and Black activism, a close examination of primary and

secondary sources offers students the opportunity to identify the historical context of women's struggles and evaluate the strategies used by different women's political organizations.

Grade and Strand:

Canadian History since World War I, Grade 10 (CHC2D), Strands A, C, D

Canada: History, Identity, and Culture, Grade 12 (CHI4U), Strands A, D, E

Lesson Topic (s):

Women and Political Activism in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Lesson Framing Critical Questions:

- A) In what ways were women active in political movements and advocacy groups during the 20th century, and first decades of the 21st century?
 - B) How did different kinds of strategies implemented by women-led activist groups' help shape different outcomes?
-

Estimated Lesson Length (s):

Two to three class periods.

Lesson Planning and Curriculum Expectations

Relevant Curriculum Expectations (Links to Grade 10 and 12 Curriculum)

Canadian History since World War I, Grade 10 (CHC2D)

A. Historical Inquiry and Skill Development

Specific Expectations:

A1. Historical Inquiry

A1.2 sources reflect a range of perspectives

A1.4 interpret and analyse using various tools, strategies, and approaches

A1.5 describe various approaches to the study of history

A1.6 use the concepts of historical thinking

A1.7 make informed judgements or predictions

A1.8 communicate their ideas, arguments, and conclusions using various formats and styles

A1.10 use appropriate terminology when communicating the results of their investigations

A2. Developing Transferable Skills

A2.3 apply the knowledge and skills developed when analysing current social, economic, and/or political issues in order to enhance their understanding of these issues and their role as informed citizens

C. Canada, 1929–1945

C1. Social, Economic, and Political Context

C1.1 describe some key social changes in Canada during this period

C1.3 describe some key economic trends and developments in Canada during this period

C1.5 describe the main causes of some key political developments and/or government policies in Canada during this period

C3. Identity, Citizenship, and Heritage

C3.1 describe contributions of various individuals, groups, and/or organizations to Canadian society, politics, and/or culture during this period

D. Canada, 1945–1982

D1. Social, Economic, and Political Context

D1.3 describe some key trends and developments in the Canadian economy during this period

D1.6 analyse the impact on the lives of Canadians of key social welfare programs that were created or expanded during this period

D2. Communities, Conflict, and Cooperation

D2.1 describe some instances of social conflict and/or inequality

Canada: History, Identity, and Culture, Grade 12 (CHI4U)

A. Historical Inquiry and Skill Development

Specific Expectations:

A1 Historical Inquiry:

A1.1 formulate different types of questions

A1.2 select and organize relevant evidence and information

A1.3 assess the credibility of sources

A1.4 interpret and analyse using various tools, strategies and approaches

A1.5 use the concepts of historical thinking

A1.6 make informed conclusions and/or judgements and predictions

A1.7 communicate their ideas, arguments and conclusions using various formats and styles

A1.8 use accepted forms of documentation

A1.9 use appropriate terminology when communicating the results of their investigations

A2. Developing Transferable Skills

A2.2 apply in everyday contexts skills and work habits

A2.3 apply the knowledge and skills developed when analysing current social, economic and/or political issues in order to enhance their understanding of these issues and their role as informed citizens

A2.4 identify careers in which skills of history might be useful

D. Canada, 1867–1945

D1. Setting the Context

D1.1 analyse some key social developments as well as dominant social attitudes and values during this period

D1.4 analyse key economic trends and developments during this period and their contribution to the development of Canada, including the development of identity in Canada

D1.5 analyse how key political developments during this period contributed to the development of Canada, including the development of identity in Canada

D2.2 describe some significant social movements

D2.3 analyse key aspects of life for women in Canada

D3. Identity, Citizenship, and Heritage

D3.1 describe contributions of various individuals, groups, and/or organizations to Canadian society and politics during this period

D2. Interactions and Interdependence

D2.3 analyse the goals, strategies, and effectiveness of a variety of reform movements/organizations during this period

D3. Diversity and Citizenship

D3.1 explain the contributions of various individuals to Canadian society and politics during this period

E. Canada Since 1945

E2.1 explain the context for the development of reform movements

E3.1 explain the contributions of various people to Canadian society

E3.2 explain how women's lives changed in this period

Lesson Learning Goals/Objectives:

(Learning goals can be communicated with students as follows: We are learning about.../ We are learning how to...)

- Students learn about the ways in which women were involved in political activism through different avenues (protests, participation in organizations, and music) in the 20th and 21st centuries.
 - Students critically engage with the idea of “women’s issues” and how gender intersects with political, economic, and social issues.
 - Students learn about the various goals and strategies of political women’s organizations, such as the Voices of Women for Peace (VOW), Woman Worker, Housewives Consumer Association, and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.
 - Students connect past and present political activism with ongoing inequalities.
-

Links to Historical Thinking Concepts:

Historical Significance

The lesson highlights contributions women have made in resisting and transforming social and economic policies in Canada. The lesson touches upon significant issues of the 20th century (1920’s-1960’s) and early 21st century that are still relevant today including domestic labour, consumer rights, basic income, and health/healthcare.

Primary Source Evidence

Students will examine several primary source documents (visual, written, and oral) in relation to women’s activist groups.

Historical perspective

In a class, group, and individual setting, students will discuss the historical significance of the primary sources to Canadian history in order to consider several different historical perspectives.

Cause and Consequence

The lesson highlights how women were able to advocate and influence human rights legislation despite existing legal, social, economic, and political limitations.

Continuity and Change

Through a detailed exploration of women’s advocacy work, in areas such as consumer rights, labor rights, and anti-war advocacy both in the 20th and 21st centuries, students will become familiar with, and be able to identify actions such as continuity and change in social and political issues that faced society, and the grassroots movements led by women, which sought to address them.

Links to Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and/or Transformative Justice:

- Students will analyze the prejudice and inequitable treatment of women during the 20th and 21st centuries in the socio-political realm through an examination of the barriers that women’s organizations and activists faced.
- By examining the tribulations of members of the Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) organization, students will learn that marginalized groups in society have the agency to contribute to effect change.
- Students will reflect on what groups of women might have been commonly left out in women’s advocacy movements and how intersectionality became vital to a broader feminist activism.
- Students will imagine what a future without systemic barriers for women might look like.

Part 1: Minds On

Activity 1 (AfL): Deconstructing the meaning of “Women’s Issues”

Over time, women have engaged in political activism on a variety of issues, including everything from voting rights, anti-war activism, reproductive health, labour rights, environmental issues, sexual freedom, and more. While early gender-based political mobilization such as **the suffrage movement** was often focused on equity demands (liberal feminism), in the 1960s and 1970s movements such as **Black Feminism**, and the fight for **2SLGBTQ+ rights** expanded the notion of what constitutes “women’s issues” by questioning gender norms and embracing intersectionality. As an introduction to these topics, students view three short videos about **women’s activism** (1 min.), **Black Feminism** (2 mins.) and **intersectionality** (1 min.), and answer the following questions.

Mentimeter or Class Popcorning Response:

1. What kinds of issues might be considered “women’s issues” and how has the idea of what counts as a “women’s issue” changed over time?
2. Can you think of an activist group or a social justice advocacy movement where women lead? Name a woman activist trending in the news today.

v (AfL): Women’s Political Advocacy Throughout the 20th and 21st Centuries Venn Diagram

Have students briefly explore the **Women & Politics: 1960-2000 Timeline**. In groups or as class, use a Venn diagram to brainstorm the kind of societal changes that women advocated for in the 20th century (1901-2000) and note how this has changed in the 21st century (2001-today). Discuss both similarities and areas of uniqueness.

What kind of societal changes were/are women advocating for?



Part 2: Inquiry Groups

Activity 1: Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) - Video/Website Viewing and Class Discussion (20 minutes)

Focus Question for Inquiry:

What issues have women fought for in their political activism in the past, and what kinds of strategies did they employ? What are the connections between women's activism in the past and today's social movements?

Watch the following video as a class: [Canadian Voice of Women for Peace](#)

VOW today: Have students examine the “No Fighter Jets” campaign posters (See Appendix A or see the [full website here](#))

Model the questions for Activity 2 by discussing answers to the following five questions that stem from the VOW history video:

1. What were the main issues of concern for the VOW?
2. What kind of strategies were used by the women of the VOW to voice their concerns and create political change?
3. What were some of the barriers that women faced in advocating for their cause?
4. One of the VOW members, who went to Moscow, to meet with women in the Soviet Union during the Cold War stated: “We know there's no difference between washing a socialist diaper and a capitalist one”. What does this statement about class suggest about the possible common challenges in women's experiences during this period?

Activity 2: Women's Political Organizations: Jigsaw Activity (30 minutes) (AaL, AoL)

A. Assign each student in the class a group number between one to six, to correspond to the women-led political organizations from the past, found in the table below. Each group will be responsible for reading the assigned pages or articles, will explore the additional primary and secondary sources, and will fill out their section of the **graphic organizer below**. See *Appendix B* for the resources for each of the groups.

Materials and Set Up:

(Activities, resources, worksheets, data collection charts, videos/music/images, and others)

- Digital or hardcopy of “Societal Changes” Venn diagram” and “Women's Political Organizations” graphic organizer
- Digital or hardcopy of the following pages from *Framing Our Past*: pp. 240-247, pp. 248-251.

Primary & Secondary Sources

See Appendix C

Teaching Strategies:

(collaborative learning, culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, inquiry-based learning, differentiated instruction)

- Collaborative learning, culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, inquiry-based learning, multi-modal sources.

Assessment(s):

Minds On Activity 1 - Venn Diagram (AfL)

Minds On Activity 2 - Women's Issues Discussion/ Mentimeter (AfL)

Activity 1: Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) - Video Viewing and Class Discussion (30 minutes) (AaL)

Activity 2: Women's Political Organizations: Jigsaw Activity (30 minutes) (AaL, AoL)

Exit Ticket - Pay Gap and Womens' Professions (AoL)

Accommodations:

(Students with IEPs, ELLs)

- Reduced number of readings and/or sources for jigsaw activity
- Graphic organizer can be presented in any format (audio recording, in-person interview, written form)
- Extra time for any assigned work

Political Organization	Main Issues of Concern	Strategies of Activism	Connection to Today's Issues and Movements
Group 1: Woman Worker (pp. 241-242)			
Group 2 : Housewives Consumers Association (pp. 242-245)			
Group 3 : Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) (pp. 245-247)			
Group 4 : Indian Homemakers' Association (IHA, British Columbia)			
Group 5 : Lesbians against the Right (1981 Toronto Conference)			
Group 6 : Congress of Black Women of Canada			

B. As a class, examine the findings in the table and discuss the following questions:

A. What were some of the **common barriers** faced by all six organizations?

B. Not all women's organizations had the same political goals or faced the same struggles.
What **unique barriers** existed for women with specific marginalized identities?

Part 3: Consolidation and debriefing

Wrap Up and Action:

(actionable consequences of learning, connections to present day, gaps in learning, and further questions)

Women and Work Today: Imagining Political Change

In pairs or in small groups, students are invited to imagine that they are on a newly assembled government panel tasked with deciding the necessary political and economic changes that need to be made in order to reduce gendered, class-based and race-based workplace inequities in Canada. Students should be instructed to research, discuss, and design three new policies that the group agrees might help curb workplace inequities. Students can fill out the chart below.

Students can choose to read one or more of the following three articles about women and work today to help inform their policy decisions.

1. [Here's what the economy would look like without women.](#)

"Child care workers, for example, made just \$10.72 an hour on average in 2015, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's \$22,310 a year. As Emily Crockett in Vox notes, that's less than what those working as dog trainers and janitors make."

2. [Pay Inequity for Racialized Women](#)

"...women of colour are overrepresented in lower paying and precarious jobs, and their workplaces often do not match their education background as they are overqualified for the work they do"

3. ['Trailblazing came at a cost': The history of Ontario's Black nursing pioneers](#)

"... Even though Ontario was, at the time, facing a profound nursing shortage, the barriers against accepting Black women into nursing schools were "particularly fierce"..."

- Students demonstrate and reflect on learning
- Students share research work
- Provides opportunities for consolidation and action plans
- Links back to the historical thinking questions

Three New Policies to Address Continuing Workplace Inequities

Describe your New Policy	What steps need to be taken to implement the new policy? What barriers might the new policy disrupt?	What historical, political, and economic evidence from the article(s) illustrates that this policy is needed?
Policy #1		
Policy #2		
Policy #3		

Appendix A: Additional Materials for Learning

Inquiry Question 1, "No Fighter Jets"
Campaign Materials

**No to \$19 billion for
Fighter Jets
Yes to Peace
and Canadian Prosperity**



 Financial Support
for Canadians  Healthcare  Green Jobs

Choose people and peace, not weapons and war

**One hour of
operating an F-35 Jet
would cost Canadians \$55,000.**



**That is a year's
salary for a nurse.**



**Sign the petition and learn
more at**
www.vowpeace.org/NoFighterJets
**#DisarmTheSkies #ClimatePeace
#NoNewFighterJets**

Appendix B: Additional Materials for Learning

Inquiry Activity #2, Sources

Working Class Roots of Canadian Feminism

Online Archive Organized Working Women and The Eaton's Strike, 1985



Group 1: Woman Worker (Framing Our Past pp. 241-242)

Excerpt:

"The CCF, a social-democratic party intent on a milder, evolutionary, and parliamentary brand of socialism, also believed in organizing homemakers - but on their own terms. After it was founded in 1933, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation remained a somewhat decentralized party, with strong local and provincial federations as well as a nascent national structure. In many of these localities, women set themselves the task of drawing more women into the CCF movement, convincing them of the benefits of democratic socialism.

Because the CCF began with a strong base in the prairies, urging women to organize as homemakers also meant organizing farm wives. During the 1930, controlling consumer prices on basic foodstuffs was not necessarily the primary concern of farm women, as many farmers did not have, or could not sell, their own produce. However, farm wives could be convinced that a competitive, capitalist economic system contributed to the difficulties of their household labour.

In 1936 Toronto CCF women formed a short-lived but radical women's organization, the Women's Joint Committee (WJC), to raise women's issues, draw women into socialist causes, and train women for leadership in the CCF. Though the WJC did not focus exclusively on consumer issues, as it had a long list of concerns ranging from international peace to the unemployed single woman in Canada, it did see the household economy as key to reaching married women.

CCF women continued to address women as a distinct political constituency, often

assuming their interest, as homemakers, in problems of the home and family, or as one CCF activist put it, using the same political language as the communists, referring to "bread and butter" issues. These were not limited to prices; like communists, CCF women also concentrated on social policy issues such as child welfare, education, Mothers allowances, and health care. As one historian has noted, these appeals to women as homemakers were "both a hook and a trap." On the one hand, they recognized the work and worries of women in the home and spoke directly to matters considered key to the well-being of the family. On the other hand, they tended to reproduce an image of women that was linked solely to domesticity, which contributed to the marginalization of women in political life."

"Pensions for the needy" - Regina: Co-operative Commonwealth Federation



Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, Saskatchewan Section. Pensions for the needy: Vote the C.C.F. into power. Regina: Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (S.S.), [1938].

Group 4: Indian Homemakers' Association (British Columbia)

Submission from the Indian Homemakers Association (Primary Source Document, 1990s)

Excerpt:

The main objective of the Indian Homemakers' Association was to establish a consultations process in which the views of [Indigenous] women could be expressed in the three following areas:

1. Family violence and sexual abuse;
2. The delivery of social and health services;
3. The law and the justice system.

(pp. 4)

On Domestic Violence

It is only through our self-determination and autonomy that we will be able to effectively address our social problems, the stigmas against us and become self-actualized.

A second major concern in identifying, disclosing and exposing our problems to the non-native world also pertains to racism and discrimination. The criticisms directed at Susan Hare, author of *Breaking Free: A Proposal for Change to Aboriginal Family Violence* reflect this concern. These critics felt that she should not be providing the sensationalists in the media with further ammunition to condemn us. Because of the abhorrent and blatantly racist ways in which First Nations people have been treated historically by those who monopolize economic and political power, we have preferred to band together, even with those men who abuse us, to maintain Aboriginal solidarity. Since we have logical and justifiable reason for distrusting the motives and interpretations of the non-natives of our problems and because we fear further stereotyping, we believe that our needs would be best met by our own people.

117 respondents, or 85% of those surveyed felt that our programs should be delivered by First Nations people, a position fully supported by workshop participants. In addition to the loss of control that we experience at the hands of state bureaucrats, we are constantly up against those "highly qualified" non-Indian people who insist upon applying for jobs in our organizations, our band offices and even in political positions. Even at this stage in our development, when there are enough of our own people to hold these positions, there are still non-Indian people occupying them.

- 3) WE RECOMMEND THAT EXISTING ABORIGINAL SERVICE PROVIDING AGENCIES, POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND FIRST NATIONS GOVERNMENTS BE COMPENSATED FOR LOST LANDS AND RESOURCES, AND FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR COMMUNITY FABRIC THROUGH THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM, THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM AND ANY OTHER STATE STRUCTURES WHICH DISRUPTED OUR LIVES.
- 4) WE FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT THE STATE RELINQUISH ITS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTROL OVER OUR LIVES THROUGH THE INDIAN ACT AND ALLOW US TO BECOME AUTONOMOUS AND SELF-SUFFICIENT.

THIS MEANS PUTTING INTO PLACE POLICIES AND MECHANISMS THAT WILL FACILITATE THE TRANSFER OF POWER AND RESOURCES IN A JUST AND EQUITABLE MANNER.

5) IN THE INTERESTS FURTHERING OUR GOALS OF AUTONOMY AND OF OUR HEALING PROCESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT EVERY ABORIGINAL APPLICANT BE GIVEN EVERY OPPORTUNITY, INCLUDING OFFERING TRAINING, BEFORE ANY NON-NATIVE PERSON BE CONSIDERED. WE ALSO RECOMMEND THAT THOSE NON-NATIVE PERSONS WHO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANY NATIVE PROGRAM BE GIVEN A TIME-FRAME UPON WHICH SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE REVIEWED. (Capitalized in document)

In these times of raised consciousnesses, one cannot help but recognize the significant interconnections and differences between social classes, abilities, sexual orientations, genders, racial and ethnic groups and generations. But while these recognitions exist in theory, its practical applications still lag behind. For example, in defining family violence, feminists maintain that it is a patriarchal and a woman's issue. On the other hand, the justice and educational systems, and other sectors of the establishment, insist upon defining it in gender neutral terms such as "spousal assault" and "gender equity". Our view is that these are westernized references that we would rather not be fitted into. Neither of these takes into account the residential school experience which instructed its interned children in the practice of corporal punishment. Neither do they describe the trauma of family disruption associated with the massive removal of our children through the Canadian child welfare authorities. While Aboriginal women would concede that sexism is a primary issue in Aboriginal family violence, author included, we would not want to see battered women or the offenders treated individually, as if their violence occurred in isolation from this collective history of systemic racism and oppression.

(pp. 8-11)

Read more about the Indian Homemaker's Club/Association here: [Nipissing Homemaker's Club](#)

Group 5: Lesbians Against the Right

[Booklet from 1981 Toronto Conference](#)

Excerpt from *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*, author: Tom Warner

Lesbian Visibility and Organizing. Meanwhile, lesbian liberation, as distinct

from lesbian and gay liberation, flourished in the late 1970s and early 1980s as lesbians continued to struggle for visibility, forming organizations separate from those of both gay men and straight women. Autonomous lesbian organizations emerged across the country, with diverse missions and varying degrees of success. An important impetus for the creation of the new lesbian groups was the fact that, within women's organizations, efforts at keeping lesbians closeted, at low profile levels of involvement, continued and, in some cases, intensified. In Halifax, for example, Lynn Murphy recalls that such efforts forced lesbians to leave women's organizations, following which it became apparent 'just how much work had been done by the lesbians and what a kind of blow this was ... to have that not available anymore.' Montreal's Louise Turcotte also remembers, 'We knew that in [the] 70s, who were the feminists, they were called lesbians.' But as the women's groups became more mainstream, lesbians became less and less welcome in them. Turcotte attributes much of the subsequent anti-lesbian sentiment to growing dependency on government funding to keep women's organizations afloat. Similarly, Liz Massiah, active in Alberta in the mid-1980s, recalls that many lesbians involved in women's groups felt they could not be out. One group, in fact, actually put out a feminist magazine by a collective that was mostly lesbians who would not discuss that fact. (pp. 173)

...

Reflecting on the difficulties lesbians have had in working with gay men, Louise Turcotte and Nancy Tatham, during interviews, cited the unwillingness of men not only to share power but to abandon their selfcentredness when defining issues around which to organize. Turcotte stressed that, in order to work with lesbians, gay men had to imagine a different kind of group from those in which they had been involved historically. They needed to share power with lesbians and let the women do what they wanted to do within the groups. As long as gay men did not confront their own social position, nor compromise on what the political agenda would be, things never worked out. (pp. 176)

...

Increasingly throughout the late 1980s and the entire nineties, gays, lesbians, and bisexuals of colour formed organizations devoted to meeting their needs and assisting in their liberation, socially and sexually, battling homophobia and heterosexism in the process. In 1987, Khush, Gay South Asians, was formed as a 'group of South Asians of diasporic origin (South Asia, Africa, Indo-Caribbean ...)' and diverse cultural/ religious backgrounds.' Khush - the word is Urdu and means 'happy, pleased,

good' - was founded by a group of men including Nelson Carvalho, Karim Ladak, Deep Khosla, and Chris Paul. Khush held regular meetings and social activities and published a newsletter, Khush Khayal, until the late 1990s. Over the years, Khush attracted 'new immigrants, people who are just coming out and seasoned pros' and engaged in public education and political advocacy issues as well as providing a range of social activities. In 1988, Khush and Gay Asians Toronto jointly organized 'Unity Among Asians', a groundbreaking first conference for Asian lesbians and gay men in North America. Khush also held 'Salaam Toronto!' in 1989 to celebrate diasporic gay and lesbian cultures and identities. That event was so successful that it led to the launching of an acclaimed annual cultural festival, Desh Pardesh, that from 1990 to 2000 showcased the art, culture, and politics of diasporic South Asians living in the West. It consistently had substantial gay, lesbian, and bisexual content, including workshops and forums, readings, dance, and theatre by gay and lesbian writers and performers. Blazing still more new trails, Khush hosted 'Discovery '93,' the first international South Asian Gay Men's Conference, which men from all over the world attended. A women's caucus existed in Khush until 1989, at which time it decided to become part of Asian Lesbians of Toronto (ALOT). The new group was launched when a significant number of Asian women came together at 'Unity Among Asians'. They had their own agenda dealing with 'questions of identity, of empowerment, the question of our contradictions in history, of being Asian and lesbian and the links between our oppression - sexism, heterosexism, racism, and classism. Inspired by organizations for Asian lesbians in the USA, a decision was made to establish a similar group in Toronto, resulting in ALOT. Founded in the fall of 1988, ALOT existed until sometime into the early 1990s. (pp. 326-327)

Group 6: Congress of Black Women of Canada

Introduction to the Congress of Black Women of Canada

Booklet from the CBWC (Primary Source Document, 1970s)

Excerpt from Rosemary Brown's speech to the first meeting of the National Congress of Black Women in Canada, April 7, 1973:

"Because we are Black and because we are female, this conference has given us the opportunity to explore the two liberation struggles which we are setting astride at this moment - and so I would like to share with you some of my thoughts and some of my experiences in these struggles.

Whenever anyone - male or female; Black or white - asks me why I am part of the

women's liberation movement - I always reply "because I am a woman". Then I wait for the significance of their question to dawn on them - for in reality what they have said to me is that since I am a Black person, Black oppression is the only oppression with which they expect me to concern myself. But for me, not to participate in the Women's Liberation Movement would be to deny my womanhood, and to be Black and female in a society which is both racist and sexist is to be in the unique position of having nowhere to go but up! And to be in the unique position of learning about survival from being able to observe at a very close range the Achilles heel of a very great nation.

Indeed, my Black friends who congratulate me for speaking out on racial issues, chastise me for being a feminist. And my sisters who love me for speaking out on the issue of the movement chastise me for being preoccupied with my race. Add to all of the fact that I am a Socialist living in a capitalist country and you will wonder what worlds are left for me to conquer or be conquered by. Yet, I enjoy a strange kind of freedom because in order to survive I have had to learn and learn well about racists and about sexists and about capitalists. And the wisdom that I have learned from these studies is that all people depend on all people and that unless all of us are free, none of us will be free. And that, indeed, when I fight for your freedom I am also fighting for my own and when I am fighting for my freedom I am also fighting for my sisters and my brothers and for all of our children.

I learned, also, that this country, Canada, is beautiful and strong only because of the people of both sexes, and of all races and political persuasions who have lived in it and contributed to its culture and its soul and its growth. And that its strength and its beauty will increase only to the extent that it is able to accept and respect all of its people equally. But what did I learn of us? Of you and I, the Black women who through choice, or luck, or by birth, make this our home. Where do we fit into this space and into the changes and developments that are taking place about us? Well, if you read the traditional history books, you will find that we have never been here and indeed are not here even now - the invisible people. Because where judicious prodding might unearth the names of one or two of the males who made contributions in the past, the digging has to be deep indeed to find the women. So, I left the history books and went back to the school of survival and there I learned that there are a number of liberation movements sweeping this land - racial, economic, and, of course, the feminist movement. And, I ask myself, "Where do Black women fit into the Women's Liberation Movement?" And I learned something very interesting:

namely, that unless the Women's Liberation Movement identifies with and locks into the liberation movement of all oppressed groups, it will never achieve its goals... that unless it identifies with and supports the struggles of the poor, of oppressed, races, of the old and of other disadvantaged groups in society it will never achieve its goals. Because not to do so would be to isolate itself from the masses of women - since women make up a large segment of all these groups. I believe that Black women do fit into the Women's Liberation Movement. I believe that through the movement we can fight for Black women as well as for women of all other races, even as when we fight for Black people we fight for Black men as well as for Black children and Black women."

Appendix C: References

Primary Sources:

*Some hyperlinks might not open the document due to security reasons. We advise teachers and students to copy the topic and the original website for document access.

Brown, R. (1973). *Speech by Rosemary Brown, MLA representing Vancouver-Burrard in the British Columbia legislature, on the occasion of the National Congress of Black Women in Canada*. Rise Up Feminist Collective Archive. <https://riseuparchive.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/cwbc-1973-speechRosemary-Brown.pdf>

Congress of Black Women of Canada. (n.d.). *Congress of Black Women Canada booklet*. Rise Up Feminist Collective Archive. Retrieved 13 April 2024, from <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/cwbc-information-booklet.pdf>

Eaton's strike. (1985). Rise Up Feminist Collective Archive. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/culture/photos/eatonsstrike-2/>

Lesbians Against the Right. (1981). *Lesbians are everywhere—Dykes on the Street booklet*. Rise Up Feminist Collective Archive. <https://riseuparchive.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/LesbiansEverywhereFightingRight-1981-DykesonStreetBooklet.pdf>

Regina: Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. (1938). *Pensions for the needy: Vote the C.C.F. into power*.

Submission from the Indian Homemakers Association, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Library / Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 8200-5011). (2016). Library and Archives Canada. <https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=rcap&Id-Number=576&q=homemakers%20association>

Women & politics: 1960-2000, political activism for gender equality. (n.d.). Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library. Retrieved 13 April 2024, from <https://omeka.uottawa.ca/arcs-en/exhibits/show/women---politics--1960-2000--p>

Secondary Sources:

Biblio uOttawa Library (Director). (2023, November 29). *The Canadian Women's Movements Portal hosted by the University of Ottawa Library*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zl5D4D9bdg>

Black feminism. (2020, March 6). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOFk7YEAh2g>

Black women in the women's movement. (n.d.). Rise Up! Feminist Digital Archive. Retrieved 13 April 2024, from <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/black-women-in-the-womens-movement/>

Black, K. (2022, April 13). 'Trailblazing came at a cost': *The history of Ontario's Black nursing pioneers*. TVO Today. <https://www.tvo.org/article/trailblazing-came-at-a-cost-the-history-of-ontarios-black-nursing-pioneers>

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace. (n.d.). *VOW Herstory*. Canadian Voice of Women for Peace. Retrieved January 29, 2023, from <https://vowpeace.org/vow-herstory/>

Connelly, M.P. (2015). *Women in the Labour Force*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-in-the-labour-force>

Doerer, K. (2017, March 8). *Here's what the economy would look like without women*. PBS NewsHour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/heres-economy-look-like-without-women>

Indigenous women's rights. (n.d.). Rise Up! Feminist Digital Archive. Retrieved 13 April 2024, from <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/issues-actions/indigenous-womens-rights/>

It Gets Better Canada (Director). (2022, June 7). *Our friend @tblizzy (she/they/he/ze) is back to help us all learn more about intersectional activism!* Tiktok. <https://www.tiktok.com/@itgetsbettercanada/video/6955853738569420037>

Jenkin, M. (2018, June 5). *The steady decline of consumer protection in Canada*. Policy Options. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2018/the-steady-decline-of-consumer-protection-in-canada/>

LGBTQ + organizing. (n.d.). Rise Up!

Feminist Digital Archive. Retrieved 13 April 2024, from <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/issues-actions/lgbtq-organizing/>

Loewen, C. (2001). Making ourselves heard: "Voice of Women" and the peace movement in the early sixties. In S. A. Cook, L. R. McLean, & K. O'Rourke (Eds.), *Framing our past: Canadian women's history in the twentieth century* (pp. 101-110). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Metraux, J. (2022, March 14). *The working class roots of Canadian feminism*. JSTOR Daily. <https://daily.jstor.org/the-working-class-roots-of-canadian-feminism/>

Newton-Thompson, C. (2016). *Congress of Black Women of Canada (CBWC) / Congrès des femmes noires du Canada*. Rise Up! Feminist Digital Archive. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/congress-of-black-women-of-canada-cbwc/>

Organized Working Women. (n.d.). *Organized Working Women (OWW) – Rise Up! Feminist digital archive*. Retrieved March 25, 2023, from <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/organized-working-women/>

Pay inequity for women of colour. (2022, March 18). Urban Alliance on Race Relations. https://www.urbanalliance.ca/pay_inequity

Srigley, K., & Beaucage, G. (n.d.). "Everything from our hearts to our hockey sticks": *Nipissing Homemaker's Club*. Nipissing First Nation.

Strong-Boag, V. & Clayton, M. (2021, January 28). *Women's Suffrage in Canada*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/suffrage>

VOW Peace. (2018, September 4). *Canadian Voice of Women for Peace*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZwzvHQMSSqE>

Warner, T. (2002). *Never going back: A history of queer activism in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.

Framing Our Past 2.0
Conjuguer nos histoires au féminin