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## **Our Results from 2 years of Developing Women's Leadership Skills in Northern communities**

In March 2011, as part of FemNorthNet and with a grant by Status of Women Canada, we started work to develop women's leadership skills in northern communities. We completed our activities in May 2013. Here is a short report of what we did and what we learned. We will post a longer report on our website in the fall: [www.femnorthnet.ca](http://www.femnorthnet.ca).

Our goal was to engage underrepresented (particularly Aboriginal, disabled, immigrant and young) women in 4 northern communities – Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Labrador West in Labrador, Thompson, Manitoba and La Loche, Saskatchewan. In addition, in Norway House, Manitoba we would produce a video to document the sharing circle model of leadership development practiced there.

### **Hundreds of women participated**

Over the past two years, our community partners engaged over 450 women in 5 northern communities in discussions and training to develop more local women leaders.

### **Training covered many areas**

Training was a key component of the strategic actions taken to promote northern women in community leadership.

Women trained women in the following areas of leadership and decision-making skills:

- Self-awareness and self-care as well as physical, mental and spiritual well-being



Members of FemNorthNet at April 2013 meeting.  
Front: Judy White

- Practical economic capacity building activities such as creating budgets and developing job interview skills
- Creative story-telling and presentation skills (making shadow puppets, masks, visual displays, digital story-telling, creating scrapbooks) and more

### **Greater community awareness of the issues and barriers to women's participation as leaders and decision-makers**

Partners & participants developed a much deeper understanding of the barriers to community leadership for northern women. Even where supports are provided (childcare, transportation, food, translation, disability accommodation, etc) it is hard to engage women for many reasons. These include not seeing themselves as a leader or potential leader, feeling invisible, not feeling their needs or opinions are valued, having very busy lives, not having the right to schedule time off work to attend training sessions and other reasons. Across communities, our discussions identified many barriers as structural – conditions embedded in communities and difficult to overcome simply with opportunities to participate.

### **Better understanding of how to promote women's leadership**

Through this work, community leaders strengthened understanding and capacity to promote women's leadership and mentored other women from diverse groups in their community. We increased community discussions about women and leadership in their community and inspired young women by engaging them with women leaders in action.

We learned from each other, regardless of age or background. We came to understand mentoring as being a mutual learning and beneficial relationship. We reached a group of diverse women who were often excluded. We helped women who did not see themselves as leaders start to recognize their leadership skills and potential.

### **Ongoing Reflection & Evaluation – A key to success**

Face-to-face meetings were invaluable to the success of this work. They provided rich opportunities for peer learning, collaboration to set goals and develop methods, to review and adjust plans over time, sparked by reflection and discussions within the Network. For more information on what is needed to develop and support women's community leadership in northern communities, [click here](#).

### **Community summaries**

More information on the leadership development model used in each community, why it was suited to that community and what was accomplished in each community, will be posted on the FNN website in the fall.

**A longer version of this article is available [here](#).**

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Susan Prentice, Colin Bonnycastle

## FemNorthNet Meeting – April 21-24

Leaders of the FemNorthNet community and theme research groups came together in Ottawa April 21 – 24, 2013 to share:

- What we are learning about developing women's leadership in northern communities
- How to honour community partnerships through Collaborative Research Agreements and Mutual Assistance Pacts looking at an example from the development of a Community Vitality Index in Goose Bay
- Who we are reaching and engaging with and how and what are we trying to accomplish
- Next steps and how our work can be built on by others

### National Leadership Development

We squeezed in an unexpected opportunity to develop national leadership skills within the Network during the April meeting in Ottawa. Few of the women at our meeting had ever been to a federal Parliamentary Standing Committee hearing before and wanted to see it in action. The Status of Women Standing Committee meeting on Bill S-2 (*Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act*) was just down the street. Federal Ministers Rona Ambrose (Status of Women) and Bernard Valcourt (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development) were appearing before the committee that day.

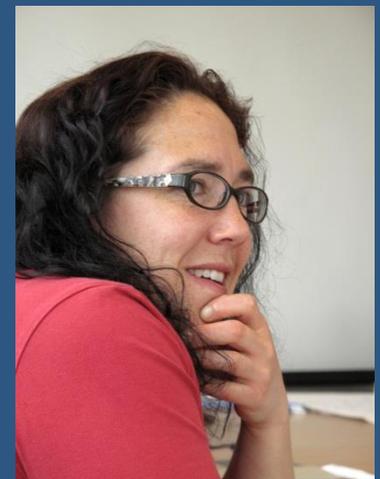
We rearranged our agenda and prepped with a quick but thorough explanation of what happens at a Committee hearing from Network member Carmela Hutchison. She has often appeared before federal standing committees as President of DAWN Canada.

Following the Standing Committee hearing, our group debriefed on the discussions that had occurred, clarified the process in the federal legislative process and discussed how FNN members and CRIAW could try to engage with local, provincial/territorial, and federal levels of government. One participant said it was one of the most valuable experiences in FemNorthNet yet because it helped her connect the dots about how the federal government works. This experience highlights important things we've learned in FemNorthNet:

- Being open to change and flexible with plans to take advantage of unexpected opportunities
- Learning from each other. We have tremendous knowledge in different areas within the Network
- Learning is deepened through experience



Noreen Careen, Charlene Lafreniere, Caroline Andrew



Leah Levac



## FemNorthNet Flags Gender Issues with Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board

FemNorthNet recently flagged concerns before the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board's public hearings in Halifax May 28 2013. Barbara Clow and Gail

Baikie presented the submission on behalf of FemNorthNet raising impacts of the Maritime Link portion of Muskrat Falls Hydroelectric development on diverse women in Nova Scotia. Diana Lewis-Campbell, a Mi'kmaq Ph.D. student at Dalhousie University, prepared the submission.

They noted that women already face many barriers to economic and social well-being that may be deepened, in Nova Scotia and in Labrador, by the Muskrat Falls/Maritime Link projects. For example:

- Women are poorer than men, on average, and therefore less able to afford current and future power rate hikes
- Women are less likely than men to get jobs from this project and enjoy the direct benefits of this economic development in the short and long term
- Certain groups of women (Aboriginal, disabled, older for example) experience deeper poverty and fewer benefits than women on average

These issues have not yet been adequately considered in the review of the Maritime Link project.

Clow and Baikie urged the Board to consider social and personal costs that have not been fully addressed in the review of whether the Maritime Link Project is the lowest, long-term cost alternative for the creation of clean, renewable energy in Nova Scotia. And they urged Nova Scotians to ask themselves whether one can in good conscience justify the degradation of the land and water in Labrador for "clean" energy in Nova Scotia. Shouldn't the energy we consume be both green and fair?

You can read the full submission and recommendations on the FemNorthNet web site here: [FemNorthNet Submission to Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board](#)

*Thanks go to the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (ACEWH) Halifax, NS for their financial support that made this submission possible.*

*We're sad to say goodbye to this FemNorthNet organizational partner, forced to close its doors March 31, 2013 when federal government funding ended but pleased that Barbara Clow, its former executive director, will continue to participate in FNN.*

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**“Certain groups of women (Aboriginal, disabled, older for example) experience deeper poverty and fewer benefits than women on average.”**

## Give up NL fisheries in Exchange for Muskrat Falls Loan Guarantee



In May 2013 Newfoundland & Labrador Premier Kathy Dunderdale revealed that she had been pressured by the Prime Minister's office to agree to deregulate provincial fisheries if she wanted federal backing for a loan guarantee for Muskrat Falls last November. But she reported she stood her ground and refused to budge on the fisheries.

Deregulating the fisheries means exporting fish as a raw resource. It means fish landed in the province would no longer be processed in the province. The Premier was being asked by the Prime Minister's office to agree to this as part of an international trade agreement – CETA- with the European Union.

CETA stands for the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union. The EU has been strongly pressuring to abolish minimum processing requirements for raw resources as part of this agreement.

At the end of May, Dunderdale warned that the pressure to deregulate the NL fisheries may not be dead yet, as Canada nears the final stages of negotiating the EU trade agreement.

A danger in this agreement is restricting Newfoundland and Labrador's future economic development to only exporting natural resources and not creating jobs from processing them in the province.

You can read more about this at:

<http://ntv.ca/premier-rejected-ottawas-fishery-trade-off/>  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2013/05/28/nl-dunderdale-harper-trade-reaction-528.html>

## What's New in Thompson, MB? TEDWG Update

Thompson is the hub of Manitoba's North. It serves 65,000 people within its City limits as well as those from a large area of surrounding communities with road or air access to Thompson, who come to the city to use different services. The region is 98% Aboriginal and the City is 47% Aboriginal. Iron ore mining company Vale is the largest employer accounting for 21% of jobs.

In 2010 Vale announced the transition of the Manitoba operations, decommissioning the smelter to only do mining and milling by 2015. The need to ensure that the community was not reliant on Vale for

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jobs prompted the City of Thompson to create the Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group (TEDWG) and increase the jobs in Thompson by diversifying the local economy. TEDWG recently concluded a long period of public consultation and has submitted reports of their findings and Action plans to the City of Thompson.

Charlene Lafreniere, member of the FemNorthNetwork, Thompson city councilor and national co-chair of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy was deeply involved in the TEDWG process in Thompson. On May 30<sup>th</sup> she chaired a session with FemNorthNet research theme leaders during which Michelle Drylie, a Senior Planner with rePlan, presented on the key findings from the TEDWG process. rePlan is a Canadian planning organization that works with resource-based communities in Canada and internationally. Michelle was TEDWG Project Manager for the past 18 months working with the community and a team of people. This session with Michelle and Charlene prepared FNN theme research groups to analyze the Thompson Economic Diversification Plan, the action plans and the regulatory framework which was established to provide helpful feedback for city council.

She reported on key aspects of the process to develop plans:

- Deep community engagement
- How visual presentations made data understandable and helped change community perspectives
- How a strong community foundation was a key to success

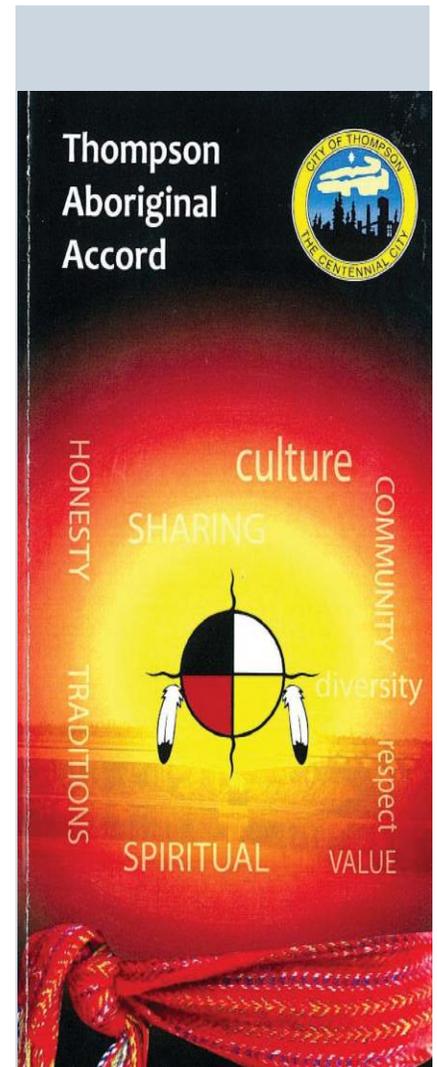
For a summary of the presentation [click here](#).

### **The Ups and Downs of Vale in Thompson, MB**

Decisions by global mining company Vale about whether it is shutting down or expanding continue to have a major impact on the economic development plans for Thompson MB.

Since the FemNorthNet project started:

- In 2010 Vale announced the Thompson mine smelter was going to be shut down (decommissioned) in 2015 representing a loss of about 600 jobs.
- In 2013 Vale froze all capital spending around the world to improve their profits. This postponed the Thompson smelter shutdown until 2017.
- Now Vale is looking to create a partnership to open a new mine outside Thompson to exploit a large ore body.



**“Vale is looking to create a partnership to open a new mine outside Thompson to exploit a large ore body.”**

## Community Development of Inclusive Timeline in Thompson

The FemNorthNet Community Engagement & Governance theme, led by Charlene Lafreniere and Caroline Andrew, is engaging community members in developing an inclusive, historical community timeline for Thompson, Manitoba.

The only written history of Thompson starts with its incorporation as a city in 1956 as a mining centre. The new community timeline will stretch back further to capture the history and more recent lived experiences of Aboriginal people in Thompson. In doing so, it will contribute a fuller understanding of life in the region.

Community sessions have been held with Aboriginal women and youth to identify events. A training guide will help students interview more members of the community about Thompson's history.

We'll bring you more reports on this in future issues of the FNN Newsletter.

## Happy Valley-Goose Bay Leadership Training and Public Showcase

Women in Happy Valley-Goose Bay participated in a four-day leadership skills development session this past spring. Women from Aboriginal groups within the region (Innu, Inuit, NunatuKavut) came together with non-Aboriginal women to make it known that local women matter in local economic development. This training prepared women to welcome the community to a public showcase and performance of the art they had created and to share what they thought of economic development in The Big Land.



J'net AyAy Qwa Yak Sheelth Cavanagh

J'net AyAy Qwa Yak Sheelth Cavanagh, an Aboriginal researcher, facilitator and artist, led the training using her Creative Action Circle methodology. J'Net trained local women in how to gather stories and perspectives of other women and express them in creative ways including mask making, storytelling using shadow puppets, sewing and appliqué.

In the final public showcase local women voiced concern that their and their families' wellbeing was being negatively affected by the damming of the Muskrat Falls on the Churchill River, near the community as well as by recent cuts to federal and provincial social programs.



**“women voiced concern that their and their families’ wellbeing was being negatively affected by the damming of the Muskrat Falls on the Churchill River ”**

## The Situation of Immigrants in Lab West Generates Interest at Memorial University

In March 2013 the Harris Centre from Memorial University in St. John's NL visited Labrador West. They held public workshops looking for opportunities to partner to do research on areas the community felt important. Lab West Status of Women Centre Executive Director Noreen Careen addressed the increase in the immigrant population working in Lab West and the problems they face – overcrowded and expensive housing, a lack of immigrant services, overqualified for the service sector jobs they are doing, not integrated into the community.

Noreen's plea for research caught the attention of Memorial University, who featured it in their magazine in a column designed to connect people from outside the university with researchers. The story attracted the interest of a Memorial professor Dr. Delores Mullings of the School of Social Work. You can read more about the story here:

[http://www.mun.ca/gazette/past/GazetteApr24\\_Vol45no13-web.pdf](http://www.mun.ca/gazette/past/GazetteApr24_Vol45no13-web.pdf)

*Noreen Careen is the community co-lead of the FemNorthNet theme research group on Immigration, Migration and Mobility.*

### Ending our partnership with La Loche

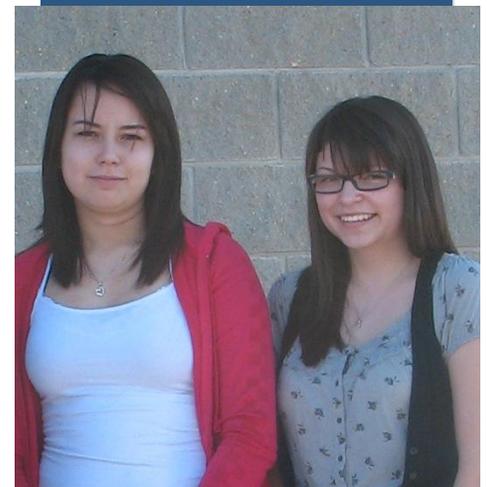
We are thankful for the time that our partners from La Loche SK were able to spend with the FemNorthNetwork. We learned a lot from the sharing of their experiences, knowledge and worldview. We recognize that their participation in FNN has not been easy given distance, differences and the need for more supports to do the work. We deeply appreciate their need to focus on meeting the needs of the community and respect their decision to withdraw from FemNorthNet in order to have more time and energy to do so.

We'd like to thank Mayor Georgina Jolibois for her involvement in FemNorthNet from the outset. And wish her well in her third term as the Mayor of La Loche, Saskatchewan. We'd also like to thank Brenda Janvier who played an important role in the leadership development work with women in La Loche. And also the students who helped gather women's stories and contributed to our learning - Cheyanne Lemaigre, Ashlyn Lemaigre and Wendy Petit and Demetria King.

*La Loche is a community in Northern Saskatchewan of over 2,000 people, primarily Dené and Métis.*



Mayor Georgina Jolibois & Brenda Janvier



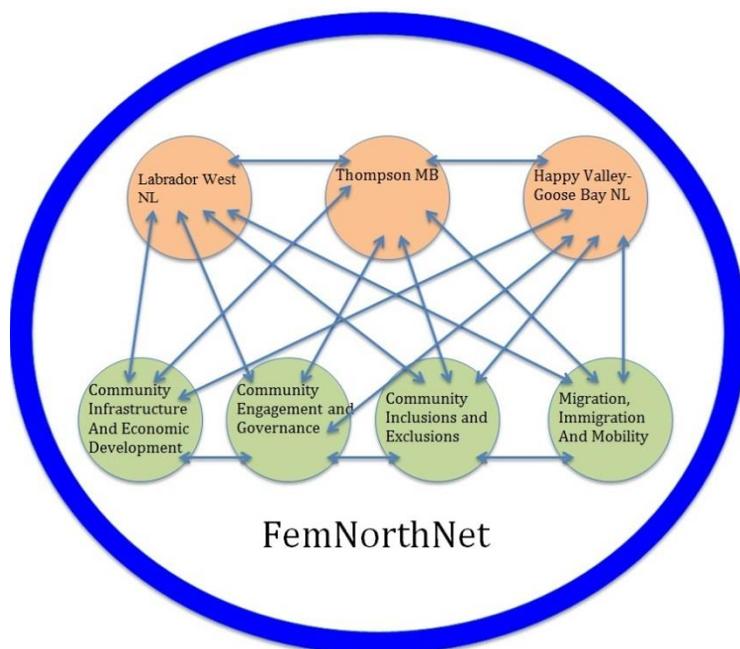
Students from La Loche

## Special Thanks

Thank you to **Jane Stinson**, **Sara Tedford**, **Jami Neufeld** and **Deborah Stienstra**, for their wonderful contributions to this newsletter! And a shout-out to **Caroline Paquette** and **Brigitte Ginn** for their work in laying out and producing this newsletter in English and French.

## FemNorthNet Partner Organizations

- Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health - Le Centre d'excellence de l'Atlantique pour la santé des femmes
- Bay St. George Status of Women Council, Stephenville NL
- Canadian Labour Congress - Congrès du travail du Canada
- Child Care Coalition of Manitoba
- Dalhousie University
- Disabled Women's Network Canada - Réseau d'action des femmes handicapées du Canada
- Labrador West Status of Women Council, Labrador City NL
- Labrador Institute of Memorial University
- Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Mokami Status of Women Council, Happy Valley-Goose Bay NL
- New North-SANC Services Inc
- North Central Community Futures Development Corporation
- Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, Thompson MB
- UN Platform for Action Committee (UNPAC), Winnipeg MB
- University of Manitoba
- University of Ottawa - Université d'Ottawa
- University of Regina



FemNorthNet would like to thank both the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada ([SSHRC](#)) and Status of Women Canada ([SWC](#)) for their funding.

FemNorthNet is actively recruiting Inuit, Métis and First Nations student researchers and placements. If you are interested in applying please send your resume and your area of interest to

[info@criaw-icref.ca](mailto:info@criaw-icref.ca)

FemNorthNet is a 5-year initiative of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW)

