

# **CRIAW-ICREF's Experience with Intersectionality**

**A summary**



Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women  
Institut canadien de recherches sur les femmes

## 1990s – Changing Practices to be more inclusive

CRIAW-ICREF's experience with intersectionality started in the 1990s, responding to the fact that the experiences of women who faced multiple forms of inequality and oppression were not taken up within the women's movement. CRIAW-ICREF acted to apply intersectionality through its programs and organizational structure in this decade in three main ways.

### Conferences

These conferences brought women together to identify and address the needs of marginalized groups of women.

- Women and Disabilities (1990)
- Making the Links (1992), between racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism and other systems of oppression.

### Organizational Change

- Organizational review (1992). Examined how CRIAW-ICREF's organizational structures hindered or facilitated the participation of diverse groups of women.
- Research ethics committee formed (1994). Developed policy on feminist research ethics, intellectual property, collaborative research processes, and on research partnerships.

### Publications & Research

- The More We Get Together (from Women and Disabilities conference) (1992)
- Learning from Diversity: An Information Tool on, by, and for Racial Minority and Immigrant Women (1992)
- Looking for Change: A Documentation of National Women's Organizations Working Towards Inclusion and Diversity (1992)
- Feminist Research Ethics: A Process (1996)
- The Challenges and Methodologies for Research on Lesbians (1997)
- Health of Lesbian and Bisexual Women (1998)

## 2000s – Evolution & Shifting Language of Intersectionality

At the start of this decade CRIAW-ICREF undertook comprehensive and intensive measures to develop and implement an integrated feminist analysis (IFA). Over the decade the CRIAW-ICREF Board became more diverse and put intersectionality at the centre of its Strategic Plan. CRIAW-ICREF's thinking about intersectionality evolved and language shifted through this period from IFAs to a more developed intersectional analysis.

### Organizational Change

- A new board structure adopted in 2001 required more diverse representation from equity groups identified as racialized women, women with disabilities, lesbians and bisexual women, transwomen, and Aboriginal women, in addition to regional representation and for 25% of board members to be Francophone.

### Strategic Plan

- Phase One (2002-2003): Comparative analysis of gender and diversity in 18 public policy research institutes. Contrasted Integrated Feminist Analysis to government terms of 'gender-based analysis' and 'gender diversity analysis,' and to 'intersectional race and gender analysis.'
- Phase Two (2004-2005): Roundtable of feminist policy researchers from different environments to move integrated feminist analysis from theory to practice and beyond identity politics.
- Phase Three (2006-2009): Developing mechanisms and strategies to facilitate CRIAW-ICREF and other organizations' use of Intersectional Feminist Frameworks in public policy development.

### Publications & Research

- Linking Research, Action and Social Change within an Integrated Feminist Analysis: CRIAW Initiative for Status of Women Canada 2003-2004 (2003)
- Fact sheets on Women's Experience of Racism: How race and gender interact (2002), Immigrant and Refugee Women (2003), Women, Peace and Security (2004), and Women and Poverty (2005)
- Women's Economic and Social Justice: Overcoming Poverty and Exclusion. Strategic Overview paper and creation of a Think Tank (2005)
- Intersectional Feminist Frameworks: A Primer (2006)
- Intersectional Feminist Frameworks: An Emerging Vision (2006)
- Everyone Belongs: A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality (2007)

## 2010s – Applying Intersectionality to CRIAW-ICREF’s work

In the decade from 2010 to 2020 CRIAW-ICREF has focused on applying intersectionality in its projects and developing a deeper understanding of gender equality and intersectional analysis.

### Feminist Northern Network (FNN)

- Organizational structure was co-led by academic and community co-chairs; involved cross-section of women (academic, community activists, Indigenous, immigrant, women with disabilities, northern and southern inhabitants, younger and older...)
- Used an “intersectional gendered analysis” and feminist participatory action research to identify impacts and implications of resource extraction in 3 Northern Canadian communities for diverse groups of northern women.

### Changing Public Services (CPS)

- Researched and documented what is changing in public services, the impacts on diverse groups of women, and the actions needed in response to these changes.
- Applied intersectional feminist analysis to research and publications on public sector precarity, violence against women, experiences of women with disabilities, and experiences of women in the federal public sector exercising their rights in the workplace.

### Policy4Women

- A community-university collaboration that explored new ways to bring feminist voices into discussions of public policy in Canada.
- CRIAW-ICREF produced accessible materials on policy issues and options and encouraged all briefing note authors to use an intersectional analysis.

### Action on Systemic Barriers to Women's Participation in Local Government Project

- A collaboration between CRIAW-ICREF and Women Transforming Cities, which focused on two municipalities in British Columbia.
- To identify and institute on-going solutions to address barriers to diverse women in local government as elected decision-makers, as staff, and committee members.

- To “enhance the understanding and awareness of the importance of using a ‘gender-based intersectional lens’ to guide policies and actions, and to increase the use of such a lens throughout municipal departments and functions.”

### The Feminist Word

- The Feminist-Word, or The F-Word, was started in 2015 by young feminists to describe their thoughts and priorities about women’s equality in Canada.
- Issues have focused on such topics as the struggles of Indigenous women with sex discrimination in the Indian Act and the invisibility of racialized women in the academy.

### Building Capacity for Intersectional Advocacy on Women’s Issues

- CRIAW-ICREF reached out to over 300 women’s organizations across Canada from 2017 and 2020 through a survey, regional meetings, training sessions, and interviews, to identify what is needed to advance advocacy on women’s issues.
- In 2019 and 2020 representatives of women’s organizations were invited to in-person training sessions to pilot new CRIAW-ICREF materials that aim to deepen our understanding of what intersectionality means in theory and practice. Feedback from a diverse range of women’s groups was invaluable to refine and produce the final materials: a new primer on feminist intersectionality, a gender equality and intersectional analysis toolkit, and a guide to feminist intersectionality that identifies how to build inclusive networks to strengthen our collective capacity for advocacy on women’s issues.

#### Acknowledgments

CRIAW acknowledges its presence and work on the Indigenous Territories. We respectfully recognize the legacy of colonization upon Indigenous Peoples.

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**Publisher:** Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF)  
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**ISBN:** 978-1-77483-002-4