

UP SHE RISES!



November
7th-9th

A Public Forum Presented by the Newfoundland & Labrador Historical Society about Women and Gender in Newfoundland & Labrador History

Friday
Nov. 7
@ 7:00 pm

THE ROOMS

Dr. Margot Duley presents "Fishing for Answers": Does the Newfoundland Women's Suffrage Movement neatly fit into other scholarship on suffrage?

Saturday
Nov. 8
@ 10:00 am

**BRUNEAU
CENTRE,
MUNL**

Opening Plenary by Dr. Linda Kealey, followed by panels and roundtables on NL women's and gender history

Saturday
Nov. 8
@ 6:00 pm

**WEDGWOOD
CAFÉ**

Dinner followed by songs & primary source readings, featuring Dr. Anita Best and others.
(Seating for dinner is limited)

Sunday
Nov. 9
@ 10:00 am

**BRUNEAU
CENTRE,
MUNL**

Panels and roundtables on NL women's and gender history

Sunday
Nov. 9
@ 7:00 pm

**COLONIAL
BUILDING**

NL women's history as expressed through poetry and fiction



Heritage NL



Inspired by the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in NL, Up She Rises! constitutes a public discussion about women and gender in NL history. It involves academics, researchers, activists, writers, and poets who have studied and written about women and gender in NL history. This is a capstone event to the anniversary year of women's suffrage in this province. We hope it will inspire people to learn more about the historical experiences of women and gender-diverse folks and to continue the work of engaging with our collective history.

Friday, November 7th (The Rooms, 9 Bonaventure Avenue)

7:00–8:00 pm

Opening Remarks

Her Honour, The Honourable Joan Marie Aylward, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

Keynote Address

Margot I. Duley – *“Fishing for Answers”: Does the Newfoundland Women's Suffrage Movement neatly fit into other scholarship on suffrage?*

8:00-9:00 pm

Reception

Saturday, November 8th (Bruneau Centre, Memorial University)

10:00-10:10 am

Heidi Coombs – *Introductory Remarks*

10:10-10:40 am

Opening Plenary

Linda Kealey – *Women's and Gender History on the Rock: Looking Back and Forging Ahead*

10-Minute Break

10:50-12:20 pm

Roundtable: Second Wave Feminism

Barbara Doran, Noreen Golfman, Peg Norman, Gerry Rogers

12:20-1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00-1:40 pm

Session 1: Women, Spirituality, and Community

Willeen Keough – *The 'old hag' meets St. Brigid: Irish-Newfoundland women and the intersection of spiritualities on the southern Avalon*

Bonnie Morgan – *Sensory Anglicans: Women, Textile Making and Faithfulness in 20th-century Newfoundland*

Saturday, November 8th (Bruneau Centre, Memorial University)

1:40-2:20 pm

Session 2: Mothers, Families, and the State

Terry Bishop Stirling – *Regulating Families: The Work of the St. John's Welfare Office, 1936-1943*

Rebecca Ralph – *Problems with Pensions, Licensure, and Discrimination: Married Women and the Teacher Shortage in Post-Confederation Newfoundland and Labrador*

20-Minute Break

2:40-3:40 pm

Session 3: Gender and Home Production

Meaghan Walker – *Production and Consumption in Bonavista: Menswear Sales as a Method to Understand Women's Home Production using the Ryan's Merchant Records, 1860-1880s*

Raymond Blake & Hayward Blake – *South Coast Woman: The Personal Is Historical and History Is Personal*

Andrea O'Brien – *Some Old White Guy Lived There: Rethinking Existing Narratives and Searching for Herstory*

3:40-4:00 pm

Provincial Historic Commemorations Designation

Saturday, November 8th (Wedgwood Café, 17 Elizabeth Avenue)

6:00-9:00 pm

Supper

Anita Best & Ellen Power – *Musical Entertainment*

Readings of letters representing women's experiences

Sunday, November 9th (Bruneau Centre, Memorial University)

10:00-11:00 am

Session 4: Politics, Agency, and Leadership

Tracey Evans-Rice & Andrea Procter – *Stories of Strength and Connection: Celebrating Inuit Women's Leadership in Nunatsiavut*
Meret Ebsary – *Trusted to Choose?: Women and the Politics of Control in Newfoundland (1890-1940)*

Sonja Boon – *"Widows of the West End" and other monikers: Pseudonyms in letters to Smallwood, 1948-51*

Sunday, November 9th (Bruneau Centre, Memorial University)

10-Minute Break

11:10-12:10 pm **Session 5: Women, Land, and Sea**

Erica Hurley

Vicki Hallett – *How to Escape a Net: Women, Cod, and Multi-species Possibilities in Archival Research in Newfoundland & Labrador*

Heidi Coombs – *"Women came and helped her plant the garden": Gardening, Gender, and the Grenfell Mission in Northern Newfoundland & Labrador, 1906-1949*

12:10-12:50 pm Lunch

12:50-1:50 pm **Session 6: Creative Approaches to Women's & Gender History**

Julia Laite – *Sketches of a Life? Toward a Biography of Shanawdithit*

Kristina Bidwell – *Reading Academic Colonialism in Labrador: Lydia Campbell and the John Mason Hastings Diary*

Rhea Rollman – *Reading Between the Lines: Researching Marginalized Community Histories in Newfoundland and Labrador*

20-Minute Break

2:10-3:40 pm **Roundtable: Challenges and Ways Forward (Up She Rises: Redux)**

Terry Bishop Stirling, Margot Duley, Vicki Hallett, Willeen Keough, Julia Stryker

3:40-4:00 pm Rebecca Ralph – Closing Remarks

Sunday, November 9th (Colonial Building, St. John's)

7:00-9:30 pm **NL Women's History in Poetry and Fiction**

Mary Dalton, Leahdawn Helena, Robin McGrath, Trudy Morgan-Cole, Agnes Walsh

Reception

NLHS Women's History Symposium Subcommittee: Heidi Coombs (co-Chair), Vicki Hallett (co-Chair), Terry Bishop Stirling, Lisa Daly, Margot Duley, Bill English, Willeen Keough, Andrea Procter, Rebecca Ralph, and Meaghan Walker, with Katherine Morton Richards from Heritage NL.

Anita Best C.M. is a teacher, broadcaster, recording artist, and well-known singer from Newfoundland. Best has spent a lifetime exploring, cataloguing and celebrating the rural Newfoundland lifestyle and culture. In the process she has become one of the province's most well-known traditional singers.

Terry Bishop Stirling is a retired professor of History and former Chair of the History Department at Memorial University. She has written numerous articles and presented papers on Newfoundland social and political history, with emphasis on health and welfare policy, women's history, and volunteerism. She is an active public historian who speaks to interested groups on many different aspects of the province's history. She has served on the executive of the NL Historical Society for over thirty years, including a term as President.

Hayward C. Blake was born in Pushthrough, an NL community that was resettled in 1969. He holds education degrees from Memorial University and the University of Toronto. He has served as an educator in rural NL and as an administrator in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. Hayward's leadership and commitment to education have been recognized with a Reader's Digest Leadership Award and by being named the Canadian Principal of the Year by the Canadian Association of Principals. Hayward is an active volunteer in his community, continuing his lifelong commitment to service and education.

Raymond B. Blake (PhD FRSC) is professor of history at the University of Regina and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He has written and edited more than 20 books on Canadian and Newfoundland history, focusing on nationalism, citizenship, and identity as well as 20th century politics. His most recent book *Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity* was awarded the 2025 Shagnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing from the Writers' Trust of Canada.

Sonja Boon is a writer, researcher, flutist, and teacher. The author, co-author, or editor of seven books, most recently *Dear Mr. Smallwood: Confederation in the words of those who lived it* (2025), Sonja is also a mentor in the MFA (creative nonfiction) program at the University of King's College.

Heidi Coombs (she/her) is an education specialist with the Faculty of Medicine and an independent historian. She has a PhD in history specializing in nursing with the Grenfell Mission and has numerous publications based on her research. She is active in the heritage and arts communities, serving as a longtime board member and past president of the NL Historical Society. In the folk arts community, she recently helped establish I's Not the B'y, a traditional session for women and gender-diverse musicians, with the NL Folk Arts Society.

Mary Dalton has published six poetry volumes, among them *Merrybegot*, *Red Ledger*, *Hooking*, and *Interrobang*, and as a prose miscellany, *Edge*. Her Pratt Lecture, *The Vernacular Strain in Newfoundland Poetry*, was released by Breakwater in 2022. Dalton served as Poet Laureate of St. John's 2019-2023. Her anthology, *Best Canadian Poetry*, is being launched at the Ship Pub on November 30.

Margot I. Duley is Professor Emerita of History and Women's Studies, Eastern Michigan University, and Dean Emerita, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Springfield. She has written extensively about the Newfoundland women's suffrage movement and related topics and is the editor and chief contributor to the *Cross Cultural Study of Women*, an interdisciplinary survey. Her most recent book is *From Silence to Suffrage: Women's Path to Citizenship in Newfoundland, 1803-1949* (Boulder Books, 2025). Dr. Duley is also a board member with the NL Historical Society and PerSistence Theatre.

Meret Ebsary (she/her), iBA, MSc, and 2025 Rhodes Scholar, is reading for a Master's in Comparative and International Education at the University of Oxford. Building on her research into women's suffrage and eugenics in Newfoundland, her work examines how history curricula shape political understanding and national identity.

Tracy Evans-Rice is an Inuk from Makkovik, Nunatsiavut. She received her Bachelor's degree from Carleton University and has worked with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Nunatsiavut Government. While there, she planned an Inuit Women's Conference in Nain, hosted Lunch 'n Learns, held Take Back the Night marches, and held workshops around Violence Prevention, Women in Leadership, and Women's well-being. She is now a Senior Policy Analyst with Nunatsiavut Affairs and a Master's student in Arctic and Subarctic Futures at the Labrador Campus, Memorial University.

Kristina Fagan Bidwell is a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Storytelling and Professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan. She grew up in St. John's and is a member of NunatuKavut Community Council. She currently leads a collaborative project that seeks to amplify urban Indigenous voices from St. John's and Saskatoon.

Noreen Golfman is happily retired after almost 40 years from Memorial University where she worked as a professor and senior administrator. Memorial conferred an Honorary Doctorate on her this year. Life in retirement has allowed her to continue engaging with the arts community in various ways, while serving on the advisory board of the not-for-profit Studiosity. She is now a regular podcaster for them on higher ed issues.

Vicki S. Hallett (she/her) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Gender Studies at Memorial University. Her research interests include the co-constitution of place and identity through life narratives, archival serendipity, and historical silences. She is Vice-President of the NL Historical Society and in 2024, served as interim Academic Editor at Memorial University Press.

Leahdawn Helena (she/they/nekm) is an award-winning playwright of Mi'kmaq and mixed Settler ancestry from the west coast of NL, now living in St John's. Their play, *Stolen Sisters*, won the Playwrights Guild of Canada John Palmer Award in 2024, and is available from Breakwater Books.

Linda Kealey is Professor Emerita at the University of New Brunswick. Before moving to UNB, she was a member of the History Department at Memorial University, 1980-2002, and became involved in creating the Women's Studies Programme. Select publications include *Pursuing Equality: Historical Perspectives on Women in Newfoundland and Labrador* (1993) and "Outport 'Girls in Service': Newfoundland in the 1920s and 1930s" in *Acadiensis* (2014). Her article "From Dreams of Equality to One Hundred Years of Struggle: Radical Women's Biographies in the History of Canadian Politics" appeared in *Rethinking Feminist History and Theory: Essays on Gender, Class and Labour* (2025).

Willen Keough is a retired Professor of History, Simon Fraser University. She has published extensively on gender, ethnicity, immigration, oral history, and communal memory in Newfoundland in the 18th–20th centuries. Her award-winning monograph, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860*, is available through Columbia University Press.

Julia Laite is Professor of History at Birkbeck, University of London. She publishes widely in gender and women's history, the history of migration and labour, and historical methodology. Her new book project will tell the story of the Beothuk woman Shanawdithit, the dilettante ethnographer William Epps Cormack, and her own Newfoundland ancestors.

Robin McGrath is a writer, journalist, and former academic specializing in Inuit culture and literature. She is the author of 26 books, the most recent of which is *Poems on the Long Finger*.

Bonnie Morgan (MJS/LLB, PhD) is a librarian and award-winning historian. She is the author of *Ordinary Saints: Women, Work and Faith in Newfoundland* (McGill-Queen's UP, 2019) and *Out on the Trail* (Running the Goat Books and Broadides, 2025). Bonnie works as Public Services Librarian at Memorial University's Centre for Newfoundland Studies.

Trudy Morgan-Cole has written seven Newfoundland historical novels, all focusing on women's experiences, as well as the play *The Mirror*, about pioneering Newfoundland suffragist Armine Nutting Gosling. Trudy is a retired educator living in St. John's and is currently working on a novel set in Ferryland in the mid-seventeenth century.

Social Worker **Peg Norman** helped to found and then manage Henry Morgentaler's clinic in St. John's. A cinematographer, she filmed and appears in the award-winning "My Left Breast," that documents her partner, Gerry Rogers' journey with breast cancer. They own the "Bees Knees" and the "Travel Bug," community-minded Water Street businesses.

Andrea O'Brien has a BA focusing on folklore, history, NL Studies, and English, a BEd, and a Masters in Folklore. She serves as Heritage NL's Register of Historic Places, Municipal Outreach Officer, Heritage Places Poster Contest coordinator, Historic Commemorations Program coordinator, and web manager. Andrea has worked 8 seasons at the Colony of Avalon in Ferryland and with the Folklore and Language Archives. She is also a founding board member of the Mummers Festival.

Ellen Power's performances are rooted in the musical heritage of her family: well-known singers, storytellers and fishermen from Placentia Bay. She has performed for nearly 25 years at festivals across Newfoundland. Sharing songs passed down through generations of Newfoundlanders before her, Ellen uses her voice to keep the old traditions alive.

Andrea Procter is an anthropologist with over 20 years of experience in working with Indigenous communities in Labrador and an Adjunct Professor at Memorial University. Her book, *A Long Journey: Residential Schools in Labrador and Newfoundland* (2020) won the 2021 Atlantic Canada Book Award for Scholarly Writing, the Canadian Historical Association's Clio Prize (Atlantic), and the NL Book Prize for Non-Fiction. She coordinated the Daughters of Mikak: Celebrating Inuit Women's Leadership project for the Tradition and Transition among the Labrador Inuit SSHRC Partnership.

Rebecca Ralph is a historian and Manager of Legislation with the Department of Education, Provincial Government of NL. She completed her PhD at the University of Calgary. Her SSHRC-funded research examined denominational pluralism in NL, which led to the development and entrenchment of the denominational school system in NL during the 19th and early 20th century.

International award-winning filmmaker **Gerry Rogers** (she/her) loves loves loves making films. Based on the feminist activism she learned from so many fabulous feminists in NL in the 1980s and then at Studio D in Montreal she then went on to become the first out lesbian/gay elected to the NL House of Assembly in 2011. After serving 8 years she's back at making films and other trouble.

Rhea Rollmann (she/her) is an award-winning journalist, writer and author of *A Queer History of Newfoundland*. Among other distinctions her work has garnered three Atlantic Journalism Awards, the Andrea Walker Memorial Prize for Feminist Health Journalism, and in 2024 she was short-listed for the NL Human Rights Award.

Julia Stryker is the former Pratt Postdoc in NL Military, Naval, and Maritime History and current adjunct professor for Memorial University. She received her PhD in History at the University of Texas at Austin for her research into women's labour at sea in the nineteenth-century British empire. She is working with the Lloyd's Heritage Foundation and the Marine Institute to hold symposia on the history and current status of women in maritime industries, to develop resources promoting retention and recruitment as part of the Seafaring Women Aboard and Ashore Network (SWAAN).

Meaghan Walker was the inaugural 2021-2023 Ewart A. Pratt Postdoc of Naval, Military, and Maritime History at Memorial University and works closely with the Maritime History Archive. She studies maritime menswear in the British Empire (1660-1920). Her work has explored the clothing of merchant seafarers, Royal Navy sailors and marines, and now NL fishers largely in the long nineteenth century, with an emphasis on the adoption of ready-made or "slop" clothing by maritime



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