



# ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006

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## *Chairperson's Message*

It is once again that time of year to present the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women's 2005-2006 Annual Report. The past year has been an extremely busy year for Council members and staff.

We continue to work diligently in many areas in order to promote the awareness of the status of women through our many public and professional events. Our ultimate goal is a better society for women based on our values of justice and equality.

In March 2006, we launched our Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick. The purpose of the report card is to ensure that we have an accurate picture of the status of New Brunswick women. A snapshot of women is extremely important. We all know that there are many myths that exist regarding the status of women. Some myths say that women have reached equality and others say that nothing has changed.

Part of our mandate is to bring issues surrounding the status of women to the attention of the public and Government. That is the first step. Our report card demonstrated that the status of N.B. women is improving in some important areas however much change is needed in other areas. The Report Card is a very valuable tool that we and others utilize throughout the year.

You will also find in our annual report that we have had a very active calendar of events. We continue to work on many issues of interest such as the gender pay gap, childcare, violence against women, access to abortion services, Aboriginal women's issues, etc.

In order to be an effective Council we continue to make an effort to educate ourselves on issues of concerns to women. This past year we have made a concerted effort to educate ourselves on many issues that our First Nation sisters face on a daily basis. The issue of matrimonial real property is one example of many issues that we looked at. Much work remains to be done however the Council hopes to strengthen our partnerships with First Nations communities to work towards ensuring the well being of future First Nations generations.

As the Chairperson of the Council, I take this opportunity to thank each and every Council member for their continued commitment and support in making New Brunswick a better society for women and families.

I would also like to thank our staff for their dedication, spirit and vision in working to create a better world for women. It is indeed a pleasure to work with such a fine group of individuals.

Ginette Petitpas-Taylor  
Chairperson

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## WHO WE ARE

The members of the Advisory Council in 2005-2006 are:  
Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, Moncton, Chairperson appointed 2005  
Odette Richard, Westmorland Kent, appointed 2004, (Vice-Chairperson 2005)  
Joanne Barr, Greater Fredericton, appointed 2002  
Brenda Murphy, Greater Saint John, appointed 2003  
Jackie Matthews, Charlotte, appointed 2002  
C. Anne Cummings, Carleton, appointed 2002  
Christine Augustine, Miramichi, appointed 2003  
Nathalie Boivin, Chaleur, appointed 2003  
Kathleen V. Archibald, Restigouche, appointed 2002  
Gisèle Bujold-Michaud, Madawaska/Victoria, appointed 2002  
Patricia J. Allen, Kings/Albert, appointed 2002  
Sophie Robichaud, Acadian Peninsula, appointed 2004

## WHAT WE DO

The Advisory Council was created by provincial legislation to advise the Minister on issues of concern to women and to bring these issues before the public and the government. The Mission of the Advisory Council is to promote equity for women in all sectors of New Brunswick society. The Council meets four times per year to study issues and adopt recommendations for action. On matters of interest to women, the Council:

- advises governments
- recommends laws, policies and practices to the N.B. government
- facilitates networking amongst women's groups
- gathers, researches and disseminates information
- increases awareness on issues, programs and services.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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## COUNCIL MEETINGS

The 13 members of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women hold 4 meetings per year, each in a different part of the province. Quarterly meetings usually include a public session as well as board and member development activities, such as orientation to board responsibilities and media training. Members report on their activities and on the concerns of women in their region and decisions are made on priority issues and actions.

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**May 5-6, 2005, Dalhousie, N.B.**

The action plan covering the period ending April 2005 was reviewed and a new plan for May 2005 to December 2006 was adopted. Because the Council decided to collaborate with the Commission on Legislative Democracy during the past year, an unforeseen opportunity to promote electoral reform, action on some other objectives was postponed. The 2005-2006 budget was adopted. Advisory Council members received copies of the documentary film *Pioneer Women of New Brunswick*.

### **Women and Politics**

Council initiatives to increase women's participation in electoral politics have included a monthly email newsletter on women and politics to subscribers and Lunch and Learn meetings in April 2005 in 3 locations and a conference call for those who could not attend. Similar points were raised in all forums, in particular support for some kind of training for women, criticism of the Old Boys' hold on electoral politics and of political parties' role. There was little interest in forming new groups to pursue this work. Among the suggestions: the publication of best practices among initiatives by political parties and a provincial conference. Council members discussed ways of getting women's caucus/wings within political parties and party riding associations involved to reach out to women candidates.

### **Meeting with N.B. Aboriginal Peoples Council**

Barb Cameron provided an overview of the origins, role and activities of the N.B. Aboriginal Peoples Council, which represents Aboriginal people living off-reserve and offers programs in areas of personal and economic development, social infrastructure and political issues.

### **Position Statement on Reproductive Health**

New Brunswick has a dismal record on many issues related to reproductive health: high STI rates; high birth rates to teenaged mothers; unequal and limited access to abortion services; limited prenatal and postnatal care; high caesarean and hysterectomy rates and wide regional disparities; low breastfeeding rates and

regional disparities in the proportion of women who get Pap tests. The Advisory Council adopted a position statement, urging the provincial government to address the serious policy and service gaps by developing a multifaceted strategy on reproductive health emphasizing health promotion and collaborative care. The government's action plan should include the integration of midwives into the provincial health system, investigation and action on high caesarean and hysterectomy rates, reduction of incidence of STIs and unintended pregnancies and improved access to abortion services. An additional recommendation to government will be the creation of a perinatal committee to serve as an advisory body to the Department of Health and Wellness, to help coordinate policies and programs for maternal and newborn care in the province.

### **Media training**

A workshop on working with media was held for members.

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**August 29-30, 2005, Metepenagiag (Red Bank), N.B.**

### **Meeting with Representatives of First Nations Women**

The Advisory Council met with Chief Joanna Bernard of the Madawaska First Nation; Tamara Sanifas of the Fredericton Native Friendship Centre; Natalie McBride of Gignoo Transition House in Fredericton; Fern Paul, a UNB Sociology Master's student researching Aboriginal Women's Issues; Amanda Martin, the NB/PEI Representative for Assembly of First Nations' Youth Council; Teena Paul and Cheryl Ward from the Committee for the Career Advancement of Aboriginal Women; Barbara Martin who is conducting research on Aboriginal women; Pam Ward of Metepenagiag Heritage Park; and M.J. Peters and Elizabeth Coburn of N.B. Aboriginal Women's Council.

The First Nations women representatives provided an overview of some of the issues faced by their communities, outlined the activities of various organizations and services, and responded to questions from the Council members. Some of the highlights:

- Bill C-31 is an emerging critical issue, given the young Aboriginal population. It has a negative impact for the descendants of many Aboriginal women who married non-Aboriginal men. Loss of Indian status has led to financial pressures on Band resources when women and children regain status.
- Aboriginal women, especially the majority who live off-reserve, face severe problems, in areas of health, education and housing.
- The importance of reconnecting with and transmitting identity, language and culture is a paramount issue for many Aboriginal women.

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## COUNCIL MEETINGS (continued...)

- Aboriginal women's groups and services struggle because of lack of core funding.
- Some Aboriginal women are calling for a designated Aboriginal seat on the Advisory Council.
- The Committee for the Career Advancement of Aboriginal Women has a project aimed at gathering testimonies from women, including youth, elders and chiefs and is planning a forum in 2007 to report on the findings.

### Maternity and Parental Benefits

The Advisory Council accepted the recommendations of the study by Women's Network of PEI on maternity and parental benefits under the Employment Insurance program. Currently, many women including the self-employed, seasonal and part-time workers and those not recently employed, do not qualify for benefits and the benefit amount can vary depending on the level of unemployment in the area. Some parents cannot afford to draw just 55% of their regular earnings.

### Taxation

The Advisory Council adopted position statements on two taxation issues brought to the Council's attention by members of the public:

The Council favours changes to the federal Income Tax Act to make spousal support payments non-taxable for the recipient and non-deductible for the payor. About 740 people, mostly women, received spousal support in N.B. in 2003-04.

The Council also adopted a position on the taxation of one- and two-earner families, including recommendations to improve the supports for families in the income tax system as well as in socio-economic policy. Council said people with dependent children should pay lower taxes than people without, to compensate for the costs of raising children.

### Public event: August 29, 2005, Metepenagiag, N.B.

Some Aboriginal women joined the Council members to view a documentary film, *Native Women: Politics*, dealing with issues surrounding women's status and role in decision-making, the Band government system introduced by the federal Indian Act and self-government.

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November 3-4, 2005, Bathurst, N.B.

### Meeting with Women from Pabineau First Nation

A few women from Pabineau First Nation joined the Council members for lunch and an informal exchange about their priority issues: the need to increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal women, problems accessing resource rights and child care and the assimilating effect of Bill C-31.

The divisive impact of the Bill was evident in the situation of two of the women present: although they are related, their children have different status because some are descended from male status line and some from female. The women noted a lack of services for battered women on reserve and said they were unsatisfied by the response of local RCMP to domestic violence calls.

The Council decided to develop a blueprint for action, for consideration at the Advisory Council's March 2006 quarterly meeting, identifying the changes needed and the actions to be taken by governments and agencies, including the Advisory Council, on issues of concern to First Nations women.

### Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

The Advisory Council discussed the UN human rights treaty ratified by Canada 25 years ago, which aims to ensure women's equal access to political and public life. Countries who sign it must take pro-active measures to uphold its provisions and must report every four years to the UN. A new national feminist group, FAFIA, is planning a campaign throughout 2006 to highlight the need for government action on the most pressing problems identified by the UN in its 2003 review of Canada's last report (discrimination against Aboriginal women, women's poverty, inaccessibility of civil legal aid and Court Challenges for provincial cases, violence against women, marginalization of immigrant women and core-funding for women's organizations). Canada reports again to the Committee in 2007.

### Coalition for Pay Equity

Anne-Marie Gammon, Johanne Perron and Huberte Gautreau of the Coalition provided an overview of the group's efforts and discussed next steps in favour of pay equity. The Advisory Council and the Coalition will be monitoring how the government's Wage Gap Action Plan is implemented. Areas of mutual concern include the establishment of independent monitoring mechanisms, the development of good tools for employers, ensuring the participation of women employees in the process, and defining how change is to be measured during the voluntary period.

### Imagining Public Policy to Meet Women's Economic Security Needs

Brenda Murphy, the Advisory Council member for the Saint John region, provided an overview of the conference she attended on women's economic security needs and public policy responses. The conference underlined the impetus for change amid the hostile political climate, the need to view poverty from a human rights perspective, the need for a "livable income", the importance of valuing unpaid work and the need to view child care as

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## COUNCIL MEETINGS (continued...)

part of community development.

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March 9-10, 2006, Woodstock, N.B.

### Advisory Council's 2005-2006 Workplan

The Advisory Council discussed the current workplan, which covers the period ending in December 2006 in anticipation of the development of a new 18-month workplan at the next quarterly meeting.

### Meetings and Conference calls

The Advisory Council approved dates and locations for three quarterly meetings and agreed that a fourth meeting would be conducted via conference call, tagged on to an event or devoted to a professional development activity.

### Government Action Plan on Violence Against Women

The Advisory Council met with Lise Bellefleur, of the Violence Prevention Initiatives, Women's Issues Branch, Executive Council Office. Following an overview of the latest five-year action plan on violence against women, members expressed concern that the plan does not adequately ensure that services are consistent throughout the province, should put more focus on prevention and recognize the links between the sex trade and addictions. Members sought more details on the promised expansion of sexual assault crisis services.

### Age Differential in Sexual Relations

The Advisory Council adopted a position statement on age differential and age of consent, recommending maintaining the current age of consent at 14 years

along with the existing "close in age" exemption but reinforcing protection from sexual exploitation by making sexual activity unlawful where the 14 or 15 year old's sexual partner is more than 5 years older, and by improving the quality and availability of health education, prevention and treatment services.

### Report on Aboriginal Women's Issues

Representatives of Han Martin Associates presented a draft report, *Aboriginal Women in New Brunswick: Issues of Concern*, commissioned by the Advisory Council to summarize the actions needed to improve the situation and how the Advisory Council and other bodies might support Aboriginal women in their equality-seeking efforts. Members will provide feedback for the final version, to be adopted at a scheduled conference call.

### Multicultural Association of Carleton County

Erica Briggs of the Multicultural Association of Carleton County provided an overview of the group, which facilitates the integration of newcomers and promotes public acceptance of cultural diversity. Some of the major challenges facing immigrant women are isolation, finding employment and access to language classes given lack of childcare.

### Public event, March 9, 2006, Woodstock

About 70 people attended a presentation by Senator Sandra Lovelace Nicholas on "Aboriginal Women in Canada Today". The Senator spoke about violence against Aboriginal women and children, the destructive impact of the Indian Act and the imposition of Christianity on pre-contact attitudes towards women. The Senator invited individuals seeking redress to write to her.

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## ISSUES

### Aboriginal Women

In preparation of a blueprint for action in support of Aboriginal women, the Council held a working session with over 20 aboriginal women to discuss priorities.

The Advisory Council advised the provincial government that some of the problems facing Aboriginal women contravene their basic human rights. Solutions to the non-application to women in reserve communities of the Canadian Human Rights Act and of laws such as the *Marital Property Act* must be found.

Officials of the Advisory Council attended cultural awareness sessions on the First Nations held by the provincial government.

The Advisory Council hosted a lunch to welcome the new executive director of the Fredericton Native Friendship Center, attended by about 20 women's groups.

The Advisory Council brought to New Brunswick the former president of the Québec association of Aboriginal women and current assistant deputy minister in the Québec government *Secrétariat de la condition féminine*, Michèle Audette, to participate in the gender-based analysis training session provided to the employees of the Women's Issues Branch and to meet with the government's Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat.

### Poverty

The Advisory Council reiterated its concerns about the discriminatory impact of the economic unit policy in meetings with the Minister responsible for the status of women and the Minister of Family and Community Services. The Council researched and publicized the limited impact of new exemptions added to it in 2005. A presentation on the economic unit policy was made to a national conference of the Canadian Council on Social Development. In collaboration with the Common Front for Social Justice, a motion on the economic unit policy was developed for municipalities and associations.

The Advisory Council covered the cost of translation of a study on welfare in New Brunswick by Ysabel Provencher and Chantal Bourassa, of the Université de Moncton, *Life On Social Assistance In New Brunswick - Or "If Welfare Owns You, You Can't Do Nothing"*, and made it available on its internet site.

### Family policy

In support of a rural model for child care in New Brunswick, the Advisory Council organized one-day sessions in Woodstock and in Shédiac plus a Lunch & Learn and meetings with bureaucrats with representatives of Rural Voices for Child Care. A report from the sessions was widely circulated. The Council was invited to participate in two Premier's consultations, one on services to families and one on the economy. In both, the Council raised the importance of child care to children and to the economy. The Advisory Council participated with

community groups in a meeting with the Minister of Family and Community Services to discuss child care services and federal funding. A rural child care initiative was proposed to the government. We assisted community groups in mounting a campaign in support of a federal-provincial deal to improve the quality of regulated child care services.

We organized meetings with the Minister of Family and Community Services as well as a Lunch & Learn for Lynne Wannan of Australia who was touring to speak on lessons learned from the commercialization of child care in Australia.

The Advisory Council gave a presentation on family policies to the francophone association of municipalities and subsequently was consulted by a city looking into adopting a family policy.

### Pay Gap

In monitoring the work being done by government on a plan to close the wage gap, the Council expressed major concerns with the orientation of tools to be provided to employers. The Council also reiterated the importance of independent monitoring and evaluation after five years of voluntary measures, and of female employees participating fully in the process of closing the wage gap.

The Advisory Council was invited to present its recent study of the cost of the current pay gap at the 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Women's Policy Research Conference in Washington, D.C.

In collaboration with community groups, the Council sponsored a visit by the President of Quebec's pay equity commission for meetings with the public and government officials.

### Health

On the issue of the continued limited access to abortion, the Council collaborated with Health Canada on a challenge of the provincial government policy on abortion.

The Council publicized its newly adopted Reproductive Health position statement, and took the lead on several related issues, including breastfeeding, abortion and maternity care services. Access to emergency contraception and pharmacies' violation of privacy was commented publicly. A complaint on the issue was laid with the Ombudsman and a complaint to the Privacy Commissioner of Canada was facilitated.

### Violence

The Advisory Council participates in the ongoing Minister's Working Group on Violence Against Women and a committee researching the use of conditional sentencing in cases involving violence. Meetings were held with the Justice Minister to discuss the issues of custody and violence and of domestic death reviews.

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## ISSUES (continued...)

The Advisory Council covered half of the cost of translation of the Start-Up Guide for Peer Support And Social Action - Women Helping Women Break the Cycle of Violence, by Support for Single Parents, Inc. and made it available on the Council internet site.

### Home Support

A campaign for improved home support services continued. A Labour Force Adjustment Committee for Home Support Workers to find solutions to the recruitment and retention of home support workers was set up by three government departments and the Advisory Council was invited to be one of its 12 members. The Committee's final report was presented to the Ministers in March 2006. Its recommendations propose changes to the scope of the work, the required training, and support reimbursement

of travel time and costs, paid sick time, and a fair compensation system based on an independent assessment, relevant to female-dominated work in the caring field. The Council was invited to give a presentation on home support to the National Healthcare Leadership Conference on Renewal of the Health System and to the annual meeting of the provincial Home Support Association.

### Gender-Based Analysis

The Advisory Council staff was invited to give training on gender-based analysis to Executive Council Office's Women's Issues Branch. The Advisory Council has advised officials within provincial government departments that it is available for consultation on gender-based analysis.

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## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

### INFORMATION SERVICE

The Advisory Council provincial office regularly provides information to hundreds of groups and individuals, mostly through a toll-free line and email.

### PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

**N.B. Women's News / NouvELLES** - This weekly email bulletin about women's issues is sent by request to over 2,600 New Brunswickers and is archived on the Council internet site.

**Internet Site** - The Advisory Council internet site, [www.acswccf.nb.ca](http://www.acswccf.nb.ca), provides all current Council documents for viewing and downloading. Individuals can also subscribe to the e-newsletter, submit their name to the Talent Bank, add their group to the list of women's groups and check what equality-related events are occurring. Several thousand visitors use the site each month, with the most popular publications being the Report Card on the Status of Women and the brochures on sex and on living common law.

**Nancy's Award** - The Advisory Council sponsors an award to recognize student projects on New Brunswick women's history. Nancy's Award, named in honour of Nancy Morton, a woman who challenged her enslavement to a York County Loyalist in 1800, is one of the awards to be won by middle-level students participating in regional Heritage Fairs, a project of the Heritage Branch of the Culture and Sport Secretariat, Historica and the Department of Education. To be considered, the project must deal with some aspect of New Brunswick women's history and highlights an aspect of women's lives, their individual or group accomplishments or their individual or group struggle for equality and must be based on historical research.

**Events** - The Advisory Council regularly holds kiosks at fairs and conferences and participates in various workshops. Also in 2005-06, lunch & learns were organized in numerous locations on various topics, with over a thousand persons attending:

Federal pension programs;  
Judy Rebick speaking on The Making of a Feminist Revolution;  
Prostitution in New Brunswick;  
Dr. Peter Jaffe on Lessons Learned from Domestic Death Reviews;  
Maternity Care and Caesarean Rates;  
Breastfeeding;  
Aboriginal women and family violence;  
Economic unit/income assistance;  
Quebec's pay equity law with the President of the Pay Equity Commission;  
Commercialization of child care centers;

Global feminist solidarity day;  
Media bias against female politicians;  
Rural child care;  
Women in politics.

### RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

The Advisory Council met with several Ministers to discuss issues of concern to women relevant to their department. The Advisory Council has advised officials within provincial government departments that it is available for consultation or partnership on issues of concern to women. The Advisory Council Chairperson presented comments to the House of Commons finance committee conducting pre-budget consultations, with considerable discussion focused on the situation of Aboriginal women.

### RELATIONS WITH WOMEN'S GROUPS

The Advisory Council collaborated in 2005-06 in joint ventures with women's and equality seeking groups, including development of campaigns, collaboration on translation of resources and organization of events. The internet site of the Advisory Council includes documents from other equality-seeking groups in the province, and is offered as a clearinghouse for news about New Brunswick women and women's groups.

The Advisory Council assisted the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in organizing a provincial consultation attended by 15 women's group representatives and covered the expenses of a New Brunswick youth attending NAC's national consultation.

The Advisory Council was invited to participate in a Status of Women Canada consultation that brought together representatives of national groups, researchers and feminists, organized in view of Canada's response to UN CEDAW Committee in 2007.

The Advisory Council participated on the organizing committee for the États généraux of Acadian/francophone women planned for 2006.

### TALENT BANK OF NEW BRUNSWICK WOMEN

The Talent Bank of N.B. Women has accumulated over 250 résumés of women who have agreed to consider invitations to act as a resource or be considered for appointment.

### MEDIA

Several dozen media requests for interviews, information and names of potential resource persons were received in 2005-06. The Council regularly published opinion pieces. We also issued media releases on our 2006 Report Card on the Status of Women, child care services, rural child care and the high rate of caesareans in the province.

A print ad campaign aimed at youth was conducted to promote our e-newsletter and use of our internet site.

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## COMMUNITY RELATIONS (continued...)

In December 2005, the Advisory Council accepted an invitation to have a weekly column in the *Moncton Times & Transcript*. The column has generated interest in the

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

No complaint concerning the Advisory Council was filed with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in 2005-2006.

## PUBLICATIONS RELEASED IN 2005-2006

The following publications can be consulted at [www.acswccf.nb.ca](http://www.acswccf.nb.ca) or can be ordered from the Advisory Council.

*2006 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick* - a biennial publication that gathers available statistics on New Brunswick women and income, health, violence, education, paid and unpaid work, positions of influence and justice.

*Pictures of Poverty* - some New Brunswickers living in poverty and some obstacles to change.

*Birth: Vaginal Versus Caesarean Delivery* - A guide to making informed decisions on the issue.

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# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

March 31, 2006

