



Celebrating Our ACCOMPLISHMENTS



International
Women's
Day
March 8
2014

EMERGING FROM THE SHADOWS

Women in politics



— Cathie Roy with files from Toolbox March 2014

With the exception of School District #46 board of trustees where the women outnumber the men four to three and a woman, Betty Baxter, sits as the board chair, local politics reflect the national average of 21 per cent female political participation.

In addition to Baxter the elected women board members, Lori Dixon, Lori Pratt, and Christine Younghusband represent a good cross section of the local population both in age and cultural diversification. And this year for the first time ever a young woman, Maya Treuheit, a student from Chatelech Secondary School has been chosen to represent her peers at the board table.

While women make up 51 per cent of the population of the Sunshine Coast that number is not yet reflected on the local council and board. And given the lack of a mayor from either of the largest settlements on the Coast there is room for change.

Councillors Charlene SanJenko and LeeAnn Johnson are two members of the five-person Gibsons council. SanJenko is a first-term politician whose advocacy for women in leadership roles is an important part of her work career, while Johnson is a seasoned veteran well known for her championing of social issues on the Coast.

In Sechelt long-time union representative and NDP supporter Alice Lutes is in her second term as councillor, while newcomer Darnelda Siegers has looked for ways to save the District money as well as advance business in the area. The pair are two members of a seven-person council.

Two women are elected members of the Sunshine Coast Regional District board. Donna Shugar has represented Roberts Creek (Area D) for several terms. Her approachability and concern for her area is well documented. Lee Turnbull is also a familiar face at the SCRD table; she is very firm in representing the concerns of her constituents, the West Howe Sound, Area F population. The board consists

of five elected members including Shugar and Turnbull.

Around the world, there are far fewer women than men who are actively involved in politics. Among the countries where women predominate, Rwanda is at the top of the list! Indeed, the radical reworking of electoral and parliamentary processes remains a primary way to promote sexual equality in leadership roles.

It is the case both here and elsewhere that because women still assume most family and household responsibilities, their professional and financial situations are generally weaker. That makes it difficult for women wishing to enter politics to build a reputation and a public image. It is difficult to obtain the support of a political party; difficult to access networks and the necessary financing to support their work and electoral campaigns; and difficult to win over voters.

In many areas of the world, gender prejudice adds to the other obstacles that keep women in the minority in the upper levels of many different sectors, such as post-secondary education, business, and senior management. However, in Canada, it is encouraging to see that the role played by women is gradually moving them off the back benches. Influential women lead organizations of all types and occupy key political posts, such as provincial premier. Women are also parliamentary assistants, advisors, managers, and strategists; hopefully, some of them will dare to make the leap to become members of Parliament, cabinet ministers, and, one day, prime ministers.

Other women combine discretion and visibility with skill. Some first ladies leave their personal stamp on their country's political history, sometimes going so far as to eclipse the popularity of their famous politician husbands.

The face of politics is more feminine than it would first appear. So our congratulations should go to those who dare to contribute to our society's advancement in this way.



ALICE LUTES



BETTY BAXTER



CHARLENE SANJENKO



CHRISTINE YOUNGHUSBAND



DARNELDA SIEGERS



DONNA SHUGAR



LEE TURNBULL



LEEANN JOHNSON



LORI DIXON



LORI PRATT



MAYA TREUHEIT

