



# CFUW SUNSHINE COAST



VISIBLE VOICE – VOIX VISIBLE

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 8

[www.cfuwsc.org](http://www.cfuwsc.org)

MAY 2009

## Coming Events

Join us for our year-end luncheon  
The Sunshine Coast Golf & Country Club

**\*\*Monday June 8\*\***

Tickets \$20.

Please pay Elaine Clayden by June 1.  
A buffet lunch is provided. Fun for all!

\*\*\*\*\*

Come to a festive wine tasting  
Bursary Fundraiser

Friday, June 19

Cost \$20, includes great appies and good  
company.

\*\*\*\*\*

Our final general meeting:  
**Monday, June 22**  
A preview of next year and social at St.  
John's United

## May 25 General Meeting and AGM

Gather at 11.00 a.m.

St. John's United Church  
Davis Bay

We have a fun, interactive meeting  
planned, do join us. Dorothy Fraser  
will lead us in the Great Canadian  
Quiz, a team event with prizes.  
Guests welcome.

## Interest Groups

Nine of our 13 interest groups have  
already submitted year-end reports.  
Thank you.

Thinking of new interest groups or  
expanding existing ones?  
Let's see what we can come up with  
when our fall season starts.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Announcements and notices
- 2 President's message; ideas for next year's programs? And let's keep our herstory. ...
- 3 AGM info; notices. Article on the slow erosion of women's rights
- 4 Article on erosion of women's rights, and Bountiful, continued. Author: Jancis Andrews

## President's Message

With our AGM coming up on May 25, this will be my last "President's Message" before passing the gavel to Michele Stobie. I can hardly believe how fast this year has gone by.

It has been a privilege to serve as your President and I want to thank all of you for the encouragement and support you have given me. My special thanks to the Club Executive, the Bursary Board and members of special committees for your hard work throughout the year.

I joined CFUW - Sunshine Coast just over 4 years ago and found myself on the Executive as Second Vice President only a year later. At the time no one had stepped forward for that position and I agreed to serve rather reluctantly, feeling that as a very new member I was not well qualified for the job. I stipulated that I didn't want to move up to the Presidency but was willing to help out in the Vice President's role. Once on the Board, however, I learned a lot about the Club and realized how supportive and helpful my fellow Board members were. Gradually the idea of being President became less intimidating.

I've found the job challenging at times but it has also been extremely rewarding. I've learned about and been inspired by the work that the national and international organizations, local Clubs and members all across the country are doing in terms of advocacy, bursaries and support of women's issues. I've realized how highly regarded our Club is in the local community and within CFUW as a whole and have been proud to be our representative. I've gotten to know other women across the country and made new friends within our own Club. I know this experience will enrich my future involvement with our Club and I urge you to give Board membership a try.

*Stephanie*

### IT'S TIME TO PLAN NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMS

Programs are always a highlight of our Club's regular meetings.

We've had a wonderful selection again this year. It's now time to plan for the 2009-2010 program season.

**If you have a suggestion for a program, please send your idea to Janet Smith, Program Chair, [janetksmith@dccnet.com](mailto:janetksmith@dccnet.com).**

A small planning meeting will be held immediately following the May 25 meeting. **If you are interested in participating, please contact Stephanie at [slomax@telus.net](mailto:slomax@telus.net)**

### Let's keep our history (herstory?)

During the past few years, Joyce Fitzpatrick, Patti Gunning and Mary McKinnon have been our CFUW historians.

They've had a lot of enjoyment, adding to the collection of information about our CFUW, which had been gathered over the previous years. Much of this has been recorded with Ann Watson in the CFUW archives at the Sechelt Public Library.

Mary, Joyce and Patti feel that it's time for others to take on this responsibility. (It's not a lot of work.) They're sure that some of our members would enjoy this challenge.

"We would be pleased to help and give any suggestions needed to the new historians," says Mary. Give her, Joyce or Patti a call. We don't want our herstory to be lost. ...

**News Items from the BC Regional AGM**

- ◆ Both regional resolutions passed (Addressing Climate Change; Food Security for BC)
- ◆ No National or Provincial dues increases are proposed for 2009/2010
- ◆ 3 BC Clubs dissolved this year (Kamloops, Penticton and Trail)
- ◆ CFUW National’s website is being revised

**A slow erosion of women’s rights**

*Bountiful isn’t just about a small group of women in rural BC. Or about their children, many of whom are forced to have sex when underage. This is abuse. This issue is raising many more questions about women’s rights here in BC and in Canada.*

*At our last meeting, Jancis Andrews spoke to us about Bountiful. The following is an edited version of her excellent talk.*

Bountiful started around 1940 with two families and did not explode into public consciousness until around 1990, when “celestial wife” Debbie Palmer fled with her 8 children and informed the RCMP about sexual exploitation and lawlessness. Although the RCMP recommended charges, then AG Colin Gabelman did not prosecute.

There are many issues around Bountiful. One is the practice of polygamy, which contravenes Section 293 of the Charter; another is sexual exploitation of underage girls, which contravenes Section 153. Gabelman lumped the two together, called it polygamy, and said he’d been advised not to prosecute. Polygamy *might* be protected by the Charter under the freedom of religion guarantees.

No group in Canada has a Charter right to collect women and girls as concubines in harems, force sex on them, deny birth control, limit their education to cooking, cleaning and childcare, or to trade them. At Bountiful, wives and children can be taken from one man and given to another. Anyone who protests is threatened with burning in Hell.

By his refusal to act, Gabelman gave the green light to polygamy and sexual exploitation of young girls. Bountiful has grown to about 1,400 inhabitants from about 400. Bountiful is not a religion; it is a cult.

*Continued on next page*

**GET CONNECTED, STAY IN TOUCH**

CFUW National Office produces two electronic newsletters:

- ✓ **CFUW Week in Review**  
A weekly summary of women’s news from home and around the world
- ✓ **CFUW National Update**  
A monthly review of key issues looking for your involvement, as well as the latest outreach materials and CFUW news

To subscribe to one or both newsletters please email:  
Colleen Burns at  
[cfuwcomm@rogers.com](mailto:cfuwcomm@rogers.com)

**Congratulations Rosemarie**

Rosemarie Blenkinsop has agreed to stand as Vice President. Thank you, on behalf of all of us.

Incoming President Michele Stobie says that Rosemarie is unsure of how much time is needed for her new position on the Board of Directors for Elder College. Michele graciously promised that the two of them would be “co-presidents” the following year.

This type of job sharing is done in other clubs and we can try it out. We have the year to determine if there needs to be a change to our by-laws to allow for it for one term.

Now, let’s find a few assistants where we still have gaps in our incoming board roster.

**A slow erosion** (*continued*)

Bountiful slid into obscurity until 2002, when the National Post ran a story that BC was a haven for polygamists. Crown Counsel Herman Rohrmoser had announced that Section 293 proscribing polygamy was now invalid and would not be enforced in BC. Who gave him this right? Parliaments write the law, not Crown Counsel.

In 2002 our branch wrote to AG Geoff Plant. He replied that it was a question of competing rights. We wrote many letters, to no avail. CBC and Global TV aired programs on Bountiful, and Blackmore appeared on TV. Plant said he was not aware that any girl had complained to the RCMP; if they did, the RCMP would investigate. CFUW and others wrote that the girls would not complain because they were threatened with hell fire. It was up to outsiders to protect them. No action was taken.

Thanks to Daphne Bramham's excellent articles on Bountiful, hundreds of Canadians began pressuring Minister Plant to act. Nothing happened, then he resigned and Wally Oppal became AG. Although he's prosecuting Winston Blackmore and Jim Oler under 293 for practicing polygamy, he is not prosecuting them under 153, even although the evidence of sexual exploitation is irrefutable. Men who have sex with underage children are pedophiles. Winston Blackmore may be the only well-known pedophile to get away with his crimes, because he's invoked religion.

It will cost millions to prosecute Blackmore and Oler. If the RCMP charge every man in Bountiful who has had sex with an underage "wife," then many men could be jailed, throwing the community into chaos.

Unlike a same sex couple, concubines are not entitled to share in their "husband's" health or life insurance, medical benefits, dental plan, or pension. Only the first, legally married "wife" is entitled to his estate. The other women have no legal claim.

There are numerous international, national and BC laws or covenants that protect women against the discriminatory practice of polygamy. Women's rights are being ignored. Around the world, women's rights are under widespread attack. In Europe, fundamentalist male Muslims are pressuring

governments to institute Sharia for family disputes, even though Muslim women beg them not to.

The UK is allowing Sharia to settle marital disputes in Muslim families, with the support of Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. Now the UK has two systems of law for its citizens. Although multiple marriages cannot be performed legally, imams perform the ceremony. Polygamists bring extra wives into the UK. Last year the British government voted to pay them a support allowance, against the taxpayer's protests. The UK does not prosecute female genital mutilation and battered wives in Muslim areas don't receive police support.

There is a move afoot in the Common Market to legalize incest between consenting adults. In Canada, a Muslim group in Toronto has petitioned the federal government to allow polygamy. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty considered allowing Sharia law for disputes within Muslim families, even though Canadian Muslim women begged him not to do so.

It'll take about 5 years for 293 to work its way to the Supreme Court. I'm 95% confident that the Court will find 293 constitutional. Yet some women professors such as Martha Bailey and Beverly Baines of Queens say polygamy should be decriminalized and that polygamy is acceptable as long as the women consent.

Decriminalization will have the same affect as legalization. It will open the door to polygamists and Bountiful will double and re-double.

We cannot pick and choose which parts of the charter we will uphold and which we will not. For the sake of abused children, pedophiles must be charged with their crimes whether the child complains or not.

This is where respected groups like CFUW can play such an important part. Let your voices be heard. All citizens must come up to the standard of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We owe this to the suffragettes, to our daughters and granddaughters. Misogynistic forces are rich and powerful, but I will leave you with a saying which I believe is true. It is: **Women, united, will never be defeated.**