



FEMINIST UNIVERSITY

Interim Report, Spring 2019

Feminist University Project Background/Vision:

This project is inspired by the ongoing Feminist University Project at Concordia University led by Simone de Beauvoir Principal and Political Science Professor Dr. Kimberley Manning. The central tenet of the initiative is that the provision of institutional support, compensation, and recognition for initiatives focused on creating and supporting inclusivity in both the university and broader community is a growing and vital need.

The project draws on an intersectional framework to evaluate how equity, representation, and inclusion could be improved at the University of the Fraser Valley and within the broader community, with particular focus on issues of gender, sexuality, race, Indigeneity, and ability.

This research is currently being conducted via consultative processes through which already available resources (such as existing organizations, projects, funding opportunities) and existing gaps or barriers (such as "burn out", isolation, institutional siloing, transphobia, and racism) are identified. The results of these consultations will then provide the basis for two complementary initiatives.

- These findings will provide the basis for the launch of the UFV *Centre for Gender Research and Teaching*. The Center will require one faculty coordinator, one student coordinator and an advisory group.

The centre will act as a hub (both physical and virtual) for those students, faculty, staff, and community partners working on issues of gender and equity. As such, it will act as an anchor of support, acknowledgement and celebration for this work by facilitating relationships and/or collaborations, knowledge dissemination, and community events.

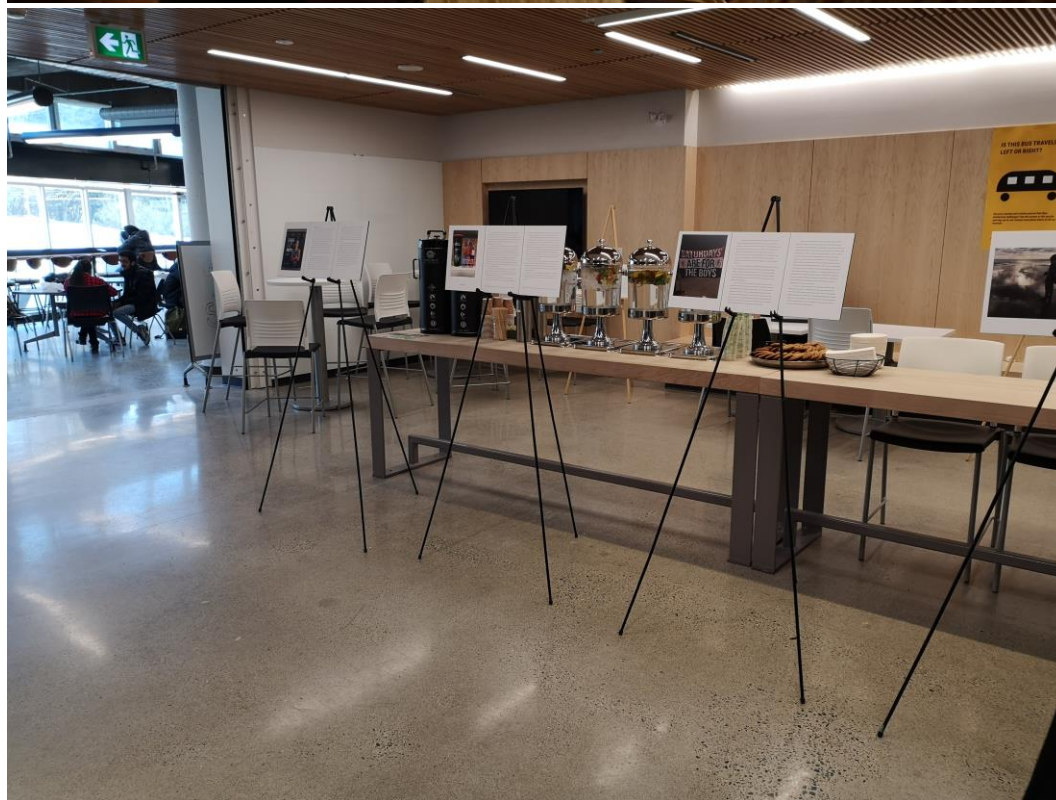
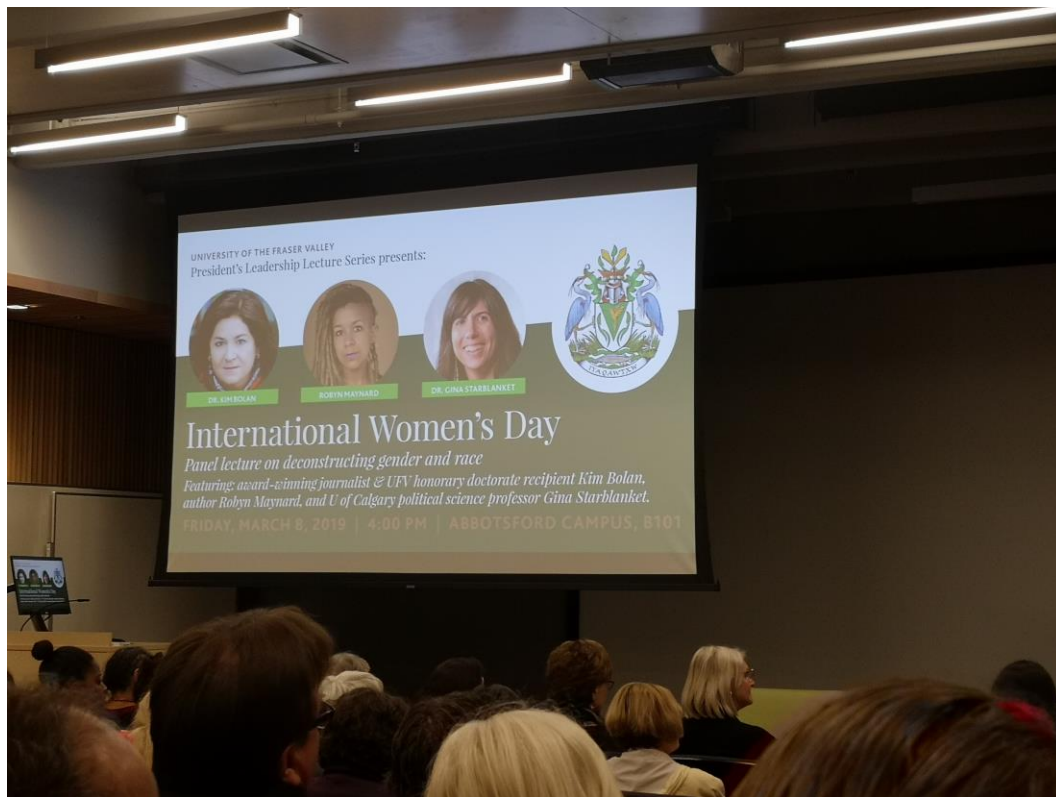
- These findings will be analyzed according to emerging themes. Once the top three to five themes have been clearly identified, these themes will provide the basis for a new interdisciplinary research-based course titled "The Feminist University". Throughout the course, students will contribute to three to five social action projects developed out of year one consultations. These projects may be UFV centered, community centered or both.

Timeline and Deliverables:

September 2018	Approval of initiative from Dean of Arts
December 2018	Hiring of RA/Feminist University Coordinator Raveena Walia
December 2018	Approval of POSC 400 level course option for RA/Feminist University Coordinator Tracy Morrison
January- March 2019	International Women's Day event planning and delivery in collaboration With Ian Rocksborough-Smith (History Department), UFV President's Office, and POSC 350 Sex, Gender and Women in Political Thought students
January-March 2019	Collaboration with UFV Graphic Design students and Professor Jennifer Deon re: Feminist University Logo Design (successful logo designed by current UFV student Emily Rabb)
March 1 2019	Feminist University Retreat/Workshop and Logo Reveal
May 15 2019	Feminist University Faculty Focus Group

International Women's Day March 8, 2019 Summary:





International Women's Day event planning was prioritized in the original Feminist University proposal. Dr. Gina Starblanket was secured as a panelist who could speak to complex issues of Gender, Race, and Colonialism.

Dr. Gina Starblanket is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary. Gina is Cree/Saulteaux and a member of the Star Blanket Cree Nation in Treaty 4 territory. She holds a PhD and MA from the University of Victoria and a BA (Honours) from the University of Regina. She has critical work in the 2nd edition of *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Fernwood Publishing, 2017) and in an edited collection entitled *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings* (University of Toronto Press, 2018). She is co-editor of the 5th edition of *Visions of the Heart: Issues Involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada* (forthcoming Oct 2019) and also has forthcoming work in the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* and the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. Her work is centered in Indigenous politics and Canadian politics, and takes up issues surrounding treaty implementation, gender, feminism, identity, decolonization, resurgence, and relationality.

As plans developed, the opportunity to collaborate with UFV History Professor Ian Rocksborough-Smith and the President's Office became available, leading to a three-person panel featuring Robyn Maynard, Gina Starblanket and Kim Bolan. Photo voice assignments completed by POSC 350 students on the topic of "gender politics in everyday life" were also featured at the event.

Feminist University Logo Design and Reveal March 1, 2019:

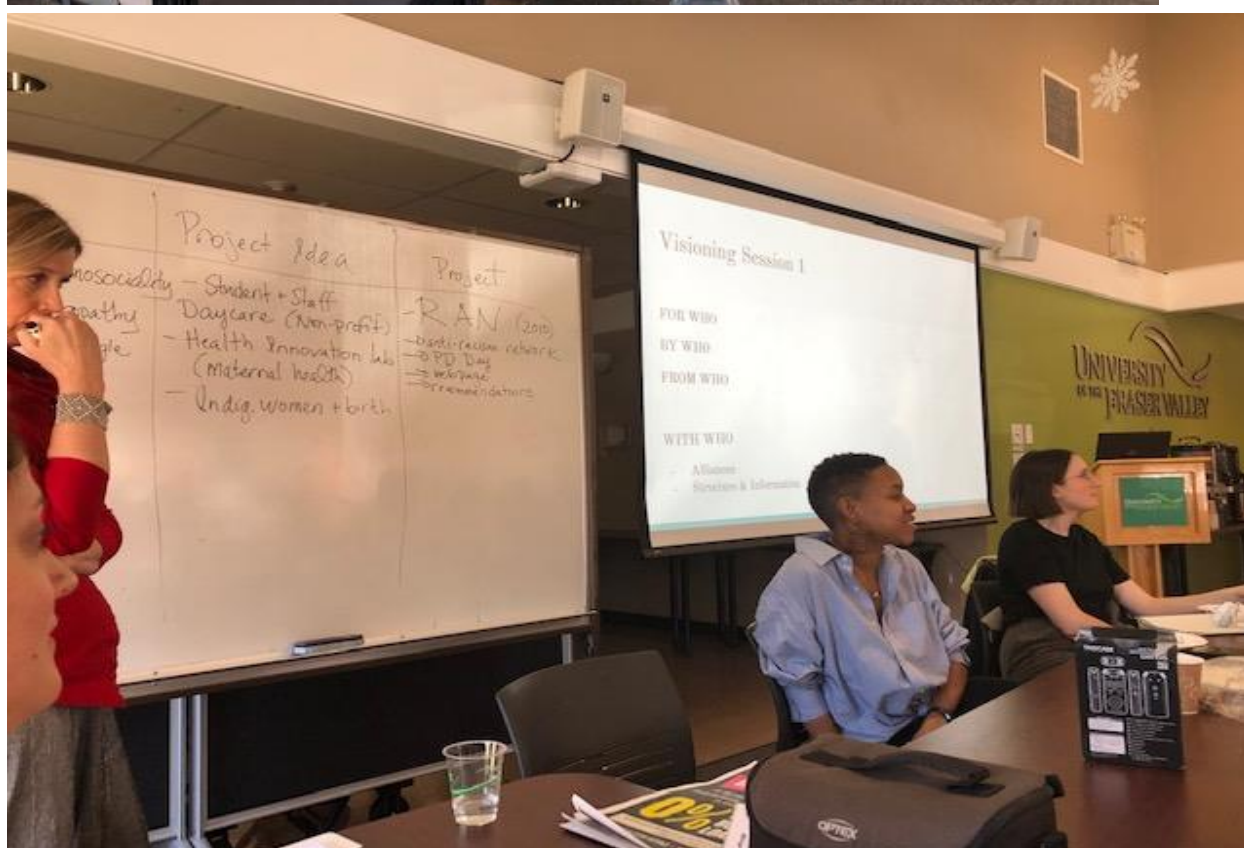
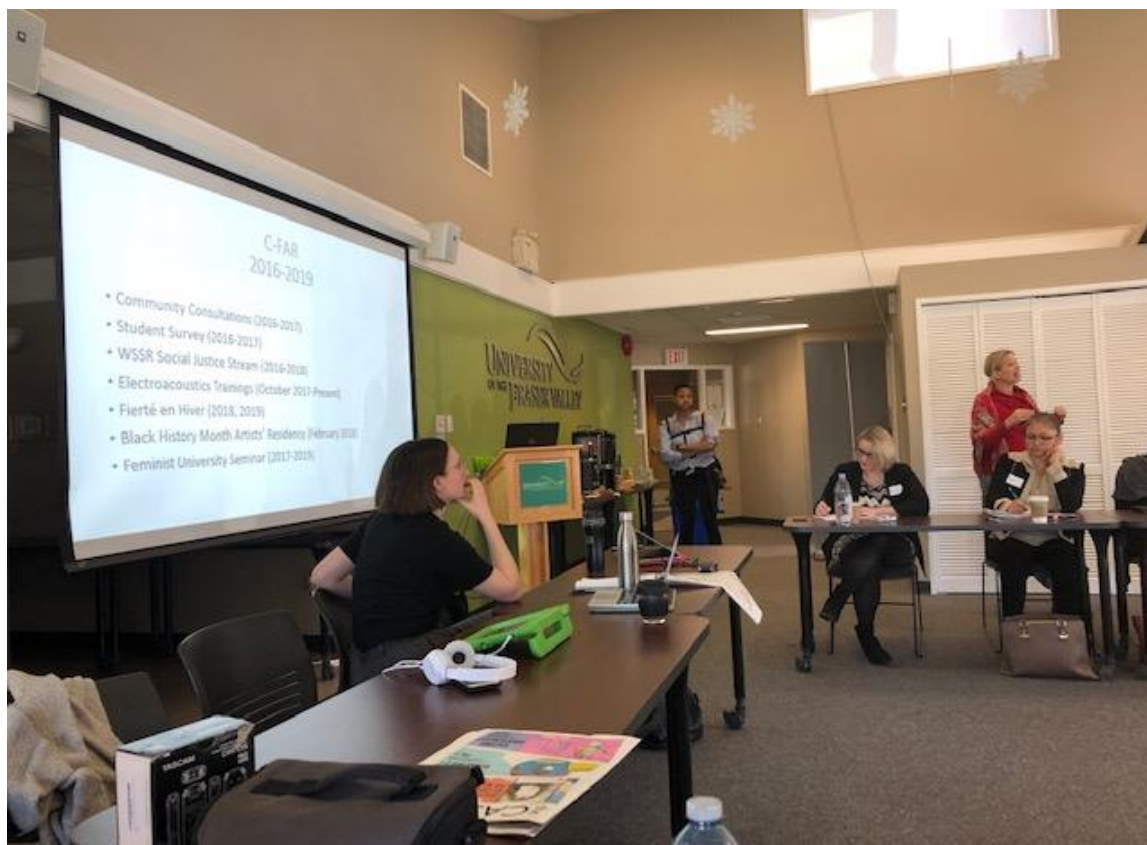
A visual symbol of inspiration and collective values is an important part of building community for a new initiative. With this in mind, the feminist university team consulted with UFV Graphic Design Professor Jennifer Deon and a group of her students to develop potential logos for the Feminist University initiative. Three different designs were submitted and revised upon receiving feedback from the Feminist University team. The successful design was submitted by Emily Rabb. The students were compensated as a group with a \$500.00 donation to their study tour to New York. Emily presented her design at the Feminist University retreat event on March 1, 2019. Statement from Emily Rabb on the inspiration of her logo design:

"I took a font using rough edges to signify all the hardships, we as equal people, have endured to get where we are today.

I chose colours that would stand out the way we want to be known and seen" and "took two strong known women in the feminist community to illustrate, Malala Yousafzai and Simone de Beauvoir".

Feminist University Retreat/Workshop March 1, 2019 Summary:





In Attendance:

- Sharanjit Sandhra – Coordinator, South Asian Studies Institute
- Satwinder Bains – Director, South Asian Studies Institute
- Nicola Mooney – Professor – Social, Cultural & Media Studies
- Anna Cook – Professor, Philosophy
- Martha Dow – Department Head – Social, Cultural & Media Studies
- Anita Vaillancourt – Professor, School of Social Work and Human Services
- Kim White – Human Rights Advisor, UFV
- Sylvie Murray – Associate Dean of Faculty, College of Arts
- Katherine Watson – Professor – Social, Cultural & Media Studies
- Bryanna Anderson – Coordinator, Student Transition & Engagement
- Anastasia Anderson – Professor, Philosophy
- Jeannette Ashe – Chair, Political Science at Douglas College
- Clare McGovern – Lecturer, Political Science at SFU
- Zoe Dennison – Professor, Psychology
- Melissa Walter – Department Head, English
- Natalia Deros – Community Developer, Diversity Education and Resources, Abbotsford Community Services
- Alison Guttrath – Coordinator, DEARS Program, Abbotsford Community Services
- Janel Jack – Student
- Lyza Murphy – Student
- Jules Morden – Student
- Sarah Kopan – President, UFV Pride Collective
- Beru Bell – Secretary, UFV Pride Collective
- Tracy Morrison – Research Office Assistant, UFV, Feminist University Coordinator
- Raveena Walia – Student, Feminist University Coordinator
- Fiona Macdonald – Professor, Political Science
- Dr. Kimberley Manning – Simone de Beauvoir Principal and Political Science Professor at Concordia University
- Annick Gold – Outreach Coordinator, C-FAR, Concordia University
- Meghan Gagliardi – Project Coordinator, C-FAR, Concordia University

Summary:

The Feminist University Retreat/Workshop consisted of two presentations facilitated by the Feminist University team visiting from Concordia as well as a brief visioning exercise. All existing members of the Gender and Society Network were invited as well as other stakeholders from various departments at UFV, and community groups/organizations/post-secondary institutions. Attendees were invited to learn from

the Feminist University model at Concordia and to begin community building and visioning for a similar initiative at UFV.

The first presentation, facilitated by Dr. Kimberly Manning, focused on her experience(s) and inspiration(s) for her current work. A central theme was the lack of space within current post-secondary institutions for systemic understandings, and responses to, complex issues regarding race and gender. Instead, these issues tend to be assessed/analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The Feminist University model is designed to respond to this gap by using the skills inherent to academics to create institutional and transformational change. At Concordia, the application of these skills led to the creation of C-FAR: Critical Feminist Activism and Research.

C-FAR aims to provide compensated cross-disciplinary, collaborative and creative equity work. Since 2016, C-FAR has engaged in community consultations (2016-17), student surveys (2019-17), the WSSR Social Justice Stream (2016-18), Electroacoustics training (2017-present), Fierté en Hiver (2018-19), Black History Month Artists' Residency (2018), and the Feminist University Seminar (2017-19). The Feminist University Seminar course (WSDB 499) at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute focuses on collaborative work in addressing students' experiences of sexism in the classroom. This course has spread to different faculties, including the Faculty of Fine Arts. Ultimately, this initiative will expand to an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion course and certificate program.

The second presentation, facilitated by C-FAR coordinators Meghan Gagliardi (project coordinator) and Annick Gold (outreach coordinator), further elaborated on the mandate and goals of C-FAR. Put simply, C-FAR has developed from an intersectional feminist mandate and is grounded in an anti-racist and anti-oppressive approach to equity, inclusion and representation on the Concordia campus as well as within the wider community.

The Tenets of Coalitional Work and Organizing are as follows:

- FOR WHO: audience; access
- BY WHO: redefining expertise; compensation
- FROM WHO: integrity; creating space
- WITH WHO: alliances; structure and information

Combined, the four tenets of C-FAR are required for genuine transformational change. There is also need for accessibility on every level (not simply on a physical level). Knowing one's audience, their needs, and their relationship to the work is another key component.

Annick and Meghan identified three key principles regarding C-FAR, its mandate and its work:

- Race and transparency: who is participating in the conversations surrounding race at the university
- Intimacy - genuine intimacy, without tokenization
- Disruptions and transformations - transforming the space of the university

Overall, fostering genuine relationships of trust is at the centre of this work. These relationships are created by creating significant space and opportunities for active listening and learning for both faculty members and students.

Findings:

The presentations set the stage for a brief, preliminary visioning session centered on the following questions:

1. Where is the power? Who is making decisions and allocating resources?
2. What about this place is unlivable for me? What about this place is unlivable for the people I share space with?
3. Who is missing? Who is made invisible? What histories led to this and how are we transforming them?

In response, the following challenges and potential projects were identified by the collective:

Challenge:

- Disrupting homosociality - incorporating gender into all disciplines, i.e. instead of niche areas of study i.e. “women and politics”
- Confusion/miscommunication/potential bullying re: Queer student organizations/representation on campus
- Student body apathy
- The space in the Indigenous student centre is too small - the impact of the TRC and the need for allies
- Ensuring that it is “not always the same people in the room”
- Piecemeal approaches, lack of vision/leadership

Project Ideas:

- Daycare for staff/students/faculty/visitors (non-profit)
- Resources for single parents
- Greater institutional support for community building/project sharing/collaboration

- Assessing EDI capacity grant
- Increased support for women (especially Indigenous women) and female students
- Student Refugee Support (WUSC) - need institutional support

Feminist University Focus Group Summary May 15, 2019:







In Attendance:

- Ghizlane Laghzaoui – Department Head, French
- Shelley Stefan – Professor, Visual Arts
- Sharanjit Sandhra – Coordinator, South Asian Studies Institute
- Ian Rocksborough-Smith – Professor, History
- Nicola Mooney – Professor – Social, Cultural & Media Studies
- Katherine Watson – Professor – Social, Cultural & Media Studies
- Martha Dow – Department Head – Social, Cultural & Media Studies
- Luciana Hakak – Professor, School of Business
- Sara Davidson – Professor, Teacher Education
- Ceilidh Hart – Professor, English
- Adrianna Bakos – Department Head, History
- Fiona MacDonald – Department Head, Political Science
- Tracy Morrison – Research Office Assistant, UFV, Feminist University Coordinator
- Raveena Walia – Student, Feminist University Coordinator

Summary:

The idea for a focus group came from consultations between Fiona MacDonald, RAN Co-Chairs Ghizlane Langzaoui and Melissa Walter, Satwinder Bains, Raveena Walia and Tracy Morrison. Ghizlane offered to facilitate a “Trajectories and Intersections in Gender Equity and Inclusion (GEI)” exercise to identify and discuss the past experiences and current needs of attendees.

Working from the understanding that all participants have a vested interest in gender equity and inclusion from an intersectional perspective, the purpose of the exercise was designed to learn more about the participants’ personal and professional experiences at UFV regarding GEI, in order to identify those principles that could either bolster or prevent gender equity and inclusion from being successfully implemented at UFV.

All participants were asked to create a “map” or route/trajectory, identifying the key moments and events that have shaped their perspectives and goals, through the use of road signs. All attendees shared their map with the larger group to facilitate community building and developing shared understandings. This experience fostered both trust and intimacy amongst the group.

The trajectory exercise offered a meaningful foundation for a second exercise through which the group identified and discussed assets and gaps at UFV re: GEI via asset mapping.

The key tenets of the asset mapping exercise are that, “assets are what we want to keep, build upon, and sustain for the future”, and that “asset mapping starts with what you have rather than with what you don’t have”. The purpose of this exercise is to identify strengths (i.e. skills, talents, resources) that have previously been overlooked or untapped, and then to also recognize the threats to these assets (i.e. the barriers/gaps).

The following questions were posed to the group for wider discussion during the asset-mapping portion of the focus group:

1. What are the areas you think UFV is strong in/What is working well re: gender equity and inclusion?
2. What do you see as existing barriers or potential threats to gender equity and inclusion at UFV?
3. What skills/knowledge in gender equity and inclusion do you have related to your position and experiences?
4. How do you contribute with those skills/knowledge?
5. What would you like to see in UFV that does not exist now?

Findings:

Assets:

- The champions across disciplines who are doing equity work
- RAN
- The Centre for Accessibility Services
- Small class sizes
- New position(s) in schools re: human rights (i.e. creative arts)
- Status of Women representative through FSA
- Academic freedom
- Women’s Studies classes/program

Gaps:

- There is no current “inventory” of groups/offices focused on gender at UFV
- Siloing/isolation
- The impact of being a “commuter campus” on the UFV community
- Workplace behaviour training - lack of mandatory, comprehensive training re: bullying, homophobia, transphobia and racism
- International student education, training and support re: human rights
- Centre for Gender/Equity Teaching and Research or similar
- Institutional response and approach to intersectionality
- Lack of urgency on behalf of the leadership/bureaucracy and the tendency to move slowly

- Lack of equity and diversity education among faculty and the need for a teaching module
- Lack of vision, understanding, and visibility
- Independent Office of Equity and Inclusion
- Issues of identity at UFV: the culture at UFV does not want to upset people (i.e. faculty, students); wanting to avoid liability issues
- The tendency to “add it to the agenda” and move on
- The need for genuine commitment to equity - in hiring and promotion as well as in everything else
- Equity is “simply not part of the culture at UFV”
- Which disciplines are at the table re: discussions of equity and inclusion and which disciplines are not
- No use of gender-neutral language - i.e. the use of phrases like “Ladies and Gentlemen” at major events such as Convocation
- No existing course releases for EDI work (for example, RAN co-chairs)
- No existing pool of funds re: EDI projects/activities

Ongoing activities/Tasks for Feminist University Initiative:

In addition to the retreat and focus group, at least one member of the UFV Feminist University team attended the following events/activities as part of community/relationship building:

- SARA For Women: One Billion Rising, February 15, 2019
- Open Mosque Day, February 16, 2019
- Fraser Valley Human Dignity Coalition meeting - March 7 and 14, 2019
- MAP Power of Starting Over - March 19
- Intersections on the Block (ACS and The Reach), March 21, 2019
- I-Lead Abby Youth 4 Change Photovoice Project, April 5, 2019
- RAN May 21, 2019

Recommendations/Next steps:

The Feminist University initiative is now 6 months into year one of the initiative. Next steps for year one are as follows:

1. Establish an advisory group, which will develop and bring to life the mission/vision/guiding principles of the Feminist University.

2. Establish *The Centre for Gender Research and Teaching*, as both a physical and virtual hub at UFV for students, faculty, staff, and community partners working on issues of inclusivity and equity and, in so doing, to break down existing silos and isolation between these actors. This hub will exist in both virtual (website and newsletter) and physical forms (consultations and events).
3. Establish Feminist University website and development of newsletter/social media presence.
4. Ongoing engagement with community members (both on campus and beyond) in the development of a strong shared vision and future activities.
5. To further explore with RAN and HR an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training/certification for students as part of an insitutional commitment to ensure students are “career ready.”
6. To officially recognize and celebrate the Feminist University initiative on March 8 2020 by planning and hosting a celebration of International Women’s Day. This event will inform and educate the public about the Feminist University project, engender a sense of community pride and stewardship of the project, and create excitement around opportunities for the community to use and participate in the project to ensure its success as a social anchor for initiatives focused on equity and inclusion.
7. To identify up to five social action projects with specific outcomes. These projects will be completed by students in a new six-credit upper level interdisciplinary course called “The Feminist University Seminar” in the 2019-2020 academic year.
8. To launch a new award for students and for faculty committed to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
9. To create a fund/permanent budget line for EDI research and/or community initiatives.

Importance of the Initiative:

Providing institutional support, compensation, and recognition for initiatives focused on creating and supporting inclusivity in both university and community contexts is a growing and vital need. According to the 2016 census, British Columbia has the second highest immigrant population compared with other provinces and territories in Canada (only Ontario has a greater immigrant population). In 2016, Abbotsford had 138,555 total residents of which 38,225 (27.6%) were immigrants. In recent decades, both universities and community organizations have recognized the significance of diversity through various means. Yet, there is a growing body of research documenting the persistence of systemic barriers and implicit biases members of equity seeking groups such as women, racialized minorities, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities continue to face (Frances et. al 2017). Recent reports from the Fraser Valley Human Dignity Coalition (FVHDC) are consistent with this trend. The FVHDC documented 25 instances of discrimination in Abbotsford in 2017. Most of these cases involved overt incidents of racist language and/or violence. As University of Alberta Professor of Political Science Malinda Smith argues, “Diversity alone does not guarantee inclusion or equitable treatment” (Smith 2018). A significant part of the problem is that “these groups are often seen in isolation, which sets up competing interests, hierarchies and exclusions—not a strategy for success” (Smith 2018). In relation to Canadian universities specifically, Smith argues that not enough attention is paid to equity issues at the micro-level such as the administrative offices and, in particular, the departments, which she calls the “gateways and gatekeepers” of equitable workplaces and learning environments. Smith is not alone in her observations; institutions across Canada are now in a “rethinking moment” in which there is increasing recognition that many of the “token gestures” around equity, diversity and inclusion lack the robust accountability structure to ensure these policies are translated into action (Elghawaby 2018). This rethinking is a growing need if universities are to stay relevant to the communities they serve. In response, there is an emerging consensus among scholars and activists emphasizing the need for broader conversations around intersectionality. This approach rejects either/or understandings of difference and instead is centered on heterogeneity and relationality. From an intersectional standpoint, both individuals and groups are understood as internally heterogeneous. “Using both/and, same/different thinking, groups can be characterized by their potential to organize around ‘heterogeneous commonality’ rather than homogeneity (May 2015, 24). The concept of heterogeneous commonality provides a much-needed foundation for inclusive communities. For example, while over half of all women in BC have experienced physical or sexual violence, the complexities of gender-based violence are different for differently situated women. Immigrant women often face increased vulnerability due to social isolation, lack of information, lack of English language skills, and issue of residency/citizenship. The Feminist University project is grounded on an intersectional framework and provides a meaningful opportunity to go beyond the facts of diversity to build a democratically

accountable and attentive approach to identifying, supporting, and developing the skills and resources required for equity and inclusion.

Proposed Impact:

This project has the potential to contribute significantly to both the university community and the broader community well-being by responding to community identified needs through relationship building, support, and social action driven research. The Feminist University project will identify the gaps in support and compensation for those working on issues of equity and inclusion, and partner with existing groups/actors to respond to these gaps. It will also create an institutional hub for those who are working on issues of inclusion and equity within the university and beyond. This hub will provide an opportunity to celebrate this work and provide various supports including networking, knowledge dissemination and community. The impact will be less isolation and burnout amongst those working on inclusion and equity as well as a new opportunity for UFV to support education and community development both inside and outside the classroom. It will strengthen partnerships between UFV students, staff, and faculty and community partners and allow the university and community to celebrate diversity in a meaningful and transformative way.