



Report Submitted by Cheryl Hayles, VP International Relations



The CFUW delegation had a most successful week at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW62) in New York! This event is one of our opportunities to engage with government, Non Government Organizations (NGO), and Partners on the issues that affect women.

For the second year in a row, CFUW was awarded the distinct honour of having our Oral Statement selected to be read in General Discussion. At CSW, this is equivalent to receiving the Academy Award! It spotlights our organization and provides a platform to voice our reaction to the Draft Agreed Conclusions member states to the UN are there to finalize. Because we had made contact with the Chair of the session, H.E. Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland), at the beginning of the week, it is noted that there was name recognition in her voice as she invited CFUW to present the oral statement!

In our series of successes CFUW also hosted a Parallel Event, sponsored by the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). This was moderated by our VP International Relations, Cheryl Hayles. The panelists, Teri Shaw of CFUW, Paulette Senior of the Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF), Collette Prevost of the YWCA and Dr. Joshipura of All India Women Conference (AIWC) presented on the "Opportunities and Challenges of Rural Women in the Global Community". CFUW's point of view was based on the Executive Summaries from both Rural Women Surveys (individual members and community organizations) completed in January and February of 2018.

CFUW was honoured when Cheryl Hayles, VP International Relations was invited to be a guest panelist on the International Alliance of Women's (IAW) Parallel Event; "Rural Women's Empowerment, Strategies and Challenges of Women's NGOs". She had the privilege to be interviewed with the UNCSW62 "Woman of Distinction" Sizani Ngubani. This was a second opportunity to share the voices of women who live in rural areas.

We distributed our position paper, "Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Canada's Women and Girls" to our Canadian politicians. MP Sheila Malcolmson, B.C., complimented CFUW as she stated we have well researched papers.

The Executive Summaries of the Rural Women Surveys (Individual and Community Organizations) were shared with 3 Federal Ministers and the Canadian Team working on the draft Agreed Conclusions. The intention was to influence the outcome document with our findings and to engage in the conversation with stakeholders. The aforementioned documents were requested by several stakeholders. In a very understated manner, CFUW had collected primary data that became helpful to Canadian Ministers and NGOs in their deliberations!

VP International Relations met with the Canadian Federal Minister of the Status of Women, Ms. Monsef, at the Canadian Permanent Mission to the UN. The conversation with the minister was most insightful. While at the Reception hosted by the Canadian Ambassador to the UN for Canadian Non-Government Organizations both the President and VP International Relations established contact with other like minded organizations.

CFUW sent 19 women to CSW62 and we were able to include 3 university students in the delegation. These young women are the future of the movement and are to be encouraged to continue the work with their local club in the area of sustainable development goal #5. For the first time in CFUW's history one of the delegates was awarded a scholarship of \$475 to facilitate her participation in life long learning by attending UNCSW62. This scholarship was made possible by donations from the delegation.

In line with our fiscally responsible practice \$202 from the CFUW dinner proceeds was donated to the Charitable Trust designated for the 100th Anniversary celebrations.

On the social side of our Civil Society engagement, CFUW hosted a dinner for 37 guests from around the world. Our members had the opportunity to network with like minded NGOs in the global community. The CFUW delegation was invited to a reception at the Permanent Mission to Greece by the President of the International Alliance of Women, Joanna Manganara. H.E. Ambassador Kalamvrezos Dionyssios, Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN delivered an address to the IAW group. The week ended with a dinner for the International Alliance of Women members. CFUW was represented by Sandy Thomson, VP Ontario Council and Cheryl Hayles, VP International Relations.

CONSULTATION DAY:

The first event of the UN Women Forum - (Bringing Everyone Together) reviewed by Cheryl Hayles, VP International Relations and Gail Crawford, CFUW Mississauga.

Sponsored by the United Nations Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) which is currently in contact with more than 20,000 women from 189 countries, the opening session was held at the City of Manhattan Community College. The priority theme of the UN sessions addressed the "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and empowerment of rural women and girls".

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, was one of three opening speakers on the topic of "Advancing Towards Leaving No One Behind". A remarkable woman in her own right, she has devoted her life to issues around human rights, equality and social justice. Involved in the struggle to end apartheid in her home country of South Africa, she was an MP in South Africa's first democratic government. She painted a grim picture for the 400-million women African farm workers who experience gender inequality, few rights, little or no wages and inability to own the land they farm. Governments have to take responsibility for improving conditions for working women, she says, and although they may pay lip service to the issue, in

remote communities this has no effect. Dr. Mlambo-Ngcuka advised delegates to resist the normalization of bad behaviour by using resilience, conviction and assertiveness.

Here are some quotes from her very inspirational speech for further reflection:

- *Labour laws for rural women are necessary.*
- *They (women in rural areas) feed us but they are invisible.*
- *Girls become child labour due to lack of sanitation, water and transportation infrastructure.*
- *A 7 year old has to make up for policy failure by carrying water for miles.*
- *Make sure we do not have a disconnect with urban based women as they have similar challenges as women in rural areas.*
- *Direct engagement with the women in the local context is key.*
- *Nigeria created safe homes for women who have suffered violence. This is also a “Me Too” moment. This is psychological support.*
- *Let us fight the normalization of unacceptable behaviour.*
- *Women need the benefit of being validated even when they are not doing ground breaking stuff.*
- *Encouragement. The power of lifting as you climb. Even when you don't like someone encourage and validate when they do the right thing.*
- *Nothing about us without us.*

H.E. Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) also delivered an address. She talked about the moral challenge of gender inequality being gender inequality. Participation and the ability for women to address these issues themselves are important pieces of the work. In Ireland something as simple as giving washing machines to rural women allowed them a free evening to organize themselves for advocacy. I felt her most important statement was, “People who assume local leadership are versed in Human rights”. In her final comment, she quoted Beckett, “Resiliency means to fail, fail again, fail better”.

Keynote speaker of the opening session was Sizani Ngubane, Founder of Rural Women's Movement South Africa and this year's recipient of CSW's Woman of Distinction Award. She stated her “Me Too” moment began 64 years ago when she was 6 years old, hiding under her mother's bed listening to free radio from Zimbabwe, former Rhodesia. She heard “Smith is killing people every day at 7 p.m.” and that compelled her to make a difference in the world!

She, too, confirmed that women in rural areas have been silenced and have suffered much. Women produce 85% of food that is consumed but own less than two percent of the land on which it is grown. There also a movement afoot to ensure that women can inherit land, impossible at the moment. Ngubane said that rural women must be able to counteract the actions of men and eventually get government approval for them to be elected to positions of power.

The afternoon session “Technology and Media in the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls”, provided some practical strategies to be effective communicators in the struggle for equality and empowerment. First, know your audience. Most people are not driven by facts but by human experiences; since we live in an age of story telling, tailor your messages accordingly. Speak or write with love and speak to the heart; negative messaging is not effective. Work with trusted voices and pick your spokespeople carefully. It is not what is said but who is saying it. Conversations, not content, drive discussion. Create a “surround sound” and radio is the best medium for this approach. If content is king, then distribution is the kingdom. Think about what partnerships we need to get our messages across.

These “Seven Golden Rules for Storytellers” were highlighted in documentaries and national campaigns on women’s issues, created and directed by women in media.

To end Consultation Day, Mayor Garacetti was given the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Award” and a posthumous award to San Francisco Mayor Lee, which was accepted by his daughter.

Sunday events concluded with a Caucus meeting for the CFUW delegates to review the week’s events and prioritize actions to further the goals of CFUW.

INDIVIDUAL DELEGATE REFLECTIONS:

The week of March 11-16, 2018 is reported through the summaries that follow. The CFUW delegates were asked to reflect on the 4 questions listed:

1. I wished to attend because...
2. Outstanding Session
3. This changed my perception...
4. New Advocacy ideas to introduce to my home club

Heather Oxman, CFUW Lethbridge

I WISHED TO ATTEND BECAUSE:

I wanted to understand the international and intergovernmental work of various NGOs at work for women’s rights, and for women from rural communities, and women working in media and with ICT. After a week of intense listening, exchanges one-on-one and learning, it is enormously impressive that anything is accomplished, given the complexities that must be overcome to have an agreement of all parties emerge. I hope that with CSW62, women from rural communities get a final document agreeing on actions.

OUTSTANDING SESSION:

Economic Empowerment of Rural Women Entrepreneurs through Online Business Incubation sponsored by BEC Global was one of the most impressive presentations in terms of the impact on small communities of women in very remote communities who are doing crafts. Bringing those hand made crafts to the attention of fashion markets that could not only help the makers bring their prod

ucts to larger markets but increase the value of their products in those markets without pressing for mass production or increased scale. Handmade was key to the value of these incubated businesses.

And the women who benefitted went from \$1 per day life to \$100-200 per month per woman which went directly into family health, education and support.

Human Trafficking and CEDAW was another session which featured a lot of great information and actions to take to make a difference in local and regional space. Lots of references, support material and other items to guide advocacy to get CEDAW process in place in a city, a province/state or nation. Excellent work by Kentucky representative and other speakers on the panel.

CSW62 CHANGED MY PERCEPTION:

After attending the Lunchtime Advocacy session for North America and Europe, where the process for creating the final document was reviewed with examples of texts and their amendments, I was

enlightened about the rigour of the review process in creating a document reflecting ONE VOICE. Consensus is not an easy process and the more parties involved in developing consensus, the longer and more difficult the process becomes. I have nothing but admiration for the facilitators and writers

who pull all the comments and adjustments together to make a coherent document of the many single voices. I used to produce consultation documents for a Canadian government agency and I know how hard it is to satisfy everyone and ensure that everyone can live with the final product.

A NEW ADVOCACY IDEA TO INTRODUCE TO MY CLUB:

The Lethbridge & District CFUW club concentrates its advocacy energy currently on Child Poverty in Alberta and federally and to supporting women reentering the community after leaving a shelter locally. There are many ideas springing from this conference, particularly related to women in the rural community and it would be worth a discussion to talk to our members about the isolation, transportation and health challenges faced by our own rural residents in Southern Alberta. Perhaps advocating for improving ICT to rural communities would be helpful with telemedicine, and communication among neighbours which could reduce isolation. Certainly member discussion needs to occur.

Gail Crawford, CFUW Mississauga

As part of CFUW's delegation to the UN in March, I had a first-hand glimpse of how the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) works, how other NGOs come together in a common cause, and how this year's theme of empowering rural women and girls drew young and old from every corner of the globe. First-hand accounts depicted staggering numbers: 80 percent of women in Africa are rural; 70 percent in India. Most grow the food that feeds villages yet few own land themselves and cannot purchase or inherit any. In Iran since the 1970s, rural women are virtually forgotten with no access to water, sanitation, medical services, or education. Most experience sexual violence and child marriages yet governments have little will to bring about change. Here at home,

aboriginal women on reserves share some of the same conditions and, as we know, some end up missing altogether.

For me, there were two outstanding events. In 1990, a self-educated South African villager, Sizani Ngubane, had had enough and founded the Rural Women's Movement of South Africa to make the country and the world aware of conditions for rural women. Her work to empower them – her motto is *Persist Resist Insist* – has attracted hundreds to her cause. This year, she received a Woman of Distinction Award from the CSW and was nominated by the International Alliance of Women (IAW) of which CFUW is a member. You may read more about this remarkable survivor on the IAW website.

The second event was the American premiere of a powerful film *1200+ Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women*. The film is seen through the lens of Chief North who is an investigative reporter herself and the film's narrator. I spoke with Mr. Yakir about its Canadian debut and when it might be introduced at TIFF. He explained it was not able to meet the advance deadlines for this year so it would likely be ready by 2019. Be sure to see it.

Sandra Thomson, Regional VP Ontario

PURPOSE:

To learn, grow and network in efforts to make a difference for women and girls globally and to determine how to help my rural clubs in Ontario, especially given the priority theme this year, "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls." The review theme was "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (agreed conclusions of the 47th session).

LEARNING:

If I were to draw a global map of a main thoroughfare, it would be named, "Women's Rights are Human Rights." The intersections (more formally known as intersectionality) of this global road are entitled: Access to Health Care; Access to Technology; Access to Transportation; Access to Clean Water; Land and Property Rights; Opportunities for Education; Opportunities for Economic Growth; Freedom from Violence and Abuse, to name a few. There are access gaps between these intersections, and the connecting bridges, many yet to be constructed or completed construction, are named Gender Equality.

I learned we have a long distance to travel to achieve true equality in some instances – globally, and yes even here in Canada. Canada has to bridge the gaps too.

GROWTH:

I was proud to be a member of this delegation representing CFUW. Once again, we received the equivalent of the “Academy Award” by having our Oral Statement selected to be read in the General Assembly. This is the second year in a row. We co-hosted a parallel event (offered by the Non Government Organizations or NGOs) with the YWCA and our voices were heard on a panel hosted by the International Alliance of Women (IAW), one of our global partners. We connected with our Minister of the Status of Women at the Canadian Permanent Mission and I spoke directly with M.P. Sheila Malcolmson, British Columbia, who requested and received our Rural Women Survey. She said she appreciated our information as it is so well researched. What a compliment!

I attended the following during the week:

- Consultation Day, with the keynote speaker, Sizani Ngubane, founder of the Rural Women’s Movement in South Africa. IAW nominated Sizani, and was selected, for the “Women of Distinction” Award. Sizani founded the Rural Women’s Movement of South Africa. She is one amazing woman, making a difference for the lives of women in South Africa, especially in the area of land/property rights.
- Another segment featured, “Media: Women’s Stories for Empowerment and Change.” For rural women, storytelling is the outlet for being heard and what a transformation when they do speak!
- Briefings: One Canadian Briefing, and two held by the NGO-CSWNY, with keynote speaker, Ambassador Geraldine Bryne Nason, chair of the Commission of the Status of Women, and the vice chair of negotiations of the soon to be hopeful agreed conclusions on rural women. (In the 56th session there was no outcome document for rural women.)
- Townhall Meeting with UN Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez. The Secretary General took many questions from the delegates. It was heartbreaking to hear some of the women’s stories of their home country situations. The UN can only do so much; it takes the political will of the individual governments to make the difference regarding women’s human rights.
- Four Side events sponsored by governments – I was particularly impressed with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland - Celebrating and Advancing Women's Political Participation. The barriers for women leaders are: 1. Lack of role models; 2. Social media; and 3. “Photo Fit “image.
- Eleven Parallel events sponsored by NGOs – Our own parallel event, “Opportunities and Challenges for Rural Women in the Global Community.” I was also impressed with “Mentorship for Entrepreneurial Opportunity to Enhance Gender Equality,” hosted by Empowerment for Sustainable Resilience of Nepal. I connected with many women in this session and exchanged mentorship assessments and programs.

NETWORKING:

I exchanged numerous business cards during the above named sessions, the UN Reception held at the Kimmel Center at the NYU, and the IAW Meet and Greet. The face to face contacts serve to move our agenda forward, and learn of the advancements/advocacy efforts in other countries.

Memorable Quotes:

“Women to Win – We Will Support You.” (politics/media)”

“Hallmark of oppression occurs with silos.” (working in collaborations)

“If our daughters cannot see them, they cannot be them.” Or “You cannot be what you cannot see.”

“Failure is a blessing – it is an opportunity to learn.” Or “Creative disruption allows growth in pieces.”

Gail Neff, CFUW St. Catharines

It was an amazing experience to hear about the conditions of women in countries all over the world. To get an overview of this huge conference with 4,000 delegates, I attended about five 90 min. panel discussions per day for 6 days! I heard presentations from ambassadors, ministers, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and civil society (citizen activists) on a variety of topics including rural women in agriculture, land rights, inheritance rights, politics, education, access to internet and radio to reduce isolation and increase knowledge, child marriage, and violence to name just a few. It produced a whirlwind of information that I am still struggling to organize and communicate in a way that does justice to the issues.

In order to make successful change, advocates need to work together. This is certainly facilitated by the annual Commission on the Status of Women. It often involves partnering with groups in other countries. This was evident in the variety of countries represented on most panels. For example in the session Korea Against War, the speakers were from Canada, Japan, and So. Korea. They talked about their combined efforts to urge Foreign Ministers from 20 countries to keep peaceful negotiations as the only option for security on the Korean peninsula. Other partnerships were between Afghanistan and Finland, and Uganda and Australia. Canada is also partnering with Kenya to help with setting up an Investment Fund using local savings to be used for local projects. In many of the presentations, there was a strong push to include women in decisions affecting their rights. Donors often decide what the funds will be used for.

I was surprised to learn that in South Korea, there is 100% literacy, with 25% of the national budget earmarked for primary education. One program feeds children at school to ensure they come, using food produced by local farmers which helps the local economy.

Another success story is in Rwanda, where in 1994, one million people were slaughtered in acts of genocide. The current President is a firm leader making good decisions and fast changes. All children are required to have 12 years of education. 90% are covered by health insurance and 90% with HIV are receiving medication. Life expectancy has increased from 48 to 67 and women are being encouraged to participate in government.

Other reports, however, were heartbreaking: Widows required to marry a brother-in-law or lose her children and be cast out of her home, children as young as 10 who were raped, were denied abortions because of religious customs, and of course, lack of penalties for violence against women. Small improvements in the lives of women and girls are being made in many countries but progress is discouragingly slow in most.

It is sobering for me to realize that in many countries, women are actually risking their lives when they advocate for gender equality and freedom from sexual assault and exploitation.

One lovely and unexpected meeting happened when another delegate and I were waiting for the next session to start. Three muslim women came into the room to have some lunch, and when they saw us they offered to share their homemade Persian rice and stew. We accepted and discovered they were health workers in Iran who, among other activities, organized mobile clinics for rural areas.

The one young woman who spoke excellent English was born in New York and had no trouble traveling between the US and Iran. Life in Iran seemed quite nice from their description.

The Woman of Distinction Award was given to an amazing, self taught, Zulu grandmother named Sizani Ngubane, who founded The Rural Women Movement in South Africa. It now has 50,000 members who are learning how to advocate for women's rights. Her motto "persist, insist, and resist" has served her well. She noted that 80% of food production is done by women, but only 2% of the land is owned by women. So, in 1994, she decided to try to change the law. With other "unruly women", she took the government to court to allow women to own and inherit land. In 2010, she won the suit! She pointed out that there was still much to be done. Despite laws being on the books, local customs often impede their implementation.

Women in rural areas include migrant workers...They often don't know what their legal rights are and are afraid to report instances of abuse for fear of losing their job or being deported. Migrants in Florida are experiencing what is essentially modern day slavery. Laws are unable to stop abuses in the fields or for those in domestic care if not reported. I participated in a 4 hour protest march on the streets of New York in support of more protection for women agricultural and migrant workers so they can report abuses.

The conference is 2 weeks long. I attended the first week as one of 20 delegates of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW). Our combined comments will be used to lobby the Canadian Government.

Ruth Mellor, VP British Columbia Council

I wished to attend because: I had watched pictures of previous UN CSW at other CFUW AGMs and heard delegates talk about their life changing experiences there.

Outstanding session: The Parallel session involving the screening of the documentary film 'Little Stones' was especially moving. All four of the young women who had used rap, graffiti, dance, and fashion to empower women around the world were present.

This changed my perception: How so many mainly women, but also men are working to make positive changes in their countries despite barriers. Many of the problems we share in Canada despite our wealth and privilege eg needing school lunch programs.

New advocacy ideas to introduce to my home club: To educate and promote projects happening around the world partly through our association with GWI and IAW for example. Dinners with members of these organizations were very enjoyable and enlightening.

Sandra Shaw, VP CFUW Perth and District, Co-chair Social Justice Committee

I made my second visit to the UNCSW as a CFUW delegate to supplement my understanding regarding the plight of women, not just in developing countries whom we might smugly assume are subject to exploitive and outdated laws, customs and challenges that in Canada have supposedly been put to bed, but also our own women, specifically (but not limited to) Indigenous and rural women, whom Canada still, for the most part, treats abominably through repressive laws, under-resourcing, apathy and discrimination.

UNCSW62 mobilised powerful speakers and produced exceptional sessions. Several emphasised that LGBTQ, migrant and Indigenous women in rural and remote areas, even in developed countries, are at greater risk for wage discrimination, sexual harassment and violence (including death).

Astonishingly, I learned that in Canada children are still being forcibly removed from Indigenous families, only now Child Welfare takes an infant from the mother, citing as rationale that the mother is unfit or has too many children, or incarceration removes her forcing her children into foster care. I discovered that Canadian Indigenous women are simultaneously under- and over-policed. While reported violence against Indigenous women is often not investigated, there are proportionally more Indigenous women in our jails/prisons. A haunting film (Tanya's Story) accompanying the session: *The Mass Incarceration of Rural Indigenous Women in Canada* is narrated by an Indigenous woman who tells her story of finally getting her identity back after decades spent in prison. Speakers suggested that jails/prisons are taking the place of residential schools and that the track for many Manitoba Indigenous children is from foster home to juvenile detention to jail.

This UNCSW62 experience will compel me to advocate more strongly for Indigenous rights and restorative justice systems developed and run by Indigenous people. Two quotes from Canadian Indigenous presenters will forever remain with me: “Hurt people hurt people.” and “We are all treaty people.”

Jeannette Mergens CFUW Kelowna, BC Council Advocacy Chair

I wished to attend CSW62 because I grew up in rural poverty in Canada. Living on a farm, my siblings and I were engaged in child labor. I cannot remember when I did not work, both in the house and with the animals. This went well beyond daily ‘chores’.

Two main themes in the sessions I attended were:

1. We must understand where the people we are trying to help are coming from. What is their perception? It is more successful to have known contacts in each small community than to try to bring people to a central location.
2. We must all work together, not in silos. I learned a new word: intersectionality.

It was discouraging to learn that transportation is still one of the biggest barriers to women and girls living in poverty. Lack of transportation very much limits opportunities and leads to isolation.

Media Contacts to use:

www.her.nowthisnews.com

www.breakthrough.tv/in/

www.pcimedia.org

7 Tips to get your message across as a storyteller:

1. Know your audience.
2. Speak to the heart: speak of what CAN be - do not be negative
3. Distribute Content/information: share with your partners (95% of people still listen to the radio.
4. “Surround Sound” Hear from different sources.
5. Work with trusted voices.
6. Conversations, not content, make behaviour changes.
7. Stories work! Stories allow us to make sense of a situation.

Work from the bottom up!

Marlene Adam, University Women's Club of Vancouver

I wished to attend because participating at the United Nations always seemed like a chance to be inspired by an organization committed to forwarding the most important human rights requirements. Also last year, when I visited with Saode Savary from the Montreal club, I was impressed with some of the information she learned about what is happening in trafficking. It made me want to go and find out more. When I saw that, as a member of CFUW, I could apply, I thought it would be a great opportunity. When I began to speak with other members of the club who had attended, they all found the experience worthwhile and highly recommended it. Many had attended more than once.

Outstanding Session – I attended an event on trafficking at the Proskauer Law Offices in Times Square that was so interesting and informative. The speakers were all leaders in their fields: Ambassadors from France and Sweden, Val Richey, Special Prosecutor in King County (whom I had heard speak before and wanted to hear again), Cyrus Vance. Other speakers were private companies/NGOs

doing leading-edge work using data analysis as well as their own computer programs to target sex traffickers. In addition, a sex survivor spoke about her recruitment and life as a prostitute. The hand-outs are extensive and I'm looking forward to reading them. It was pleasant to chat with a magistrate from France who is very proud of the fact that France now has a version of the Nordic model in their country.

A close second was the film, 1200+ Murdered and Missing. The film broadened my understanding of what it is to be Indigenous in our country and the kind of issues particularly affecting young people. There were Indigenous from other countries who attended and added their experiences to the conversation. The panel after was informative and I particularly liked the remarks of the Senator who seems to have a comprehensive view on the subject.

Some perceptions that changed: I realized that there are innumerable organizations around the world working hard on women's issues and that each one is making progress in their own way. It may be local and it may only affect services to women in their area, but they are still saving and enhancing lives. I was very impressed by the speakers from the YWCA, and it has increased my knowledge about the hands-on work they do as well as increasing my respect for the organization as a whole.

New advocacy ideas to introduce to my club. My area of interest involves violence against women and gender equity, particularly in the areas of prostitution and pornography. What I learned and will take back to my advocacy groups is that men have to be included in the conversation. It's also important to find ways of connecting with people who know nothing of the subject so that we can create awareness; too many people don't realize the extent of the problem.

Gail Neff, CFUW St. Catharines

I applied to be a delegate to UNCSW62 after a delegate to the 2015 convention (Heather Foss) suggested it would be a good experience for me. I was curious, and took her advice. She was right. It opened my eyes to some of the amazing grassroots work being done by women, often at the risk of their own lives. It also made me thankful of where I live.

There were two sessions that presented issues I thought were Canadian concerns and could be introduced to my club:

#Done Waiting: Organizing for Rural and Indigenous Women in Canada and
Mass Incarceration of Indigenous Women in Canada

Rural women and girls are often in areas not serviced by the internet and are therefore doubly isolated. A very practical suggestion was to reopen rural post offices and include in their services, internet facilities (broad band connection), charging stations and banking services. This would perhaps require more transmission towers to be built. Until then, trucks could provide equipment to fill areas where internet service is lacking. I would like to see CFUW advocate for reopening and expanding services of rural post offices.

The other suggests that the current system of punishment of Indigenous women and men should be changed to use cultural methods to change behaviour. There is a need to create another system, i.e. Restorative Justice. According to Chantal Barkler, culture works for both the victim and the offender. 20 years of research results have been ignored. I would like to see CFUW advocate for creating an Indigenous culture-based justice system.

Teri Shaw, CFUW Oakville

1. I wished to attend because the UNCSW is one of the highlights of both my and the CFUW year. We have the opportunity to meet and connect with a number of Canadian NGOs and government members who are also attending, and to have the opportunity to share and listen to international stories from which we can learn.
2. Outstanding session: this year there were two: the film *1200+* by Sheila North and Leonard Yakir, and *Violence Against Women in Politics* sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).
 - *1200+* is a film concerning the Murder and Missing Indigenous Women, with particular reference to Winnipeg. Sheila and Leonard connected at the tragic death of Tina Fontaine. The film is extremely powerful, discussing both the murders and the child welfare system. One young woman went through 92 foster homes!
 - *Violence against Women in Politics* was shocking to hear of the what women must contend with. In a study done by the IPU, 81.8% of the women had psychological violence, 44% received threats of death, rape, beatings, or abduction, including for their

children. But one of the most shocking was to hear a Canadian MP speak of her experiences.

- Being part of a session within the NGO-CSW Parallel Events on the *Opportunities and Challenges for Rural Women in the Global Community* and having the opportunity to present the finding of the three CFUW surveys done this year concerning women who live in rural communities was of course thrilling and a delight.
3. What changed my perception were three things in particular:
- preparing for the presentation meant learning much more about the concerns of rural women within Canada, their isolation, lack of transportation, lack of services;
 - how destructive climate change is for women in the north attempting to leave violent situations – the ice bridges are gone to allow them to escape quickly to towns that have shelters;
 - that a child can actually go through 92 foster homes!
4. Continuing advocacy will include incorporating that which we learned into our work – for Ontario that will mean understanding better the problems of trafficking and homelessness in the north, plus those related to hospitals, schools, and transportation among others.

Roberta Ostler Balmer, CFUW Kanata

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference” Winston Churchill.

The Commission on the status of Women is a global policy making body dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Priority areas:

- a) Increasing leadership and participation.
- b) Ending violence against women/girls.
- c) Engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes.
- d) Making gender equality central to national development/budgeting plans.

Here are some daunting statistics. In 18 countries husbands can prevent their wives from working. In 49 countries there are no laws to prevent domestic violence. Globally 750million girls were married before the age of 18.

This year the CSW topic was: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. A rural movement in South Africa, is training girls and women (without academic skills), practical guidance in agri-business, crop sharing, sanitation, water issues and climate change. Land entitlement is also a strong feature and the necessary skills to negotiate and change public policy. Micro financing and economic support needs to be generated in order to allow the production of food, for even an existence level. These are many of the issues that exist and many countries are dealing with.

Changes are imperative as is their implementation in order to make rights realistic.

With over 300 side events (UN) and 400 parallel events(NGO's etc) to choose from, selection and time management are of the essence. I attended a poignant Side event: The Joint Program on Essential services for Women and girls Subject to Violence. Following opening remarks by Dr. Sharum Stone (Australian Ambassador for women and Girls), nine Member States were represented; each Ambassador presented a report and Statistics from their island or area. I learned where Kiribati is! We then heard testimony from two girls, Boko Haram survivors. Hauwa(17) and Ya Kaka(18, girl advocate). The ballroom became hushed as they gave their testimony and we agreed afterwards that their stories were beyond sad. I went over to the girls at the end of the session and told them that I thought that they were very brave and had strong hearts. They reached out and each one took one of my hands and held it in both of theirs; a soulful moment.

I appreciate the opportunity and honour of representing our Federation at this event. Added to that, I am one of two Canadians represented on the Core Group of the North America/European Caucus.

Joanna Manganara, President, International Alliance of Women

The CSW is the most important Commission of the UN on gender equality and women's human rights. What happens in New York is very important for the international community and in particular for the thousands of feminists and women who come to New York hoping that they can contribute to changes in international policies that have to do with women's human rights. The IAW always participates in the CSW with a big delegation. This time it was the biggest ever since I became President with many new, qualified people. This is a plus for our organization. In Nicosia, we already had 10 new organizations being admitted as affiliate/associate members of IAW mainly from the developing world, so we are doing very well.

We have also maximized our visibility by nominating Sizani Ngubane from South Africa, Founder of Rural Women's Movement of South Africa, for the Woman of Distinction Award which she has won. She has been chosen out of 80 candidates from different countries and she was very warmly received at the UN. She has delivered a keynote speech at the Consultation Day and has been invited to speak on many occasions. She has also been the keynote speaker in our parallel event on Rural women's empowerment - Strategies and challenges of women's NGOs.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has done a documentary on Sizani and 5 other women from different countries, I believe our choice of Sizani's nomination for this award has really been very successful and very wise, not only for her work on rural and indigenous women in South Africa but also because she is a rural woman human rights defender.

In my comments on the zero draft text I asked the NGO/CSW NY for strong language on this issue which has been an issue of dissent during the negotiations.

Dr. Shelley Ball, CFUW Perth & District Environment Committee Chair and mentor with the CFUW National Mentoring Program

As a first-time delegate I was honoured and excited to participate in CSW62 and hoped I would come away with important insights into the plight of women, globally. I came away with far more than I ever could have imagined.

It started with a wander around the UN building. Peering into the General Assembly chamber and seeing displays about work the UN does, was awe-inspiring. It was a reminder of why we need the UN, to keep the global ‘family’ connected and working together for greater good. I took a moment to sit in the UN Meditation Room, a quiet room dedicated to stillness. I reflected on the significance of being here and wondered what the coming week would be like.

The week was packed with sessions by NGO’s and governments. With 8,000 participants, the air was buzzing with energy, discussion, debate, and connection. Within the theme of empowering rural

women and girls, I heard presentations about things such as the impacts of climate change and shocking accounts of how rural and Indigenous women in North America continue to be denied basic human rights. What became indelible in my mind were the stories shared by women from rural Africa. They spoke of abduction, rape, torture, and abuses you can’t even imagine. In developed nations we fight for gender equality. We need to. But hearing stories of the utter absence of the most basic human rights for rural African women shook the foundation of my understanding about the plight of women, globally. I’ve heard accounts through the media, but it wasn’t until I heard women deliver their own stories, with anguish and determination in their voices, that I truly understood how much work remains to ensure all women are treated with equality and respect. It has renewed my energy and resolve to support empowerment of women, globally, especially those most vulnerable.

The CSW62 tagline, “Leave No One Behind” must be transformed into action. The challenge comes in finding the ways to best support this mission and truly ensure that when it comes to women and girls around the world, that no one is left behind.

Bilkies McKen, VP Prairies

Outstanding Session(s)

Those from which trending changes are maximizing impact hence transforming rural lives. They include the following:

1. ILLUMINE - A Media Project:
Using conversation to drive a story.

2. The National Federation of International Association of Immigrant Women:

It's time to evaluate how aid is presented. Aid is not about money. Aid is not about gender equality through the lens of advanced nations. Aid is about education, education, education. Aid is commitment to education. Aid is "encouragement and the power to uplift" (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka).

3. Consultation Day Messages:

Speakers Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator (Canada); Susan O'Malley, Chair; H.E. Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason and UNCSW Woman of the Year, Sizani Ngubane: It is: Emphasize the interconnectivity of the intersectionality that rural women epitomize - race, gender, class, geographical location, violence, poverty, poor education, degradation, disability) and the harshness of them all. De-emphasize the silos of them and connect rural women's voices with structures of rural/urban, and with local (grassroots)/national/international.

4. The Mass Incarceration of Rural Women of Canada:

Indigenous culture (Canada) needs their own justice system which is restorative and which works through healing and not punishment. For instance, what the status quo terms a "risk assessment" is seen through Indigenous eyes as a "social needs assessment." The 1992 Charter of Rights is not applied by jailers. Senator Pate (Ontario) expounds. "Policy cannot limit the law and custody is a ploy to replace the reservation."

This Changed my Perception

To affect change we need to demonstrate humanity's capacity to work together. (Quote - Producer. "Little Mosque on the Prairies"). Some examples are: Constitutionally, enactment of justice and rights see strong support by men and boys (Iceland's Barbershop conversations) and gender responsive budgeting (Gambia's and Jordan's roads to harmonizing the sacred and the secular from the "traditional court" to the constitution.

New Ideas

Climate Justice: An island in the West Indies has disappeared. A woman in the North has seen her house fall into the sea because of permafrost erosion, and the desert advances in the Sahel.

Rural Women: We cannot rely on the government alone. Harness other socio-economic aspects available from those versed in entrepreneurship, legal rights, businesses and politics in helping women in rural communities to act their concerns.

Kathryn Wilkinson, VP Education

I wished to attend because...

I wished to attend CSW 62 because I have been fortunate enough to have attended previous sessions and realize what an amazing opportunity they are to interact with people from so many different

organizations and also with members of our own CFUW. To be able to hear sessions in which people share their expertise from small NGOs through to government officials is an invaluable experience.

Outstanding Session

It is difficult to select an out standing session but I would highlight the viewing of the movie 1200+. The movie focusses on one missing/murdered girl in Winnipeg and she is one of the 1200+; it is believed that this is a very conservative figure. The audience had a number of indigenous people including a number of the chiefs. After the movie, there was a panel discussion including the film makers: Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson and Leonard Yaker, and Senator Mary Lou McPhedran. In 2017, CFUW adopted support for Canada's Indigenous Peoples as our third national initiative. This movie illustrated just how much there is for us to learn and how many questions remain

unanswered. How can a young woman who is dead before she is eighteen years old have lived in over 90 foster homes? As Senator McPhedran said "What makes some people disposable?"

This changed my perception...

It was interesting to see rural and indigenous women grouped together in many of the sessions. So many of the issues facing rural women are ones of which we are aware: transportation, access to healthcare, education, employment, childcare, etc. but, it was particularly enlightening to learn of the issues through an Indigenous lens. I am aware of the effects of climate change on the north but had never considered the implications for a woman trying to escape from an abusive relationship. How do you leave when there is no longer a winter road? Where do you go for safety in a community where everyone knows everyone else?

New Advocacy ideas to introduce to my home club...

The ideas that I will take home are definitely to continue to encourage the club in our work on Indigenous People. I also think that many of our members would benefit from a session on intersectionality and what that means.

Allison Gonzalez, CFUW White Rock

As one of the student delegates for CFUW this year, I went into the conference with the intent to obtain as much knowledge as possible. Although it may seem simple—basic even—the single most important lesson I will take with me into any, and all, of my future work and life from CSW62 is to listen. Listening enabled me to encounter and connect with ideas and experiences that lay beyond my own, reminded me how oblivious I can be to my own bias and privilege, and how some of the largest policy barriers go unchanged because those who they affect seldom have a voice.

Although there are many sessions I wish I had attended, there were simply too many. However, the one session I wish I had attended in particular was "Canada's Indigenous and Immigrant Rural Women and Girls," which was hosted by the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women. One of the most significant issues in which I believe Canada has a lot of work left to do is in supporting our rural and aboriginal women. As my future goals are to serve as a policy analyst within Canada, either provincially or federally, the barriers and challenges as presented and told by the very women who face them ensure that any policy I write comes from the rural and aboriginal

women as they express it - not as I see it. Thus, this would have been a great opportunity for me to listen and learn.

However, the session I did attend that I will use here was both the outstanding session and one that changed my perception. This was the “Addressing Violence against Rural and Indigenous Women—Challenges and Strategies,” by the International Public Policy Institute. I felt that this session was outstanding for its ability to show me just how oblivious I can be to my own bias—thus, it changed my perception. The catalyst was a simple comparison between two scenarios which forced me to consider that my comfort zone and views are fundamentally urban and thus if I am designing something for rural women I must listen, otherwise I cannot nor will I ever be part of the solution.

Therefore, my first and most related policy and advocacy idea that I will bring to my club is less a policy to recommend to government as much as it is an internal policy for our very own club - we must add a larger diversity of women to our federation. The second is a call for government to put all policy through a gendered lens. This is fundamental, as doing so will require the voice of women affected and must include our rural, aboriginal, and immigrant women. If policy is not put through a gendered lens, policy will continue to fail portions of the population; and if Canada is to move forward in a meaningful and sustainable way, it must support and carry every person.

Grace Hollett, CFUW National President

I attended as President of CFUW because of the high caliber panels bringing multicultural perspectives on feminist topics and the opportunities to network with other NFA's, government representatives and individual delegates .

At Consultation Day one of the most outstanding presentations was by Sizani Ngubane winner of the CSW 2018 Woman of Distinction Award, Ms. Ngubane is a woman's rights activist who was instrumental in founding the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) in her homeland, South Africa. She spoke of her life and the challenges she faced and overcame in a country where women produce 85% of the food but own less than 2% of the land. The RWM

has about 50 000 members and focuses on land rights food, education, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS, Ms. Ngubana reflected a global approach when she said "I am you and you are me and each of us has been fighting for the same things . . .gender equality"

This changed my perception of life for rural women in underdeveloped countries and how vital women activists are to effecting change.

Advocacy ideas for my Club; explore women's empowerment with the SDGs and apply to local provincial and regional situations including indigenous and rural women

Sizani Ngubane, UNCSW62 Woman of Distinction, Founder of Rural Women's Movement South Africa

It was a great pleasure for me to meet the IAW delegation at CSW62, I really appreciated the invitations to attend IAW's exciting events. I have no Zulu or English words to say Thank you, thank you, and thank you for having me and for nominating me for the prestigious NGO CSW62 Woman of Distinction Award.

When I received our President Joanna's email message asking me if I would like her to nominate me for this prestigious award - I was tempted to say to Joanna please don't nominate me because I thought it would be a waste of her time. I didn't think I would win the award. But I did not want to disappoint Joanna and reluctantly accepted the nomination.

One day in I think towards end of November I was browsing the internet for news and stumbled upon an article saying Sizani Ngubane is the winner of the 2018 Woman of Distinction Award. I was shocked and started circulating the message to my friends in different countries.

My lovely friend Nomcebo Manzini from Swaziland read the message and said to her spouse "I am going to New York - Sizani has won an award". Her spouse's response was "Ahhh uGogo (grandmother) and Manzini flew into New York. My beloved friends Pat Walker and Linda Nacif of San Francisco read my email message and took a decision to travel together to NYC, Frieda Werner a great friend of mine i met at the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 also attended. I started making preparations for my trip to USA where through the award our organization and myself obtained a great publicity.

For example the short video which was publicised on the internet about our work was viewed by 25,000 people in just one day and had more than 500 likes and more than 300 share which was amazing. Our movement's work would not have been publicised if it was not for your nomination.

I am currently visiting Canada in effort to create partnerships with potential supporters. Yesterday (March 29, 2018) I visited the Canadian Parliament and was honoured for winning the award by the Senators.

Tomorrow I will be travelling back to NY to catch a flight to Vancouver to see if we could create partnerships and then travel back home on the 16th of April.

Please wish me luck, our movement is struggling in its efforts to obtain funding for its activities.

Thank you for every thing. With all my heart.

In conclusion, I am most proud to have served as VP International Relations for two terms. The expansion that has taken place in our International Portfolio has been tremendous and that was made possible by the team that surrounds the work. The Advocacy Coordinators over the years, Tara Fisher, Maddie Webb and currently Geneviève de Breyne-Gagnon have all been my every day and late night consultants as we prepare for CFUW's annual engagement in UNCSW.

I have the awesome privilege to be the leader but without the support of my colleagues and the trust of our delegates to embark on the journey, none of the great experiences at CSW would have been possible.

My personal reflection from UNCSW62 is that we have no choice but to remain vigilant and active in our work to eradicate injustice and balance the soul of our communities. Without the two halves of humanity, woman and man, being equal in all initiatives we are lopsided! Whether the conversation is about women in rural areas or urban areas we must stay focussed on the impact of apathy and indifference. Our individual and collective responsibility is to Peace and that can only be achieved by valuing and appreciating all members of society in our thoughts, words and actions.

My appreciation to all the delegates over the past four years. You have all made me want to run faster and reach higher in the work we are engaged in. I wish the next VP International Relations continued success in her term in positioning CFUW as an influencer and a global change agent.

I conclude this report with a photo of one of the special moments at UNCSW62 - the UNWomen Reception on March 13, 2018.

