

# Celebrating the Origins and Teaching of Women's History at Atlantic Provinces Universities: A Symposium

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Volume 33, Number 2, Spring 2004

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad33\\_2for01](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad33_2for01)

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## Publisher(s)

The Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

## ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

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## Cite this document

Campbell, G. (2004). Celebrating the Origins and Teaching of Women's History at Atlantic Provinces Universities:: A Symposium. *Acadiensis*, 33(2), 68–68.

## FORUM

### **Celebrating the Origins and Teaching of Women's History at Atlantic Provinces Universities: A Symposium**

The idea for “Celebrating the Origins and Teaching of Women's History at Atlantic Provinces Universities: A Symposium” grew out of a conversation over lunch at the 2003 CHA conference in Halifax. At the Canadian Committee on Women's History (CCWH) meeting a question was raised about the continuing relevance of that group. Since one of the three young women I was lunching with was Lisa Chilton, the newly appointed Atlantic representative to that body, I raised the question about the future of the CCWH. There was general agreement among my young colleagues that networking – one of the longtime purposes of the CCWH – was still both necessary and valuable for women entering the field. But, we concluded, developing an active and dynamic network among women scattered across such a vast country – or even among women in our own region – posed significant challenges that widespread access to e-mail and internet discussion groups have not adequately addressed. My three companions pointed enviously at the recently expanded cluster of women historians at UNB. When I mentioned that, in the long-ago past when I was Atlantic representative for the CCWH, I had always thought that I should organize a meeting of scholars and others interested in promoting the study of women's history in the region, they were enthusiastic about the idea. So I rashly said that I would talk to my high-powered women colleagues – all five of them – when I got back to Fredericton and see what we could do. “Celebrating the Origins and Teaching of Women's History at Atlantic Provinces Universities: A Symposium” was the result.

GAIL CAMPBELL

Note: The following papers were revised by their authors for publication.

### **Women's History at Acadia University**

THE FIRST COURSE IN WOMEN'S HISTORY AT Acadia was taught in the 1974-75 academic year by Lois Vallyely.<sup>1</sup> In the Acadia University *Calendar* for that year, it is listed as “History 220: History of Women: A Survey of the History of Women in Europe and North America”. It followed quickly – and a whole lot more easily – on the heels of an Interdisciplinary Studies course, “IDST 310: Woman in the Modern World”. Taught in the 1973-74 academic year, IDST 310 was a first at Acadia in two respects: the first course to focus on the topic of women and the first credit course to carry the mysterious designation “interdisciplinary”. The course was coordinated by Lois Vallyely, with psychologist Lorette Toews and myself as “chief monitors”. To give us something else to do, Lois Vallyely and I were both members of a collective that planned and launched *Atlantis* in 1974-75. That the two female historians at Acadia were central to these developments is a testimony to the importance of the

1 I want to thank Paula Chegwiddden, Barry Moody, Donna Smyth, Lois Vallyely-Fischer and Leigh Whaley for their help in tracking down information on this topic.