

Conservatives elected 22 female MPs out of 121 (18 percent). Jody Wilson-Raybould was the sole Independent candidate elected.

High-profile women defeated in the October election include Conservative Party MP Lisa Raitt and former Health Minister Jane Philpot, who ran as an Independent following her resignation from caucus after former Justice Minister Wilson-Raybould resigned over the SNC-Lavalin affair. Due to the resignation of Green Party leader Elizabeth May after the election, Canada no longer has a female party leader in the Commons.

Once again, Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's cabinet has gender parity.

Women hold half of the 36 posts. Notably, former foreign affairs minister Chrystia Freeland is now deputy prime minister and minister of intergovernmental affairs. Carolyn Bennett remains minister of crown-Indigenous relations and Catherine McKenna has moved from the Environment portfolio (and the misogynist trolls who harassed her) to the ministry of infrastructure and communities.

Plenty of work still remains before Canada has a more diverse Parliament. Of 87 LGBTQ+ candidates who

ran in October's election, only four were elected, making up just over one percent of MPs. This includes Liberal MP Seamus O'Regan, who has been appointed minister of natural resources.

The 55 people of colour who were elected represent 16.2 percent of MPs, bringing the House of Commons closer to representing Canada's ethnic and racial diversity. Ten Indigenous MPs were elected, Wilson-Raybould among them. Notable Indigenous and Inuit

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women elected include Mumilaaq Qaqqaq, 25, the NDP MP for Nunavut and social activist Leah Gazan, the new NDP MP for Winnipeg Centre.

Female parliamentarians have proven powerful when they

find common ground. In early 2018, women worked across party lines in response to the #MeToo movement, helping develop policies to address sexual harassment on the Hill. Another sign of feminist influence in Canadian politics is the newly formed Canadian Association of Feminist Parliamentarians, which formed in 2018 and has 60 members. The cross-party group of MPs and Senators is expected to provide a sharp gender lens on legislation and other matters to advance feminist issues. ❀

## Doc Explores Queer Spaces

by AMANDA LE ROUGETEL

Out of the closet, but... where to go? Where do queer folk meet up to play, build community, organize politically and document their lives?

In the American documentary *All We've Got*, director Alexis Clement examines four female LGBTQ+ organizations to illustrate how queer female spaces have changed over time. She explores how factors such as surviving the gentrification of their neighbourhoods, resisting assimilation into dominant cultures and meeting the evolving needs of their communities have influenced the groups' ability to remain relevant.

*All We've Got* takes us to Alibi's Bar, deep in the Oklahoma Bible Belt,

where the young owners are committed to making everyone "from the homeless to millionaires, gay or straight or bi or trans" comfortable and welcome. Profit comes from booze, so the focus is on fun and drinks. Contrast this to the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City, founded by the Gay Academic Union in 1974 in Joan Nestle's apartment. Still going strong today, the priority in this lesbian space is on "stopping [our] history from disappearing." It is an archive of lesbian-centred materials. Says one volunteer, "The who is different from the early days, but the fact of difference is no different than it ever was." It is love for that difference

the kids" and "something that, in some cases, was a little bit harder for their parents to understand."

Kim Culmone, the executive leading the Creatable World team, acknowledged that while gender identity has been highly political in recent years, the company sees the new line "as something that's all about play and not about politics."

### THAT'S A WRAP

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) has achieved its gender-parity goals in terms of the number of productions directed by women and for production budgets allocated to women filmmakers.

Results from 2018 to 2019 indicate that 48 percent of NFB works were directed by women (38 percent by men and 14 percent by mixed teams) and that 44 percent of the NFB production budget was allocated to works created by women (41 percent to works by men and 15 percent to works by mixed teams).

"Creating parity also means working toward diversity and inclusion," said Claude Joli-Coeur, chairperson of the NFB. "And indeed, in 2018-2019, 65 percent of NFB works by Indigenous artists were directed by women, and 58 percent of NFB works by artists from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds were directed by women."

In 2016, the government-funded film development agency made a commitment to ensure that by 2019, half of its productions would be directed by women and half of production spending would be allocated to projects directed by women. In 2017, the NFB added new objectives for parity by 2020 in key creative positions—including screenwriting, editing, cinematography and music composition.



### RED CROSS VOWS TO AID RAPE VICTIMS

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement recently pledged to step up action to prevent, end and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in and around conflict.

Through their work in conflict zones around the world, the two organizations see the enormous and lasting damage caused by sexual and gender-based violence, commonly used as a tactic of war to dehumanize victims and destabilize entire communities and societies.

"Too often, sexual atrocities are accepted as an inevitable by-product of war. This must end. The law is clear: rape and other forms of sexual violence are a violation," said Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In the wake of widespread reports from international workers about sexual assault, Maurer pledged to not only demand an end to sexual atrocities used as a tactic of war but to "demand a change in attitudes that blame survivors, not the perpetrators."

UN Secretary-General António Guterres added, "We will replace impunity with justice; and indifference with action. Survivors—their experiences, needs and demands—will be at the heart of everything we do."

Julienne Lusenge, a human rights activist who works with survivors of wartime sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo put it plainly: "It is time to stop using women's bodies as battlefields. Direct support to grassroots women's organizations will enable us to treat victims and survivors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo within hours and provide them with access to legal services, transforming them from victims into agents of change and protectors of humanity."

## ABORTION PILL APPROVED

A group of Manitoba medical students behind a June campaign to have the abortion pill Mifegymiso available free of charge and without a prescription everywhere in Manitoba was thrilled when Brian Pallister's Conservatives agreed to follow their advice.

"We were obviously very, very excited because this is what we've been asking for," said Erika Lee, a member of Manitoba Medical Students for Choice, in a CBC interview.

Mifegymiso had already been available in Winnipeg and Brandon but was not free and required a



How LGBTQ+ female spaces have changed over time is explored in the documentary *All We've Got*.

that continues to fuel the fire that keeps the space up and running.

Viewers are also taken to the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center in San Antonio, Texas, an intergenerational political and cultural space where everyone can come with "all their identity/identities," and to the WOW Theater Café in NYC, a lesbian-founded performance space run on sweat equity and open to women "of every sex." Mention is made of The Daughters of Bilitis, a secret organization created in 1955 by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon to keep "our people out of bars, where arrests were frequent, and to educate them about their rights." And viewers are introduced to two members of The Trans Ladies Picnic, a group that intentionally uses only public places to meet

in small friendly gatherings as a way of creating safe spaces for trans women to "live their lives as real people without being mocked."

Clement set out to explore lesbian spaces but her lens broadened as her travels unfolded. Her questions to her interview subjects apply to any minority group in society: Where do we go in public? Where are we seen as ourselves, without fear of censure? How do we build those places? "Without communal spaces, lives are privatized," says a member of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, suggesting that, in the increasingly privatized context of 21st century living, owning spaces and places of our own (whoever that "we" is) continues to be a vital survival strategy for marginalized groups. ❁

## Alberta Anti-Choice Bill Nixed

by PENNI MITCHELL



A coalition of female forces, including NDP MLA Janice Irwin at the mic, at a press conference on Bill 207.

Jason Kenney's United Conservatives may occupy a majority of the seats in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, but

those united for reproductive choice in the province aren't taking attacks on women's rights sitting down.

In November, United Conservative Party MP Dan Williams lost his bid to enact a law that pro-choice activists say would have permitted health care professionals with "conscientious beliefs" to stand in the way of a woman's right to receive reproductive health services.

Doctors and Alberta pro-choice activists spoke out loudly against the bill. The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) helped block an attempt to pass a law that would have