

VOTES FOR WOMEN 100 OVERVIEW

In 2021, through a series of projects under the banner of VOTES FOR WOMEN 100, PerSISStence Theatre will be the lead organization coordinating a community effort to commemorate and reflect on the **100th anniversary since women in St. John's first achieved the right to vote in municipal elections**. In doing so, these women became the first in Newfoundland or Labrador to achieve this right.

LADIES' READING ROOM

MONTHLY
APRIL-OCTOBER 2021
E.B. FORAN ROOM

WOMEN'S MARCH THROUGH TIME

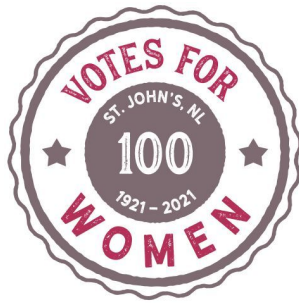
OCTOBER 16, 2021
COLONIAL BUILDING TO
CITY HALL

THE MIRROR

BY TRUDY MORGAN-COLE
OCTOBER 20-24, 2021
LSPU HALL THEATRE

STATUE OF ARMINE GOSLING

BANNERMAN PARK
UNVEILING OCTOBER 23, 2021



LADIES' READING ROOM

This project is inspired by the Ladies' Reading Room events that were held in St. John's in the early part of the 20th century in protest of the fact that women of the time were not allowed to attend or speak at the local debating societies.

The Ladies' Reading Room, where women WERE allowed to make speeches and debate, was the incubator for the creation of the Women's Franchise League – the leading suffrage group in our province's history. This group was the instigator of our province's earliest women's marches and other work for equality.

"The women developed confidence as public speakers by giving papers, and debating and analyzing issues, all within a socially respectable atmosphere defined by cups of tea and genteel female company."

(<https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/society/womens-history-group.php>)

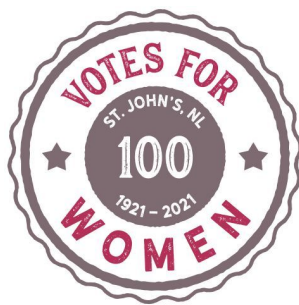


The Ladies' Reading Room was located in "a large and airy upper floor room" in the Lyon's Building, 158 Water Street.

Our idea is to host seven public events in homage to the original Ladies Reading Room and their popular Current Events Club. Our Ladies Reading Room events will occur monthly, on the first Tuesday of each month, from April-October 2021 at the E.B. Foran Room at City Hall.

These free events, open to the public, will start with a short 5-10 minute theatrical performance, set in 1921, written by a local female playwright, directed by a local female director, with costumes designed and constructed by local designers, and performed by a local female actor. Each month will have a theme related to women's equality that was relevant to women both in 1921 and 2021.

Following the theatrical performance, we will "jump forward in time" to host an expert panel discussion on the same topic from a current-day perspective, involving participation from community leaders, academics, celebrities etc.



Broadly, topics will include:

- Women and Politics
- Women and Violence
- Indigenous Women
- Women and Image
- Multi-Cultural Women of St. John's
- Women and Work
- Women and Legacy

Importantly, links on progress (or lack-thereof) between 1921 and 2021 will be emphasized.

Tea will served in both period-appropriate and environmentally sustainable china cups to all.

WOMEN'S MARCH THROUGH TIME



The Women's March Through Time is envisioned as a large-scale public event where the public is invited to attend a theatrically-presented re-enacted rally for women's rights in 1921, from the steps of the Colonial Building, before marching en masse to our modern day city hall for an actual rally for women's rights in 2021.

This project will involve the participation of many partner women- and girl-serving

organizations, such as: YWCA St. John's; the St. John's Status of Women Council; the Canadian Federation of University Women St. John's; the NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre; the Multicultural Women's Organization of NL; the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women; NL Organization of Women Entrepreneurs; Esteem Women; St. John's International Women's Film Festival; Girls Rock NL; and Girl Guides.



THE MIRROR, by Trudy Morgan-Cole



A professional theatre production at the LSPU Hall in October 2021, featured around the life of **Armine Nutting Gosling**, who founded the Ladies' Reading Room (1909) and the Women's Franchise League (1920), as well as being married to the mayor of St. John's, William Gosling. This work is commissioned exclusively for this project.

Armine Gosling was central to all three of the major suffragist events of 1921 -- the suffrage bill being brought to the house of assembly, the petition for women's votes being launched as a response to the defeat of that bill, and the extension of franchise to women in the 1921 St. John's election.

The performance will be performed by local professional actors and will be visually realized by historically-accurate set and costume design.

COMMEMORATIVE STATUE

Did you know that in the entirety of Newfoundland and Labrador there are only TWO statues of named women: Shawniditit in Boyd's Cove and Ameila Earhart in Harbour Grace; there are **none** in our capital city of St. John's.

As a leader of the suffrage movement in St. John's, founder of the Ladies Reading Room, and wife of William Gosling, the mayor of the St. John's who led the charter change in 1921, we feel that **Armine Nutting Gosling** is an ideal choice to be immortalized as the first statue of a named woman in St. John's.

The vision is for a life-sized statue in bronze, on a granite base, representing Gosling as she would have appeared in 1921, reaching out to the viewer in the process of handing out a pamphlet on women's suffrage. On the pamphlet, viewers can read the title "VOTES FOR WOMEN".





Sheila Coultas is a local emerging female bronze sculpture artist who has just achieved her Red Seal designation and is apprenticing under Morgan Macdonald of the Newfoundland Bronze Foundry in partnership with Esteem Women Inc.

The statue will be located in Bannerman Park, facing the Colonial Building, in a yet-to-be-determined exact location along one of the accessible park pathways. The unveiling of the statue would ideally occur in October 2021.

PROJECT BENEFITS

For PerSISTence Theatre, this project represents a unique opportunity to commemorate 100 years of women voting in St. John's, and thusly take another step towards achieving our mission of "community enlightenment based on the core beliefs of feminism", feminism being defined as "the belief in political, economic, personal and social equality for women."

For our community, by highlighting both the struggle and progress of women gaining the right to vote 100 years ago in St. John's, this project creates another opportunity for our audiences and the public to reflect on the current state of equality.

As part of the PerSISTence mandate to "change hearts and minds", the hope is that, through our activities, we will **support and inspire the continued advancement of all women in our community and society.**

PROOF OF ANNIVERSARY DATE

August 2, 1921 - Civic legislation known as the City Charter passed both Houses of the Legislature. This document was worked on extensively by **Mayor William G. Gosling** and laid out the rights and responsibilities of the council and its officials. Women received the right to vote as a result of the charter." (<http://www.stjohns.ca/living-st-johns/your-city/st-johns-history/1888-1929-city-councils>)