



# Our Voices

WINTER 2016 VOL.1 ISSUE 10

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE, MSC 482, 2500 UNIVERSITY DRIVE NW, CALGARY, ALBERTA T2N 1N4  
T: (403) 220-8551 E: WOMEN@UCALGARY.CA W: WWW.UCALGARY.CA/WOMEN

## Creating a Culture of Consent Through Activism



By Ashley Morrison

WE ARE ENTERING A TIME OF DEEP connection and destigmatization of sexual violence. Survivors and allies on campuses across the country are coming together to fight patriarchy, rape culture, and slut-shaming by actively promoting consent and healthy relationships.

In the aftermath of several cases of improperly handled sexual assault and

sexual harassment reports including the attack that led Emma Sulkowicz to carry her mattress with her wherever she went and the Dalhousie dentistry student's misogynistic and homophobic Facebook page, campuses across Canada are renewing their commitment to ensure students, especially those at a high risk for sexual assault and harassment, are

safe. Student groups and administration are working together in new and revolutionary ways.

Events like these have pushed sexual assault and harassment in to the spotlight and have galvanized survivors. No longer are people staying silent about their trauma; instead they are utilizing tools like twitter and tumblr to show support,



# WRC Awards

## Distinguished Alumna

### MILENA RADAKOVIC

MILENA RADAKOVIC is the President and owner of Nexus Exhibits Ltd. Milena graduated with an MBA from Nova Southeastern University and has a Bachelor's of Commerce degree from the University of Calgary's Haskeyne School of Business.

Milena embodies the definition of what it means to be a true leader. Inspired by her parents, who had the courage to leave Belarus, Russia to pursue a better life when Milena was only seven years old, she understood the importance of following one's dreams whatever the risk. As new immigrants to this country, with nothing but the clothes on their back, Milena's parents have ingrained the values of hard work, dedication and perseverance. She has translated this into a business that has a long-term vision and is focused on strategic partnerships with her clients.

Coming from struggle, Milena is generous in giving back to her community. In 2012, Milena helped start the Calgary Chapter of the Women in Leadership Foundation (WIL). A national, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing women in leadership roles. During her time as Chapter Chair, she helped the National committee bring innovative programming to thousands of women across Canada, focusing on the development of leadership skills to women from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Recently, Milena was appointed the role of WIL Ambassador and donates her time to mentoring young women looking to make their way in the business world. Milena's commitment and passion for this cause is constantly in focus as she helps lead WIL to deliver innovative programming to thousands of women across Canada. She was awarded the "Presidents Volunteer Champion" Award by the Women in Leadership Foundation (WIL) and one of the nominees in 2016 for Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) "Celebration of Achievements" Awards.



WRC Peer Helpers and CASE Executives with Laci Green at the project kick-off event

encourage one another to stay strong, and pressuring institutions to take a firm and progressive stance against sexual violence. Hashtags like #beenrapedneverreported, #rapecultureiswhen, #redmylips, and #everydaysexism created online spaces for survivors to connect, share stories, and empathize with each other. New tumblr blogs and user-created art has sprung up with messages that dispel rape myths and take down rape culture.

Online activism hasn't slowed traditional advocacy though. Student groups like 'Silence is Violence' has chapters at York University and the University of British Columbia, and here at the University of Calgary the Consent Awareness and Sexual Education club (CASE) celebrates its third year. Google searches for 'rape culture', 'campus assault' and 'consent' have all spiked in recent years, showing a growing interest in understanding and combatting the epidemic of sexual assault on campuses.

A 2015 feature documentary "The Hunting Ground" dives deep in to the culture of university campuses in the US and centers the voices of survivors, showing with deep compassion and sensitivity how traumatic those experiences can be. It follows the story of two women who, after their own experiences of campus sexual assault, begin travelling the country supporting other survivors in filing Title IX complaints with the federal government.

In an effort to educate students, staff, and faculty, the Women's Resource Centre in partnership with CASE launched a Student's Union Quality Money-funded program "Creating a Culture of Consent". The three year initiative will promote consent education across campus, engage the campus community in open dialogue, and host events aimed at reducing victim blaming, stigma, and fear, and promoting a shift in our campus culture to one based on respect and equity.

If you're interested in learning more about consent or the "Creating a Culture of Consent" project, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/askfirst](http://www.ucalgary.ca/askfirst).



The WRC Awards 2016 Presentation Ceremony was held on March 19 at the University of Calgary. The ceremony is supported by the University of Calgary Graduate Students' Association.



# WRC Awards

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S WISDOM, RESILIENCE AND COMPASSION

## *Distinguished Graduate Student*

### CARI GULBRANDSEN



CARI DISCOVERED HER LOVE of social work practice and research in 2009, when she took a participatory action research course in the Faculty of Social Work. She was thrilled to be accepted to the PhD program in 2011. Cari's dissertation research focuses on older women's resilience. Publishing feminist scholarship was a "dream come true" moment in her academic experience. Cari published her first feminist article, one that she co-authored with her supervisor, Dr. Christine Walsh, in 2012, and she has continued to contribute

to feminist literature. Cari's academic, work and community experiences have deepened her appreciation of mentorship. Cari feels extremely fortunate to have met many "womentors" who have modeled the wisdom, compassion and resilience that she aspired to develop. She plans to continue this tradition by supporting other women in the future.

Cari has gradually discovered and learned to value her leadership style, which she expresses in actions that aren't "traditionally" associated with leadership. She values listening, non-hierarchical activism and creating spaces and opportunities for women to share their voices. Valuing and supporting women's diverse leadership styles is very important to Cari. Cari has embraced several teaching opportunities and has contributed to research teams focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning in social work education. She strives to develop her own teaching effectiveness and she hopes to continue facilitating collegial opportunities for professional teaching development.

Cari served as the Vice-President Academic of the Graduate Students' Association from 2014 to 2015. She also serves as a Board member for the Women's Centre of Calgary and fulfills varied community volunteer roles. Cari is very grateful for the support of her family, friends and nominators. She notes that one of her greatest joys in life has been the ultimate feminist adventure, raising her son, Brendan.

## *Distinguished Undergraduate*

### EMILY LEEDHAM



EMILY LEEDHAM IS IN HER final year of a Women's Studies degree with a minor English at the University of Calgary. Emily has organized countless events and programs to benefit students. In 2013, she co-founded The Consent Awareness and Sexual Education Club (CASE). Under her leadership the club's achievements include: changing the security advisory to remove victim blaming language; arranging for bystander intervention training for all staff at the campus bar; and running public awareness campaigns during major events to educate students on how to practice consent at times when sexual assault is more likely to occur.

Emily's compassion for victims of violence has led her to take a leadership role in educating others about the importance of this issue. One of her most significant roles as a leader has been her service on the Ad-hoc Subcommittee for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence. She also had a key role in the development of UCalgary's three-year sexual assault prevention program: Creating a Culture of Consent, in partnership with the Women's Resource Centre.

Emily has co-hosted a feminist talk radio show, Yeah, What She Said on CJSW 90.9 FM for two years, showcasing feminist activism in the city. She has also hosted the International Women's Day Festival and a panel on female comic creators at the Calgary Comic and Entertainment Expo. She is passionately engaged in provincial and student politics, and currently represents the Faculty of Arts in the Students' Union. Emily not only rises to the challenge, but also brings valuable wisdom and experience to the table that directly impacts the governance of the university, and has helped transform campus into a safer place for targets of sexual violence and harassment.

## THE SHEILA O'BRIEN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP 2016

*Samantha Withnell*



SAMANTHA WITHNELL IS A fifth year Psychology major, with a minor in Women's Studies. She has experience working in the Eating Behaviors Lab, where she is currently involved in research looking at the overlap between #Thinspiration and #Fitspiration content on social media, as well as their potentially harmful messages. This research reflects her professional goal of aligning the intersectional, anti-oppressive

knowledge she has gained from Women's Studies courses with psychological research and mental health treatment. She will be completing her degree next year with the Psychology Honours Program, and aims to enter graduate studies in Counselling Psychology.

Samantha joined the WRC as a Community Outreach and Peer Support volunteer in September 2011, and became a co-team leader for the COPS team in 2013. She has benefitted greatly from the leadership development opportunities at WRC, and has been mentored and encouraged by volunteers to increase her self-confidence and identify herself as a leader. She spends most of her free time in the centre, interacting with peers and the many friends she has made as a volunteer. The promotion of supportive, inclusive, and learning-focused communities have become important aspects of her own activism. As a team leader, she is passionate about increasing campus knowledge of WRC's peer support program, and enjoys supporting other volunteers and seeing their growth as individuals and activists. Samantha was selected by her WRC volunteer peers to be recognized for her outstanding contributions to the WRC and the campus community.

*For more information on the award, please visit: [http://www.ucalgary.ca/women/volunteer\\_award](http://www.ucalgary.ca/women/volunteer_award)*



DEAN, FACULTY OF SCIENCE

*Dr. Lesley Rigg*

DR. LESLEY RIGG WAS APPOINTED DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE FOR A five-year term in 2015. She is an internationally recognized scholar with more than 18 years of experience working in postsecondary education.

Before joining the University of Calgary, she was vice-president for research and innovation partnerships at Northern Illinois University (NIU). During her time at NIU, Lesley was Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Affairs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Professor in the Department of Geography, a faculty associate in the Department of Biological Sciences and an active faculty associate in Women's Studies. Lesley is a forest ecologist, earning a bachelor's degree in geography and environmental studies from York University in Toronto, a master's degree in geography from the University of Colorado and a doctorate degree in geography and environmental studies from the University of Melbourne in Australia.

She is dedicated to student mentorship and graduate student excellence in research, and in 2009, she won the student-generated campus Excellence Teaching award. In 2015 and 2014, Rigg received honorable mentions for NIU's Women Who Make a Difference Award and in 2009, won the Wilma D. Stricklin Award for enhancing the climate on campus for women. She believes the way we enhance learning environments is through inclusive and diverse modes of instruction, careful attention to the vocabulary we use, and how people in the room are treated.

In sharing her personal leadership philosophy, Rigg emphasizes "a true leader must be authentic, innovative, passionate and respectful. Leaders who expect great things must allow people to do great things by creating the environment that accepts risk-taking and failure, while celebrating the successes. I depend on the team of experts around me and I would hope my team would describe me as genuine, respectful, and supportive of their immense talents."

