

Your Voice, Your Future
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On April 23rd, we had the special privilege of attending a youth conference hosted by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta titled Your Voice, Your Future. It celebrated the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Alberta and the role of individual citizens in fostering positive change within their communities.

Our morning started in the Wainwright Hotel in Heritage Park with a brief introduction from Her Honour, the Honourable Lois E. Mitchell. Shortly, we moved to the saloon where we were greeted by Sharon Carry, the CEO of Bow Valley College. She spoke us about her experience of founding the Olds Fashioned Christmas event in 1993 because she had a vision of people visiting Olds, coming together, and connecting in the spirit of the holiday season. Today, hundreds of thousands of people visit Olds during November and December. Having a passion for event planning and increasing community vitality, her success and drive deeply inspired us. We also had the opportunity to discuss current issues with student representatives from other schools and brainstormed on how we, as individuals and as part of a collective, may find innovative solutions.

One of our favourite events of the day was visiting the Famous Five Interpretive Centre. This was a replica of Nellie McClung's home where she lived with her husband from 1923 to 1932 (the original on 15th Avenue in downtown serving as the Colombian embassy). As proud feminists ourselves, we listened with bated breaths to the struggle of these five women in The Persons Case, a manifestation of their shared belief that women could build a better Canada. From there, it snowballed. Their victory led to greater equality for all citizens and became a symbol of the progress and reform that has since permeated the Canadian identity.

Standing beside Nellie McClung's original desk, we were reminded that we can all lead a ripple of change in our communities and beyond. We are proud to be Canadians and will carry on the spirit of the Famous Five.

We had the honour of meeting Councillor Druh Farrell in our last break-out session, where we discussed factors that constrained women from taking on more prominent roles in society. Ms. Farrell shared her experience as one of two women in our city council. She noted the surprising lack of women involved in politics and urged high school students to share their experiences with gender discrimination so as to encourage the community in taking action. In the break-out session, we discussed current issues that restrict females in today's society, such as the media's portrayal of women, victim blaming, and rape culture.

Our day was wrapped up with an inspiring speech from Hayley Wickenheiser, a member of the national women's ice hockey team. Since female hockey made its debut in 1998, Hayley has played in every Olympic Games. As a four-time gold medalist, Hayley is Canada's most decorated Olympian. She recounted her experiences of attending a boys-only boarding school, where she was forced to live in an equipment closet because she was the only girl on the boys' hockey team. The social stigma of girls' participation in sports has motivated Hayley to advocate for organizations such as Right To Play and Because I am a Girl to provide resources to girls who otherwise would not have access to sports. Her speech on her efforts to empower young women was a beautiful conclusion to our day at this event.

