

Women draw attention to voting issues to mark Person's Day



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Jessica Dawe, left, and Chelsea Noel, respectively the vice-president academic and president of the Grenfell Campus Student Union, hand out information flyers to passing motorists during the Person's Day rally in Corner Brook Friday. — Star photo by Gary Kean

CORNER BROOK For some women in Corner Brook, marking Person's Day was more than just another annual celebration of a major milestone in gender equality Friday.

Person's Day marks the anniversary of when women were declared "persons" under the British North American Act on Oct. 18, 1929.

For the dozen or so women, and a handful of men, who came out for the Person's Day rally, it was a time to draw attention to recent allegations by some female students who claimed they were discriminated against and treated with prejudice during the recent municipal election in Corner Brook. The Grenfell Campus Student Union reported that some young women were referred to as "little girls" when they went to cast their votes and were questioned at the polling station about their interest in politics.

The student union teamed up with the Corner Brook Status of Women Council, the Canadian Federation of University Women and the Western Regional Coalition to End Violence in organizing and taking part in Friday's rally. To get the message out, they distributed to passing motorists some 200 flyers containing information about Person's Day and the recent voting experience of students.

"It was a quick and solid reminder that, unfortunately, some of our rights are not as protected as we would like them to be," Paula Sheppard-Thibeau, the Status of Women Council's executive director, said of the voting complaints.

With Person's Day not even a century old, Sheppard-Thibeau said awareness still needs to be focused on all disenfranchised segments of the population and on the rights that have been recognized.

"I think it's important, especially on days like this, that we remember how fragile our rights are and that we have had these rights for so little time in terms of our history," she said.

The students union filed formal complaints with the City of Corner Brook concerning how some women voters were allegedly treated. The chief returning officer is investigating the complaints and is expected to provide city council with a report when that investigation is done.