

Lana Payne: Empower a girl and change the world

Every single day, I am inspired and humbled by brave, smart women and girls who, despite systemic sexism, harassment, poverty — and, in some cases, unthinkable circumstances — make their mark.

And when they do, they make the world better for other women and girls. They empower other women and girls. They show that anything is possible.

But I would be less than honest if I didn't admit that I yearn for a day when it isn't so hard for girls. As the mother of a 16-year-old daughter, I had hoped to have seen more advancement by now. Yes, we continue to make giant strides, but don't we all wish that the need for such strides was no longer necessary.

October is Women's History Month in Canada. And this year, Status of Women Canada is calling on women and girls to make their mark and claim their place.

And all around us, bold, smart, funny, hardworking, feminist women are doing just that.

Look at St. John's city council. With a few notable exceptions, for generations the chamber had been the domain of older white men. No longer. Last week, the city's most gender-inclusive council in history was sworn in.

It is worthy of celebration.

And so are the everyday acts of women who, with passion and compassion and gutsy determination, push for equality and equity.

There are the union women who demand equality, fairness and economic justice at work and in our broader society.

There are the fierce and fearless women advocates and counsellors who do the so very difficult anti-violence work in our communities and who demand a fairer justice system for survivors.

There are survivor women who, with beautiful and heart-stopping courage, break the silence, despite circumstances we should all spend some time imagining.

There are the girls who fight for the right to an education, to play sports, to be treated as equals. Girls like Malala, who inspired millions around the world with her strength and her voice and her story. This fall, five years after being shot for