

Trudeau, women and the mystic north ^[1]

London journal of Canadian studies, volume 18, 2002-2003

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Source: London journal of Canadian studies

Format: Article

Publication Date: 30 Nov 1999

AVAILABILITY

Full paper in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from article:

This article looks behind the well-known images of the sexy, intrepid Pierre Trudeau to consider his government's record on gender politics, on the one hand, and Arctic politics, on the other. It demonstrates how the Trudeau government encouraged the civic participation of women and territorial First Nations, by founding organizations which enabled these citizens to develop claims for a more just and inclusive society and, eventually, entrenching their rights in the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, it also shows that despite these developments, the Trudeau government failed to introduce policies on key issues of concern to women and territorial First Nations. It argues that such initiatives were hampered by the constraints of Trudeau's liberalism, jurisdictionalism and continentalism, as well as his government's reluctance to traverse the public-domestic divide, finalize land claims and speed up the process of territorial division in the Canadian North.

...Trudeau's record on gender politics and the North tells a mixed story. In the case of women, although his government responded to the 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, it found it difficult to move beyond the Liberals' adherence to concepts of equal treatment and develop a contextual approach to gender equality which spanned the public/domestic divide. Moreover, Trudeau's strict adherence to the jurisdictional imperative in a period when state-centred nationalism had intensified in Quebec, meant that his government was unwilling to contemplate the development of new social policies, like a national strategy on child care, because this could be interpreted as trespassing on the provincial domain. Nonetheless, as a result of women's concerted political activism, funded to a large degree by the federal government, the Trudeau government did eventually bow to feminist pressure by entrenching gender equality in the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms and recognizing the legitimacy of affirmative action to achieve that goal. In national child care strategy, he end, therefore, it could be argued that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was Trudeau's most significant legacy to Canadian women.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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