

Women in Canada, U.S. and elsewhere march a year after Trump inauguration with renewed calls for equality ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Thousands of Canadians took to the streets Saturday on the one-year anniversary of the Women's March — part of an estimated 250 rallies planned for Saturday and Sunday in Canada, the United States and around the world.

The scenes in at least 38 Canadian communities were an echo of the women's marches that were held around the globe a year ago this weekend in protest of Donald Trump's inauguration as U.S. president. Organizers said they're fighting for basic rights for women, immigrants and others who are under attack.

Over 2,000 people took to the streets in downtown Vancouver on Saturday in a rally that began at Jack Poole Plaza and included a stop in front of the Trump International Hotel and Tower on Georgia Street.

"I think Donald Trump is just beyond [the pale]," said participant Kirsty Bin. "Every morning since that march last year we wake up to him on the news and he has put the women's movement back 100 years."

'We march ... we win'

The march in Washington, D.C., on Saturday had the feel of a political rally when U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, both Democrats, urged women to run for office and vote to oppose Trump and the Republicans' agenda.

"We march, we run, we vote, we win," Pelosi said, to applause.

Cathy Muldoon, a high school librarian from Dallas, Pennsylvania, took her two teenage daughters to the New York rally and said marching gives people hope. She said this year's action is set against the backdrop of the Trump presidency, which "turned out to be as scary as we thought it would be."

[Image of President Trump's Tweet on the day of the march, "Beautiful weather all over our great country, a perfect day for all Women to March. Get out there now to celebrate the historic milestones and unprecedented economic success and wealth creation that has taken place over the last 12 months. Lowest female unemployment in 18 years!", available to view online].

Earlier Saturday, dozens of activists gathered in Rome to denounce violence against women and express support for the #MeToo movement. They were joined by Italian actress and director Asia Argento, who made headlines after alleging in 2017 she had been sexually assaulted by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein in the 1990s.

Mothers and daughters

In Canada, hundreds of people of all ages hit the streets Saturday morning, including Heather Day in Regina, who marched while pushing her 14-month-old daughter in a stroller. Day said she was marching for women's safety, pay equality and to protest workplace harassment.

"I want to teach her that you don't have to just suck it up and deal with it," she said. "You can speak out and help to change things."

Outside Place-des-Arts in Montreal, about 500 people gathered to mark the first anniversary of the Women's March.

One of the goals of the rally was to bring marginalized voices to the centre of conversations about feminism and feminist movements like #MeToo — where women shared stories of sexual harassment on social media.

Despite the impact of #MeToo, many women have felt excluded from it for safety reasons, said one of the event's organizers, Sandra Wesley — also the executive director of sex work organization Chez Stella.

[Tweet from Marina v Stackelberg pictured, "#womensmarch in Sandy Cove, NS in full swing. They doubled their numbers from last year: 31 people plus one baby!", available to view online with photograph].

Five-year-old Mariette and three-year-old Audrey attended the rally with their mother, Émilie Gagnon, who has started having conversations with them about discrimination and how "some people have fewer choices than others." She said attending the rally is a way "to start to broach these topics."

In rural Nova Scotia, marchers more than doubled from a year ago on the quiet streets of Sandy Cove, a community of only 65 permanent residents.

"I think people were surprised that in a very small, isolated rural community that we were concerned enough about what was going on in the world ... that we felt it was important enough to make a stand," said resident Gwen Wilson.

[Tweet from Elysha DG Enos pictured, "Emilie Gagnon brought her daughters out to the women's rally get them thinking about rights, discrimination", available to view online].

#MeToo an eye-opener

Helen Morrison, an organizer of the march in Sydney, N.S., said the #MeToo movement opened many people's eyes to what women, regardless of background, are experiencing.

"That's why it's so important for us to be out there, and supporting ... and showing our anger if that's what we want to show, or sharing our joy that we've got these people coming together who really want to march with us and talk about this," said Morrison, who's also executive director of Cape Breton Transition House.

Rana Zaman said the event in Halifax, which brought hundreds to the city's downtown last year, is more of a celebration this time around. She said the event is about standing up for the rights of women of colour, transgender women and members of the LGBTQ community.

In Winnipeg, hundreds of people gathered on the steps of city hall for the women's march, which focused on the social issues women in Manitoba face. Winnipeg march organizer Basia Sokal highlighted unequal access to child care and health care in Manitoba as examples.

She said women in northern communities in the province struggle with inadequate access to the type of health care, drugs and services available in Winnipeg and Brandon.

[Tweet from Maryam Monsef pictured, "It was a privilege to stand among so many strong women, girls, and allies today at #WomensMarchTO. So much wisdom shared--I leave inspired and invigorated to keep working toward gender equality. Thank you to the hard work of the volunteer organisers for a beautiful day.", available to view online with accompanying images].

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