News and Spoken Word Check List

Women's Hands & Voices is a project of the NCRA. For more info: womenshandsandvoices.ca

women's HANDS + voices

Does your story have a focus on women?

yes — **no**

What issues are you focusing on?
• Violence against women • Sexuality • Women in labour •
• Racism • Immigration/refugee issues • Queer issues •
• Homophobia • Dis/ability • Poverty • Childcare • Health •

Anything that focuses on the experiences and voices of women

"I believe in balanced programming – to specifically focus on women would not be fair or accurate"

To have a gendered lens in programming is not unbalanced or unfair – but rather, gives space to issues not normally reported.

Neutrality has been a contested concept in media – the belief being that we are or should be objective programmers with the intent for and commitment to balance and fairness.

However, while we strive for responsible reporting and programming that is balanced, it is vital to acknowledge that

1) Mainstream media does not live up to the values of fairness and balance and often reproduce marginalization and silence

2) Marginalized voices are just that – marginalized. We live in a sexist and racist society; these oppressions are likely to be reproduced in our radio stations. To focus on programming that gives voice to these issues starts the discussion.

Ways to include a gendered lens:
• women's opinions • women's expertise •
• women's research • women's organizing and activism •
• doing special programming on women's issues (focus programs) •

Do you strive to include a diversity of voices?

What is diversity?
• Ensuring the representation and involvement of marginalized peoples through "inclusion with influence"

Where can diversity be found?
• Aboriginal women • Women of colour •
• Dis/abled women • Queer women •
• Single mothers • Trans women •
• Women in poverty • Working women •
• The diversity of lived experience •
• Our diverse histories •
• The diverse systems of power •
• How oppression effects all of us differently •

Who are the experts in your community?
• Women's centres • Sexual assault centres •
• Aborginal friendship centres •
• Immigrant and refugee centres •
• Anti-poverty organizations •
• Women's writing/arts orgs • Unions •
• Youth and senior women •
• Activists • The women in your life •

Does the research and preparation of your programming include a gender based analysis?

yes — **no**

Different perspectives
• Women writers • Women academics •
• Women's personal testimonials •
• Women's lived experience •
• Women organizers •
• Feminist websites and journals •
• Perspectives based on gender, race, dis/ability, homophobia and poverty •

Ask yourself:
• Why does society value the perspectives and expertise of men over women?

• How can we diversify our research to include the perspectives of women?

How do you present women in your programming?

Victim — Survivor

Portraying women as **victims** often re-victimizes them – enforcing **stereotypes** that women have little or no power. Women are **survivors** against oppression – to survive is to struggle and be powerful.

The effects of stereotypes
• Reduce a wide range of differences in people to simplistic categorizations
• Transform assumptions about particular groups of people into "realities"
• Used to justify the position of those in power
• Perpetuate social prejudice and inequality

Stereotype — Complex

A **stereotype** is a negative assumption, generalization or pre-judgment about a group of people, which may or may not be based in reality. At times, your programming may **reinforce stereotypes without discussion of complex power dynamics** that effect women. By giving a complex account, you fight stereotypes and give your listeners a more realistic world view

Individual — Systemic

Victimization and stereotypes occur when explanations of the systemic conditions of people's lives are overly personalized. Systemic conditions are the layers of history, politics, economics and over all social relations that make up a society and its institutions. A careful examination of the connection between the systemic and the idividual leads to an understanding of the personal as political. Additionally, when individual women's voices are used in programs it gives women agency and helps breakdown systemic barriers to women's equality.

"Why do I have to think about this?"
• Because women are often ignored in the news
• Because our real stories are left untold
• Because women still do not have an empowered voice in campus-community radio

"But my show is not a women's show"
• Everyone can and should think about women's perspectives and also encourage the voices of women on diverse shows. Gender-based content does not have to be relegated to specifically women's programming, but can influence other shows.

"How else can I help?"
• Stand in solidarity with women's programming
• Encourage anti-sexism workshops in your radio station
• Prioritize the voices of marginalized women in your programming
• Be an ally