

# WOMEN IN COLONIAL CANADA

# “A BIT OF A SLAVE...”



*“We all joined in a little tirade against Canada this morning...already having an abundance of work on hand...I may as well say it... a woman is a bit of a slave in this country” A. Langton*

# HISTORICAL FOCUS”

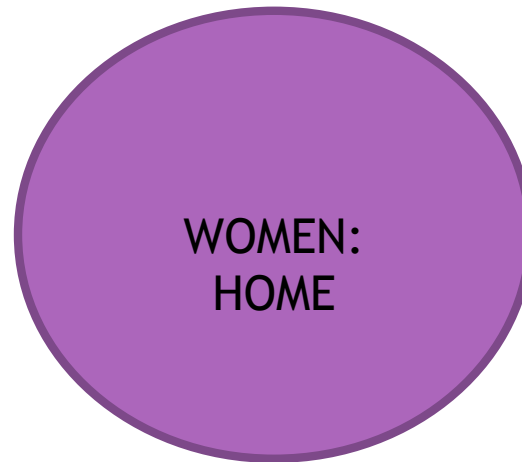
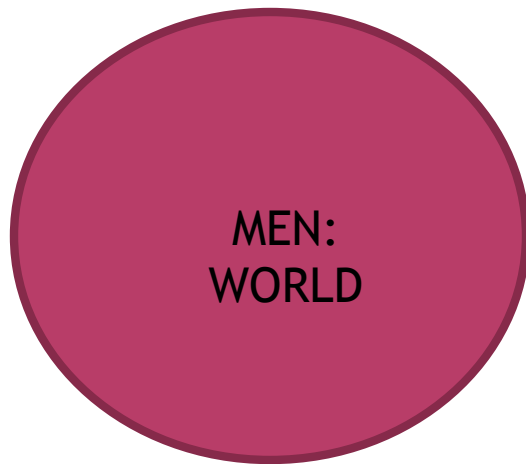
Until recently, our view of history has focused mainly on **economics** and **politics** *a.k.a money and power.*

As a general rule, women had very little do with issues of money and power.

So, what can we deduce from this?

# “FROM PRESS AND PULPIT”

Separate spheres:



# GOOD WOMEN:

- ◉ “an angel in the house”
- ◉ Restricted her attentions to her husband and children
- ◉ Fulfilled their “divinely” appointed duties as man’s helpmate and support



# LOVE AND MARRIAGE ?

- ◉ Men were to marry a women: (*from a colonial newspaper article*)
  - 1. because he loved her
  - 2. to look after *his* affairs
  - 3. to assist him in *his* journey
  - 4. to educate and prepare *his* children
  - 5. to not dissipate *his* property

# LOVE & MARRIAGE CONT.

- ◉ Upon marriage, a woman became a “*feme covert*”
- ◉ A *feme covert* was a dependent, like an underage child or a slave, and could not own property in her own name or control her own earnings, except under very specific circumstances.

# LOVE & MARRIAGE CONT.

- The husband was “the master”
- Wives were often “chastised” for misbehaving.
- If a husband, excessively beat his wife, he could be charged. Usually, the charges were acquitted.
- “it was invariably assumed that the victim was at least in part responsible for her husband’s actions”



# CHILDREARING:

- ◉ Pregnancies were dangerous. Women often miscarried or died of complications.
- ◉ Doctors were a rarity. Usually neighborhood women helping
- ◉ Children often did not survive to their teenage years
- ◉ Cholera, colds, flu, whooping cough, measles etc. all threats to children's health

# A WOMAN'S WORK—PRIMARILY:

- ◉ Ensuring the well-being of family:
  - ?
- ◉ Producing goods and services for the household:
  - ?

# A WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE:

- Cleaning, laundry, food preservation, childrearing, mending and making clothing, tending the fire, gardening, taking care of cows/chickens, and also helping with the “men’s work”... EVERY DAY
- Remember, no modern conveniences:
  - Vacuums
  - Washing machines
  - Refrigerators
  - Freezers etc.

## “HELP!”

- Many women hired “help” to assist them in their daily work
- Often new immigrants, and young unmarried women

# THE POINT OF THIS?

- ◉ Women, though often unseen and unheard in our history, were an integral part of the economy (and therefore political development) of Canada.
- ◉ *“The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”*

# RESPOND:

- ◉ In one (to two) **well-developed** paragraphs, discuss your thoughts about what you have just learned regarding the role of women in the early 19th Century.
- ◉ Or, if you want a challenge, complete question #5 on page 64 😊