How did women’s rights evolve at SFU? The answer is in the Archives.

In 1965 there was just one woman, Janny Wilson, in administration at SFU. There were four women on faculty. Male students outnumbered women 62% to 38%.

Women’s Caucus rises to the challenge

In the rebellious summer of 1968, women students, staff and faculty staged a “sit-in” in the student lounge! This photo from the Student Union’s newspaper The Peak for November 1965 shows women demanding that the board of the Student Union open the women’s bathroom.

Women’s work is recognized

Maggie Benston was appointed professor of computing science and women’s studies. She examined issues of interdisciplinary education, women’s needs and class issues, and served on the Senate’s Committee on the Status of Women. She was also the first woman to serve on the Senate. In 1975, Benston held appointments in chemistry and computing science. When she joined SFU’s English Department in 1965, Maggie Denhollander said, “Parents using the new building owe a lot to the women of my time.”

Credit is given where credit is due

As the final winners were about to be announced she rose and denounced “contests that glorify women as plastic sex objects.” Supporters in the audience sang “We Shall Overcome” while others laughed, or shouted in agreement or scorn. The event received plenty of publicity, sparking debate and raising awareness.

The Child Care Centre has a tempestuous birth

The SFU Archives has collections from the Women’s Bookstore, the Oaklawn Society, SFU Women’s Centre, and Archives/Libraries. Do you have questions about feminism and activism at SFU? The answers are in the Archives.