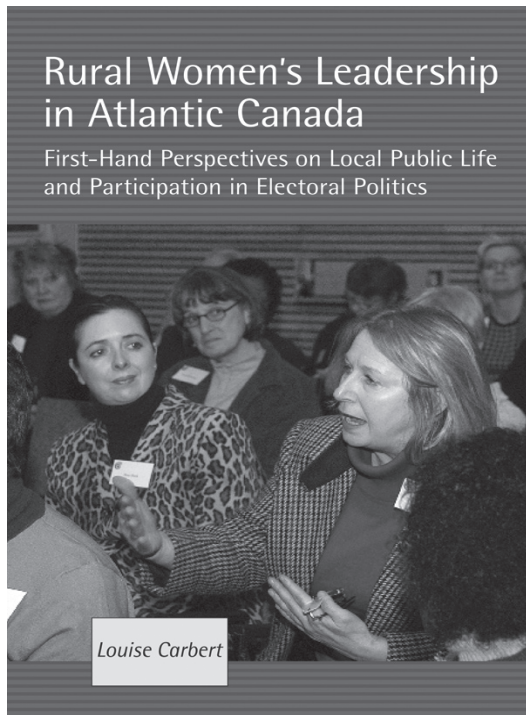


RURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN ATLANTIC CANADA

FIRST-HAND PERSPECTIVES ON LOCAL PUBLIC LIFE AND
PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS



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Most people are aware of the large and persistent gender imbalance in elected office at all levels of government in Canada, but few appreciate the far greater imbalance that occurs outside of large cities. This deficit arises not from rural voter bias, but from low numbers of female candidates running for winnable seats. The question of why there are so few female candidates has been difficult to answer, largely because we know so little about the pool of potential candidates.

Rural Women's Leadership in Atlantic Canada presents results from a regional field-based study, which confronted this challenge directly for the first time. Louise Carbert gathered together small groups of rural community leaders (126 women in all) throughout the four Atlantic provinces, and interviewed them about their experiences and perceptions of leadership, public life, and running for elected office. Their answers paint a vivid picture of politics in rural communities, illustrating how it intersects with family life, work, and the overall local economy. Through discussion of their own reasoned aversion to holding elected office, and of resistance encountered by those who have put their names forward, the interviewees shed much-needed light on the pervasive barriers to the election of women. Carbert not only contextualizes the results in terms of economic and demographic structures of rural Atlantic Canada, but also considers points of comparison and contrast with other parts of the country.

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