

Text of Acceptance Speech
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As I grow older, I find that even while enjoying my present life very much, I have started, occasionally, to look backwards – reflecting on the choices I made; roads taken or not; opportunities offered and lost. Not surprisingly, given that it occupied some thirty-three years of my life, a lot of this reflection focuses on my career as an academic economist – was it the right choice for me, did any of that work matter? To anybody? When I started my career in 1971, not only in the economics profession, but in the broader academy as well, the rules, policies, procedures, values, perspectives, networks, etc. were designed primarily for men’s careers. In those early years, I lived and worked within the context of that culture, building my academic credentials, raising my two children, caring for my aging parents, and in my spare time, trying to chip away at some of the more egregious aspects of the gender inequality I saw around me. While there were, clearly, some wonderful times during that period, it was, on the whole, not an easy row to hoe. All my research work focused on women’s experience in the labour market – hardly a hotbed of interest to mainstream economists at the time. And even though I would be the first to acknowledge that I benefited immensely from both mentoring and support from some of my male colleagues (there were very few senior females in the discipline at that time) I could never shake the feeling that I didn’t fit, that the work I felt was critically important was generally not regarded as a serious pursuit. The added fact that all the rules and procedures and networks at that time did not serve women well – especially those women in families with children – exacerbated the sense of feeling on the outside, and I had enough contact with other women economists to know that I was not alone in the way I felt. In one way or another, we all struggled with gender inequality, and by the late eighties, although we had made some headway on some issues, it was clear that simple tinkering at the margins of this problem – each in our own little corner - would not suffice, and nothing short of sustained, well-thought out, coordinated, transformational change would make a dent in the status quo. We needed to pull together. And so, in June of 1990, I joined with a group of some two dozen women economists at a breakfast at the University of Victoria and CWEN – The Canadian Women Economists Network was formed. That began a period of individual and collective activism by both senior and some wonderful junior economists (for whom the costs of speaking out were clearly higher) to restructure the economics profession and the academy in terms of gender equality which continues to this day. We worked on a number of fronts – networking, organizing CEA sessions of interest to women, initiating challenges to sexist policies and procedures, etc. - but one of the key characteristics of the approach was mentoring – a passionate commitment to making it easier for those who came behind us. I am incredibly proud to have been part of that group and I would like to leave you today with two thoughts: first, despite all the work that has gone on over the years and that clearly, much has been achieved, I don’t think either the economics profession, or the academy, or society as a whole has fully achieved gender equality. So I urge those of you who have not already done so, to find your voice, bring it to whatever table at which you find yourself, and make it heard. And second, as I said at the beginning, I am at the stage in

my life where I do wonder if the work mattered. To have been told so publicly, by being selected as the inaugural recipient of this award, that the work DID matter, has been a profoundly humbling experience and is the gift of a lifetime to me. Thank you so very much.