

**The New  
Brunswick  
Menstrual Hygiene  
Accessibility  
Initiative**

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Institute for Women's Leadership

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to *practice* leadership *through* action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.

The issue I plan to address through my Social Action Project is that of menstrual hygiene product accessibility in the New Brunswick community. Access to these items are a basic human right, yet sold at incredibly expensive prices for small quantities. For my project, I'd like to explore a sustainable route of providing these products for a low or free cost to people in need. I plan to achieve this through extensive research of how much it costs to make these products, collecting data from community resources, and initiating conversations with potential locations for distribution, such as women's shelters, LGBTQ+ centers, and food pantries. To a privileged individual, the biological process of menstruation may be considered a slight change-up to one's regular routine for a week's time. Yet to those experiencing homelessness, or struggling with their socioeconomic status, the purchasing of menstrual hygiene products such as pads, tampons, or menstrual cups could put a severe dent in their weekly budget. These items should not be a luxury to only those that can afford to purchase them. Women are primarily affected by this issue, as this involuntary process occurs in all those with female reproductive organs. This issue stems from the public health sphere, intersecting with the movements of feminism, social justice, and human rights.

LGBTQ  
Equality  
Menstruation  
Human Rights  
Women  
Accessibility New Brunswick  
Pads

# Research Foundations

**“As gender equality is an integral part of a robust human rights agenda, tax reform also must be understood as key to realizing more meaningful human rights.” -Bridge J. Crawford**

There is a link between menstrual hygiene and accessibility to health, sanitation, education, work, and dignity. This author aims to show that eliminating a tampon tax will free individuals from discrimination, and take back one’s right to health, education, work, and dignity, all with supplementary documentation pulled from prominent human rights documents such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

# Stigma

- o menstrual-related shaming, embarrassment, and taboos
- o improving provision of puberty guidance
- o lack of distribution of sanitary materials
- o lack of water and sanitation facilities for girls in high school
- o Practitioners and policymakers didn't consider clean hygiene practices when creating household or school-based programs
- o Result of subconscious gender-bias from engineers
- o Schools in developing countries engineered at a time before girls can go to school and few women were in leadership positions

4- 55  
products are purchased for  
**ONE CYCLE ALONE**

76.7%  
of respondents do **not** use  
organic menstrual products

56%

Of respondents spend  
over \$100 per year on  
menstrual hygiene  
products, with the  
highest amount spent  
being \$375



97.7%

Of respondents believe these products should be distributed for free.

# Creation and Implementation of the New Brunswick Menstrual Hygiene Accessibility Initiative

500...

Dollars spent

Menstrual hygiene pads  
purchased

Individuals impacted

# Feminist Leadership

- Identifying a problem in one's space
- Using a human rights lens to analyze the problem
- Working with and for marginalized populations
- Supporting an independent, women-led and founded business
- Developing leadership skills within myself
  - Time management skills
  - Communication
  - Budgeting

# Impact

- De-stigmatizing menstruation through conversation and accessibility practices
- Providing 500 organic products to individuals
- Building relationships in the community



“This is an incredible project and I am so delighted and honored that you have shared it with the Pride Center of NJ!”

Emma S. of the Pride Center

# What's Next?

# Bibliography

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