

Dear Frances and Lillian. It's time to put pen to paper. I'm writing because our political leaders are ignoring **your** sensible suggestions. We men need to get involved. We can vote – so might have half a chance to get Winnipeg and Ottawa to pay attention.

Our parents, James and Rebecca Beynon, raised us as active, principled community members. Our mother helped get the Methodist church going at Melgund – southwest of Hartney. And she saw you – Lillian – struggling to walk to school with your bad leg – so sent you to her sister in Ontario. Was it all those letters you wrote home that honed your writing skills? Frances, you adored Lillian – learning to write as you responded to her letters.

Look at you now – Lillian, Assistant Editor Winnipeg Free Press weekly - with your own column. Francis – Editor of the women's page of the Grain Growers Guide. You both taught in local schools and then sought bigger audiences. I'm proud of you. I'm most impressed - how you've taken the feistiness of pioneer women with you – advocating for all women who want to farm.

Our leaders are more British than the British – wanting women to be delicate, indoor trophies. Women working the land, they think is crude. But, now during WW1 Britain has a problem - too few men to grow food.

Schools are offering training for lady farmers. Canada needs women farmers too but won't admit it.

Americans are way ahead – allowing women to prove on free hold land. And - as you say - single women have satisfied land improvement obligations more efficiently than men! So, what's the hold-up?

Canadian politicians hold on to their image of a stalwart white man persevering against all odds – be they Indigenous, immigrant, women or nature itself. Foolish, and wasteful. I have a growing family. I'm allowed land for my son, but not my daughter – even though she has greater affinity to both land and animals.

It astounds me that any white man, single, married, widowed from Europe or Canadian-born can file for free hold land. But only a woman who is widowed with children can. I suppose it's thought that she's no longer available as a wife and therefore no longer destined to be subservient? I don't understand why this is the law of the land in this country.

You both write with such clear logic and good humour. You deserve to be celebrated – and followed. As a brother, I've been slow to step to your sides. No longer. Men and women, Indigenous and newcomer. We're not battling each other. We're battling together. Love to you both.



Lillian Beynon Thomas



Francis Marion Beynon

'Feisty Sisters' was inspired by a Hartney listener who asked David Neufeld to highlight the Beynons in a Vantage Points story.