

Sociologist named to Ruth Wynn Woodward chair

BY BRUCE MASON

"It is a great challenge, which I look forward to," is how Vanaja Dhruvarajan, describes her appointment to the Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair in women's studies

Dhruvarajan



BRUCE MASON PHOTO

at SFU.

"Part of my role, of course, is to help support and raise the profile of women's studies," explains Dhruvarajan, who will return to her position as a professor of sociology at the University of Winnipeg after her one-year appointment.

"Because this is a grassroots movement, I also want to encourage the ideas, involvement and initiatives of the larger community, to make use of them, and ensure that this process is ongoing."

Dhruvarajan has extensive research experience in family and socialization and the dynamics of sex and gender. Her research concentrates on women of color, particularly women of Indo-Canadian origin.

"Until now, the struggle to place women's perspectives in the centre of all academic disciplines has largely involved white women," she continues. "This must now include

knowledge created from the points of view of women of color, who are too often portrayed as exotic stereotypes and pushed away from the centre, to the margins of society.

"This is everybody's problem," concludes Dhruvarajan. "Although society must continue to fight discrimination by gender, class, race and ethnicity, a very important goal is to significantly expand opportunities for women of color and to bring them into the mainstream of society."

The Ruth Wynn Woodward endowed chair was established in 1986 in honor of the B.C. pioneer whose rich life included family business affairs, cattle ranching, and a very active role in community resource groups. Among those who have been appointed to the chair include national political figure Rosemary Brown, SFU economist Marjorie Cohen and entrepreneur/taxonomist Hilda Lei Ching. ♦