Myths and Facts Related to Feminists and Lesbians
(taken from GALE-Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC)

Lesbians always understand each other

This myth implies that lesbianism is easy and that all lesbians support each other. This myth may seem positive, but is extremely misleading and can cause much pain. Just as people in any community have different beliefs, values and desires, so this is true in the lesbian community. We do not always understand each other. Important issues need much discussion and debate to build alliances.

Because women have been taught in our society to devalue themselves, much internal homophobia and sexism needs to be overcome to develop a sense of personal power and control over one’s life. When two lesbians form a relationship, the relationship can suffer from poor self esteem, unclear or unrealistic expectations (that this will be the perfect relationship), and a fear of discrimination from the outside community. We do not always know what our partner wants or needs; we can only learn that through clear communication and acceptance of each other’s differences.

All lesbians are feminists. All feminists are lesbians.

Being a feminist does not necessarily mean that one is a lesbian and vice versa. Being a feminist requires more than being woman-identified; it involves having a political analysis of how and why women have been oppressed and understanding the dynamics of power and control. It involves a willingness to fight oppression in one’s personal life and within our society at large. It does mean that heterosexual feminists have a responsibility to identify lesbian oppression, as part of the oppression of all women, and to understand the effect of heterosexism in all areas of one’s life.

There is no need for labels (e.g. lesbian) because we are all human beings.

This myth is based on the belief that we are all human beings (and women) and that labels are divisive. Some lesbians see their orientation as personal, not political, and some heterosexual women prefer to view all women as coming from a common culture. However, some women have more rights than others. The label “lesbian” reflects a lack of opportunity and privilege in our society. When lesbians can be protected from losing their jobs or custody of their children and are free from harassment on all levels, we can then discard labels.

As well, the labels “lesbian” and “dyke” have been reclaimed within the lesbian community and are seen by many lesbians as a proud and positive past of our identity.

All lesbians are man-haters. All man-hating women are lesbians.

Lesbians are women who form intimate relationships with women. Although not sexually attracted to men, many lesbians have male children and maintain close male friendships. Being a lesbian is how women feel about women, not how they feel about men. Some lesbians are angry about heterosexual privilege, male control and power, but are not angry with individual men. It is more
often true that heterosexual women have issues with men and anti-male attitudes that are communicated to their children and to others.