

NAC News

In keeping with NAC's tradition of holding the Fall Provincial Conference outside of the Lower Mainland, member groups met September 25 for a three-day conference hosted by the Quesnel Women's Centre. Earlier in the summer NAC BC submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Women's Equality for a small grant to cover travel costs, childcare and related expenses for conference participants. We were disappointed to learn that Sue Hammell's Ministry decided not to provide any funds, resulting in many NAC member groups not being able to afford to send delegates.

A representative from the Ministry's North Central Office was present for part of the Conference. Questions were forwarded to the Minister about the following: the narrow funding criteria for groups trying to access grant monies; the rationale behind funding of assaultive men's programs; and the proposal from the Minister's office about establishing a Women's Foundation.

Considerable concerns were raised about this proposed Foundation initiative. These included:

- the absence of consultations by the Ministry with women's equality-seeking organizations;
- competition in the future for funding that women's groups currently access;
- rationale for the government getting into the business of setting up charitable organizations. Is this a strategy to diminish the Ministry of Women's Equality, replacing it with the corporate-driven sector? Members raised concerns that although the proposed Foundation looked good on paper, this could be the government off-loading its responsibilities.

In the round of information-sharing about the current economic and social situations in communities around the province, the same theme was heard time and time again:

- increases in poverty levels, homelessness and unemployment;
- impact of cuts to legal services, especially on women who have few financial resources to challenge wrongful child apprehensions, take protective measures against violent partners or inform themselves of their legal rights;
- hardships endured as a result of B.C. Benefits policies i.e. "Early Intervention" Process whereby women needing income assistance are only able to make an appointment

with a Financial Aid Worker after they sign lengthy consent forms, attend an orientation session and experience a delay of several days awaiting verification of addresses, bank accounts, etc. Without access to transportation, childcare, or bus fare, will we be seeing growing numbers of moms hitchhiking with their children, "dumpster-diving" and sleeping in alleyways while they're waiting for the very help that would make them not have to do these things??

We also heard from counsellors at women's centres working with women from abusive relationships, who had been told to reconcile with their partners or go through counselling sessions before receiving benefits or assistance.

Another critical issue is reported by rape crisis and sexual assault centres who are hearing about an increased use of the "rape" drug – Rohypnol – street names Roofies or Roaches. This drug is sold in the form of powder, pill, tablet or liquid for \$2 on the street. Women who have been drugged and sexually assaulted are apprehensive about calling the police, because they have no recollection of what took place after being sedated with the drug unknowingly, often in a drink they are having in a bar.

Contract Reform was also raised as a concern. Under the proposed guidelines, Women's Centres and other organizations under contract with the government are in danger of losing their flexibility, becoming more bureaucratic and being required to look and act like government agencies. Organizations and Centres already straining to meet the needs of women needing services will require new staff or additional training to cope with reporting requirements, all without additional funding.

Saturday's meetings concluded with a lively Take Back the Night March through downtown Quesnel, with a ceremony at the newly constructed sculpture monument at the Women's Centre.

NAC member groups continued to discuss the implication of the funding criteria changes of the Women's Program. NAC National is in a severe financial crisis. A heartfelt thank you to those groups and individuals who have supported NAC through donations and responded to the National Day of Action. Please keep those letters, faxes and telephone calls flowing. Feel free to contact me for addresses/phone numbers of key cabinet ministers.

– Hannah Hadikein,

BC South Central NAC rep. (250) 352-3609.

LESBIAN DISCUSSION GROUP

A small group of lesbians has been meeting once a month for informal discussions around lesbian issues. We want to make this group accessible and available to all lesbians desiring to participate in such discussions. Together we can make it a place where all our lesbian perspectives are heard and honoured, and where the many lesbian perspectives we have in this community can all be discussed. If you are a lesbian, come and make this group yours.

**Sunday, October 18, 1998, 2pm
Nelson & District Women's Centre**

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN ASSERTIVELY

Facilitated by Shelly Chvala

**Sun., Nov. 8; Mon., Nov. 9, & Tues., Nov. 10
7pm – 9:30pm each evening**

Nelson & District Women's Centre

Sliding Scale: \$40-\$55 / person

Please preregister by November 5 • 352-9916

Watch for detailed posters

What we're hoping to see (and helping to make happen):

More women in public positions, & mentors when they need them!

In May at the 'C4 conference in Castlegar, WKWA began actively encouraging women to participate in the decision-making bodies of their communities. Thanks to further funding from the Ministry of Women's Equality, this work is carrying on until at least February 1999 (and hopefully beyond.)

There are many components to this ambitious project, and many ways to get involved:

- Women with experience on community decision-making bodies can include their names in a mentoring network coordinated by WKWA. Similarly, women wishing to put their names forward for nomination for decision-making positions can register their skills and area(s) of interest. WKWA will nominate women for positions as appropriate vacancies occur and/or assist women to prepare applications to boards, agencies and commissions.
- As well as looking through lists of women who have already indicated an interest, WKWA will post notices at the Women's Centre as opportunities arise for applications. E.g. the Ministry of Health is currently looking for applications for positions on Regional Health Boards and Community Health Councils. Deadline for applications in Nelson is November 6 – call your Community Health Council for the date in your area and to receive an application package.
- Four conference videos will be available for loan as of October 20:

Confidence, Competence and Community Cooperation (21 min.) summarizes the conference through excerpts from the speeches, workshops and interviews. More than simply a report on the conference, this video puts forward a strong argument for women becoming more involved and effective in their communities.

What's a Woman Like You Doing in a Job Like This? (35 min.), a speech by Chief Commissioner Mary Woo Sims of the BC Human Rights Commission.

The Dominant Male Culture: Spinning Out of Control (1hr., 8 min.), a speech by Dr. Margaret Fulton, Education Consultant and author of *The Kootenay Learning Culture*.

Left, Right or Centre: Women's Issues Cross Party Lines (41 min.) a speech by Audrey Moore, Mayor of Castlegar, 1977-1993, and presently chairperson of the Selkirk College Board of Directors. (Audrey received a standing ovation.)

These programs will be airing on Shaw Cable towards the end of October and into November. The schedule is currently being developed and will be included in the November newsletter. As well, the Conference video will be featured in the Friday night workshop at Queer Reels, and the Women's Centre will be having two evenings devoted to these videos and ensuing discussion. You too can book these videos for your organization or discussion group.

- WKWA will launch a website in November to provide a forum for women to discuss issues relevant to their activism, to share stories and to continue exploring ways for our communities to prevent violence against women. We need a working title for this website – short, snappy, meaningful, possibly a clever acronym. Suggestions? Marion Grove is providing the technical expertise to bring this component of the project to life.

- We will hold workshops in the ABCs of applying for Board membership, and the 5 W's of municipal elections (Aren't you curious?)

This project is both exciting and extremely challenging. If we have the effect we are hoping for, we will see a significant transformation of the gender balance on the bodies which make decisions about how our communities function. In doing so we will, to paraphrase Audrey Moore's speech, reduce violence against women and children and improve the decisions of the groups women join.

For more information on any aspect of this project, leave a message for me at the Women's Centre or call me directly at 359-7721.

– Jane Burton

BOOK SALE

Extraordinaire!!!

Saturday, October 31
Nelson Trading Post
(corner of Stanley and Baker Streets)
11am - 3pm

**Time to stock up for those long
winter nights by the fire!**

**SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CENTRE LIBRARY
& WE'LL GET LOTS OF NEW BOOKS TO SHARE**

PERSONAL SAFETY

Wenlido

WORKSHOP

Taught by women for women
(basic program – 14 hours)

Instructor: Gitta Ridder

With 22 years experience in Wenlido instruction, Gitta draws from a wide range of skills and experience to help women overcome fear, paralysis or over-reaction and to deal effectively with harassment, verbal abuse, stalking, aggression, assault & rape.

Two Saturdays
Oct. 17 and Oct. 24 • 10am - 5pm
Un(der)employed & teens: \$45 • Employed \$80

WKWA ... Continued from first page

Began work on developing ground rules for co-sponsoring projects • Co-sponsored Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force meeting at Women's Centre • Agreed to update Constitution and By-laws • Held a Committee / Task-sharing discussion, at which CC members identified their interest areas and what they didn't want to do • Worked on report to Ministry of Women's Equality for the grant for women to attend the Columbia Basin Trust Symposium • Put in a grant application to Canadian Women's Foundation for Girls on the Town booklet (We didn't get it.)

December

Constance developed a WKWA tree diagram to show how the organization works, and distributed them to CC members • Hannah Hadikein became our National Action Committee on the Status of Women representative • CC Members assigned themselves to Committees.

January 1998

Set up a new tax receipt system so that charitable receipts are now issued on a regular basis, instead of once a year. • Helped host the Women's Centre's 25th Birthday Party • Helped host memorial for Kathleen Shannon • Ongoing work on lawsuit re Solstice Fire • Asked KLinda to investigate the possibility of a new computer for the Centre. She recommends buying a new one. Further research is required. • Several members met to come up with proposals for Status of Women Canada funding

February

CC met with MWE rep, Janice Logan, who presented the collective with a large packet of information about the MWE's process. This information now resides in the CC binder. • Wrote a letter to Status of Women Canada expressing concerns about funding, and asking for an increase in support for overhead expenses • Eileen wrote a support letter for Hannah Hadikein to sit on the Health Council. Hannah obtained the seat. • Decided not to get a banner for our 25th birthday year, as it is too expensive • Rhonda investigated getting a sign about the Women's Centre with the other club signs on the way into town (We still haven't figured this out.) • Brainstorming meeting re Festival, where it was decided to have a Festival • Sent out request to RDCK directors for annual grant funding • Highly successful fundraiser, "Sensible Footwear" at Capitol Theatre. Cleared \$614.84. Special thanks to Joanna Moratta.

March

KLinda's evaluation • Discussion of restructuring of Women's Centre staff positions • Projects committee began work on guidelines for co-sponsoring projects • IWD – Multicultural potluck and event at United Church • Set up a display in the kiosk at Baker and Ward throughout the month – thank you Gitta and Fiona • Submitted proposal for SWC funding for Women's Centre

April

Funding received from MWE for C4 Conference • Cathy P. reported on her research re finding funding for a volunteer coordinator. Ideally there would be two jobs, or part of this job might be a WKWA administrator, which it was agreed is sorely needed. There is no funding, however. Cathy agreed to put together a binder with her full recommendations. • Cathy P. created a procedure for Criminal Records checks. All staff must

have these checks, and any volunteers who wish to, may do so. • Cathy P., Terry MacKenzie and Jenny Craig got underway as the Policy Committee, and proceeded to do vast amounts of work over the next several months • CC went on a one-day retreat.

May

Decision to hold Festival re-considered, decided to have scaled-down event: Friday night Literary Cabaret in town, dance at the Vallican Whole on Saturday • Mission Statement proposals presented • C4 Conference takes place at Selkirk College in Castlegar • Kathleen Shannon Memorial Film Festival – a very successful fundraiser... over \$1000 raised!

June

CC member went to Family Resource Centre meeting • Raised WC staff wages, reduced hours • Hired Jane Burton for the C4 followup position. Eileen Pearkes will be the CC liaison to this project. • Decided to have a reception for Bev Lapointe • Co-sponsored Girls Exploring Trades and Technology with Kootenay WITT • Applied for funding from SWC with HRDC for Distance Education project • Chose two of the proposed Mission Statements to bring to the AGM

July

Agreed to close the Centre for one week • Placed Volunteer Appreciation ad in Barter Bulletin and Newsletter • Meeting between designated CC members and staff re CC/staff relations • Got funding for HRDC/Distance Ed project, hired Willow Brocke for position • Began recruitment for new CC • Passed the new budget(s) • Approved several new/clarified policies brought forward by Policy Committee.

August

No meeting in August • Wrote a detailed letter outlining concrete results of last year's MWE-sponsored evaluation project. Sent this letter to Ridge Meadows Women's Centre, who is compiling this information as part of an evaluation of the MWE's Contract Reform process.

September

WKWA and the Centre wrote a thorough letter recommending changes to the City of Nelson's proposed Employment Equity policy. Several of our recommendations wound up in the new policy. • Received the year-end financial review from our accountant, Nance Henne • Put on a reception for Bev LaPointe • Planned for and held the AGM, including putting together a comprehensive Orientation Binder for CC members (thanks, Eileen!) • Take Back the Night, Saturday, September 26.

Ongoing:

The CC regularly has long discussions about the role of the organization within the community, and the role of individuals within the collective.

We write numerous letters of support for various projects and organizations.

We write letters to government about proposed changes to legislation and current government practices.

We deal with copious amounts of correspondence.

The Finance Committee does vast amounts of work and we would be nowhere without them.

Written by Moe, presented by Rhonda. There may be some errors in time frame, but we did do all this and more. So, new CC, this is some inkling of what you have to look forward to, plus whatever you dream up yourselves!