

NOVEMBER 2002

Inside:

December 6 Day of Remembrance

Statistics on violence against women

Violence against women & militarism

A WITT tribute

Library Report

Staff Reports

Events

WEST KOOTENAY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

420 Mill Street, Nelson, BC, V1L 2J6 Phone: (250) 352-3177 Fax: (250) 352-7100 Email: wkwomyn@netidea.com

December 6th

National Day of Remembrance and Action on
Violence Against Women

In Memory of

*The Montreal Massacre,
the women murdered
in East Vancouver
and the women
missing off
HWY 16.*

*Remember and honour women who live in fear and those who have
died violently. Speak out against violence, make our voice heard.*

December 6th

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

December 6th is the National Day of Remembrance as we honour the anniversary of the deaths of 14 women who were shot and killed on December 6th 1989 at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal because of their gender .

Beyond the loss of these 14 innocent lives, this day represents a time to reflect on violence against women in Canada and around the world, and a time remember those whose lives have been affected by violence, and to take action to stop it.

In our own area Nicole Hoar, who was a resident of Nelson, went missing from Hwy#16 along with many other women over the years. There are 63 confirmed missing women from the Vancouver downtown east side, but Women's Centres report the number of missing women is closer to 100. Females make up the vast majority of victims of sexual assaults (86%), criminal harassment (78%) and kidnapping / hostage taking or abduction (67%). (Status of Women Canada source)

Remember and honour women who live in fear and those who have died in fear by making it a priority to help eliminate violence against women, and to help promote gender equality everyday.

Violence against women represents a unique aspect of the wider social problem of violence. The elimination of women's rights equals violence against women and children, cuts to income equals increased poverty, cuts to health care equals increased risks, cuts to housing equals homelessness, and the elimination of justice equals violation of human rights, all of which contribute to violent behaviours in our society today.

On December 6th there will be a candlelight vigil at 6:30 pm between Sidewinders and Gericks on Baker Street in memory of the Montreal Massacre victims, followed by an evening of music beginning at 7pm at the Scandenavian Church on Baker Street. There will also be self-defense demonstrations, spoken word, and information available on action to eliminating violence against women.

Celebrating the power that individuals hold to make our community a safer place, the Nelson & District Women's Centre will be hosting a safe place to share personal thoughts and experiences. There will be informative films running throughout the day, a mural of expression that women can sign, letters to Premier Campbell and Liberal MLA's to sign regarding the impact of provincial government cuts on women, and information will be available to take home as well. The Women's Center is open between 12-4pm at 420 Mill Street.

Take Action ! Speak Out !

STATISTICS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CANADA

WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF CRIME

- Half of Canadian women (51%) have been victims of at least one act of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.
- Of all victims of crimes against the person in 2000, females made up the vast majority of victims of sexual assault (86%), criminal harassment (78%) and kidnapping/hostage-taking or abduction (67%).
- Women are much more likely to be victimized by someone they know than by a stranger. In 2000, 77% of all female victims were victimized by someone they knew (37% by a close friend or acquaintance, 29% by a current or past partner, 11% by other family members – including parents) while 19% were victimized by a stranger.

CRIMINAL HARRASSMENT (stalking)

- Over three-quarters (77%) of reported victims of criminal harassment in 2000 were women.
- Almost nine in ten (88%) female victims in 2000 were stalked by men.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

- In 2000, 27,154 sexual offences were reported in Canada, including 24,049 sexual assaults and 3,105 other types of sexual offence. Women made up the vast majority of victims of sexual assault (86%) and other types of sexual offence (78%).

SPOUSAL VIOLENCE

- Of the almost 34,000 victims of spousal violence reported in 2000, women accounted for the majority of victims (85%), a total of 29,633 victims.
- From April 1, 1999 to March 31 2000, there were 96,359 admissions (57,182 women and 39,177 children) to 448 shelters for abused women across Canada.
- In a snapshot taken on April 17, 2000, 89 shelters turned away 476 people (254 women and 222 children). More than 7 in 10 of these shelters (71%) turned women and children away because the shelter was full.

HOMICIDE AND SPOUSAL HOMICIDE

- Data on solved crimes indicates that 52% of all female homicide victims in 2001 were killed by someone with whom they had an intimate relationship at one point in time, either through marriage or dating (compared to 8% of male victims).

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Eliminated by the provincial Liberal government:

- A freestanding Ministry of Women's Equality
- Funding to women's centres (as of March 2004)
- Pay & Employment Equity
- Childcare subsidies slashed in June 2002
- It is estimated that 1/4 of all BC women, and almost 1/2 of BC's single Mothers, earn less than the low-income (*poverty line*) cut-off ratio.
- The \$ 6.00 training wage

Volunteer Coordinator Report *by Thea Trussler*

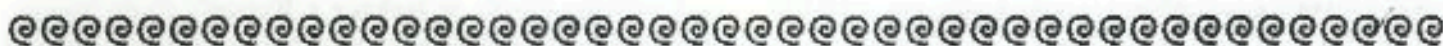
The volunteer training session has begun with fourteen amazing women participating in this year's ten-week course. The group is already planning numerous activities together and enthusiasm is contagious! The course is intensive and covers as many areas as possible to prepare the volunteers for working front line during drop in hours. We are being challenged to a greater degree than ever with the cuts to services in town. Our drop-in numbers are steadily increasing and the severity of issues facing staff and volunteers makes it essential that everyone's skills be enhanced.

The course covers areas of self-care and personal boundaries, initial crisis counseling skills, communication, suicide prevention, feminist and gender analysis and a number of other topics essential to our role as the women's centre.

This year's December 6 memorial includes a focus for the women missing from the Vancouver lower east side and the women missing on Highway 16. Two sisters from the Nelson area are included in those missing women's statistics. Each year the December 6 Montreal Massacre Memorial brings up deep emotions for women and now the almost daily media attention to the other missing women challenges us in ways many have never dealt with before. Canada has become internationally known now for its attacks on women...it is real, it is here, and it is our neighbours, sisters, mothers and friends.

If you want to become involved in the December 6 memorial please contact us at 352-9916. We are also calling for support in a variety of other areas at the centre including assistance in maintenance at the centre, snow removal and a variety of committees that require members to participate.

The volunteer training group will also be planning a solstice gathering here at the centre. For more information please contact the centre closer to the date. Blessings to all of you for the holiday season!



Library Report *by K. Linda Kivi*

The Library Committee had a very successful book sale at the Women's Festival in August. Over \$200 was raised for the purchase of new books. We decided to have another book sale with the remaining books, and along with a few donations from community members, we raised another \$200.

The Library Committee bids farewell to committee member Allison Hack who has moved to Victoria to study writing. Catherine Fisher has rejoined the Library Committee and quickly helped us out by spearheading the second book sale. Sara Gillespie, another new Library volunteer, joined me on the day of the sale to haul books around and flog them. Welcome to both of you.

On the missing books front, thanks to all of you who dug out your long overdue Women's Association Library books and returned them. Every overdue book returned warms the heart of Marg Smith (our honourable librarian crone) and the Library



Committee. On the flip side, our summer inventory (what a job!!!) revealed that more books have gone missing than we originally thought. We have no way of keeping track of books that are removed with cards and all (i.e. not signed out) until we do the arduous work of an inventory. Fortunately, even some carded books have recently been returned. (Applause!!).

Why does this simple system need to be so disregarded and violated? I understand **Rebellion Against Rules**, especially since so many of them are senseless and even misogynist, but we're talking about a Women's Library here. Signing books out and returning them more or less on time, is not about authority and patriarchy, it's about **Mutually Beneficial Agreements** between people striving for a better world. Oh, I digress...

By the new year we should have a few new, new (as opposed to *new to us*) books on our shelves. Check them out! But return them too!

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN and MILITARISM: CLOSELY LINKED

by Hannah Hadikein (VOW)

The last century was the bloodiest in history as evidenced by two World Wars, continuous regional conflict, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, Afghanistan, ethnic cleansing and genocidal massacres in Europe, Rwanda, the Balkans, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and numerous regions of the world. Reliance on armed and violent intervention has not produced peace and security. Armed conflict and war target and victimize women and children in an unprecedented manner.

According to UNICEF, since World War II ninety per cent of war casualties have been civilians - the majority being women and children. Women are subjected to rape, sexual slavery, forced impregnation and kidnapping. Militarism and violence against women are increasingly connected. The military establishment is based on domination, use or threat of force, power and the legitimization of violence in its business of killing. In *War and Rape*, Ruth Seifert writes: "What is defined as masculine in Western society is almost inseparably interlinked with heterosexuality and the monopoly of violence." Rape is used to demonstrate to the enemy that they can't protect their "own" women - clearly a misogynist and macho mindset. A recent study found spousal abuse in one-third of Army families, twice the civilian rate.

Violence also takes the form of exile, deportation and displacement. "There are more than 34 million refugees and internally displaced people worldwide, people uprooted by conflict, oppression or persecution; approximately 80 % of them are women and children" Women's Commission for Refugees. Despite displacement, war, and conflict, women continue to be responsible for nurturing, providing and caring for others. Violence against women, a major barrier to the achievement of equality, development and peace, also violates and nullifies the fundamental principles of freedom, human rights and social justice.

Economic sanctions backed by threats of military intervention are acts of socio-economic violence. Up to 1.5 million civilians have died during the 10 years of sanctions against Iraq, which has essentially become a walled ghetto. Before the Gulf War Iraq was a sophisticated nation with one of the highest standards of living. Today, it is a nation of extreme poverty, devastation, death and despair. Iraqi women are reduced to begging for food, suffering an epidemic of stillbirths and deformed newborns, and remain helpless as malnutrition and lack of medicine kill an estimated 5,357 children each month. Armed conflict creates economic insecurity and destroys survival mechanisms. Women are the vast majority of those who are adversely affected. Environmental disasters pose even greater risks to women's well being. In Guatemala, for

example, after the devastation of a civil war the women of Rio Negro were massacred and their lands were seized for a hydroelectric dam project. Women are excluded from socio/economic and political power sharing due to gender disparities. The UN Declaration on Violence Against Women calls gender-based violence "a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men" and a means by which this inequality can be maintained.

Women, rarely participants in armed conflict, are often the targets. Alongside the general hardships and suffering experienced as a result of the recent war in Afghanistan, women have been subjected to a range of human rights abuses perpetrated by the various parties in the conflict. In Burundi, a 16-year-old girl was tortured and forced to stand naked in front of male members of the security force. UN Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict states: "All the necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the prohibition of measures such as persecution, torture, punitive measures, degrading treatment and violence, particularly against that part of the civilian population that consists of women and children".

I believe strongly in building a Women's Peace Agenda. Women understand nonviolent resistance as a social and political practice, grounded in our women's giving and spirituality. I believe we are central to building and maintaining peace. I believe that feminist principles of gender equality, guarantees of economic security, shared political power, and freedom from violence are essential to counter global militarism. I believe women must have freedom from violence, invading armies, agents of repressive governments or abusive spouses. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (October 2000), calls for gender sensitivity in all missions (including peacekeeping), equal participation of women at all negotiating tables, and the protection of women and girls during armed conflict. To date, minimal resource commitment has been made from the UN to support these principles. We must hold our Governments accountable and press for the implementation of the above resolutions.

War has unconscionable costs, not the least violent of which is the dissipation of our social safety net as funds for services are used to bolster Canadian military policies which are increasingly aligned and compliant with US military objectives. Regardless of gender, we must all advocate for the implementation of the UN resolutions and commit to ending the perpetration of human rights violations and violence against women.

Hannah Hadikein is a newly elected member to the National Executive of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace. For more information about VOW and interest in a local chapter please phone 250-352-3609.

A TRIBUTE/MEMORIAL *by Deb Taylor*

As the Women In Trades and Technology Coordinator/Developer Instructor of Selkirk College, and a member of the West Kootenay Women's Association Coordinating Collective, I was asked if WITT could be part of the December 6 National Day of Remembrance. It was felt that a Trade/Technology program for women could make a positive submission to the newsletter about the fourteen female engineering students shot by a man who believed the women had displaced him.

Initially, I couldn't find a positive approach to this article. For the last twenty five years I have been seen as intruding in the male dominant workplace because I'm a pipefitter welder. I encountered anger and hostility but have always returned to the workplace with a bit more strength. But staying on the job has helped me educate male co-workers, showing them that I could be myself and do the job well. Many of my male cohorts have learned to accept and enjoy my presence – and therein lies the positive side of the picture.

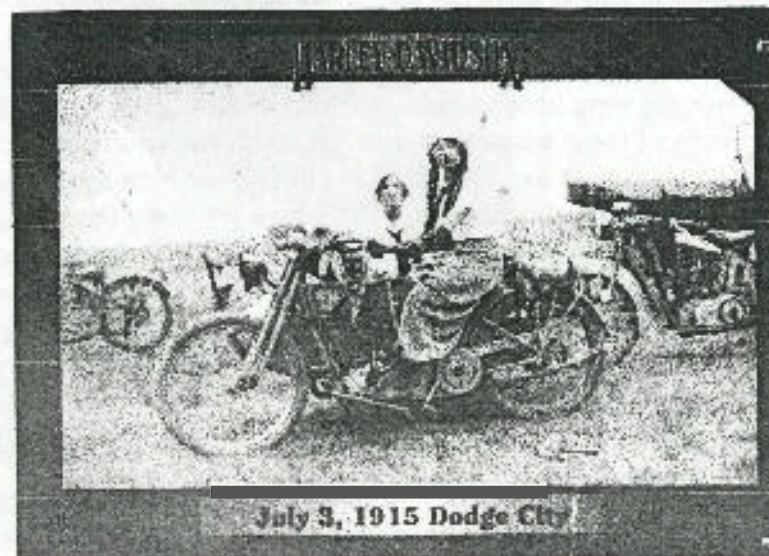
Every woman who goes into a technology or trades is a tribute to the women who died on December 6, 1989. These fourteen women chose to not be intimidated by societies ill-conceived notions of gender appropriate choices. These women continue to inspire many of us to pursue non-traditional careers.

In an electrical workshop for women I overheard a male participant say, "You women can do anything." He said the same thing many times and I wondered if he needed to convince himself to feel less threatened by us.

Recently I received a call from a past WITT student who thanked me for supporting and encouraging her to enter the engineering program at Moncton University. She is doing a great job and will be volunteering some of her time to teach math and science to young girls through the Women's Engineering Association of New Brunswick. This positive story and the increasing number of women in technologies and trades helps society gain a greater acceptance of employment equity.

Non-traditional careers give women an incredible sense of pride, self confidence and empowerment. The strength of these women educates society to the benefits of respect and equality. I am proud of the women who venture into the uncharted waters of technology and trades to face their fears and the fears of others.

While writing this article, I cried for the women who died on December 6, 1989, and for a society still ignorant to the realities of violence against women. I hope we can learn and grow as a result of this tragedy and can one day live and work in an equitable, peaceful world.



December 6th – A Time to Take Action by Cheryl Dowden

December 6th, a time to REMEMBER the 14 women who were murdered in the Montreal Massacre at L'Ecole Polytechnique in 1989; a time to REFLECT on the reality of violence against women in our society; a time to TAKE ACTION in order to bring about systemic changes and end violence against women. It is hard to believe that it has been 13 years since that horrific day that I will never never forget! The emotional response that I experienced on that day has never really left me and will always be a part of the heaviness I feel in my heart around the issue of violence against women and the struggle that we continue to engage in to end all forms of violence that women experience in their lives...our lives.

Last year on December 6th, Women Centre volunteers created a giant women's symbol that bore messages of remembrance, strength and encouragement. The women's symbol asks us to remember the 45 women who have gone missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The appalling thing is that 22 more names have been added to the list over the past year. 67 women have gone missing over recent years from one Canadian city. My question is why is there not an overwhelming display of public outrage!!!! I think we all know the answer to that question: because many of these women were involved in the sex-trade, because many of these women were users, because many of these women lived in the poorest neighbourhood in Canada and because these Canadians were women. The amount of women who disappeared, most unnoticed by the Criminal Justice System, to me indicates a genocide that exposes the deeply rooted systemic indifference and detachment that exists in our society when it comes to issues of violence against women.

In addition to remembering the Montreal Massacre as well as the 67 women missing from the Downtown Eastside, we are remembering the

women who have gone missing from the section of #16 hwy between Prince George and Smithers. Last winter, Nicole Hoar, who disappeared from #16 hwy while hitch hiking from PG to Smithers, was living in Nelson. I had met Nicole through the Women's Outdoor Club and had enjoyed a day of snow shoeing with her and a great group of outdoorsy women at APEX in January. It is a lovely memory of Nicole, doing what she obviously loved, being outside on a beautiful snowy afternoon traipsing around the bush. I have thought of her often since the day that I heard that she went missing. I am angered and outraged at the violent (mostly men) in our society that wage a war of hatred, violence and abuse against women in their lives or even against perfect strangers. This is why I am committed in my life and the work that I do to continue to TAKE ACTION TO END VIOLENCE!!!!

I have been searching over the course of the writing of this piece, to summon up the strength and courage to find a positive means of encouraging women to continue the struggle. I have to admit that at times it seems that the more we struggle, the more battles we seem to have to fight BUT — I also know that the wonderful, intelligent, passionate women that I am surrounded by on a daily basis give me the strength and courage to speak out and to fight to effect change on a systemic level. Thanks to all of you for being the strong, capable and wonderful women you are.



Women's Economic Equality by Penny Ruvinsky

In darkened doors the beggars lie.

November, raining, kinda cold. I want to spend the best part of the day under my quilt cuddling with my dog and cat, and the rest of the day playing music. I don't want to be trying to solve problems around poverty. I don't want to know anymore. I don't want to be living in poverty anymore. I want a hot tub and brand new studded winter tires for my car (the hot tub is for me). I want roses on the table and I want someone to take me out for an expensive dinner with fancy wine (white) and luscious dessert. I want chocolate – yes, you heard me, chocolate, real chocolate, nothing made with carob and honey. No, I want real chocolate with real sugar in it and fresh strawberries with cream and I want to eat it lounging on a soft rug. I want to go somewhere beautiful by the ocean. I want a lover to go there with me.

Ah, in darkened doors the beggars dream of paradise.

"There I am determined to go, not to stop short of that beautiful place, and I do not mean to stop till I get there, and meet you there, too."
Sojourner Truth, May 9, 1867

Despite my need for self-indulgence, things are going well with the Economic Equality Project. We have made some in-roads this past month or so. The Food Coalition has received \$57,000 in funding towards the creation of a much awaited Food Security Centre.

WKWA holds the contract for the project which will be overseen by the Nelson Food Coalition.

WKWA has also been successful in a proposal to the Canadian Women's Foundation for a grant in the amount of about \$29,000 to develop and run the first Women's Cooperative Ventures Initiative. Cheryl and I are particularly ecstatic to get this little baby off the ground. We'll get out more information as the Initiative begins to take shape. Seems fitting that we should get word of this grant so close to the day of remembrance for women who died violently for the career choices they made.

Violence – women – poverty. The research has been done. The connections have been made. The reality continues to be lived by too many with too few options and too little anger. Talking to someone the other day I was reminded that anger is preferable to depression. Anger can move us. I'm sure there are other things to move us (like my car for instance), but sometimes, now, anger seems so appropriate. I'm pissed right off that women around the world continue to bear the brunt of poverty and violence. And I'm pissed right off that we haven't all just walked out on a system that refuses to work for our families and ourselves. And I'm pissed off that we actually continue to study what we already know is true – women bear the brunt, women of color bear the brunt even more so. I fear the looming threat to the women of Iraq and wonder what public outrage would occur if it were North American white women and children being murdered in their homes. But I ramble and digress —

Like I said – I don't want to know anymore. I want chocolate & strawberries & cream & roses —



West Kootenay Women's Association News

Published by Nelson & District Women's Centre
420 Mill Street, Nelson, BC. V1L 4R9
Tel: (250) 352-9916 Fax: (250) 352-7100 Email: wkwomyn@netidea.com

Editorial Collective/Contributors/Graphics/Helpers: Deb Taylor, Hannah Hadikein, K.Linda Kivi, Thea Trussler, Cheryl Dowden, Kym Elder, Tanya Wright, Yara Findlay, Lily Bernhardt, Penny Ruvinsky

We need your help, contributions, event listings, art, and "Letters to the Editor"!! WKWA News is published 7 times a year. Call us for submission deadlines.

Operational funding provided by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services, Province of British Columbia; Funding for Volunteer Coordination provided by BC Gaming Commission. Funding for the Women's Economic Equality Project provided by Status of Women Canada.

EVENTS, WORKSHOPS, THINGS OF INTEREST

WOMEN AND POVERTY QUESTIONNAIRE: The survey is still available and needs to be completed by about 50 more women. If you would like to participate please call Penny at 352-3177 to set up a time. Thanks.

FOOD COALITION NEWS: Coalition meets the second Wednesday of every month, 1PM, at the Nelson United Church, 602 Silica Street (back door please). The Coalition is open to anyone wanting to work on community food security.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES: The Coalition is hiring an Administrative Coordinator and a Supplies Manager to manage daily activities of the Food Cupboard, solicit donations, streamline distribution, fundraise, etc. Applicants must be committed to social justice and barrier-free services. For an emailed job description or information contact Penny, 352-3177, wkwomyn@netidea.com, or pick one up at the Nelson Advocacy Centre or the Nelson Youth Employment Resource Centre. Deadline for applications is December 10. Please submit to Nelson Food Coalition, 420 Mill Street, Nelson, BC, V1L 4R9.

FOOD CUPBOARD is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 9AM to 12 PM, at the Nelson United Church, 602 Silica Street. We are in need of clean, empty containers (250, 500, 750 ml). These containers are used to portion pack bulk food. Please consider recycling your used containers. They can be dropped at the United Church any weekday morning between 9 AM and noon.

KNITTING/CRAFT CIRCLE: As the nights grow cold and long, people gravitate towards the warmth and shelter of the indoors. There's no better time for us to get together and hone our creative skills. We've started a knitting/craft circle on Monday nights at 7PM at the Women's Centre. For those who already know how to knit and those who want to learn how, it's a great opportunity to connect with other womyn in the community. New womyn are always welcome. Call Naomi at 354-4742 for more details.

WOMEN'S RECREATIONAL AVALANCHE COURSE: January 10, 11, & 12th

The Women's Outdoor Club is hosting an intensive three-day avalanche course, taught by Kristina Metzloff (Certified ACG) and Monica Niessen (teacher & associate member of the Cdn. Avalanche Assoc.). Friday evening is in-class instruction. Saturday includes in-class instruction and backcountry instruction. Sunday is an all-day backcountry class. All backcountry instruction is at Whitewater. All costs, including ski pass, pieps, shovel and probe are included in the \$200 fee. This is a great deal and a fantastic opportunity to become avalanche savvy in the company of kick ass outdoor women. Please call Cheryl (352-3177) for more information and to *pre-register a.s.a.p.

*Limited number of spaces available.

