




February  
2002

420 Mill Street, Nelson, BC V1L 4R9 ☺ Phone: (250) 352-9916 ☺ Fax: (250) 352-7100 ☺ email: wkwomyn@netidea.com

Celebrate International Women's Day

With

  
**5 Feminist Minutes**

A Fulfilled Cabaret!



Your chance for five minutes of fame (or notoriety. . .)

**7:00 pm Friday, March 8**

Admission \$5 - \$500 (sliding scale)

**How this works:** Women and girls sign up at the door to perform just about anything for five minutes.

Past performances have ranged from the usual, to making a pair of pants, putting on a play, synchronized swimming, rants, comedy, how-to demonstrations, and heart-rending stories. Your imagination is the only limit to what you can do here (except, it can't be illegal or disgusting.)

**Be brave! You won't be alone.**

Men and boys are welcome. Women and girls only as performers, please.

Proceeds to the Women's Events Planning Committee and the Nelson & District Women's Centre

## Administrative Coordinator's Report February 2002

By Cheryl Dowden

**T**he Nelson and District Women's Centre has a reason to celebrate! This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada's oldest living rural women's centre. For thirty years the centre has provided a space for women to have access to social, economic and emotional support around issues ranging from housing, food security, clothing, health, job search, as well as a place to access education on issues that impact women's lives and more. The Women's Centre is a refuge where women and children can come and relax, talk, play, cry, laugh, share, sing and have a respite from the day's challenges. Back in 1973, we received our first funding cheque from the federal government in the amount of \$7,600. Since that time we have weathered several financial crises which we have always managed to survive.

On January 17, 2002, the provincial Liberal government announced that it would be cutting funding to all BC Women's Centres, effective March 31, 2004. The total budget for the 30+ Women Centres funded through the BC Ministry of Aboriginal, Community and Women's Services is approximately 2 million

dollars. Our centre receives just under \$48,000 each year from the Ministry and that makes up about 50% of our overall budget. That funding was perceived, until January 17, to be the most stable of our funding sources. The irony is that while the 2 million dollars that funds Women's Centres is being cut from the ministry budget, they have doubled the Physical Fitness and Sport Fund to \$44 million (by April 2004) and are creating a new Olympic Arts Fund of \$20 million (by April 2004). What is to be deduced from this about government priorities? Is pouring money into the Olympic Bid more important than the lives of women and children in this province? We need to let this government know that we will not turn the clock back 30 years. The government needs to understand the true meaning of the word deficit that is being created by not choosing to invest in the lives of women and children in the province of British Columbia. All that being said, if the women of

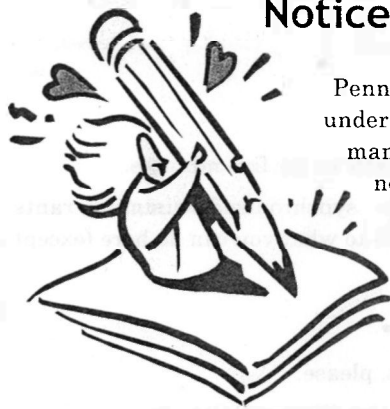


Nelson and District want their women's centre to survive, then together we must fight to make sure it stays alive! Women have always found ways to make something out of nothing through creative problem solving. We are not about to throw up our hands in despair and lock the front doors forever! If you would like to help strategize around the cuts, if you would like to be on our fundraising committee, or if you would like to keep abreast of information around the impact of the cutbacks on our community, come by our drop-in for tea or give us a call at 352-3177.

***We are not going back.  
We are never going back***



### Notice to all WKWA members:



Penny Ruvinsky, Anti-Poverty Coordinator, and Thea Trussler, Volunteer Coordinator, will be undergoing their six month job evaluation as required by the WKWA policies and procedures manual. This process is to support our employees and to assess their strengths and weaknesses.

If you are interested in helping with the evaluation or have any suggestions or comments contact Anne Russell at 226-6910 or e-mail [arusell@metacrawler.com](mailto:arusell@metacrawler.com) All comments will be treated as confidential. Deadline for input is February 23, 2002.

## Want to know what's happening in BC these days?

Well, take a deep breath and read on... by Penny Ruvinsky Anti-Poverty Coordinator

- ⊗ Employable single parents will be expected to work when their youngest child turns age 3 (as we expected, flipping burgers for \$6/hr is more valued than raising our children)
- ⊗ If a dependent child refuses to attend school, the entire family will be ineligible for welfare
- ⊗ People convicted if welfare fraud under the criminal code will be banned for life from receiving assistance (if you don't commit fraud your kids go hungry, if you do commit fraud, your kids go hungry - you decide)
- ⊗ The bus pass subsidy to seniors will be cut (they're too old to go anywhere anyhow)
- ⊗ Family maintenance payments will be deducted dollar for dollar from welfare cheques
- ⊗ The liberals have imposed a freeze on plans for social housing.
- ⊗ Support payments for employable single parents, and employable individuals age 55-64 will be reduced to match those rates for employable individuals age 19-54
- ⊗ Eligible employable singles and couples can receive assistance for a maximum of two years out of every five (the other three years you get to live on the street and eat the rich)
- ⊗ Earnings exemptions will be eliminated for people on welfare (Marat we're poor, and the poor stay poor)
- ⊗ The Ministry of Human Resources is considering privatizing the welfare system (attempted, and failed, in Ontario)
- ⊗ Kids hot lunch programs are being cut (let them eat cake)
- ⊗ Women Centres receive a total of about \$2 million dollars a year in provincial funds. This will be discontinued in 2004, while money to Sports and Fitness and the Olympic Arts Fund has increased by \$44 million. (Put your jogging shoes on ladies, looks like now we're going to have to run for our money)
- ⊗ As legal aid funding is slashed, poverty law in this province will basically cease to exist (but then again so will the poor as they crash and burn).
- ⊗ refugee claimants will be cut off hardship assistance (what did they expect, support from the free world?)



## Campbell's Government Claims They are Forced into These Cutbacks Because of NDP Financial Mismanagement. But lets look at some facts.

**DU**'s audited books showed a budget surplus for 1999/2000 of \$40 million and a surplus for 2000/2001 of \$1.498 billion. ("BC Public Accounts" released by Liberal Finance Minister Gary Collins, July 30, 2001).

Campbell's government cut taxes by over \$2 billion (my share of the cuts buys me a cup of tea once a week). They now need to cut government programs and lay off thousands of workers to pay for those tax cuts.

While Liberal-appointed Deputy Ministers received a raise of \$32,000/year to their already hefty salary of \$150,000 /year, the Liberals cut income assistance rates to families and individuals who survive on less than

\$14,000/year.

The frozen health budget and Liberal funding cuts will mean the closure of hospitals. Meanwhile, the government plans to spend \$9 million on a divisive and ill-advised referendum on treaty negotiations.

The changes to welfare coverage and rates, along with reduced availability of social housing and community services, will force more British Columbians onto the streets. These changes will see an increase in child poverty, homelessness, increased health problems, domestic violence, and suicide, and a greater

burden on mental health, addiction, and health care services.

For up to date information on the cutbacks and what you can do about them, please check [www.kootenavcuts.com](http://www.kootenavcuts.com) - this is the most current information available on rallies and community actions taking place to demonstrate the public disdain for the Liberal attack on the people of British Columbia. Please, join us in the streets to ensure the return of the social structure that so many worked so hard to create.



# RAWA

## Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan

By Cheryl Dowden

The following is a poem written by Meena and published in "Payam-e-Zan" No.1, 1981:

### I'LL NEVER RETURN

I'm the woman who has awoke  
I've arisen and become a tempest  
through the ashes of my burnt  
children  
I've arisen from the rivulets of my  
brother's blood  
My nation's wrath has empowered  
me  
My ruined and burnt villages fill me  
with hatred against the enemy,  
I'm the woman who has awoken,  
I've found my path and will never return.  
I've opened closed doors of ignorance  
I've said farewell to all golden bracelets  
Oh compatriot, I'm not what I was  
I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've found my path and will never return.  
I've seen barefoot, wandering and homeless  
children  
I've seen henna-handed brides with mourning  
clothes  
I've seen giant walls of the prisons swallow  
freedom in their ravenous stomach  
I've been reborn amidst epics of resistance and courage  
I've learned the song of freedom in the last breaths, in the  
waves of blood & in victory  
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, no longer regard me  
as weak and incapable  
With all my strength I'm with you on the path  
of my land's liberation.  
My fists are clenched with the fists of  
thousands of compatriots  
To break all these sufferings all these fetters of  
slavery,  
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, I'm not what I was  
I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've found my path and will never return.



Photos of Meena  
courtesy of the RAWA  
website

Many of us participate in social activism to affect social justice and positive change in our communities. Some of us have risked arrest for our beliefs, but most of us have never risked our lives to stand up for what we believe in. I have to ask myself if there is a cause for which I would be willing to risk my life? What about you? What if acting on your feminist beliefs meant that you might be risking imprisonment, torture or death? For the women of Afghanistan, membership in the organization called RAWA, (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan), has meant exactly this type of risk. RAWA members have spoken out against the abusive treatment of women, first in the 1970's and 1980's under the Soviet Invaders, and through the 1990's by the Islamic fundamentalist regime.

RAWA, founded in 1977 by a handful of university women in Kabul, Afghanistan, is an independent political and social organization fighting for human rights and social justice. Meena, a young student instrumental in laying the foundation for RAWA, became its charismatic leader. As a social activist, Meena helped organize a growing movement against the puppet Russian regime. She eventually left university to devote herself entirely to organizing and educating women.

With the founding of RAWA, the women of Afghanistan found a voice. During the late 70's and 80's, RAWA mobilized the Afghans to campaign against Russian forces. To spread the word and to promote the struggle for the rights of women in Afghanistan, RAWA launched a bilingual magazine (Persian and Pashtu) called "Payam-e-Zan" (Women's Message) in 1981. The magazine exposed the oppression inherent in Islamic fundamentalism – the same fundamentalism, which was to fuel the twisted sexist laws, handed down by the Taliban when they came to power in 1996.

Meena spoke out bravely against the kind of politically oppressive regimes that had denied the women of Afghanistan their basic rights and freedoms. She was murdered by agents of KHAD, (Afghanistan branch of the KGB), and their fundamentalist accomplices in Quetta, Pakistan, on February 4, 1987.



**In** spite of the death of their courageous leader, the spirit and powerful voice of the women of RAWA was not quelled. RAWA continued to fight against the oppression of women, risking torture, imprisonment, and death at the hands of the Taliban. The laws of the fundamentalist regime basically banned women from participating in their own society.



\* A woman could not raise her voice in public or laugh loudly, because she would lure men into corruption

## RAWA

surviving on private donations, takes an anti-fundamentalist stand in

focusing on women's rights and human rights, documenting and reporting abuses carried out by fundamentalist regimes. Currently, RAWA is involved with a variety of projects in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These projects range from the operation of primary and secondary schools for refugee girls and boys, literacy programs for women, orphanages, and operating mobile health teams in the refugee camps in Peshawar and Quetta. They produce cultural cassettes of songs with anti-fundamentalist themes, organize events to promote the rights of women in Afghanistan, promote women's financial independence by

running handicraft, carpet, tailoring and bead knitting workplaces; as well as running chicken and fish farms; producing jams and pickles and making chalk etc. Much of their work, focusing on female victims of war and human rights abuses, has been carried out subversively and at great personal risk.

Under Taliban rule:

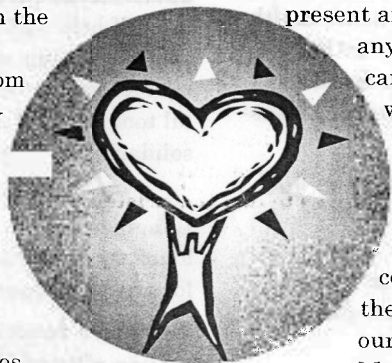
- \* Women had no rights to education (all girls' schools were closed down)
- \* Employers were threatened for hiring women employees
- \* No woman could venture out of her house without a male family member
- \* All women had to wear burqas (to cover their faces, bodies and ankles)
- \* A woman could not petition the court directly and her testimony was worth half that of a man's

**The** brave women of RAWA need our support. They rely on individual donations and sales from their handicrafts, publications, cassettes and posters. This year they will also be receiving 10% of the proceeds from the Vagina Monologues productions held on V-Day across North America.

For more information about RAWA, visit their website at [www.rawa.org/](http://www.rawa.org/)

## REPORT FROM THE VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR *by Thea Trussler*

has been a very busy month what with the budget cuts and the regular hubbub of the centre. The media have been knocking on our doors to find out the scoop on the poop with the Liberal cuts. The attention from all the newspapers, radio and television stations has been heartening. They see our value and want to ensure that our stories are getting out there. We have been seen as leaders within the chaos and ensuring the voice of the grassroots doesn't get lost in the bigger picture of the unions. We have received so many offers of support that we feel confident about our position and longevity. Our



main concern with regards to fundraising is to pay off the mortgage therefore securing our infrastructure and subsequently ensuring confidence with our present and potential funders. If anyone has a rich friend who can spare \$50,000 and would like a tax receipt send them our way! Our largest volunteer training group has just completed a ten-week course and eighteen of them will be graduating at our annual volunteer retreat March 3 at the Ashram. At present we have over 50 volunteers and are apparently one of the healthiest volunteer pools in the Kootenays. Thanks to each and every one of you for your work and support. I am opening a

regular Thursday morning circle for the volunteers as a support circle and educational avenue. The training group were not prepared to let go of their meeting time and asked to open it up to all the other women who volunteer for the Association. Every Thursday morning we will meet from 9:30-11:30 am.

As many of you know one of our four legged volunteers who gave so many a chuckle and a cuddle has passed on. Freckles the basset hound passed away suddenly January 19 at home. Thank you all for your support with my second loss in my fur family in 5 months.

Blessings to all of you and here's to the revolution!!!

# THE WOMEN'S OUTDOOR CLUB



**M**any of us know how lucky we are to be living in one of the most beautiful mountain playgrounds in the world. Here in the Kootenays we have access to hundreds of square kilometres of forest, lakes, rivers, ski hills and backcountry mountain biking, hiking and ski trails. The Women's Outdoor Club was recently established at the Nelson & District Women's Centre with the purpose of providing outdoor opportunities for women in the

Kootenay region. The idea of the Women's Outdoor Club came from a desire to provide a venue for outdoor group activities such as day-hikes, overnight camping trips, outdoor skills training workshops and courses and more. We are blessed with having so many skilled women's outdoor enthusiasts in this area and we would like to encourage those with outdoor skills to come out and share their knowledge and experience. The Outdoor Club also provides an informal opportunity for women to meet other women with similar interests. Some upcoming group activities that are in the works include: an avalanche awareness course, a bear aware workshop and an introduction to birding.

Our first outdoor activity, held on Sunday, February 3rd at Camp Busk, was a fun-filled adventure. This activity featured an introduction to snow shoeing, shelter building, animal tracks, tree-identification, storytelling and basic outdoor winter skills with the very experienced and knowledgeable outdoor instructor, Shanon, from the Slokan Valley. Shanon, on behalf of the 11 women who attended this event, I would like to extend our thanks for such a fun, playful day of learning in the outdoors!

For those of you who are interested in becoming involved in the Women's Outdoor Club, and/or you have ideas for activities or would like to share your skills with the group, please contact Cheryl @ 352-3177.

## Circle of Habondia

Lending Society



### What is Habondia?

Habondia is a circle of diverse women from the Slokan Valley/Nelson/ Castle-gar, and surrounding area. We meet monthly for a potluck, talk about abundance, and support each other's projects and lives. Habondia is the name of a Medieval Celtic Earth Goddess and was taken from a Marge Piercy poem "The Sabbath of Mutual Respect". The poem talks about abundance as freedom of choice as well as abundance of the harvest. We have come to see that abundance takes many forms and that gratitude is basic to creating more of it in our lives.

Habondia incorporated as a society in 1997 to establish a women's lending circle. Thanks to the loan of \$5000 made to us by a sister, we have set up a small loan fund. The money sits in a term deposit as collateral for a line of credit (the loan fund).

### What kind of projects do you fund?

We support women and their needs, whether that is for a bicycle for their child or to get a business going. The criteria for getting a loan include the expressed need, good character, and the ability to repay. We have provided loans (up to a maximum of \$1000) for recording a CD; starting a home health care business; supporting "Art Farm" for youth; to buy frames for framing artwork; and to buy supplies for an aesthetician's business.

We charge interest at prime rate, mutually agree to a repayment schedule, and support women to keep to our agreement (the success rate for repayment is high). There is a 5% charge on all loans.

### Why is there a need for a lending fund?

Anyone on a subsidized or limited income is ineligible for a loan from the banks or credit unions. We encourage eligible women to apply to the Commu-

nity Futures Micro-Lending Program which provides business training unavailable through Habondia. However, we do provide women with a network, peer support, and community encouragement.

### On what model have you based the lending circle?

The women's lending circle is part of an international movement of women using self-help and cooperative models to create economic solutions. Credit provision for women is now seen as a powerful tool for building community and solidarity at the grass-roots level.

Originally, poor, landless women in Bangladesh were given access to small loans through the Grameen Bank's informal credit operations.

In India, a donation from a wealthy woman allowed the creation of a loan fund where crafts women could purchase their material in bulk and market their crafts together. The brilliant results have helped women move out of poverty.

*(Continued on page 7)*

Habondia is limited only by our creativity. When women lend money to lending circles that can administer loans through a rotating fund, we generate wealth.

The Circle of Habondia has a vision to partner with sustainable community organizations interested in the social housing sector. We look forward to expanding our activities in community economic development. We invite individuals to contribute a portion of their investments to our fund, so that we can expand our capacity in offering loans to women.

### How can women contact Habondia?

To talk about investing in the women's loan fund contact Laverne at 355-2868 or Hannah Hadikein at 352-3609.

To get a loan application contact Barbara Brown at 359-7617. To get on the potluck phone tree contact Sandra at 226-7906.

If you were interested in starting a small regional lending circle, we would love to talk to you.

## Special Events

**Starting Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Tai Chi and Chi Gung** for women with Penelope Shanti. Infinite Tai Chi for health and balance – based on the timeless wisdom and understanding of the eternal and natural rhythmic movement of life. Infinite Chi Gung for inner strength and vitality. Tuesdays, 10-11AM, at the Women's Centre, 420 Mill Street, Nelson.

To register call the Women's Centre, 352-9916, or Penelope, 352-1376. Payment by donation to the Centre.

**The Women's Health Working Group - Next Meeting: 5PM, Wednesday February 13<sup>th</sup> at the Women's Centre**

Guest Speaker: Suzy Hamilton will be speaking on the Barter System and Alternative Health Care in preparation for the up-coming Health Barter Fair planned for March 9<sup>th</sup> from 11-4PM at the United Church. For more information or to confirm attendance, please call Cheryl at 352-3177.

**Queer Dance** (and friends of queers): Saturday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002, 9 PM Rod and Gun Club at Cottonwood Falls Park. Licensed Bar – no minors please. \$10.00 admission. Music by DJ Lisa.

**Menopause Group:** Starts: Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, for six weeks (except Easter Monday and on Tuesday in April).

**Time:** 5:15 to 7:15 PM **Cost:** Sliding scale \$20 - \$50 (50% of proceeds to go to support the Women's Centre)

**Place:** Women's Centre, 420 Mill St., Nelson, and one night at the Scout Hall on Cedar Street, Nelson.

This six week facilitated group includes sharing of experiences and resources ("normalizing"), discussion, looking at use of HRT as well as food, herbal and other supplements to support menopausal symptoms, use of exercise for health, body image, visualization, stress relief etc. Suggestions from the group will be welcome.

**Facilitator** Rose Stapenhurst is a Human Service counsellor trained at Findhorn as a course and workshop leader. She has been leading groups for over 13 years. Rose brings her passion for group work and interest in the menopausal process to this group. Space is limited so register early by calling Rose at 352-2139.

**Women's Working Health Group meeting:** February 13, 2002 at The Women's Centre

**Town Hall Meeting: Our Own Budget Briefing**

February 23 at 2PM at the Fireside Room - Best Western Inn, 1810- 8th Avenue, Castlegar

This will coincide with the Campaign BC Rally in Victoria sponsored by the BC Federation of Labour **February 14** send Gordie and your own MLA valentine's asking where their hearts are ...we hope to jam the fax lines and phone lines.

Organized by the BC Women's Centres Coalition. **Gordon Campbell** FAX: 604-660-5488 PH: 604-224-8875, Email [gordon.campbell.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:gordon.campbell.mla@leg.bc.ca); **Blair Suffredine**: FAX: 250-354-5937 PH: 250-354-5944

Email: [blair.suffredine.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:blair.suffredine.mla@leg.bc.ca); **Sandy Santori**: FAX: 250-364-5520 PH: 250-364-5514;

Email: [sandy.santori.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:sandy.santori.mla@leg.bc.ca)

## Regular Events

**Nelson Food Coalition:** Meets 1PM, the 2nd Wednesday of every month at the Nelson United Church, 602 Silica St., back door. This group is working to create a Food Centre that will provide food security in a respectful, consistent manner, and will be a place to hold community kitchens, workshops, and dinners. Meetings are open to everyone.

**Nelson United Church Food Cupboard:** Open Monday to Friday, 9AM to noon for drop-off & pickup—602 Silica, back door. The Food Cupboard is helping to provide food security for many community members while the Food Centre is being planned. Please help if you can by donating non-perishable good food items.



### Why join a sharing kitchen?

#### You can:

- ⊗ Get more for your \$\$
- ⊗ Save time
- ⊗ Save money
- ⊗ Meet new people
- ⊗ Learn new recipes
- ⊗ Taste new foods & spices
- ⊗ Have a good time
- ⊗ Take home delicious meals.

A pilot project is now underway to create the Bread and Roses Sharing Kitchens.

This project is designed to bring participants together who are interested in creating a sustainable community kitchen system in Nelson.

### Overview of a Sharing Kitchen

**Form** a small group of 4-6 participants. Discuss your nutritional needs (likes, dislikes, allergies). Find an appropriate and affordable kitchen to use in your community.

**Hold a planning session** a week before your planned cooking date. Decide what and how much to cook, keeping to budget, using your own recipes or some of ours. This session lasts about 2 hours.

**Grocery Shop:** Find the best deals in town and decide who's going shopping and when.

**Cook the Food:** Meet at the appropriate place and time to cook your meals (you'll be cooking 2-3 different recipes each time you meet). This session takes 3-4 hours.

### Share some time together Take home the food and enjoy.

For the purposes of the pilot project, we will cover the cost of babysitting for the planning, shopping and cooking sessions. We will also supply the kitchen and appropriate containers to take the food home in.

### What is a sharing (or community) kitchen?

Sharing kitchens are small groups of people who get together monthly to prepare 3-4 main dishes for themselves and their families.

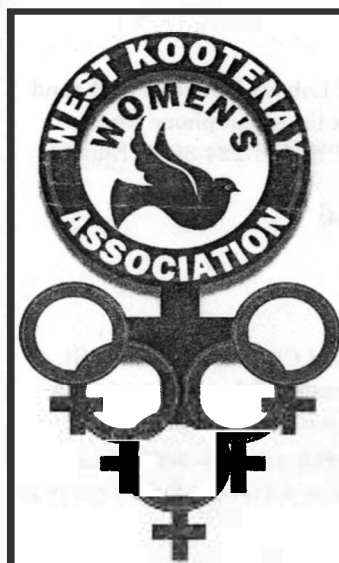
A sharing kitchen is a place where we nourish each other, enjoy ourselves and learn more from each other about cooking, budgeting and nutrition.

### Who can join? You Can

Anyone is welcome to join one of our kitchens—young or old, single or married, students, those with children or without. A small group of friends may want to establish their own sharing kitchen (we'll show you how).

Sharing kitchens are for anyone wanting to have fun, save money, and participate more fully in their community.

For more information call Penny at 352-3177, by Feb. 23, 2002.



### West Kootenay Women's Association News

Published by Nelson & District Women's Centre

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We need your help, contributions, events, art, and "Letters to the Editor"!!

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