

West Kootenay Women's Association

NEWSLETTER

420 Mill Street, Nelson, B.C. V1L 4R9 • 352-9916 • May 1997

EXCITING NEWS! We have received a grant from BC21 to teach 40 women to use the Internet! Sign up if you're interested!

ONGOING GROUPS

Please call in advance of attending the following groups.

Unemployed Women Working Together. Facilitator: Karen Newmoon. Fridays, 9:15am - 11:30am.

This group is for any woman who is presently unemployed / underemployed and who would like to be employed. We discuss the effects unemployment has on our lives and address the impact, both personal and collective, of lack of meaningful employment for women. We also explore coping measures, personal and community resources, and grassroots action. Call Karen at the Centre.

What do I want for me? Facilitator: Kathleen Shannon. A discussion/support group for women of all ages. It involves building self-esteem, questions of selfishness vs. self-interest, and dealing with things that have disempowered us and left us feeling "dis-entitled." \$10 per session, \$40 deposit requested, fee negotiable. Call the Women's Centre or (250)229-5325 or toll free, (604)918-0108.

As always, we are gathering names for **Menopause Information Sessions** with Suzanne Miller and Penny Bonnett, and when there are enough names, we will call you and let you know when the session will take place.

The **Company of Older Women** continues to meet on fourth Mondays. For more information, call the Centre and we'll get someone to call you.

The **Moms and Tots** drop-in has run out of steam for the time being, so we are cancelling it until the Fall, or until someone new has an interest in developing such a program again. Thanks to the women who have put so much energy into this over the last couple of years, especially Tika.

The Spring season of workshops, etc. is coming to a close. We have had two support groups during this time, one for

women who have been in abusive relationships, and one for women who were sexually abused in childhood. Women interested in being in these groups in the fall can call the Centre and your name will be put on a confidential list to be called when the next groups are about to get underway.

The **LesBiDyke Drop-in** continues to happen at the Centre at 7pm on the first Friday of every month. This month it turned out to be a Taurus birthday party, and a gathering place for women who were going off to the Hockey dance. Every month women new and old find their way here, so come out one, come out all and get to know some others in your community.

Revealing Anger & Transforming Conflict. One very successful workshop we had this spring was the one on anger, and Shelly Chvala has revamped this one using some input from the group to put together a weekend workshop May 30 and 31. See the box on page 2 for more info.

RUMMAGE & YARD SALE



**SAT., MAY 24 • 10am
AT THE CENTRE • 420 MILL**

**Please bring donations to the Centre
in the week prior to the sale.**

We need workers Thurs., Fri., and Sat.

**First meeting of the newly revamping
WOMEN'S CENTRE COMMITTEE is Wed., May
21, 5pm. Call Catherine or Jo at the Centre.
They'll call you back, ask you what you think,
and give you lots of good reasons to join up!**

WKWA Report

Committees, committees, committees, I don't know where to start so here are some things we've been attending to:

- The Columbia Basin Trust Symposium (see article elsewhere);
- House cleaning (major variety) and shelf construction/organization: Thanks a lot, Susan P. and Jo, the basement looks great!
- Garage tidying – What will we use it for? (After it's used as a sorting space for our Garage/Rummage Sale, May 24)
- Finance / business stuff. We've lost Laurel from the Finance Committee – our loss Kelowna's gain! Thank heavens for Pat, Abra and Karen – Is there anyone else out there who'd be interested in helping keep us on track in the money department?
- Centennial Celebration. We've signed up to have a float in the August 2nd parade, so we will need creative ideas attached to creative energy and persons to make this the best float in town. If this sound like something you'd be excited by, please contact the Centre.
- Garage / Rummage Sale May 24, here.
- **Slocan Valley Clothing Exchange / Fundraiser, Place in the Forest Gallery, Winlaw, June 8.**

So, lots of neat stuff, including: keeping in touch with the Youth Centre and the new proposed community radio station; organizing the Women's Festival; starting to plan the

Centre's 25th Birthday Party (we've chosen October 5th for a big party / reunion); and very importantly, arranging a "buddy" system and working on a crisis response team for our wonderful Women's Centre staff.

We have also been talking with an organization called Wheels of Change which runs a series of camps for women and girls using a range of techniques to explore issues such as oppression, violence and discrimination.

As all these events are coming up and energy is bursting forth, it's great timing that the resurrection of the Women's Centre Committee has begun. Our goal for this committee is to have the widest possible representation of women who use and have used the Centre in the last 25 years. It's a great opportunity to help the Centre grow and expand with the 21st Century, give our staff direction and support and see your ideas and visions put forth. Together we can leap forth into the next quarter century, and continue making a positive difference while helping to shape our future. Anyone who wants to join up and/or comes with any enthusiasm, ideas, input etc. can contact Jo or Catherine through the Women's Centre.

It's all very exciting – spring fever is definitely here!
Happy growth, everyone!

– Fiona Robson

Bios 'n' stuff

Every Newsletter we include a bio from a couple of CC members. This month we introduce you to Fiona Robson, our new Vice Chair. And for a slight change of pace, we include a note from KLinda, our new(ish) Office Administrator.

Fiona Robson

Hi, I'm the other Fiona on the CC. I moved here a year ago from Vancouver and just love it. This is the first time I've ever gotten involved politically or with my community and it's been great in helping me to get off the fence, find my voice and begin a revolt against my "too nice girl" upbringing. So, I'm just working, hanging out and meeting lots of empowered, inspiring women.

KLinda Kivi: Greasing the Wheels

Hi! For those of you who don't know, I was hired in February as the Women's Centre's new Office Administrator. I work eight hours a week, greasing the wheels of the Women's Centre "machine." This includes answering mail, keeping supplies in stock, moving money and papers about and anything else that needs doing. When I'm not here, I'm writing (just finished my second novel) or working on the land I share with my four land partners. We're in the process of trying to install our own hydroelectric system – but that's another story entirely....

REVEALING ANGER & TRANSFORMING CONFLICT

Anger is one way of responding to our world when we feel frightened, powerless or unfairly treated. Yet, few of us are comfortable expressing anger and some of us believe we have no right to express it at all. As a result we have a difficult time working through conflict and resolving important work and personal issues.

In this **NEW WEEKEND** workshop we will focus on:

Uncovering Anger:

naming it, owning it and understanding it

Releasing Past Anger:

exploring words, sound and our body's wisdom

Creating Constructive Strategies in Conflict:

- identifying and de-fusing conflict "Mind Games"
- discovering new ways to express anger & related emotions

The facilitator for this workshop, Shelly Chvala, offers 15 years of counselling and group facilitation experience, as well as a strong belief that personal change can be fun.

Friday and Saturday

MAY 30 (6:45pm - 9:30pm) & MAY 31 (9am - 4pm)

To register, please call

Nelson & District Women's Centre, 352-9916 by May 28

Cost: Sliding scale \$35 - \$40

Gay Pride Organizing Meeting
Sunday, May 11 • 1pm
Women's Centre
(Gay Pride events – last weekend in August)

Regional Conference Report

This report was written by Hannah Hadikin, our new NAC Rep for the West and East Kootenays. Thanks, Hannah!

The NAC Regional Conference was held in Vancouver April 25-27, 1997.

The day before the conference, four of us set up an office space at the Vancouver Women's Health Collective for use as the BC NAC office. This is the first time there has been a home for BC NAC and it was an exciting event. Some office equipment was purchased and the rest collected from generous donors! The new phone/fax number is 604-736-3346. Since there isn't a coordinator for the office (no funding for a position), volunteers will from time to time staff the office. The space will serve other member groups as well as the central location for teleconferencing.

I am taking over from Moe Lyons as the West and East Kootenay Rep. I can be reached at the WKWA number (352-3177) and at my home number, 352-3609. The Conference provided an opportunity to meet with representatives from member groups (approximately 50 women were in attendance). We also heard reports from the committees: Aboriginal women, anti-violence, immigration, lesbian issues, women with disabilities and women of colour.

On Friday evening an educational workshop was held on the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit. In November 1997, the leaders of 18 countries of the Asia-Pacific region will gather in Vancouver for an APEC world summit. The participants in APEC include Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and the United States. A moratorium on new members expires this year and other countries including India and Russia have applied to join.

The main objectives of APEC are to abolish barriers to trade and investment, to further trade liberalization and to facilitate economic and technical cooperation. Since the 1993 summit in Seattle, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have monitored APEC activities. They are finding that APEC is adopting a neo-liberal program of 'free-trade', deregulation and privatization, while describing itself as an organization of "economics" not countries. This conveniently separates economic issues from their national and social context, leaving matters such as human rights, social justice, women's rights, indigenous peoples, refugees, environment, peace etc. off the agenda.

At present some characteristics of APEC include: non-accountability to parliament or to public debate; being driven by a force of "eminent persons," a group consisting of financiers, prominent academics, CEOs of transnational corporations; along with the promotion of an agenda based

on "free market" policies. APEC's definition of economic growth has created more inequalities among and between countries, as a result of profit-oriented and investment-led policies.

"The impact of APEC on women will be the same as effects of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (*economic programs imposed on countries of the south by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank*). APEC will benefit those who have power, but for those who do not, their survival will become even tougher, poverty will increase. The environmental devastation, the large number of people being displaced, and the migration and growth of refugees, are almost guaranteed to increase through the kind of model the APEC grouping is pushing."

— Sunera Thobani, past-president of NAC.

For those interested in social and economic justice, APEC activities require monitoring and action. Since 1995 and the first APEC summit in Japan, an alternate people's summit has become one of the key organizing tools for mobilizing people. It is important that voices be heard for human rights, economic and social justice, sustainable development, women's rights, NGOs, community and union activists. To this end, members of women's, environmental and church groups, among others have joined to sponsor a network for a popular summit. The '97 People's Summit will be held November 19-24. At the end of the APEC meeting in Manila in Nov. '96, the Women's Conference in Manila passed the work on to NAC in Canada for a Women's Conference to be organized in Vancouver. The Women's Conference will be held November 17 & 18th. Currently a steering committee is working building coalitions and bringing together 300 women from the Asia Pacific countries. Women in B.C. are encouraged to participate. Further information can be obtained through Margaret Blamey at (604)682-1952.

The better portion of Saturday was spent on the Priority Campaign focusing on the upcoming election. NAC has produced a "NAC Voter's Guide – A Woman's Agenda For Social Justice" to be available early May. The focus of the guide is on 1) a strong role for the federal government in enforcing national standards for social programs and ensuring that they are properly funded; 2) social solidarity and the issue of exclusion; 3) the need for progressive legislation; 4) the fight against poor bashing and racism; 5) establishing grassroots support.

The Voter's Guide will also address the 12 Critical Areas of Concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action and how each party has dealt with these areas. The Guide's in-depth analysis of our issues will serve as an excellent resource. It costs \$9.95 (250 pages). Unions, community

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Columbia Basin Trust

The CBT Symposium took place in Revelstoke April 11, 12 and 13th. I was one of several women financially assisted to attend by a grant received from the Ministry of Women's Equality. WKWA administered these funds on behalf of the Women's Ad Hoc Committee on the Columbia Basin Trust.

My experience at the CBT symposium began with the Friday afternoon information session for women, organized by the Women's Ad Hoc Committee. This was a very positive and helpful beginning to a packed, intense weekend of evaluating the CBT Draft Management Plan. We met from 1pm until 4pm and I came out of the meeting well fed (thank you) and much better prepared to participate in the symposium discussions.

In brief, the Columbia Basin Trust has three "pockets" of money. The largest, \$250 million, will be matched with another \$250 million from the province through the Columbia Power Corporation (this is a government body) and is strictly for investment in power projects. One message from many participants at the symposium was that alternative power sources and projects be undertaken, rather than conventional, capital-intensive, environmentally dubious undertakings.

The second pocket of money is comprised of a one-time, lump-sum payment of \$45 million. This money is currently invested through the Municipal Finance Authority. Over a period of five years the CBT expects to move this capital into the basin, as income-generating investments. The lowest acceptable rate of return on these capital investments is 8.5%. Symposium delegates were clear in their feedback that the

money should be invested in the basin region and that the capital must be protected. The Trust refers to this money as "for-profit investment capital".

The third pocket of money is the interest generated by these investments. It is to be used to fund projects which will benefit the basin economically, environmentally and socially. The Trust referred to this spending as "not-for-profit investment", but it was agreed that this phrasing was confusing, so they will simply call it "spending". The amount of interest income will vary from year to year, with projected cash flow ranging from \$1.5 million in 1997 to \$10 million in 2006. This cash flow includes returns from both the power projects and the for-profit investments. This is the money potentially available to the community, and is also where we can have the most input into priorities and criteria for the spending of these funds.

The Trust will also receive \$2 million per year for 16 years to cover operating expenses as they get established. 1996 was the first year this money was received, so these payments will end in 2011. At the end of every fiscal year if there is a balance unspent from the \$2 million the board will decide whether to add it to the capital or to the projects spending allocation.

Overall, the Symposium was worthwhile. I certainly know more about the CBT than I did before attending. At the previous Symposium in 1995 there were about 30 women delegates out of 250. This time there were about 60. Let's aim for doubling it again at the next Symposium so we comprise half the delegates.

We have oodles of information about the CBT here for any women who want to know more about this, and we are planning a **Wonderful Wednesday May 28**, so come on out and get informed and involved.

— Karen

NAC Report *(continued)*

organizations and advocates are urged to contribute to the cost of bulk purchases so the Guide is accessible to low income women.

NAC is also producing another "Shocking Pink Paper," a quick reference guide for women to use during the election campaign at All-Candidates Meetings. In light of the recent announcement by Hedy Fry, Federal Minister for the Status of Women, that no more core funding will be available for women's groups after this year, with project-type funding being substituted, and in light of continued cut-backs to women's services and organizations, the outcome of the federal election is of utmost importance to women. While a paltry sum of \$8 million or about 50¢ per woman or girl in the country is spent on women's work all across the country, about \$9 BILLION is spent on defense!

While women's groups continue to lobby on issues such as employment and pay equity, violence against women, poverty, racism and homophobia, the government is set on plans that will widen the wage gap, create more inequalities and advance the corporate agenda of marginalizing women in society. It is important for women to know that "Women's Votes Make a Difference": and to be clear what the Party positions are concerning issues related to women.

NOTE: Come to the discussion at 7pm May 14!

The following are a number of election strategies :

- Reverse all-candidates debates to educate the candidates on the issues – invite media & public.
- Get candidates to sign pledges of support for our platform as in "If I'm elected, I agree to support the following positions...." Report card on who signed.
- Send list of questions to each of the candidates and then publish their responses in local papers. A form of accountability.
- Hold a fun event—"fiesta" with food, music, speakers, (invite women activists to speak about the key issues), invite the candidates, but it will be our event not theirs. Make sure we get women out – women of colour, lesbian, aboriginal, with disabilities.
- Do outreach to groups who do not have access to information due to socio-economic, language, lack of education barriers, etc. Voter's rights should be a focus.
- Use popular education, theatre, and other venues to educate women on the issues. May be used together with the Voter's Guide.
- Distribute Voter's Guide to groups – churches, labour, anti-poverty groups etc.
- Organize coalitions to work on common issues.
- Expand communications links: phone trees, mailings, central places for distributing information, contact lists, writing letters, talk shows, local TV /radio interviews

— Hannah