

Women In Community Development Workshop

Twenty women entrepreneurs from Antigonish town and county met February 20 at the Coady International Institute for a one-day workshop on "Women and Community Economic Development in Antigonish County."

Sponsor of the workshop was the Antigonish Women's Resource Center.

Co-director Martha McGinn said that the objective of this community roundtable event was to "provide a forum for local women to meet and to share their experiences and strategies as women who are either currently in business or who are intending to be in small business for themselves in the Antigonish area."

"For a growing number of women, entrepreneurship is seen as the logical alternative to employment in a shrinking job market, as a way out of poverty, and as a way to achieve personal financial control," McGinn continued. "Being involved in an entrepreneurial endeavour may allow women to determine the dimensions of their involvement and allow variation in the degree of commitment at different times in their family and life cycles."

The morning session began with facilitator Nancy Wright leading participants through the basic steps and concepts in exploring the possibilities of becoming an entrepreneur.

"Most women use these basic planning skills every day to organize their own and their family's daily lives," Wright said.

One of the outcomes of the morning session was agreement that there was a desire to initiate a group that will bring together a support network of local women interested in business.

Leading the afternoon session was facilitator Linda Cooke in an exercise that examined the connection between business and community. The workshop ended with a panel presentation. Speakers were Sr. Michelle MacDougall, csm, Extension Depart-



PARTICIPATING IN a workshop on Women and Community Economic Development, sponsored by Antigonish Women's Resource Center, were Martha McGinn (seated, left), Karen McGuire; Nancy Br MacEachern (back, left), Sian McLean, Mary MacLean and Judy Bernard-Julian. The workshop took place at the Coady International Institute February 20.

ment, St. Francis Xavier University; Donna Lawrence, Nova Scotia Economic Renewal Agency (Port Hawkesbury); and Ian Spencer, department of business administration, St. F.X. University.

Sr. MacDougall spoke about community-based economic development, and its history, from the mainstream approach utilizing a top-down, government-centered strategy, to today's government programs such as ACOA. Donna Lawrence discussed government loan programs and resources, while Ian Spencer gave a lively talk about sizing up the local market. He also discussed the economic profile of Antigonish County, and how to use statistics in order to "make an informed decision about a decision as estimating information is vital when developing your business, and particularly your business plan."