

PRE-TOPSHEE WORKSHOP

JANUARY 20, 1993

TRURO

MORNING SMALL GROUP SESSIONS: "THEMES"

GROUP 1

* Justice System

- Legal aid
- Appointment of judges, crowns, etc.
- not women friendly

* Defining Violence

- Look at different forms of violence
- Suggested definition:
Any behaviour or institution which inhibits women (anyone) from developing to full potential.
- Examination of root causes would lead to a definition

* Systemic Abuse

- Rhetoric propagates violence
- Systems have not caught up to rhetoric

* Socialization and Patriarchy

- Women are male deferred
- Men are listened to and get the credit
- leads to powerlessness in women's lives
- living with double discrimination means even less power

* Patriarchy: question of how to approach in terms of the process and content of the conference

* Violence in the workplace

- affects violence at home
- sexual harassment

* Educational system

* Violence and the church

- organizational structures are oppressive to women
- recognizing the feminine face of God

GROUP 2

* Patriarchy

- How to approach

* Aboriginal Community

- all is spiritually connected
- focus on healing
- spiritual values
- humiliation detrimental

* Need for a vision statement

- What would be a healthy community?
- A healed world?

* Historical perspective

- patriarchy
- how women have survived
- legal, political, economic, religious oppression
- themes flow from historical perspective
- how to move from survival and oppression to survival and healing and how to build safe communities in which to live.

* Use positive words

- restoration
- healing
- economic wellness

* Conference should be participatory

- participants would be actively involved rather than "consumers"

* Speaking the truth

- important to speak the truth about women's lives is important in the context of the vision
- truth may be angry and hurtful but would be dealt with with integrity and in an atmosphere of hope
- conference should have healing session at the end

GROUP 3

* Begin Conference with sharing experience

- symptoms
- direct issues
- speaking the truth
- then move to analytical themes

* Cultural differences must be addressed (ie. Coady students)

* Racism and violence (silent issues)

* Objectification of women

- media
- pornography

* Direct violence

- economic
- sexual
- emotional
- psychological

* Ageism

- young and old

* Workplace violence

- dealing with abusive public
- employer harassment (sexual/physical, wages, working conditions, co-workers)

* Systemic perpetrators

- patriarchy must be dealt with in several ways
 1. political process and design
 2. medical system
 3. business/capitalism
 4. religion
 5. education
 6. judicial
 7. popular organizations (i.e. co-operatives, trade unions)

* Safety Issues

- ensure facilitators are sensitized to dynamics in room
- small groups
- support - private spaces available for those in pain

- debriefing time between workshops (time away from formal agenda)
- emotional and physical safety very important
- * Theme must be presented as societal issue
- * Who is conference for?
- might be taking on too much to address it all
- * Focus on social justice organization
- trade unions
- co-ops
- women's organizations
- church

VISIONING EXERCISE

A good Topshee Conference on the theme, "Women and Violence"

Does:

- educate
- involve all
- focus
- confront
- explore
- expand
- network
- inspire
- identify
- promote positive change
- support motivate
- heal
- give hope
- motivate action
- politicize
- keep issue alive
- make connections
- agitate
- help develop solutions
- organize
- help develop strategies

A good Topshee Conference on the theme, "Women and Violence"

Says:

- no women should be abused
- we have individual and collective responsibility
- the truth
- men must take responsibility for their actions
- personal is political
- there are solutions
- violence is systemic and has many forms
- violence is global and universal
- violence has to be attacked at its roots
- all violence is connected
- violence begets violence
- all parts of the ecosystem are harmed when there is violence
- violence is a societal problem
- women are valuable
- focus on prevention
- attendance open to all
- there are alternatives to patriarchy

A good Topshee Conference on the theme, "Women and Violence",
Is:

- accountable
- affordable
- accessible
- inclusive
- participatory
- fun
- safe
- sensitive
- multicultural
- memorable
- friendly
- inspirational
- useful
- innovative (conference fits subject)
- transformational
- relates to participant's reality
- diversified program
- open to men

A good Topshee Conference on the theme, "Women and Violence",
Should:

- encourage non threatening behaviour
- actively outreach to include people with special interests
- not harm
- offer alternatives to violence
- model the vision
- include youth and elders
- be action oriented
- try to deepen questions - not give easy answers
- create/develop an analysis
- promote feminist ideology and practice
- help define feminism, patriarchy and violence
- be a safe, non-judgemental forum for women and men struggling against violence
- promote supportive confrontation
- have good food

A good Topshee Conference on the theme, "Women and Violence",
Will:

- raise awareness
- move the anti-violence movement forward
- facilitate personal changes
- support people in their work in communities
- promote a coalition for change
- reach people who have not been reached before
- be a collaborative effort with the community

- raise issues in the co-op, labour and religious sectors in their own context
- debunk myths about the transition house movement

Will continued

- increase the commitment of men to be non-violent and to support women in the struggle
- integrate the issues of violence
- affirm people of different sexual orientations
- connect people to the women's movement
- help men to understand the underlying causes of violence in our society and their role and responsibility as part of the problem and part of the solution
- examine the social and political construct of violence
- be helpful in assisting women and men to make healthful choices leading to non-violent lifestyles

OTHER ISSUES

- * Use of drama as part of conference design
- * Safety issues:
 - process for dealing with emergencies or disclosures
 - space in agenda for debriefing/cooling down between sessions
 - designated "watchers"
 - quiet rooms available
- * Planning committee needs to seriously consider the closing of the conference. It should emphasize and facilitate an atmosphere of healing and hope.
- * Conference P.R. should emphasize and promote the participation of men.
- * Registration for conference should be controlled and should attempt to reach a rough gender parity.
- * Conference mailouts should make use of the mailing list available through Debbie Forsyth-Smith