

AWA

Spring 2001

c/o The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Suite 204, Kirk Place, 219 Main Street, Antigonish, NS, B2G 2C1

"Antigonish Womens Association - a sister organisation of the Antigonish Womens Resource Centre"

NEWS FROM THE CENTRE

To say that the Centre has been busy would be a huge understatement. Young women, older women, university and college students, rich, poor (you name it!) have participated in all kinds of things. Resumes have been written, work placements carried out, new initiatives started and events and programs held.

Highlights

BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE - seven sessions of assertiveness training, self-esteem building, sexuality and mental health education.

YOUNG WOMEN EXPLORING OUR LIVES TOGETHER - topics included body image and the media, reclaiming and expressing our anger.

TEENS TAKE ACTION - three, full-day peer education workshops on dating violence and sexual assault.

STAGE II GROUP FOR ADULT SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE.

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN 2000 - We participated in organising a weekly gathering in front of the Town Hall all summer long as well as other related activities. We built solidarity among groups with common issues and we educated each other and members of the public about measures to address women's economic concerns and violence against women. A Grande Finale took the form of a huge march through downtown, ending with a soup and biscuit lunch.

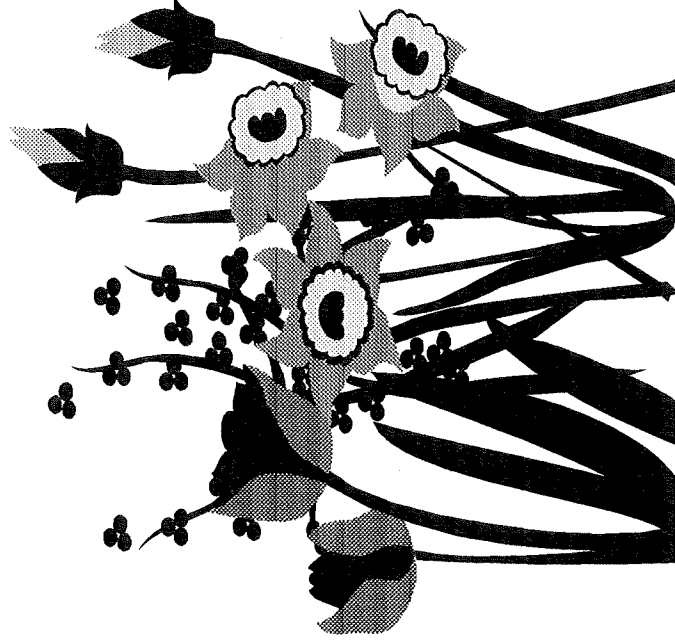
AWC USER PROFILING PROJECT - Fifty women were interviewed last year about how they use the Centre, what issues they have brought, how the Centre has benefited them. This, along with the same data from all the other women's centres in Nova Scotia formed the basis of a report to our provincial government funders. It was gratifying to the interviewer, Katherine Reed to get such detailed feedback about the results of our work over the past dozen years. The report is available at the Centre.

FAREWELLS - We are sorry to say goodbye to Maureen Ryan and Caitlin Mulcahy. Maureen assisted with corporate fund-raising and Centre program planning. She was also behind the creation of packaged greeting cards that are for sale at the Centre. Maureen is now living and working in Granada. Caitlin worked as a liaison between local high school students and the AWRC this past winter. We recognise the need to reach out to youth and she helped with this.

SERVICES - The Centre has a fantastic lending library. We encourage everyone to take advantage of this resource. Borrowing is easy, confidential and best of all— free!

The Centre makes presentations to many different groups on topics like sexual assault, feminism and economic justice for women. Contact the office if you wish to have a speaker for your meeting.

The Women's Centre provides women with peer support, information, referral, advocacy and accompaniment. Please do not hesitate to call or drop in if you need some type of confidential, non-judgmental cost-free peer support.



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Poetry Corner

Walking the corridors of time,
And exploding the myth of comfort;
I blew kisses to grief,
And prayed with loneliness.

In eternal time,
I climbed compassion,
And flirted with empathy;
Only to emerge
Pieced together, but still fragile.

My brain rained tears,
Dry and unfulfilled.
I kissed the past,
And fed on memory;
As my heart wept wild flowers.

by Fran Nunn

In the fields of hope,
I sew my dreams;
Watering them with my tears.

I pray for flowers,
But suffer the weeds to thrive,
As my garden brings forth
The rebirth of suffering.

By the light of pain,
I explored my suffering,
And let the heart pretend.

by Fran Nunn

What have I done to you?

You don't know that?
haven't you grown up?
why are you failing?
why are you so strange....?
.... so different?
can't you be normal?
won't you shut up?
can't you sit up straight?
why did you do that?
is that what you're wearing?
WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
What have I done to you?

by Nonie
Exploring Our Lives participant

THE VOICE OF WOMEN PEACE CUP

Joanne Tompkins is the 2001 recipient of the Voice of Women Peace Cup. This award is given to women who have worked toward a more just and peaceful world. Joanne is a founding member of the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice and over the past several years, she has been at the centre of many economic justice actions in Antigonish. Her peace and justice promoting activities have reached far and wide and we are fortunate to have her with us now in Antigonish.

Recently, Joanne was one of the main coordinators of the weekly Town Hall vigils for the World March of Women 2000. Along with her partner, Ed Miller, (and with the help of Marion and Karl, their two children) Joanne played a critical role in making those Wednesday noon demonstrations come alive with people, music and fun. The weekly vigils prompted anti-poverty activists in Halifax to confer upon Antigonish the flattering title "The Social Justice capital of Nova Scotia" and earned Joanne the distinction of becoming known as one of "The Feminist Trio" (The Casket, May 10/00 Letter to the Editor by Peggy MacIsaac).

Joanne helped to organise ACEJ's very first International Day for the Eradication of Poverty event, a popular theatre production called "Shine the Light of Justice". The piece demonstrated how people can "fall through the cracks", becoming trapped in poverty, and how government has increasingly abdicated its role in helping citizens cope with difficulties and work to reach their potential. In 1999, Joanne coordinated "Teach-in on Poverty" by gathering and distributing educational tools for children, teachers and parents to help them reach a new understanding of poverty issues.

Through all of these activities, the relationships among local individuals and organisations concerned about economic justice have been strengthened, and people have been made more aware of the causes of poverty and the ways in which it can be addressed. In the process of this work, we learned about these important issues, got to know each other better, and just as importantly, we laughed and had fun. In making all of this happen, Joanne has made a major contribution to peace.

Congratulations Joanne, from all of us.

YOUTH NEWS

Youth in Antigonish have had the opportunity to explore the issue of peer sexual harassment through a recently completed program called "When Bullying Becomes Sexual Harassment: Building a Student Centered Prevention Approach". Workshops with young people have taken place in cooperation with local schools and youth groups. Participants in the workshops identified problematic behaviours and discussed possible solutions. Another part of this program involved the development of an educational resource kit on the subject of peer sexual harassment. The kit will be distributed throughout the Strait Regional School Board and to women's centres across Nova Scotia.

The Young Women's Reading Group is looking forward to reading Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* this Spring. An enthusiastic group of teen readers engaged in lively discussion of The Color Purple by Alice Walker in March. The group welcomes new members (young women 14 - 17). For more information call Pamela Fry at 867-1784. The weekly after-school meetings of the AWRC teen program Exploring Our Lives are wrapping up the this season on April 25, 2001. Our spring sessions have involved conversation and activities on various themes including childhood, change, sexuality and career/education options. The program will resume in the fall.

ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT

On The Road To Employment is an 18-week pre-employment program for single mothers in Antigonish Town and County who are on social assistance. The purpose was to create a program that was relevant to the lives of single mothers and that would educate, empower and motivate women to get back out into the work force. The program is sponsored through the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and funded through a Memorandum of Agreement between human Resources Development Canada and the Department of community services.

"This program has saved my life. It motivates me to get out of bed in the morning and has allowed me to feel like a productive person within our community again!"
Lynn, program participant

On February 19th sessions began for the participants. The first half of the program was centred around life skills, such as assertiveness training, self-esteem building, and communication skills. The second half of the program concentrates more on job readiness skills, such as portfolio development, resume and cover letter writing, interview skills and computer training.

Even though we could only seat twelve women in the program, continuing interest in the program shows that these services are greatly needed in the community. We have had a lot of community support in running this program and have accessed many resources and services throughout Antigonish and the surrounding area. We have had thirty-eight people from the community willing to volunteer their time to speak to our group on various topics and the participants have made many contacts that could be helpful for them in the future.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON THE GO!

The Antigonish Affordable Housing Society (AAHS) has been meeting at the Centre regularly since November 2000. This group is working to address the affordable housing crisis in Antigonish. We are happy to report that we are making steady progress! We have gratefully received donations from local business people, and community supporters, and grants of \$500 each from the Town and County of Antigonish. This money will pay for women's child care and transportation expenses so they can attend housing committee meetings and related activities. AAHA and related meetings. The Sisters of St. Martha have been very supportive and take an active interest in advancing this cause.

There is still a need for funding to conduct a "need and demand study". Once this is completed the AAHS will be well on its way to push forward and present our proposal to other pertinent services and funders.

Our goal is to have a long-term, positive impact on the community through this community economic development effort. The lack of affordable housing affects almost everyone in a community in many ways. Charities are pressed to respond poverty issues, costly government services are over-used, neighbourhoods deteriorate. More than anything, when people live in housing that is unsuitable or too expensive, they suffer and their potential is limited. When people (all kinds of people - not just those who need housing) participate in developing affordable housing, we grow, learn and contribute.

Bouquets of Praise and Thanks

☘ Canadian Auto Workers Union for their donation of \$2000

☘ Shahnaz Kahn, Associate Professor in the Women's Studies Program, at St. FX, recently published her book, "Muslim Women: Crafting a North American Identity".

☘ Harlequin Enterprises for providing \$2500 to support our Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse Therapy Groups

☘ Pam Calabrese MacLean's play, Her Father's Barn will be playing at the Fringe Festival in Halifax this fall. Pam created the play from her series of poems about a rural Nova Scotian woman named Ida-Mae Mac Hinc. The play was awarded "Outstanding New Script" in Theatre Antigonish's One-Act-Play-Festival this year.

☘ AWRC Director, Lucille Harper was honoured with the Ron Stratford Award by the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers. This prestigious award is given to a Nova Scotian who, through volunteer efforts, makes a significant contribution to a preventative or community-based social service program.

☘ This spring Kay Chisholm became the first woman to serve as Mayor of Antigonish. Congratulations to Kay, and to Diane Roberts, Deputy Mayor who won her seat on Town Council with the most votes in the campaign.

AWA COADY PICNIC

Watch for details of the Annual AWA Coady Women's Picnic. This year's picnic will be at Oona Landry's house in Bayfield in August. As usual, we call on AWA members and other interested women to join us for this lively social event. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet women from all over the world who are working on social development, often specifically with women. Bring some friends, bring your favourite dish, and be prepared to go for a swim if the weather is

They Must Be Joking ... They're not joking: The Government of Canada and the FTAA

I'd like to know who came up with this hare-brained idea: there is a section in the north American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and in the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) that allows corporate interests to sue governments if the policies or regulations of those governments inhibit the corporate interests' ability to pursue profit. Corporations can sue for actual financial losses and potential (future) losses. Is it just me, or does that sound patently stupid? Don't they know that the almighty buck always takes the path of least resistance and that the concerns of ordinary people and governments will never be catered to by private, for-profit organisations? Have they never heard the phrase "absolute power corrupts absolutely"? The FTAA is probably the closest thing to absolute power for the global free market that we have seen yet. If it goes through, we're in big trouble.

It's "Chapter 11" of the proposed FTAA that so many people are understandably upset about. It gives corporations the right to sue governments. There have been a few cases already of public interests being forced to give over to huge, wealthy corporations. The first example is the case of Methyl Corp. of Virginia, US. They sued the Government of Canada because, in its wisdom, the Government of Canada banned a gasoline additive called MMT, one of Methyl Corp.'s products. The reason for banning MMT is that it is a dangerous neuro-toxin and it breaks down automobiles' catalytic converters (emissions control equipment that helps clean the exhaust on its way to the tailpipe). The upshot of the law suit is that our government had to pay Methyl Corp. \$13 million in damages, issue a public apology, and rescind the ban on MMT. That's Methyl Corp. 1, The People of Canada 0.

Now if our government is going to continue to enter into international agreements which hobble our ability to protect the public good, (e.g. the natural environment, human rights, labour rights, women's struggle for justice, our children's education, our health care, etc.) who can we turn to for protection? How can we even begin to wrestle back some control over our own national, provincial, and municipal policies? It seems to me that the most promising attempts to fight this agreement are coming from people's organisations (NGOs like ACEJ, AWA and the Sisters of St. Martha) and from municipal governments.

I urge every AWA member and supporter to join in the struggle for a better world for ordinary people. A good way to start is to join forces with the AWA/AWRC and the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice. Another organisation that is worth checking out is the International Gender and Trade Network. Visit their website at www.genderandtrade.net.

Cooking Over Time

A Collection of Recipes and Stories of
Women From Antigonish

Written by Jane Barter

Price \$20 (including postage)

contact the centre for ordering information
(902)863-6221



A FINAL THOUGHT....

An elderly woman and her little grandson, whose face was sprinkled with bright freckles, spent the day at the zoo.

Lots of children were waiting in line to get their cheeks painted by a local artist who was decorating them with tiger paws. "You've got so many freckles, there's no place to paint!" a girl in the line said to the little fella.

Embarrassed, the little boy dropped his head. His grandmother knelt down next to him. "I love your freckles. When I was a little

girl I always wanted freckles," she said, while tracing her finger across the child's cheek. "Freckles are beautiful."

The boy looked up, "Really?"

"Of course," said his grandmother. "Why, just name me one thing prettier than freckles?" she said.

The little boy thought for a moment, peered intensely into his grandma's face, and softly whispered, "Wrinkles."