



AWARE

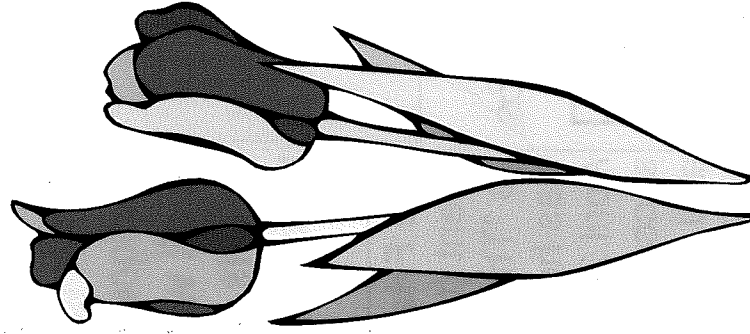
Spring 2004

Spring Greetings from the Centre....

Spring has finally sprung! Hurray! Spring is a time for new beginnings. It's a time to welcome nature in all its bounty and beauty. It's a time to say so long to a long winter and welcome in the warmth of the shining sun. The staff at the Women's Centre would like to share the joy and cheer of spring time with each and all. Please drop in to say Hello. We'd love to see you.

It's an exciting and busy time here at the Centre. We are finishing up with our Income Tax Program and we look forward to getting started with our upcoming spring programs. Be sure to check our schedule inside for a list of our up-coming programs.

~ Isabel Gillis



I am happy to announce that the Centre has a new webpage! It is still a bit of a work in progress, but I hope you will check it out and feel free to let me know if you have any suggestions. My hope is that it will become something you will check frequently for updates, events and programming.

This edition of AWARE is full of news, articles, poems, reports and more- I hope you enjoy reading it!

~ Charlie ten Brinke

Spring Greetings from the Board of Directors...

Spring has sprung... or did you miss the one warm day we had?! I am going to declare spring here even if the temperatures remain chilly... perhaps if we all dug out our shorts we could will the temperatures to rise along with our goosebumps!

In this issue . . .

Spring 2004 Programs
Rural Youth Education Project
How Literacy Affects Health
What Happened To My Country?
Common Law Relationships
EI Program
Report on IWD- International Women's Day
Web Bytes
On a Lighter Note...
Annual Coady Women's Picnic



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Resource Centre
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219 Main Street
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Phone: 863-6221

Website:

<http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/antig.women/>

AWARE editor:
Charlie ten Brinke

Submissions to AWARE
can be emailed to
aware_news@yahoo.ca

We have woven a bit of the web! The AWRC has launched a new website for the Centre (see contact box on right for url). There is an interactive notification feature on the calendar page, where you can sign up with your email address, and receive a notice whenever we add a new event to the calendar. Now you won't miss an event! Check it out and let us know what you think.



AWRC Staff:

Lucille Harper
Amanda Workman
Isabel Gillis
Vangie Babin
Christine Hanlon
Pamela Fry
Katherine Reed
Heather Carson
Gwen O'Neill
Jean Crosby
Jackie Jacques
Krista DeCoste
Angika Peters
John Jantunen
Patrick Tampan

2004 Board of Directors:

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Karen Kenny
Betty MacDonald
Betsy MacDonald
Donna MacDonald
Heather Mayhew
Catherine Meery
Lynn O'Donnell
Maureen Shebib
Charlie ten Brinke
Mary Turay

The Sr. Mary MacLeod

Bursary application forms
are now available at the
Centre for any one
interested in applying. Stop
by and pick one up!
Application deadline is the
21st of May, 2004.

The AWRC Giftshop:

*The following items can be
purchased at the Centre:*

*AWRC Cooking Over Time
Cookbooks \$15.00*
AWRC Mugs \$15.00
*AWRC Greeting Cards
\$8.00*
*AWRC 20th Anniversary
Poster \$10.00*

What a great gift idea!

Sobeys shoppers are
asked to please save
their receipts and
bring them in to the
Women's Centre.
Sobeys will donate
\$1.00 for every
\$500.00 in receipts
we can collect. Every
bit helps!

**The winner of "Fall
Flowers" for the Sr.
Mary MacLeod
Bursary ticket draw
was Murray
Workman, of
Antigonish. Thanks
to all who purchased
tickets and helped
with our fund-raiser.**



*A sincere thank-
you goes out to
Betty Johnson,
Terry Dunningan,
Jim McLaren and
Ted Moore for
their tremendous
assistance in
volunteering with
our **Income Tax
Preparation** for
low income
women and their
families.*

The Friend to Friend
event (formerly known
as "The Free Store")
was held on Saturday,
April 24 was a huge
success. Much thanks
and appreciation goes
to Diana Diao and
Clare Mulchay for
organizing the event
and seeing it through
to the end. Many
thanks also go to the
University students
who chose to donate
their items, and to all
the volunteers who
showed up on Friday
night to set up and
then again on
Saturday for the
actual event.

Spring 2004 Programs

Check out the following Spring programs being offered at the Centre.

Stage 1 Therapy Group for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse - Will be starting in May. Call the Centre for more details.

Teens Take Action - A peer education approach to educating youth regarding dating violence and sexual assault. (More details inside).

All programs offered at the AWRC are free of charge. For more information on any of our programs or services, or to register, please call 863-6221. Please specify whether you prefer morning or evening sessions.

Teens Take Action

Teens Take Action uses a peer education approach to dating violence and sexual assault. This year the project began in January and recruited the youth team in February. The Teens Take Action team is made up of nine very creative and enthusiastic students in grades 11 and 12 at Dr. John Hugh Gillis High. The TTA youth are: Jessie Berthaume, James Brenton, Peter Goldie, Keegan How, Jennifer MacDonald, Laura MacDonald, Zach MacDonald, Clare Mulcahy, and Elizabeth Walsh.

On March 9th and 10th, the TTA presented at Saint Andrew's Junior School to the grade eight PDR classes. The presentation consisted of two skits followed by small group discussions facilitated by pairs. Peer pressure and sexual harassment were the themes of the first skit. This skit portrayed how the boys in grade 12 often target grade 9 girls as "fresh meat". The second skit focused on the issue of sexual assault by presenting a high school couple who had been dating for 6 months. The boy expects to have intercourse and despite the girl's assertiveness and physical gestures, he sexually assaults her. This skit was intended to highlight the responsibility of the boy in this situation. The presentations were successful and the youth facilitated well.

The Service Learning Program provided TTA with a St.F.X. student, Allison MacDonald, as a volunteer. The work she did with the TTA will replace the required term paper for her Women's Studies class. Allison was able to help with preparation and facilitation of the TTA training. She also assisted with facilitating small group discussions at the SAJS presentations. Allison was a perfect fit for this project and was a great support.

Family Services have invited TTA to present at the Conference on Family Violence at the UCCB campus on May 28th. We are excited to be able to attend this kind of event and look forward to taking our "show" on the road.

Krista DeCoste,

**AGM-
June 2004**

Please note:
The Annual General Meeting will be **Tuesday, June 8, 2004** at 7pm at C.A.C.L. (83 Kirk St.).

**All are
welcome!!
Bring a friend!**

***Please renew your
AWA memberships!
All memberships can
be renewed at the
AGM. If you're not
planning to attend,
stop by the Centre
and update yours
today! Memberships
fees are \$15.00 or
pay what you can.***

Join us at the
**Annual Coady
Women's
Picnic** this
August. Watch
for posters with
details of the
exact date and
location.

Happy Mother's Day!

I stop writing the poem to fold the clothes. No matter who lives or who dies, I'm still a woman. I'll always have plenty to do. I bring the arms of his shirt together. Nothing can stop our tenderness. I'll get back to the poem. I'll get back to being a woman. But for now there's a shirt, a giant shirt in my hands, and somewhere a small girl standing next to her mother watching to see how it's done.

— *Tess Gallagher* (1943-; American screenwriter, educator, poet, writer), *Instructions to the Double*, 1976

Most so-called women's work is not recognized as real activity. One reason for this attitude may be that such work is usually associated with helping others' development, rather than with self-enhancement or self-employment.

— *Jean Baker Miller* (1927-; American psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, editor, teacher, author), *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, 1976

Lalache League Meetings:
May 25, 7 p.m. at Kids First, regular meeting on "The Advantages of Breastfeeding."

June 11, World Walk for Breastfeeding, Meet at Kids First at 10 a.m., walk to Columbus Field.

June 21, Healthcare Professional Seminar at the Millennium Centre, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., contact Nicola Aquino for details.

What's "Your Thing"
 A television commercial states that everyone is good at something and poses the question, "What's your thing?" My 6 year old daughter asks what that means, then, after my explanation, goes on to say that her thing is dancing and playing. She then continues with "Daddy's thing is fixing trucks and yours is laundry."

— Excuse me while I stick my head in the oven.

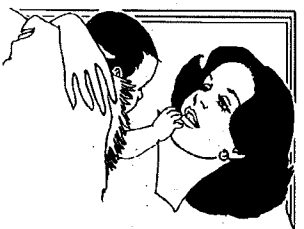
A dagger stabs my feminist heart. What am I doing here?

Is this what I have taught my daughter?? In trying to provide the best possible care for my children have I taught them that a woman's role is to simply do other people's dirty laundry? Does she not see that I am a mother, educator, paramedic, artist, activist, actor, gardener, chef, etc, etc...

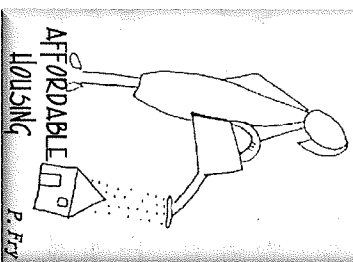
No. She sees me folding laundry.

I quickly set her straight and went back to cooking supper... *sigh*
 How can we get society to look beyond the mundane, undervalued tasks of motherhood and see the incredibly important roles of childrearing? If you figure it out, come find me- I'll probably be doing laundry.

— *Charlie ten Brinke*
 is a mother, doula, childcare provider, artist, photographer, activist, gardener and yes, a laundress.



The Antigonish Affordable Housing Society is racing against the May 20th deadline to apply for the recently announced federal-provincial affordable housing grants program. The deadline was a big surprise and the time is very short for preparing a detailed and complex application. It's hard to understand why the government organized the process in this way. The group is doing its best to complete the application before the deadline expires.



If all goes well we will be building 14 units of mixed rental housing contained within four buildings just below Thorne Ridge, across Hawthorne St. from Brendan's Fairway. An application for rezoning has just been made to the County of Antigonish Planning Department.

It is a little hard to predict exactly when the buildings would be constructed and the residents moved in, but if all goes well it looks like moving day would be sometime next summer. It takes a very long time to complete this process and a lot of learning has to take place along the way. Lots of legal and design hurdles have to be surmounted.

We will be looking for donations from building supplies stores, service clubs, and philanthropists to pay for some of the capital costs, but this part of the process is in the very early stages. We do not have charitable tax status unfortunately, and this may make the process even more difficult that it already would be. Some of the costs that are covered by donors might be appliances, landscaping, playground equipment, floor covering, drapery equipment, etc.

Keep an eye on the site if you drive by, and if you have any questions, I would be happy to talk with you. Just call me at 364-2232 or email reebing@ns.sympatico.ca

***This article is adapted
from the speech Jennifer
Hines gave at the
International Women's
Day Dinner, March 8,***

Like many young women, I dream about the future. I dream about what it would be like to have a career that would let me earn enough to not live in poverty. I could be a lawyer and my daughter would have extra curricular activities and new clothes. She would be proud to bring her friends to her home after school and she would look up to me. I am in my third year at Saint Francis Xavier University working toward that dream, but I know that at any moment it may be snatched away from me because I am a single parent. In 2001 the government decided to save a little bit more money on the backs of its students. This time single parents became the target. They decided that anyone who was in a post secondary program of more than two years simply could not qualify for social assistance. Supposedly student loans could cover the living expenses for a woman and her children. In the province of Nova Scotia, all government student loans and grants reach a maximum of about 11,000 dollars. Subtract the costs of university tuition and fees and the amount left over is not enough for any family to live on. I was at the social assistance office several times trying to convince them that an exception just had to be made. At one point when I had only 11 dollars to live on, a case worker told me that they did not want to support people to go to elite institutions. He said that he could help me if I dropped out, but as long as I stayed in school, they simply would not. I somehow managed desperately to get

through the year, but at the end of final exams I was forced to return to the social assistance office. Even though the school year was over I was told that I could not be helped unless I dropped out. I even had to get a letter from the registrar's office proving that I was no longer a student. I was forced to literally drop out of school in order to survive. (A few months later I changed my mind and returned to school.) Through everything that happened in the past year and a half I had to hang on to my conviction that I was allowed to choose the kind of education, career and life that I wanted for myself. Many women dream of going to university and having professional careers. Women should not be forced to choose between those dreams and loving and raising children. Several women that I know personally have felt that they had no choice and have left university or abandoned their applications. Those who are still here certainly must owe much to the people around them. My personal success so far must be greatly attributed to the women in my life. In my apartment building there are two other single mothers in university. The three of us offer moral support to each other. When our children play together we get the kind of social activity that we could not afford to have in the regular university setting. This year I car-pooled with one of the other mothers and we have both saved a lot of money on transportation. My mother often provides free sitting and drives me to places I need to go and I have received some cash donations from concerned members of the community. This year I moved my daughter from the StFX day care, (which by the way charges students 25 dollars per

day!) to a subsidized seat at Children's Place Day Care. The women who work there treat all parents and children with equal respect, regardless of the parent's age or the family's economic circumstance. It is a great relief to know that when I leave my child in the morning she is loved and well cared for. The extra 300 dollars I save each month is also a huge relief. The scholarship and bursary programs at the school are a great help. For any student who can do well, grades are far more lucrative than working. This year I was able to get over three thousand dollars from school bursaries and scholarships. The financial aid officer at our school, Lynn O'Donnell, is always available, she makes single parents feel entitled to be at school and offers real help and strategies. The Antigonish Women's Resource Center is also an excellent place for women who are in university. The women there are excellent to talk to and about finances, and they have even helped me to secure university awards. It is thanks to these women, especially Katherine that I learned that poverty is a situation and not an identity and situations can change. Some people might like to say that any woman can achieve anything if only she puts her mind to it. Instead, I would like to offer that any woman can do anything with the support of those around her. Without the women around me I would not have gotten as far as I have. I implore you to speak out for those women whose dreams do not seem to matter to the government -- whose families do not seem to matter to the Province. Tell the government to allow women welfare checks for the four years it takes to get her degree, so that she will never be forced to ask for a welfare check

Web-bytes

Bits 'n' bytes of the web to check out:

The new ANRC website can be found at:
<http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/antig-women/>

I hope you will check it out and let us know what you think of it. We will keep it up to date with current programs and events - it should be a great tool to keep up with what's going on at the Centre.

Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women

Amnesty International

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

March 2004

We are pleased to launch a global campaign to stop violence against women. We are excited to be joining your long standing efforts to stop violence against women.

The women's movement has long been a powerful force against the tide of violence. Amnesty International, too, has added its voice to the struggle to protect and promote women's rights. Now we want to concentrate more attention and resources on this issue because we know that violence against women is everyone's problem. Amnesty members and staff offer our voices to the struggle for a world free of violence against women.

To the struggle, Amnesty International brings the energy, determination and activism of members and supporters from all over the world.

To the struggle, we bring the power and persuasion of the human rights framework which points to the obligations of states and other actors.

To the struggle, we bring reports and documents that can help create the power of evidence and documentation to the force of denunciation and illustrate how violence deprives women of all human rights.

To the struggle, we bring the resounding message that violence against women is fundamentally about unequal power relations between men and women.

A human rights crisis

We all know the facts about violence against women and that statistics that don't capture the true extent of the crisis. Very few states systematically collect and publish statistics on violence against women. As well, violence against women is generally under-reported because women are made to feel ashamed that they have been victimized or they fear disbelief, hostility or further violence if they come forward.

This campaign is designed to sound the alarm about violence against women as a human rights crisis, educate the broader public about the issues, mobilize both women and men to work to counter violence and to use the power and persuasion of the human rights framework in the efforts to stop violence against women.

Our long-term commitment

It may be unexpected that Amnesty International, an organization that typically works on behalf of prisoners of conscience and on civil and political human rights, would venture into the area of violence against women. But in many ways, this is not far from our traditional work. This campaign will incorporate our long-standing concerns such as a persistent disregard for international standards, impunity and failings in the administration of justice.

Working with women's activists, advocates and rights defenders, Amnesty International launches today a two year public awareness and action campaign to stop violence against women. As a worldwide initiative of Amnesty International, this a priority campaign for over 1.8 million Amnesty supporters in more than 150 countries and territories across the planet.

Campaign planning at the international level began with consultations with some international organizations that work on women's human rights. In Canada, we consulted with some frontline groups and national organizations to help us develop our campaign strategy, goals and how to best work as allies. This campaign is a product of those consultations.

This campaign provides Amnesty with a tremendous opportunity to develop a stronger analysis of violence against women as it connects to broader issues of women's rights. We will develop a long-term program of action to address the root causes of violence against women.

We want to support you and invite your support.

We know that violence of all kinds is experienced by women and girls in a variety of ways every day in every part of the world. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Members of Amnesty International may be in contact with you to explore possibilities for collaboration as this campaign takes shape in communities across Canada. At the national level, we look forward to fostering relationships with women's groups to ensure this campaign makes a meaningful contribution to your work.

We look forward to working with you. Please visit www.amnesty.ca/stoptheviolence or call us at 1.800.AMNESTY.

In solidarity,

Cheryl Hotchkiss
 Campaigner, Women's Human Rights; Amnesty International
 Canada (English)

If you're a Canadian youth between the ages of 8 and 24 years, **Status of Women**

Canada invites you to send us an

essay about a Canadian woman who serves as your role model.

You can choose to submit a video, photo, or written essay from one of the following topics:

'Our Foremothers, Women of the Past' or 'Continuing Change, Women of Today'. Excerpts from some of the submissions we receive may be posted on the

Status of Women Canada web site and some of those role models will be highlighted in the material we produce for

Women's History Month 2004.

For further details and Essay

Project rules: visit our web site at <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca>; send

an email request to

communications@swc-cfc.gc.ca;

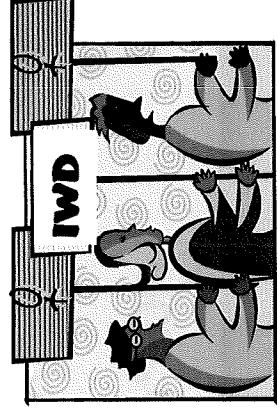
or fax a request to

(613) 943-2386.

International Women's Day: 8 March, 2004

This year's International Women's Day Celebration, organized in collaboration with the St.FX Office of Equity and Community Issues drew over 100 women to the Keating Millennium Centre on March 8th, 2004. The theme of the evening was "celebrating the many ways women work". The evening started with delicious chili and fresh roles, lovingly prepared by Nellie Cypher. An IWD cake was donated by SuperValu.

After the meal, the audience heard four women speak on various issues in relation to women and work. Professor Nancy Forestell, who teaches in the Women's Studies Program and History at St.FX, spoke on the history of IWD starting in the early 1900's, in terms of marches of women and men seeking better wages and working conditions for women. Nancy's presentation was a good reminder that IWD is not just a time to celebrate our achievements as women, but to remember the women who came before us decades ago - the women who began the fight for decent wages and working conditions - a struggle that is far from over. Jennifer Hines, a senior student at St.FX spoke of the challenges she has faced as a single mother in university, in particular the financial challenges imposed by



government policy that does not allow women on social assistance to continue to receive assistance while enrolled in university.

Jennifer clearly moved and inspired the audience with her story - a story of strength and determination as a single mother, in the face of injustice and financial hardship. Carla Bryden, President of Local 2107 of the Canadian Auto Workers brought messages from the C.A.W., spoke of the achievements made possible for women by and through the unionization process. She also, on behalf of the C.A.W., presented the AWRG with a cheque for \$2000.00. Carla encouraged women to think positively about joining a union, as one way to increase our power within our workplaces.

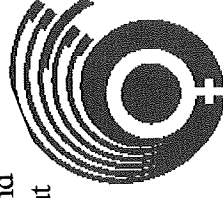
Maureen Shebib, Coordinator of Equity and Community Issues at St.FX for just under a year, spoke about some of the work being done to improve both the working and educational environment at the University, in terms of discrimination and harassment. For example, in education to launching educational workshops on the issues, new policies and

procedures are being developed to address harassment and discrimination within the University. With the help of a number of volunteers (some spontaneous!) poster, picking up the cake, setting up and cleaning up after the event, etc. went smoothly, which Maureen Shebib and Katherine Reed were most grateful for. With the turnout for this year's event, it is clear that women in Antigonish remain keen to get together, especially over some good food, to reflect on our lives, past and present - as women.

NewsByte: February 13, 2004
NEW PUBLICATION ON COMMON LAW

RELATIONSHIPS And They Lived Happily Ever After...

rights and responsibilities of common law partners provides easy-to-understand information about Nova Scotians' legal rights and responsibilities. This publication is for Nova



Scotians of all ages who live common law. The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Seniors' Citizens Secretariat have received many questions about the implications of living common law. This resource answers many of those questions and encourages readers to address legal issues arising from their relationship before problems arise. We want to help people who choose to live common law understand

Continued on page 11...



Springtime means gardening!!

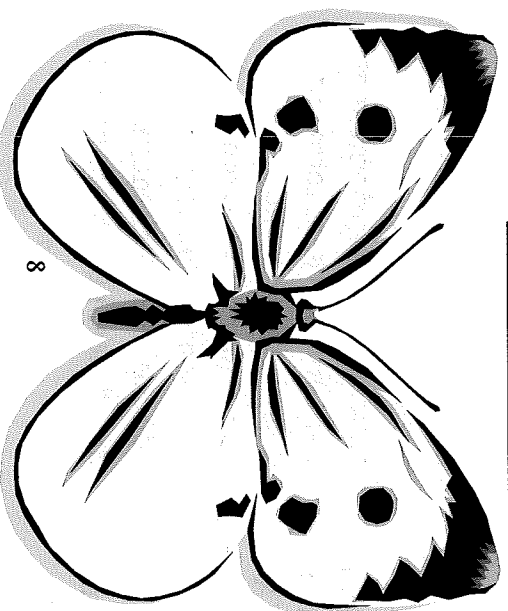
The Tribe of the Sovereigns

by Janette Fecteau

The larvae, lovely
or clubbed, ugly. Drab
on bark, in gardens
beautiful nuisance,
voracious consumers of parsley, carrot and
dill.
Or clever inventors of tents
rolling, binding leaf to lilac leaf
with killing gossamer cables.
Caves for forays to neighboring foliage
soon stripped skeletal.

The pupae, repugnant,
small fat, tightly wrapped dark brown cigars,
suspended menace
with tapered tips
they glisten horribly,
arch in spasms of anger
when disturbed in their long season
of transmogrification.

Inside, entire limbs gone liquid.
But briefly, butterflies,
stained, translucent, luminous.
Queen, we hail them, monarch
viceroys and tawny
emperor.

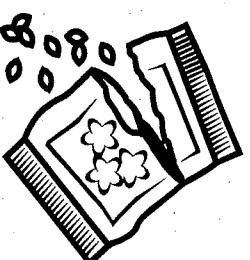


"Gardens Along
The Sunrise Trail"
This summer's Garden Tour will
be held on Sunday, July 4th.
Gardens along
Rte. 245 will be
featured, perhaps
as far as Arisaig.



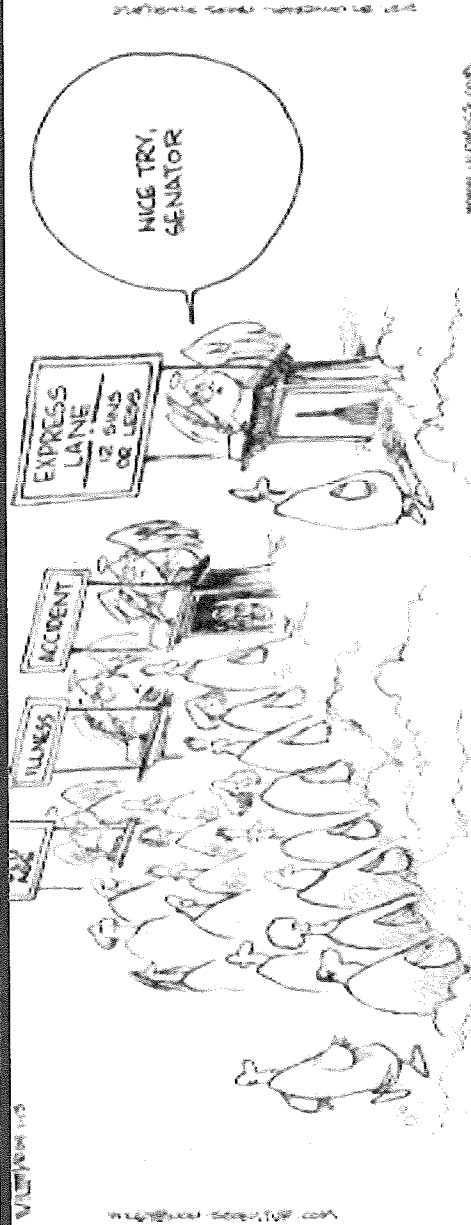
The Antigonish Garden Club is
open to all! Meetings are typically
held the third Monday of each
month. Phone Sharon Bryson for
more information at 863-6307.

Sharon Bryson & Bill Wilgenhof
have a large variety of SEEDS
available free to
anyone who might
like to try growing
them. The list is
online at their
website:



<http://www.infinitymedia.ns.ca/willowgarden/page2/savedseeds2003.htm>

On a lighter note... HA HA HA



I thought I would include a frequently-forwarded email joke here- those of you with email have most likely received this at some point, but as a stay-at-home mom I can't help but chuckle at this. I thought it might bring a smile to your face too. Enjoy & have a great day!!

~Charlie

One afternoon a man came home from work to find total mayhem in his house. His three children were outside, still in their pajamas, playing in the mud, with empty food boxes and wrappers strewn all around the front yard. The door of his wife's car was open, as was the front door to the house. Proceeding into the entry, he found an even bigger mess. A lamp had been knocked over, and the throw rug was wadded against one wall. In the front room the TV was loudly blaring a cartoon channel, and the family room was strewn with toys and various items of clothing. In the kitchen, dishes filled the sink, breakfast food was spilled on the counter, dog food was spilled on the floor, a broken glass lay under the table, and a small pile of sand was spread by the back door. He quickly headed up the stairs, stepping over toys and more piles of clothes, looking for his wife. He was worried she may be ill, or that something serious had happened. He found her lounging in the bedroom, still curled in the bed in her pajamas, reading a novel. She looked up at him, smiled, and asked how his day went. He looked at her bewildered and asked, "What happened here today?" She again smiled and answered, "You know every day when you come home from work and you ask me what in the world did I do today?" "Yes," was his incredulous reply. She answered, "Well, today I didn't do it."

"Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing."

-Phyllis Diller

"SEXISM GOES SO DEEP THAT AT FIRST IT'S HARD TO SEE; YOU THINK IT'S JUST REALITY."

~ **ALEX KATES SHULMAN, BURNING QUESTIONS (1978)**

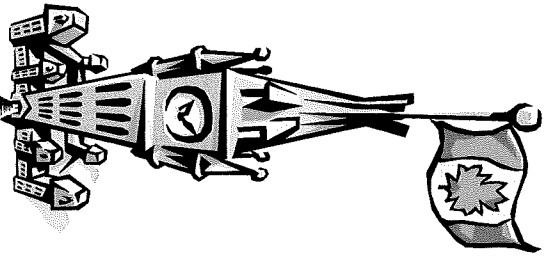
Notices:

Woman with two well-behaved dogs seeks a small (2-3 bedroom) house, within 10 minutes of Antigonish, to rent (possibly purchase). Call Maureen during day at 867-5306, evenings and weekends: 863-1280.



What Happened To My Country?

~By Katherine Reed



I recall growing up in Montreal and later in North Bay,

Ontario and formulating a sense of what made Canada the country it was. I recall the flag-raising ceremony

in the yard of my elementary school when our new maple leaf flag was introduced. I didn't realize that as I grew older, this symbol would often bring tears to my eyes.

By the time I was in grade four, Trudeauania had seized the nation. Trudeau articulated his vision for Canada: a modern, multi-cultural, bilingual society that was distinguished and respected around the globe by its people's sense of justice and compassion.

During the 1970s there was a growing awareness that our governments were spending too much money and accumulating large debts. (Actually, this was only half accurate. About half of our debt is a result of high interest rates during the inflationary 1970s).

In the early 1980s economic recession struck. Immediately afterward things started to shift. Social assistance spending was tightened up,

Unemployment Insurance was spoken of as a problem rather than a solution, and poverty increased.

In the early 1990's social policy watchdogs started predicting the erosion of social programs when Lloyd Axworthy carried out his "Social Programs Review." Sure enough, in 1995 the deepest cuts to social programs in our history were made under Finance Minister Paul Martin. Funding for social housing was cut. UI was overhauled and the number of unemployed workers who could qualify for benefits was reduced by more than half. Post secondary student bursaries were eliminated. Ralph Klein's Alberta got noticeably more right-wing and Mike Harris, ironically one of my favourite junior high school teachers, ushered in his "common-sense revolution."

A mountain of evidence now shows how during the 1990s the rich got substantially richer, the poor got poorer, and poor people's rights eroded alarmingly. All kinds of public spending responsibilities were downloaded onto provincial and municipal governments. Tax breaks for the well-to-do became governments' mantra. Attitudes toward the poor hardened.

At a conference last week I was unceremoniously reminded of our governments' lack of commitment to housing the poor and to supporting the

community agencies who develop housing projects. We were all encouraged to turn away from government in our search for funding and learn to suck up to wealthy business-people and convince them to donate to our cause.

The language of the corporate world is increasingly infiltrating our everyday speech. At a meeting of government representatives and community groups we were told to go back and report such-and-such "to your CEOs". Organizations' strategic plans have become "business plans" and every social initiative imaginable is being required to show how it will become "self-sustaining."

Well, guess what? Some people don't do well in a free market, capitalist economy, (e.g. people with disabilities and single parents) and they need to be supported through our tax base. Some people can't earn enough money to pay the high price of housing and must be helped with that if they are to raise a healthy family. This is purely altruistic stuff. There is no "business plan" that points to a time when those people will become "self-sustaining." We Canadians decided a long time ago that we wanted to live in a peaceful and compassionate country where beggars and child prostitutes would rarely been seen in our cities. Looks like somebody undecided all that while we weren't looking, eh?

Taking off the blindfold:

Seeing How Literacy Affects Health

~ By Doris Gillis, Dept. of Human Nutrition, St. FXU

It is well known that people who have trouble reading and writing often have poor health. The aim of the *Health Literacy in Rural Nova Scotia Research Project* was to learn more about this problem in Antigonish, Guysborough, and Richmond counties and to find out what should be done to improve it.

We talked to 46 people who had struggled with getting an education. Some were in adult learning programs. Others had difficulty reading but were not in classes. These people told us stories about their lives and how literacy affected their health and their family's health. We also held seven meetings with health and literacy workers, and we talked to 20 community leaders. All of these people lived in the counties of Antigonish, Guysborough and Richmond. All were asked to share their views on how literacy and health were linked and to tell us what needs to be done to make it easier for people in this region to have better health.

The report called **Taking Off the Blindfold: Seeing How Literacy Affects Health**

highlights what participants told us. For example, people had different ideas about what literacy meant. For some, it meant being able to read and write, or not. For others, it was more than just reading and writing. Literacy was important to many parts of their life such as getting a good job and feeling good about themselves. People also had different ideas about health. Some people thought health meant just not being sick. For others, being healthy meant being able to do what they wanted to do in their life. Both literacy and health were seen as

important to getting along well in life.

Many people told us that it was sometimes hard living in the country. For example, lots of people talked about not being able to find a job or to get to a learning program. Some talked about not being able to get into town to get food or medicine. Prices were often higher at small local stores. Going to a gym or skating rink was hard. Many talked about feeling lonely. However, people also spoke of the good things about living in a rural area. For example, people take care of each other in small places.

People had many ideas about what could be done to make it easier for people who don't read and write well to have healthier lives. They

suggested ways that information about health could be made clearer and within reach. They talked about how services and programs could be improved to better meet the needs of people with limited literacy skills. The actions they suggested are listed in the report.

Those who took part in the study and others interested in health and literacy met in January 2004 to discuss the report. They identified priorities from the list of actions suggested by research participants. Working in small groups, they developed strategies to address the priorities. These strategies will be included in a revised report which advocates can use to work for improvements in programs, policies and practices. By working together, we hope that we can find ways that all people, no matter how well they

read and write, will be better able to:

- Find, understand, and use the information that they need to stay healthy
- Get the services and support that they need
- Make choices in their own lives that help keep them healthy
- Speak up about their own health needs
- Have more control over the things that make and keep them healthy

For more information on the Health Literacy in Rural Nova Scotia Research Project, visit the website:

<http://www.nald.ca/healthliteracy/cysfxf/>

Continued from page 7...

their rights and responsibilities. Then, should relationships end, partners will be better prepared to settle matters for example, property, taxation, estate planning, child support in a fair and amicable manner. While many common-law relationships are a gateway to marriage, many are not and eventually come to an end. Therefore, it is important that partners talk to each other about their expectations and know the Nova Scotia laws. The book will be available at the offices of the three partnering organizations as well as at public libraries across the province. You may also download the publication from our web site: www.gov.ns.ca/staw/pubs2003_04/commonlaw2004.htm The above page provides links to the English and French editions of the publication. If you would like a hard copy, please contact us: tel : 424-8662; toll-free 1-800-565-8662 e-mail: nsacsw@gov.ns.ca

RURAL YOUTH EDUCATION PROJECT

by Jean Crosby

WHAT IS THE RYEP ?

The Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP) is a four year project which started in February/02. This project is sponsored by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and funded by the National Crime Prevention Strategy, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. The project implements a gender-based, violence prevention model which will provide youth with skills to build and maintain healthy relationships.

The model being replicated was developed by the Saltspring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA) Community Development and Research Society in rural British Columbia and the project work is being carried out with ongoing consultation and collaboration with SWOVA staff. Key to the process is the partnership RYEP has with the Antigonish East Education Centre in Antigonish County and Chedabucto Place in Guysborough County. These rural schools reflect a diverse population with a significant percentage of the students coming from Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities.

The model presents a gender-based, violence prevention approach for working collaboratively with teachers to deliver a core curriculum of 12 lessons to students in grades 7, 8, 9, and 11. It is designed to be presented as a multi-dimensional, multi-session, multi-year program. The

inclusive teaching approach utilized is acknowledged to be an effective way to present the skill development and awareness of issues required to build and maintain healthy relationships.

In each school a male/female team of Adult Facilitators facilitate the classroom sessions and are also responsible for providing leadership, information and support to a team of up to ten Youth Facilitators. Youth Facilitators assist with the delivery of the classroom sessions. These youth play an important mentoring and peer support role with other students both in and out of the classroom. This team presents role-modelling of a healthy adult male/female relationship as well as a co-operative youth/adult relationship. Members of the Youth and Adult teams also reflect culture and gender diversity.

This project will incorporate adaptations which will enhance the existing SWOVA curriculum, most notably in the area of diversity. Within Antigonish and Guysborough Counties there exists significant cultural/racial diversity with both First Nations and African Nova Scotian communities. Cultural diversity will be a priority and the diversity component will continue to be developed and integrated throughout the project. In addition student workbooks and resources for teachers and parents will support and enhance the classroom lessons.

KEY COMPONENTS OF MODEL:

- ◆ School-based violence prevention programming
- ◆ Community based Collaboration with schools
- ◆ Links forms of violence Addresses gender dynamics
- ◆ Addresses diversity
- ◆ Employs an inclusive education approach

- ◆ Youth involvement
- ◆ Counselling Support

WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE SCHOOLS?

During the last two school years, almost 700 students in grades 7 - 11 have received 12 classroom sessions of the Developing Healthy & Respectful Relationship curriculum. In addition, 38 students have received training and were engaged as Youth Facilitators in their schools.

VOICES OF THE RYEP YOUTH TEAMS:

The Youth Teams are actively engaged in monthly evaluation exercises which ask them to identify lessons learned. This is some of what they had to say about their role as classroom facilitators and peer educators.

- ◆ *Your actions affect everyone around you. You're learning to be a better person, by acknowledging others and yourself.*
- ◆ *The work we do has a ripple effect, if we keep doing this work the ripple effect keeps going.*
- ◆ *I learned that sometimes when the kids don't participate it isn't always because they don't want to it's because they are uncomfortable and if they see someone else talk first then they feel more comfortable*
- ◆ *We make a difference with students even if it doesn't show right away.*
- ◆ *Out of the classroom, I feel like a role model...not swearing or doing anything negative, even joking. You have to listen closely to what others are saying before you react. Make sure you understand what others are asking of you before responding.*
- ◆ *Young students are much smarter than people think they are, they have great ideas and should be listened to more by society.*

- ◆ *When we discuss racism we always have to keep the emotional safety of the youth in mind and make sure they don't feel we are pointing any fingers.*
- ◆ *Issues of respect need to be taken very seriously in the classroom.*
- ◆ *In rural communities people keep their problems secret because we do live so close to each other.*
- ◆ *Girls are more open to talk and able to show emotions when they feel safe.*
- ◆ *One of the things we do that helps boys take down their guard is separate gender sessions. They don't have to be worried about what the girls will think of them, so it can be cool and they learn more.*
- ◆ *Activities which engage students to challenge what they think they know about violence work well.*
- ◆ *We're not lecturing, we're sharing information, we're involved...how we present - it's accessible.*
- ◆ *We are not just delivering a set curriculum but adding everyone's experience to really make it work.*

WHAT'S NEXT?

- ◆ Planning for the 04/05 school year: students are being recruited in both schools to join the Youth Teams and we will also be rehiring two male Adult Facilitators over the summer.
- ◆ Internal evaluation processes which will result in an evaluation report in the fall.
- ◆ With the end of the RYEP funding in sight (Mar/06), sustainability is also a focus.

If you would like more information on the RYEP, please contact:

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Fear of Knowledge: Sex Education Booklet by Lynn O'Donnell

The sex education booklet created for grade 7-12 students by the province's Office of Health Promotion has caused a furor. It, using suggestions and advice taken from the very kids it would be reaching, was created to inform, enlighten, demystify and explain various parts of sexuality in an easy to read and straightforward way. The kind of way most young teens would appreciate reading and learning from.

George Kehoe, chairman of the Strait Regional School Board, gave us the *quote of the year* and I think the perfect example of why we really need to offer this type of information to our youth, "If I had all that information when I was 14 years old, my life would've been frigged."

Well, while I am glad the chairman's life has not been "frigged" by information about his own body and sexuality in general, I am concerned about my children and their peers getting "frigged" in relation to STD's, HIV, pregnancy and all the pitfalls, misinformation and a lack of knowledge about sexuality can lead to. If girls had all that information when *they* were 14 years old (up to 19) perhaps they wouldn't have the highest rate of reported chlamydia and gonorrhea infections in Canada. (statistic of Health Canada)

Apparently the school board thinks what teens don't know about sex won't hurt them. Health Canada says, "There are a number of myths about teen pregnancy that can interfere with the development of effective public policy. For example, there is an erroneous belief that sex education will promote sexual activity among teens. Another erroneous myth is that parents do not support sex education in school." (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dca-dea/publications/reduce_teen_pregnancy_section_1_e.html)

Also let us not forget that teenage pregnancy also has economic consequences. Childbearing may curtail education and thereby reduce a young woman's employment

prospects in a job market that requires high levels of training. Most teenage mothers are single. Many are on Social Assistance. The government will not allow these people to stay on social assistance if they attend university. No mother and child(s) can survive solely on student loans.

Sex education is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. It is also about developing young people's skills so that they make **informed choices** about their behavior, and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices. Sex Education is a means by which they are helped to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Who wouldn't want that for their child?

Health Canada's 1994/95 National Population Health Survey with a sample of nearly 2000 youth, found that:
* 44% of males and 43% of females reported being sexually active between ages 15 and 19.

*Thirteen percent of teen females and 21 % of teen males reported sex with at least two different partners in the previous year.

*Among sexually active teens aged 15 - 19, 51 % of females reported having sex without a condom, compared with 29% of males.

*In a school-based survey conducted in Nova Scotia, approximately 61 % of Grade Twelve students (ages 17 to 18 years) reported having sexual intercourse in the year prior to the survey.

*Of those who were sexually active, only 32% always used condoms, and 40% indicated that they had had two or more partners in the past year.

*In 1996, girls aged 14-19 years had the highest rate of reported chlamydia and gonorrhea infections in Canada, indicating a breakdown of safe sex practices.

EI Program robs workers, especially women

Times have changed. Work has changed. The EI Program needs to change too.

OTTAWA – Women who work to support their families and pay for unemployment insurance protection get robbed by the federal government. A new report released today shows that the EI Program, which was set up to administer unemployment insurance in 1996, pays insurance to just one third of working women who lose their jobs.

The report "Falling Unemployment Insurance Protection for Canada's Unemployed" was prepared by the Canadian Labour Congress. It examines Canadians' access to unemployment insurance based on gender, age, region and federal riding and estimates the financial impact of declining coverage. The report's key findings were released at a joint news conference today by the Canadian Labour Congress and the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the FTQ – which together represent a majority of the country's unions and their members. "Times have changed. Work has changed. The EI Program needs to change too in order to be there when today's working men and women need it to get them through to that next job," says Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti. In 2001, just 33% of unemployed women received insurance benefits, compared to a 44% rate of coverage for men. It's a gender gap that's getting wider every year, due in part to the rapid slide in the number of women able to access their insurance. In 1996, the year the EI Program took over the administration of unemployment insurance, the rate of coverage for women was 39%, compared to 45% for men. The CLC's research found that insurance coverage for unemployed Canadians has been cut in half since the early 1990s, when

Ottawa began changing the rules and the hours of work required to qualify for benefits. Over the same period, the workforce underwent a change as more women sought jobs in sectors which rely heavily on part-time or seasonal work, such as the tourism and hospitality industry. The largest gender gap and the largest number of women affected are in the 25 to 44 age group who are more likely to have young children. The biggest losers since 1996 have been women over age 45. Before the EI Program took over, there was virtually no difference in coverage. Today only 45% of these women are covered, compared to 58% of men the same age.

The FTQ's general secretary René Roy says Ottawa needs to be reminded of its responsibility to administer unemployment insurance on behalf of all Canadians. "Right now, it looks as if the government has been operating this insurance program in its own interest rather than in the interest of the working people who pay for it. It is unacceptable to us and to the millions of workers we represent, to have rules that prevent the majority of people who pay for coverage from accessing their insurance. It is particularly offensive when these rules victimize women," said Roy, who also noticed that on a regional basis, Quebec has lost 3.5 billion dollars every year since 1996 with the current EI regimen. Georgetti says the report proves labour's longtime grievance that the EI Program is out of step with the needs of a modern workforce which includes an increasing number of women and relies on a steady supply of skilled workers. "The EI Program isn't working when, just last year, only 38% of people who found themselves unemployed had access to unemployment insurance. Working people pay for coverage off of

every pay cheque and they expect this program to be there when they need it. That isn't the case right now, especially for women who work to support their families," says Georgetti. Barb Byers, an Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress, says these new findings prove once and for all that the EI Program needs to change.

"Women deserve nothing less than equal access to unemployment insurance. The rules must change to accommodate the kind of work that's out there right now and to recognize that the realities of life for many working mothers make it damn hard to qualify for benefits.

Let's make the EI Program work for everyone," she says. To drive the need for change home, all three labour leaders say MPs can expect a visit from their local Labour Council in the coming months and should be prepared to publicly endorse labour's proposals for modernizing the EI Program. Those proposals include a basic 360 hours to qualify, a longer benefit period and benefits up to 18 months for workers over 45, a weekly benefit no lower than two-thirds of the best twelve weeks of earnings, and regular EI benefits for all hours of work lost while training.

"Falling Unemployment Insurance Protection for Canada's Unemployed" is available from the Canadian Labour Congress and on line at www.unemployed.ca.

The FTQ represents over half a million unionized workers and is Quebec's largest labour federation. The Canadian Labour Congress, the national voice of the labour movement, represents 2.5 million Canadian workers. The CLC brings together Canada's national and international unions along with the provincial and territorial federations of labour and 137 district labour councils.

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