

SPOKESWOMAN



From the Editors

Wow! Another IWD...what's to celebrate? We hate to be a killjoy but are you getting tired of the baby steps?

Yes, it's a great bit of news that MUN has agreed to Women's Studies as a major. Metrobus takes down the right to life ads... great! Joanne MacDonald's Order of Canada is not to be diminished. But Marie White or Shan-

nie Duff for the next city mayor? There's a better chance of Andy Wells leading the Geneva Peace Talks than that happening in this town!

Why can't we get it together and support each other? Why can't we place women in well-deserved positions of power? Let's take this place and put it in the hands of sensible women who will

preserve it for our grandchildren, who will not allow corporations to have the last word or the last piece of green space!

Let's fight to protect our community and our culture by electing a conscience! Women rock and it is time for women to rule!

*Glenda Cabot
Sheila Keats*

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Cover Story

Politics Across the Generations: Lori Anne Martino

I take a lot from my grandmother – my ecological consciousness, my political belief in the need for people who want to change their social reality to act, and my belief in the distinct nature of my reality as a woman. Having lost two brothers to WWII, grandmother believed that women not only had a right but a responsibility to make the personal political, and actually speak for men when they found themselves unable to speak for

themselves. Like my grandmother, I feel that if a person believes strongly in a cause, or simply wants to be a watchdog for her family's future, it is her responsibility to get involved. I wonder what she would think about my experiences in the political arena over the last number of years.

Like many young rural Newfoundlanders, I decided to leave the province and seek an education on the mainland.

With geographical distance and exposure to new cultures, I was able to recognize the character strengths and freedoms my experiences growing up in Newfoundland afforded me. I wanted to give my own children the same benefit. In making the permanent return to the province with my young child (now two young children) and husband, I made a decision not to let my education in political science and international relations fall to

the wayside. I have deeply held convictions over the collapse of the North Atlantic cod fishery and the failure of conventional approaches to provide sustainable economic development and democratic empowerment.

It seemed a natural fit to decide to become the first female president of the federal division of the Green Party in Newfoundland and Labrador, running seven campaigns out of my family home in the 2004 federal election. The historical success of this campaign attracted the attention of the leader of the provincial Liberal party, Gerry Reid, who was eager to listen to my ideas and experience with a view to revitalizing the Liberal party and empower me as a candidate in 2007.

I have run twice in this province. I was often asked, "How do you run as a candidate when you are a mother of small children?" I believe the question itself emerges from assumptions about gender and the artificial division between 'public' and 'private' spheres of knowledge and experience that are deeply interwoven through the fabric of our everyday lives.

There are certainly barriers that prevent women from being involved, but the perception of these barriers are often more problematic than the barrier itself. I have been told by men, "I will vote for you because you have a nice ass," or "You're the one they nominated because you are good looking." That made me feel objectified. I have heard tales of women from other parties claiming I am of x

belief because I belong to x party and that makes me a "sell-out," rather than respecting my individuality and ability to possibly make change within a party.

What would my grandmother think of my involvement in politics? I expect she would be surprised at how pervasive sexism and stereotypes are in 2007. I have been told by the Department of Eastern Health and Community Services that running as a political candidate does not meet the criteria for receiving a daycare subsidy. I am sure she would have hoped that there would be more support out there, financial and otherwise, for a young mother who wants to protect what she is most invested in – the home and future of her children – when she tackles the most important avenue for change – politics.

Remembering Patsy Fisher

By Glenda Cabot

The Women's Centre lost a great friend on December 26, 2007 when Patsy Fisher passed peacefully away at the Health Sciences Centre. Patsy started visiting the centre on Military Road four years ago to socialize with other women in the community and was inspired to become a volunteer with the drop in program.

She was a proud member of our POPCORN group, a group of women who met under the

guidance of Jennifer Mercer, a Social Work Student, to find ways to combat poverty, especially in the downtown area. Patsy became a member of the St. John's Status of Women Council, where she served for one year and then joined the board of the Women's Centre, where she remained for the last three years.

Patsy will best be remembered for her commitment to the women who drop by the centre in need of support. 'Patsy's Pantry' was a source of pride

and she was committed to its maintenance. Her compassion and wisdom and humour were qualities that warmed the volunteers, staff, as well as the women who visited. Those of us who worked alongside marveled at her commitment to the work and to her motivation for growth in spite of her failing health.

Patsy was a loving mother to her son John, and a devoted caregiver to her cat Pepe. She is dearly missed.

Happy Belated New Year and Happy Int'l Women's Day

By Charmaine Davidge

These past few months have been a hectic and eventful time at the Women's Centre – bringing us many highlights and many sad moments.

At our Annual General Meeting in November we welcomed new board and committee members. On behalf of SJSWC and the WC, I would like to thank those women who had served with us during the past year but were unable to continue as board or committee members. I would also like to welcome our incoming board and committee members!

December was a time of highs and lows. We celebrated the success of our annual Christmas Program, this year having helped many families in the St.

John's Region. I would like to take this time to thank all those who were involved, with a special thank you to Franca Smith, the Program Coordinator. December was also a time of sadness, as we said good bye to Patsy Fisher, our long time volunteer, Women's Centre board member and friend, who passed away after a lengthy illness.

In January we welcomed two participants from the Katimavik program, Holly Harb and Valerie Poirier. Both young women will be volunteering with us until March 31. We are also working with Study Nurse, Kari Sparkes who is offering confidential advice, support and anonymous testing for HIV, Hepatitis A B and C. We are also pleased to be working with Keri Chambers

from Community Connections and Jennifer Mercer and Maureen Kearley from Mental Health and Addictions, to expand the services which we offer through our Drop-in Program.

In February, we recruited and trained new volunteers to work on our Women's Centre team!

On behalf of the St. John's Status of Women Council and the Women's Centre I would like to thank everyone who assisted with our various fundraising endeavours and to all the wonderful people who continue to support us as volunteers or employees. With your dedication we will continue to be the incredible success that we are!

Daycare Costs Increase: A Rant

By Sheila Keats

Have any of you daycare users had your fees hiked lately? Well, I have! My son attends a childcare agency for 40% of the week and in the past eighteen months we have been saddled with two rate increases. In total, the increase amounts to \$19 per week or \$76 each month. Note that I have not researched any other local centres to compare, but the increases got me thinking... Is it a coincidence that this has

happened since the bestowment of Stephen Harper's infamous \$100 per month bonus to offset childcare? How can parents keep up? I have only one child that goes part time; what about those families that have more children and those that attend fulltime? A \$100 windfall does not take long to be eaten up, especially for parents on a tight budget.

I am all for daycare workers getting a living wage for the important work they do. But is

this where the extra money is going? Or is it to offset rent, buy more toys or add activities?

It just seems that the \$100 per month does not look like such a great deal anymore.

We would like you to respond to this issue! Our address is on the back page.

Do You See Her?

By Angela Crockwell

The Community Youth Network, St. John's (CYN) has been working with marginalized youth for the past six years. Throughout our experience we have had the pleasure and heartbreak to work with countless young women who live with violence, work in the sex trade, suffer trauma, lack opportunities, and would laugh at the notion of equity or equality.

So what's happening at a street level for young women in St. John's? Well, our Street Reach program operates two evenings a week and we meet young women who are working the sex trade on our downtown streets. They are in all stages of their lives—some are single, some have children and some are grandmothers. They are prostitut-

ing to feed their kids, pay for a drug habit, find a sense of control, or because they have no control and are being exploited by a pimp. Nearly 30% of the women supported through our Street Reach Program are involved in the sex trade.

Through our conversations with young women, we have begun to understand their complex worlds. Here's what we have discovered: violence is normal; being valued as a sexual object is normal; being treated liked a commodity is normal; hating other women because they are competition is normal; trading sex for a place to sleep, drugs or money is normal; using drugs to escape pain is normal; having your family, peers, and society tell you that you're a slut and a whore is normal; not ever feeling truly safe and



respected is normal.

Within all the crisis, violence, and injustice, CYN has also found these young women to be survivors. They are incredibly strong, beautiful, determined and powerful, and we feel honored to work with them everyday.

Angela Crockwell is the Executive Director of the Community Youth Network

PACSW UPDATE!!

By Danielle Finney

Over the past few months, the Advisory Council has worked hard on a number of issues. We brought national media attention to the case of Dr. James Hanley. That's the psychiatrist who had sex with a patient while practicing in our province and was allowed to keep practicing in New Brunswick, even though the medical authority in that province knew about the allega-

tions Hanley faced here.

We're also keeping a close eye on the Commission of Inquiry on Hormone Receptor Testing. Once the inquiry gets under way, we will make a formal submission regarding Eastern Health's unacceptable treatment of female patients.

The Advisory Council is also looking into the new Family Justice Services approach to family law issues. Since last

spring, families have been diverted from courts to an alternative dispute resolution program. There are positive aspects to this approach but also many troubling features which need attention.

We will continue to keep a watchful eye on these issues and step into the ring when necessary. We look forward to working with all of you in the future.

National Focus - Child Care: Let's Get It Right

By ChildCare Coalition of NL

It is Canada's longest unfulfilled political promise. For more than two decades, Canadian children and their parents have waited for a national child care and early learning program. The first promise was made in 1984 by the Mulroney Conservatives. The Liberals promised a program in 1993, 1997 and again in the 2004 federal election. We thought we had it when then social development minister Ken Dryden told us the "debate over a national child care program is finally over." Then, as with other women's and social programs, those bilateral child care agreements were cancelled unilaterally by the newly elected Harper Conservative government.

In contrast, our provincial government has demonstrated a commitment to the child care sector in Newfoundland and Labrador. Funding announcements at the provincial level are promising first steps in shoring up the fragile "system" in our province. Wage enhancements for the primarily female workforce, many of whom are trained, professional staff with a post-secondary diploma or higher, and bursaries for Early Childhood Education students begin to address the recruitment and retention issues faced in the sector. Increased funding for inclusion of children with

special needs and for the development of child care spaces in under-serviced areas of the province are important in supporting families.

The real answer, however, lies in the development of a national, publicly-funded child care system.

First and foremost, public funds must be used to deliver high-quality child care and in order to guarantee that quality, there must be accountability. We must ensure new public funds go directly into services that maintain the "QUAD" principles on which the now-defunct bilateral child care agreements were founded – a Quality, Universal, Accessible and Developmental system of child care. The patchwork child care community in our province developed from individual, predominantly female, entrepreneurs who saw the need for care for their own children. A conversion plan must be developed to move to a true, public, accountable system of child care services. Our current patchwork leaves us vulnerable to the threat of "big-box" child care – mega corporations that reduce quality and access for families and children.

Approximately 49,000 mothers with children aged from birth to 12 years of age work in this province. Some 68% of their children are under the

age of six, yet there are only about 4,400 regulated centre and family-based child care spaces. Most of these spaces are in St. John's and other urban centres. For parents living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, regulated child care is virtually non-existent. However, we cannot expand child care spaces without first addressing the workforce shortages in the sector. The child care workforce is the key to quality programming. Recruitment and retention is as important in this field as any other and is indeed the cornerstone of recruitment and retention issues in other sectors.

We must build a national program – a program in which all Canadians can be proud, a program that has children, parents and early childhood educators at its heart. This makes for good child care, but it also makes for a stronger civil society in which children and their development are a priority, rather than an afterthought. As advocates and parents, we know we have a long way to go.

If you're interested in joining the Child Care Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador campaign for quality child care that is accessible to all, you can contact us by sending an e-mail to:

coalitionchildcare@gmail.com.

Metrobus Pulls Misleading Ads

*By Brenda Kitchen
Executive Director
NL and Lab Sexual Health
Centre*

Earlier this year, you might have noticed a disturbing ad on St. John's Metrobuses. The ads, which are part of a nationwide, pro-life campaign coordinated by Life Canada, depict a pregnant woman. At the top are the words, "Nine months: the length of time abortion is allowed in Canada. No medical reason needed." At the bottom is the question, "Abortion, have we gone too far?"

The ads ran in dozens of cities across Canada. Fredericton and Kelowna are the only cities in the country that have refused to run the ads. However, it wasn't long before St. John's joined the list of cities refusing to run the advertisements. Once again, The Right To Life Association has misrepresented the facts. The group has no research to back up the claim that women are choosing to have abortions in their ninth month of pregnancy.

"Nine months: The length of time abortion is allowed in Canada. No medical reason needed." This statement is simply untrue. Each province has its own set of rules for abortion. In Newfoundland and Labrador a woman can only choose to have an abortion if

she is 8 to 15 weeks pregnant. If a woman entered the Morgentaler clinic or the Health Science Centre at 20 weeks plus 1 day she would not be permitted to have an abortion.

The laws vary in other provinces. You can get an abortion in some provinces as early as 6 weeks and as late as 22 weeks. There is no province in Canada that allows a woman to choose to have an abortion past 22 weeks. Further, while the restrictions vary, there is no Morgentaler Clinic in Canada that will allow a woman to have an abortion past 20 weeks.

This is just another attempt by the Right To Life Association to misrepresent the facts in order to cause confusion and fear in our community. This is not unusual for the Right To Life Association. For example, they continue to claim that abortion and breast cancer are related. When in actual fact, scientific research does not support this link. Here is some of the evidence:

In February 2003, the US National Cancer Institute (NCI) brought together more than 100 of the world's leading experts who study pregnancy and breast cancer risk. They concluded that induced abortion is not associated with an in-

crease in breast cancer risk.

A Harvard study released in April 2007 supported the findings of the National Cancer Institute's gathering of experts. Based on the 2003 NCI findings, the Canadian Cancer Society has stated: "At the present time, the body of scientific evidence does not support an association between abortion and increased breast cancer risk."

A 30-year Swedish study of 49,000 women indicated no link between abortion and breast cancer.

A study from Denmark published in 1997 indicates no increased risk for women who had abortions when they analyzed medical histories of more than 1.5 million women.

Research published in the January 2000 issue of Epidemiology indicates that women who have had an induced abortion are at no more risk for breast cancer than their counterparts who did not have an abortion.

The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation has spoken out against an advertising campaign that links abortion to breast cancer, saying the campaign sends the wrong message to women.

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The 2007 Christmas Program



By Franca Smith

On November 1, 2007 the St. John's Women's Centre launched its 5th annual Christmas Program. For those of you who are unaware of our program, we match up single moms and their children with community donors to provide Christmas gifts so that everyone can have a wonderful holiday.

As this year's coordinator, I felt very lucky to have the amazing support that our program received. We were able to help 117 families wake up on Christmas morning and have something special under

their tree! There were many businesses, offices, community groups, individuals and families who were so generous this year with both their time and money. We were also able to provide gift bags for over 30 women who regularly avail of our services at the centre.

Many thanks to everyone with their amazing generosity! I'd also like to mention all of our Christmas "elves", our volunteers and Women's Centre staff, who are so integral to the success of the program. There was so much to do in such a short time and everyone chipped in with the phone

calls, emails, and gift sorting and delivering.

Special mention must be given to Will and everyone at Coast 101.1 fm, for all their hard work promoting the program. Penney Mazda was also onboard again with their corporate sponsorship! The Women's Centre also worked with Iris Kirby house to host *A Woman's Guide to Surviving the Holidays*, at the centre. The focus of the event was to remember that Christmas is also a time when many experience grief and hopefully the event helped some women find comfort.

Cheers:

A million CHEERS to Joanne MacDonald on receiving the Order of Canada! Her contribution to athletics and community, and her commitment to equality for persons with disabilities won her the gold!

A CHEER goes out to Metrobus for removing those anti-choice ads from their vehicles.

CHEERS to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for providing strong leadership and forging the way for other women and people of colour in American politics

Jeers:

To Hockey NL...JEER...JEER...JEER! Keeping our young women on the sidelines in the cheerleader section (it's 2008, guys!) when they want to play in the Confederation Cup is not playing fair.

JEERS to Health Canada for banning gay men from being potential organ donors. This is blatant discrimination as it focuses on SEXUAL ORIENTATION rather than RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIORS.

And our Jeers section would not be complete without a Harper blunder... A resounding JEER to Stephen Harper for ensuring sexist traditions are alive and well in NL. We remain the ONLY province to have NEVER had a female lieutenant-governor.

Welcoming Charmaine Davidge as Executive Director

By Franca Smith

As we celebrate International Women's Day this year, we are also celebrating 2008 as a year of changes and growth at the Women's Centre and St. John's Status of Women Council. Guiding that change is our new Executive Director Charmaine Davidge, whom we are happy to introduce to our readers.

Charmaine joined us in July of 2007 and in a short time has become an invaluable asset to the centre. Charmaine's extensive community awareness and strong feminist viewpoint is a

key to the growth that we are looking forward to this year.

As we look to the future with the construction of our new home that will contain a supportive housing facility called Marguerite's Place, Charmaine is the ideal woman to guide us.

In the short time Charmaine has been with us, she has shown great warmth and compassion to the women who avail of the services of the centre, the volunteers who are so important to the Women's Centre, and the board and staff. As

the chairperson of the St. John's Status of Women's Council, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you all to Charmaine and welcome her in the position of Executive Director.



Spotlight on the Law

By Sheila Keats

Private Members Bill C-484, also known as the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, has had its first reading in the House of Commons. It has a way to go through the House but it is important that people are aware of what some of our politicians are trying to get passed into law.

Specifically, this is an Act to amend the Criminal Code so that injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while

committing an offence, will mean an added charge. If you murder a pregnant woman, you



will be charged with two murders. Although, they actually say this is not an attempt to challenge the abortion laws in

Canada, it is hard to believe that a pro-abortion law and the amendment could co-exist in one Criminal Code.

If you wish to contact your MP to comment on the bill, their contact information is located on the bottom of page nine.

SJSWC

Fondly remembers:

Barbara Hopkins

Brian Martin

(Warm thoughts to their loved ones)

Pancakes, Partners, and Plans!

Marguerite's Place Initiative: Winter 2008 Update

By Wendolyn Schlamp-Hickey

On February 5, many friends of SJSWC attended the annual Raising the Roof Pancake Breakfast, which proved to be a big hit this year, with overflowing tables of hungry supporters eager to participate in this event to raise funds for local efforts to address homelessness. We want to congratulate our community partners who received funding from this year's event: Community Youth Network, Salvation Army, St. John's Native Friendship Centre, and AIDS Committee of Newfoundland & Labrador.

Opening the Doors, our final phase in the development of Marguerite's Place, is in full swing. Last fall our Management Committee welcomed

new members who bring with them a wealth of community experience. Thanks to our outgoing committee members for all their hard work and continuing support. In December we completed work on our Business Plan which is now being shared with potential funders. Thanks to Tamara Reynish for the excellent job she did in producing this document for us.

We have several partners who have committed capital funding, and have just surpassed the \$1 million mark on our capital fundraising efforts! (This figure includes conditional approvals, contingent upon meeting additional requirements). Most recently the Rotary Club of St. John's Northwest shared the news with us that they will make a

capital contribution to Marguerite's Place following their annual spring auction.

To learn more about the initiative and view the full record of our partners to date, visit us at: www.margueritesplace.ca.

Contact Wendolyn @ 754-8500 for more information.



Members of Parliament Contact Info

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Katimavik At The Women's Centre

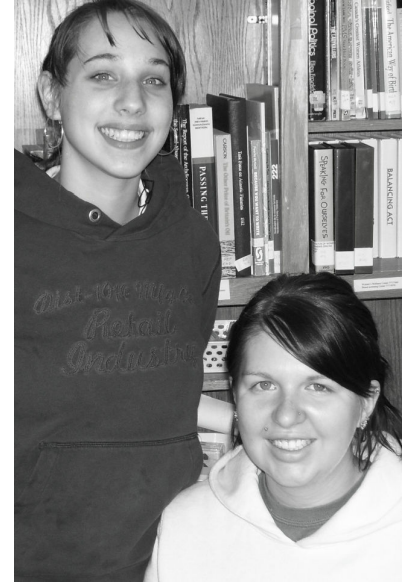
By Holly Harb/Val Poirier

Katimavik is Canada's leading national youth volunteer-service program. During the program, the students involved volunteer for the community, as well as experience group living, billeting within the community, and try to experience as much of the culture as possible. The youth that are currently in St. John's are volunteering with many different local organizations, such as the St. John's Women's Centre, For the Love of Learning, and the Lotus Centre. The students have also been experiencing the culture with adventures to the Rooms museum, Signal Hill, and they really enjoy Hava Java.

A very important aspect of this program is language. Canada is a bilingual country and Katimavik reflects this. Part of the program is to reside with people who speak the opposite language as you, whether it is English or French, and to try to learn the other language. Living with people who speak another language adds to the excitement of participating in Katimavik.

Here at the Women's Centre, there are two volunteers who are offering their time to help out around the office. They are helping with the drop-in services, including cooking and the clothing boutique, as well as planning special events during drop-in hours, such as the Birthday Club and Valentine's Day festivities. The girls will be here until the end of March and are looking forward to their time here. All of their efforts are much appreciated by both staff and volunteers.

Katimavik est un programme de service volontaire pour jeune de 17 à 21 ans, qui ce situ partout au Canada. Ces étudiants parcourent, en groupe de dix à douze personnes, trois villes de trois différentes provinces (2 anglophones et 1 francophone) durant une période de neuf mois afin de s'impliquer dans des organismes tel qu'à St. John's le *Women's centre, for the love of learning, friendship centre...* Ce projet donne surtout la chance à ses adolescents de voyager, d'acquérir du *leadership*, une expérience de vie de groupe, et plusieurs autres.



Un des points les plus importants qu'apporte katimavik est bien évidemment le langage. Comme c'est un pays bilingue, les groupes katimavik sont aussi constitués de francophone et d'anglophone. Cela consiste un véritable défi puisque la communication prime au sein d'un groupe.

Les participants ont un horaire bien chargé, les soirs et les fins de semaine sont consacrés aux activités physiques, culturelles et autres. Pour leur permettre de mieux comprendre les différents modes de vie, à chaque session, les jeunes adultes sont hébergés de 9 à

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Making decisions about our health is not a pro-choice or pro-life issue. All of us need to be fully aware and well educated about important health issues. Women need facts, not

lies.

Here at the province's Sexual Health Centre, we pride ourselves on giving our clients the most accurate information possible, allowing them to make informed decisions about their

sexual health.

The Right To Life Association must be accountable for the false information that they spread and yes, they have definitely gone too far.

Coalition on Richer Diversity (CORD)

Winter Event

By Sheri Woolfrey

CORD is a fairly new organization. It defines itself as an umbrella organization promoting diversity and immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador. Their primary goal is to promote networking opportunities by reaching out to organizations, groups of immigrants and those who provide social services.

The “Diversity Winter Event” was a one-day workshop, held at The Lantern, repeated over two days: January 18th or 19th. I chose the Friday workshop, which attracted about thirty participants. Those attending were from varied backgrounds with a variety of reasons for attending. Attendees represented organizations working with immigrants, cultural groups, the volunteer community and others simply inter-

ested in the topic with no particular ties.

The day was pleasant and well planned with a variety of activities ranging from the screening of award winning films on issues of cultural diversity, information about the formation and development of CORD, opportunities for participants to interact and network and consensus building designed to identify how to make the province a more welcoming community to immigrants. Previously identified strategies were discussed as well as new ones identified through the World Café process. This exercise ended with participants identifying those strategies, which we felt could be the most influential and helpful if implemented.

Opportunities exist for anyone to become involved with

CORD through Solution Groups. They are designed for community members to promote a variety of topics ranging from education, to community, to health and others as they relate to immigration.

Each year, over 500 immigrants come to Newfoundland and Labrador, bringing a wide range of skills and abilities to our province. Unfortunately, many or most move on to other provinces, which are better prepared to support them culturally. Anything which would make this a more welcoming community is certainly in everyone’s best interest.

More specific information about CORD can be found on their website www.cancord.org.

**The Women’s Centre
always welcomes donations.**

Currently, some of our needs include:

**Personal Care Items
CD player
Socks (ladies and children’s)
Underwear
Plus Size Clothing**

Quotable Quote

Barbara Strickland:

“What I am proud of, what seems so simply clear, is that feminism is a way to fight for justice, always in short supply”

December 6th Vigil– A Program of Remembrance

By Mary O’Keeffe

The December 6th Vigil, in memory of the 14 women murdered at the Ecole Polytechnique in 1989, was held in the Engineering Building at MUN. Selections from Bach’s Cello Suite no. 5, performed by Nathan Cook, set a dignified tone for a candlelight procession with representatives from student and community groups.

Kate Bride, Department of Women’s Studies, shared her memories of the tragic event. She stressed the importance of keeping memories of the 14 murdered women in our consciousness.

Guest speaker Connie Snow, National Parole Board, spoke most compellingly about the Montreal Massacre. In her soft-spoken but deliberate

manner, Ms. Snow poignantly reflected on what the murdered women’s lives could and should have been.

The Montreal Massacre was not an isolated, random act, but a cold and calculated way of putting women “in their place.” Appalling acts of violence and control continue to this day with many women in Newfoundland and across Canada suffering “regular” violence often culminating in death. Ms. Snow warned against becoming desensitized to violence, explaining that “regular” violence usually goes unnoticed.

After Carolyn Rumsey’s reading of the names of the victims (unfortunately omitting Annie Turcotte), the MUN Chamber Choir, directed by Douglas Dunsmore, performed “Amazing Grace.” This was followed by dedications to the

14 women made by many representatives of campus, community and government agencies.



There followed another captivating performance by the MUN Chamber Choir, before Kate Bride’s closing comments in which she thanked Kim Gill for her part in organizing this year’s moving and thought-provoking Vigil.

A Women’s Centre Benefit!!

When: Friday, April 4th

Where: Bianca’s Water Street

Time: 8:30 PM

Cost: \$5.00

Musicians will include Jill Porter, Suzanne Power, Maggie Meyer, Sherry Ryan and others to be announced.

The fun will include door prizes, a raffle and more.

Come in for the night or just drop in to say hello.

All proceeds to support the Women’s Centre.

Hepatitis and HIV Risk Study

By Kari Sparkes

Hello. I am writing to let you know about a new service I am pleased to be offering at the Women's Centre. Since the end of January, I have been on site at the Women's Centre on Tuesday afternoons to offer health education and free anonymous testing for HIV and Hepatitis. The testing and education is made possible by a study looking at risk behaviors and HIV and Hepatitis.

HIV and Hepatitis B and C are spread through the blood and body fluids of someone with the infection. Unprotected sex and needle drug use are the most common ways of getting infected. There has been a steady increase in the number of diagnosed Hepatitis C cases. Using needle drugs and smoking cocaine puts people at particular risk for Hepatitis C.

Women who use street drugs often fear being judged. This can make it hard to access a more traditional service for testing. Transportation can be an issue. So can family commitments. We are trying to make this service as easy to access as possible by offering it during drop in hours on site on the 2nd floor of the Women's Centre.

Women are welcome to drop in and see me between the hours of 1pm and 4 pm Tuesdays for health education and the option of an anonymous blood test. I am also at the Sexual Health Centre Tuesday evenings (women and men welcome). No appointments are needed. No names or MCP numbers are taken. Women who do participate are expected to fill out an anonymous questionnaire.

If you want more information please contact me:

Kari Sparkes RN BN
Outreach study nurse.
777-7120 or 1-800-563-6611



Upcoming Events at the Women's Centre

Sewing Club

Offered in partnership with community connections.

Date to be announced

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

Presentation at the St. John's Women's Centre
Presented by: Catherine Dwyer, N&L Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre.

March 19, 2:30pm

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Course

Offered in partnership with Community Connections.

Date to be announced.

All women are reminded that the Women's Centre is open from 12:30PM-4:00PM every Tuesday and Thursday for a casual drop-in. The clothing boutique is open at the same time at no cost but appointments are required. Phone 753-0220

PACSW: “Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods”

By Danielle Finney

Soon, some scary legislation will come into effect in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's called the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods act, also known as SCAN. But women's groups are afraid the law will do more to harm people than it will to keep our neighbourhoods safe.

This legislation will give the province the power to throw people out of their homes for doing things it says are harmful or unsafe for the community.

Once the legislation is passed, SCAN officials will investigate people and their activities, based on secret tips from neighbours. It will go something like this: a neighbour will make a confidential call to the SCAN office. SCAN investigators will look into the matter and begin surveillance. After conducting an investigation, if the SCAN officer thinks the activities in question are harmful or unsafe, the landlord will be instructed to “shut down the residence.”

During recent consultations, provincial government officials assured the public that shutting down a residence would be a last resort. But the

fact remains, this legislation makes it a possibility. If it comes to that, everyone living in the rental property would be thrown out—including people who have had nothing to do with the behaviour in question. That means women and children might suddenly find themselves homeless.

What activities count as harmful or unsafe? That's a good question. According to the Department of Justice, some of the “targetted activities” are illegal, while others are not. That means people can be evicted for doing things that aren't even against the law.

The scary thing about this legislation is that it bypasses two systems already designed to deal with criminal and/or tenant matters. Currently, if police know criminal behaviour is afoot, they can press charges under the criminal code. If a landlord has a delinquent tenant, she/he can turn to the Residential Tenancies Act for support. These systems also protect citizens and tenants from unfair treatment. They have safeguards to protect people from unfair treatment by police or landlords.

The SCAN legislation bypasses both those systems and their safeguards. For example, the criminal code uses the

standard of “beyond a reasonable doubt.” But SCAN investigators can simply go by a “balance of probability” that the property “is being used for unsafe activities.”

If your alarm bells are going off, you're not alone. Women's groups and community advocates have grave concerns about this legislation. Unfortunately, the provincial government did very little in the way of consultation before pushing this bill through the House of Assembly.

The act has not been proclaimed but government officials say that day is coming. Once in effect, we can only hope eviction notices under the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods act will be rare.



International Focus

Benazir Bhutto: A Guiding Light For Many

By "maryann" (Author's pen-name)
(originally from Bangladesh)

Born in 1953, educated in Harvard and Oxford: Twice Prime Minister of Pakistan, 1988 – 90 and 1993 – 96. She was the 1st democratically elected female PM in a Muslim country.

The world watched the tragic departure of a soul in December, 2007. The Pakistan's possible would be next head of the state, Ms. Benazir Bhutto. She was assassinated immediately after delivering the speech, the hope of light and guide for millions. She was the hope may be not of all but many especially Pakistani women.

This was the time when she was active and in action of unshackling many justified (someway), pseudo justified and unjustified chains for women.

The very assassination proved that even she herself was deeply engaged. Highly educated women, a historic family descendant, gathered much courage to face a diverse society of Pakistan that consists of a range of non-violence Sufi ideologists to blood – thrust thugs.

She was a daughter whose heart was crying for the murdered politician father. She carried the flag of her father's political ideology. She was a mother who decided to educate her children for the future. She was a wife all the time by her husband.

Her amazing courage made most of her fellow women astound not only in Pakistan but through out the world.

However, was she free???

Probably not.

Having education in Oxford and Harvard and being brought up partly in the west, still she had to give in to traditional, cultural and faith bondage. Even being a woman of that charisma couldn't defy.

Why??

There are two types of chains. The visible one – easy to target if one wants to get unchained.

However the invisible one is not only difficult to get rid of, sometimes women's minds create many. After creating and getting used to it, the person gets enchained for a long time, accept it as norm, correct

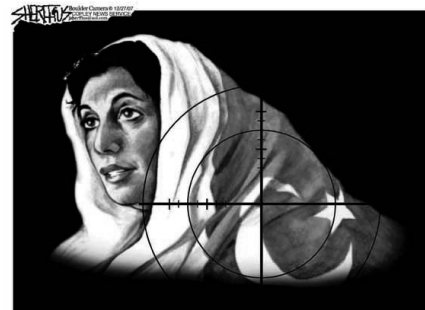
and that it is the only way. One forgets the feeling of being unchained. Deviation or rejection may bring disaster or doom for the present, future and after world. So silence is the way to keep security and peace.

Her death is a great loss for the women who love to be recognized as free human beings, vocal, participating in politics and building the future of the country where the generations will thrive. This is frustrating to see that her tragic death is a big success for many.

The unwritten posters are studded with invisible declarations: Demand for freedom require a high price to be paid many a times by blood.

Women's fight are not only for visible one but also against a number of invisible chains.

On the day of assassination, her ever free soul soared high up in the sky unshackling all chains in the name of politics, culture, faith, creed and gender.



International Women's Day

Source: www.un.org

Why dedicate a day exclusively to the celebration of the world's women?

The United Nations General Assembly, composed of delegates from every Member State, celebrates International Women's Day to recognize that peace and social progress require the active participation and equality of women, and to acknowledge the contribution of women to international peace and security.

For the women of the world, the Day is an occasion to review how far they have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development.

You might think that women's equality benefits mostly women, but every one-percentile growth in female secondary schooling results in a 0.3 percent growth in the economy. Yet girls are often kept from receiving education in

the poorest countries that would best benefit from the economic growth.

Until the men and women work together to secure the rights and full potential of women, lasting solutions to the world's most serious social, economic and political problems are unlikely to be found.

In recent decades, much progress has been made. On a worldwide level, women's access to education and proper health care has increased; their participation in the paid labor force has grown; and legislation that promises equal opportunities for women and respect for their human rights has been adopted in many countries. The world now has an ever-growing number of women participating in society as policy-makers.

However, nowhere in the world can women claim to have all the same rights and opportunities as

men.

The majority of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor are women.

On average, women receive between 30 and 40 per cent less pay than men earn for the same work.

And everywhere, women continue to be victims of violence, with rape and domestic violence listed as significant causes of disability and death among women of reproductive age worldwide.



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