



ALBERTA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

Volume 5 June 1993 Number 3

In anticipation of appointments to the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, all women are invited to submit their resumes to the Council. We strongly encourage women from all parts of the province, rural and urban, all religious and ethnic backgrounds, women of visible minorities and immigrants, women with disabilities, women working inside and outside the home in traditional and non-traditional occupations, women with various family and marital status, and from all economic situations to apply. Please send a resume outlining your qualifications and interests and a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues
9810 - 111 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1K1

For more information use the RITE line in your area and ask for 422-0668.

Women's Ways

Women have a different way of being, doing, and speaking. Often, when we try to talk about issues of concern to us, those differences are held up as signalling weakness or a lack of credibility. The focus is steered away from the issue. We must not continue to allow that to happen.

The value of women's voices cannot be underestimated, particularly when it comes to speaking about our experiences and the issues that concern us. Whether those issues are the ones traditionally thought of as women's issues, child care, the health and well-being of families, poverty, violence against women, elder care, de-institutionalization, the social safety net, divorce and custody, education, employment and pay equity, sexual harassment, and equality, or the discussions that traditionally leave women out like how to stimulate our economy, deficit reduction, changes to agriculture, business and industry, political reformation — all would benefit by including women. To deflect the public's attention from the importance of these issues by name-calling or by demeaning the woman speaking, does nothing to address the seriousness of the problem or to enhance

the quality of our lives.

So, the next time someone accuses you of whining or snivelling when you are trying to tell your story; the next time you read women's voices described as shrill, hysterical, strident, squeaky or soft; the next time you hear women called gossips, chatterers, gigglers, or weak and vulnerable because they have something to say — take a deep breath, consider the source, and don't let yourself be swayed from speaking your mind on any issue.

Throughout the past six years, the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues has been a place where all voices could be heard. The Council table has been a safe place for any woman to speak what was on their minds, or in their hearts, without fear of judgement. This has not always been easy, but by using an open, consensual process; recognizing that everyone has the right to a respectful hearing; taking individual responsibility to listen for understanding; and being committed to making room for other voices around the table, the women of the Advisory Council have succeeded in bringing women's voices to Government.

*It goes on one at a time.
It starts when you care
to act, it starts when you do
it again after they said no.
It starts when you say WE
and know who you mean, and
each day you mean one more.
(Marge Piercy, The Moon is
Always Female.)*



Graphic reprinted with permission from Ontario Women's Directorate "Words That Count Women In" brochure.

Snapshots From the Margin — Women with Disabilities in El Salvador

Written by Patricia Pardo-Demiantschuk, Council member from Calgary, where she is executive director of the Independent Living Resource Centre.

Like the phoenix rising from the ashes, El Salvador is a country in the midst of re-birth and re-construction. The years of war, violence and terrorism have taken their toll not only economically, in the loss of millions of dollars worth of real estate investments and business, but also in the decimation of its youth. The country is racked by the legacy of war. Of the seven million Salvadorian citizens, it is estimated that close to fifty thousand people, including the soldiers from both sides and civilian casualties, were rendered disabled. Many thousand more were left homeless and traumatized by the experience of extreme violence which was the civil strife in El Salvador.

Government and non-government rehabilitation resources, minimal at best but dedicated to the rehabilitation of the disabled community comprised of accident, illness, malnutrition and genetics, were left fragmented, underfunded and unable to meet the demand of the disabled veterans.

Issues and concerns of people with disabilities take a very low priority. No financial support (as in a disability pension) exist for those who are injured or become ill while employed. A small disability pension (\$35.00 per month) is available during the time of rehabilitation. Persons born with disabilities have received no government support whatsoever. Government and non-government service providing agencies work with limited funds and with outdated and limited technology and systems. The average level of education completed by persons with a physical disability is grade five. Blind and deaf children manage to complete, on the average, grade one, as overwhelmed teachers operating in already overtaxed conditions, find themselves completely unprepared or indeed unable to integrate sensory impaired children into the classroom. Special education resources are close to non-existent. Blind and deaf children who attend the few available centres of rehabilitation leave them after grade 3 to become lost in the overcrowded public school system. Deaf children suffer particular discrimination as sign language is totally unaccepted as an alternate form of communication. Deaf children are forced, with physical blows, to vocalize and to mimic spoken language with

little concern as to the level of conceptual understanding.

In the midst of this disability dynamic, women with disabilities in Central America face four levels of discrimination. First the discrimination of gender. Second, the barrier of poverty and illiteracy. Third, the discrimination of disability. Fourth, the discrimination of machismo.

Although more than half of the disabled community (not veterans of war) are women, few are represented in consumer and service providing organizations. Fewer still have any direct input to the development of options and services. Women born with disabilities are shunned, imprisoned in their homes, sexually and physically abused and generally left to live their lives at the discretion of the economic, emotional and physical resources of the family. Unwanted pregnancies as a result of rape occur often. Intentional abortions brought on by beatings and easily accessible sterilizations are common place. In law, deaf women can have their children removed from their care solely as a result of their disability. Women with developmental disabilities, any type of learning disability, epilepsy and cerebral palsy experience the most extreme forms of abusive discriminations.

Betty

Betty has epilepsy. Early, in her life, with the onset of her first seizure, she found herself imprisoned in her house. She was not allowed to leave except to attend school to the fifth grade. At the age of 16, her step-father raped her and left her pregnant. Her mother, not knowing who the father was, blamed her daughter for the pregnancy. In her anger, embarrassment and frustration, she pelted her daughter with blows so severe that they instigated the termination of the pregnancy. Betty's mother, wishing to control her daughter's "promiscuity," had her daughter sterilized shortly after the premature termination of her daughter's pregnancy. It is common practice (and easily accessible) to obtain sterilization for women with disabilities.

Betty is now twenty seven. She does not realize that she has been sterilized. She is engaged to be married and is under constant fear and anxiety that once married she will again become pregnant and so invite the blows of her mother. So she postpones the date of her marriage, living with her mother and working in a sheltered workshop which caters primarily to persons with cerebral palsy.

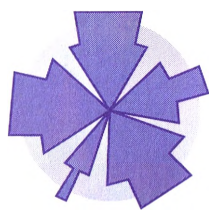
Miriam

Miriam was affected by the polio virus when she was quite young. At twenty seven years of age she had lived all her life in a small rural village, with her mother, just outside San Salvador. Her only life line to existence was the support, care and love given by her mother. Miriam's home was not accessible and so every time Miriam needed to leave her room, for example to use the outhouse facility, her mother would lift her out of her chair and carry her to the washroom. The village where Miriam and her mother lived was very poor, rural and also inaccessible. Miriam spent most of her days, sitting alone in the house, a prisoner of her disability. Her literacy level was quite low; about grade two.

At twenty seven, Miriam heard of a ceramic cooperative run by people with disabilities in San Salvador. When she finally came to San Salvador to work in the cooperative, the only place she found which was both economical and physically accessible was a residential institution for persons with cerebral palsy. It was not long before she was desperately looking for another place to live, for her life in the institution was totally controlled. She finally found reasonable work and a more or less accessible apartment. Shortly after her mother began harassing her, filling her with guilt for having abandoned her, blaming her for her lost opportunities and the loss of her husband until finally overwhelmed with guilt, Miriam left her job and apartment to go back to her village to care for her mother.

Although women who are disabled later in life face many of the same barriers as women who are born with a disability, some other issues arise. Almost always, women disabled later in life are abandoned by their husbands, usually with no financial support and left with the care of the children. A corresponding loss in social and economic status occurs. Few ever re-marry as women with disabilities are perceived as "un-feminine" and thus undesirable and unmarriageable.

As no financial assistance exists, most women are left to fend for themselves with whatever family support is available. Often the entire family moves into the woman's parents home where accommodation is often limited. Children leave school to find work to support the family. Few rehabilitation options exist and so without a husband and limited options for work, the woman disabled later in life is left destitute, stripped of whatever status and security her past life held.



Pulling Together

The goal of the Pulling Together section is to provide you with some suggestions for your "one outrageous thing" (to quote Gloria Steinem). It may be a matter of writing a letter to your MP or MLA; or learning more about an issue, so that you can discuss it with others in your community or organization — whatever the act, if we pull together and share our knowledge with each other, women everywhere gain power.



What's Cooking in Women's History

Amplly illustrated with archival photos and documents, *What's Cooking in Women's History, an Introductory Guide to the Preservation of Archival Materials About Women* offers practical advice on how to preserve and safely store personal and organizational records, research family history and genealogy, and donate material to public institutions. The 32-page manual, published by the Northern Alberta Women's Archival Association, also describes important sources of women's archival material and suggests ways in which archives might more effectively serve women's history.

Funding for the project was provided by the Edmonton Community Foundation and the Edmonton Association for Continuing Education and Recreation (EACER).

The Northern Alberta Women's Archival Association (NAWAA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of archival material documenting the lives and accomplishments of Alberta women. Its founding members include researchers, academics, writers, librarians, archivists, students and women interested in history who were concerned that important historical records relating to women were being neglected or lost. The group works in co-operation with existing archives in encouraging and assisting women to save and donate their personal and organizational records.

Where to get more information



Copies of the manual can be purchased (at \$6.95 a copy plus \$1.00 each for postage) by writing to NAWAA, c/o Women's Program and Resource Centre, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, 11019 – 90 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E1 (phone 492-8950). Members receive a complimentary copy. NAWAA welcomes the support of new members (\$25 for organizations, \$10 for individuals, and \$5 for students/low income).



A National Women's Monument

The Women's Monument Project is raising over \$300,000 to build a national monument in Vancouver, to honour all women who are victims of violence, especially those who have been murdered. It will educate this and future generations about violence against women.

The Women's Monument will be a living, changing monument, designed to include a way for visitors to interact. It will be accessible and become a part of a Vancouver park. Names of all contributors to the monument will be inscribed as an appreciation of their support for the project and of their commitment to ending violence against women.

How to get involved



Guidelines for a national competition to design the Women's Monument are now being worked out. This competition will be of particular interest to women in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, and the visual arts. Once the location for the monument is confirmed, the competition will be launched.

Donations to the Women's Monument Project are tax deductible. For more information contact them at:

The Women's Monument Project
Capilano College Women's Centre
2055 Purcell Way
North Vancouver, British Columbia
V7J 3H5
(604)986-1911 – local 2078



Upcoming Federal Election

The Prime Minister has indicated that she will call an election this fall, probably in October. There are many issues of concern to women that may become central to this election: universality of health care; anti-stalking and sexual predator legislation; child care; taxation; and the recognition of unpaid work in the home.

Two women's organizations have published material to help women make their voices heard during the election campaign:

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women is producing a 1993 version of the *Shocking Pink Paper*. As in 1984 and 1988, the pocket-sized pamphlet will contain information on election issues for women to consider when assessing their local candidates. It will also suggest questions that women can pose to candidates regarding the issues.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has also produced a *Voter's Guide for Women*.

In order to get a different perspective on Canada's social programs, the editor recommends reading, *"The Wealthy Banker's Wife,"* by Linda McQuaig (published by Penguin Books). The book, based on a series of articles that originally appeared in *The Toronto Star*, argues for keeping our social programs strong using the impressive examples of the western European nations.

Where to get them



Copies of the 1993 *Shocking Pink Paper* will be available free-of-charge, from our office by about mid-July. Phone (403)422-0668 to have one mailed to you.

The *NAC Voters' Guide*, is available from the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee office, 9930 – 106 Street Edmonton, or call (403) 421-0306. The cost is \$4.95 and proceeds will help support ASWAC projects.

"The Wealthy Banker's Wife," is available in most book stores.

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The Role of Advisory Councils

It seems like a long time has passed since twelve women from Ottawa and across Western Canada came together in Banff for the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Western Regional Meeting of Advisory Councils. Organized by the Alberta Advisory Council, the two day meeting in March covered a wide range of issues; but, in the end, it was the future role of Advisory Councils that most of the women wanted to talk about.

Every province in Canada has an Advisory Council on Women's Issues, with the exception of British Columbia. Their Government has created a Ministry of Women's Equality with 95 employees. Alberta was the last province to form a Council in 1986. The Canadian Advisory Council celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary this year and the other Councils represented at this meeting — Manitoba and the North West Territories — have been around for 10 years or more.

Glenda Simms, the president of the Canadian Advisory Council, has said that "the issues for women are intensifying." All of the women around the meeting table agreed that Councils everywhere are going through a time of soul-searching. They talked about the need to be relevant and to help Government in their efforts to be more consultative with communities.

Rita Arey, president of the North West Territories Advisory Council, which is considered strong and successful by women and government alike, gave this important advice: "You must trust in your council and your staff. If you don't, you are going to lose good people. You are the voice for women and you are their voice with government. . . We worry about what the women think about us. We have seen missed opportunities

because of fear. You can only be of use to Government if you tell them the truth."

At the end of a fruitful discussion, Rita Thompson of the Alberta Advisory Council, summarized for the group:

The role of Advisory Councils is to help Government govern in the interest of women by:

- hearing women's voices and facilitating them to be heard by government
- act as a conduit from women to government and government to women
- ensure that the content is relevant to women
- empower Council members to do what is best for and with their community
- share information through partnerships in education and research
- remember that the process of having women decide what is important to them is what empowers them
- **tell the truth**

In order to accomplish this, Advisory Councils need:

- a clear mandate and job description
- understanding by Government of our mandate
- tools to do the job:

1. a fair method of making appointments (a

formal process that is responsible to women and committed to women's equality);

2. a structure or mechanism to ensure continuity;
3. good representation of regions, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds; and
4. orientation process for new members with a good briefing on issues and structure.
5. accountability to our mandate and to our publics: women and government.

AACWI in Transition

This has been a period of great change — in the political arena, in the structure and process of the Council; and our relationship to the Government, the general public and the women of Alberta. In retrospect, for the past twelve months, the women of the Advisory Council have spent most of their time in three areas:

- trouble-shooting and crisis management;
- developing, postponing and finally, abandoning projects;
- providing Government with a mountain of information on the Council, members, staff, projects, structure, past recommendations and publications.

As it would appear that the Advisory Council is in the midst of a profound transformation, we thought that it was important to leave a record of the changes that have marked this period. The report that follows may help to understand the affect of change on the life of an organization and its people. As the Ethiopian activist, Baba Dioum said, "In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."

With the end of term for the chairperson, Elva Mertick, in June, 1992, the women on Council spent the summer in imminent anticipation of, and preparation for, the appointment of a new chairperson. Faced with several set-backs in the appointment process, Elaine McCoy, the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, requested that Ms Mertick continue on an "on call" basis. Ms Mertick communicated with the office every two or three weeks for an update on Council's activities and to give guidance or advice.

In September, the leadership campaign for the progressive conservatives was launched and the appointment of the person proposed for



Western Council Meeting March 27 – 28, 1993. l. to r.: Betty Nordrum, Manitoba; Rita Arey, NWT; Diane David, Alberta; Ardyth Cooper, BC; Thorine Goodall, CACSW; Rita Thompson, Alberta; Dorothy Hill, Manitoba; Lynn Brooks, NWT. Front row l. to r.: Laurie Blakeman, Alberta; Derryn Yeomans, Alberta; and Marguerite Alexander, CACSW.

chairperson denied. Ms McCoy took a leave of absence from her Ministerial duties to run for the leadership. The women on Council preferred to wait and deal directly with the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues rather than trying to get approval for items from another Minister who may not have been familiar with our programs and issues, which meant that research contracts, travel arrangements, and major purchases such as a portable display unit were put on hold.

On October 1, 1992, the chairs of Council's three sub-committees; Rita Thompson, Ann Tweddle, and Derryn Yeomans met with Ms Mertick to decide on a possible course of action. To allow the Council to continue with its work, this group proposed that, at the regular meeting scheduled for October 30-31, a vice chair be elected from within. For the rest of the month, staff took direction from the three sub-committee chairs and the women on Council attempted to carry on business as usual. However, no new action on any issues was taken.

At the Council meeting in October, two vice-chairs were elected: Ann Tweddle would serve from November 1 to January 30, and Rita Thompson from February 1 to April 30. The eleven women spent considerable time in the meeting discussing the future work of the Advisory Council and committed to continuing their work as much as possible. They decided to proceed with an update paper on the topic of employment equity; to produce a six-year review of the work of the Council; and to replace some obsolete computer equipment. Three budget scenarios were prepared in compliance with the Government's budget call. These were reviewed by the Economic Committee and approved by the Council as a whole.

In December, a new Cabinet was formed and the responsibility for the Advisory Council was transferred to a new minister and the new department of Community Development.

While under the auspices of Elaine McCoy, the Council received minimal administrative support from the department of Labour. Labour supplied the personnel, computer, and financial services required to link us with the Government systems. However, the day-to-day office functions; budget development, hiring of staff and tendering of research contracts; purchasing; communications and public relations were under the control of the Advisory Council.

Throughout December and January, there was much uncertainty on the Council as they sorted out new ministers, portfolios, and developed strategies for switching our administrative support from Labour to the new department of Community Development. Comprehensive notes on the Council's requirements were

written and forwarded in compliance with their requests. At this time, Council also learned of the Agencies, Boards and Commissions review and began to compile information in anticipation.

In January, the stress and pressure on the Council increased when the new Minister Responsible for Women's Issues was quoted in the media objecting to the Human Rights Commission and to the concept of pay equity. She was quoted as saying that she had consulted with the women on the Advisory Council about these issues. At the same time, requests for authorization to make various purchases and to hire a researcher to proceed with updating the Council's employment paper were being put off by Community Development — projects were in limbo.

The change from one department to another, required many adjustments on the part of Advisory Council staff. In addition to changes to simple procedures like mail processing, time reporting, etc., there were delays in transferring the signing authority of the executive director.

Council held their regular meeting in Lethbridge in conjunction with the Southern Alberta Women's Dinner which they organized for February 5, 1993. During the meeting, the women discussed their response to the Government's ABC Review questionnaire and also their reaction to the Minister's comments about the Council. When the meeting with the Minister was confirmed for March 1, 1993, staff and members worked on strategies for the meeting and prepared comprehensive briefing notes.

After the March 1st meeting, contact between the Minister's officer and the Advisory Council became increasingly difficult. Rita Thompson, the vice-chair, continued to spend almost full time developing strategies with staff and members on how to respond to the media, the Minister, other government officials, and to the women of Alberta. Staff completed the *Six Year Review* which was widely distributed.

In April, Rita Thompson spoke to the Premier about the rumours circulating about the Council. At his request, she sent a brief letter outlining the Council's concerns and suggestions for how the Government could quell the fears of the women on the Council and in the community. The Council made five requests:

1. That the one-year re-appointments be given immediately to the three members who are eligible, and that Government move to appoint a chairperson and fill other vacancies according to the criteria set by the Council.
2. That the Government commit to the continuation of the Advisory Council as an



Catharine Arthur,
Acting Chairperson
Alberta Advisory
Council on Women's
Issues
May 14, 1993 –
August 10, 1993

autonomous, reasonably-funded advisory body as provided for in their legislation.

3. That this commitment be stated publicly and as soon as possible.
4. That the women on the Advisory Council report to a Minister who is supportive, open to our process, and sensitive to the issues of concern to women.
5. That the Advisory Council be included in policy discussions on issues of concern to women.

By the first weekend in May at the Council retreat, it had become clear that the re-appointments would not be made and that on May 15, 1993, Council would be reduced to only five members.

In a letter to the Minister signed by all Council members, they requested that the autonomy and arms-length role of the Council be kept intact.

"To have us report through the bureaucracy negates the vision of an autonomous Advisory Council for which thousands of women in Alberta fought in the early 1980s. It is also a structure that we feel will, ultimately, be more costly and less efficient for Government to operate and administer . . .

. . . In the 1992/93 fiscal year, the Advisory Council had a budget of \$338,000.00 [editor's note: not the \$1 million that had been erroneously reported by several media]. For this year, and indeed every year that the Council has been existence, we have never exceeded our budget. The proposed bureaucratic model for the Council, will not, in our opinion, save taxpayers money. On the contrary, our structure has provided the taxpayers with exceptional value for their money . . ."

On May 14, 1993, the Government announced the appointment of Miss Catharine Arthur as acting chairperson of the Advisory Council for a period of three months (August 10, 1993). On May 18, Miss Arthur met with the five remaining council members.

Council Member Resigns

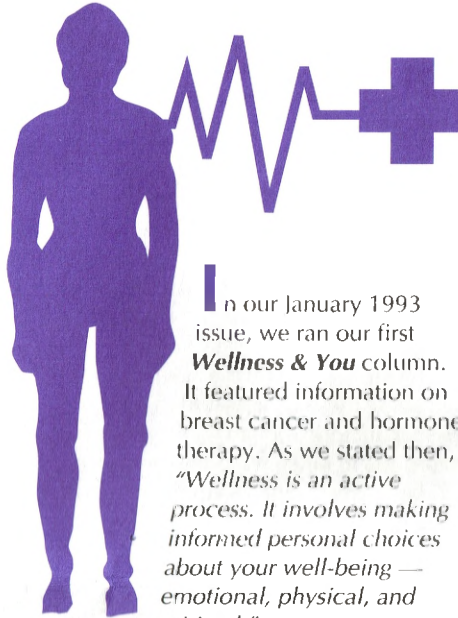
Patricia Pardo-Demiantschuk has resigned from the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. Pat is Executive Director of the Independent Living Resource Centre in Calgary and has served as a member of the Advisory Council since December 1991.

In a letter to the Acting Chairperson of the Council, Pat gave the following reasons for her resignation:

"On Friday, June 18, 1993, the minister responsible for our council, stated that "we might not be able to afford the administration of it, but that women's issues will continue to be an important part of our government." Frankly, the Council's potential termination demonstrates the anti-thesis. For the thousands of Alberta women who lobbied government for the establishment of a Council, a breach of trust has been created.

In conclusion, I find myself morally and ethically unable to serve on a government advisory council whose mandate, mission and work is so blatantly discounted and as such, I resign."

Council members and staff, while respecting Pat's decision and the reasons behind it, will miss her voice at the Council table. She had a unique ability to combine fresh insight and enthusiasm along with a tremendous compassion and understanding of the human condition. She was, and will continue to be, an effective voice for women and persons with disabilities.



In our January 1993 issue, we ran our first **Wellness & You** column. It featured information on breast cancer and hormone therapy. As we stated then, "Wellness is an active process. It involves making informed personal choices about your well-being — emotional, physical, and spiritual."

The intent of this column is to help you make informed decisions about your health care. We want to empower you to ask questions of your doctors to ensure that the treatment and advice you receive is right for you. To do so, the women on the Advisory Council feel that it is important to bring forward the views of women working in the medical and health professions, who might offer a different perspective on these issues. This column is not, however, an endorsement of any one form of treatment or viewpoint over another.

What is vitally important to the women on the Advisory Council is that you keep asking the questions until **you** understand what your doctor is trying to tell you. That is the only way you will be able to give truly informed consent throughout any course of treatment. After all, you are responsible for your health care and well-being.

Questions You May Want to Ask Your Doctor:

Pap Tests

- What is a pap test?
- How often should I have a pap test?
- At what age should my daughter start having pap tests?
- Do I need a gynecologic examination if I don't need a pap test?
- What does an abnormal pap test mean?
- Does a pap test prevent cancer?

Wellness And You

- What is the significance of the genital wart virus (or HPV)?

Menstrual/Period Problems

- What are the causes of heavy or irregular menstrual periods?
- What is known about PMS?
- Does stress affect my menstrual periods?
- What things can I do to help?
- What are the common and new medical treatments for menstrual problems?
- When is a hysterectomy necessary and what are other choices?
- When is it necessary to remove my ovaries and what are my choices?

Breast

- How often do I need a mammogram?
- Should I do a breast self-examination?

Menopause

- How do I know I'm going through menopause?
- What changes are normal/abnormal?
- Should I be taking estrogen?
- What other factors influence my symptoms at this time?

* Source: N. Schuurmans, MD, FRCP (C), Clinical Head, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Grey Nuns Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta

Celebrations

What Great Ideas!

The One Whole Parent Book

The One Whole Parent Book is the result of a project funded by the Memorial Trust Fund of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and co-sponsored by the Family Life Centre. A single parent group was formed to look at the highs and lows of solo parenting. The 'core group' met weekly for several months, with new participants joining in for four-week sessions. The result is this resource manual, an easy-to-read wealth of good information for single parents.

Written by Jocelyn Brown, the manual includes chapters on: health and survival (stress management, accessing health and dental services, nutrition, housing, clothing); child care (daycare, education, discipline); income (social assistance, employment, training, money matters); legal issues; advocacy; and recreation. There is also a comprehensive reading list.

For more information contact Jocelyn at 461-3868, or write to One Whole Parent Resources P.O. Box 42063 Lee Ridge Post Office Edmonton, Alberta T6K 4C4.



What Great Women!

Congratulations to our own Amal Umar and Brenda Hill who recently received awards in recognition of their invaluable contributions in their communities.

The Honourable Don Sparrow, then Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, presented Ms Umar with the first annual Haider Dhanani Award at the Immigration Week Gala Event at Edmonton's Fantasyland Hotel on May 6th.

Amal and Brenda both received the Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Canadian Confederation. The medal recognizes people who have made a significant contribution to Canada or to their fellow Canadians.

The women on the Advisory Council have long appreciated Amal and Brenda's wisdom, hard work, and integrity. They have dedicated their lives to the betterment of the lives of immigrants and women everywhere. We are very glad to know that other people recognize their unfailing commitment.



The Women of the Metis Nation has proclaimed that Gayle McKenzie is Metis Woman of the Year for 1993. Gayle is one of the founding members of Women of the Metis Nation. She is presently employed with Advanced Education and Career Development as an Employment, Family and Housing Counsellor. She has shown her involvement with organizations like the White Eagle Native Women's Association, Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, Native Education Project in the County of Lac St. Anne, Metis Associations Blue Ridge Local, and the Sagitawah Employment Services.

The proclamation letter reads, "Gayle has shown over the past 22 years, what hard work and perseverance can achieve in the Aboriginal community. Her strength and wisdom have gained her the respect of her peers, friends and co-workers. Her visions has gone beyond women. Specifically, to the children. She believes that our future generations are our most valuable resource and by teaching them pride in their heritage, it will help instill a strong knowledge of their birthright. Hopefully, this vision will help overcome the stumbling stones placed in our young people's way."

"As her daughter, Alanna McKenzie-Dionne, expressed to the selection committee, "She is, and always will be, my real-life hero because, regardless of her volunteer works, she has left a strong legacy of love, honour and respect to me and my children."

Melanie Omeniho, President of Women of the Metis Nation, told AACWI that in addition to this award, Gayle was also honoured by becoming one of their Metis women Elders at the last Annual General Meeting. In Metis culture, an Elder is one who has worked hard and become a person of great wisdom within the community. She is a person whose sound and good council will be respected and sought.

The Advisory Council offers heartfelt congratulations to our former member. It is a most deserving honour.

Pulling Together

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Are You Eligible?

If your marriage ended in divorce or annulment or if you separated following a marriage or common-law union after January 1, 1987, you could be eligible for a Canada Pension Plan credit split. Eligibility for credit splitting depends on a number of factors including the length of your relationship, when it ended, if there were any spousal agreements, and in some cases, involves time limits in applying.

How to find out



To find out how this provision affects your situation, or if your group would like someone to speak on this subject, please get in touch with an Income Security Programs Office. The address and telephone number are listed in the government pages of your telephone book under "Health and Welfare Canada."

The facts on AACWI

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues is an autonomous advisor to the provincial government. We are your voice, telling the government about issues which concern women. We are the only official body advising the provincial government about legislation which best serves the needs of Alberta women.

We are up to 15 committed women who represent Alberta women of all geographic, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Our diversity reflects the diversity of women's lives in Alberta today.

We are a self-governing body which works in partnership with other groups and organizations who are seeking to raise public awareness of women's issues in Alberta. We meet regularly to discuss issues raised by you or concerns which arise from our own professional and personal experience.

We prepare briefs, submissions and reports with specific recommendations to the provincial government through the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

We can provide copies of our discussion papers to groups and individuals free of charge. Topics we have addressed include: employment equity, social assistance, immigrant women, funding for women's shelters, maintenance enforcement and many others.

We will gladly meet with groups, organizations and individuals to discuss your concerns or we'll come and speak at your annual meetings, regional conferences or workshops.

Our Objectives

1. To be effective advisors to the Alberta Government. In order to do that we will:
 - a. Develop processes and skills to function effectively
 - b. Be knowledgeable
 - c. Be focused and specific
2. To ensure all work of the council is governed by recognition of the existence of racism and its negative effects.
3. To identify, evaluate and prioritize issues of concern to women and to develop plans to meet these priorities.
4. To market the Council's strategic plan and current priorities while still keeping lines of communication open.
5. To identify issues to the women of Alberta, to provide leadership that educates, and stimulates awareness about these issues.
6. To work towards increased consultation by government with the Council, as policy and legislation is being developed.
7. To ensure ongoing cooperation and consultation with the Women's Secretariat.
8. To ensure ongoing dialogue and cooperation with the community regarding issues of concern to women.
9. To provide leadership to the community for the creative development of new processes of participation which recognize diversity.

We want to hear from you so we can continue to work effectively for you.

Our office is located at:
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(Outside the Edmonton calling area, place calls through the RITE operator listed under Government in your telephone directory.)

If you like what the Council is doing, please let us know.

Who we are

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This issue of the newsletter is dedicated with love to Rita Thompson.

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If you are moving, or if you have had personnel changes, please correct this mailing label and return it to us.

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