

MONTREAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN – LE CONSEIL DES FEMMES DE MONTRÉAL

INTERIM PRESIDENTS REPORT

Happy Spring to all! It has been a long, cold and seemingly endless winter but here we are, spring is in the air. Our March program had to be postponed as our guest speaker Ms. Barbara Kay, was unable to attend due to illness. Ms. Kay apologized profusely, as she however, we were fortunate enough as Ms. Daniela Chivu, who is Convener for Immigration and Citizenship and Global Affairs, and Co-representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women for the National Council of Women of Canada, kindly accepted to fill in for Barbara. Many thanks are extended to Daniela for her inspiring presentation on human rights which are women's rights! Her presence was greatly appreciated.

Ms. Chivu's topic was relevant to the Commission of the Status of Women forum (CSW58) taking place at the United Nations, New York (March 8 to 21, 2014). Canada had a number of delegates who attended from various NGO's. Mrs. Chita Chopra, who is presently MCW Executive Vice-President represented MCW and I was represented the National Council of Women of Canada Development Organization (NCWCDO). For a first experience, it was an eye opener to perceive the severity of problems women face worldwide! Presentations were made by exceptional women, some rose from poverty-stricken areas to higher education. They now had the opportunity to share their experiences and to influence NGO's. Although there are standards for developmental goals, women are habitually not included in the development or in the implementation strategies. Women from the grass roots must participate in community based programs.

Exploitation of women and girls takes place primarily in poor countries and frequently in countries where they have suffered an environmental disaster. Girls and women are left homeless and desperate. They are promised work; they are kidnapped; abused and forced into prostitution. This is a serious problem that affects all countries including Canada, where these women are brought to and forced into prostitution. The NGO's impelled the United Nations to prosecute men rather than criminalize women for prostitution.

Education plays a key role in reducing violence against women and girls. The educational program must be an integral part of early education programs in schools; young people must be given the tools for empowerment; boys and men play an equally important role in this education. Men must comprehend the magnitude of human rights as they

pertain to women. Authorities, such as police, lawyers, judges all have to understand the significance and the rights of women to participate as equal citizens.

The "equality effect of the 160 Girls" partially funded by the NCWCDO has made legal history in Kenya, indeed in Africa and beyond; it has set the high water mark for girls' rights internationally. The decision recognizes the obligation on the Kenyan police to conduct proper investigations in cases of sexual abuse, and could easily be extended to apply to other forms of gender-based violence. Equally of importance is the fact that the police asked for training to assist them in the execution with the High Court's "160 Girls" decision. This training will take place in the form of a pilot project over one year. Significantly, over 160 girls involved in the case have been empowered with the knowledge of the human rights they are owed, and with the knowledge that it is possible for them to hold their state accountable for these rights. *The equality effect* and its partners will also engage in a variety of public education strategies to raise awareness about the court decision, and to keep the State accountable to the public for any progress that has not been made in complying with the decision. This is a formidable step that has been taken with the help of Canadian legal representatives pro bono.

As you can see attending the Commission of the Status of Women forum (CSW58) was an overwhelming but interesting experience that will not be forgotten.

-Bonnie Stamos-Destounis, Interim President

"Women are a main force to democracy and peace."
Nicole Ameline, Chair of CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women)

UPCOMING GENERAL MEETING

Come join us on Thursday, April 3, 2014 for MCW's monthly general meeting at Les Jardins du Canal, 2700 Rufus Rockhead (opposite the Atwater Market, metro Lionel Groulx, bus 108).

A light lunch (\$10 per person) will be served at 12:00 noon and our program will begin at 1:00 pm. Please contact our hostess Convenor, Ms. Frances Gregory email: frances.gregory@videotron.ca or Tel. (514) 935-1674 should you be attending our luncheon.



Canadian Representatives to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women – March 2014

Front left to right: Chitra Chopra (MCW), Daniela Chivu (NCWC)
Back left to right: Bonnie Stamos-Destounis, Sue Calhoun,
Vi Andersen (Canadian Federation of Business & Professional Women)

We Used to Ask Now We Demand!

While generations of women before mine asked for everything my generation enjoys today, the right to education, the right to vote, the right to speak, the right to be heard, the right to participate in decision making, they are asking for basic human rights; it is now my turn to demand that we are treated fully as equals and partners with men. We no longer ask permission we demand. Nonetheless, before I further move with my accountability on the demands, I must say thank you to you all, to the generations of women who fought for my rights which allows me today to speak in your behalf at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and Convener for Immigration and Citizenship and Global Affairs. As this year was for the first time I have participated as the Co-representative of the National Council of Women of Canada to the 58th session of the UNCSW, I understood something very important that is, if we do not take action no one will care to give us what we rightfully deserve.

Actions speak louder than words, yet the most important, effective and efficient action is the one we all rise up together and act together. This is something I have addressed during my speech, while enlisting the U.N. goals established in Beijing at the 21st CSW meeting. The Millennium Development Goals, these are the actions which speak louder than words: Eradication of Poverty and Hunger, Achieving Universal Primary Education, Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, Reduce Child Mortality, Improve Maternal Health, Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases and Ensure Environmental Sustainability Global Partnership. Thus, in order to achieve these goals we must stand and work together as we did before and we can do it again. Nevertheless, the most important ingredient

for every woman in the world who will join us to demand all of the above is EDUCATION, the most powerful weapon and shield of all times.

The reason why I am emphasizing education is very simple, here in Canada we still have women who cannot afford to go school; either because of culture and traditions or simply not having the means to going to school and we must help them. These are the voices we do not hear and the eyes we do not see. These are the women in whose behalf we must demand; these are the women we need to stand up for. As it has been said many times before “Knowledge is Power”. It is our common responsibility to help, encourage and support those who need us. None of us was born a super woman, yet we are here you fought for my generation so that we will not go through the injustice you had to endure. Therefore we must follow this wonderful quote by Brigham Young “You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation.”

Thank you all for the opportunity you gave me to be the woman I am today and let us together bring our cause to the next level. - Daniela Chivu, Convener for Immigration and Citizenship and Global Affairs, Co-representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
National Council of Women of Canada

Social Health and Wellbeing...

According to the ‘World Health Organization’, ‘Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.’

While the physical and mental aspects of good health are more readily determined, diagnosed and discussed, social well-being remains one of the most important and vital issues of our times. Statistically, we women hold and occupy 35.4% of all management positions, 22.9% of which are comprised of senior posts. We are indeed considered to be a powerful force in today’s economic landscape. We are investing in ourselves and in our communities. Women, reportedly, have controlling positions over 1/3 of the economic wealth of North American markets, a trend that is growing by 8% annually.

In Canada alone, statistics showed, women entrepreneurs started 4 out of 5 businesses, bringing economic growth and prosperity to their communities. We are a very well educated, active and vibrant segment of the population, endowed with a sense of strong and moral social obligations which allows us to stand our ground and express our opinions. Wealth has certainly allowed us a certain degree of social wellbeing but what about the poor amongst us?

It gives me no pleasure to report that an estimated 4.8 million Canadians will be poor when the full impact of the recent global economic crisis is measured. Compared to other developed countries, Canada with a 9% poverty rate ranks at number 20 out of 31 OECD countries.

Where poverty is concerned it is appalling yet natural that some groups would be more at risk than others.

- 36% Aboriginal women...
- 35% Visible minority women
- 26% Women with disabilities
- 21% Single parent women
- 7% Single parent men
- 14% Single senior women

The question then remains how to define and measure poverty in order to determine lacking or inadequate social health and wellbeing in our neighborhoods and communities.

Much like other terms, poverty is measured as absolute or relative. Absolute poverty is a state of deprivation, where we cannot afford basic needs such as food, shelter and transportation. Relative poverty is a condition of inequality where we are 'noticeably worse off' than others around us.

It is true that women or mothers form 80% of all single parent families subsisting on less than \$17000.00 dollars income per year. Of these ladies who have children under 6 years old, some 70% work outside of their homes yet they also perform on average 4.2 hours of home related unpaid work in addition to their jobs every day. Women aged 40 or more who had opted for maternity leave and stayed home with their infant children for 3 years ended up earning 30% less salary than those of us who had not left our careers.

As a society we must ask, why should we focus on bettering the lives and living conditions of poor women. Simply put, so that we may change the lives and future prospects of poor children. In Manitoba, some 70% of aboriginal children under age 6 are reported poor.

In 2011 senior economists at the 'World Economic Forum' called the current divide in income inequality '... the most serious challenge facing the world today...' Faced with these realities, these worsening conditions, what do we ask for from our elected and governing bodies? What do we ask from ourselves?

In the past few months I have tried to bring certain elements of helpfulness to ourselves and others into a more clear focus. For additional information please refer to Statistics Canada, CBC Canada documentaries the fifth estate and the doc zone, Canadian Women's Foundation, Women in Canada, The Pink Collar, John Norcross 'Changeology', Charles Duhigg 'The Power of Habit.

- *Nadia Badaghi Convener
Health, Child and Family*



GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

It can't be emphasized enough that every nation, every region, every city and every individual must take the responsibility to act sooner than later, to do their part in curbing greenhouse gas emissions that have reached **398.03 ppm Feb 2014** (CO2now.org). Climate scientists continue to warn us that **we have years**, not decades anymore, to stabilize CO2 and other greenhouse gases.

Montreal has been trying to implement quite a comprehensive sustainability plan (2010-2015), which won prizes in North America because of its holistic nature. However there have been setbacks, as the city has once again delayed its island-wide organic waste collection program. Initially, four compost-treatment centers slated to open this year will not open until 2018 or 2019. Quebec set a goal for municipalities to recycle 60% of organic waste on the island of Montreal by 2015. By 2012, only 12% of organic waste could be recycled. The Government of Quebec estimates say that each person in the province produces about 184 kilograms of organic waste each year. Considering our 8,155,334 million population (September 2013) that comes to 15 005 814 kgs of organic waste! And what a waste that is!



On a national level, is very encouraging to know that environmental groups have forced Ottawa to review the approval of some 383 pesticide products containing 23 active ingredients including many with links to cancer and water contamination. This happened after a legal challenge by Ecojustice on behalf of Equiterre and David Suzuki Foundation that the federal government showed willingness to examine those pesticide products which contain ingredients already banned in Europe. Let's hope the Canadian Government will decide to ban or restrict their use in Canada.

Our guest speaker for April 3, 2014 will be Dr. Arshad-Ayaz, Assistant Professor, Concordia University. Her topic will be 'Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Environmental Sustainability in Quebec.' Dr. Arshad-Ayaz's research, teaching practice, and her previous anthropological experience directs her analyses to focus on the social, cultural, historical, political and economic dynamics of a particular context that affect teaching and learning. Dr. Arshad-Ayaz's published work explores educational policies and programs especially those related to the introduction of educational technology and social media in developed and developing countries. - *Mrs. Nusrat Mirza, Convener
Environment, Land and Housing*

Celebrating March Nutrition Month - Wheat Flours are Confusing?

Eating and feeling well is all about making the best food and lifestyle choices. Which breads and grains are best for us? It is confusing. This confusion has recently been escalated by books such as, "Wheat Belly" and "Grain Brain," along with the vocal advocates of Gluten-Free eating. Firstly, the avoidance of any grain or gluten is unnecessary, unless you have a specific disease, such as celiac sprue or a proven sensitivity to gluten or any other grain. There is no other scientific evidence for these regimes. Of course, if you are trying to lose weight, you will, if you reduce your calories. This can occur if you give up wheat or grain or for that matter any food.

Wheat flour labelling in Canada is confusing. It's little wonder many Canadians are perplexed as to which wheat products are best, enriched or whole wheat? Canada is the only country in the world that flour, labelled "whole wheat flour," can be sold with much of the germ and nutrients removed. Your only guarantee in Canada that the entire wheat grain is present is if the label specifically says whole wheat grain flour or whole wheat kernel flour.

Unlike refined white flour, so-called "whole wheat flour" is not enriched with thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and iron, and most recently, since 1998, with folic acid. Folic acid serves as an effective primary-prevention strategy for neural tube defects, the most common birth defect, if consumed in the periconceptional period. A seven province study from 1993 to 2002 showed a reduction of 46% in the overall rate of neural tube defects.

Those who eat so-called "whole-wheat flour" do not get the benefits of enrichment. What is the solution? One could be to legislate that all wheat flour be enriched to the same level of thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and iron, and folic acid. Even though white flour is enriched, it still has a fraction of many of the essential nutrients found in whole kernel wheat flour. For example, it has only 13% of the fibre, 2% of the Vitamin E, about 20% of the zinc, magnesium, potassium and biotin!

Like all other countries, we should legislate that only whole wheat flour that contains the entire wheat grain or kernel be labeled "whole wheat flour." Possibly, if seen necessary for its public health benefits, enriched with folic acid to the same level as white flour.

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It is well to note, in spite of Health Canada being pressured for years to change the rule regarding the labelling of wheat flour, the department says it is not a high priority. It should be a high priority. Food labelling should be accurate and easy to understand. - *Sandra Cohen-Rose, Past President Consulting Dietitian-Nutritionist*

COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF TO POLISH CHILDREN

invites you to the winter BAZAAR, Saturday and Sunday, April 26th and 27th from 9AM to 5PM at the St-Antonin Church, 5361 av. Snowdon, metro Snowdon. Serving hot and cold traditional Polish dishes and desserts, display and sale of amber and handmade jewellery, folk art, Peruvian alpaca products, books, cosmetics and various articles. Funds are being raised for the children and seniors with disabilities.

Info: 514 489-6010 and 514 983-7353

ATTENTION

**MONTREAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
will be held on May 15, 2014**

Article and Announcement Submissions

The next issue of *The Bulletin* will be in April 2014. Please submit your articles, announcements and photos by the 15th day of the month via email to:

bulletin@montrealcouncilwomen.org