

**CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN**

**ONTARIO COUNCIL**

***DATES & DATA***

---

Ontario Council Newsletter January 2008  
Vol. VI, Issue 3 (Electronic) Standing Committee Reports

---

**January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**CFUW ONTARIO COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEES**

**Joint Morning Session**

***ABORIGINAL EDUCATION & CULTURE***

***from Pre-school to Post-Secondary Graduation***

The morning session featured two speakers, both aboriginal, on developments and challenges in aboriginal education, at elementary, secondary and post secondary levels. Elizabeth Bigwin is with the Aboriginal Education Office of the Ministry of Education, an office that was established in 2006 on the present government's recognizing aboriginal education as a top priority. Lu Ann Hill represents the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium, a group advocating for increased support for aboriginal post-secondary education.

**Elizabeth Bigwin** described her office's aims and strategy for restoring respect and collaboration with the province's 50,000 aboriginal students (First Nation, Metis and Inuit). The aim is to ensure that students achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to function in the mainstream in an environment that recognizes traditional skills and culture, and to increase the system's ability to this end. In an attempt to recognize where needs are greatest, Boards of Education are encouraged to self identify as having aboriginal students - so far, 21 (of 72) have, 30 more are in progress. In September 2007 the Office's efforts expanded to the Secondary level, with dedicated funding of \$13 million, with the goal of preparing aboriginal students for post-secondary education.

Specific goals are to increase the educational system's ability to meet the cultural and learning needs of aboriginal students by:

providing quality services and appropriate curriculum

assisting aboriginal students to meet provincial standards

increasing aboriginal teaching staff

increasing the graduation rate

increasing overall achievement

increasing self esteem

increasing collaboration with aboriginal educators, the Federal government, the College of Teachers, western provinces

The office recognizes the size of its undertaking, but aims to build "the will and skill, one Board, one school, one teacher, one student at a time."

**Lu Ann Hill**, of the Bear Clan, Six Nations of the Grand River, began with an overview of indigenous education (she prefers the term "indigenous" to "aboriginal", "First Nations", etc), including residential schools and various government initiatives. She pointed out that until 1951 indigenous people had to relinquish their identity to attend post secondary institutions. Since then, government support and assistance has increased gradually, so that now there are 50 post secondary indigenous institutions in Canada, tasked with providing training and knowledge in many fields, while reflecting indigenous culture and needs. Enrollment in these institutions has increased 95% in the past five years, but Ms. Hill claims that thousands of qualified applicants are denied access because of lack of funding. The profile of attendees is mainly women, often mature, with family and job commitments.

Problems facing aboriginal institutions:

A lack of adequate, sustained funding

Lack of government and mainstream public recognition of the institutions' degrees, diplomas and certificates

The government expects that indigenous institutions will perform as well as regular universities and colleges, with much less funding: Ontario gives \$1577 per indigenous student, \$9667 for each mainstream student

Indigenous institutions are forced into partnerships with mainstream universities and colleges.

A 2001 Federal government report acknowledges the need for aboriginal institutions, but provides no increased funding, with the result that these institutions are now organizing regionally (they are much more successful in Western provinces) and are slowly gaining regional recognition.

CFUW members are urged to lobby their federal and provincial members to provide support for these institutions.

Peggy Pinkerton

## **STATUS OF WOMEN & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session**

***Cookbook for Women's Equality*** was available. Everyone was encouraged to purchase a copy. If you wish more copies, please contact Judie Arrowood and she will place an order at a bulk price. Each Club's Issues or Current Events group should have a copy. National is mailing a copy to each Club president. You may wish to include the website in your next newsletter.

[www.womensequality.ca](http://www.womensequality.ca)

Announcements and Business arising from the previous meeting:

Margaret McGovern, North York CFUW spoke of the formation of the Toronto Caucus Committee on Poverty. The Mayor of Toronto has declared poverty a major issue. Four areas of concern have been identified: unemployment insurance, housing, daycare and low income. The Province of Ontario has promised universal senior and junior kindergarten. This may relieve some of the stress on daycare spaces.

Hamilton CFUW in conjunction with that city's Round Table on Poverty is also studying the problem. One in five Hamiltonians is below the poverty level and health care is a major concern.

Margaret McGovern provided an update on the HPV vaccination which was discussed at our September meeting. (Human Papilloma Virus immunization program) There is a reported rate of approximately 50% participation. The vaccine will be accessible later through your local health authorities. See: [www.cmaj.ca](http://www.cmaj.ca) [www.cwhn.ca](http://www.cwhn.ca) [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

We still need to collect feedback and information on this issue. Will the government sponsor the program in future years? There was concern that there was no information and education to recipients around relationships and sex. How much education is being done about Gardasil? Guidelines on sex education in schools is available through the Ministry of Education on line in Health & Physical Education. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary) and [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/primary](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/primary)

During December, 2007 the Committee had a flood of email correspondence about the killing of a teenager by her father. This is still before the courts and therefore we will not work on that specific case. It is still another instance of **Violence Against Women**. It was notable that the press did not use the term "honour killing". It is murder. CFUW has policy on murder and violence against women.

**ACTION** –A sub-committee will work on action we might take focusing on Violence against Women. We need a narrow focus and an achievable/measurable target. The committee members are Judie Arrowood (Leaside-East York), Arleen Midriak (Hamilton), Rhea Pretsell (Belleville), Ann McElhinney (Etobicoke) and Leslie Jeanneret (Aurora/Newmarket).

Much work has already been done. **War On Women** by Brian Vallee is well researched. Also check out a book entitled **Flapper**. Deb Matthews, MPP and assistant to the Minister responsible for Women's Issues, will be contacted.

Clubs can contact other community groups and ask "How may we help?". Clubs could work together with local immigrant groups to educate on the topic. We can support our local women's shelters, the white ribbon campaign; support men against –violence against women; participate in "Take Back the Night"; support all educational initiatives against violence and bullying. We can work to incorporate Women's Studies at a young age and get it into the curriculum. Everyone should be collecting statistics and information for the sub-committee on violence.

As when we fought religious arbitration in Family Law, we should speak out, lobby, write letters and educate wherever and whenever possible. Some of our Clubs already hold Dec. 6th Dinners/Events. We can all hold or attend our local Dec. 6th event.

It would be especially helpful to work with men to educate other males of all ages. Educate both genders early. Such behaviour is not acceptable and will NOT be tolerated. Strategies to modify such behaviour and respond to such behaviour are needed.

The Report on Violence in Toronto Education System has received wide publicity. We can each question our local school boards on their policy and response to violence against women. We can ask how prevalent is violence against women? What is the reported incidence of violence? What is the response of the principal? Of the Board? We need to use the our policy effectively!

Members of the group asked that the Sub-Committee : give specifics, concrete action suggestions, solutions, responses to the 'controlling male'.

Edeltraud Neal was unable to attend the meeting. She sent some comments. **Family Law Education for Women (FLEW)** is a Project of the Ontario Government to educate women on their legal rights. Lisa Cirillo, Legal and Project Coordinator for FLEW will be one of the speakers at the Ontario AGM in North Bay (May 9-10/08). Perhaps each Club could use this as a Program/Speaker idea next year!

**BIG BOX DAYCARE** This program is coming from an Australian company, ABC Learning Centres. We do not want "for-profit" big-box daycare centres in Ontario. We support quality early learning and child care. A Draft letter was distributed to use to communicate with a Club's MP and MPP.

Please indicate your interest in being considered for Chair of the Standing Committee Status of Women and Human Rights.

**TASERS** – There are now small personal tasers available for women in the USA. They are being sold at parties similar to Tupperware parties. More than 300 people have been killed by Police using tasers in North America since their introduction in 2003. This may be a Human Rights issue; but, it was decided after some discussion that we should focus on Violence against women.

**ECHO**, the new women's health agency. Linda McGregor wrote to the Premier congratulating him on establishing ECHO and asking for CFUW representation. Although there was an enthusiastic response, the outcome is not yet certain.

Gwen Williamson for Judie Arrowood, Chair  
Status of Women & Human Rights Committee  
[arrowood@sympatico.ca](mailto:arrowood@sympatico.ca)

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session**

The afternoon session was to be about the Aboriginal Early Learning program, Head Start. Unfortunately, due to a family situation our speaker was unable to attend.

Lu Ann Hill, our morning speaker stayed to offer her input into early learning in the Aboriginal culture.

Marianne Singh Waraich our National Education Chair discussed the resolution on Aboriginal Education that she has been working on for the past year. Marianne gave us the background to

the resolution. There are a number of issues facing our Aboriginal population that were pointed out. They are; health, higher incidence of diabetes, substandard housing, overcrowding, inconsistencies from reserve to reserve, little maintenance of housing, individuals are unable to own homes, unable to attain money from bank to purchase homes, Northern reserves are isolated, no jobs.

After some discussion on the resolution several comments were made: Many felt strongly that the resolution should be amended to include post-secondary education. Marianne would like to see the resolution pass so that we have policy in place to have something to work forward with.

Marianne also discussed and gave us background on the Student Debt Load resolution that the Burlington CFUW Club is working on. Primary focus is the transfer payments from the Federal to the Provincial governments have been cut. Many students are facing high debt loads to go onto post-secondary education. One suggestion is to decrease the interest rates on loans.

Lu Ann Hill discussed Aboriginal Early Learning with the committee. *Head Start* originated in Hamilton and was introduced to create cultural identity with Aboriginal youth. It is all about families and being thankful for what the Creator has provided for them. Prayers are done in their own language. Children are taught seven teachings; respect, honesty, humility, to be a good person, live in harmony, thanks to the mother earth, the water and the winds. Native identity or the sense of who they are is important as they feel if they don't have it, they will flounder.

Wendy Taylor, Chair discussed the New Safe School Act very briefly. It was decided to continue the discussion for the March 8th meeting. Each committee member was asked to discuss the New Act with their committee's, or issue groups to base an opinion on the amended Act. When we reconvene, we will put our thoughts together in order to respond to the Ministry of Education.

Important web sites are [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) and [www.peopleforeducation.com](http://www.peopleforeducation.com)

Wendy Taylor, Chair  
Education Committee

## LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - Afternoon Session

One or two members of each of the small groups that discussed specific environmental issues at September's meeting (2007) of the Legislation Committee carried their topic forward and presented their findings at the January 2008 meeting. The presenters are to be commended for the research they did and the excellent brief presentations that each of them made. These will form the basis of the March meeting. Their comments are summarized below:

**Pesticides:** Nora Waldon (Stratford) – Having proposed the Non-Essential (Cosmetic) Pesticides Resolution CFUW (2002), Stratford has embarked on a public education campaign with door signs, a kit, a pesticide-free garden competition, a collection of recipes using dandelions, and finally joined with a community group to bring about a ban on pesticides for cosmetic use.

**Electronic Waste:** Renata Dashawetz (Orillia) described the increasing problems caused by the proliferation of electronic devices that are constantly rendered obsolete and have to be replaced. These contain materials which are toxic to health and the environment, and which cannot be put in landfill. Companies are springing up to recycle electronics, but presently take only 1% of the 140,000 tons produced each year. Moves are afoot to require producers and sellers to take back old devices, and to upgrade rather than replace.

Arlie Freer (Muskoka) is concerned about illegal shipping of waste material to offshore sites, and has researched other jurisdictions. Ontario rates poorly, and Muskoka is pushing to have manufacturers accept responsibility for disposal. Her Club has an established committee on E-waste that has researched the topic extensively.

**Sewage:** Carolyn Day (Southport) identified practices which are of particular concern: municipal systems which combine storm and sanitary sewers, inadequate sewage treatment plants, birth control and other drugs being flushed into the system and causing havoc downstream, lack of treatment for phosphates in water systems, runoff from factory farming. There are glimmers of hope, such as a bio-digester company in Chatsworth, Ontario, which processes sewage sludge into electricity and clean fertilizer. The Province is urged to fund similar enterprises.

Clubs also reported on various initiatives:

**LHINS** (Local Health Integration Networks): Elaine Sutherns (Mississauga) and Monique Kelly (Vaughan) monitored LHINS in their areas. Elaine stressed the importance of having a contact in the system (theirs was a local representative) in order to gain access, and being persistent as Board meetings are not readily accessible.

We are pleased to have Elaine keeping us up-to-date on the Mississauga Halton LHIN and Monique on the Central LHIN, and hope to establish a LHIN network of CFUW members from each area.

**CCAC** (Community Care Access Centre): Linda Hall and Myrtle Greve (Hamilton) gave an overview and updates on their efforts to fight the privatization of nursing in long-term care facilities. Present policy which puts the service up for tender to the lowest bidder has removed long-time non-profit providers such as the VON and St. Joseph's Home Care in favour of private companies, which have no local experience, and which are governed solely by concern for the bottom line. Quality of care is not a criterion. Hamilton is working with other groups to try to influence the government to change this policy.

**SUCCESS: The Request for Proposal Process has been stopped!**

**Compact Fluorescent Lights:** Deferred.

**Accessibility:** Elizabeth Pulker (Kanata) in pushing for increased accessibility for the disabled stressed the necessity for tolerance for those whose disability is not visible, e.g. those with Asperger's Syndrome.

**Family Poverty:** Teri Shaw (Oakville) prepared, introduced and distributed her handout on poverty issues. It is a timeline on government response to poverty from 1989 to the present with references to web resources. We are grateful to Teri for this excellent summary, which will be of value when letter-writing to MPP's.

**Next steps at the March meeting!**

Peggy Pinkerton, for  
M. Elaine Harvey, Chair  
Legislation Committee