



Victoria Newsletter for the year 1996

Dear Friends, as I worked through the minutes to write a short yearly report on the activities of the Victoria VOW Steering Committee, I found more and more entries which I was sure would interest you all. I hope that I am right and that many of you will find the following lengthier summary of activities interesting. Perhaps, after reading this, you might be inspired to join the Steering Committee. We are always glad to see new faces around the table. Some members of the Steering Committee have been at it now for many years and we are all a little tired. Yet, we remain willing to keep the small community of Voices in Victoria together by limping - *sans peur* - from concern to concern, from friendship to friendship. Come and support us!

PUBLIC EVENTS:

Women in Black. The silent vigil on Douglas near City Hall continued for a few months on each first Thursday. The aim of the vigil was to raise awareness of and to protest all forms of violence against women here in Canada and everywhere else on this earth. Terry Wolfwood brought the idea for this quiet demonstration from Beijing to Victoria. There she had witnessed and participated at such an event. Elisabeth Mayne with Marya Nyland had created a truly impressive banner. Leaflets with various themes were handed out to passers by. (On human rights abuses, phone numbers for crisis lines and safe houses as well as government services, women and unpaid work (Census Day was May 14), military spending vs. social spending.)

As the year progressed participation at the vigils dropped off. By September it was decided to put them formally on hold or to change the format. The last very successful vigil was held in December.

International Women's Day, March 8th.

Diana Chown together with the Victoria Public Library organised the showing of three films: *The Glass Ceiling*, *Gathering Strength* and *Outstanding in her Field*. On the Saturday following IWD, Marilyn Waring's *Who is Counting*, was also shown.

Council of Canadians

We co-sponsored events organised by the Council of Canadians: Murray Dobbin spoke on the collapse of the New Zealand social safety net, Susan George on global capitalism, William Krehm and Mike Godora on the debt and our social programs.

A few members took part in the National Action on Fair Taxation demonstration on Dec. 5, 1996.

Local meetings for members:

In the spring Janet Hawksley opened her house to our members for a luncheon meeting. It was a great success and we thank Janet once again for her generosity. Besides good food and company, we also heard each other express our hopes and fears for the future.

A collection for the Sandy Merriman House was taken.

The traditional strawberry tea was hosted in June by Rona Murray in Metchosin in her beautiful garden overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the distant mountains of Washington State. It was well attended and gave pleasure to those who could be there.

We remembered Hiroshima Day with talk and food at Freda Knott's house on August 11th.

A rainy day in November saw a few stalwart members on the grounds in front of the University Library planting a tree, a *cercis*, in memory of longtime and loyal VOW member Mary Cox. Members of Mary's family joined us there and later at a get-together at the Monterey Centre. The turn-out was not encouraging for those members who organised this event.

National news:

The General meeting of *Canadian Voice of Women* took place in May in Halifax. Several women from BC went. Marya Nyland and Maria Abbott (BC rep. on the national board) from Victoria attended. The theme of this conference was: "Women Creating a Culture of Peace." It was a very lively and wonderful meeting.

BC presented a resolution to support the work of several women's groups who wish to have the power and influence of the Vatican at the United Nations curbed, if possible to have the claim to statehood by the Vatican set aside. This is an action which also came out of the Women's Conference at Beijing. To our surprise this proposal led to a heated discussion but the motion was carried. The General Meeting coincided with the start of the Anti-poverty caravan and Women's March to Ottawa.

Provincial News:

Freda Handfort left BC VOW a generous legacy. We are grateful for this. However, as a result several matters came to a head. We had some difficulties and delays in accepting this money, since BC VOW legally did not exist as a distinct entity but was merely geographically distinct from National VOW. We resolved this matter but it took time and it increased the costs of settlement. To avoid a repetition of this somewhat tiresome process, the BC Executive decided to incorporate BC VOW under the BC Societies Act. Our legal name henceforth is: *British Columbia Voice of Women Society (VOW)* and should appear so on all legal documents.

This inheritance is known as the Freda Legacy. It was the major point of discussion during the B.C. VOW Day of Renewal at Crescent Beach. Consensus was reached on how to deal with the money. A letter was sent to all BC VOW members to inform them of guidelines reached by consensus. It was a good meeting in a charming setting. Try to come next time. **Work is Work is Work:** The effort to have work recognised as work, not money, and in particular to have the unpaid work of women counted as wealth creating and productive found some recognition in the census of this year. **Newsletter:** Members of the Victoria Steering Committee are also members of the BC Newsletter Collective. In the past year (and a little more), we helped put out four BC newsletters and two national newsletters

Housekeeping in Victoria: Membership: Alison Acker is in charge of local membership. She also organises the phone tree. She feels and the members of the Steering Cttee. agree, that the membership fee is high (\$35). We all appear to have less money than we thought we did. But, as was pointed out, a lower fee is totally acceptable and that all fees are treated confidentially. So please, do not let your membership drop.

The archives of the *Victoria Voice of Women* are the hands of Joyce Stewart. To Quote Joyce: "They are up and running as part of the *Women's Movement Archive* at UVIC.

Fundraising: Marya Nyland organised a very effective Garage Sale on May 8th.

Our treasurer, Freda Knott assures us that we will be solvent for a while as a result of it.

Continuing involvement in the community:

We shared the cost of an ad in *Monday Magazine* to continue the boycott of French imports in protest of their nuclear testing in the Pacific.

Gudrun Doherty regularly attends and reports on Action Victoria. She informed us of the *Alternate Federal Budget* and the *Women's March against Poverty* in May.

We were part of the *Earth Walk* celebration on April 20th.

Joyce and Freda organised an All-Candidate's Meeting prior to the Provincial election.

Local social concerns: We are saddened by the increased shamelessness of poor bashing, of the harassment the homeless on the streets of Victoria, by the lack of compassion for our youth as expressed by the confiscation of backpacks and tents by police this past summer.

Ida Chong's *Good Samaritan Act* was discussed and researched, by Elisabeth Mayne. She wrote to several members of the Legislature but had little response.

Of general interest: Douglas Roche came to town and Alison went to see him. She reported that VOW national and BC. VOW has endorsed *Abolition 2000*, the renewed campaign to abolish nuclear arms. An article by Alison was published in the latest *BC Voice*.

Manach Girashki from the Philippines spoke on the world wide traffic in women. Two young local women from the *Prostitute Empowerment, Education and Recovery Society PEERS* moved a mostly young audience with stories of their lives within the power structure of our society.

Central American Support Committee. We signed a petition in their *Clean Clothes Campaign*.

The *Buy Nothing Campaign* was publicised by Joyce. It was received with interest in the community. We hope to make an earlier and stronger push this coming November.

Gudrun and Alison attended the soup kitchen event in connection with *International Day for the Eradication of Poverty* in October.

Gudrun or Alison staffed the table at a lecture at UVIC given by Carmel Budiardo, winner of the alternative Nobel award.

Several VOW members attended the *Praxis Nexus* conference organised by the Women Studies Department at UVIC.

An economics study group produced a leaflet called "Organise don't Agonize." It was distributed at several events.

Deaths: Voice of Women lost several of its most loyal members within the past year and a half: Clare Culhane, Mary Cox, Mary Thomson and Beth Hill, friends to all.

When writing such a catalogue as this, there is always the danger that something of importance has been left out. I apologize for this.

Members of the Steering Committee at present are: Alison Acker, Diana Chown, Freda Knott, Gudrun Doherty, Maria Abbott, Joyce Stewart, Elisabeth Mayne. We would feel enormously cheered if someone from the membership were to phone us to say that they will join the committee, or even merely volunteer to help now and then.

Victoria, March 15, 1997

In Peace,

Maria Abbott

