

Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace—Members' Spring Meeting, March 29, 2009

Women's Council House
989 Young Ave, Halifax, NS

Program

11:30- 1:00: Membership renewals, Meet & Greet, and Lunch: Leonard Preyra, MLA for Halifax Citadel Sable Island, attend the luncheon, and was thanked for his sponsorship of the Women's Council House for our event.

1:00- Uranium Mining

Donna Smyth and Gillian Thompson presented an overview on their Anti-uranium Mining Campaign.

Actions suggested by Donna and Gillian:

- Raise profile of the issue, especially during pre-election time
- Work with municipal councils on issue of local uranium exploration or mines

NS VOW agreed to assist Donna and Gillian with a "Uranium Follies Evening." Emily-Levy Purdy wrote an anti-uranium song that she could be asked to perform. As Donna and Gillian left, the group sang the anti-uranium song written by the Raging Grannies.

2:00- Report from NS VOW Steering Committee

Pamela Harrison reported and gave a summary of the year's events accompanied by PowerPoint photos: Fall Day of Renewal; Halifax Explosion Memorial Attendance; Dec 6th "Montreal Massacre" Memorial attendance; Peace Vigils; Valentine Day VOW Party; Film showing of "Practicing Peace". Pamela asked for volunteers in the areas of special events and vigils, and handed around sign-up sheets. She asked if there were any reports from any other areas of the Province. Janet Maybee mentioned that Dr. Karen Ewing has created a Peace Garden at Bass River. Maureen Vine reported that the Raging Grannies sang at two conferences, and mentioned the Valley Raging Grannies as being active.

3:00- National Issues

Resolutions From and National Board Members Elected at the 2008 National AGM in Halifax

Joan Hicks chaired the discussion of passed resolutions and elected board members from the Nov. 2008 AGM. National has stated that there was not a quorum at that AGM. Joan suggested that out of the nine resolutions passed at the meeting, NS VOW could focus on the two that are most relevant to our group, and ensure that we do have volunteers working in these areas:

1. White Poppy Campaign: Norma Scott agreed to lead a sub-committee; Gwen Davies is willing to produce literature; Maureen Vine mentioned importance of including history; Norma Scott said Raging Grannies would support the sub-committee.
2. The three connected resolutions for (A) Abolishing Nuclear Weapons, (B) Medical Isotopes and Uranium and (C) Banning the exploration for, Mining of and Export of Canadian Uranium: Betty Peterson agreed to organize a sub-committee;; Helen Fleet, Ruth Bishop and Avanika Weiser volunteered to be on the committee. Sandy Greenberg offered to sing at a public event. Emily Levy-Purdy was mentioned as someone to contact.

Joan also reported that we will re-submit the names of the Nova Scotia Board members, elected at the 2008 AGM. Sandy Greenberg and Angella McEwen's names will be submitted. Emily Levy-Purdy has withdrawn her name. **Note:** *Since the meeting, Angella McEwen informed us by email that she had withdrawn her name from nomination to the National Board*

National VOW Issue with Torture Free Zone Activities

Update presented by members of the NSVOW Steering Committee and By-Laws Committee:

Sandy Greenberg summarized the work and credentials of Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald, who created the Torture Free Zone Circle at the 2007 NSVOW Day of Renewal. Sandy then read a statement from Jeanne and Linda that described their work. Pamela read Jeanne and Linda's letter of resignation from VOW, NSVOW and the NSVOW Steering Committee.

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman explained the current situation, with National insisting that Jeanne and Linda withdraw the Torture Free Zone Circle, and not attend United Nations sessions under the VOW umbrella. Linda strongly endorsed their work, especially as Feminist work that is within the mandate of the National VOW mission statement.

Janet Maybee gave a summary of the time period during which NSVOW found out that National had serious issues with Jeanne and Linda's work. NSVOW realized that prior to the spring of 2008, critical discussions at the National level had occurred for quite some time without Jeanne and Linda or NSVOW being aware there was even a problem. Both NSVOW and Jeanne and Linda questioned a process that had not enabled Jeanne and Linda to respond to the criticisms. In June of 2008, the National Co-chairs wrote a letter of apology to Jeanne and Linda, for not involving them in the process. In this letter they also promised to delete "problematic" wording from April 2007 board meeting minutes and also to review the National By-Laws and produce policies and guidelines to improve board procedures (Appendix A.) To this date, no policies and guidelines have been developed, although National had committed to have them ready for the 2008 AGM.

Linda C-R explained that Jeanne and Linda have now withdrawn from the Steering Committee and resigned as members of VOW. As their main reason for excluding them, National stated that the Ritual Abuse Torture Circle does not fit within the VOW mandate. Linda C-R, Professor of Sociology at St Mary's University in Halifax, offered her professional opinion that discomfort with Linda and Jeanne's work began at a UN meeting chaired by National VOW Co-chair Janet Eaton. At this meeting, one audience member raised the issue of False Memory Syndrome about which there was much disagreement among the participants. It was this incident that probably raised a red flag for National VOW that Jeanne and Linda's work might be considered controversial. Linda C-R gave her opinion that embracing the Torture Free Ritual Abuse Circle, however uncomfortable, would be a strong Feminist stance, as opposed to the support of the patriarchal system which would prefer to deny the violence and abuse and even torture of women.

NSVOW Resolution Concerning the National VOW Board

As a response to the issue with National VOW, Linda C-R tabled a resolution, seconded by Norma Scott, to be sent to the National VOW April AGM. The resolution passed with two minor amendments (Appendix B.)

Betty Peterson raised questions relating to the National position, especially the claim that Torture Free Zone advocates had used National VOW name when not allowed. Pamela replied to these concerns, suggesting that the allegations of unauthorized use of VOW National's name have not been corroborated. The accusations have been repudiated by Jeanne and Linda in a response to National. e.g: In one case, it was the host group which cited VOW, not TFZ.

Final Remarks

It was agreed to extend meeting time to 5:00 to allow for final remarks:

1. There was a strong response from members present recognizing the difficult role taken on by the NSVOW Steering Committee and thanking them for dealing with the situation in a constructive and respectful fashion.
2. Betty stated her admiration for the work of Jeanne and Linda, thought she still feels she is not fully informed about the National issue with their work. She asked if she could attend a future Steering Committee meeting for further discussion, and that meeting will be scheduled.
2. Andrea D'Sylva raised the issue of what happens next with our local VOW chapter. Members suggested we wait until after the April AGM.
3. Maureen Vine asked who would be attending the April AGM to represent our chapter and table the resolution. She agreed to help with fundraising for travel costs by writing the request. Possible reps: Sandy Greenberg, Ruth Bishop, Janet Maybee.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 with singing of "It's Time" with Sandy Greenberg.

Carolyn Green
Minute Taker

Appendix A



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CANADIAN VOICE OF WOMEN FOR PEACE

June 17, 2008

Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald
Persons Against Ritual Abuse Torture
361 Prince Street Truro, Nova Scotia, B2N 1E4

Dear Jeanne and Linda,

I am writing on behalf of Janis Alton, VOW Co-Chair, and myself to convey the National VOW Board's very sincere regrets for the long delay in contacting you and to apologize for not involving you both sooner in the discussion concerning our association with Persons Against Ritual Abuse Torture, which the National Board undertook to review. We recognize the need to inform and consult, in a timely fashion, with any member of VOW whose work is a matter of discussion by the Board.

In the interim, the VOW Board has given serious thought as to how we can best address outstanding concerns around the issues that arose. Amongst these concerns was the matter of wording of the April 2007 minutes regarding your work and "ritual abuse torture". The Board has agreed that the problematic wording in the April 2007 minutes be "expunged". This is in accordance with The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (Robert's Rule of Order) and follows the practice of good governance to better ensure that no damage to any parties involved can ever come from them.

After our February meeting with you, the Board agreed that we would write to you with a copy of the February minutes. We sincerely apologize for the delay, which was directly related to lengthy board procedures and processes. We now include a copy of those minutes for your review- both the original and copy that will become the official copy for the files in which the reference to the April 2007 minutes has been "expunged" according to the Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure referred to above.

You may be interested to hear that we have for some time had a board commitment to review our by-laws for the next VOW General Meeting this fall. As part of that process, we aim to revise by-laws where necessary and to produce sound policies and guidelines which will provide clear procedures defining the relationship between the Board and VOW provincial groups and the role of our national organization vis-à-vis our local chapters. This process will also aim to provide clear frameworks that meet and adhere to the VOW Constitution and mission of our organization in making decisions on issues such as the one in which you were involved. The board has agreed that until new guidelines are in place any further discussion or further decisions by the Board about 'ritual abuse torture' and any decisions of a similar nature, will be put on hold.

When we have our VOW By-law committee in place, we would like to invite you to meet with the Committee to discuss concerns you have had with the process to ensure that a clearly defined decision-making process be put in place for the future. Before that time, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss what has transpired. I believe that Janet Maybee from Nova Scotia VOW and Andria Hill, NSVOW Rep on the Board may also be interested in joining us.

At your convenience, please advise if you would like to meet with us to share perspectives in the mutual interest of better addressing all of our concerns and for the overall well being of our organization, the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace. Looking forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

Janet M Eaton, PhD, Co-Chair, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
On behalf of Janis Alton, Co-Chair, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Appendix B

*At our March 29, 2009 Spring meeting, the Nova Scotia Voice of Women passed the following resolution to be presented to the membership at the Canadian Voice of Women Annual General Meeting taking place April 24-26, 2009 in Toronto.
Moved by Linda Christiansen Ruffman, Seconded by Norma Scott*

Whereas the Mission Statement of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace states “that since our foundation in 1960, the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace/ LaVoix Canadiennes des Femmes pour la Paix has worked locally, nationally and internationally on issues related to peace, social justice, human rights and development, always seeking to promote a woman's and a feminist's perspective.”

And whereas feminist principles include:

- A shared feminist perspective- that women should have an equal say in the affairs of the world; that women should always treat other women with respect.
- Shared emphasis on the values of peace, caring, empathy, and respect for others—values traditionally associated with women and undervalued in the mainstream.
- Respect for wisdom and experiential knowledge
- _Encouragement and valuing of diversity, difference, inclusiveness and open-mindedness
- Preference for resolving conflicts through peaceful methods; with decision making based on mutual respect and consensus.
- Support for action research & activities (projects that support or create actual social change
- Preference for work and projects that are co-operative, collaborative and inclusive
- Organization of groups in a way that is non-hierarchical, consultative, & noncompetitive

And whereas Article #16 of the By-laws of Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (Incorporated February 27, 1986, as amended at General Meeting October 6, 2002, as approved by Industry Canada and Federal Minister February 2006) states that “ All Directors are responsible for representing the needs of the provincial and local branches of the organization. These branches are autonomous to the extent that they may choose their own activities and projects within the overall objectives of the organization.”

And whereas in the experience of Nova Scotia Voice of Women throughout the 2008-2009 year, the actions of the National Board and staff have not been consistent with these principles

Therefore be it resolved that the National board in conjunction with its membership, develop, adopt and implement the following:

- A) A code of conduct for individual board members and staff
- B) Guidelines for ethical behaviour
- C) A conflict of interest policy
- D) An oath of confidentiality for board members and staff
- E) A feminist/non-hierarchical process for resolving differences within all levels of the organization
- F) Guidelines for vetting groups wishing to affiliate with VOW or use VOW accreditation

And be it further resolved that grassroots activities have historically been the basis for success of the Voice of Women and that the autonomy of Chapters as described in article 16 of the by-laws be affirmed and maintained.