Congress Report

Designing Our Future
Women's Learning, Education & Training
in Canada:
2000 & Beyond

March 2-5, 2000

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women

in collaboration with

The National Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues

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Executive Summary

Introduction

From March 2 to 5, 2000, the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) hosted a conference on women's learning, education and training in Canada, in collaboration with the National Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues (NWRG). The conference brought together a diversity of women from across Ontario and the rest of Canada to discuss the status of women's learning, education and training in this country and to strategize for the future.

The aim of the conference was to examine the current status of women's learning, education and training in Canada, and the continued role of a national organization addressing these issues. Six overarching theme areas were identified by CCLOW's Board of Directors, with input from the membership, and from the summer of 1999 on, open on-line discussions refined the focus of these areas and elicited sub-themes and important issues. Conference workshops were designed based on the outcomes of these discussions.

An auxiliary aim of the conference was to investigate a potential merging between CCLOW and the National Women's Reference Group (NWRG) on Labour Market Issues. The advantages and disadvantages of such a merger were weighed by members of both CCLOW and NWRG and, after much discussion, it was decided that such a merger would not take place at this time.

Themes
Learning, Work and Gender Equity
This discussion concerned itself with past and pending changes to Employment Insurance policies and eligibility, and with the loss of the "equity principle" in devolution of training responsibility from the federal to provincial governments. Workshops under this theme were: Gender-Based Analysis, Practical Approaches to Increasing Women's Participation in Technical and Non-traditional Occupations and Increasing Women's Participation in Trades and Technology Occupations and Blue Collar Work.

Technology and Women's Learning
As new information technologies affect all aspects of life in our culture, it is important for women to have access to these technologies. There exists a "digital divide": the haves and have-nots of access to and use of new technology. Also important is how learning and education are affected by new technologies and how this impacts on women. Workshops under this theme were: Women's Access to New Information Technologies, New Information and Communication Technologies and Women-Centred Learning, and Access to Learning Through Technology (The Community Learning Networks).

Women's Literacy Education

It is important to counter the trend to link literacy exclusively to employment and instead promote its use as a tool towards independence and empowerment. It is also important to defend learner-centred, goal-oriented curriculum, rather than a standardized approach for every program and every learner. Workshops under this theme presented examples of good programming that incorporates learner - centred curriculum. They were: Women, Literacy and Health, Basic Education for Women at Work, and Worker-Centred Learning Programs for Women and Their Families.

Learning and Trauma

Educators never just work with the minds of their students, but with their hearts and spirits too. While safe and holistic learning environments must be created for survivors of trauma, it is also important to provide support and resources for instructors. Issues of disability were also raised under this theme, in that counselling, resources and safe learning opportunities for those with disabilities are scarce. Workshops under this theme were: Too Scared to Learn, Supporting Practitioners, and Program Models.

Older Women and Learning

With changing demographics, the needs of older women learners are becoming more pronounced. Research indicates that older people thrive better with a continued sense of control over their lives. For some women, the later years are the first opportunity to seek more education, to change or start careers or pursue interests outside the family. One workshop was presented under this theme: The Four P's: Personal, Public, Professional and Political.

Supporting Women's Learning

Support mechanisms necessary to enable women to participate fully in education and learning opportunities include: childcare, financial support, transportation, flexible scheduling, counselling, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), etc. Of particular concern are the supports necessary for women with disabilities. Two workshops under this theme were Models for Integrated Family Programming and the Impact on Women Learners of Employment Insurance and Related Changes.

Sixteen concrete recommendations were culled from the workshop discussions and will be used by CCLOW to form the basis of further work and project proposals.

Open Space Technology

Using Open Space Technology during Saturday and Sunday discussions, conference facilitators elicited from participants a list of nineteen "burning" topics. Discussion groups were formed for fifteen of these topics and on Sunday, through democracy, six topics were identified as priorities, with the remaining subsumed under these six:

1. CCLOW and NWRG: Where Do We Go From Here?
2. Connecting to Corporate and other Community Economic Development Resources

3. The Role of Emotional and Spiritual Growth in Learning, Education and Training
4. Diversity in Education
5. Focus on Individual Needs: People with Disabilities
6. Pro-Active Labour Market Policy

Draft proposals for projects in these areas are appended to the report.

Results

A majority of conference goals were met, and more than sufficient ideas and information were produced to generate ongoing results. Firstly, the attendance and participation of a diversity of women from across Canada was achieved. Secondly, the six conference theme areas were thoroughly discussed among women with particular knowledge and experience in the fields. Thirdly, a number of possible partnerships were identified for productive work in these and other areas. Fourthly, the effectiveness of information technology as a way of working was explored and evaluated. Fifthly, a number of exciting and innovative project areas were identified, and the raw material for a new mandate and plan of action for CCLOW was gathered. Finally, CCLOW emerged from the conference with the energy and enthusiasm of a new Board of Directors which more closely reflects the diversity of the organization's constituency.

Evaluation

The conference was a success for the goals it achieved and the benefit it accrued to the women who attended. Comments on evaluations forms were consistently in the nature of "Very informative," "Very good," and "I learned lots." An area that was inadequately covered was the education and learning needs of women with disabilities. Due to lack of registration, a planned workshop on this area was cancelled, though support for the resource persons was provided and a discussion group was convened on Saturday. However, it cannot be left to women with disabilities alone to identify needs, act on issues, raise awareness and lobby for public recognition, support, accessibility and inclusion.

The exploration of technology revealed that though it is an effective tool to broaden, diversify and facilitate participation, it cannot replace face-to-face meetings. A clear conclusion was that traditional (face-to-face) and newer (technology-based) ways of working need to be combined for the best results.

It also became evident that for an effective organization, a one-time conference is no replacement for a stable operating base, permanent staff and regular meetings of a cohesive governing body. Organizers were obviously keen to make the most of time spent in the company of such experienced, innovative, active and thoughtful women; however, this meant that conference activity was affected by a significant time pressure, with an enormous agenda to be accomplished in three days. At the same time, many far reaching and less tangible objectives were achieved through the networking, information exchange, support and inspiration generated by such a gathering of participants.

Conclusion

Designing Our Future created an important moment in Canadian women's history. It facilitated the networking, collaboration, support, learning, growth and inspiration of some of Canada's most active, experienced, knowledgeable and thoughtful women, and, through this work identified numerous critical issues in women's learning, education and training. At minimum, these issues and the recommendations they generated indicate the significant amount of work still to be undertaken to achieve equality for women in learning and education. An important point to highlight is the inadequacy of having educational and training systems tied principally to labour market participation. Education and learning are fundamental to fulfilled and active existence in all aspects of society, beyond employment, and this is especially relevant for women whose participation in the labour market may be limited, such as older women, women with dependents and women with disabilities.

The motivation and scheme for this congress were drawn in part from CCLOW's founding congress in Banff, 1979. Twenty years later, much has been achieved but much remains to be done. It is imperative that a co-ordinated, national body continue to advocate for equitable learning and education for women. Those who gathered in Toronto in March, 2000, were diverse, dedicated, concerned and committed to the advancement of women's equality in all its manifestations. Their work and participation have indeed begun to design the future for women's learning, education and training in this country.

Sommaire

Introduction

Du 2 au 5 mars 2000, le Congrès canadien pour la promotion des études chez les femmes (CCPEF) à tenu, en collaboration avec le Groupe de référence national des femmes sur la problématique du marché du travail (GRNFPMT, NWRG en anglais), un colloque sur les questions touchant l'apprentissage, de l'éducation et la formation des femmes au Canada. Ce colloque à réuni des femmes provenant de l'Ontario et de partout au Canada, afin de discuter de la situation de l'apprentissage, de éducation et de la formation des femmes au pays et d'élaborer des stratégies pour l'avenir.

Ce colloque visait à examiner la situation actuelle en ce qui à trait à l'apprentissage, à éducation et à la formation des femmes au Canada et le mandat d'un éventuel organisme national qui aborderait cette problématique Le Conseil d'administration du CCPEF avait ciblé, avec la participation de ses membres, six secteurs thématiques principaux; depuis l'été 1999, des discussions ouvertes en ligne ont contribué à faire le point sur ces thèmes et ales préciser, de même qu'a soulever des thèmes secondaires et des questions

importantes. Les ateliers du colloque ont été identifiés à partir des résultats de ces discussions.

Le colloque visait également à évaluer une possible fusion entre le CCPEF et le GRNFPMT. Les membres de ces deux organismes ont pésé les avantages et les désavantagés d'une telle fusion, et suite à des longues discussions, il à été décidé qu'elle n'aurait pas lieu dans l'immédiat.

Thèmes

Équité en emploi et en apprentissage (analyse basée sur le genre)

Cette discussion était centrée sur l'inquiétude que soulèvent les changements déjà apportes et en cours aux politiques de l'Assurance Emploi et à l'éligibilité à ce même service, de même que la perte du « principe d'équité » découlant du transfert de la responsabilité de la formation du gouvernement fédéral aux gouvernements provinciaux. Sous ce thème, on retrouvait les ateliers suivants: Analyse basée sur le genre, Approches pratiques pour accroître la participation des femmes aux techniques et aux métiers non traditionnels et Accroître la participation des femmes au commerce et à la technologie et au travail des cols bleus.

Technologies et femmes en apprentissage

Puisque les nouvelles technologies de l'information affectent tous les aspects de la vie dans notre culture, il est important que les femmes aient accès a ces technologies. Mais il y à cependant une « barrière numérique »: d'une part, les personnes qui ont accès a cette nouvelle technologie et l'utilisent, et d'autre part relies qui en sont privées ou ne savent pas l'utiliser. Il est aussi important de noter à quel point l'apprentissage et l'éducation sont touches par les nouvelles technologies et l'impact que cette situation à sur les femmes. Des ateliers touchaient ce thème: Accès des femmes aux nouvelles technologies de l'information, Nouvelles technologies d'information et de communication et formation axée sur les femmes de même que Accès aux études par la technologie (réseaux locaux de formation).

Femmes et alphabétisation

Il importe d'aller à l'encontre de la tendance à établir un lien exclusif entre l'employabilité et alphabétisation; il faut plutôt promouvoir celle-ci en tant qu'outil qui aide à accéder à l'indépendance et à l'émancipation. Il est également important de privilégier un curriculum axé sur l'apprenante et orienté vers un but précis plutôt qu'une approche standardisée pour tous les programmes et toutes les apprenantes. Dans les ateliers où l'on à discuté sur ce thème, des exemples de bonnes programmations qui incorporent un curriculum axé sur l'apprenante ont été présentés. Il s'agissait de Femmes, alphabétisation et santé, Education de base pour les femmes au travail et Programmes d'études axés sur les personnes au travail et destinés aux femmes et à leur famille.

Apprentissage et traumatismes

L'enseignant ne s'adresse pas seulement a l'intellect, a la « tête » de ses étudiants, mais aussi à leur coeur et a leurs sentiments. Non seulement doit-on créer un environnement d'apprentissage sécuritaire et holistique pour les personnes victimes de traumatismes, mais

il faut aussi fournir du soutien et des ressources aux éducateurs. Les questions touchant les personnes handicapées ont également été sou levées pendant cette discussion, puisque les services d'orientation, les ressources et les opportunités d'apprentissage sécuritaire destines aux personnes souffrant d'un handicap sont peu nombreuses. Les ateliers Trop panique pour apprendre, Professionnels aidant et Programmes modèles traitaient de ces questions.

Apprentissage chez les femmes plus âgées
Suivant les changements démographiques, les besoins en formation des femmes plus âgées deviennent plus prononcés. La recherche indique que les personnes plus âgées réussissent mieux quand elles sentent qu'elles exercent un contrôle sur leur vie. Pour certaines femmes, l'âge offre une première opportunité de retourner aux études, d'initier ou de réorienter une carrière, ou de s'adonner a des intérêts hors de la famille. Un atelier se concentrait sur ce thème: Les quatre P: vie personnelle, publique, professionnelle et politique.

Soutien aux femmes en apprentissage
Les mécanismes de soutien nécessaires pour permettre aux femmes de participer pleinement aux possibilités d'éducation et de formation comprennent les services de garde, le soutien financier, le transport, les horaires flexibles, les services d'orientation, l'évaluation et la reconnaissance des acquis, etc. Le soutien nécessaire aux femmes souffrant d'un handicap soulève un problème particulier. Les ateliers Modèles pour une programmation intégrant la famille et Impact de l'Assurance Emploi et des changements qui s'y rapportent sur les femmes en formation.

Les discussions de l'atelier ont donné lieu à seize recommandations concrètes qui formeront la base du travail a venir et des propositions de projet du CCPEF.

Espace Technologique Ouvert
Utilisant un espace technologique ouvert pendant les discussions du samedi et du dimanche, les animatrices du colloque ont obtenu des participantes une liste de dix-neuf sujets « chauds ». Quinze parmi ces thèmes ont fait l'objet de discussions de groupe et le dimanche on a identifié par vote les six thèmes suivants comme prioritaires et englobant le reste des sujets discutes :

1. CCPEF et GRNFPMT: que fait-on maintenant?
2. Rejoindre l'entreprise et d'autres ressources de développement économique communautaire
3. Rôle du développement émotionnel et spirituel dans l'apprentissage, l'éducation et la formation
4. Diversité dans éducation
5. Se centrer sur les besoins individuels: personnes souffrant de handicaps
6. Politique pro-active du marché du travail

Des ébauches de propositions de projets touchant ces secteurs ont été annexées au rapport.

Résultats

La majorité des objectifs du colloque ont été atteints; des idées et de l'information ont été apportées plus qu'il n'en fallait pour en arriver aux résultats actuels. Premièrement, la présence et la participation d'une diversité de femmes de partout au Canada a été un succès. Deuxièmement, les six secteurs thématiques du colloque ont été discutés à fond avec des femmes ayant des connaissances particulières et une expérience sur le terrain. Troisièmement, des partenariats éventuels ont été identifiés en vue de réaliser un travail productif dans ces secteurs ou autres domaines connexes. Quatrièmement, l'efficacité de la technologie de l'information comme mode de fonctionnement a été explorée et évaluée. Cinquièmement, plusieurs projets stimulants et innovateurs ont été ciblés et du matériel de base a été recueilli pour définir un nouveau mandat et un plan d'action du CCPEF. Finalement, le colloque a apporté au CCPEF l'énergie et l'enthousiasme d'un nouveau conseil d'administration qui reflète plus fidèlement la diversité des membres de l'organisme.

Évaluation

Le colloque a été un succès: les buts ont été atteints et les femmes qui y ont participé en ont tiré beaucoup de profit. Les commentaires inscrits sur les questionnaires d'évaluation se résumaient fondamentalement a « très instructif », « très bon » et « j'ai beaucoup appris». On note un sujet qui n'a pas été suffisamment traité : il s'agit des besoins en matière d'éducation et d'apprentissage des femmes souffrant d'un handicap. Un atelier sur ce sujet avait été prévu mais a été annulé, étant donné le peu d'inscriptions, et ce malgré le soutien offert aux personnes ressources et la planification d'un groupe de discussion pour le samedi. Il n'incombe toutefois pas seulement aux femmes souffrant de handicap de cerner les besoins, de faire face aux problèmes, de conscientiser et de faire pression pour obtenir la reconnaissance et le soutien du public, l'accessibilité aux services et l'inclusion sociale.

L'exploration de la technologie a révélé que même s'il s'agit d'un outil efficace pour élargir, diversifier et faciliter la participation, cela ne peut remplacer les rencontres en personne. Une conclusion s'impose: les façons de travailler traditionnelles (en personne) et nouvelles (basées sur la technologie) ont besoin d'être combinées pour obtenir de meilleurs résultats.

Il s'avère également évident que pour qu'une organisation soit efficace, un simple colloque ne peut pas remplacer une base stable de travail, du personnel permanent et des rencontres régulières d'un groupe cohérent de direction. De toute évidence, les organisatrices tenaient a tirer le maximun du temps passé en compagnie de femmes aussi expérimentées, créatives, actives et réfléchies. Les activités du colloque étaient cependant soumises à de fortes contraintes de temps, étant donné l'horaire très chargé de ces trois journées. Par le fait même, plusieurs objectifs moins tangibles et à plus large portee ont été atteints par le biais de travail en réseaux, d'échanges d'information, de soutien et d'inspiration suscitée par un tel rassemblement de participantes.

Conclusion

Le colloque « Créons notre avenir » s'est révélé un moment important dans l'histoire des

femmes canadiennes. Ce colloque a rendu plus facile le travail en réseau, la collaboration, le soutien, l'apprentissage, le développement et a été source d'inspiration pour des femmes canadiennes des plus actives, expérimentées, cultivées et réfléchies ; le travail accompli a aussi permis d'identifier plusieurs questions essentielles en matière d'apprentissage, d'éducation et de formation des femmes. À tout le moins, ces problèmes et les recommandations qui en découlent laissent voir l'immense travail qu'il reste à entreprendre pour obtenir l'égalité des femmes en matière d'apprentissage et éducation. Un point important est à souligner: l'inadéquation des systèmes d'éducation et de formation, liés principalement à la participation au marché du travail. L'éducation et l'apprentissage sont des éléments fondamentaux pour mener une vie active et remplie, dans toutes les sphères de la société, et ce au-delà du travail; ceci concerne particulièrement les femmes dont la participation au marche du travail peut être limitée, comme c'est le cas des femmes plus âgées, des femmes qui ont des personnes à charge et de celles souffrant d'un handicap.

La motivation et le projet de ce colloque ont été ébauchés en partie lors du colloque de fondation du CCPEF à Banff en 1979. Vingt ans plus tard, beaucoup de choses on été réalisées, mais il reste encore beaucoup à faire. Il est essentiel qu'un groupe bien coordonné à l'échelle nationale continue à plaider en faveur d'un système éducation et d'apprentissage équitable pour les femmes. Celles qui se sont réunies à Toronto en mars 2000 provenaient de divers horizons, étaient dévouées, préoccupées et engagées en faveur de l'avancement de égalité des femmes dans toutes ses manifestations. Avec leur travail et leur participation elles ont sans aucun doute commencé à créer l'avenir en ce qui concerne l'apprentissage, éducation et la formation des femmes au pays.

Introduction

From March 2 to 5, 2000, the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) hosted a conference on women's learning, education and training in Canada, in collaboration with the National Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues (NWRG). The conference brought together a diversity of women from across Ontario and the rest of Canada to discuss the status of women's learning, education and training in this country and to strategize for the future.

CCLOW has a twenty year history of addressing women's learning and educational needs in Canada. Prior to its establishment in 1979 by a committed group of feminist educators, no other organization in the country, perhaps in North America, exclusively addressed issues of learning and education as they affect women. Since that time, a guiding principle of the organization has been that, as the educational system and opportunities to learn are fundamental components of Canadian society, it is imperative that women's access to this system and these opportunities, is equitable. The work and research of CCLOW has focused on identifying and alleviating barriers to women's learning and it is true to say that the lives of many hundreds of women across Canada have been touched directly by

this work.

By the late 1990s, in an atmosphere of threatened survival (through the reduction of public funding) and the transfer of political responsibility for training and education from the federal to the provincial governments, the need to examine the continued role of a national organization addressing learning and education became apparent. In the spirit of CCLOW's founding congress twenty years earlier, organizers planned a weekend conference to identify and examine pressing issues and to map out a possible future for the organization. As preparation for this congress, six overarching theme areas were identified by CCLOW's Board of Directors, with input from the organization's membership, and, from the summer of 1999 on, open on-line discussions were held to refine the focus of these areas and to elicit sub-themes and important issues. Workshops for the conference were designed based on the outcomes of these discussions. Information from both the on-line discussions and the workshops is summarized in this report, and a list of recommendations culled from the workshop discussions is provided at the end of this section. In addition, Appendix A includes the potential projects developed through input from participants in each theme area.

An auxiliary aim of the conference was to investigate a potential merging with NWRG as a strategy for the future. CCLOW has been severely affected by cuts to its operational funding. Ten years ago, it was a vibrant, national organization with active networks in every province and territory, a strong national voice, the respect of policy-makers across the country, a national office in Toronto and a staff of five who, with the participation of dedicated volunteers, consistently executed ground-breaking projects and produced unique resources. Today, the spirit of the organization survives in a virtual connection of women across Canada, with no physical office space or centralized locus of operation, a significantly reduced membership and survival dependent on the liberal commitment of concerned volunteers. Those volunteers, the membership of CCLOW and many other women across Canada feel it is extremely important for such an organization to continue to exist. Still no other body in this country focuses exclusively on issues related to women's education and learning and, in CCLOW's twenty year history, some of those issues (such as violence, literacy, technology, training and labour market issues, and women's ways of learning) have only begun to be addressed.

The National Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues addresses women's training issues directly related to the labour market and to employment. NWRG was born out of CCLOW's advocacy to establish equitable representation on the Canadian Labour Force Development Board. With the devolution of training responsibility to the provinces and the subsequent dissolution of the CLFDB, the time seemed right to propose that the two organizations unite to collectively address women's learning, education and training issues. The Board of NWRG agreed to consider the possibility and to participate in CCLOW's planned congress. Prior to the congress, discussions by the boards of the two organizations took place on-line and by teleconference. At the congress itself, the advantages and disadvantages of a merger were weighed by members of the two organizations, and other interested parties, primarily during Saturday's discussion period.

A summary of this discussion (at the congress) and its result is included in this report.

In addition to a workshop format for the congress, the CCLOW Board decided to make use of "Open Space Technology." This process allows for the free flow of ideas and concerns from congress participants as a way to ensure that all possible issues are identified. As well, through self-selection, Open Space Technology offers a means to gauge the level of energy, interest and commitment to particular issues. A complete list of issues identified through Open Space Technology is included in this report, as well as recommendations culled from the resulting discussions.

Designated Themes

CCLOW's Board of Directors, with input from the organization's membership, identified six theme areas as key issues for women's learning, education and training in Canada. Through on-line discussions, hosted through AlphaCom's web capabilities at AlphaPlus, topics for workshop sessions were identified. Following is a summary, under each theme, of discussions from both the on-line dialogues and the congress workshops, organized by workshop topic. However, there are many intersecting subjects and issues throughout all the themes.

Learning, Work and Gender Equity

This stream of discussion concerned itself largely with past and pending changes to Employment Insurance (EI) policies and eligibility, and with the loss of the "equity principle" in devolution of training responsibility from the federal to provincial governments. Results documented in Voices from the Field, produced by the NWRG, indicate that, a) fewer women are availing themselves of training opportunities; b) provincial and federal policies are undercutting services to women as there is no longer any requirement for women's equal access to training; and c) providers of training directed specifically to women are disappearing from the field. Despite years of rhetoric about women's equal access to higher paying, more stable jobs, a huge percentage of women apprentices are still concentrated in "pink ghettos" and marketing efforts for jobs in the new field of Information Technology (IT) are unlikely to attract women. Topics identified for conference workshops were: Gender-Based Analysis; Practical Approaches to Increasing Women's Participation in Technical and Non- Traditional Occupations; and Increasing Women's Participation in Trades and Technology Occupations and Blue Collar Work.

Gender-Based Analysis

In the on-line discussions, gender-based analysis (GBA) was identified as an important policy instrument to strengthen the government's commitment to equity and as a means to assess whether programs meet women's needs. Joan McFarland, professor in the Department of Economics at St. Thomas University and a former President of CCLOW, was invited to present findings from her research on women's access to training in New

Brunswick. Helene Dwyer-Renaud, Director of the Gender-Based Analysis Directorate, Status of Women Canada, was asked to discuss GBA and the role of her directorate in implementing it.

Joan McFarland's research focused on the unavailability of government sponsorship as a barrier to training. Information from the public sector indicates that women's access to training has been driven by government sponsorship and with that sponsorship virtually eliminated by the 1996 EI changes, the impact has been great. Sponsorship was supposed to have been replaced through the Skills Loans and Grants program but the federal government has not yet found a financial institution willing to underwrite the loans portion, resulting in assistance only for those eligible for grants. Gender-specific data shows that, to date, males in New Brunswick have taken greater advantage of these grants. Other assistance programs are becoming targeted to more and more narrow populations, reducing the number of those who are eligible. Very little gender based data is available from the private sector. This is important to note given that there has been a 100% increase in the number of private training agencies in New Brunswick since 1991.

Joan McFarland's research can be found at: www.yorku.ca/research/crws/network (under Publications).

Hélène Dwyer-Renaud described gender-based analysis as a means to understand the different socio-economic effects of policies on women and men, and to question underlying assumptions. The federal government established the Gender-Based Analysis Directorate in 1995. The principles of GBA used by the directorate are that: women and men have different needs; women are not a homogenous group; inequality has a systemic and structural nature; men can be disadvantaged by gender differences; GBA is only part of an approach to equitable policies. The directorate has also developed a pool of "Gender Equality Indicators" and more are in development, though these have not been fully utilized to evaluate programs and policies. It has been challenging to circulate information and research findings widely enough so policy-makers utilize the information. Effective monitoring and evaluation is needed, as is pressure to ensure the directorate plays an active role in all policy development.

The Gender-Based Analysis Directorate can be found on the website for Status of Women Canada: www.swc-cfc.gc.ca.
Or contacted by mail at: Constitution Square, 350 Albert St., Suite 520, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 1C3.

Practical Approaches to Increasing Women's Participation in Technical and Non-Traditional Occupations
Jane Wilson, of the newly established Women's Technical Institute (WTI) in Rexdale, Ontario, and Shirley Muir, Executive Director of the Women's Television Network Foundation (WTN), located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, were asked to present information on routing women into technical and non-traditional occupations. Program participants from

WTI also participated in the presentation, sharing their experiences.

The WTN Foundation is a private, non-profit educational institution whose mandate is to advance women in the broadcasting industry. The Foundation currently has four separate programs:

- *Women's Technical Internship*: a six month program to train college graduates as camera operators, sound technicians, etc.

- *Girls TV Camp*: a summer camp for girls aged 12-14 to teach them lighting, audio, camera and editing skills to produce their own videos.

- *The WTN dowment* provides financial assistance to women already in the business to upgrade their skills.

- *Cross Cultural Workshop*: an equity and diversity workshop for girls, women, educators and employers who have received WTN funding in the previous year.

The programs work for women and girls because of the following principles:

- flexibility (in fee payment, scheduling, location)
- outreach (to diverse communities)
- research (staying in touch with issues in the field)
- networking (maintaining connections with participants, developing partnerships with colleges)
- employment connections (supports and connections to finding work after training), and
- personal approach (connecting participants and WTN management, creating a personal environment).

Muir believes in training educators as a way to reach girls when they are young, so their opportunities are not limited to a one-shot summer camp. It's also important to draw attention to the issues; ie. to get attention and recognition (via the media) for the barriers women face and the solutions being created.

The Women's Television Network Foundation can be found at: www.wtn.ca.

WTI is an education service of Rexdale MicroSkills and was opened in September 1999. It offers training for IT (Information Technology) occupations such as network management, web design and database design to women who are unemployed, underemployed, laid off, re-entering the workplace, sole support parents, immigrant, racial minority, older, social assistance recipients or survivors of abuse. WTI addresses both the gender gap in the IT field as well as the shortage of IT professionals.

Factors that make the program work for women are that it

- is women only

- has women instructors
- uses learning designs and course content relevant to women
- is flexible
- provides supports such as financial assistance, childcare, settlement services and counselling, and
- conducts advocacy with all parties who influence women's access to IT training and employment.

WTI can be found at: www.womentechinstitute.org (under construction), or emailed at: jane@womentechinstitute.org.

Discussion after these presentations focused on the many barriers remaining to women's equitable access to technical or non-traditional work. Women need supportive and informed counselling about new careers, financial support, access to information about new careers, access to training programs, commitment to gender equity from both the private and public sectors, and strong reinforcement, through media or public service campaigns, about women's abilities and opportunities to succeed.

Increasing Women IS Participation in Trades and Technology Occupations and Blue Collar Work

Trades, technology occupations and blue collar work (TTO/BCW) were identified in the on line discussions as an area where women are far from reaching their full access and potential. Less than 10% of technicians and technologists in Canada are women. Tamara Knox, President of Women Into Trades and Technology National Network (WITT -NN), and Eleanor Ross, Consultant with WITT's Construction Technology for Women Project, came to co-present information on facilitating women's entry into TTO/BCW.

WITT was created in the 1970s to increase the number of women employed in TTO/BCW. It provides training and consulting services to employers, industries, unions, government and educators, including gender analysis of marketing materials and publications, employment referrals for trained women to employers, entrepreneurial training for women, and employment equity training. WITT -NN also develops innovative projects and resources, including curriculum resources, training manuals and a set of national standards and guidelines for entry level training and exploratory courses.

WITT-NN can be found at: www.wittnn.com.

Technology and Women's Learning

New information technologies are affecting all aspects of life in our culture. It is important for women to have access to the new technology in order not to be "left behind" in the information revolution. A concept raised in the on-line discussion is the "digital divide": the have and have-nots of access to and use of new technology. It is' also important to consider how learning and education are affected by use of new technologies and how this impacts on women. The three workshops presented under this theme were:

Women's Access to New Information Technologies; New Information and Communication Technologies and Women-Centred Learning;' and Access to Learning Through Technology: The Community Learning Networks.

Women's Access to New Information Technologies
Jo Sutton of Women 'Space, a quarterly magazine about issues of access to technology, and Fiona MacCool, Internet Project Developer with Advocates for Community-Based Training and Education for Women (ACTEW), were invited to present perspectives on women's access to information technologies.

Women 'Space and the Women's Internet Campaign were founded out of a concern to raise women's participation in and access to internet technology. There has to date been no in-depth gender-based analysis of internet activity and consequently there is very little understanding of women's internet use and expectations. Ellen Balka conducted an informal study of public access internet sites in Vancouver, and concluded that two-thirds of the users were male. The internet is a powerful tool, but it need not be top down like a corporation selling something or government giving information. We can use its potential for multi-way communication. As well, once there was a left wing tradition of reading and learning in preparation for a weekly meeting and for activism. The internet offers the opportunity to do that again in innovative ways, the motivation for which is partly provided by content, partly by working together.

Women' Space can be found at: www.womenspace.ca.

Fiona MacCool introduced ACTEW's new website. ACTEW is an umbrella organization whose members are community-based education and training organizations across Ontario. The aim of ACTEW's website is to be an interactive source of news, information and resources on issues of women's education and training in Ontario. Other organizations can post news, events and materials, and advocacy work can be accomplished through sharing information on-line. The site also has the capacity for on-line conferences and private discussions. Fiona also shared information about VolNet, a federal government initiative administered by Industry Canada to improve the voluntary sector's access to information technology and related skills and tools. VolNet's goal is to offer Internet connectivity, including computer equipment and Internet skills development and support, to 10,000 voluntary organizations by March 31, 2001. More information can be found at www.volnet.org.

ACTEW can be found at: www.actew.web.ca.

New Information and Communication Technologies and Women-Centred Learning
The purpose of this workshop was to look at the new technologies and their relation to women's learning-how women can learn about new technology and how new technology affects women's learning and employment. Ruth Mitchell presented information on an innovative program of the Manitoba Women's Directorate, called "Power Up," and Heather Menzies, feminist author and critic in the area of new technologies, discussed

some of the affects of new technologies on women's lives.

Power Up was developed by the Manitoba Department of Education and Training and the Manitoba Women's Directorate, in response to the fact that two-thirds of all jobs in the province require basic computer literacy. As the primary occupational categories for women are in sales, teaching, waitressing or service industry, they have far fewer workplace opportunities to develop computer skills. Power Up is a fifteen hour introductory computer course available to all women in Manitoba and provided free of charge in participants' home communities. Initial interest in the course was immediate and widespread and evenly split between urban and rural locations. Each participant receives a comprehensive manual for classroom use and as a take-home resource; the courses and manuals are offered in both French and English.

Power Up can be contacted at: 1-800-263-0234.

Heather Menzies' presentation raised the question of what women are training for when they are learning to use computers. There has been a fundamental shift from a nation-based industrial economy to a fragmented global cyber economy with no commitment to equality. As many as 2/3 of women who are currently working with computers may be on the disempowered side of the digital divide, controlled by the technology rather than controlling it. It is important to resist educational initiatives that train people to "do" rather than "think". Women don't want just access to new technologies, but access as thinking, participating subjects.

Heather Menzies can be contacted at: hmenzies@ccs.carleton.ca.

Access to Learning Through Technology: Community Learning Networks
The purpose of this workshop was to present information on the Community Learning Networks (CLN) Initiative sponsored by the Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) and Human Resources Development Canada. The CLN Initiative provides funding to community organizations for pilot projects that enhance community development and the lives of constituents by supporting and encouraging lifelong learning. These pilot projects may be new models or may build on existing models that other communities can learn from or adapt. A community can be defined geographically or by interest.

OLT is particularly interested in new ways of providing access to learning opportunities through new technologies and in developing creative uses of learning technology in communities. Funding of up to $100,000 per year for three years is available, on a 50% cost-shared basis (volunteer and in-kind contributions can be included). In some cases, development funding of up to $25,000 (not cost-shared) for six months may be available to develop a comprehensive proposal and business plan.

More information can be found at: http://olt-bta.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca, Office of Learning

Technologies, 15 Eddy Street, Hull PQ, K1A 0MS, 819.953.0300, olthrdc@ibm.net.

Women's Literacy Education

An important trend that was noted in the literacy on-line discussions is the push to link literacy to employment, rather than as a step towards independence and empowerment. Also identified was the importance of learner-centred, goal-oriented curriculum, not a standardized approach for every program and every learner. Resources available in order to maintain a learner-centred curriculum are much better than twenty years ago, and it was suggested that examples of good programming be presented at the congress. Workshops under this theme, then, were: Women, Literacy and Health; Basic Education for Women at Work; and Worker- centred Learning Programs for Women and Their Families.

Women, Literacy and Health

The Centre for the Study of Adult Literacy at Georgia State University has carried out research and initiated projects that link levels of health with levels of literacy. Daphne Greenberg, Associate Director of the Centre, spoke about the assumptions of medical professionals, what is lost in communication, and how the health of those with low literacy is jeopardized as a result. Sometimes a slight difference in how a question is asked or what information is requested affects a diagnosis. If the directions on a prescription aren't clearly understood, they aren't followed correctly or aren't followed at all. Less access to clear information about various illnesses can lead to greater degrees of fear and misunderstanding, and possible reluctance to seek treatment.

In response to these problems the Centre has developed a number of strategies and resources. In the area of preventative health, they have developed resources that use simple pictures along with clearly worded text to illustrate precautionary measures. They have also made use of video; for example, creating a short video for elderly African American women on the importance of regular mammograms. Resources for literacy instructors, and for health care professionals, are also available, and the Centre has worked with the American Medical Association to have low literacy recognized as a health issue. One possible strategy is to form referral networks between literacy programs and physicians, so that referrals for patients with low literacy skills can be made in the same way as referrals for the treatment of physical conditions.

The Centre for the Study of Adult Literacy can be found at: http://education.gsu.edu/CSAL (under construction) or emailed at alcdgg@langate.gsu.edu.

Basic Education for Women at Work

As women have less opportunity or time to pursue training outside family and work responsibilities, it was considered important to hear about alternative strategies for reaching women. Representatives from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) were invited to present information on their workplace literacy programs, but were compelled to cancel. Instead, Karen Geraci presented information about the Preparatory Training Program of Toronto and Judith Bond spoke about the Workplace Training and Services of

the Toronto District School Board.

The Preparatory Training Program (PTP) is the single largest funded literacy program in Ontario. Sixty percent of the clients are social assistance recipients and are routed to PTP through Ontario Works. Most live below the poverty line and most of the women are younger than 34 years of age. The program is narrowly focused to work towards the quickest route to employment and off social assistance. Though this may be limited, it was suggested that where the regular school system allows for thirteen years to learn the basics, adult learners don't have the same luxury of time. As well, instructors have found that learning works best when it begins with the concrete or specific skills and works toward the abstract.

PTP can be found at: www.ptp.ca.

Workplace Training and Services (WTS) is an initiative of the Toronto District School Board which otters a variety of training, including basic skills in language and math, to employers and employees in the workplace. Ontario, which cancelled its extensive workplace program in 1997, is now the only province without a government-sponsored initiative for such training and so WTS must provide its training on a cost-recovery basis. Broadly, the issues covered in WTS training are diversity, clear language and design, basic skills, supervisory approaches, organizational skills, job task analysis, problem solving and change management. Programs are custom designed to meet the needs of a specific workplace and to build on what learners already know. WTS also provides workplace training in areas of human rights and workplace harassment.

WTS can be found at: www.trainingwts.com.

Worker-Centred Learning Programs for Women and Their Families
An innovative way to provide training for women is to incorporate the needs of families. Ann Haney and Florence Marquez of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, Local 459 (in Winnipeg), presented information on a Learning Experience Centre (LEC) which offers training in basic skills, including computer literacy and ESL, to union members and their families.

In order to run LEC, the union had to negotiate agreements with several parties: workplace management, federal and provincial governments (as funders) and union members (whose dues partly fund LEC). The LEC mission is "to provide members and their families with a warm and friendly environment, to meet individual needs and to give women opportunities to develop foundation skills." The attempt is to create a "home away from home" so learners feel comfortable and welcome. Organizers found that a secondary benefit to workplace training has been increased connection between workers, who may have worked side by side before and never spoken. As well, students have gone on to other studies, have become more involved in their union and, in some cases, have become leaders at work and in the union.

Future goals of LEG are to become self-sufficient (as funds are always in question), to

find ways to share the curriculum and the learning from the LEG, and to develop more networks with other unions, training agencies and literacy and family programs.

The LEG of UNITE Local 459 can be contacted at: 204-956-4868 or [ahaney@mb.sympatico.ca.](mailto:ahaney@mb.sympatico.ca)

Learning and Trauma

An important point made in the on-line discussion was that educators never just work with the minds of learners, but with their hearts and spirits too. When we recognize that memories and information are carried not just intellectually but physically, even at the cellular level, it becomes evident how trauma, past or present, interferes with the ability to learn. But while safe and holistic learning environments must be created for survivors of trauma, it is important also to provide support and resources for instructors. Issues of disability were also raised, in that counselling, resources and safe learning opportunities for those with disabilities are scarce. The workshops presented under this theme all came under the rubric of Implications of Trauma and Violence for Women's Learning, with the subheadings: Too Scared to Learn; Supporting Practitioners; and Program Models.

Too Scared to Learn: Women, Violence and Education

Jenny Horsman, author of *Too Scared to Learn*, facilitated this workshop on the effects of violence on women's learning. Participants shared their experiences of working with women survivors of violence, especially to validate the large impact that trauma has on learning. Women believe that they cannot learn or accomplish more than the person whom they believe has power over them. Partners and family members (including adult children) are often threatened by a woman's desire to improve her life. Women themselves often fear their own success, having been told so frequently that they can only fail.

These challenges in learners' lives present strains for instructors as well. It's painful when women give up, quit the program. It's frustrating to work in opposition to the influence of another party outside the learning environment, whose pull on a student is greater than her own desire to learn; it's difficult to maintain a clear distinction between the learner's experience of violence and an instructor's own sense of fear and threat, to not be overwhelmed by the disclosures of violence and trauma.

Participants on-line and in the workshop raised the question of how appropriate and possible it is to allow the issue of violence in the classroom. Some learners need to make disclosures before any learning can begin; others want to be safe from hearing or re-living stories of violence and trauma. Some learners are overwhelmed by realizing that the violence they live in is not "normal". Participants shared their strategies for coping, including:

- maintaining hope and sharing it with learners
- exploring the intersections between therapy and education
- keeping the classroom door open to women who may return after an absence
- raising awareness and visibility of the issue

- supporting one another.

Resources that would help include:

- financial aid for supportive services to women (childcare, counselling, transportation, living allowance)
- training for staff and instructors to learn how to listen, ask questions and remain clearheaded when dealing with violence in the classroom
- a means to communicate with policy makers to facilitate their acceptance and understanding of the impact of violence on learning.

Jenny Horsman's research can be found at: www.jennyhorsman.com.

Supporting Practitioners
The intention of this workshop was to share ideas for supporting practitioners who work with survivors of violence. However, the workshop itself became an activity of support by becoming a (modified) talking circle in which each member shared a challenge they had faced, how they had dealt with it and the successes that resulted. The circle was led by Priscilla George, an Aboriginal Literacy Consultant from the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation in southern Ontario. Janet Isserlis, of the National Institute for Literacy Fellowship Project in Rhode Island, agreed that the time for her presentation be given over to the talking circle.

Important points drawn from the stories shared in the circle are:

- it is important to stay in touch with the spiritual and emotional side of one's work
- violence, trauma, abuse cannot be treated as a separate part of learners' lives
- fear needs to be dissipated before learning can begin
- mainstream learning methods don't work for Aboriginal learners
- mainstream teaching practices are a subordinating experience for most women
- communicating hope can facilitate learning
- finding a balance between "sticking to the agenda" and following one's instinct is challenging but important
- safety cannot always be created (it is sometimes necessary to know how to face trauma and violence and move on).

Janet Isserlis's research can be found at: www.jennyhorsman.com (under Links). Priscilla George can be contacted at: priscilla.george@sympatico.ca.

Program Models
Helen McPhaden presented information from an innovative program in Saskatchewan called Stardale Women's Group. Stardale serves Aboriginal women and women in poverty, and was created specifically to facilitate healing. The program is based on a bridging model, to help women with life skills, to provide counselling, and preparation for further training. As creative production can be a powerful healing process, the program

incorporates a high degree of creative activity, such as painting, drawing, clay work, sculpture, wicker work, quilting and dyeing.

Much of the program is carried out in a non-hierarchical way, in circles, with women sharing the decision-making. A lot of celebrations and feasts are organized to mark healing, a passing or to give thanks. Provision of transportation and food is part of the program support; women coming to the program are often hungry. The success rate for completion of the program is very high, with only a 5% drop-out rate. Last year the Group incorporated as a foundation to facilitate fundraising to carry on the project.

Stardale can be contacted at: [stardale@sk.sympatico.ca.](mailto:stardale@sk.sympatico.ca)

Older Women and Learning

With the changing demographics in Canada, the needs of older women learners are becoming more pronounced. Women live longer than men and, contrary to stereotypes of decline and disease with increasing age, many women strive to maintain vital, active and engaging lives well into their later years. Research indicates that older people thrive better with a continued sense of control over their lives. For some women, the later years are their first opportunity to seek more education, to change or start careers, or pursue interests outside the family. At the same time, women in the over-50 age group have the hardest time finding employment. One workshop was presented under this theme.

The Four P's: Personal, Public, Professional and Political

Workshop facilitator Marie Munro, from Red Deer, Alberta, was introduced to the concept of the "crone" while completing her Masters in Education as a mature student. She has carried out research and written on the subject, and avidly encourages older women to reclaim the term as one of strength, power and wisdom. She recommended *The Crone: Woman of Age*, *Wisdom and Power* by Barbara Walker, as well as *Celebrating Ourselves: A Crone Ritual Book*, edited by E.M. Ward.

The demographics of age in North America are changing as the baby boomer generation ages. By July 2001, the projected population of women over 65 will be 8.59%; a lot more women than men survive into years over 85. These statistics mean that the need for services for older people, including adult education, will significantly increase; it also means that with greater numbers older women may have a louder voice and more clout. Older women may need to become more political and become active in organizations such as the Canadian Association of Retired People (CARP).

The four "P's" refer to four contexts of women in education: personal, political, public and professional. These contexts intersect and influence each other. Older women face not only sexism but ageism, yet can take a number of steps to counter the detrimental influences of such oppression:

- stay physically active

- maintain mental activity through games, crosswords, talk shows
- maintain a support network of friends and relatives of various ages
- socialize
- join groups
- become politically active
- be outrageous and self confident
- be a role model.

Educators can support older women who are returning to learning by:

- being a true facilitator
- building on the skills and experience older women already have
- providing women-only programs, especially in computers
- being role models as assertive, confident crones.

Marie Munro can be contacted at: [rmmunro@telusplanet.net.](mailto:rmmunro@telusplanet.net)

Supporting Women's Learning

This theme area is concerned with the support mechanisms necessary to enable women to participate fully in educational and learning opportunities. These may include childcare, financial support, transportation, flexible scheduling, counselling, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), and so on. Again expressed in this on-line discussion was concern for the disappearance of the "equity principle" in the devolution of training responsibility from the federal to provincial governments. If equity is no longer a principle for training or, education policy, supporting services needed by women will not be provided. Another main concern was for the supports necessary for women with disabilities. A workshop on the needs of women with disabilities was proposed for the conference but did not take place due to lack of registration. However, presenters from this panel were invited to host a discussion in the Saturday Open Space period. The workshops held under Supporting Women's Learning were: Models for Integrated Family Programming, and the Impact on Women Learners of Employment Insurance and Related Changes.

Models for Integrated Family Programming

Sue McCormack, of the Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network and the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, and Jean Rasmussen, of Family Literacy Development, Literacy B.C., presented this workshop on the philosophy and practice of family support programs and family literacy programs. A key understanding that resulted was the need for collabouration among educational programs and support services for families, in order to maximize funding, resources and expertise while enhancing opportunities for women and their families.

The family support model, or family resource model, and the family literacy model support learning skills for both parent and child. Considerable research indicates a powerful link between the education level of parents, particularly mothers, and the learning success of their children. It is also important to recognize the cyclical nature of

social problems such as poverty, low educational levels and poor health, and how providing support to families can help to break the cycle. Successful family services do not target or label participants or identify their priorities; programs are open to all and participants identify their own needs and issues. Literacy B.C. is currently engaged in producing a *Framework for Best Practices in Family Literacy* which should be available after April, 2000.

The need for stable, secure funding is critical. The term "drive-by funding" was used to describe how programs may be in a funder's sights for a short period, then left to survive on their own. A successful program that has overcome this predicament and become self-sustaining is Families in Motion, Chilliwack, British Columbia.

The Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Learning Network can be found at: www.phdaln.on.ca. Literacy B.C. can be found at: www.nald.ca/lbc.htm. Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs can be found at: www.frp.ca.

Impact on Women Learners of Employment Insurance and Related Changes
The changes to Unemployment Insurance that took effect in 1996 have had a significant impact on women and have seriously affected women's access to training and upgrading. Ursule Chritoph, who is the National Training Coordinator, Workplace Training Strategy, of the Canadian Labour Congress, presented this workshop on how women learners have been affected by these and related changes in labour market programming.

Ursule reminded participants of the growing global trend in polarization between rich and poor. Within this trend is the development of a larger and larger class of low skilled, low paid people whose job is to work for the small percentage of those who are higher paid. More and more human aspects of society are being disengaged to technology. Politically, these trends can be viewed as an anti-democratic thrust against humans in favor of corporations as the basic and defining component of society.

Despite various in-roads in recent decades, the picture of women's employment is still gloomy:

- women still earn on average only 52% of what men earn
- their work tends to be non-standard and lower paid
- the number of women who hold multiple jobs continues to increase
- more women lose work time due to family responsibilities
- etc.

Though there is still much lip service devoted to gender equity, Ursule reported that most of the 300 recommendations in the federal government's plan for Gender Equality do not contain much substance.

Changes to E.I. have meant that fewer women are eligible. There has been a 20% drop in the number of women whose E.I. claims are successful; consequently fewer women can access training that is E.I. sponsored. In addition to which, all other entry points to

government programs have been removed. Less access to E.I. and to E.I. sponsored training result in pressure for women to take low paying jobs. The bias in the new labour agreements between the federal government and the provinces is towards those who are most employable and against those who face many or multiple barriers to employment.

Ursule Critoph can be contacted at: ucritoph@istar.ca.

Recommendations from Workshops

That information and research from the Gender-Based Analysis Directorate, including the "Gender Equality Indicators," be more widely circulated and utilised to evaluate programs and policies.

That training be provided for educators of young girls in the areas of career choices in technical and non-traditional occupations.

That women be provided with supportive and informed counselling about new careers, financial support, access to information about new careers, access to training programs, commitment to gender equity from both the private and public sectors, and strong media messages about women's abilities and opportunities to succeed.

That a gender-based analysis of internet activity and use be undertaken.

That a national study of women's access to training, such as was carried out by Joan McFarland in New Brunswick, be undertaken.

That women's and other like-minded organizations make use of ACTEW's website, for information sharing, advocacy and networking.

That basic computer training programs, such as Power Up in Manitoba, be provided to women across Canada.

That educational initiatives train people to "think" rather than to "do".

That literacy programs and practitioners work in collaboration with medical associations and professionals to have literacy recognized as a health issue.

That more workplace training opportunities, such as delivered by Preparatory Training Programs and Workplace Training and Services, be provided to women.

That the curriculum and program of the Learning Experience Centre, of UNITE Local 459, be shared and delivered through more unions and training agencies.

That resources to assist in addressing the effects of trauma on learning be provided, such

as: financial aid for supporting services to women (childcare, counselling, transportation, living expenses), training for staff and instructors, support for staff and instructors, etc.

That the spiritual and emotional aspects of learning be incorporated into any educational situation.

That programs such as Stardale Women's Group in Saskatchewan be replicated in other parts of the country.

That greater educational opportunities, and the necessary supports, be provided to older women.

That the principle of "equity" be reinstated as a fundamental component in training agreements between the federal and provincial governments.

That family resource programs work with literacy and other training programs to provide training opportunities that incorporate the needs of families.

That federal and provincial governments maintain commitments to gender equity and equality.

Outcomes of Open Space Technology

Saturday Discussions

The procedure used for Saturday and Sunday of the congress was Open Space Technology in which, rather than having pre-set workshops, participants are asked to identify topics for discussion. There is no limit to the number of topics that can be named and once ideas are exhausted, participants break off into discussion groups of their choice. The purpose of using this process was to determine important issues in women's education and training (specifically, to tease out any hitherto overlooked areas) and to determine possible future directions for a national body addressing women's learning and education. What is documented here is the complete list of identified topics and, under those that were discussed, the most salient points and concrete recommendations.

List of Topics

1. Recognition and acceptance of "outside of Canada" credentials by educational institutions, provinces and professional bodies.
2. How women have been subordinated in the process of their learning and how it can be different.
3. Networking, bodily and digitally.
4. How do we sustain older women's education well into their 80s?
5. CCLOW/NWRG: where do we go from here?
6. The role of emotional and spiritual growth in learning, education and training.
7. Diversity in education: rethinking and rewriting history and curriculum.

8. How to incorporate the needs of students and other "grassroots" into the emerging organization; funding, information, choices, action.
9. Immigrant women's literacy: holistic learning, job training, a safe place to learn.
10. Using existing resources creatively rather than creating a new organization.
11. Starting from scratch: where are the resource connections to create women's literacy centres in non-urban communities?
12. Basic education (education that is meaningful) for disabled persons.
13. Literacy and health: develop and distribute resources, raise awareness of issues, create partnerships.
14. Addressing the labour market needs of women.
15. Working with issues related to trauma and learning.
16. Creating a pro-active strategy for connecting to corporate and other community development resources.
17. Delivery of services to rural women.
18. How does the family literacy model support women's learning?
19. Creating a pro-active labour market policy, rather than analyzing outcomes of the past.

Topic Discussions

Discussion groups were created for fifteen of the above nineteen topics. Following are the most salient points and concrete recommendations from these discussions.

Recognition and acceptance of credentials obtained outside of Canada

Recommendation

Support or collaborate in the work being done by women's groups to achieve this goal, such as INTERCEDE and the Philippino Women's Centre, by sharing CCLOW/NWRG expertise in research, public education and advocacy.

Networking, bodily and digitally

In our current information age, people exist along a continuum of communication, from oral to face to face to telephone to digital networking. The gaps exist along generational lines but also geographically, educationally and economically. Tensions develop across these gaps, including among groups in the current women's movement, between those who have and make use of digital networking and those who do not. Many many women still do not have their own computers, access to facilities such as email, or literacy in the computer medium.

Recommendation

To bridge the digital divide by forging alliances and digital partnerships with like-minded organizations (such as ACTEW) to work together on projects and policies, develop digital resources bases and to incorporate local projects and face-to-face events on a pan-organizational bulletin board.

Meaningful education for people with disabilities

The needs of people with disabilities are often overlooked, not incorporated into a program, learning situation or community event, or are inadequately provided for. As

well, the diverse and dissimilar needs of people with disabilities are often lumped into one category of "disability". Women with disabilities are often not even seen as women but as a kind of third gender. This conference is an example; the session originally planned on women with disabilities was cancelled for lack of registration.

Recommendation
That the importance of issues for women with disabilities not be based solely on interest expressed; that organizations with resources, connections and experience utilize these advantages to advance the rights of women with disabilities.

Secure funding to carry out a literature search and review of studies addressing the needs and situations of women with disabilities to use as an educational and advocacy tool.

How do we sustain older women's education well into their 80s?
Recommendations
Provide educational opportunities to older women where they are, as older women are often less mobile and have less financial resources.

Provide transportation grants for reasons of safety and mobility.

Develop the role of older women as mentors.

Lobby for compensation to older women for eldercare and childcare.

Develop strategies to reduce isolation, ego creation of communes or intentional communities.

The role of emotional and spiritual growth in learning, education and training
Recommendations
Develop strategies, resources, publicity tools which clearly identify the role of the spiritual in learning processes.

Develop a language with which to address funders to have them recognize the importance of spirituality in learning.

Collect data, program examples and research findings that support the importance of a spiritual/emotional/ mental/physical approach to learning.

Develop comprehensive programs which address the multiple aspects of trauma: behaviour modification, anger management, co-dependency, uncovering core beliefs, repressed memories, understanding cultural lenses, dealing with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Effects, etc.

Continue the on-line discussion of the effects of trauma on learning and education, to share resources and ideas and to give support.

Literacy and Health
Recommendations

Lobby provincial Ministries of Health to have literacy recognized as a health issue.

Lobby provincial Ministries of Education / Training to have the detrimental impact on health recognized as a consequence of un/underemployment and inadequate training opportunities.

Develop and deliver training for health care professionals on broader health issues such as literacy, poverty, social isolation, violence and trauma, un/underemployment, etc.

Collect and compile resources related to education and health.

Creating a pro-active strategy for connecting to corporate and other community development resources
Recommendations

Develop a strategic national approach, possibly through partnerships that are topic- or task-focused rather than women-focused.

Communicate and work collaboratively to avoid competing for same funds, to share resources and to expand the breadth of projects.

Design a national body to act as a clearinghouse of information and research.

Develop new models of advocacy work that incorporate national, regional and grassroots levels.

Develop a strategy for national organizations to work cohesively and effectively with grassroots organizations.

Develop a strategy to connect the expertise of women working in various sectors: academic, advocacy, grassroots, corporate, public and voluntary, to build a more powerful, influential, effective network.

Maximize use of technology by organizations, for networking, etc. and to help women gain access.

Working with issues related to trauma and learning
Recommendations

Ensure that the reality of violence is central to any agenda dealing with learning, education and training.

Recognize that there is no "one size fits all" approach to healing.

Allow for the joys and pleasures of learning along with acknowledging the effects of

trauma.

Develop training and resources for practitioners and educators.

***How women have been subordinated in the process of their learning and
how it can be different***
Recommendations
Research and raise awareness of how women have been subordinated through the formal
education system and the continued effects of this in employment and career.

Promote the importance of being able to control one's education.

Promote the importance and value of alternative schools for girls and young women.

Diversity in education: rethinking and rewriting history and curriculum
Recommendations
Acknowledge the value of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies.

Lobby for educational practices that reflect the diversity of society.
Insist on a broad and inclusive definition of diversity.

Promote movement away from the Eurocentric model of education.

Promote the inclusion and use of culturally relevant material in literacy programs; ensure
that literacy instructors understand what is culturally relevant.

Develop strategies for white educators, practitioners and trainers to understand and
counter the effects of white privilege.

Creating a pro-active labour market policy, rather than analyzing outcomes of the past
Due to a prevailing mindset among decision-makers that women have achieved equality,
there is a reluctance to agree to new initiatives or even to fulfill commitments made in the
past.

Recommendations
Compile a "report card" of women's present situation compared to ten or twenty years ago
with respect to unpaid work, access to school or training, exposure to fear, harassment or
violence, under-estimation of abilities and aptitudes, lack of control over education and
learning, etc.

Develop a vision of what women's equality will look like, to be used as a lobbying and
rallying tool.

Develop a set of women's equality criteria to be used in labour policy formation.

Delivery of services to rural women

A service delivery approach based on numbers does not meet the needs of rural communities. Rural communities also often suffer from a lack of professionalism and necessary qualifications of people in positions of trust (those in community colleges or health professions, for example, not travelling outside the community to upgrade skills; rural communities often lacking medical professionals).

Recommendations
Promote the recognition that rural communities need better access to educational and professional services of improved quality.

Promote the accessibility and use of technologies to reduce isolation.

Promote the partnership of rural community-based organizations with publicly funded educational institutions.

Immigrant women's literacy: holistic learning, job training, a safe place to learn
Recommendations
Consider whether the broader context of women's issues can incorporate the uniqueness of immigrant women's experiences, or whether it is necessary to create a separate space.

Ensure the creation of a climate where all women are welcome and the wide range of women's realities are reflected.

Lobby for the recognition of credentials gained elsewhere and for less restrictive conditions for immigrant women's employment as domestic workers, etc.

CCLOW/NWRG-where do we go from here?
Members, Board members and interested parties of CCLOW and NWRG joined to discuss their respective organization's history, mandate, climate and structure. It was acknowledged that the infrastructure of the women's movement in Canada has been seriously eroded; very few national women's groups are still active and very few opportunities remain for women's groups to directly influence policy and decision-making. With specific respect to education and training, the sphere of influence has changed with the devolution of responsibility to the provinces; what is the role for a national organization? There was significant discussion of some important differences between the two organizations: that the mandate of each is broad, yet the only overlap between the two is in the area of training (where NWRG addresses training issues related directly to women's labour market participation and CCLOW addresses training as part of women's larger participation in all aspects of society); NWRG membership is based on organizational representation whereas CCLOW's membership is open to individuals and organizations alike.

Based on these and further discussions that the members of each organization held separately, it was concluded that the mandate, organizational structure, constituency and focus of each organization did not at present allow for a smooth or effective merging.
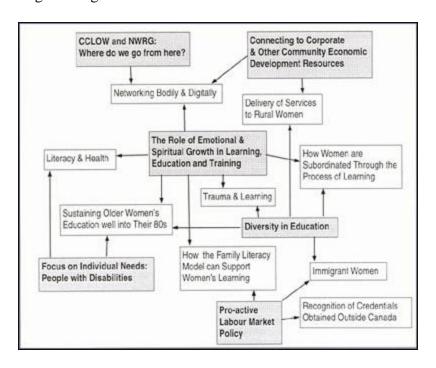
How does the family literacy model support women's learning?
Many misconceptions exist with respect to family literacy, including that it is based on a "deficit" model of the family; that it resembles a pre-school literacy program; that it does not address the needs of women outside their role as mothers; that the term "family" applies only to a limited configuration of people. Yet research shows increased motivation, longer participation and more sustainable advances in literacy levels in both adults and children among participants in family literacy programs. The role of women in their families-where many women feel their greatest strength-cannot be ignored in any truly effective educational approach.

Recommendations
Dispel myths and misconceptions about family literacy by promoting information on its woman-positive philosophy, collaborative and multidisciplinary approaches and the success of its programs.

Build support in women's organizations for the role of family literacy in the process of women's life-long learning.

Sunday Discussions (see chart)
On Sunday, all conference participants gathered to review reports from Saturday's discussion groups and to priorize issues using the voting method of "dotmocracy." Six major areas, of the fifteen that were discussed in groups, were identified as priorities (grey boxes); draft project proposals for these areas are included in Appendix A of this report. The remaining nine areas (white boxes) were clustered under these headings, in some cases under more than one heading. The chart on the previous page illustrates their

distribution.

Congress Results

Though the fixed time available at the congress did not allow for the full scope of objectives to be achieved over this set period (as is discussed in more detail under "Evaluation"), a majority of goals were met and more than sufficient ideas and information were produced to generate ongoing results.

Firstly, conference organizers managed to attract and facilitate the participation of a diversity of women from across Ontario and Canada. In attendance were First Nations women, older women, women with disabilities, young women, women from geographically diverse locations, women of color and economically disadvantaged women. This diversity is reflected in the recommendations from both the Friday workshops and the Saturday discussion groups.

Secondly, the six theme areas identified by CCLOW's Board of Directors as important for their current and future relevance to women's education and training were thoroughly discussed among women with particular knowledge and experience in the areas, and, through the conference, a wealth of information, connections, ideas and initiatives were shared. The number of recommendations resulting from the conference, as well as the opportunities identified for future work (as outlined in the attached proposals), are an indication of the fruitfulness of these discussions.

Thirdly, a number of possible partnerships were identified for productive work in the area of women's education and learning. One potentially fruitful partnership was identified between ACTEW and CCLOW. These organizations are no strangers to each other but it was evident that they might collaborate more fully, particularly within the arena of new technologies on information sharing, advocacy and the execution of projects. A number of potential partnerships were also identified in the area of women's entrance into non-traditional or technical occupations. CCLOW and WITT -NN already possess a history of collaboration, and conference discussions re-affirmed how these organizations could continue to work together to promote the participation of women in trades, technical and blue collar work. The workshops on the innovative programs "Power Up" and the "Learning Experience Centre" generated a great deal of interest in bringing computer or technical skills to women, and in collaborating in order to have these programs, or similar ones, delivered in other provinces. In the area of violence and its impact on learning, participants were very encouraged by the success of the Stardale Women's Group from Saskatchewan. Those involved in the Saturday discussion group recommended that the Stardale Women's Group act as the hub of an ongoing network on trauma. Other connections were made between family resource programs and literacy programs, recognizing the value of incorporating family needs into an effort to bring literacy skills to women.

Partnerships were also recommended, through participant evaluation forms, between CCLOW and organizations such as Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (with

respect to women's unequal access to training and EI benefits); Feminists for Just Public Policy (FEMJPP); Web Girls and Wired Women; the Centre for Literacy in Montreal; Status of Women Council of the NWT; the YWCA (with respect to learning programs that incorporate a mind/body/spirit approach); the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW); and the Canadian Students' Federation.

Fourthly, through the on-line discussions and the use of technology at the conference, the effectiveness of information technology as a way of working was explored. The on-line discussions produced a rich exchange of personal stories, thoughtful consideration of issues, generation of ideas, recommendations for resources, and peer support. These discussions became a working demonstration of the efficacy of new technologies in bridging distance, time, expense and, in some cases, ability. Women who were unavailable to attend the conference still had the opportunity to contribute to discussion and to the definition of priority issues. On the other hand, it should be noted that some women found participation in the on-line discussions difficult or time- consuming, and there are also those who were unable to participate at all due to lack of access to the technology.

Due to the generous funding of the Office of Learning Technologies, the exploration and utilization of technology as a way of working has continued past the end of the congress. CCLOW coordinated an on-line conference, similar to the pre-conference on-line discussions, building on the organization's previous work on women's learning and technology, titled "The Janus Project." This on-line conference explored technology and women's learning with specific reference to access, control, learning tools and quality of learning in our rapidly changing economic, social and technological environment. Also explored were the community learning network model and how it might respond to the particular needs of women.

Fifthly, a number of exciting and innovative project areas were identified, and the raw material for a new mandate and plan of action for CCLOW was gathered. Taking this information, the Board of Directors of CCLOW identified possible areas for further work:

- labour market programs, specifically for immigrant women and women with disabilities
- literacy programs, specifically related to the labour market, to health and to family literacy
- the role of spirituality in women's learning, education and training
- new technology and its relation to women's learning
- providing a clearinghouse function of information on women's learning, education and training.
  Draft proposals for projects in these areas are included in Appendix A.

Since the closing of the conference, the CCLOW Board has reviewed and revitalized itself, with some longer term members resigning to make room for new energy and enthusiasm. For the first time, CCLOW's board reflects more closely the diversity of the

organization's constituency and this achievement is a direct result of the March congress.

These new Board members have worked hard since the March congress to develop a comprehensive three year plan of action for the organization. Once this plan is finalized it will stand as another concrete result of the congress.

Finally, a number of more long term, less tangible goals were also achieved through the medium of the CCLOW/NWRG congress, and these are discussed in the following section, "Evaluation."

Evaluation

As is discussed in the above section, *Designing Our Future: Women's Education and Training in Canada, 2000 and Beyond* achieved a notable number of its objectives and was, overall, a success for the women who attended. Comments on participant evaluation forms are consistently in the nature of, "Very informative", "Very good", and "I learned lots". The conference managed to attract the participation of a significant diversity of women from across Canada and from across Ontario, some of whom, without financial assistance, would not have been able to attend. Being able to offer financial assistance to economically and socially disadvantaged women is fundamental to incorporating the participation of a truly diverse constituency.

An area identified as important for attention but which was inadequately covered by the conference was the educational and learning needs of women with disabilities. In initial planning, a workshop period was allocated to this topic but, due to lack of registration, was cancelled. Support for the resource persons connected to this topic was still provided, and a discussion group on the needs of women with disabilities was convened on Saturday. However, as a minority group within the larger women's movement, it cannot be left to women with disabilities alone to identify needs, act on issues and lobby for public recognition, support, accessibility and inclusion. Rather than a workshop session subject to voluntary registration, an alternative strategy would be to hold a plenary panel discussion in which the experiences and concerns of women with disabilities can be addressed to all conference participants.

The use and exploration of technology through the on-line discussions as well as at the conference raised a number of issues. Though it became evident that technology is a very effective tool to broaden, diversify and facilitate participation, it cannot replace face to face meeting. This is reflected in the comments of many conference participants, but most surprisingly in those of young women, on the whole more familiar and comfortable with information technologies, who voiced a concern for the loss of personal connection. They do not want to be solely and always behind their computers but also in personal contact with those with whom they are working. While many aspects and advantages of information technology have yet to be mined by organizations like CCLOW, it was also a clear conclusion of the conference that traditional (face to face) and newer (technology-

based) ways of working need to be combined for the most effective results.

Some of the larger and more detailed objectives of the conference were not achieved within the conference timeframe. This was primarily due to the number and scope of objectives set out rather than to the importance or priority of any of them. That is, the conference was designed to investigate the state of women's learning, education and training in Canada, explore the possible merger of two national organizations, investigate the uses of new technology, identify and develop projects and identify possible funding sources, explore the effectiveness of CCLOW as an organization and/or develop alternative ways to address women's concerns, and map out a three year plan of action for a national women's group addressing learning, education and training. This is an enormous amount to be accomplished in three days, especially by women who may be coming together for the first time.

It is evident that CCLOW organizers were keen to make the most out of time spent in the company of such experienced, innovative, active and thoughtful women. However, a one time conference is no replacement for a stable operating base, permanent staff and regular extensive meetings of a cohesive governing body. In fact, if there is any "negative" comment from participant evaluations, it is that there was "Not enough time" or "Would have liked to discuss more." These comments indicate not only the time pressure of a limited conference, but also that participants attributed a great deal of significance to the issues they were addressing. However, as a result of the limitations, CCLOW organizers did not come away with a three year plan of action in hand for the organization, nor with draft funding proposals for possible projects (though, as discussed in "Results," the basic material to develop these objectives was gathered) . The effectiveness of CCLOW's ways of working was not fully explored (except to note that CCLOW projects and publications have had an enormous and lasting effect in the area of women's education) nor were alternative ways of representing women's concerns and interests. Some of this work needs to be the focus of other conferences dedicated to those topics; some needs to be the work of an active and well-supported Board of Directors; and some needs to be the work of dedicated, stable employees.

However, many far reaching and less tangible objectives were achieved through the networking, information exchange, support and inspiration generated by the coming together of a diverse and dynamic group of women. All of the women who attended the conference are in some way involved in women's educational or learning programs across the country, whether as instructors, facilitators, administrators, learners, academics, writers, activists or policy makers. All of them have taken away ideas, connections, information or motivation to feed into their personal and professional work. Many connections were made that will, in time, improve the economic status of many women, as women's equitable labour market participation is pursued. Much information was shared that will help alleviate systemic violence against women and girls, especially if prototype programs are implemented elsewhere and as practitioners continue to be able to support and collaborate with each other through networking. These and other results of the conference cannot but augment the persistent, though often obstacle-laden, movement to achieve social justice for women of all diversities. It was in the spirit of social justice

and equality that conference participants came together and it is in this bolstered spirit they returned to their communities to continue their work and learning.

Conclusion

Designing Our Future: Women's Education and Training in Canada, 2000 and Beyond created an important moment in Canadian women's history. It brought together a diversity of women from across Ontario and Canada; women who by no other means would be able to meet, discuss issues at length, learn from each other's experiences and expertise, give and receive personal support or have access to such a wealth of resources over such a short period. In both the on-line discussions and the face to face conference, CCLOW facilitated the networking, collaboration, support, learning, growth and inspiration of some of Canada's most active, experienced, knowledgeable and thoughtful women, and through this work identified numerous critical issues in women's learning, education and training, as well as a significant list of recommendations.

These women also took it into their hands to direct, in part, the future of the women's movement in Canada by mapping out the possibilities for a merger between two national feminist organizations. That this merger will not proceed does not indicate a failure of the process but rather a successful and careful consideration of all relevant questions. Though an important recommendation out of this conference is for groups to collaborate in order to maximize resources and expertise, such collaboration or consolidation cannot take place simply for its own sake, nor at the expense of critical issues and vision that have been the driving force of one or the other organization for the duration of its existence.

Two enormous successes of *Designing Our Future* are the identification of critical issues and the list of recommendations for further action. At minimum, these issues and recommendations indicate the significant amount of work still to be undertaken to achieve equality for women in learning and education. An important point worth highlighting here is the inadequacy of having educational and training systems tied principally to labour market participation. While successful, sufficient and meaningful employment is important for all citizens, including and especially women, education and learning are fundamental to fulfilled and active existence in all aspects of society, beyond employment. This is important to note with respect to the divergent mandates of NWRG and CCLOW and that conference discussion in this area weighed towards the need to distinguish between the two spheres. This is also particularly relevant for women whose participation in the labour market may be limited, such as older women, women with dependents and women with disabilities.

The motivation and scheme for this congress were drawn in part from CCLOW's founding congress in Banff, 1979. At that time, women from across the country gathered to identify important concerns for women's education and learning, and to devise a plan for a national organization that would address them. Twenty years later, much has been achieved. Important resources have been developed; issues previously not linked to education, such as violence and poverty, have begun to be addressed; policy makers in Canada have begun to acknowledge that women's equal access to education and learning

means a great deal more than providing them with seats in a classroom; and women themselves have begun to demand educational experiences that are safe, empowering, relevant and useful.

But much work remains to be done. It is imperative that a co-ordinated, national body continue to advocate for equitable learning and education for women. Those who gathered in Toronto in March, 2000, were diverse, dedicated, concerned and committed to the advancement of women's equality in all its manifestations. Through their work and participation they have indeed begun to design the future for women's learning, education and training in this country, and have, in the identification of priority issues and recommendations, created a blueprint for progress.

Appendix A

Preliminary Project Proposals
for consideration in
CCLOW's strategic planning

Project: Gender Based Analysis

Prepared by Kate Humpage

Description

To raise awareness and increase understanding among the broader women's community of the role and value of Gender Based Analysis.

Issues to be Addressed

This project concerns gender based analysis (GBA), and provides the opportunity for CCLOW to play a role in helping Status of Women Canada raise awareness and sensitize the women's community and the broader public about the purpose and value of GBA.

Project Components

Phase 1 involves identifying the main concerns and issues with respect to GBA, through an exploratory, outreach process to the women's community, and addressing these concerns with the intention of promoting GBA as a valuable and useful tool in policy development. It is expected that this phase will involve on-line discussion groups (ie Alphacom process), as well as some small workshops. This phase will lead to the production of a number of information sheets concerning GBA.

Phase 2 will focus on outreach and raising awareness of GBA. As part of this process, a number of examples will be developed which demonstrate the way in which GBA can be used in policy and program development.

Phase 3 will involve the development and delivery of training sessions to the broader community and public service sector.

Relationship to Other Activities

CCLOW expertise in public education and engagement, and the organization's capacity to use regional and local networks to support efforts at the national level, are strengths that can be applied in this area. In addition, CCLOW has had extensive experience in developing and delivering learner-focused and learner-appropriate training, which will be very useful in making GBA accessible and understandable to a diverse audience. CCLOW may consider publishing a special GBA edition of Women's Education des femmes to look at the broader issues.

Expected Outcomes

To raise awareness and sensitize the women's community and the broader public about the purpose and value of GBA. This is a very important objective in that, by increasing the level of understanding of GBA and expectation that it will be used in analysis and evaluation, public pressure can be brought to bear on governments to ensure that GBA is an integral element of policy, program and legislative development.

Timelines

It is expected that this initiative would result in a three-phase project spread over three

fiscal years: 2000-2001, 2001-02, and 2002-03.

Contacts
Kate Humpage as lead consultant (613) 258-7331   khumpage@magi.com

Board representative and additional CCLOW resources to be determined.

Estimated Budget
The budget for Phase 1 would be in the order of $10-20,000. Budgets for the remaining two phases would be determined as the required elements are finalized.

Potential Funders
Status of Women Canada; Gender Based Analysis Directorate

Potential Partners
To be determined as required

Project: Pro Active Labour Market Policy
Prepared by Barbara Guy

Description
This project involves a comprehensive analysis of approaches and strategies to improving women's equitable access to and participation in the labour market.

Issues to be Addressed

1. Detail/define/analyse the strategies necessary to ensure improvements in women's participation.

2. Examine barriers to participation and develop proposals for changes to policy and programs in order to meet the diverse and often multiple needs of women. These proposals will be informed by how barriers inter-relate and will embrace a holistic view of women's participation, rather than compartmentalizing their needs.

3. Identity critical issues (those that have the most impact when resolved) and locate critical points for lobbying at the provincial/territorial level and federal level.

4. Examine the current policy making process and how it might be influenced. For example, there are policy makers whose notion of equality is formal, and see equality as already achieved. In order to get women's equality on the policy agenda, we will have to show what substantive equality would look like, and demonstrate that we are not there.

Advancing the Status of Women Through this Work

The project will provide:

1. a comprehensive examination of barriers by a diverse and large group of women
2. holistic (interconnected) solutions for addressing the barriers
3. well researched analysis of policy processes and responsibilities
4. arguments for putting women's substantive equality on the policy agenda
5. an opportunity for dialogue among many types of women's organizations to pro-actively address the issue of labour market access
6. strategic targets for the efforts by women's groups to see these barriers addressed in a comprehensive way.

Project Components

The project has the following components:

1. Consultations with women's groups and policy makers
2. Research on past and present labour force development initiatives and how they affect women's equality
3. Research on the impact (or potential impact) of different policies and programs

Consultations with women's groups will form the qualitative part of the research. The information and recommendations will be used to create a web-like model of women's participation so that all needs are seen together, and not in isolation. This will 'connect the dots' for those who need it, and will avoid the compartmentalization of women's needs.

The baseline data and analysis, the strategies, would come from research and consultations. Strategies and reports could be tailored for groups of women by geography or other characteristics such as ethnicity and age. The research would go back and mine older data, or use existing measures such as women's earnings as a percentage of men's, and come up with some comparisons of how women have progressed over time. This will allow us to show some progress (e.g. in pay, labour market participation rates, access to some occupations like law and medicine as well as the slower progress in engineering), and to include some measures of time use (women's extra work) and a quality of workplace survey. The quality of workplace survey is a ground-breaking idea and would serve as a baseline to measure how women feel at work and what they experience there.

Develop a policy framework for women's labour market equality that can be used in government. The framework would provide a comprehensive tool to policy makers and program designers that could be used to assess the degree to which the policy or program moves women closer to the goal of equitable participation in the labour market.

The largest component is the development of many strategies that together form a comprehensive labour force development strategy for women. Types of possible actions range from valuing women's unpaid work to career , counselling, individual actions such as mentoring, pressuring CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education Canada) to include gender specific indicators in their new research on educational processes and outcomes,

the criteria for policy formulation mentioned above, pay equity, child care, increased access to training at all levels, workplace acceptance of women in all roles, safety from violence and harassment, and public education.

A final product may be similar to *Ninety-nine Steps*, the report on violence against women that came out of federal consultations in the early 1990's. It will also be comprehensive in its context setting, its inclusiveness (recognizing that different strategies are necessary for different barriers) and its scope of recommendations for action.

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased effectiveness of the lobbying effort by bringing together diverse perspectives on policies and programs that holistically address the barriers that women face
2. A workplace quality survey that will promote understanding of the issues that women face and form a benchmark on workplace quality
3. A benchmark analysis of women's substantive equality (inequality) in the labour market
4. A web-like analysis showing how barriers inter-relate
5. Myriad strategies that work positively to address lack of access, lack of participation, lack of equitable outcomes
6. An analysis of these strategies demonstrating who the major beneficiaries are and what impact they have on diverse groups of women.
7. A set of criteria for policy formulation for women's equality, developed for both federal and provincial territorial governments, according to the policies and programs in F/P/T jurisdictions.

Funding
Funding partners are likely to be SWC, the Women's Bureau at HRDC, and others such as employers, unions, educational organizations, etc., for specific components of the project.

Timelines
2000 - 2001: Phase 1

- Research labour force development initiatives and their impact on women
- perform benchmark analysis of how women participate in the labour market (this requires no primary research)
- Form partnerships for a workplace quality survey
- Analysis of labour force development strategies for a diverse population

2001 - 2002: Phase 2

- Perform workplace quality survey; present results
- Using results of Phase 1 and a developed equity policy, design a 'supports framework' that demonstrates how barriers inter-relate and what must be in place to support women's access
- Design key labour force development initiatives that would move women closer to equality and detail the many different types of strategies that are needed to achieve equality. This design responds to the needs of a diverse population and details how the initiatives affect diverse groups.
- Design a policy formulation tool for use in government that requires a demonstration of how the policy will improve women's access to and more equal participation in the labour market.
- Work with other women's groups to determine priorities for the NGO sector.

2002 - 2003: Phase 3

- Using the benchmark analysis, the workplace quality survey, the initiatives designed in Phase 2 and the results of the priorities of the NGO community, design a strategy of actions, responsibilities and outcomes that would move women closer to equal participation.
- Quantified results of the strategy developed as a tool to measure potential progress in several key areas.

Staffing
Project Manager (E.D)
Lead Researcher - Project Coordinator
Content Researchers - specialists (4 to 6)
Researcher/Writer to work on development of tools

Estimated Budget

Activity	Time	Cost	Total
Year 1			
Project Manager		@$450	
Lead Researcher		@$350	
Regional Researchers		@$350	
Communications and travel			
Administration		@$250	
Year 2			
Project Manager		@$450	
Lead Researcher		@$350	
Regional Researchers		@$350	
Communications and travel			
Writing/editing		@$350	

Administration   @$250

Potential Partners
The National Women's Reference Group is a potential partner in this initiative. Also, provincial Women's Advisory Councils.

Project: Women, Learning, and Disabilities
Prepared by Jane Larimer

Women with Physical Disabilities
At CCLOW's conference, Penny Leclair was very articulate in describing her dilemma. As a woman with disabilities, she is expected to be either as outstanding as Helen Keller or to live her life quietly, without education or expectation. She faces many barriers in her desire to be an educated woman. Many of these are as a result of systemic discrimination in education and training policies and practices. There is a tremendous need for policy analysis and advocacy in this area and CCLOW's mandate would allow it to address these issues. For example, it would be useful to pull together previously developed recommendations for changes within these systems, and to advocate for their implementation.

Women with Learning Disabilities
Women with learning disabilities, similarly, face tremendous barriers to receiving an education. Working with Learning Disabilities Associations across Canada, CCLOW may have the opportunity to promote findings and advocate for improved practice in the field. Again, this work clearly falls under the organization's mandate.

Recommendation
CCLOW should:
> **Analyze government education and training policies and practices and their impact on women with disabilities. This analysis should highlight how these policies leave many women with disabilities without the most basic education. Based on the analysis, the CCLOW should advocate for improved policies and practices.**

Related work includes:

- Establishing a clearinghouse of information related to women's education and training issues, which would include information on women with disabilities.
- Articulating best practice models in a women-positive context, and
- Providing a forum for discussion and analysis of issues

Conclusion
There was significant interest among the conference participants in ensuring that this specific work was undertaken. It appears that much of the primary research (e.g., issue

identification, data gathering, issue formulation, recommendation development) has already been done. What is now required is that the voices of women with disabilities be heard, rather than ignored. CCLOW was seen as a potential advocate for this work.

Contacts

Penny Leclair	(613) 834-4669	leclairp@magma
Sue McKay	(613) 723-3575	suem@neilsquire.ca
Neil Squire Foundation		

Project: The Role of Emotional/Spiritual Growth
Prepared by Priscilla George

Description
Emotional and spiritual growth are the foundation for life in general and literacy in particular. Women in literacy and education programs are asking for assistance in dealing with issues in their lives that impact on their learning. In the recent past, various researchers and writers have established that, not only do people learn in a variety of ways, but life incidents, especially those related to trauma, create blocks to learning (Howard Gardner, Daniel Goleman, Diane Hill, Doc Childre, Morris Keaton). Anecdotal and empirical data from literacy practitioners have established that, when learners are taught how to recognize their own unique learning style (including a spiritual or an emotional-relational learning style), or how to process their traumatic experiences in a way so as to see the "teaching", they make progress that was heretofore thought improbable.

This project proposes:

1. a literature review, compiling and summarizing pertinent educational and medical research/findings and recommendations, including but not limited to, Multiple Intelligences, Optimal Learning Environments, Heart Math, Emotional Intelligence, Prior Learning Assessment, and Accelerated Learning
2. an audit of workshops/seminars related to the above
3. a holistic vision statement for literacy programs-drafted, shared with practitioners and revised as needed
4. contact with literacy/education/training practitioners already incorporating some of the above into their work with learners
5. development of a list of resources and methodologies found to be effective with women students, backing same with educational and scientific research, adapting the resources and methodologies as appropriate
6. the design, development and piloting of a train-the-trainer model, incorporating the above
7. evaluation of same, and revision as appropriate, then delivery

8. ongoing contact with literacy/education/training practitioners
9. a showcase of learners to become role models for each other

Issues to be Addressed

The quality of our lives is a direct outcome of the quality of our learning and our thinking. We actually have three brains in one, each part with its own function:

a. reptilian (basic functions including breathing, heart rate, and instincts such as the fight-or-flight response);
b. limbic system/mammalian (controls emotions and hormones, maintains homeostasis and is an important part of long-term memory; when you deliberately involve the limbic system in learning and teaching, i.e., deliberately involve the emotions, you harness powerful forces that make learning more effective);
c. neocortex / thinking (handles seeing, hearing, creating, thinking with specialist parts for speech, hearing, vision and touch. If we want to create a strong memory, we should store the information using all of the senses; similarly, working with the memory to reframe experiences uses all of the senses.)

The body remembers. Experiences are stored in our cellular memories and can create an "emotional hijacking". The method of comparison is associative: when a key element of a present situation is similar to the past, we can react in ways imprinted long ago, with thoughts, emotions, reactions learned in response to events that may be only dimly similar. Literacy practitioners have had to recognize and deal with such "triggers," often finding themselves in such situations with no warning or preparation whatsoever.

The brain is in the body; the body is in the brain; there is no split (the basis of psychoneuroimmunology). There are literacy-based and literacy-related means of catharsis: stories, art, dream-sharing and interpretation, reframing the event with a different outcome, etc. Practitioners need support to use these methods, because many are already dealing with the situation anyway, doing the best that they can, but very much wanting and needing the training, resources and methodologies.

Project Components

Research (Action and Literature Review)
Design Training/Develop and/or Adapt Materials
Deliver Training and Provide Hands-on/Telephone/E-mail Support

Relationship to other Activities

This project builds on the well-received work begun by Dr. Jenny Horsman through the Violence and Literacy project which culminated in the book, *Too Scared to Learn*. It will also incorporate and revise some activities in the *Making Connections* curriculum.

Expected Outcomes

Women's literacy/education/training practitioners will:

- have ready access to educational medical research, findings and recommendations related to the impacts of trauma on learning and program participation, as well as the role of emotional / spiritual growth in same
- share resources and methodologies found to be effective in their work with students, and these will be posted on the electronic discussion and/or summarized into a book.
- participate in professional development opportunities that give them the tools to manage situations with their students with which they are already dealing, and to affirm and/or expand upon their own understandings

Timelines
Year 1   Research existing work; audit pertinent workshops; compile resources and methodologies; continue the dialogue (through AlphaCom, or a listserv); create a holistic vision statement through consultation with practitioners.

Year 2   Continue to compile resources and methodologies and to develop book; continue the dialogue; design, develop and pilot train-the-trainer workshops and create a draft manual; develop draft emotional and spiritual learning outcomes; share with practitioners.

Year 3   Deliver train-the-trainer workshops; revise manual; evaluate; showcase learners/programs; revise and finalize emotional and spiritual learning outcomes.

Staffing
1 researcher/writer
1 Administrative assistant

Estimated Budget
Year 1

Researcher (150 days @ $300)	$ 45,000.00
Admin. Asst. (20 days @ $140)	$ 2,800.00
Travel (accomm., workshop reg.) (12 mo. @ $1,250)	$ 15,000.00
Honoraria	$ 1,000.00
Other (phone, fax., mail) (12 mo. @ $125)	$ 1,500.00
Admin.	$ 9.700.00
Total	$ 75,000.00

Year 2

Researcher (130 days @ $300)	$ 39,000.00
Admin. Asst. (25 days x $140)	$ 3,500.00
Travel (12 mo. @ $1,000)	$12,000.00
Honoraria	$ 1,000.00
Other (phone, fax, mail) ($12 mo. @ $100)	$1,200.00
Draft manual	$1,300.00

Admin.	<u>$ 8.700.00</u>
Total	$ 66,700.00

Year 3

Researcher (110 days @ $300)	$ 33,000.00
Admin. Asst. (15 days @ $140)	$ 2,100.00
Travel (12 mo. @ $750)	$ 9,000.00
Honoraria	$ 1,000.00
Other (phone, fax, mail) (12 mo. @ $75)	$ 900.00
Finalize & distribute manual	$ 5,700.00
Admin.	<u>$ 6.600.00</u>
Total	$ 58,100.00

Potential Funders
National Literacy Secretariat
Health & Welfare Canada
Private foundations (through Canadian Centre for Philanthropy)

Potential Partners
Movement for Canadian Literacy; MCL may also be able to provide names of programs and practitioners doing related work.

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Project: Overarching Roles for CCLOW
Prepared by Jane Larimer

Recommendations
CCLOW should work to:

1. **Establish a clearinghouse of information related to women's education and training issues.**
2. **Articulate best practice models in a women-positive context**
3. **Provide a forum for discussion and analysis of issues**

Establish A Clearing House of Related Information
Educators, activists and administrators all want current information but have very little time to devote to finding, reading and analyzing such information. An undercurrent throughout the pre-conference and conference discussions was the desire for CCLOW to compile and disseminate information which already exists but has not been widely distributed or promoted. Though no ideas were generated about how this activity could be funded, it was seen as a tremendous service that CCLOW could provide its members.

Articulate Best Practice Models in a Women-Positive Context
There were many calls for CCLOW to articulate women-positive "best practice" models (e.g., in Family Learning and in Workplace Education). Depending on the needs of the learners, these models can be inclusive of men or other family members- are often enhanced by their presence-but their distinguishing feature is that the needs of women are primary.

Provide a Forum for Discussion and Analysis of Issues
A related activity is the continued need for women to have a forum for discussion and analysis on issues central to CCLOW's mandate. It is not possible for each woman to read and digest all the material in a topic area; only by sharing knowledge with each other can collective wisdom grow. Vehicles for this ongoing dialogue were called for at the conference, though there was no clear means of communication preferred. Various electronic methods (such as list serves and the AlphaPlus AlphaCom) are used by conference participants, and none is problem free. Through the process of re-establishing itself, CCLOW may be better able to respond to this call from conference participants.

Curriculum Development
Participants in pre-conference discussion strongly indicated that delivery works best when curriculum is individualized. A single curriculum, though developed from a feminist perspective, is not as valuable as a variety of woman-positive, feminist materials. For this reason, rather than a demand for new curriculum, the focus is on development of a range of materials that have a feminist or women-positive perspective.

Conclusion
Conference participants spoke about the difficulty in absorbing and analyzing vast quantities of information required to remain current in their field of work. There is a need for some organization, perhaps CCLOW, to take on the role of collecting, summarizing and making available new information in the field.

The articulation of best practice models, which create safe and supportive environments for women to learn (with or without other family members), would be a welcome contribution to the field. These models, grounded in theory and developed by practitioners, would need to be promoted across the country. The network of women connected to CCLOW may provide a good base for the dissemination of this work.

In conjunction with these activities, there is a desire among the conference participants to remain connected to each other, and to carry on the ongoing dialogue and analysis of issues that has been a part of CCLOW's history. CCLOW was encouraged to continue with this work.

Contacts
Jane Larimer   (416) 654-9094   jlarimer@interlog.com

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Project: Family Learning and Literacy

Prepared by Jane Larimer

Description

Many literacy and education providers see family literacy and learning as an "add on" rather than as a core program delivery method. In contrast, many students in family learning programs believe this is the best delivery method for them and consider it their best chance for learning. Providers and funders, therefore, need to recognize the value of this delivery method, ensure greater access to family learning programs, and fund accordingly.

There is a wide range of quality and quantity (hours of delivery in a program) in the "family literacy" field. Some programs provide an integrated learning environment for families; others provide a two-hour a week drop-in. The two-hour a week family learning programs do not provide much apparent benefit for their students, and so neither the program staff nor the students are encouraged to pursue things further. This may explain why many providers do not more actively adopt this delivery method. However, opportunity exists for a best practice model to be developed and promoted thus encouraging providers and funders to increase access to family learning opportunities.

The work is therefore twofold. First, the theory behind the practice needs to be substantiated. This will allow for family literacy practitioners and advocates to develop a broad base of support. Second, best practice models need to be articulated and promoted. This promotion may be done in conjunction with the development of a broad support base, or it may be done as a second stage of outreach.

Research and Promotion of Delivery Method

CCLOW's initial work in this area may be to network with provincial and local literacy providers (particularly those groups actively working in family literacy and learning) to determine their needs in advocating for this delivery method within their jurisdiction. This networking will also give CCLOW an understanding of the knowledge in the field of the theory behind the practice. With this information, CCLOW can undertake meaningful and focused research for use by delivery and advocacy agencies.

The development of the theory may include research into such topics as:

1. the impact of family learning for both children and adults
2. the value of the family learning model to educational development of children, and
3. the strengths of family learning compared to other literacy delivery methods for parents (mostly women) of young children.

As much of this research has already been done, a survey of findings may be more appropriate than beginning a new round of primary research. The survey findings could then be widely promoted within both the literacy and funding communities. This research can be expected to be less time consuming and less costly than primary research.

Research and Promotion of Best Practice

Based on research findings as outlined above and on original research with literacy deliverers, a best practice model could be developed and promoted. Once again, this should be undertaken in partnership with existing practitioners.

Policy Analysis

The provincial policies supporting this method of delivery vary widely in their approach and level of funding. For example, in Ontario this method is not supported within the funding framework while in British Columbia there is government funding available. An analysis of these policies and their impact on literacy delivery would be of value in showing the results of the family learning model.

Partners

There are a number of people and agencies working in this area across Canada. Jean Rasmussen and Janet Shivley were at the March conference and could be consulted for recommendations. CCLOW may wish to approach these women to undertake contracts in this area.

Sue McCormack, president of the Family Resource Centers across Canada and working in the literacy field, should be consulted about further partnerships between CCLOW and family learning projects. She would also be good source as a contract person for such a project. There are also provincial and local literacy organizations working in this area. Literacy BC and Saskatchewan Literacy are examples of provincial coalitions with a body of work in this area. CCLOW board members should approach their provincial organizations to determine the level of work and interest within their province. This information can be pooled to create an initial contact list.

Funding Sources

The National Literacy Secretariat has supported work in this area in the past and seems a likely funding source for future work. SSHRC grants may also be available to support this work, particularly its research aspects. Provincial ministries are also likely funding sources, though this will vary from province to province.

Private foundations could be approached, particularly if the work is described as Family Learning rather than Family Literacy-which may tie it directly to government responsibilities.

Project Components

1. **Determine the need for a paper outlining the theory and benefits of family learning and literacy , programs. Undertake secondary research and promote findings, as necessary.**

Initial conversations between CCLOW and partners should begin. A draft list of contacts can be developed from provincial and local organizations. Individuals named above can further refine this list. These conversations should be focused on determining the need for

research and promotion of findings and, therefore, serves as the basis for a project in this area.

2. **Develop and promote best practice models.**

Based on the findings from Recommendation 1, CCLOW should work with delivery partners in articulating and promoting a best practice model. Quantitative research may be required to provide a base on which to develop this model.

Conclusion

Some indications from the conference were that the articulation of best practice models, which create safe and supportive environments for women to learn (with or without other family members), would be a welcome contribution to the field. These models, grounded in theory and developed by practitioners, need to be promoted across the country. The network of women connected to CCLOW may provide a good base for the dissemination of this work.

CCLOW will need to determine what its particular contribution to this area of work can be. While there is a great deal of work to be accomplished in research and promotion of the delivery method, as well as articulation and promotion of a delivery model, much of this work is now being undertaken by individuals and provincial organizations. CCLOW may act most effectively as a national "home" for this work, thus broadening the impact of the work now being done. A national conference was held this spring, and the proceedings of this conference may assist CCLOW in further clarifying how it can best contribute.

Contacts

Jean Rasmussen (604) 684-0624   Jrasmussen@TheHub.capcollege.bc.ca
Family Literacy Dvlp, Literacy B.C.

Janet Shively   (902) 485-1635   meadow@north.nsis.com
Family Literacy Association of Nova Scotia

Sue McCormack (905) 812-3533   phdaln@interlog.com
Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network

Project: Women, Literacy and Employment
Prepared by Jane Larimer

In the area of Women, Literacy, and Employment CCLOW should:

1. Determine the need for a paper outlining the theory and benefits of workplace/workforce learning and literacy programs. Undertake secondary research and promote findings, as necessary.

2. Articulate and promote best practice models.
3. Analyze government education and training policies and their impact on women with low literacy skills.

Research and Promotion of Delivery Method

As a delivery method, Workforce and Workplace Literacy Programs receive varying levels of support from governments across Canada; many delivery agencies are working with private sector firms and unions in this area. There is value in articulating the theory behind such programs and in promoting the value of the delivery method to providers and government funders. CCLOW's mandate indicates the organization has a role to play in this area, particularly as an advocate for women's access to education.

Research and Promotion of Best Practice

Developed from the discussion about the theory and value of literacy and basic skills education for people in the workforce, best practice models can be articulated and promoted. CCLOW's contribution may be to articulate these models within the context of creating women-positive learning environments. Karen Geraci, Judith Bond, and others attending the March conference could be approached as reference people for such a project.

Policy Analysis

Women at the March conference were very interested in labour market analysis, and how employment regulations such as E.I. impacted on the working lives of women. There are numerous topics where further research and analysis can contribute to a better understanding of how well (or poorly) our education and training system is serving women. A new report by the National Council of Welfare provides an analysis of the impact of the justice system on Canada's poor and will be a power advocacy tool for years to come. A report by the CCLOW on how the employment and training/education systems impact disadvantaged women and their families could similarly be both an advocacy and education tool for women active in these fields.

Materials Development and Promotion

A great deal of material has been and is now being developed for use in workplace environments. The clearinghouse role may be the major contribution of CCLOW to this work, though funding for this activity may be difficult to acquire.

Partners

Many partnerships are possible in this work, such as ACTEW, the National Women's Reference Group, and consultants working in the literacy and employment field. Other organizations such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Canadian Labour Congress, and Women in Trades and Technology are also possible partners in this work.

Funding

Materials development may be funded through the National Literacy Secretariat or provincial governments. Policy analysis may be funded as research work through private

foundations. It may be possible to recover some of the costs of this work through subscription fees to newsletters, digests, and journals that are developed to distribute information. Further research may be funded through SSHRC grants or through provincial ministries.

Recommendations

1. **Determine the need for a paper outlining the theory and benefits of workplace/workforce learning and literacy programs. Undertake secondary research and promote findings, as necessary.**

   Preliminary work in this topic area should be networking with people active in workforce and workplace basic skills delivery. The goal of this work is to provide an education and advocacy tool for practitioners.

2. **Articulate and promote best practice models.**

   CCLOW may be able to best articulate how to make this delivery model most effective for women students.

3. **Analyze government education and training policies and their impact on women with low literacy skills.**

   A comprehensive analysis of employment policy and its impact on women could be both a strong advocacy tool for better policy and a strong promotional tool for CCLOW as a national organization. It could also generate media interest.

Conclusion

The articulation of best practice models, which create safe and supportive environments for women to learn (with or without other family members), would be a welcome contribution to the field. These models, grounded in theory and developed by practitioners, should be promoted across the country. The network of women connected to CCLOW may provide a good base for the dissemination of this work.

There is a need for a national group to advocate on behalf of women's learning in the context of employment. Though other national advocacy groups exist, CCLOW should explore the opportunity to take on this role.

Contacts

Karen Lior	(416) 599-3590	actew@web.ca
ACTEW		
Ursule Critoph		ucritoph@istar.ca
Karen Geraci	(416) 465-0827	kgeraci@interlog.com
Judith Bond	(416) 927-1885	jbond22@home.com
Workplace Training &		

Services

Jane Larimer   (416) 654-9094   jlarimer@interlog.com

Project: Women, Literacy, and Health

Prepared by Jane Larimer

This topic is crystalline, in that there are many facets that connect and reflect each other, yet are distinct within themselves. Several key areas are presented here.

Recommendations

CCLOW should:

1. Develop health literacy materials.
2. Develop literacy materials for women with low literacy skills.
3. Develop a curriculum for use in various learning environments.
4. Promote new and existing materials created for use by women with low literacy skills.

Research and Materials Development

Perhaps the first facet is for CCLOW to explore "health literacy". This is similar to "computer literacy" in that each is an area of growing knowledge that has great impact on the general population. As this body of knowledge grows, an ever larger number of people have outdated understanding of issues, appropriate practices or treatments, and expected outcomes.

Coupled with increased demands on the health care system, the results of this situation mean that people are more frequently expected to do their own health research. An article in the May 2, 2000 edition of *The Globe and Mail* reads:

> For his part, Mr. Singer has obtained more information about the [medical] test from the Internet than from his family doctor. That's not necessarily a bad thing. As Dr. Bunting points out, "For doctors to really go through something like this would take at least half an hour, and they don't even get a fee for counselling patients."
>
> Instead, doctors can refer patients to websites aimed at helping [patients] decide whether they want to have the test. (Schuman, "The Ins and Outs of Checking on Prostate Cancer," Globe and Mail, 2/5/00, R13.)

Thus, even literate people must acquire a new "literacy," that of understanding medical information and applying it to themselves, often making critical decisions without the support of experienced practitioners.

This creates the opportunity for the development of a vast body of material containing, at

least, general background information and, at most, very specific information on health care issues. This information can prepare women to dialogue with their health care professionals, for example, or can direct women to sources of more detailed information to assist them with health care decisions. Topics covered can include information about children and pediatric medicine, in addition to women's health issues.

Research and Materials Development, Curriculum Development

A second facet of this work is to focus on the health care needs of women with low levels of literacy. Some very good work has been done in this area; however, there are still gaps and as the overall body of knowledge grows, so do these gaps.

Further, using new or existing materials, CCLOW could develop "health curriculums" for use in programs throughout the country. Modules on various topics can be developed for delivery in various venues (such as workplace programs, family literacy programs, and community centres).

Policy Analysis

Health policy analysis is a related facet of this topic. Primary research can be undertaken by CCLOW, or findings' from other groups already doing this work can be supported and promoted, and perhaps adapted for use by a wider group of women. For example, Pat Armstrong is working on an analysis of the impact of health policy (and in particular, privatization) on women. A recent paper of Ms Armstrong is available through the Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. An article in the May 1,2000 issue of the *Toronto Star* reports that a "male bias [has been] found in researchers' health studies" in the US. We can expect similar findings in Canada. Though taking on this research may be outside the CCLOW mandate, the process of analysis and promotion of these findings may provide an important part of a "health literacy" curriculum.

Materials Promotion

A clear message from the conference and pre-conference discussions was that many women are unaware of available information. Rather than a research/development role, CCLOW could take on a clearing house role and improve the distribution of and access to existing information. By moving beyond promotion of materials in the literacy field into promotion of materials in the health and social services sectors, an increased number of women would receive valuable information, funding options for this work would increase, and CCLOW would gain increased recognition of their work.

Partners

Mary J. Breen has done extensive work (research and writing) in literacy and health. Recently she worked with Lindsay Hall on a project for Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre on women's health in mid-life. This book was written for working women with some level of literacy skills, but needing a reliable source of information on health issues. The work covered menopause, depression and relationships. Mary would be interested in further work, though is busy at the moment. She recommended CCLOW contact Lindsay Hall, who is ending a current contract at Lawrence Heights.

Pat Armstrong is currently working in this area though she is unable to take on new project work at this time. However, she may be able to suggest contacts and connections. Ms. Armstrong offered to review any proposals that CCLOW drafts for work in this area. She recommended her recent paper, available through the Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, as preliminary reading on the subject.

The Centre for Literacy in Montreal is currently doing work in this area and Linda Shohet has expressed a great deal of interest in pursuing this topic further.

Potential Funders

Possible funding sources for this work include pharmaceutical companies, national health foundations and associations, and provincial and federal health funders as well as community and municipal funders. The broader the target constituency, the more likely private sector firms would be to fund the work, or to provide matching dollars. Some firms may be interested in reaching this "market" of literacy learners, and so could assist in the literacy materials development aspect of this work as well.

Recommendations

1. **Develop health literacy materials**
   Substantial funding in this area could allow CCLOW to undertake important and long term work needed by women, support core operations and administrative work, and promote itself and its other projects through broad distribution of the results of the health literacy work.

2. **Develop literacy materials for women with low literacy skills.**

3. **Develop a curriculum for use in various learning environments.**

4. **Promote new and existing materials created for women with low literacy skills.**

   Funding through government agencies such as the National Literacy Secretariat should be available to CCLOW for additional literacy and health projects. This work can build on current work, and promotion of new and existing materials could be part of this project. This work would be of great value to women with low levels of literacy.

Conclusion

This is an area that can provide information to the public as well as to women in learning environments. There appears to be both a range of topic options to pursue as well as numerous funding opportunities.

Contacts

Mary J. Breen   (705) 740-2350

Lindsey Hall   (416) 787-1661

c/o Lawrence Heights Community
Centre, Toronto

Pat Armstrong   patarmstron@yorku.ca
c/o York University, Centre of Excellence
for Women's Health   nnewh@yorku.ca

Linda Shohet   (514) 731-1531   lshohet@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
Centre for Literacy, Montreal

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