

# D.E.W. DROP IN

## **DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN DO DROP IN**

The Newsletter for the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre  
SEPTEMBER 1999 Free

*innovative*

B E A P A R T O F I T

*partnerships*

### **RESEARCH TO IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND DEVELOPING A 'PROJECT PROFILE'**

There have been reports that women in the DTES would like more diverse learning opportunities. Some women have been attending DEWC support groups for a number of years and are ready for the next step, whatever that may be. There are also many education and employment programs offered in different agencies in the DTES, unfortunately many of them are not relevant or not accessible to women. The challenge for us is to develop new programming for and by women that are fitting for them.

The Centre, in partnership with The BC Learning Disabilities Vancouver Chapter and UBC, will be conducting inquiries. We want like to find out what kind of programs women in the DTES would like to see offered to help them make positive changes in their lives. The information from this inquiry will be available to anyone interested and will assist us in developing some new programs. There will be an Advisory Committee made up of women from the neighborhood, BCLDVC and UBC who will guide the project. If you are interested in being on the Committee or would like to know more about the project please attend the Information Session.

**Information session on Tuesday September 7  
at 5:00 at the Centre or you can talk to Cynthia.**

# Program Volunteer HIOT NEWS

The Centre members will be going on a Retreat this month. Would the volunteers like a parallel retreat? We could organize volunteer events and workshops at Camp Fircom. Denise is very interested in bringing a group of volunteers for a camping experience with Cynthia and Denise Co. Please talk to Denise if you are interested. The dates are September 27, 28 and 29. It would be an excellent opportunity for volunteers to do some team building and enjoy each others company. We will still have a volunteers-only retreat in Spring at the Sasamat Outdoor Centre.

An outing to Boundary Bay, Alice the Advocate is taking the picture



- September 12, Sunday at 5pm  
**Orientation for Kitchen Worker**
- September 14, Tuesday at 2pm  
**Volunteers-only Meeting**
- September 15, Wednesday at 9am  
**Food Safe Workshop**
- September 19, Sunday at 5pm  
**Volunteers meeting**

*Women's Own Home Improvement Zone*

- Learn How to
- Fix leaky taps
- Do diy wall repairs
- Paint like a pro
- Reupholster furniture
- and much, much, much more

For more info: Gwen at Tradeworks  
876 Cordova at 254-9355

Groups on Tuesday and Thursday

Starting Sept 28th

Hey Wonderful Women,  
It's Meshell here, I just though I'd write to let you know that I will not be around the centre bugging all of you for a little while. I am going away to Guatemala from August 25<sup>th</sup> to September 29<sup>th</sup>. I am going to be studying Spanish at a school run by Guatemalan human rights activist and I will be living with a Mayan family. Through my travels, I am hoping to learn a lot more about the history, culture and social-political climate of the Mayan peoples (natives of Guatemala). I will try and sent a postcard to the center. I will return with lots of stories, pictures and information to share with you all. See you when I get back.

Violence against women is one of the most pervasive, yet least recognized issues in the world. Once a year in Canada, and throughout the world, women come together to protest this point. Take Back the Night is an event where women march in large numbers and transform the streets, which are usually a place of fear, to a place where we can walk together free from the threat of male violence.

# ***TAKE BACK THE NIGHT***

**Saturday September 25**

Vancouver Art Gallery at 7pm

**MEET AT THE CENTRE AT 5PM FOR A  
MEAL AND WE WILL ALL GO TOGETHER  
*WE'RE NOT GONNA TAKE IT ANYMORE***

Take Back the Night is organized by women's centres, transition houses and coalitions of women's groups. Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter has been organizing this protest in Vancouver since 1976.

This women-only protest is attended by women of all ages, abilities, races and class backgrounds, for many different reasons. Some women come to celebrate the freedom we attain as we march through the streets together, others mourn the violence that our sisters have endured. We all attend to bring attention to our right to live in a world where we feel safe and free from the constant threat of male violence.

This year's protest will be held on Saturday September 25, 1999 at the Georgia Street side of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Women will start to gather at 7:00pm. Speakers will

include local and international feminist organizers and authors. Childcare, sign interpretation and wheelchair pushers will be available. We will be carrying our Women's Centre banner. In addition, on Friday Sept. 17, in the Stopping the Violence Support Group, women will have an opportunity to create their own picket signs to carry during the march. Come join us for international protest of male violence against women. Bring drums, whistles and noisemakers.

A sign up sheet will be posted in the Women's Centre. We will meet at the Centre at 5pm for a meal. All women are invited to join at the Gallery. Bus tickets will be provided to women at the end of the march for return transportation. If you would like more information, or would like to volunteer please call Rape Relief at 872-8212, or speak to 3 Marlies (Victim Services).

# WHO'S WHO ON STAFF?

There always seems to be some staffing changes at the Centre, so here's the latest just in case you've lost track.....

**FIRST OFFICE – Alice Kendall – Legal Advocate**  
Please see Alice the Legal Advocate if you want help getting what you need from your worker or you need info about housing, disability benefits, child apprehension, getting a lawyer, etc.

**SECOND OFFICE – Marlies Wester - Victim Services Worker**

You can talk to Marlies about just about anything! including if you have been a victim of crime (room broken into, cheque stolen, assault, sexual assault.) and want to know about filing police reports, court dates or applying for criminal compensation. Marlies can also go to see the Crown Attorney with you, take a Victim Impact Statement, or go to court with you if you have been a victim of crime.

**SECOND OFFICE –Marg Scott- Stopping the Violence Counsellor**

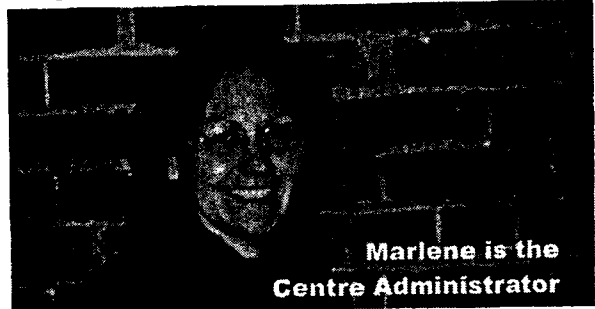
Marg is in for 2.5 days per week and her responsibilities are to counsel women in crisis and intervene for women who are survivors of violence. She provides basic advocacy, referrals and follow-up. Marg facilitates the Stopping the Violence group on Friday evenings.

**THIRD OFFICE –Bernie Poitras – Women's Outreach Worker**

Bernie is responsible for providing outreach services and programs to women with or at risk for HIV/AIDS, on issues of prevention, education and health promotion. Bernie is in and out of the Centre; you may run into her on the street as well. Bernie is planning an evening support group for women in the near future.

**FOURTH OFFICE – Christine Hutchinson - Mental Health Advocate**

Christine is also a mental health advocate and has the exact same duties and resources that our other M.H.Advocate has. Thus, Christine is also here for



**Marlene is the Centre Administrator**

any woman with mental health issues, and/ or issues around housing, welfare, legal aid, medical needs, police, tribunals etc. Drop by and see her!

**FIFTH OFFICE - Cynthia Low - Programmer**  
Cynthia can also tell you about all the exciting activities that are happening at the Centre or you can tell her your ideas about what educational and recreation activities we should plan! Cynthia will be coordinating the learning groups and informative workshops for women, here at the Centre.

**FIFTH OFFICE – Denise Tang -Volunteer Coordinator**

Want to volunteer at the Centre? Want to know what kind of training opportunities are available? Want to see if you can earn extra money from Human Resources for volunteering through the incentive program? Ask Denise!



**Julie, the new exciting student kitchen supervisor**

**FIFTH OFFICE - Reta Blind - Floor Worker**  
Reta is here if you need someone to lend a friendly ear. She is here for anyone that needs someone to talk to. You can also ask Reta about day to day functions of the Centre and if you need to use the shower, laundry machines, pads, photocopying etc. Reta also runs the successful Women Surviving Together group on Thursday evenings. Reta is our wonderwoman floorworker who is there to answer your questions!!

**SIXTH OFFICE -Marlene Trick - Administrator**  
Marlene is here to make sure shifts are covered, women's and Centre mail is coordinated, and that the Centre is running smoothly! She ensures that there are office supplies and that office equipment is working, that we have things like bus tickets, toilet paper - all the important stuff! She's also there to provide support to other staff in their paperwork.

**SIXTH OFFICE - Heather Horrocks - Bookkeeper**  
Heather does all the math for the Centre and pays the bills as well as the staff. She works 1day per week.

**KITCHEN - Julie Cyr - Kitchen Supervisor**  
Julie shops for all our groceries, plans the meals, and cooks and serves the lunches here at the Centre. (with the help of lots of great volunteers!) Ask Julie if you want to know something about the meals here.



**KITCHEN - Kathy Cooper - Kitchen Assistant**  
Kathy is Julie's assistant and works 30 hours per week. Kathy helps to plan, organize, cook and clean up after meals. She also helps to put on those annual dinners we all like so much.

Vera Bernard and Louise Lagimodiere are the Kitchen Relief Staff and contract workers (they only work when Julie's sick or on holidays and on weekends). Vera and Sabine also work as weekend/holiday relief staff when Reta is not available.

#### **FINANACIAL MANAGERS DREW DENNIS & ALIX MATHIAS**

Drew and Alix get us all the money we need to run the Women's Centre! They apply to the government for grants for certain programs and also gets us money from all the other individuals, corporations, and foundations that she can! Drew and Alix work out of their homes and they also pop in and out of the Centre on occasion.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

We are in the process of hiring a new E.D. for the women's centre. Please be patient with us as it is an important position that will require just the right individual.

### ***ARE THERE SPECIAL SHOWS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND AS A CENTRE OUTING?***

Please speak to Cynthia and you can discuss how to get tickets.

Starting in the Fall there will be more theatre events to attend.

*You make a difference  
when you contribute.*

# DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE

44 East Cordova St., Vancouver

681 - 8480

**SEPTEMBER 1999**

**LUNCH SERVED  
DAILY AT 12:30**

SUN	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT
<b>CENTRE HOURS</b>			1 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Popular Education	<i>STREET NURSES</i> 2/10:30-11:30 1:30 Women's Voice 1:00 PNE 2:00 Ceramics 5:00 Women Surviving Together	3 10:30 Sewing and Alterations 1:30 Raffle 2:00 Video 5:00 Anti-violence Discussion Group	4 1:30 Dream Catchers 2:00 PNE
Sunday 12-5 Monday 10-5 Tuesday 10-	Wednesday 10-5 Thursday 10-5	Friday 10-5 Saturday 12-5				
5 1:00 Video 2:00 PNE	6 Labor Day Centre Open 12 - 4:30 1:30 Beading 2:00 PNE	7 3:00 Planning meeting for Camp 5:00 Info. Session on the Barriers to Learning Research	8 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Pop. Education	9 1:30 Women's Voice 2:00 Ceramics 5:00 WST <i>10:30-11:30 VANNA SUSAN</i>	10 10:30 S + A 1:30 Raffle 2:00 Video 5:00 A-V Group	11 1:00 Raffle 1:30 Dream catchers
12 1:00 Video 5:00 Orientation for Kitchen Volunteers	13 1:30 Beading 5:00 Learning Group	14 2:00 Aquarium 5:00 Health Workshop with Juanita - Street Nurse	15 9:00 Food Safe Workshop 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Pop. Education	16 1:30 Women's Voice 2:00 Ceramic Painting 5:00 WST	17 10:30 S + A 2:00 Video 5:00 A-V Group	18 1:30 Dream catchers
19 1:00 Video	20 1:30 Beading 5:00 Learning Group	21 1:00 Planning meeting for Camp 2:00 Good Bye Summer Cook Out at Boundary Bay	22 Centre Closed Cheque Day	23 1:30 Women's Voice 2:00 Ceramic Painting 5:00 WST	24 10:30 S + A 1:30 Raffle 2:00 Video 5:00 A-V Group	25 1:00 Raffle 1:30 Dreamcatchers 5:00 Take Back the Night Meal and Rally
26 8:00 AIDS Walk meet at the Centre 1:00 Video	27 10:00 Leave for Camp 1:30 Beading 5:00 Learning Group	28 5:00 Battered Womens Support Services	29 4:00 Return from Camp 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Pop. Ed.	29 1:30 Women's Voice 2:00 Ceramic Painting 5:00 WST	A Rumor is about as difficult to unspread as butter.	

## REGULAR PROGRAMMING

**Learning Group** - Every Monday, doors close at 5:15. Exploring different ways of Learning with elder, Bernice Hammersmith.  
**Battered Women Support Services** or other Workshops on Tuesday nights from 5 - 8:30, support for women affected by violence in their lives.

The **Street Nurse** is here every Wednesday from 10:30 - 12:00 to give you information on all kinds of health issues.

**Popular Education** - Wednesday from 5:00 - 8:00, Share skills and resources to get things done that you would like to see done, why wait for someone else when you can do it yourself.

**Women's Voice** - Thurs. 1:30. Let us know what you think about the Centre. Your opinions and ideas are needed.

**Women Surviving Together** - Thurs. 5:00 - 8:00 Healing Circle and support group for women.

**Raffles** - Every other Fridays at 1:30 or 2:00 depending on availability, items that have been donated to the Centre are raffled.

**Anti-Violence Discussion Group** - Every other Friday night. Gathering to share stories and strategies to keep ourselves safe.

## CRAFTY WORKSHOPS - Materials provided.

**Beading with Leona** - Every Monday, 1:30 pm. Learn how to bead, expand your skills or just share ideas.

**Ceramic and Tile Painting** - Every Thursday, 2:00. Make something that you can use everyday or give to a friend.

**Fabric Arts with Freeda** - Every Friday morning, 10:30. Learn to do your own sewing and alterations and also to knit and crochet.

**Dreamcatchers** with Beverly or Mable, every Saturday at 1:30. Expand your skills and share stories with other women.

## OUTINGS - Watch the Outing Board for RUSH tickets.

**PNE Outings** are scheduled for September, 2, 4, 5 and 6. We will provide transportation and some snacks. This is not a group event once at the Fair you are free to explore on your own.

Tues. Sept. 14 we are going to the **Aquarium**.

Tues. Sept. 21 we will be going to **Boundary Bay** for the end of summer cook out. The last time we went everyone had a blast.

Mon. Sept. 27 we will be leaving for **Camp Fircom** at 10am and we will be returning on Wednesday by 5pm.

Sign up sheets are put up at the beginning of the month, even though there is a waiting list chances are there will be space available.

**NOTE:** Sometimes things get canceled or set up on another day make sure to check "Update sheet" on the front chalk board.

The Activities Board will also have information on other events.

# DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN BREAKING THE SILENCE BY SPEAKING OUT

Downtown Eastside Women Breaking the Silence by Speaking Out (Breaking the Silence) is a coalition of neighbourhood groups, agencies, and individuals on the Downtown Eastside. We have been meeting and organizing for about a year and a half to address the issue of violence in this neighbourhood, focussing on the realities of women's lives. The coalition includes representatives from the Women's Centre, Carnegie Community Centre, Neighbourhood Helpers Project (Second Mile Society), Downtown Eastside Residents' Association (D.E.R.A.), Vancouver Status of Women, and ***individual women with energy and commitment.***

The goal of this project is to continue to bring together Downtown Eastside residents, and organizations-to take a powerful community stand to prevent the devastating effects of violence, and address the social conditions that contribute to it. The project particularly recognizes the huge impact of violence on Aboriginal women in this community.



Last year, the campaign successfully organized educational workshops and a women's retreat, where women from this area came together to share their stories and ideas and strategize about healing approaches to working against violence against women. These ideas form the plan for this year's campaign, as well as a long-term vision for healing and empowering this community. The three parts to this vision are education, the healing process, and systemic advocacy with all levels of government. Specific projects we propose are the following: public awareness campaigns about how to prevent and stop violence, workshops on training women leaders, conflict resolution, and women's empowerment, healing retreats in November and May, potlucks, strategy meetings, grief circles, a front-line workers' support group, drum making workshops, a drumming and singing group, and grieving and healing workshops.



Just a reminder to all you women:

# **AIDS WALK 99**

**IS HERE!**

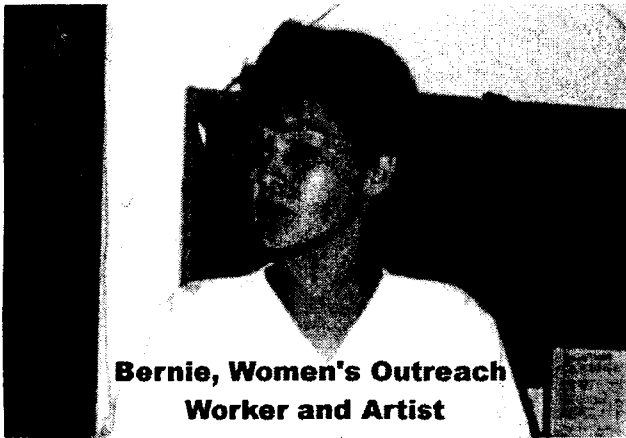
**SEPTEMBER 26TH**

*As your team captain this year, I would like to challenge all staff, Centre member, volunteers and Committee members to come out and make a pledge to raise money for women and children affected by HIV/AIDS. If you need further information come on in to see me.*

*Our team is called -*

***Many Daughters of the River***

Howáá  
Bernie Poitras  
Outreach Worker



**Bernie, Women's Outreach  
Worker and Artist**

Bernie is the Centre's new Outreach Worker who will be at the Centre from Tuesday to Saturday. Most of you will recognize her from her work as a relief staff here, but also by all the community work she does in the neighbourhood.

Bernie is also an accomplished artist from the HaidaGwaii Nation. Welcome.

You can be a part of it by...

- Attending our monthly planning and strategy meetings
- Contacting us by phone, fax, or mail
- Participating in upcoming public education events organized by Breaking the Silence coalition members to look at the issue of violence on the DES
- Participating in anti-oppression work, learning to work across differences and in solidarity
- Promoting the Breaking the Silence Campaign within your organization, to

other agencies, neighbours, friends, and allies

- Helping our coalition to lobby all levels of government to fund community initiatives to address violence against women

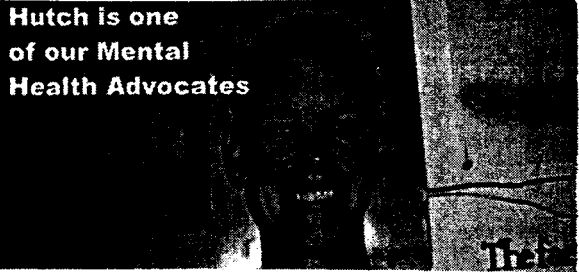
At our next gathering, we will be drumming in Oppenheimer Park between 3-5pm on Thursday. The Breaking the silence coalition can be reached at:

**Messages: 682-3269 #8319**  
**FAX: 254-2150**



# NEWS FROM THE ADVOCATES

## MENTAL HEALTH AND YOU BY CHRISTINE HUTCHINSON



Hutch is one of our Mental Health Advocates

Living in the Downtown Eastside is a very stressful proposition. Every day you probably see somebody who strikes you as a little "odd." They may dress in strange clothing, have a weird "medicated" way of walking, or talk to themselves or shout on the street. You might even be one of these individuals! We all know that this area of town has become the main area where people with mental illness gather and live. As a community, the people who live here have adjusted and made space, even if they've not given total acceptance, for those among us who are different and not usually accepted in society.

So what is the difference between mental illness, and mental health? Most of us have had at least one day when we felt "crazy," stressed out, upset, or depressed, or ready and willing to act out in a bizarre way. What keeps us from crossing the fine line that separates poor mental health from true mental illness?

Scientists, doctors and researchers are discovering more and more evidence that true mental illness has a physical, usually genetic cause. If your mother or father suffered from schizophrenia or bi-polar disorder (manic-depression), then your chances of becoming ill with the same disease increase dramatically. If it is your auntie or uncle who has a mental illness, you are at less risk, but still at more risk than the general population.

Researchers are still working to discover just how much environmental factors influence when and how badly a mental illness first appears in an individual. For example, stress is a major factor in the first onset of

schizophrenia. This disease is much more common in men than it is in women, and it affects men much earlier in life (usually the first symptoms appear in men in their late teens, as opposed to mid-to-late twenties in most women).

Drugs and alcohol, if over-used for a long period of time, can cause organic brain disease, which is a fancy way of labeling "mixed-up wiring." For example, you may know somebody who has done a lot of glue-sniffing, who is now pretty wacky, even when they're not high.

Depression is the most common mental illness that affects women. Even if no one in your family has been diagnosed with major depression, being a woman puts you at increased risk for the disease. Living in poverty increases your risk of depression even further, and living with stress raises your chances of being depressed even higher. If you have had one episode of major depression, your chances of being affected again go up 50%. If you have two episodes of major depression, your chances of it recurring increase to 80% or over. It's really sort of depressing even thinking about it!

So, what can we do for ourselves to stay healthy? One of the most helpful things we can do is to have a personal wellness

program. This is something we create for ourselves, and anyone can make one. It can cost absolutely nothing. Although it's more difficult, we can have one if we are using, if we're homeless, if we're mentally ill – you get the picture.

The most basic personal wellness program involves making and taking the time to do something we enjoy – something nice for ourselves – every day. It can be as simple as taking time to sit alone under a favorite tree - find the most beautiful leaf among all of the colours that are starting to appear in the parks. Sit at the beach, and have some still, quiet space. Self-kindness might mean eating a guilt-free chocolate bar or ice cream cone when we have some money. How about a bar of terrific smelling soap and a long, hot bath or shower? It might mean doing something kind for somebody else – but don't let this become the main object of your wellness plan – the idea is to be kind to you.

Remember to say at least one nice thing to yourself, about yourself, each day. All of those negative thoughts that we like to plague ourselves with can become pretty overbearing after a while. Do your best to drown them out. It takes some work, but it's worth the effort.

***Street Nurse Juanita at the Women's Centre on September 14<sup>th</sup> at 5pm for dinner and a discussion on sexual and reproductive health issues.***

Bring concerns, questions and ideas with you. If you have any particular concerns and contributions to discuss please leave a message for me on the front board. Thanks.

Another important part of good mental health can be to "debrief," or unload onto somebody else. It's best to do this with somebody who won't take your feelings personally, so sometimes it's not best to count on a friend or partner to be the person you use for this. When we care about somebody, we usually let our feelings get in the way. Also, when you want to unload, you usually don't want advice – friends often want to give it.

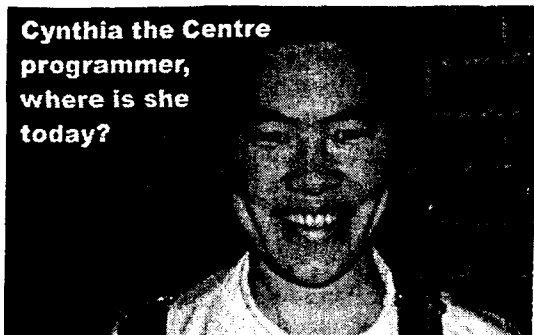
Where can you go to find somebody safe to talk? Remember that it is really important to trust and feel comfortable with anyone you get involved with for this reason. If you basically just want to chat, staff is available here at the Centre. Most of us have basic counseling or peer counseling skills. For in-depth work, Marg Scott is a qualified counselor, but as you have noticed, she is often busy. There are some good counseling services here in the neighbourhood, and we can certainly refer you for help if you need it.

Most important, if you are always feeling tremendously tired or stressed and cranky, if you are always tearful, feel ugly or unattractive, if you have feelings of guilt, or have unhappiness that never seems to go away, or if you are suicidal, you may be suffering from depression.

If you are feeling increasingly anti-social, paranoid and untrusting, or if you are hearing voices or having visions of people and things that don't make sense or don't really seem to be there, you might have a schizoid illness. If you have any of the symptoms described under depression or schizoid illness, please consider seeing a doctor right away. There are many medical ways to help deal with mental illness. If you are nervous about going to the doctor, come and see an advocate. We will help you in any way we can.

And always, remember that your mental health is important!

# CAMPING TRIP TO CAMP FIRCOM SEPTEMBER 27, 28 AND 29



If you plan on joining the camping trip you will have to attend one of the following planning meetings that will be held on;

*Tuesday September 7th at 3:00*  
*Tuesday September 21st at 1:00*

We are going to Camp Fircom on Gambier Island for a Retreat. Camp Fircom is located 25 minutes by boat from Horseshoe Bay. We will be staying in a heated lodge with an indoor and outdoor fireplace. During our stay we will have an opportunity to participate in team building activities like working together to row a WAR (Women Are Rebels) canoe, communication workshops, scary videos, Twister and BINGO. If you are interested in going please be sure to attend at least one planning meeting scheduled on Tuesday September 7<sup>th</sup> at 3pm and Tuesday September 21<sup>st</sup> at 1pm. It is very important that you attend, you will need to fill in some forms and help with input to programs, activities and menu selection.

The Centre will be providing all the transportation and food we ask that you bring your own personal stuff, sleeping bag, pillow and cigarettes. The Centre have a limited number of blankets. This is a drug and alcohol free event anyone found breaking this rule will be asked to leave the site.

## BASIC CAMPING GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL AND GROUP SAFETY AND FUN

- Try not to go anywhere alone, if you want to explore the area by yourself. Please inform someone of your intentions, the direction and time you expect to return.
- Do not wander outside the boundaries of the Camp.
- There are wild animals and they should be respected. If you encounter a wild animal that could eat you; face the animal and back off slowly. You are scaring them. DO NOT PANIC.
- Please use sunscreen and do not spend too much time in the sun.
- You are responsible to assist with clean up.
- Respect others and you will be respected.
- You will have more fun if you participate in all aspects of camp activities, workshops and organizing.
- **NO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS ALLOWED**
- Thank you for your cooperation and have a great time.

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## Please do not forget to pack these following items

bathing suit	pillow	sweater	hats	comfortable clothes
blankets	rain gear	toothbrush + paste	soap	good walking shoes
cigarettes	rolling paper	towel	medications	sleeping bag
flashlight	shampoo	warm socks	glasses	water bottle