



Photo credit: Alexis MacDonald

PRAIRIE REGION UPDATE

The Prairie Region Update is intended to keep grandmothers groups across the Prairies connected to each other and informed about the SLF Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

August 2014

WHO'S WHO in the SLF NETWORK

For the next two issues, we will be featuring members of our SLF family whose names you may have heard and not yet had a chance to meet in person. To start this feature, Sheila and Deb will share a bit about themselves.

Introducing...



Deb Radi is a member of Grands 'n' More Winnipeg. She has been part of the SLF network since she travelled to Senegal, Africa in 2007 with her daughter, Nadia, as part of Nadia's 4 year high school experience working on "Project Afrique 2007". After that social justice journey, she wanted to continue to contribute to the work on the Continent. So her friend Judy Johnson suggested that Grands 'n' More Winnipeg, affiliated with the Stephen Lewis Foundation, would be just the place for her time and talents. Deb is currently the Fundraising Co-Chair on the Coordinating Committee for her local group, a role that she has enjoyed for the past 2 years. She joined Sheila as Co-Regional Liaison for the Prairies when the SLF offered an opportunity to support her provincial community in 2013. Deb is passionate about supporting the grandmothers who are raising their (grand) children as evidenced by her recent participation in the SLF educational tour to Ethiopia and South Africa this spring.



Sheila Fahlman is a member of Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers Regina. Born in Nairobi, Kenya, she immigrated to Canada at age 15 with her family. This helps to explain her interest in the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and the African grandmothers in particular. As one of the 'founding six' in September 2006, Sheila began her involvement as Chair. After five years in that role, she took on responsibility for communications (media, social media, annual reports, and the like.) When the Grandmothers Campaign announced the formation of the Prairie Region and the search for a Regional Liaison, Sheila jumped at the opportunity to support the organization in new ways. The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign has been a way for Sheila to fulfill her desire to volunteer in areas affecting women, children, and human health. One highlight of these past eight years was participating in the SLF educational trip to Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Africa in March.

FROM OUR REGION

Prairie Region Gathering 2014

Friday, September 26th and Saturday, September 27th

St Paul's United Church

454 Egbert Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Friday evening includes local entertainment, the film *Seeking Justice at the Frontlines of the AIDS Crisis: African Grandmothers Tribunal* and remarks from Ilana Landsberg-Lewis, followed by a reception. On Saturday, there's a full day of plenary and break-out sessions, wrapping up with more local entertainment. If you'd like to join others for a post-conference dinner, so be sure to sign up for it on your registration form (the cost is on you!)

If you haven't received detailed information about the Gathering and the registration form, please contact prairiegathering2014@gmail.com. We're looking forward to meeting you there!

Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers Regina

Out and About in the Community: Summer Farmers' Markets are a wonderful opportunity to talk to people about our organization and the work that is being done on the African continent. While there we signed up a few new members, and added several names to our 'Friends of G4G' email list. At the Market, we were approached by one of the organizers of the Women's History Month event, and invited to set up our display and sell merchandise during their evening in October. It is always exciting to be approached by outside organizations with opportunities like this.

Art from the Attic: Last year through our many very generous donors and our very enthusiastic purchasers 1200 pieces of art changed hands! If you have any two-dimensional art to donate, please contact us at g4gregina@sasktel.net. There will be drop off locations in Regina and Saskatoon. The art sale will be held on **Saturday, September 20th** at the Cathedral Neighbourhood Centre in Regina from 10 am to 4 pm.



Scrabble for Africa: G4G Regina's 7th annual Scrabble for Africa 2nd event will be held on **Sunday, November 2nd**. Participants collect pledges in advance, and then come to play a friendly game of Scrabble. There will be prizes for top individual and team fundraisers, top Scrabble table scores, as well as draws and fun challenges.

Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers Saskatoon



Fabric Sale: G4G Saskatoon is holding its third annual event on **October 18th**, at St Martin's United Church (2617 Clarence Avenue S, Saskatoon), from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. We appreciate receiving donations of unused fabric 0.5m or more, quilting fabric, thread, embellishments, sewing notions... yarn, knitting needles... no patterns please (unless new or for a specialty like crafts, home décor...) People can drop off their donations at St Martin's on Thursday, October 16th from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. For questions or to arrange for donations, call Wilma Roosdahl 306-382-2356 / Susan Ashton 306-373-3210 / Jenny Neal 306-343-9448.

Annual African Dinner Save the Date: We are beginning planning for our 10th annual dinner on **March 6th, 2015**, and envision it is a celebration of the wonderful outcomes that have been achieved by Grandmothers in Africa and locally through our collective efforts.

Grandmothers Giving, Portage la Prairie

Annual Fall Dinner - September 14, 2014 - more detailed information will be available closer to the date.

Grands 'n' More Winnipeg

Awareness – Grands 'n' More Winnipeg has a tradition of staffing an 'awareness' table at the African Pavilion of "Folklorama". Our volunteers speak to passersby about the work of the Grandmothers Campaign and the SLF.

If you're in Winnipeg during the week of **August 10 to 16**, please do drop by and visit us. We'll be at Holy Cross School Gym, 290 Dubuc Street. {Apologies for the wrong location in last month's news update}.



Please let us know of any events your group is holding, or has held recently, and we'll post it here.

Disclaimer: we try to get the information accurate – but please be sure to check with the local group before you venture out to an event in case there are any errors or changes.

NEWS FROM THE STEPHEN LEWIS FOUNDATION

Tribunal Film Launches

... in our REGION

Planning for the Tribunal film launches is coming along well – it'll be a busy September and October as the film travels across the country! The film now has a title: ***Seeking Justice at the Frontlines of the AIDS Crisis: African Grandmothers Tribunal.***

- September 26 to 27 – screening at the Prairie Region Gathering in Saskatoon
- October 16 – screening in Winnipeg



... GLOBALLY

At the AIDS 2014 International conference in Melbourne, Australia, the film launch went really well!! Leah and Lee made many solid connections – including a meeting with the head of the Church of Scotland who said he wanted to show the film in all of his parishes!

The screening with the Australian grandmothers went REEEEEALLY well too. It looks like there will be three groups in three different cities – there is a lot of enthusiasm and everyone seems solidly focused on fundraising.

Interested in a visit from Ida?

Ida will be here in Canada from September 9th through October 11th. She'll be working in the SLF office and travelling around, but her schedule isn't quite full yet so if there are opportunities or events where you think it would be beneficial to have Ida there, please let Sheila/Deb know and we will pass on your interest to the SLF.

2015 Trip to Africa



The SLF is tentatively planning another Grandmothers Campaign trip to Uganda and Tanzania in March 2015, however it looks like the Ugandan (National) Grandmothers Gathering could take place in Kampala in September 2015. It would be ideal to coordinate the trip with the Gathering – kind of like the trip to the African Grandmothers Gathering in 2010 – so the SLF will shift their planning a little. Once we have confirmed dates and details, we will let you know. However, in the meantime, be thinking of this excellent educational opportunity to learn more about how the SLF supports grandmother groups locally. We hope that from the stories of Africa that we have shared with you that you will consider applying!

Planned Giving

SLF staff, Margaret Wright and Zahra Mohamed, are launching the SLF's planned giving programme in the fall. It would be lovely – if you felt it appropriate – to have a few short “testimonials” from grandmothers about the benefits of planned giving. This is not to say that you'd have to disclose whether or not you've made a planned gift! When we talked about this at the Liaisons' meeting in February, the consensus was that the Foundation should be direct in our approach and “just ask”. Anyone interested in sharing why they would donate in a planned giving way to the SLF? Let us know and we can share your thoughts with the SLF.

*“We make a living by what we get,
we make a life by what we give”*

- Sir Winston Churchill

The SLF Book Project

The SLF Grandmothers Book is still in the writing stages. As soon as we know more about its completion and the launch, we will let you know...

In the meantime, we would like to share with you an UPCOMING BOOK that might be of interest to you and your groups – *GRANDMOTHERS: AFRICA'S UNSUNG HEROES*

In 2012 – 2013, three of our partners in Uganda, Kenya and South Africa participated in a documented letter-writing exchange. In 2010, these three organizations met at an SLF Roundtable on grandmothers, and began thinking about ways in which African grandmothers could connect with one another to share their stories and experiences:

"In Africa story telling is a common tool used to connect human beings. The stories can become treasured pieces of history that are remembered and passed on. The story telling is often done in a group setting with the narrator telling a story. This powerful tool was taken one step further with two objectives: beginning the process of documenting stories of the grandmothers and connecting grandmothers across Africa. The grandmothers in this book have used the story telling tool to bring about healing from emotional pain and the overwhelming daily challenges they face."

The letter-writing exchange resulted in a book (!) that shows the hope, healing and strength that these grandmothers brought to one another AND the book will be available within a matter of months. Graham at the Foundation has a draft copy and says, "it's beautiful and moving and revelatory AND of course and it will be made available to groups as soon as the SLF can!"

IDEAS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

We have been checking out the calendar of events on the Grandmothers Campaign website. Here are a couple of ideas we think you will find interesting. You never know, one of these may strike a chord with your group:

The Gardens and Architecture of Kirkendall After their success in 2013, Blooms for Africa once again presents Take pleasure in an evening stroll along the streets of the historic Kirkendall area in Hamilton. Enjoy the beautiful gardens of over a dozen homes and experience the unique architecture of the area as well as music and art to make the evening truly spectacular! bloomsforafrica@yahoo.ca.



An African Afternoon An afternoon of Stories, Songs and Strength in the Face of HIV/AIDS. The event was held at a local library, and hosted by the Grey Grannies of Ontario. greygrannies@gmail.com.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation made a commitment following the Tribunal in Vancouver last September. Let's keep this in mind as we begin another busy year with the Grandmothers Campaign:

"You have given us a clear agenda for support – whether it's a global fund for cash transfers, the need for national level advocacy, the continuing urgency for land rights and housing, access to healthcare, universal and accessible education, food security, and laws protecting grandmothers from violence and the means to enforce them," said the Foundation's Executive Director, Ilana Landsberg-Lewis. "We commit to redoubling our efforts and to bend every fibre of our collective beings to break the inertia, the silence, and the dam of neglect and negligence that prevents the flood of resources from flowing. We will be accountable to you, and heed you, as must the world."

AFRICA TRIP 2014

Talking with the Go-Gos ~ Nina Logan, Grands 'n' More, Winnipeg

While visiting the SLF funded projects in Ethiopia, Rwanda and South Africa, the 22 women representing G2G groups across Canada, along with the SLF staff, I discovered how the Grandmothers and the children in their care work and learn together to make their lives better.

The first project our group visited was in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. The project was NLK, started in 2006 by 6 women living with HIV/AIDS in their community. Despite misgivings from their spouses and families, these courageous women worked together to improve the health and livelihood of the affected women and the families in their community. The disease continues to have such a stigma attached to it so admitting to having the disease is difficult and even dangerous.

After a traditional Ethiopian lunch and coffee ceremony, we gathered in a large circle to listen to the women share their stories. We heard how the children and grandchildren learn in school about safe health practices which are designed to avoid AIDS. The children share their learning with their Grannies. Traditionally, families share a stick, which is used to clean their teeth. The children have told them that these "toothbrushes" can splinter and cause the gums to bleed. This can pass on the disease. Now everyone has their own "toothbrush".

One grandmother shared that she and her granddaughter take a pill together every morning. The granddaughter thinks it is a vitamin pill. This Grannie asks the circle of women for advice as to when she should tell her granddaughter that she has AIDS and it is not a vitamin pill she has been taking, but an anti-retroviral drug. Can you imagine yourself in such a position?



Photo credit: Alexis MacDonald

We also visited the centre where women are trained to embroider on treadle sewing machines and weave on looms with shuttle and foot pedals. The scarves and tablecloths they produce are lovely, but so labour intensive. It takes all day for a woman to make one tablecloth or two scarves, working in little more than a shed with a hole in the roof and a single light bulb to illuminate the work. But they are so proud of their new skills and the income it generates for their families. They set up a bazaar where we can buy the textiles, crafts, baking and spices. The ladies happily showed us how to tie up our hair with the scarves in the traditional style. Lots of smiles, laughter and traditional kisses on the neck follow the demonstrations.



Photo credit: Alexis MacDonald

The NLK ladies showed us their Village Savings and Loan where not only do they save their own money and are able to get loans to start up their own business, they each contribute fifty cents a month to a social fund. This fund is not for parties or celebrations, but for emergencies in the community, such as medicine for a sick child.

We learned a lot about the importance of community and how everyone supports each other through hard work and also celebrates together with clapping, singing, dancing and laughing. It is good to have this strong community as the Grandmothers tell us they worry about what will happen to their grandchildren when they die.

RESOURCES

Here are some websites we would like to share with you:



AIDS-free World <http://www.aidsfreeworld.org/> Every Friday, Stephen Lewis shares a weekly story of the AIDS work worldwide. You can sign up for his weekly commentaries by visiting this website.

Stephen Lewis Foundation <http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org> Here you can sign up to receive the **SLF Grassroots** newsletter and updates on the Stephen Lewis Foundation's work. Did you know that there is a “members only” site that is full of great ideas and ways to connect about the G2G campaign? We encourage you to check it out. Of course, if your group has sent in its membership list, then you should be getting these publications already.

AIDS 2014 – 20th International AIDS conference was held on July 20 – 25, 2014 in Melbourne, Australia. Follow the link to see what happened at the conference. <http://search.freecause.com/search?ourmark=freecause&ei=utf-8&type=61883&p=International+AIDS+conference+2014>.

If you would like more information on any of this material, please do let us know. We are here to support you and your groups with information sharing and connections, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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